

IV.

NOTES ON SOME PREHISTORIC BURIAL-PLACES AND STANDING STONES IN THE ISLAND OF YELL, SHETLAND. (WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.) BY J. T. IRVINE, F.S.A. SCOT.

Some of the ancient *haugs* or burying-places of the pagan age can yet be traced in Shetland, occasionally occurring in close proximity to the sites of old settlements, locally called "Tounes" and "Brochs." They present considerable variety of character, as the following rough enumeration will show :—

1. Standing Stones unaccompanied by any "heap of stones (cairn) or mound of earth (barrow)." Examples are found near Hubie Broch, in the island of Fetlar; near the Broch of Underhool, in the west of Unst,

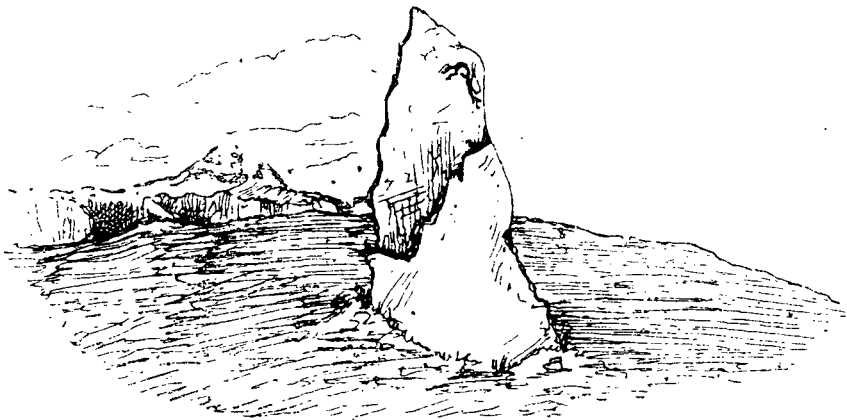


Fig. 1. Standing Stone of Hubie (3 feet 9 inches wide below, 1 foot thick, 7 feet 4 inches high).

on a piece of ground called "Burgar Riggs"; and at "The Brough," in North Yell. The stone at the last-mentioned place is a small one. The one near Hubie (fig. 1) stands 7 feet 4 inches in height above the surface of the ground, 3 feet 9 inches wide at the base, and 12 inches

thick. At Clivocast, in Uyea Sound, is another large standing stone (fig. 2), 10 feet in height and 3 feet 5 inches wide at the base; while

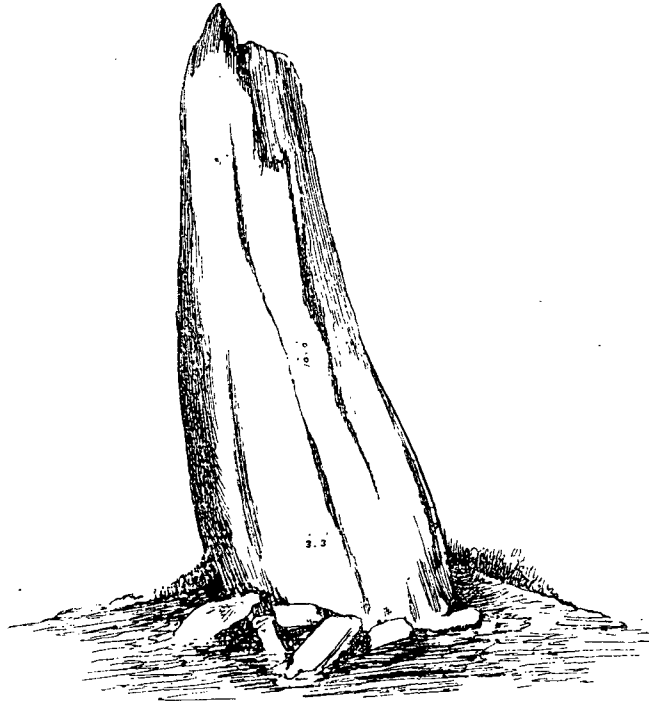


Fig. 2. Standing Stone of Clivocast, Unst (10 feet high, 3 feet 5 inches wide at base).

at Succamires, near Lund, in the island of Unst, is a still larger stone, standing 12 feet high, and measuring 8 feet 6 inches in width and 4 feet 6 inches in thickness at base. Two other standing stones to be described more particularly are situated in the parish of North Yell. The first derives its name from its being close to the burn of Forse, though from the land on which it stood having been common land of Papal, it was sometimes spoken of as standing on the Garths of Papal. The material

was a fairly hard description of pot-stone, found in layers among the rocks left bare at low tide between Tonga of Papal and the boats *noust* of that place. The stone (fig. 3) was a broad flat slab, slightly

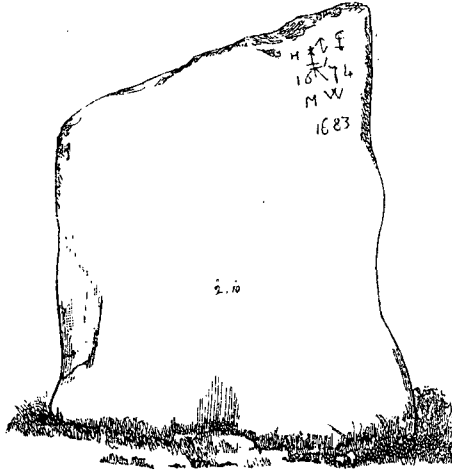


Fig. 3. Standing Stone near Burn of Forse, Papal, North Yell.

lower at one side than the other, and measuring 4 feet 2 inches in greatest height by 2 feet 10 inches in width, and varying from 18 inches to 6 inches in thickness. In one corner were the initials H I 1674 and M W 1683, with an old merchant's mark, or something of that description. It is to be feared that the stone no longer exists. The late Dr Hunt, of the Anthropological Society, dug under it in 1865, with the result that it was left to fall down, and be eventually broken up for building material to be used in the walls of a new schoolhouse.¹ The last stone to be noticed is situated in the "tounne" of Steinsetter to the south of Gatcher, in Yell. It is of a very hard crystalline quartz, its greatest height above ground being 4 feet 9 inches, width about 3 feet, and thickness 1 foot 8 inches. It is interesting as presenting traces of having been rudely dressed to shape.

¹ There is a tradition that a queen who came in a ship to Papal died there, and was buried beneath this stone.

2. "Fairy Knows," as the people call them, are low, flattish circular mounds of very small stones mixed with a blackish mould, the stones often presenting the appearance of having been burnt. Examples of this kind of mound on the burn of Bracon were obliterated when the land was trenched to bring it under cultivation; others exist at the angle of the road (where it reaches the shore) at Cullivoe, and at Sandwick, in the parish of Yell. They have also been noted at Nesting, the Loch of Kirkabister, and Scuddleswick. A superstitious feeling, which used to prevent the tethering of cattle upon them, has greatly contributed to their preservation.

3. Cairns or Mounds, which may sometimes be of composite nature, containing several smaller mounds, each marked by its own ring or fence of protecting stones, and sometimes having a central pillar stone. Of this class seems to be the Knowe of Hoversta, in Unst, 65 feet in diameter, and many of the smaller examples seem on the slope of the hill-side from Windhouse down towards Bartie's Skoe, on Whalefirth Voe. To this class also may belong the remarkable remains on Crossfield, Unst, formed of circular rings, and called "The Rounds of Tivla." Probably also the burial-place on Clody Peat Bank, Midbrake, North Yell (with its central stone rudely squared at the top), belongs to this variety. The barrow high up on the south end of Vallafeld Hill is of the same character, and smaller specimens are scattered over the common land east of the burn of Voegarth, Unst.

4. Cists or Stone Chests, now very often found with the cover wanting. Examples exist near the loch of Belmont, on the side next to the Broch of Oganess; at the back of the yards of Snarravoe; under the south end of Vallafeld; at the north of Balta Sound; and on Scottie's Wart, north of Balliasta, where the cist (3 feet 9 inches by 3 feet 6 inches) is in the centre of a circular cairn of stones 37 feet in diameter, the outer edge of which is defined by a well-built wall.

5. Of the Maeshow class of chambered Cairns, Urns Hool is probably an example.

6. The "Boat Barrow" variety is probably presented in the so-called Harold's Grave at Haroldswick, an oblong mound of stones about 58 feet in length by 28 feet in width, with vacant centre space.

7. In the Christian burial-places the survival of the inverted boat type, seen in the markedly keel-like ridge on the recumbent body-stone, is traceable in many places, and is associated with another singular custom which was almost constant throughout the north, viz., that of making the footstone of the grave, and not the headstone, the principal one of the two uprights, as that looking east.

MONDAY, 11th April 1887.

SIR W. FETTES DOUGLAS, LL.D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

A Ballot having been taken, the following Gentlemen were duly elected Fellows:—

Rev. WALTER BELL, 8 Rosebery Crescent.

JOHN HARRISON, 7 Greenhill Place.

Rev. J. KING HEWISON, Minister of Rothesay.

Rev. CHARLES ELLIS STEVENS, B.D., Ph.D., Brooklyn, New York.

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

(1) By Rev. W. FINDLAY, Saline, Dunfermline.

Whorl of claystone, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter; Whorl of sandstone, 2 inches diameter; and irregularly-shaped Disc of shale, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, perforated in the centre by a hole half an inch in diameter, from Saline.

(2) By Rev. ARCHIBALD PRENTICE, New Craighall, Joppa.

Rude Implement of sandstone, $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by 3 inches in breadth and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in greatest thickness, flattish on one side, roughly rounded on the other, from Walls, Shetland.

(3) By Mr GEORGE SINCLAIR.

Flint Arrow-Head, with barbs and stem, found near Dunkeld.

(4) By Dr C. G. MACKAY, Lochcarron.

Portion of a greyish resinous Mass, found in a peat-moss near Shieldaig, parish of Applecross, Ross-shire.

(5) By H. S. HOWELL, Stoneyhurst, Galt, Ontario, Canada.

Four Arrow-Heads of chert, from Canada.

Models of Canadian Canoe, Toboggin, and Snow-Shoes.

Necklace of seed-capsules, from Australia.

Spear-Head of iron, inlaid, from India.

Copy of *The Scots Magazine*, 1762.

The Keys of the Bastille of Paris, 12mo, pp. 15; with full-sized Photograph of the Keys.

The Weesils, a Satyrical Fable. 4to. London, 1691.

(6) By JOHN W. SMALL, F.S.A. Scot., Wallace Street, Stirling.

Dutch Tile, 5 inches square, with two figures in blue, with slings, on a cream-coloured ground, and small triangular scrolls at the four corners, from Major Weir's House, West Bow, Edinburgh.

Dutch Tile, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches square, with a shield-like figure of scrolls and foliage, surmounted by a bust and two birds in a purplish tint on a cream-coloured ground, and with small scrolls in the four corners, from Major Weir's House in the West Bow, Edinburgh.

Dutch Tile, 5 inches square, with a blue pattern on a white ground, from an old house in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh.

(7) By EDWARD LOVETT, Croydon.

Two of the so-called Rude Implements of quartzite, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches and 5 inches in length, from the laterite beds of the Madras Presidency, India.

(8) By Captain WILLIAM STEWART, of the 91st Highlanders.

Bronze Sword, $28\frac{3}{8}$ inches in length, $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches across the widest part of the blade, narrowing to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches near the hilt, and having a rounded midrib half an inch wide running down the centre of the blade from hilt to point. The handle-plate has two slots in the grip and two in the wings. No other bronze sword of this type has yet been recorded in Scotland. It was found along with another sword of the common type, measuring $26\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in breadth at the widest part of the blade, narrowing to $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches near the hilt. The hilt

plate, which is slightly flanged on both sides, has two rivet holes in the grip and two in the wings. This sword is unusually thick and heavy, being fully $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in thickness at the base of the blade where it joins the grip. Captain Stewart has supplied the following particulars regarding the finding of the two swords:—

The swords were found at Rigg, on the east side of Skye, in the month of March 1886,—the shorter one of the two by John Macvicar while digging out a rabbit, and the longer by myself a few days later on excavating under a large stone, measuring about 8 feet in length by 6 feet in breadth by 3 feet in thickness. The lower side of the end rested on some smaller stones, which left a clear space underneath; and as the earth and small stones from the cliff above closed all around except the lower side, a cavity was left under the stone big enough for a man to creep into. From the position in which the first sword was found, I think it must have been gradually moved down by the rabbits burrowing under the stone. The sword found by me lay on some stones, between which and the bottom of the big stone there was just room for it, and near its upper end, and with the blade pointing up hill. I suppose you noticed the lines on the blade of the longer sword near the hilt, also the deep gap in the edge where it met another blade at an angle of about 45° ; and that the edge near the point for what is called the forte or cutting part of the blade has been blunted and resharpened on both sides. The men who used these swords must have preferred the edge to the point, because the leaf-shaped heavy-pointed blade, unsuited for stabbing, would from the position of the weight acquire a great deal of momentum in cutting. The edge, similar to the modern hollow ground razor, is sharpened with a care that would be unnecessary if it was not to be used.

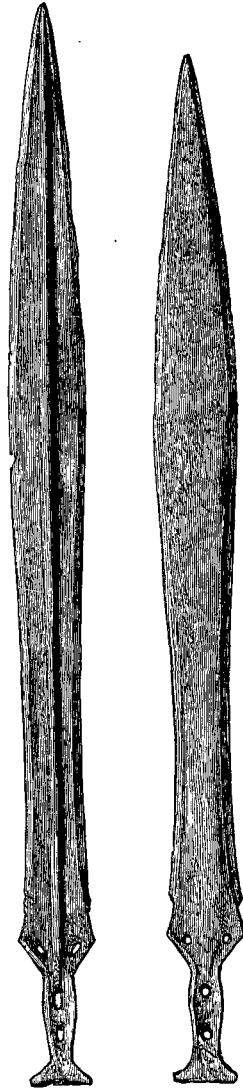


Fig. 1. Bronze Swords found at Rigg, Isle of Skye ($28\frac{1}{2}$ and $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length).

(9) By G. S. AITKEN, Architect, F.S.A. Scot., the Author.

The Abbeys of Arbroath, Balmerino, and Lindores. 4to. Dundee, 1884.

(10) By Rev. A. W. CORNELIUS HALLEN, M.A., the Editor.

The Transcript of the Register of Baptisms, Muthil, Perthshire, 1697-1847. 4to. 1887.

(11) By the ROYAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ANTIQUARIES, Copenhagen.

Bornholm's Oldtidsminder og Oldsager af Amtmand E. Vedel.

(12) By the MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

Chronica Rogeri de Wendover. Vol. I.

Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops. Vol. II.

(13) By the EXECUTORS of the late MRS RILAND BEDFORD, through Col. R. BEDFORD.

Portrait of the late Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, the famous Antiquary and Collector, painted in 1829 by Thomas Fraser.

[This valuable Donation, which was received in 1875, through Lady Hope Johnstone, from the nephews of Mr Sharpe, Col. Richard B. Riland Bedford and Francis Riland Bedford, Esq., was omitted to be inserted in its proper place under that date. The Portrait, which is a very characteristic likeness, is familiar to the Fellows of the Society, from its having hung so long in the Library. It has now been lent for exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery.]

The following Communications were read :--