

IV.

NOTICE OF A BRONZE SWORD, WITH HANDLE-PLATES OF HORN,
FOUND AT AIRD, IN THE ISLAND OF LEWIS. BY JOSEPH ANDER-
SON, LL.D., ASSISTANT-SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

The Bronze Sword which is the subject of this notice was found in August last by a crofter named Murdoch Maciver in digging on his croft at Aird, South Dell, in the parish of Barvas, Island of Lewis. It was turned up at a depth of nine feet in peat, and though nothing else was observed at the time of the first discovery, a portion of a second sword was subsequently found by the same crofter when digging in the same place in the month of February. He then examined all the soil round about the spot in which the two swords were found, but without result. As near as he could judge, the second sword was found within a foot or so of the spot where the first one was discovered. Both swords were recovered by the Queen's Remembrancer on behalf of the Crown, and are now in the National Museum.

The sword (fig. 1), which is almost entire, is of the usual leaf-shaped form, measuring 24 inches in length, 2 inches broad at the widest part of the blade at about two-thirds of its length, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the narrowest part at about one-third of its length from the hilt-end. A very small portion of the extremity of the point end has been broken off—scarcely amounting to a quarter of an inch. The blade swells slightly in the middle, but without any appearance of a mid-rib, and the edges have been drawn down with the hammer and planished smooth in the usual way. Between the slight swelling of the central portion of the blade and the hammered marginal strip which forms the edge on either side, there is a portion slightly depressed which forms a kind of shallow fluting following the outlines of the blade and becoming more pronounced towards the hilt. The usual notches made by the removal of the hammered strip which forms the edge extend for about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch beyond the termination of the hilt. The hilt-plate measures 4 inches in length from the projecting corners of the wings to those of the fish-tail like extremity, and is pierced by two rivet-holes in

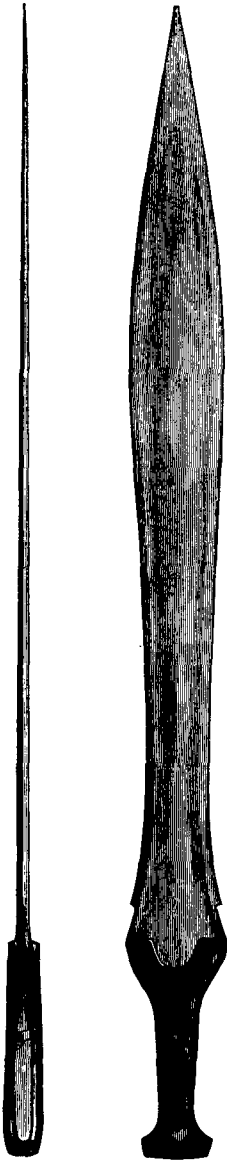


Fig. 1. Bronze Sword, with Handle-plates of Horn, found at Aird, Barvas, Lewis. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

the hilt and two in the wings. All the rivets are gone except one, and the hilt itself is broken across the middle. Unfortunately the spade seems to have struck the hilt just about the middle of its length, and not only damaged the plates of horn which were riveted on to the sides of the grip, but fractured the bronze hilt-plate itself midway between the two rivet-holes, where there seems to have been originally a flaw in the metal. The side mountings of the grip are of ox-horn, and cut out of the horn somewhat in the form of the legs of a tuning-fork, so that the two side-plates are held together by a solid portion of the horn projecting beyond the butt-end of the hilt, while they also fit closely to the faces of the hilt-plate, and are securely held in position by the rivets. In drying, the horn has shrunk slightly, but the lower parts of the side-plates, where they come on to the base of the blade, have the usual expansion and lunation, the latter measuring 1 inch across the chord and half an inch in depth.

The second sword, found in the same place, is merely a fragment, $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, of the hilt-end of a much narrower sword—also broken across the middle of the hilt—which shows remains of a rivet-hole at the fracture, and two in the wings. The blade, so far as it is shown, scarcely exceeds an inch in width, with edges almost straight, and an almost evenly convex section, the thickness in the middle being fully three-sixteenths of an inch.

Bronze swords, with the handle-plates of bone or horn, still attached by the rivets to the hilt-plate, are of exceptional rarity. Not more than three instances are hitherto on record in the British Isles, and it is somewhat singular that all three are from Ireland. Yet among nearly three hundred examples of bronze swords preserved in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy, there is no instance of the handle-plates remaining. Of the three that are on record, one is a rapier-shaped sword, $22\frac{5}{8}$ inches in length, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch broad at the base, which was found in a bog at Galbally, County Tyrone, and has been described and figured in the *Proceedings of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Society of Ireland* (4th series, vol. ii. p. 197) by Mr Wakeman, and also in *Ancient Bronze Implements of Great Britain* (p. 252) by Sir John Evans, in whose collection the sword now is. The blade has a broad, heavy, rounded midrib, and the haft, which is in reality a dark-coloured ox-horn, although it was at first described as whalebone, has been attached to the blade by four rivets arranged in a semicircle around the base of the blade. As the rivet-holes are now all empty, Sir John Evans has suggested that pins of hard wood may have been used in this case instead of rivets of bronze. The other two cases in which the handle-plates have survived are on leaf-shaped swords.¹ The first is a fine sword, $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, with a midrib of angular section running along the centre of the blade, like the sword in this museum found in the Tay near Mugdrum Island. It has two rivets in the grip of the hilt-plate and three in each of the wings, which are longer and more convex than usual. The side-plates, of which considerable portions are broken off on both sides, are of bone, which has been pronounced by Professor Owen to be mammalian, and probably cetacean. This sword was found in Listletrim Bog, Muckno, County Monaghan, and was originally in the collection of Mr Robert Day. The other case is that of a shorter leaf-shaped sword, 20 inches in length, found in draining a meadow in 1871, at Mullylagan, County Armagh, which was in the collection of Mr Knight Young, of Mona-

¹ *Journal of the Royal Archaeological and Historical Association of Ireland*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 23; 2nd series, vol. vi. p. 72; and *Ancient Bronze Implements of Great Britain*, pp. 294, 295.

ghan.¹ In the shape of the blade, it is more like the second of the swords found at Aird, the breadth of the blade being about $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch. The side-plates of the hilt were supposed to be of deer-horn, but they are so much mutilated that it is difficult to trace the outlines of their shape, although Sir John Evans notices that at the wings of the hilt-plate the bone projects beyond the metal. A bronze sword, found near Kallundborg, in Denmark, had the side-plates of the grip formed of wood.

MONDAY, 9th January 1893.

R. ROWAND ANDERSON, LL.D., Vice-President,
in the Chair.

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

Colonel The Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, 6 Sumner Terrace, London.
ROBERT BALFOUR LANGWILL, The Manse, Currie.
Sir COLIN SCOTT-MONCRIEFF, K.C.M.G., Under-Secretary for Scotland.
DAVID SCOTT-MONCRIEFF, W.S., 24 George Square.

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

(1) By JOHN RITCHIE FINDLAY, F.S.A. Scot.

A collection of Flint Implements and Bronze Ornaments, &c., from Italy, comprising :—Fifty-one Arrow-Heads of flint, mostly with tangs, but without barbs, from Orvieto; fifty Flakes, two Scrapers, and two Knives of flint, also from Orvieto; three Arrow-Heads and two Flakes of flint from Perugia; Bronze Strigil (broken), two Fibulæ of Bronze, Penannular Bracelet of Bronze, and Bronze Bracelet with hook and loop, from Perugia.

¹ *Journal of the Royal Archaeological and Historical Association of Ireland*, 4th series, vol. i. p. 505; vol. ii. p. 257; and *Ancient Bronze Implements of Great Britain*, p. 295.

(2) By FRANCIS TRESS BARRY, M.P., of Keiss, Caithness.

Stone Ball, with six projecting discs, from Watten, Caithness. This

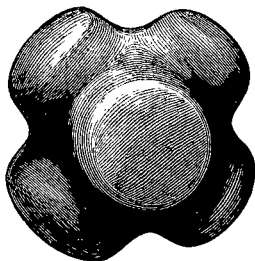


Fig. 1. Stone Ball from Watten, Caithness, 3 inches in diameter.

ball (fig. 1) is of quartzite, very regularly formed and finely finished, the surface being highly polished and without a flaw. It belongs to a class of objects of very great interest, inasmuch as they are peculiar to Scotland. So far as is yet known, no example has been recorded as occurring beyond the bounds of this country, with one exception said to have been found in 1850 at Ballymena in the County of Antrim in

Ireland, and now preserved in the British Museum. The total number in the Scottish National Museum is now over 100. The Watten specimen is the fourth in the Museum and the fifth known from Caithness, the others being—one with four discs from Odrig; one with six discs from Benicheilt, Latheron; one with six discs and slight triangular projections between from Caithness, the precise locality being unknown; and one in the Thurso Museum with six discs, which was in the collection of the late Robert Dick, and is believed to have been found in the Thurso River. None of these, however, approach the Watten specimen in the projection of the discs and fineness of finish. It belongs to a variety which have the discs elongated almost to the extent of their diameter, and instead of being flattened and slightly convex on the projecting surfaces they are rounded off with considerable convexity, a variety of form which is so rare that among 100 examples in the Museum there are only 3 that exhibit it.

Large wide-mouthed Jar of coarse earthenware or unglazed clay (fig. 2), measuring 17 inches in height, and tapering from an extreme diameter of $17\frac{1}{2}$ at the mouth to 7 inches at the bottom. The form is somewhat oval in the cross section and conical in the vertical section, the intersecting diameters at the mouth being 16 and 17 inches, and at the bottom 6 and 7 inches. The exterior is unornamented, except immediately under the slightly turned-over brim, where there is a row of rudely-impressed

markings. The interior is blackened ; the exterior of the reddish colour of the coarsely-burnt clay of which it is made, as if it had been fired in the open and filled with ashes. It was found in excavating the interior area of a broch recently discovered by Mr Barry close to the shore-line, and about half-way between Keiss Castle and the broch above the harbour



Fig. 2. Jar of Clay from White Broch, Keiss, 17 inches in height.

of Keiss, and which has been provisionally called the White Broch to distinguish it from the broch nearer the harbour. The vessel, when found, was in a multitude of fragments, which lay in a group as if purposely placed where they were found, and nothing was discovered to indicate what had been the nature of its contents, if; at the time of its deposit, it

had held anything. This is by far the largest vessel of pottery that has ever been recovered from a broch, and its discovery is therefore one of much importance. It shows at least that the vessels of very coarse pottery, of which so many fragments are commonly found in the brochs, occasionally reached a size which is rather astonishing, if the texture of the clay is considered. Pottery vessels of such great size, made after the Roman manner, were much closer-grained in texture and nearly double the thickness. In point of fact, it is difficult to imagine the manner in which vessels of such size and fragility were made serviceable for household purposes, unless we suppose that when in use they had some kind of external support, such as being embedded in a bank of soil like tanks, or carried in cases of wicker-work like panniers. But whatever may have been the manner of their use, there can be no question that they were household utensils and not sepulchral pottery, which is usually very different in its character, texture, and ornamentation.

(3) By THOMAS BONNAR, F.S.A. Scot., the Author.

Biographical Sketch of George Meikle Kemp, Architect of the Scott Monument, Edinburgh.

(4) By the YORKSHIRE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

Handbook of the York Museum.

(5) By Rev. THOMAS BURNS, F.S.A. Scot., the Author.

Old Scottish Communion Plate, with Chronological Tables of Scottish Hall-Marks, prepared by A. J. S. Brook, F.S.A. Scot. 4to, Edinburgh, 1892.

(6) By ALEXANDER J. S. BROOK, F.S.A. Scot.

Old Scottish Hall-Marks on Plate, by Alex. J. S. Brook, F.S.A. Scot. Separate Print from Old Scottish Communion Plate, by Rev. Thomas Burns.

(7) By the GLASGOW ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Transactions of the Society, and Report of Council, 1890-91.

(8) By the ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION.

Transactions of the Edinburgh Architectural Association, vol. i.

(9) By the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, Washington, U.S.A.

United States Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region—Contributions to North American Ethnology, vols. ii. and vi.; Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; and Report of the United States National Museum for 1889.

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

Aarboger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie, 1891–92.

(11) By General PITT RIVERS, F.S.A. Scot., Inspector of Ancient Monuments, the Author.

Excavations in Bokerly Dyke and Wansdyke, Dorset and Wilts, 1888–91, vol. iii. Privately printed, 4to, 1892.

There were also Exhibited :—

(1) By LOCKHART BOGLE, F.S.A. Scot., Artist, London.

Highland Dirk, with peculiarly-carved handle, from Janetown, Lochcarron. Mr Bogle, who has contributed the drawing from which the accompanying illustration (fig. 3) is made, gives the following account of the dirk :—

“The chief points of interest connected with this dirk are the archaic rudeness of its structure, its appearance of extreme age, and the very unusual pattern carved on the handle. The length of the weapon is $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches, the blade being 11 inches. The blade has no markings, except a groove on each side running parallel to the back, and part of the point has been broken off. The handle, formed of extremely hard wood, is rudely carved with ring-like patterns intersecting one another, a design I have never before seen on any dirk-handle. The execution is irregular, and is evidently the work of an unskilled man who made the weapon for his own use. On the shoulders of the handle, where

they project on the blade, are distinctly reproduced an edge and back corresponding to those of the blade. Round the lower edge of the shoulders there had been a metal band, which has long ago fallen off, and the blade is now very loose. Beneath the rivet on the top of the handle is a circular brass disc having many circular indentations.

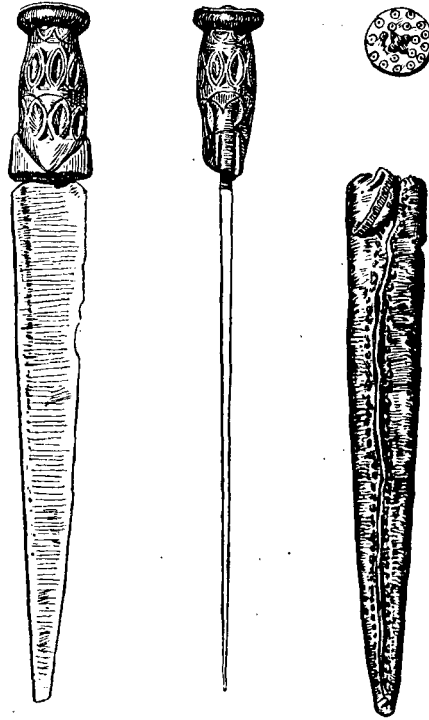


Fig. 3. Highland Dirk from Lochcarron, $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length.

“The sheath is of untanned leather, hard and black with age and smoke, sewn with thongs of the same material. Inserted in the upper part is a loop of brass, and through this the belt must have passed.

“The Irish ‘skean’ must have been very similar to the Highland dirk. In *State Trials*, 1688, vol. iv., an Irish skean is described as ‘10 inches long, thick at the back, and sharp point.’

“I have obtained authentic information from the former owner of the dirk, Kenneth Mackenzie of Janetown, Lochcarron, as to what he remembers, or has been told, of its history. He says that it had been in his grandfather’s house, near the Muir of Ord, since he was a boy, and that it was believed to have been at the battle of Culloden, and there were stories of its having been used once or twice since that time. It once had a belt, but the belt had been lost a long time ago.”

(2) By JOHN O. CLAZY, Silksworth, Sunderland.

Urn of drinking-cup type, highly ornamented, from a cist at Noran-side, parish of Fern, Forfarshire.

[See the subsequent Communication by Mr Clazy.]

(3) By Rev. ALEXANDER STEWART, LL.D., F.S.A. Scot., Nether Lochaber.

Seed of a West Indian plant, stranded on the shores of South Uist, Outer Hebrides, and there used as a charm. Dr Stewart, in a letter to Dr Christison accompanying the seed, says :—

“I send you a specimen of a kind of amulet very highly prized by the people of the three Uists—North Uist, Benbecula, and South Uist—which is locally known as *Airne Moire*—(Virgin) Mary’s *kidney*. It is really a kind of *bean* occasionally picked up on the shores of the Outer Hebrides. Martin (1692) refers to it, and calls it a ‘Molluka’ bean. Pennant is nearer the mark when he calls it a ‘Jamaica’ bean, carried by the rivers to the sea, and so by the Gulf Stream to the western shores of the Outer Hebrides. It is considered all the more valuable and sacred if, as in this specimen, there is something like a *cross* on one side of it. Midwives use it as a charm to alleviate the pains of parturition. Very often also a small hole is drilled through either end, and through these holes a string is passed and looped, so that it may be hung round the neck of children when they are teething, or suffering under any infantile ailments. It is most in request amongst Catholics, as its

local name implies ; but Protestants also sometimes use it. It is oftenest met with in South Uist and the Island of Barra, where at least three-fourths of the people are Roman Catholics. Canary-coloured specimens are sometimes got, almost white, and these are very highly prized. These amulets are greatly valued, and it is not easy for outsiders to get specimens. The one I send you was procured for me by my son-in-law, Mr Bain of Creagorry. I am promised one much larger and lighter in colour the first time I go to Uist. Meantime please find out the name and proper West Indian home of this bean."

To this Dr Christison adds :—

"In the *Life of Sir Robert Christison*, vol. ii. p. 256, there is the following notice of seeds carried by the Gulf Stream to the Hebrides, 30th May 1866 :—'Dr Macdonald of Lochmaddy has succeeded in getting for me two of the West India seeds which the Gulf Stream transports to the shores of Uist, the *Entada gigantea* and *Dolichos vulgaris* ; but he has not yet got the third, *Guilandina bonduc*, for it is rare, and is so prized as a charm during childbirth that the midwives wear the seeds set in silver, for the women to hold in their hands while in labour ; and a husband, who had two, refused twenty shillings for one of them, saying he would not part with it for love or money till his spouse be past childbearing.'

"The three species here named belong to the natural order of the *Leguminosæ*, or pea and bean tribe, but the plant from which the seed now exhibited comes is one of the *Convolvulacææ*, and is allied to the plants which produce jalap and scammony. It is the *Iponœa tuberosa*, or Spanish arbour vine of Jamaica. The seed seems none the worse for its long sea voyage, which must have lasted several years. The Prince of Monaco, by setting adrift thousands of little floats in the Atlantic, so constructed as to be a few inches under water, and therefore not directly influenced by the wind, has shown the various courses which floating objects may take to reach European shores, and the rate of the different currents. The rate between the Azores and the Hebrides is about 4 miles a day in round numbers, so that it would take, roughly speaking, about two years for the little

voyager to accomplish but half of the shortest course between Jamaica and the Hebrides, unless its rate were hastened by the direct action of the wind, if it floated on the surface."

In connection with the exhibition of this specimen of the seed of a tropical plant used as a charm in the Hebrides, Mr Balfour Paul exhibited a seed of the same kind, mounted for suspension in a mounting of pewter, and bearing the arms and initials of a M'Lean of Barra, which he deposited for exhibition in the Museum. [See a subsequent paper on "Charms and Charmstones," by Mr G. F. Black, for fuller notices of these Hebridean amulets.]

(4) By CATHEL KEER, Aberdeen.

Large wedge-shaped Axe-Hammer of diorite, found near Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, measuring 13 inches in length, 5 inches in width, and 3 inches in thickness, the weight being 8 lb. 9½ oz. Its peculiarity is, that instead of having a haft-hole, as these large wedge-shaped axe-hammers usually have, it is provided with a groove round the circumference above the part where the wedge-shape meets the base of the broader end of the implement.

The following Communications were read :—