

Shorter notes

Further notes on carved stone balls

D N Marshall*

Since my paper on the Carved Balls of Scotland was published (Marshall 1977) 24 Balls have been reported to me. Seven are in private collections, six are new acquisitions in the Aberdeen University Museum and two in Glasgow Art Galleries and Museums. Rotherham and Meffin Institute, Forfar, each have one. I am grateful to Mr Mowat, RCAM who drew my attention to the group of seven in the Cambridge University Museum and also to Mr Munro's article (1918) on Comparative Archaeology. My thanks also go to Dr Charles Turner, Botany Department, Cambridge who examined, described and arranged to have the Cambridge Balls photographed. These bring the total of my recorded Balls to 411.

There are two corrections to make in the paper already published. The Ball NMA AS 73, given as Type 3 with four knobs should be Type 4 as it originally had six knobs, two of which are now missing. It was picked up in a ploughed field near some cup and ring carvings on Stelloch farm 2½ miles (4 km) SE of Port William, Wigtown. I am grateful to Miss Jane Murray, Edinburgh for this information. Mr Ponting, Callanish, pointed out that the Ball with eight knobs from Harris (Paisley 8/1952) is given the symbol for a Ball with 5–7 knobs on the distribution map.

I have been able to examine only a very few of these newly recorded Balls. None of them has been found in an archaeological setting. Seven were found when digging or picked up in a field. Mr R Munro (1918, 177) reported that two Balls were shown to Sir John Evans about 1850 which had been found in cists.

'One as part of the contents of a cist recently opened in the course of farming operations on the estate of Cochno, Dunbartonshire, one of which was made of highly polished granite, species of rock not found in that district. . . . Another highly polished Ball of flint was found within a stone coffin along with a human skeleton in a large cairn on the Moor of Glen Quicken, Kirkcudbrightshire.'

As far as I know these Balls are not in any Museum.

GAGM has two large Balls from Ludovic Mann's collection labelled by him 'forgery'. On re-examining them in 1982 and comparing them with the other Type II Large Balls I am inclined to think that they are genuine. 55/96 Sr with many knobs is made of a coarse grained granite. 55/96 St, not so well fashioned as Sr, is made of granite rich in mica and pink felspar.

The Ball from Skye, GAGM A60.29, is interesting because J G Scott identified it as being made of a local stone and so it was probably fashioned in Skye. Many of the Balls found outwith the main distribution area – between the Moray Firth and the Tay, are of granite and therefore have been taken to their find spot.

* Kames Gardens Cottage, Rothesay, Isle of Bute

CATALOGUE

TYPE 2 4 KNOBS.

CUM 27.563 Ridgeway bequest. Aberdeenshire.
Dark rock probably amphibolite. This Ball is virtually rounded but shows traces of four weakly expressed rounded protuberances arranged in a tetrad. C. Turner

TYPE 2A 4 KNOBS WITH DECORATION.

GAGM A60.29 Roag, Skye.
Igneous rock probably local Reina lava. Four fairly small knobs not very evenly placed with about 15 small indistinct knobs in the interspaces. Ball is very much weathered. DNM

TYPE 4A 6 KNOBS. NOT PROMINENT.

CUM 2.21564 Cast. Kilphedir, Sutherland.
Six knobs more or less symmetrical protuberances, slightly battered. CT

CUM 27.574 Ridgeway bequest. Glenalmond, Perthshire.
Pinkish granite of medium grain. Six large shallow knobs rounded, symmetrically placed, one virtually broken away. CT

CUM Z.21547 No locality.
Fine-grained grey brown igneous rock with visible flakes of mica. Large Ball 67 mm diameter, with 6 symmetrically placed rounded protuberances that project only moderately. CT

CUM 2J.563 Ridgeway bequest. Aberdeenshire.
Pale brown granite of medium grain. A flattened sphere, oblate rather than round, 51 × 41 mm, with 6 symmetrically placed shallow rather flattened protuberances. CT

GAGM 20.200 Inverurie, Aberdeenshire.
Granite, medium grained. Six knobs just defined, fairly large, interspaces clearly cut. DNM

Info Mrs Heston, Muir of Foulis, Aberdeenshire.
Found in back garden 1976. Six sub-rectangular knobs almost symmetrically placed except that one is dislodged to make room for a projecting bump. If held by this the other raised areas appear regular in position. Could this 'bump' have acted as a support if placed in a socket cut into another stone? Alistair Gordon

TYPE 4B 6 KNOBS. PROMINENT.

AUM 159/52 1978. Elrick, Aberdeenshire.
Granite. Six projecting knobs evenly cut, smoothly finished, interspaces smooth. J Inglis

AUM 143/4 Aberdeenshire.
Quartzite. Six projecting knobs. J I

Rotherham Metropolitan
Borough Council
218/571 43.
Granite. Six knobs prominent and clear cut. C Miller

Info Mrs B Reid, Gyrales Farm, Fordoun, Kincardine.
Found in a field. Sandstone. Six knobs flattened, carefully cut, each knob being circular and almost equal in size. The surfaces seem scored irregularly but make no pattern. Dr Dally

TYPE 6 8 KNOBS.

AUM 135/3 Banffshire.
Granite. J I

TYPE 7 10-55 KNOBS.

AUM 158/1 Cults, Aberdeenshire.
Granite. Fourteen knobs. This Ball is unusual being rather more like a drum in shape, the knobs being on the circumference of the upper and lower faces. J I

- AUM 159/51 No locality.
Granite. Thirty knobs fairly evenly worked, interspaces smooth but not deep. J I
- AUM 159/53 No locality.
Quartzite. Eleven very crudely cut knobs. J I
- CUM 27.557 Ridgeway bequest. Ellon, Aberdeenshire.
Orange-brown fine-grained sandstone or quartzite. This Ball has 11 protuberances which stand out moderately and have flattened surfaces. The Ball has been skilfully worked to give the appearance of being symmetrical which it is not. C T
- Info David Levin. No locality.
Very coarse-grained granite. Twelve pronounced knobs, c $\frac{1}{2}$ " (12 mm) deep. It is rough in texture and in workmanship being broader at one aspect than the other. D Levin
- Info Robert Cleugh, Keighley. No locality.
Dark grey hard stone. Thirty knobs evenly made but not all of the same size. There is a hollow in one slightly flattened side. R Cleugh
- Info Richard Hattat, Hamps. No locality.
Thirty knobs, some a bit battered. They go roughly in four registers around the Ball. At North Pole one at centre and 6 around it. Eight around tropic of Cancer. Nine around Tropic of Capricorn. Six around the S Pole which curiously has a depression instead. Distinct tool marks in the interspaces, perhaps made with a metal tool. R Hattat
- TYPE 8 NUMEROUS KNOBS.
- Meffin Institute, No locality.
Forfar. The stone is a heavy dark igneous rock almost certainly a local basalt. More than 55
F 1978, 83. knobs. The knobs are low rounded projections 7-9 mm in diameter and well defined, but some are chipped and worn. J R Sherriff
- Info Digby Guy, Glen Masson, Argyll.
Found c 2' (0.6 m) below ground on Deargacha Farm, Basalt. c 70 small knobs. Ball very much worn; it may have been evenly fashioned originally. DNM
- Info Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk.
Described by Miss Broughton when she visited the private Museum as 'Hedgehog' type.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AUM Aberdeen University Museum
CUM Cambridge University Museum, Downing Street
NMA National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland
GAGM Glasgow Art Gallery and Museums

REFERENCES

- Marshall, D N 1977 'Carved stone balls', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 108 (1976-7), 40-72.
Monro, R 1918 'Comparative Archaeology; its Aims and Method', *Trans Dumfriesshire Galloway Natur Hist Antiq Soc*, 3 ser, (1916-18), 156-83.