

5. NOTES ON SOME PREHISTORIC OBJECTS.

A hoard of *flat bronze axes* was found under a stone by Mr R. I. Fraser while working in 1947 at a Forestry Commission quarry at about 1000 feet O.D. far up a glen north-west of Tap o' Noth in the parish of Rhyndie, Aberdeenshire. The site (Nat. Grid ref. 38/451308) was at the foot of the Hill of Finglenny, some 750 yards before the Ealaiche Burn joins the Kirkney Water and, more precisely, equidistant between but a little uphill from what are marked on the O.S. six-inch map as Burnside and Tumulus (supposed) (Aberdeenshire, 1902, XXXIII, S.E.).

The axes (Pl. LIII, 1) retain in parts the original golden or tin-coloured surface of the bronze, and have also green patches of patina, but they are in other places corroded, so that two have lost part of their cutting edge. All have the same shape—rounded butt, flaring sides and flat undecorated surfaces bevelled to form the strongly curved blade. They were, however, cast in at least several different moulds, the largest being 6·8 inches long and the shortest 5·35 inches. With the axes there was a bronze object like a buckle which, unfortunately, was thrown away by one of the workers. Six of the axes were carefully preserved by Mr Fraser, who brought them back to his home at Lumsden. There they were shown to Mr John Caseby of the Schoolhouse, who told our Fellow, Dr Douglas Simpson, of their existence. Our thanks are due to them all, and to H.M. Forestry Commission, who presented the six axes to the National Museum, and who later were able to claim the seventh and add it to the others.

One curious point is worth noting. Three of these axes had been snapped in half before being hidden. Now as many as seven such axes are known to have been found together only twice before in Scotland,² both times in Banffshire. Of these, the hoard from Colleopard is preserved in the Museum, and three of its axes have been snapped in two. The only one in our collection from the Hill of Fortrie of Balnôon is a similar half-axe. Broken flat axes are

¹ *Scottish Crafts*, p. 55.

² *Proc Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lvii. (1922-23), p. 127.

not common, for there are only four others among the remainder in the Museum. And despite one of the technical reasons usually given in explanation of the development of the flanged type of axe—that it was less liable to buckle in use—only one of our flat axes is bent in the middle. It is tempting to interpret these facts as evidence that each of the three hoards was a religious or magical offering, of which some of the objects were deliberately destroyed.

As *carved stone balls* continue to baffle and intrigue archæologists, it may be of interest to note a second instance of one being found well outside Scotland,¹ though it throws no light on their purpose or date.²

An entirely typical ball with six knobs and about 2·8 inches in diameter was acquired in 1946 by the museum at Trondheim, Norway, having come from Lindås, in the parish of Aure, Nordmøre.³ Dr Petersen has kindly written, in reply to an inquiry, that the ball is stated by the finder to have been discovered on the subsoil 1·5 metre below the surface of an oblong cairn. The cairn measured about 15 metres in length, and lay 15 to 20 metres above the level of the adjacent sea. It was at first thought to be a burial cairn of Viking date or earlier but now is regarded as a clearance cairn.

No doubt the ball was originally picked up in Scotland, but from the circumstances of the find it would seem that it was brought to Norway as a curiosity not less than several centuries ago.

The penannular *gold armet* illustrated in Pl. LIV, 1 was found in 1941 hidden in the structure of a shed which was being dismantled at a tile-works on the Logan Estate, Kirkmaiden, near the Mull of Galloway. When or how it got there is unknown, but it may be presumed to have been unearthed in the adjacent clay-pit or in the sand brought to the tilery from the shore close by. The discovery was, unfortunately, not known to the Society or to the Exchequer, by whom the armet would have been claimed as treasure-trove. It passed into the possession of the late Mr A. K. McDouall of Logan, and was included in the sale of his collection in London in April 1948, and is understood to have gone to California,⁴ having fetched a price greatly in excess of what any museum in this country was prepared to pay.

Such armlets, consisting of a solid metal bar expanded at the ends, are thought to have been manufactured in Ireland during the Late Bronze Age; and Logan is almost the nearest landfall in Scotland from that country. A number of gold examples found in Scotland are preserved in the National Museum.

The *torc* shown in Pl. LIII, 2 is thought to have been found near Dungyle Camp, Kelton, Dumfriesshire (see p. 321), though unfortunately it is not mentioned in John Train's list in Mackenzie's *History of Galloway*.⁵ It is about 5·5 inches in diameter, and consists of a solid bronze rod of circular cross-section, which becomes thicker as it approaches the two buffer-shaped ends. The latter are slightly oval in outline (diam. c. ·6 inch), and are emphasised by a preceding constriction of the rod; some oblique decorative lines are discernible on their edges. From the centre of one buffer a stout *iron* pin projects ·35 inch, and fits into a mortise in the opposite buffer. One-third of the way round the hoop there is a similar arrangement, where the rod itself forms on one side a thin-

¹ The first is one found at Ballymena, Co. Antrim: *British Museum Iron Age Guide*, 1925, p. 157.

² Now thought to be Early Bronze Age.

³ K. Norske Videnskabers Selskab: *Museet arsberetning* for 1946, p. 22 and *Oldsaksamlingens Tilvekst*, 1946-47, p. 8.

⁴ Thus following the unique gold Roman brooch from Erickstanebrae, Dumfriesshire, described in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxvi, pp. 370-1.

⁵ Vol. ii. (1841), App., pp. 63-72, of which items 14, 16 and 18 are now in the Museum.

walled tube (now partly broken away), and on the other is constricted to form a tenon .35 inch long.

Collars of this nature in many varieties of elaboration and detail were a characteristic ornament of the Celts.¹ Torcs formed of simple penannular rods with or without buffer ends depend for opening on the natural springiness of the metal, and the ends do not usually fasten into one another. On the other hand, the device of opening the torc by means of a movable segment is normal in the case of the more elaborate cast bronze types (Déchelette's 5 and 6), though so exceptional in the simpler that, as Mr J. W. Brailsford kindly reports, there is no instance in the British Museum collection which includes a large number from the Marne. Movable segments fastened by tongue-and-socket joints are normal on the heavy beaded torcs which Mr F. G. Simpson and Dr I. A. Richmond note² are typical of the area in Northern England and Southern Scotland which was dominated by the Brigantes; three are from Scotland, where the Kelton torc seems to be the only example of the simpler type. Our Lamberton Moor beaded torc has been recently photographed to show the fastening (Pl. LIII, 3). Its tenons are of bronze and the beaded part is solid, but the fragmentary example from Hyndford Crannog,³ recently cleaned and deposited in the Museum, has its beads strung on a thin iron rod⁴ which may have projected to form tenons (Pl. LIII, 4). The combination of metals occurs again in the Benwell example, in which the bronze tube carrying the beads terminates in iron pins. It may be, therefore, that the Kelton torc represents a local application of the more elaborate fastening to a simpler type.

A Neolithic Vessel.—While sand was being dug from Oatslie Sandpit near Roslin, Midlothian, in January 1948, a small clay pot fell out of the face of the pit. Though its original position was not noticed it may have lain 3 to 4 feet below the surface, to judge by the rootlets and clean sand still adhering to it when brought into the Museum not long afterwards by Mr George Romanes. We are greatly indebted to him for adding it to the National Collection.

There was, before the opening of the sandpit, a gully cut by a burn which ran down south-eastwards towards the river North Esk. The pot was found about 120 yards south-west of Woodend Cottage and halfway up the slope of the north-east side of the gully, and over 150 feet above the Esk (Nat. Grid. ref. 36/266624). No other objects or traces of ancient occupation were noticed at the time, or since. (Black hearth-like deposits due to naturally disintegrated shale are common in the sand and gravel there.) The immediate surroundings of the find were dug away before the site was visited on behalf of the Museum.

The vessel (Pl. LIV, 2) is of rough grey fabric, 3.8 inches high with a rounded base. The rim is about .5 inch broad and squashed down so as to slope downwards from the inside, and to project both inside and out; its overall diameter is 5 inches. There is some sooty encrustation outside, and on the inside particularly in the bottom. This suggests domestic use.

Professor Piggott writes: "The vessel is of so simple a type that it is difficult to assess its position within the 'western' family of British neolithic pottery. In southern Scotland there seem to be two cultural traditions represented within this group—one of west coast origin, where it is normally associated with

¹ British Museum *Guide to Early Iron Age Antiquities*, (1925), pp. 60-3; Déchelette, *Manuel d'Archéologie*, vol. ii. (1914), pp. 1207-17, also pp. 1332-47.

² *Arch. Aeliana*, 1941, pp. 23-5; list with references—add Tre'r Ceiri; *Arch. Camb.*, vol. vii. p. 40 (bronze gold-plated). There are distant continental prototypes, e.g. Déchelette, *cit.*, figs. 588-9.

³ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxiii. (1898-99), p. 385.

⁴ cf. Lochar Moss, Perdeswell and Mowrood torcs.

chambered tombs of the Clyde-Carlingford group; and the other derived from the Yorkshire neolithic culture and related to its offshoots in Ulster. To this latter class belong the sherds from Bantaskine, Falkirk¹ and, further north, Easterton of Roseisle²: it occurs again at Glenluce³ and in a recently excavated chambered tomb at Cairnholy in the same region.⁴ But although this class of pottery includes plain roughly-made bowls, the Roslin vessel does not seem to be characteristically of this group: the rim-section in particular is not typical, being thickened and roughly bevelled unlike the thin beaded or hooked forms characteristic of the Yorkshire group, and its derivatives.

But the thickening and bevelling do recall the rims of the Scottish pots within the 'western' group from chambered cairns, *e.g.* Glecknabae, Bicker's Houses or Achnacree,⁵ though these are less roughly made and on better class pots. On the whole I would place the Roslin vessel within this group, and perhaps the bowl from Knappers⁶ might be cited as a west-coast parallel."

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