

6. *Account of a Grave discovered in the Parish of Banchory-Devenich, by ALEXANDER THOMSON, Esq. of Banchory.—In a communication to ALEXANDER SMELLIE, Esq.*

SIR,—In the month of October last, an ancient grave was discovered on the farm of Clashfarquhar, at a spot about nine miles from Aberdeen, six from Stonehaven, and one quarter of a mile from the sea.

As soon as I heard of the discovery, I went to the place, and found the grave, &c. of the usual kind, except in two particulars, which appear to me worthy of notice.

On taking up the skull, about two-thirds of it seemed entire; the front lying on the earth having mouldered away. On the top of the head is a hole nearly circular, rather more than an inch in diameter. I think there can be little doubt that this was caused by the death-blow; and it would be curious to ascertain by what kind of weapon it was inflicted. When the skull was found, there were no rents proceeding from the hole; but it has dried so rapidly, that one has advanced from the hole to the broken edge on the right side of the head, and, joined to the separation of the sutures, has caused a piece to drop out, which I have re-united with gum. In each corner of the grave, six or eight small flints were carefully piled up in a little heap. I do not know any other instance

in our neighbourhood where these have been found ; and I am quite unable to find any satisfactory cause for their being so deposited. They are very proper for being formed into arrow heads, but none of them appear to have been wrought.

I send along with this the skull and specimens of the flint. I shall be happy if the Antiquarian Society consider them curious. I have the honour to be, &c.

ALEX. THOMSON.

2, Drummond Place, 20th January 1823.

In a subsequent communication, being a reply to certain queries submitted to MR THOMSON, the Society, through the medium of MR SMELLIE, was favoured with the following additional particulars :—

There is no particular appearance on the spot where these remains were found, which can lead to the determination of the date of the grave ; nor is there, as sometimes occurs, any tradition in the neighbourhood relating to them. I believe I mentioned to you that some years ago another grave was discovered within a few yards of the last.\* From the classical form of two vases found in the former, I was disposed to believe that it might be the grave of a Roman—perhaps one of Agricola's soldiers. It is between six and seven miles from the ground, where it seems most likely, according to the arguments of Professor Stuart, that he fought his celebrated battle with the Caledonians ; but it has been suspected, from the small dimensions of the Roman camp near Stonehaven, that part of his army must have been placed at another station in the neighbourhood. The remains of this camp have never been discovered ; but the ground in the vicinity of these graves affords an excellent situation for one ; and is so near the sea as to have made it easy to keep up a constant communication with the Roman fleet.

\* Mr Thomson, in the year 1817, communicated to the Society the account of a stone coffin having been found on a farm at Banchory. It was six feet long, being composed of eight undressed flags of mica slate ; one having been placed at the head of the corpse, another at the feet, two on each side, and two serving for the lid of the coffin. The side stones were not exactly parallel to each other, being bent in the middle. The bottom was lined with hard gravel. The breadth at the place intended for the head of the corpse was two feet three inches ; the opposite extremity had a width of one foot ten inches. The depth was irregular, varying from two to fifteen inches. The coffin lay almost exactly N. E. and S. W. and contained the skeleton of a full grown person, though of small stature. On the west side of the coffin stood two vases ; one being opposite to the knee of the skeleton, and the other to the thigh joint. The urns were broken by the labourers in their scramble for expected treasure ; but neither coins, pieces of armour, nor even ashes were found in them. One of them was about six and a half inches long, by five wide ; the other, five inches long, by ten wide. Drawings of them are in the possession of the Society.

Mr Thomson adds that, in the preceding winter, another coffin had been found not very far from the one now described, but that there was nothing in it but a skull.

The discovery of the flints in the last grave makes me much more doubtful of the truth of my theory, as I am not aware of any Roman custom which could place them there.

I was on the spot on both occasions soon after the grave was found, and before it had been materially disturbed ; but, although I examined every particle of earth in the graves with the greatest care, I could not find a vestige of armour or weapons of any kind.—I remain, &c.

ALEX. THOMSON.