

St. Kilda and the Outer Hebrides to Dingle, the Blaskets and Beyond: Souterrains in the Lives of the Common People and the Words of a Forgotten World.

To convert Scottish Gaelic to Irish Gaelic read the **Sg** letters in the word **Sgalabhad** as **Scalabhad**...see Dinneen's Irish Dictionary.

In Irish, according to Fr. Dinneen's Dictionary, a **scalán** is the word for a hut, a shelter, a camp-hut, or rough and ready lodging. Does the Scots Gaelic word **Sgala** have the same meaning as the Irish word **Scalán**; thereby indicating that a souterrain on the Hebridean Island of Uist (known locally as **(Uamh Sgalabhad)**) refers as a hut or rough and ready lodging?

In an interview with Hebridean Islanders then living in mainland Britain (see Utube), Thames TV in 1977 (check) interviewed a man who remembered that men would go to Saint Kilda Island at certain times of the year to hunt fulmar and gannet while at other times of the year they would go there to shear sheep. They would stay he said, in the 'underground houses' on the island which were built of stone with turf or thatched roofs. He did not seem to be referring to the **Black Houses** there which are above ground structures. In passing one could not help noticing similarities in the form of some of the beehive shaped, general storage purposed, **cleat** structures and think, generally, of **clocháns** and their various forms as in the West of Ireland.

Also how interesting to see them in the vicinity of a drystone built circular enclosure which hinted of a **caher (cahir)** often found here in the west of Ireland. At some point in time turf roofed and drystone built **Black Houses** were built in the midst of these structures. The Black Houses were arranged in a linear fashion their sides fronting a 'street' or laneway. There is something reminiscent in the concept of a '**sráid bhaile**' here in Ireland i.e. a 'street' village versus a non-linear village such as a fishing hamlet (and transhumance economy) **clachan** / booley settlement, did the **Both** (or **Bothy**) of Scotland reference the **Botháns** of Ireland and did the islanders of the Hebrides -as much as those of the West Coast of Ireland - engage on winter nights in the practice of **Bothanaíocht** i.e. going from house to house around the village neighbourhood visiting ...and one thinks of Bohonagh townland by Rosscarbery and its ancient 'monastic city' and demesne...and one is also reminded of a narrative from the early 16th century about a new street of village houses in Castille in Northern Spain replacing earlier rock-cut dwellings to improve the living conditions of peasant families. Vestiges of an older set of locally adapted cultural norms vanishing slowly from the shorelines of an archaeologically defined Atlantic Sea Province?

In the context of discussing inhabited beehive cells (**clocháns**) such as those at *Uig* on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, and conjoined **bothys** at *Gearraidh Aird Mhor* also on *Uig*, MacRitchie(1893) records names for structural features such as '**fosgarlan** or porch', and '**farlos** or smokehole'. Does Fr. Dinneen's dictionary have similar words from the Irish tradition? Dinneen has **foschoimheadhaidhe** meaning a guard or an attendant. Also, he has **forloiscim** meaning I singe or burn. Some souterrains in Ireland have a small 'entrance cell' feature as an ante-room to entering the souterrain proper. Was this a **fosgarlan** for someone to guard the entrance in times of danger? Often souterrains will have one or more 'vents', these occur in tunnelled as well as in masonry built sites. One excavated example at Curraghcrowley, County Cork may have been a fire pit with a long vent running out from it. In another case at Fassagh (from **fásach** meaning a desert or a wilderness, a deserted house, an unploughed field etc..monastic?) shells, animal bones and charcoal were found beneath the vent giving the recorder the idea that the vents were used as flues for fires...maybe, but though perhaps not originally intended to be...MacRitchie speaks of gypsies... and perhaps others should be included others such as a wandering **Spailpín** seeking a rough and ready lodging (a **loistín**), a 'night lodging', a place to lie down in safety for a few hours) with wall cut bench (a *forma*) to rest on for the night, someone who might occasionally occupy a souterrain and light a small fire to cook some small food item.

Is there something in the traditional folklife, and the Gaelic language, of the Hebrides which echoes on the islands off the west coast of Ireland; an Atlantic seaboard culture of drystone buildings and of concepts of adaptation to local environment, of a culture more ancient, self sufficient, and distinct, from that of the larger island 'mainlands' from which they are separated and upon which they were largely not dependent? One distinct from the 'mainland' of Western Europe and its various folklife traditions and folk histories ? The folklife and maritime traditions/heritages/histories of the Mediterranean peoples, east to west, and what lies reflected in such histories and pre-histories: the folklife traditions and histories of the Germanic, Baltic and Scandinavia seacoast peoples, those histories and folklife traditions of the Atlantic seaboard peoples.

In the context of all of this how should one read those classical authors who wrote about the customs and folklife of various peoples beyond the western and northern borders of the Roman Empire as it expanded e.g. Julius Caesar's **De Bello Gallico** or **De Bello Civili**, or how does one interpret references to underground living in the lands of the Germani or the use of **currachs** (skin boats) in the Western Mediterranean and in the Atlantic as in Gaul [**check**], and as used by the Irish to raid the shores of Roman Britannia? If the folklife practices and customs of the Atlantic seaboard, from

say the indented rocky coast of West Cork to Connemara to the Hebrides and St. Kilda Islands, represent the surviving remnants of a 'lingua franca' for expressing the cultural norms, mindsets and expressions of the common people through language and material culture i.e. in contrast and subordinated by the cultural platforms of their elites; common, peasant, social norms which were once common place across Europe - but with regional variety according to local environment adaptations across the millennia; then what does the Gaelic language, in all of its surviving variants, represent as a cornucopia of lost culture, of what once existed; existed from mindset to material object to artistic design and form? If the well entrenched idea that Gaelic culture and tradition in the West of Ireland - and particularly on the islands of that coastline up to evacuations in the early 20th century, were the last outposts of a once Europe-wide Gaelic world and material culture once commonplace and dominant across Western Europe, then, ultimately, what dynamic, what social and cultural forces, drove it to the northern fringes of the wild Atlantic sea?

How true is this scenario? If one were to project backwards in time dissolving the cultural paradigms of the present and of the Medieval world of Europe, dissolving backwards to the world of Rome's Empire and settling on a time prior to the rise of Rome in the West, how much of the mindsets and material cultures among the common people would one find which equates to beehive buildings in drystone, of drystone wall building, of skin boats such as **currachs** and Boyne coracles, of **crannógs**, of carved-out log-boats and seaboard marsh/fen dwellers and fish-traps, and of circular stone enclosures, of stone houses and tower structures, of sheep and knit-ware, and looms and cable patterns telling family stories, and islanders killing basking sharks from flimsy vessels, scaling cliff faces for the eggs of seabirds, catching seabirds with a piece of string, seasonal fishing, seasonal agriculture, a world of donkeys and small ponies and persons of varying physical stature and genetic reductions in size due to climate and environment, of pampooties and bawneen wool, of kelp collecting and of 'making the land' from it by the seashore to grow a few vegetables, of a scrap of knowledge of quarrying, of a scrap of knowledge of extracting metal from rock, of repairing metal objects and tools, of herbs and seasonal diets based on nature's bounty, of the cow and the pig keeping warm in the hut where people sleep...of a self-sufficient community, of a world unto itself...of the world of Peg Sayers and that in the writings of the Blasket Islanders ... northwards to the Arran Islands off the Connemara coast {see Robert J. Flaherty's **Man of Aran**, Hollywood documentary film 1934) and ... onwards northwards to St Kilda and the folk of the Outer Hebrides (see Pathé newsreels of the early 20th century)....

'imperium in imperium'...

and so why did Saint **Ciaráin** (the son of an **Osraighe** (Kilkenny, Offaly) prince and later of Saighir in County Offaly, bring, at some point in time, before the mission of the Britannia (or Breton) Roman of the **patrician** social class, named Patrick in 432 AD, Christianity to the Island of Cape Clear off the West Cork coast?

On this island of his mother's people, is it true that he founded the first Christian church in Ireland? Is there a sociological parallel in the Hebrides Revival of the 20th century as a model for how early Christianity may have first found a footing in Ireland through **St. Ciaráin** (returned from the Mediterranean world of Rome and/or Antioch), his mother's clan and the people of the island?

A model of how the **Corcú Laoidhe** tribe of West Cork - and one of their kings - may have been introduced to this nascent religion from the Mediterranean world; practices, perspectives and beliefs of older and ancient civilisations having being absorbed into it, some already not unfamiliar?

Is it true that his mother's people were the first in Ireland to have a Christian tribal chieftain / petty king? How and why did island people first adopt Christianity from West Cork to the Outer Hebrides? Was it because of local 'sons' who had been abroad introduced them to it? How much of the common people's material culture, the culture of the islanders and of their families on the 'mainland' shorelines, did those who created the many island hermitages - which came to exist on the small islands off these coasts as the sixth century became the seventh and then the eight when Viking dragon ships emerged upon the horizon of the sea,- absorb as part the common mode of life, the common practices of living in such environments, environments into which they blended their ways; perhaps as they thought of St. John Cassian's advice?

Uamh is the word for a cave, natural or artificial, in both Irish and Scots Gaelic. **Bhad** in Irish refers to something connected to furze or turf. A turf roof, or ceiling, of a 'cave' hidden under/beneath the furze perhaps? Turf roofed, but with time the sods grow together and become an organic mound making the structure sealed and secure as an underground building. Think of the Clocháns at Riasc on the Dingle Peninsula covered in turf sods, does a drying wind blow through the stones without the turf If the word was pronounced **Bhád** then it would refer to a boat. Does the souterrain plan resemble, in some semantic way, an up-turned **currach** acting as a shelter? Is it **Badánach** meaning tufted or shrubby? Or **Bádhaim** meaning I hide or sink deeply into?

So, was **Souterrain A** at **Ballycatteen** an ***Uamh Scalán Bhad*** and the Irish equivalent of a Hebridean ***Uamh Sgalabhad?***

More MacRitchie extracts:

1. Another old Gaelic name for those underground galleries is *tung* or *tunga*; while another name by which they are known in Lewis is ***tigh fo thalaimh*** or *house beneath the ground*.
2. ***Martin [who was he???*** 1703: 'little stone-houses, built under ground, called earth -houses' .
3. ***Dean Munroe writes [who was he?????]*** 'There is sundry coves and holes in the earth, coverit with hedder above, quhilk fosters many rebellis in the country of the North head of Ywst' (North Uist).
4. From O'Flaherty's description of West Connaught, written in 1684, **[Roderic O'Flaherty's Ogygia published 1685?]** it appears according to Captain Thomas's observations on reading it....'this style of dwelling had already become archaic'....the writer **[Roderic O'Flaherty?]** in referring to ***clocháns*** states that some are still inhabited, holding 40 men in some cases, yet he says they were so ancient that nobody knows how long ago any of them were made. Another writer (***who was this person?***) says 'the substances found in many of them have been the accumulated debris of food used by man...ornaments of bronze have been found in a few of them, and beads of streaked glass. **[One is reminded of the two Bronze Axes from a *tigh faoi thalaimh* at Aghadown, a large coastal parish by Sherkin Island with Cape Clear beyond, in West Cork, and of a 19th century report of Bronze Spears Heads from a Wexford souterrain...see my JCHAS publication of the Aghadown Axes and one is reminded of the very large cache of 'streaked', Romano-British beads and sticks of glass [see BM accessions records] from the beach of the Dunworley coastal promontory fort beyond Kinsale].** In some cases the articles found would indicate that occupation of these houses had come down to comparatively recent times.
5. In referring to the word ***Tunga*** above MacRitchie thinks that it is a phonetic variant of the Gaelic word ***Diongna***. Fr. Dinneen's dictionary has the word ***Diongna*** which he defines as 'a rampart, a fort, a tomb, a dwelling'I wonder if it is also a derivative of the word ***dangan*** (a secure place, a fortress) found in Irish place-names and perhaps referring to a community food storage place.(Note ***O Sulleabháin Bere***'s march).

6. It is interesting to note not only the wide range of names for the same thing which occur in the Irish language (see Magan 2020) and the origins of words in the language, but it is also interesting to consider the variety of written attempts to capture its words and phrases by those who wished to make a record in English language texts by phonetically writing down how they heard what was a fluid, and regionally variable according to accent, oral transmission of local heritage e.g. the words *Tigh Faoi Talaimh* (underground house) can end up being written *Tig faoi Talamh*, *Tigh faoi Talaimh*, *Tig fo talamh*, *Tigh fé Talamh* etc. according to where in Ireland, from who and by whom the phrase was recorded.

If any underground or semi-subterranean ***bothán*** or hovel (***Tig Faoi Talamh***) was occupied, or still offered accommodation as a consequence of chance discovery or local awareness), to the impoverished, to the lowest poor and destitute classes in the west and south west of Ireland up to the time of the 1901 census, how might they have been classed? As Class Four housing? Or were such places considered to be so unfit for human habitation, according to even the standards of that time, that they were dismissed / ignored as being unclassifiable according to the criteria used? Why might some souterrain Tig Faoi Talamh sites have been in use at this time in remote places? Why would field, and other local topographical, names which reference a Tig faoi Talamh have been known and recorded in the work of the National Folklore Commission during the 20th century and also during the place names and letter books of the Ordnance Survey during the 19th century, as well as in many parish place-name lists published in local history journals in the 19th and early 20th centuries?

Also from MacRitchie:

It is difficult, and indeed hardly necessary, to distinguish between one variety and another of what is practically the same kind of building; but to this last class the term "earth-house" is most frequently accorded in Scotland. In the broader dialect it is "yird-house" or "eirde-house," which at once recalls the form "jord-hus" in the saga which tells of Leif's adventure underground in Ireland.

How close etymologically are the words ‘eirde-house’ or ‘jord-hus’ to the German word for souterrains i.e. Erdstall? MacRitchie says:

The term weem is also applied to these places in Scotland. This is merely a quickened pronunciation of the Gaelic uam (or uamh), a cave; and it reminds one that, both in Gaelic and in English, the word "cave" is by no means restricted to a natural cavity. Indeed, one of the two artificial structures under consideration is known as Uamh Sgalabhad, "the cave of Sgalabhad." agglomeration of beehives"

Caesar and the people of the Common Class in Celtic society in Gaul (1982, 140):

'The common people are treated almost as slaves, never venture to act on their own initiative, and are not consulted on any subject. Most of them, crushed by debt or heavy taxation or the oppression of more powerful persons, bind themselves to serve men of rank, who exercise over them all the rights masters have over their slaves'. [VI.13.1]

Compare this description from Caesar written circa 51-2 BC with that for Scallags in Scotland from MacRitchie:

Scallags of the Scottish isles....Extract from MacRitchie's (1892) pamphlet called Underground Life, (p.1) (online from Global Grey ebooks)

In his Travels in the Western Hebrides: from 1782 to 1790, the Rev. John Lane Buchanan, 'A.M., Missionary Minister to the Isles from the Church of Scotland', has much to say of the wrongs and sufferings undergone at that time by 'an unfortunate and numerous class of men known under the name of Scallags.' This term is the Gaelic scalag or sgalag, signifying 'a servant' or, more primitively, 'a slave'; and indeed Buchanan clearly regards this latter definition as best describing the condition of those people. 'The scallags,' he says, 'are slaves de facto, though not de jure.' 'The slave is driven on to labour by stripes, so also is the scallag; who is even formally tied up on some occasions, as well as the negroe, to a stake, and scourged on his bare back.' Very significant, too, is Buchanan's testimony to the good nature of a certain minister in North Uist, of whom he says : 'Never was the minister and tacksman [lease-holder] of Ty-Gheary known to kick, beat, or scourge, or in any shape to lift his hand against his scallags in the whole course of his life.' Further evidence of the mean condition of this servile caste is afforded in these words: 'The scallag, whether male or female, is a poor being, who, for mere subsistence, becomes a predial slave to another, whether a sub-tenant, a tacksman, or a laird. The scallag builds his own hut with sods and boughs of trees; and if he is sent from one part of the country to another, he moves

*off his sticks, and, by means of these, forms a new hut in another place.’
Sometimes, however, these wretched people, fleeing from the tyranny of the dominant caste, sought refuge in a different kind of habitation. ‘The only asylum for the distressed in the Long Island is the King’s forest, where severals are sheltered with their families and cattle for the Summer season; where they live in caves and dens of the earth, and subsist, without fire, on milk, the roots of the earth, and shell-fish. But in the Winter season cold and famine drive them back again to seek for subsistence and shelter under the same tyranny that had driven them to the forest.’*

It is not unlikely that this caste of ‘slaves’ had inherited the blood of a different race from that of their masters, by whose forefathers their own had been subjugated. At any rate it is quite clear that, in one respect, they represented a way of living once followed in most parts of the British Islands, and indeed throughout the world. This was when they dwelt ‘in caves and dens of the earth’; and it is, in fact, for the sake of their dwellings rather than for themselves that I have here introduced the scallags of the Outer Hebrides’.

I have looked through Fr. Dinneen’s Dictionary for a word in Irish equivalent to **scallags**. I have not been able to find one, nor can I see any relationship with the Irish Gaelic word **Sceillig** which refers to ‘a rocky islet’ as at Skellig Michael island off the Kerry coast; which interestingly Fr. Dinneen (published 1927) refers to as a Laura monastery (Byzantine), a term also used in relation to the same place by Fr. John Ryan in his history of Irish Monasticism (published 1931). But is it from **Scala** as in **Scalán** above and therefore this caste of people were called **Scallags** i.e. **Scallags** the people of the **Scala (Scalán)**?

In the course of browsing through Dinneen in search of potential equivalents of the word **Scallags** some interesting folk terms emerged from the dictionary i.e. little huts and shelters i.e. **Scálán** referring to a ‘hut, a shelter, a **pentice** (i.e. a **leanto** structure), a rough and ready shelter, a camp-hut’.

Scathlann referring to a ‘shelter, a hut, a tent’.

Scailpín referring to a ‘little hut’.

Scraw (meaning a turf covering for a dwelling) .

[See also my piece about the word **Folacháin** (a place beneath the ground, by a ditch, a hiding place...) as a folk name for a particular type of souterrain in Hiberno-Irish parlance (as referenced by Dolan re Hiberno-English)].

[See also the word **Cró** (a rock shelter artificial or natural...see Evelyn Bolster's Diocese of Cork re Cronody in Muskerry and see also Pat McCarthy's History of the Mizen Peninsula's northside) as still used up to recent times on the Mizen Peninsula, West Cork and as also found in the townland place-name Cronody (**Cró na hOidhe**) , where **Inisluinge** (the inland headland of the ships) of St. Senan's 40 scholars from abroad by Inniscara to Donoughmore, landed by a headland by a 'black' pool (a **dubh linn**) where the Dripsey River enters the River Lee]

There are also words like **Sciollach** meaning a rustic person or **sceilfidh** referring to a 'vagrant' person. Are these Irish variants of the word Scallag and refer to the same people?

How ancient were the folklife / material cultures of the island peoples from St Kilda in Scotland to the Blaskets in South West Ireland? What was the origin of such material cultures, these part fishing. part land-based economies? Being peoples of the fringe lands of Europe, peoples of the wild Atlantic fringe, peoples of a certain distinctiveness and independence in their customs, their ways and outlooks on life? Were they the last vestiges of a once common type of folk life possessed by inhabitants of fishing hamlets - with their little fleets - along the coastlines, fishing hamlets for which a distinct way of life remained stable for many centuries, one which might have resonated as familiar in the time of Caesar and other Roman authors?

In what circumstances does the past stand still? In what circumstances do the well tested norms of the past continue as a standard way of life, in some geographical and cultural settings, long after such ways have been abandoned to antiquity elsewhere?

How much freer was island life through the centuries, the life of islanders and their sense of difference from the mainlanders, of a sense of difference, of isolation as protection, of internal focus, of

their own community sense and their community 'island kings'? How much of what constitutes 'island' cultures or 'coastal fringe' cultures derives from indigenous responses to environment - in making a way of life from what is offered by nature and through many generations shaping a distinct culture out of it, one shared by peoples of similar circumstances and challenges? How much derives from the adaptation and retention of cultural norms once common practice among certain social levels in Western Europe at a remote point in time, norms which became obsolete on the mainland because of trade abroad - and other forces of social and cultural change?

What ethnographic / anthropological answers are there to these questions one might ask, after reading about the native coastal cultures of America's North West, people such as the Tlingit and their neighbours? How free was a fisherman/ seasonal farmer and his family living on a coastal island, compared with servitude as a *scallag* or a life as a *spailpín fánach* or as a slave in a Roman household or that of a Gaelic lord? In a world of seasonally roving farm labouring groups, generation after generation, how many months per year were spent in hovel hamlets, or *bothán* clusters? What exists in the Irish folklore record of memories of such groups upon the *bothars* and *bothareens*, memories of where they stayed and what types of accommodation were made available to them by the farmers? What memories, if any, by Burren townland, by Courtmacsherry of temporary seasonal hovels / 'lodgings', and of a hermitage perhaps....and when Duke Ferdinand arrived at Kinsale in the early 16th century were some such persons residing at Burren?

How close was the life-style and the life expectations of a ***Spailpín Fánach*** (a hireling, a roaming farm labourer) in Ireland to that of a Scottish ***Scallag***? How much of a gypsy-like, 'caravan on the road', 'awning strung across a ditch', lifestyle at certain times of the year for such families travelling to the hiring fairs, hoping for seasonal work from a farmer? What temporary lodgings were provided for the labourers on the farms...farm buildings or just rough sleeping? Where did the families of such poor persons reside...nearby in temporary hovels or cabins, or did they remain behind at a place of

origin? How many **Spailpíní** travelled to Alba (Scotland) at certain times of the year for the harvest season...how old such a tradition?

How close was the seasonal life of the **Spailpín**, either travelling alone or with a nuclear family unit, to that of the traditional 'tinker' i.e. itinerant tin-smith - and stitcher of plates and jugs at farmhouses, and how old was the nomadic life style, this possibly **gobhán** life style and its landscape progress, connected to this metalworking trade across the centuries? How old was that of the journeyman carpenter among other such trades and their travels?

What connection was there to the **lucht siúil** (the walking people) known to themselves as the **Mincéirí** or Pavees, the people of the **shelta** language, of different and parallel customs and ways of living, of different geographical perspectives, of connections to older spiritualities of place and concepts of identity, landscape and **dindshenchas**, of music and story, of spreading the latest 'news' across the landscape of the island, of roving and roaming penny balladeers and songsters, of faction fights and 'monster' fair-day meetings? Where did they all stay / find night lodgings at such times? In tents on the surface, below ground, out under the stars, under awnings, in cabins, in temporarily constructed **botháns**, or in **bothán**-like accommodations created by the communities of medieval monastic Ireland to provide lodgings to cater individually for large groups of people coming together annually, at certain times of the year, such as festivals, pilgrimage events and market fairs.... as an example of monastic thinking, in early Christian Egypt speaking of building cells to accommodate a potential increase in people joining the monastic life, St. Anthony the Great advised building more cells in anticipation that more would come to occupy them? Is that what was attached to St. Factna's well site, by Burgatia townland (**Burgh an Tí** (monastic house)?) beside Bohanagh townland (**na bothánacha** i.e. the **botháns**?) by Rosscarbery's great early Christian, Hibernian, monastery and School, in West Cork?

Across the centuries how do settled people groups become displaced and thereby enlarge the numbers of centuries old people who traditionally 'walk the roads', who see the landscape of the country

from birth to death in nomadic terms and not in 'settled' terms? What Celtic 'slave' or 'scallag' people castes became liberated through a multitude of circumstances over the centuries and found a way of life upon the road for their family clans and future progeny; thereby fixing a core set of values, customs, perspectives preserved and brought forward from their time of origin? Were there long standing Brehon Laws which dictated that hospitality should be shown to them by the settled farming community?

Note in Dr. Terence Patrick Dolan's *The Dictionary of Hiberno-English* [published 2020 by Gill Books, Dublin] the word ***Folachán*** [from Gaelic *i bhfolach?*] which he says refers to a 'hidden house under a fence', 'you'd never see it from the road'. In County Cork the excavated souterrain at Curraghcrowley [search corkhist.ie] was originally entered from a few steps leading down beside a 'ditch' (in Ireland this word often refers to a fence rather than a trench, possibly because in the case of an earthwork land boundary rather than a stone built one, the trench was dug to create the fence which delimited a field boundary).

How old was 'Underground Living' as a life style for the poor in Iron Age Europe: its last remnants being on the Atlantic islands?

To what extent might both descriptions of this class of people in Gaelic societies, about 2,000 years apart chronologically, map on to each other? To what extent were islanders, from the Hebrides to the Blaskets, living a long, stable, sustainable life-style which was the last remnant of a European Gallic / Gaelic way of life? How feasible, how normal, how un-startling, is this phenomenon from the viewpoint of global ethnographic studies and anthropology?

Scottish Souterrains:

A cave in the Isle of Egg, one of the Hebrides, has a very narrow entrance, through which one can creep only upon hands and knees, but it rises steeply within and soon becomes lofty, and runs into the bowels of the rock for 225 feet. The stony, pebbly bottom of this cavern was for long strewn with the bones of men, women and children, the relics of the ancient inhabitants of, the island, two hundred in number, of whose destruction the following account is

given. “The Macdonalds, of the Isle of Egg, a people dependent on Clanranald, had done some injury to the Lord of Macleod. The tradition of the isle says that it was by a personal attack on the chieftain, in which his back was broken; but that of the two other isles bears that the injury was offered by two or three of the Macleods, who, landing upon Egg and behaving insolently towards the islanders, were bound hand and foot, and turned adrift in a boat, which the winds safely conducted to Skye. To avenge the offence given, Macleod sailed with such a body of men as rendered resistance hopeless. The natives, fearing his vengeance, concealed themselves in the cavern; and, after strict search, the Macleods went on board their galleys after doing what mischief they could, concluding the inhabitants had left the isle. But next morning they espied from their vessels a man upon the island, and immediately landing again, they traced his retreat by means of a light snow on the ground to the cavern. Macleod then summoned the subterranean garrison, and demanded that the inhabitants who had offended him should be delivered up. This was peremptorily refused. The chieftain thereupon caused his people to divert the course of a rill of water, which, falling over the mouth of the cave, would have prevented his purposed vengeance. He then kindled at the entrance of the cavern a large fire, and maintained it until all within were destroyed by suffocation.” [Footnote: Lockhart's “Life of Sir Walter Scott,” Edin., 1844, p.285.]

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