

V.

NOTE OF THE EXCAVATION OF SOME TUMULI AT MELVILLE MOOR.
BY THE REV. JAS. BRODIE, MONIMAIL, FIFE, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

The following notes contain the results of the examination of some remains of antiquity which are found in Melville Moor, to the north of Ladybank, under the direction of Sir H. Dryden :—

Attention was in the first place directed to a circular trench, between 30 and 40 feet in diameter, which seems to have been originally about 4 feet deep. But nothing was found to indicate the purpose for which it had been made, or to show whether it was the remains of a hasty entrenchment, thrown up to protect a small body of warriors, or an enclosure for some purpose of peace.

Two closely adjoining tumuli, on the east side of the road above the railway bridge, were then examined. The one on the north is about 30 feet in diameter, and nearly 5 feet high. A trench having been cut through it, it was found to be formed of the soft sandy soil that covers the moor around, but had been covered on the top with a quantity of loose stones. A depression was found in the centre. A hollow seemed to have been formed in the original soil about 6 feet long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide. At either end of this hollow was a stone, such as are found in the adjoining soil, somewhat flattened in form, and of a size that would require the united strength of two men to lift. These stones were not set on edge, but lay on their side in the hollow. The direction of this trench or hollow, being from west to east, suggested the idea of a grave; but there was no trace of any bone, nor of any instrument of metal or stone, and no sign of ashes or burnt wood, though some very dark-coloured earth was picked up. Some wood, very much decayed, was found; but nothing was discovered that could show whether it had

been placed there by the hand of man, or whether it was the remains of tree roots that had grown on the mound.

The mound to the south consists almost entirely of the soft sandy earth before described. It is rather more than 5 feet high at the centre, and is about 50 feet in diameter. About the middle of the mound the workmen employed in cutting the trench came upon some bones. These were very carefully exhumed. They were found to be parts of the skeleton of a man, apparently about 6 feet in height. Some of the larger bones, such as those of the thighs, were entire; but most of them were very much decayed. Almost all the smaller bones had completely wasted away. One side of the skull remained whole, showing that the head had been of full average size, and of good phrenological development. The other side was much decayed. The lower jaw was entire, with a full complement of healthy looking teeth, indicating a man in the prime of life. The body lay as in ordinary graves, from east to west, the head lying towards the west. No trace of wood or metal could be found, excepting a single iron nail, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, to which a small fragment of wood adhered. The fibre of the wood was parallel to the side of the nail; this induces the supposition that the nail had been driven into the end of a staff, and that the staff had been broken by some one who had been trying to dig into the mound. It seemed to have no connection with the interment of the body.

The skeleton we have been describing lay about a foot and a half above the natural level of the soil. It may therefore be regarded as a second interment in the place. The body having been buried at full length, and in the direction of ordinary graves, precludes the possibility of its having been that of a murdered man, hastily put away out of sight. The probability is that the remains are those of some unfortunate creature who committed suicide, to which the custom of former times forbade the ordinary rites of burial in consecrated ground.

The trench was carried through the mound down to the natural level of the soil, but no trace of bone, nor any remains of man or of man's art could be found. Another trench, at right angles to the first, was cut, but with the same result.

A third tumulus, rather more than a quarter of a mile to the north-west, was also explored. It is on the top of a little knoll. Like that

which we have last described, it is composed entirely of the soft sandy soil that covers the adjoining ground. At the centre it was about 5 feet high. No remains were found.

These tumuli suggest the idea of a bloody skirmish in times long gone by. The dead seem to have been gathered together, and a mound of turf torn up from the adjoining ground heaped over them. It is remarkable that not the slightest vestige could be seen of bone or weapon, ashes or charcoal.

The smaller mound, on which more care seems to have been bestowed, may be supposed to have been the resting-place of a fallen chief. But no evidence is left to show us what was the cause for which they fought, or what was the race to which they belonged.

MONDAY, 13th March 1871.

ROBERT COX, Esq., W.S., in the Chair.

The following Gentlemen were balloted for, and admitted as Fellows:—

ALEXANDER R. SIMPSON, M.D., Professor of Midwifery, University of Edinburgh.

PETER GEDDES WALKER, younger of Ravensby, Esq., Dundee.

JOHN F. RODGER, Esq., 1 Royal Circus.

JOHN TAYLOR BROWN, Esq., Gibraltar House.

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

(1.) By ROBERT THOMAS, Esq. of Drumour and Noranside, through JAMES NEISH, of the Laws, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Two polished Celts of indurated claystone, one $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide at the broad end, and 2 inches at the other. Both ends are similarly brought to a thin edge; but the narrow end, instead of being sharpened like the other, has been ground blunt. The two long edges have been ground flat lengthways. The marks of the grinding and

polishing are still visible over the whole surface; it had been done in separate facets along the length of the instrument. This is the largest specimen of a Scottish celt on record, if we except one which was found at Watten, in Caithness, in 1840, and which is described in the *John O' Groat Journal* of the date, as "shaped like a tailor's lapboard," and measuring 17 inches long by 9 inches at the broadest end, and 4 inches at the narrow end. If the two latter measurements are intended for girth measurements, the Watten celt would be very much of the same form as this one, but an inch and a half longer. The Watten celt, however, does not appear to have been preserved, and the present specimen is the largest known to exist in Scotland.

The second celt is more elegantly formed, but smaller. It measures 13 inches in length, 3 inches across the broad end, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch across the small end. It is ground and polished in the same way as the other one, but is distinguished by a slight expansion at the small end, which gives it a more elegant form. (See subsequent communication by James Neish, Esq.)

(2.) By JAMES NEISH, of the Laws, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Polished Stone Celt, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, found in a cairn in Glenshee, Forfarshire.

(3.) By JAMES WALKER, of Ravensby, Esq., through JAMES NEISH, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Two conical masses of baked Red Clay, one measuring $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter across the base and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, the other $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches across the base and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, found at Ravensby, parish of Barrie, Forfarshire. They are pierced near the top, and the holes are worn on the upper side as if by suspension. They are similar in form to the clay cones from Robenhausen and other Swiss lake dwellings, which have been termed "loom-weights" by continental archæologists. Two masses of hardened clay, not so conical in form, but similarly pierced, and having the holes similarly worn, were found at Montblairy, in Banffshire, and are now in the Museum. They are described and figured in the *Proceedings*, vol. ii. p. 347, and vol. iii. p. 68, as "clay hammers." A "loom-weight" of dark coloured clay, precisely similar to the Ravensby "clay cones," but smaller, is in the Society's collection of objects from the lake dwellings of

Robenhausen, in Switzerland. (For a description of the circumstances in which these interesting objects were found, see subsequent communication by James Neish, Esq., p. 174.)

- (4.) By Mrs SCRYMGEOUR FOTHERINGHAME, of Tealing, through JAMES NEISH, of the Laws, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Human Skull from a short cist at Tealing, Forfarshire. (Described Proc. vol. viii. p. 383.)

- (5.) By ROBERT FORREST, Esq., solicitor, Kirriemuir, through JAMES NEISH, of the Laws, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The Jougs, with their padlock and key, of the old Kirk of Clova, Forfarshire. These jougs consist of an iron collar, opening in the middle on a looped hinge at the back, and fastened in front by a large padlock, about 6 inches diameter.

- (6.) By Mr PETER COLLIER, 12 Randolph Crescent.

The following articles, collected by Mr William Gillespie, Turriff, viz. :—

A Stone Hammer, barrel-shaped, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, and 3 inches in greatest diameter, perforated through half its thickness only by a circular hole $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch in diameter, found on the hill of Ashogall, Turriff, Aberdeenshire.

A rude triangular Stone Hammer, unsymmetrical, greatest length 3 inches, greatest breadth 2 inches, perforated nearly in the centre by a hole $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch wide at one side, and $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of an inch wide at the other, found on the Gallow Hill of Turriff.

A Stone Whorl, ornamented with circles and lines of dots, found on the Gallow Hill of Turriff.

A leaf-shaped Arrow-Head of reddish flint (broken at the point), 2 inches long, found near Turriff.

Specimens of Flints, &c., from the clay of the district.

- (7.) By Major CHADWICK, Moy House, Forres.

One hundred Beads of yellowish glass, being half of a necklace found on the Culbin Sands, near Forres, and one small ribbed Bead (broken) of dark coloured glass, found at the same time, as previously described.

- (8.) By Rev. W. L. COLVIN, D.D., minister of Cramond, through Sir WALTER ELLIOT, of Wolfelee, K.S.I., F.S.A. Scot.

Copper Ring, being a plain flat band, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide and an inch in diameter, having an inscription in Runes on its exterior surface. Professor George Stephens,¹ of Copenhagen, author of the magnificent work on "The Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England," has pronounced the characters inscribed on the ring to be Runes, but the photographs and impressions with which he has been furnished have not enabled him to extract any intelligible meaning from them. These inscriptions on rings, &c., are frequently cabalistic, and present no intelligible form of words.

- (9.) By Mr JAMES ROBB, gas-manager, Haddington.

A piece of Lead Piping, about 2 feet in length, and an inch in diameter, being part of an old pipe found in the High Street, Haddington, near the site of the monastery of the Dominican friars. It is not a tubularly formed pipe, like those of modern manufacture, but has been made by rolling a sheet round and "burning" its edges.

- (10.) By ANDREW SLATER, Esq., through Dr JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, V.P.S.A. Scot.

A series of Oak Shingles, from the tower of the Canongate Tolbooth, fixed on a board as on the roof, and a bundle of separate shingles of various sizes from the same. (See subsequent communication by Dr John Alexander Smith, p. 162.)

- (11.) By the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1868. 8vo.
 Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge. Vol. XVI. 4to.
 Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections. Vols. VIII. and IX. 8vo.

¹ An account of the inscription on the ring, by Professor Stephens, will be given in the next volume of the Proceedings.

(12.) By the AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

Proceedings of the Society. Vol. XI. 1869. No. 82.

(13.) By the ESSEX INSTITUTE, Salem.

Essex Institute Historical Collections. Second Series. Vol. I. Part 2. Salem, 1869.

Proceedings and Communications of the Essex Institute. Vol. VI. Part I. 1868.

Bulletin of the Essex Institute. Vol. I. Nos. 1 to 12.

An Account of the Newspapers and other Periodicals published in Salem, from 1756 to 1868.

The following Communications were read :—