

IV.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF AN OLD CANOE IN A PEAT-BOG AT OBAN. BY REV. R. J. MAPLETON, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

Just outside of Oban, at the north end of the town, is a peat bog, extending to 12 acres or more, part of which is feued by Mr G. Drummond. In some places the peat is about 12 feet in depth. A burn now flows at one edge of the bog, and is on a level with the top of it. There are symptoms that this is not the original course of the burn. The whole bog has decided appearances of having once been a loch. Logs of wood and twisted roots abound throughout it. On May 24th, as Mr Drummond was trenching the ground, he came upon what appeared to him to be an old canoe, hollowed out of a solid block of oak. Mr Drummond reported the matter to Mr Duncan Clerk of Oban; and on the 28th of May, Mr Clerk, Mr Carmichael, and myself proceeded to the spot to examine the thing. The structure (including the canoe, with the slabs and stakes) was in the peat itself, the bottom being 2 feet below the surface of the peat; there is a depth of 9 feet of peat below the canoe, and above it a deposit of "made" ground to the height of 4 feet. This "made" ground extends to about 40 feet round the structure, and is formed of small pieces of roughly broken stone, mixed with peaty soil. Mr Drummond told us that there had been evident signs of a kind of mound, or rising of the land, on the spot. The outside length of the structure is 7 feet 6 inches. The inside measure is 6 feet. The depth is 2 feet 3 inches, not including the cover, or what served for a cover; the width is 2 feet.

The structure was formed as follows:—Evidently a canoe had been

utilised for some purpose; it is part of a trunk of a tree, roughly and irregularly hollowed out; it is lying due north and south. The south end has been broken off, or perhaps merely worn or decayed away; probably this was the stern, as, instead of rising up to a point, there is a wide groove cut on each side, into which a board or slab of wood is made to fit. The north end is likewise defective, and is filled up with a board or slab, with some marks of a groove, but not so decided as to show whether this was the original form of the canoe, or merely an alteration made by the builders of the structure—especially as there is a projection or continuation of the keel, or bottom part of the canoe, extending to 6 inches beyond the structure. In the inside, the bottom of the canoe slopes upwards towards each end, showing that the original size was not much greater than it is at present. The general impression was that the south end is still as it was, except the decay or fracture of a portion of the wood, but that the north end or stem had been altered, to suit the convenience of the builders. The sides do not converge at either end. The slabs at each end are kept in their place by stakes, driven into the soil; and on some there are manifest signs of rough workmanship, made by a rough tool. The size of the canoe is—length, 5 feet 9½ inches; depth, 1 foot 7 inches; width, 2 feet. Along the gunwale, on each side, logs were placed lengthways, and kept in their place by stakes; the intervals between were stuffed with moss—apparently to keep the inside of the structure free from moisture or dirt. This raised the height of the structure, giving a total of 2 feet 3 inches.

Logs were placed on the top, and around the structure; some of these last were parallel to the sides, lying loose or fixed in the ground; others lying in an oblique direction near the corners, evidently intended to protect the structure from the pressure of the surrounding peat or soil. We did not see what passed for a cover; but Mr Drummond and his assistant told us, that it was formed of branches of birch, and probably hazel, well stuffed with moss. Both inside and outside the canoe were plenty of hazel nuts, chiefly shells split in two. There were no signs of bone, burnt or unburnt, in the canoe, and no implements of any sort. The soil in the canoe was very unctuous, and mixed with charcoal; charcoal also was in the soil surround-

ing the structure ; and when first opened, a very strong and unpleasant odour was perceived. In the canoe were several pieces of birch bark ; and among them is one piece of about 6 inches square, which has most unmistakable holes along one edge, made by a fine instrument, but much larger than a needle ; when found, this was adhering to the side of the canoe, but not sewn to it, and was evidently not intended to be sewn to the solid oak side. There was nothing to show whether this had formed part of the cover, or whether, on the supposition that the structure might have been a "burial," it might have been part of something deposited with the body. The canoe itself cannot have required a lining of birch bark.

There was a small slab of wood lying on the west side of the canoe, protected by small logs, but there was nothing to show what had been the intention of this.

There is some difference of opinion as to what was the intention of the whole structure, whether it was a burial, or made for some industrial purpose ; but as Mr Clerk is to institute further inquiries, perhaps something may be discovered that will assist in forming an opinion.

MONDAY, 9th June 1879.

PROFESSOR DUNS, D.D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

A Ballot having been taken, the following Gentlemen were duly elected Fellows :—

Rev. DAVID BERRY, Minister of the Free Church at Airdrie.
 JOHN CLELAND, M.D., Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow.
 Rev. CHARLES J. COWAN, B.D., Minister of the Parish of Morebattle.
 Rev. DAVID SCOTT, Minister of the Free Church at Saltcoats.

The following Donations to the Museum and Library were laid on the table, and thanks voted to the Donors :—

(1.) By ARTHUR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D., Secretary.

Stone Hammer of whinstone, $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, 4 inches in breadth, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, irregularly triangular in form, and pierced by a hole for a handle $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in width, but narrowing to an inch at the centre, found near Dunse, Berwickshire. [See the previous communication by Professor Duns.]

(2.) By Professor JOHN DUNS, D.D., Vice-President.

Stone Hammer of whinstone, $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in thickness, pierced by a hole for the handle 2 inches diameter, narrowing to an inch in the centre, found at Westhills, near Gretna, Dumfriesshire. [See the previous communication by Professor Duns.]

Penannular Bronze Brooch, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, the pin being 5 inches in length, found in Mull (see p. 71, *ante*).

Hood for a Falcon, with crest and fastenings.

The College Calendar for the Free Church of Scotland.

(3.) By Lieut.-Col. ALEXANDER FERGUSSON, 18 Lennox Street.

Two curious Statuettes carved in wood, one 20 inches in height, the other 23 inches, from Sierra Leone.

Lieut.-Col. Fergusson has given the following account of these wooden figures :—

“The accompanying grotesque figures represent African deities. They were brought from the West coast of Africa by my father, the late William Fergusson, Esq., Governor and Captain-General of the colony of Sierra Leone. My elder brother held the office of Private Secretary and afterwards of Colonial Secretary under my father for a number of years. While they were so employed it was their duty to make, from time to time as circumstances demanded, expeditions of a nature diplomatic, friendly, or otherwise, into the interior of the countries bordering on their own district.

“I believe these figures to have been obtained on one of these occasions ; but I regret I am unable to state exactly *how* or what individuals of the West African mythology are here portrayed. My father died on the passage home from Sierra Leone in 1846, and my brother not long afterwards ; so, I am sorry to say, I can give little or no information on these points ; but we have always understood that these images were *ancient* ; and the fact that my father and brother thought them of such value as to induce them to bring them away from the colony under the circumstances then existing, leads me to think that these quaint objects may be not unworthy of the attention of, and acceptance by, the members of the Society of Antiquaries.

“With regard to the figures themselves, I am inclined to think that they are perhaps less of caricatures than one may be disposed at first sight to imagine ; and that so far from their being mere attempts at the grotesque, we have here, more probably, the result of the efforts of some West African artist to follow, in his sculpture, the contours of the human form as they exist, and are admired in the countries in question.

“My idea upon this point will be intelligible, if we call to mind the illustrations of the many books of African travel which have appeared of late years—Livingstone’s, Cameron’s, Stanley’s, for example. By means of such graphic, and no doubt faithful pictures, readers in this country have become pretty well familiarised with the characteristic outlines of different

African races, and will have little difficulty in making comparisons between them and the personages under discussion. In fact, I believe some dusky Praxiteles has, in these statuettes, aimed—perhaps with some success—at the production of images embodying the canons of beauty prevailing in his nation, and that truth to nature has been the object in view in these works of art, as was the case in the execution of the undraped statue of Venus, by the sculptor above named, valued so highly by the people of Cnidus as the embodiment of what was considered admirable in Grecian form.

“It was my fate a few years ago to serve on the staff of Her Majesty’s army at Aden, our military station at the south-western extremity of Arabia, where, as is well known, a large portion of the inhabitants are natives of the opposite coast of Africa, Somalis, &c., besides many of the slaves from other parts of the Continent who have been re-captured and released by the vessels of our navy. Amongst all of these such types of form as those in question are very common, and are held to be beautiful. The *reasons* for such admiration, as given by the people themselves, are exceedingly quaint; but I trust I may be forgiven if I do not enter upon that subject here.

“Perhaps I may be permitted to add that these works of African art were intended to have been offered to the Society of Antiquaries many years ago; but through circumstances they came into the hands of a most estimable old maiden lady, recently deceased, who for reasons not difficult to understand, kept them all this time most carefully swaddled up, and deposited in the innermost recesses of an ancient “napery press,” much to the amusement of her nephews and nieces, some of whom had only heard a tradition of the existence of these creatures. I trust, however, that the Fellows of the Antiquarian Society will have no such scruples, and will kindly grant these curious carvings a place in their Museum.”

(4.) By CHARLES GRAY, Esq., of Nareeb-nareeb, Victoria, through
CHARLES BELL, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Large Boulder of sandstone, 24 inches long by 22 inches broad, and 6 inches in thickness, and a smaller boulder 9 inches by 7, and 6 inches

thick, bearing grooves made by the natives in sharpening and polishing their stone axes. Mr Bell gave the following account of the larger of these specimens :—

“ This bulky specimen has been sent to me all the way from Australia, by my old friend Mr Charles Gray of Nareeb-nareeb, and on his behalf I venture to present it to this Society.

“ It is intended to illustrate Mr Gray’s theory as to the cause of certain rock-markings in Scotland at the Billowness, near West Anstruther, about which he and I have had several discussions ; and when the trouble and cost of forwarding a cumbrous and weighty package like this from such a far country is considered, it must at least be admitted that he has freely backed his opinion. If he had thought that a larger stone would have better illustrated his meaning, or been more acceptable, he would have quarried tons from the same locality, regardless of expense.

“ The only notes I have from him on the subject are scattered through letters which have been packed away during my late visit to South Africa, and they are not now at hand, but I believe I can state from memory with sufficient accuracy the few material points required on this occasion.

“ Nareeb-nareeb is near the township of Chatsworth, which appears to be in Hampden county, a district of the colony of Victoria. It may be approximately pointed out on any ordinary map of Australia, by measuring from Mount Ararat about three-fifths down the Hopkins River towards its mouth at the sea near Warrambool, which is not far from halfway between Cape Nelson and Cape Otway, both well known points on the south coast of Australia, or by marking latitudes $37^{\circ} 50'$ S. and longitude $142^{\circ} 45'$ E.

“ Long ago Mr Gray’s attention was attracted to the rocks there, from their similarity to those at the Billowness, one of his favourite resorts in boyhood, and his inquiries as to the cause of the peculiar surface marks in the former led to the discovery that the aborigines had long been in the habit of grinding their stone axes there. These stone axes are not unlike those in use in Europe in early ages, as may be observed from specimens in the Museum, and would leave grooves somewhat peculiar to their shape

on the stone where they were ground and polished. If so, then it may be fairly inferred that the numerous specimens of polished stone implements and weapons we have, could not have been left to us without leaving some traces of the grindstones, and Mr Gray thought it possible that one of them was at the Billowness.

“On his return to Europe, a year or two ago, Mr Gray carefully examined the latter locality, and became convinced that his idea is correct. I need not add any further remark at present, as he has sent home this stone to enable those interested in such subjects to judge for themselves. The Billowness is much weather worn, and there may be a want of sharpness in the grooves there that leaves room for doubt, but many similar grindstones may be discovered in situations better adapted to their preservation; and this specimen now presented may help to ensure their recognition in connection with the early occupants of this and neighbouring lands.”

(5.) By Rev. WILLIAM DUKE, St Vigeans, Arbroath, F.S.A. Scot.

Portion, 9 inches long, of Leaden Pipe which formed a conduit from a well in the neighbourhood of the Abbey of Arbroath. It has been made of sheet-lead rolled round, and the edges burned.

(6.) By R. W. COCHRAN-PATRICK, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Collection of Stone Objects from Ayrshire, consisting of

Thirty-seven flint Scrapers and Side-scrapers, varying in size from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter.

Seven flint Arrow-heads, with barbs and stems, the largest measuring 1 inch in length by $\frac{7}{8}$ inch in width, and the smallest $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch in length by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in width.

Small leaf-shaped Arrow-head, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in greatest width, flat on one side, and dressed on the other with sloping edges of considerable thickness.

Four thin triangular Flakes of flint with sharp points, and dressed along the edges, varying from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch in length.

Three small knife-like Flakes, from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch in length, and about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in breadth, dressed to rough edges on both sides.

Piece of a jet Armlet, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length, and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter.

Whorl of shale, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter.

Whorl of dark claystone, of nearly globular shape, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch diameter, ornamented with incised circular lines round the aperture.

Half of a Whorl of whitish sandstone, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter, found at Beith.

Bone Implement, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, pierced with a hole $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide near the one end. Two flint Flakes, some small fragments of brown glazed Pottery. From the cave or rock shelter at Hunterston.

Perforated Stone, being a naturally water-worn pebble of flat oval shape measuring $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in thickness, pierced near the middle of its flat sides by a hole picked through from both sides, which is an inch in diameter at the surface, diminishing to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in the middle of the thickness of the stone. This implement was found on the Hill of Beith, and is presented by Mr R. Craig, through Mr Cochran-Patrick.

Large stone Hammer of triangular form, with rounded end, found many years ago in the parish of Beith. The material is whinstone; it measures 9 inches in length, 4 inches in breadth, and 3 inches in thickness. The hole for the handle is 2 inches in diameter, and goes almost straight through the thickness of the implement, instead of contracting in the middle as is often the case.

(7.) By JAMES GIBSON STARKE, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History Society, 1876-78. 8vo.

(8.) By J. B. BROWN MORISON, Esq. of Finnerlie, F.S.A. Scot.

Instrument of Perambulation of the Marches of the lands of Finnerlie and Brocklaw, 11th Nov. 1578. With Facsimile. 4to. Privately printed. 1879.

(9.) By Rev. B. H. BLACKER, Stroud.

Gloucestershire Notes and Queries, Nos. 1 and 2. 1878. 8vo.

(10.) By ROBERT CRAIG MACLAGAN, M.D., F.S.A. Scot., the Author.
The Clan of the Bell of St Fillan. Privately printed. 1879. 8vo.

(11.) By Rev. JOHN MONTEITH, the Author.
The Parish of Glencairn. 1876. 12mo.

(12.) By WILLIAM PEACE & SONS, the Publishers.
A Tour through the Islands of Orkney and Shetland in 1774. By George Low, Author of "Fauna Orcadensis;" with Illustrations from Drawings by the Author; and with an Introduction by Joseph Anderson, Editor of the "Orkneyinga Saga." Kirkwall, 1879. 8vo.

(13.) By T. L. KINGTON OLIPHANT, Esq. of Gask.
The Oliphants in Scotland, with a Selection of Original Documents from the Charter Chest at Gask. Edited by Joseph Anderson, Keeper of the National Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Edinburgh, 1879. 4to. Privately printed.

There were also exhibited :—

(1.) By WILLIAM M'INROY, Esq. of Lude, through ARTHUR ANDERSON, M.D., C.B., F.S.A. Scot., Pitlochry.

The Bell of St Fillan of Struan in Athole.—This bell (fig. 1) is of iron, 10½ inches high, exclusive of the handle, which rises 3 inches above the top of the bell. The breadth across the mouth of the bell in the centre is 7 inches the one way and 6 inches the other, and the measurement from corner to corner along the chord of the curved sides 6 inches, and along the ends 5 inches. The bell narrows to 4½ inches in breadth along the top, and 1½ inch in width. It is greatly worn in holes on the one side, and on the other it retains a considerable portion of its coating of bronze, which has been of considerable thickness. A modern clapper attached by nuts and screws remains in the bell, which was used as the church bell until the late Mr M'Inroy of Lude gave the church a new bell, and received the old one in exchange. It is a type of bell which was in use in the earliest ages of the Celtic Church, and of which a few are still preserved. Of those that are known in Scotland, this and the Bell at Cladh-Bhrennu in

Glenlyon, are the only iron bells which remain in the locality where they were used. There are three iron bells of this form in the Museum. One is the bell dug up at Saverough in Orkney, the second (fig. 2) is the bell dug up at Kingoldrum, and the third is the small bell in its elegantly ornamented shrine that was found at Kilmichael Glassary, in Argyllshire.

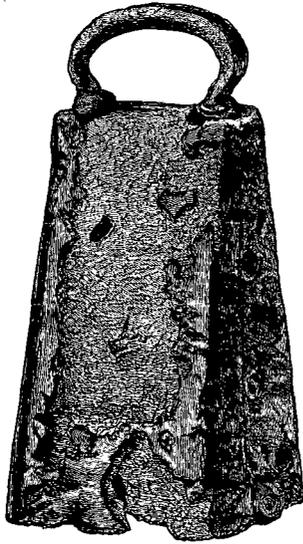


Fig. 1. The Bell of Struan.

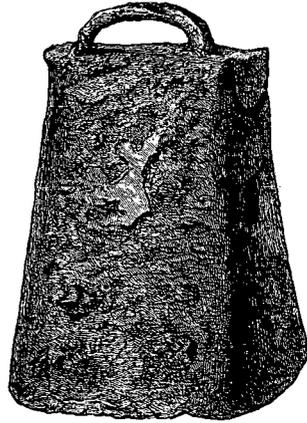


Fig. 2. The Bell of Kingoldrum.

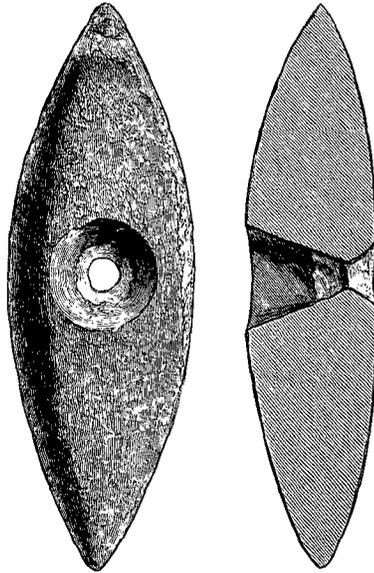
Besides these there is a smaller bell of the same form, which was found in excavating the broch of Burrian in North Ronaldsay, Orkney. There is also in the Museum the bell of St Fillan of Glendochart, of cast bronze. Two bells of cast bronze are still preserved in the localities in which they were used, viz., the bell of St Finan at Loch Shiel in Ardnamurchan, and the bell of St Adamnan at Insh, near Kingussie. The Museum also possesses six iron and four bronze bells of this form from Ireland, in the collection of the late Mr John Bell of Dungannon.

(2.) By T. J. GRAHAM-STIRLING of Strowan, Esq.

The "Bell of St Rowan" of Strowan in Strathearn.—This bell is reputed to be the "Bell of St Rowan," who is supposed to be St Ronan, as there is a deep pool in the River Earn near the church called "Pol Ronan," and a fair which used to be held in the neighbourhood was called "Feil Ronan." The bell, however, is a cast bell of the ordinary circular form, and not of the tall quadrangular and flat-sided form peculiar to the Early Celtic Church. It measures 6 inches in height and 6 inches in diameter, and the metal of which it is composed appears to contain silver. Two holes have been bored through the top of the bell, into which the ends of a squarish looped handle of brass have been inserted and roughly soldered. This handle has originally pertained to some object of much greater antiquity than the bell into which it is now fastened, and may probably have belonged to a bell or a bell shrine of the Early Celtic form. It is rudely engraved with a simple variety of the fret, which occurs pretty frequently in the ornamentation of the sculptured stones and Celtic manuscripts. It seems that this bell had a hereditary keepership, with a grant of land attached, like many of the ancient Celtic bells (see "Archæologia Scotica," vol. ii. p. 75).

(3.) By Professor W. ROBERTSON SMITH, M.A.

Polished Axe of porphyritic stone, shuttle-shaped, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch broad, and 1 inch in thickness, tapering to both ends from the middle, where it is pierced by a hole $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, narrowing to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch near the



Stone Axe from Upper Egypt ($4\frac{1}{2}$ in. long).

other side, where it has been just begun to be countersunk. It was obtained by Professor Smith in a village near Negadeh, Upper Egypt and is the first specimen of the kind on record from Egypt, as well as the only one with pointed ends yet known.

(4.) By A. PATERSON, M.D., Corr. Mem. S.A. Scot., Bridge of Allan.

Large collection of Coloured Maps of seventeenth century, printed in Holland, and bound together in a volume.

The following Communications were read :—