

III.

NOTICE OF A DISH OF BOG-BUTTER (?) FOUND AT MIDTON, INVERASDALE, POOLEWE, ROSS-SHIRE, IN MAY 1893. BY D. MACRAE, INVERASDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Midton is a small crofting township situated on the south shore of Loch Ewe, about halfway between Poolewe, at the inner end of Loch Ewe, and the small township of Cove, at the outer end of the loch. The lower or seaward part of the township occupies a depression which slopes very gently from the north, is almost quite level on the south side, slopes again gently to the shore of Loch Ewe on the east, and is bounded on the west by the Midton burn, beyond which the ground rises rather abruptly to the height of several hundred feet. Almost the whole of this depression is a peat-bog, from which the crofters cut their peats. In several cases the peat banks are within 5 or 6 yards of the houses. The public road runs north and south through the middle of the hollow.

The dish now to be described was found about 10 yards to the west of the public road, about 200 yards north from Old Midton Schoolhouse (which is situated at the south end of the hollow), and about 200 yards from the shore of Loch Ewe. It lay in a sloping position under 2 feet of peat. But at least 4 feet of peat had been previously removed, so that originally the dish must have been covered by at least 6 feet of moss, and it is supposed that the depth of peat below the spot where it was found is at least 10 feet. Beside the dish was found what is supposed to have been a straw or hay rope, probably for carrying it. The rope, however, crumbled to pieces when examined.

¹ *Life of St Columba*, p. 253.

The following are the measurements of the dish and of the material contained in it:—(a) Of dish—Upper surface: 25 inches long, 14 inches broad, 4 inches deep. Bottom: 18 inches long, 11 inches broad. Thickness of wood of which dish is made, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. (b) Of material—20 inches long, 13 inches broad, 4 inches thick.

The dish itself is cut out of solid bog-fir (?), which is still in a wonderful state of preservation. It is quite entire, except at one end, where a piece was knocked off by the peat-knife.

In shape it is oblong, with the upper ends projecting beyond the main part of the dish about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. At each end there is a holding-part or handle. The handle at one end is pierced with a small hole, as if for hanging the dish endwise. At the same end, the bottom of the dish has a similar hole, which was found plugged with a piece of wood. No ornamentation of any kind is visible.

The material contained in the dish is of the consistency of ordinary tallow. It is quite solid and firm, and holds well together. The outer surface and the parts exposed to the air are rather more bleached-looking or whiter than the central parts, which (when a piece has been cut out) show a slightly yellowish tinge. The material burns readily, and in doing so emits a smell said to resemble that of tallow. It emits little or no smell except when burned. The material fits into the dish so well that one can scarcely resist the conclusion that it must have been poured into the dish.

Within the past two years two other finds of the same kind have been made in this district. In both cases the material was similar to that here described, but in the one case (found only a few yards from where the dish was discovered) the material was contained in a small wicker-basket, such as often surrounds earthenware jars, while in the other it was contained in a small cask cut out of solid wood.

[Notices of the occurrence of Bog Butter, with descriptions, and analyses by W. Ivison Macadam, F.S.A. Scot., will be found in the *Proceedings*, vol. xvi. pp. 204–223, xix. p. 309, and xxiii. p. 433.]