

## One Stone Standing

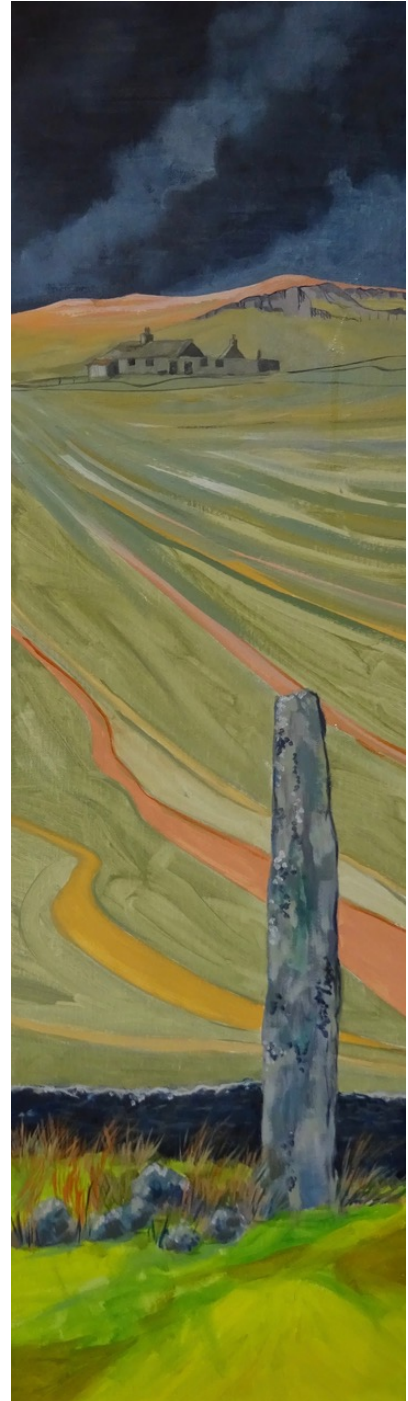
The wind that whips these islands raw  
wringing wild laments from chambered cairns,  
pushes at standing stones and shakes  
the leaning stacks and gable ends  
that stagger, gaunt, against dark sky,

tumbles the walls, and whistles through  
each window space and empty door.  
The ones who lived here scattered  
wide and far to other lonely landings  
in other times, to other endings;

hoofbeat, footfall, from the steading  
shivered by weather, tide and time  
heard only in hailstorm and wind-roar;  
at croft and shieling, keening cries  
snatched from the frenzy of the gale.

Take nothing with you on the road  
no spare shoes or shirt, and make  
no hewn altar, says our nomad God.  
The sun is turned to darkness, and  
the moon to blood. Who can endure?

At the far fringes of these lands  
we stop in narrow passing-places  
and brave the winds that lash the moor  
just long enough to take a shot  
of roofless ruin, and one stone, standing.



Barbara Payne