

VII.

NOTE ON A LATE CELTIC ARMLET OF BRONZE NOW PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM; WITH NOTES ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF TWO OTHER LATE CELTIC ARMLETS IN THE MUSEUM, AND ON A MASSIVE BRONZE ARMLET RECENTLY FOUND IN SUTHERLANDSHIRE. BY JOSEPH ANDERSON, LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

The presentation to the Museum by the daughters of the late General Sir John Macdonald of a Late Celtic armlet, in the form of a serpent spirally twisted, which was found in Rannoch before 1833, helps to clear up the history of two other armlets of the more massive form (with expanded ends containing sockets for enamel plaques), the localities of which had been lost and conjecturally restored, but erroneously, so far as at least one of them is concerned.

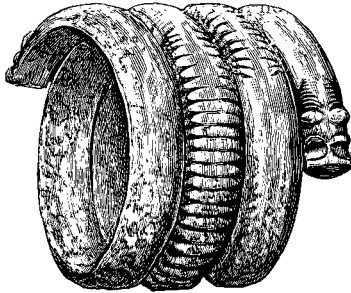


Fig. 1. Late Celtic Armlet found at Bunrannoch. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

The armlet now presented (fig. 1) is formed of a band or bar of bronze of a uniform width of about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and fully $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness in the middle, bent into the form of a cylindrical spiral of $3\frac{1}{2}$ turns, the exterior surface of the band being boldly rounded and the interior flattened. The diameter of the circular opening of the armlet is $2\frac{7}{16}$ inches, and the transverse internal measurement across all the coils is $2\frac{5}{16}$ inches. The whole length of the band or bar of bronze of which

it is made, if straightened out, is $31\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The middle part for a length of $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches (or $5\frac{1}{8}$ on either side of the centre) is ribbed transversely on the convex exterior of the bar, and the conventionalised heads at either end, which are about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in length, are boldly modelled, with very prominent eyes. The weight of the armlet is exactly 1 lb. 2 ozs. avoirdupois. It is similar in form and design to the armlets found at Pitalpin near Dundee (fig 2), and at Grange of Conan, near Arbroath, which are now in the Museum. These, and two

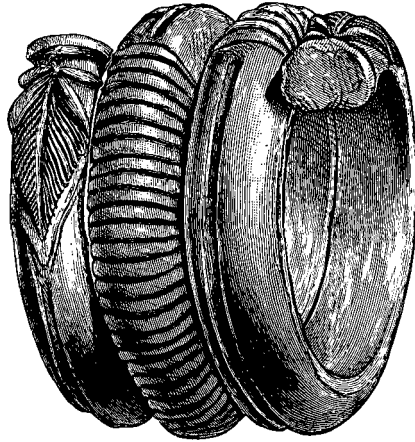


Fig. 2. Late Celtic Armlet found at Pitalpin. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

others—all that are known of this particular snake-like variety of bronze armlet—have been described and figured by Dr John Alexander Smith in a paper on Late Celtic Bronze Armlets.¹

In a letter accompanying the presentation, and dated Barnfield, Hill, Southampton, June 18th, 1903, Miss E. Macdonald gives the following particulars of the discovery of the armlet:—"As far as I know, this bracelet was found in Rannoch, at the foot of Schiehallion, along with a similar one and some other smaller articles, in a vessel of some kind

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xv. p. 344 ; see also *Scotland in Pagan Times, The Iron Age*, p. 156.

which was broken to pieces at the time of the finding. The bracelet was subsequently given to Colonel John Macdonald of Dalchosnie, afterwards General Sir John Macdonald. The date of finding must have been somewhere between 1820 and 1830. At that time the property on which the find occurred belonged to a Stewart, Sir John's first cousin."

The find of two Late Celtic armlets at Bunrannoch before 1833 is referred to by Dr John Alexander Smith in his description of the armlets of this character in the Museum, printed in the *Proceedings*, vol. xv. p. 337, where an armlet of the massive kind is described and figured as the specimen presumably found with this one, and another of the same kind is described and figured which was presumed to be this one.

There can now be little doubt, however, that one of the two armlets thus described by Dr Smith did not come from Rannoch, but from Sticheil in Roxburghshire. Since the time when he wrote, the publication by the Scottish History Society of Bishop Pococke's *Tours in Scotland*, edited by Mr D. W. Kemp, has thrown further light on the matter. It shows, at p. 331, a drawing of an armlet of this kind made by Pococke in 1760, when the armlet was in the possession of Sir Robert Pringle at Sticheil House. The drawing is somewhat crude, but from certain characteristics which it gives, and which are possessed by none of the armlets known to be in existence except the one in question, there can be no doubt of its identity. Pococke's description of it as being much worn towards the broad part at one end, and only a little at the corresponding part on the same side towards the other expansion, also corresponds with these special features of the armlet itself. He mentions that half of another armlet also found with it is worn on the same sides. This apparently means that two of these armlets were found together, and he adds that they were found "three feet under ground in digging a well," at Sticheil. The half armlet is not now known to exist. The Sticheil armlet (fig. 3) measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in greatest diameter, 2 inches in the width of the band across the middle, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in the width of each of the expanded extremities, the oval perforations in the expansions measuring $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in the longest diameter. The weight of the armlet

is $21\frac{1}{4}$ ounces, and its rounded extremities appear to have been partially pared away.

The other armlet, here shown as fig 4, and represented by Dr Smith as fig. 17 (*Proceedings*, vol. xv. p. 337), is undoubtedly the armlet found in Rannoch, along with the one here shown as fig. 1, and now presented by the daughters of General Sir John Macdonald. It is entered in the catalogue of the Museum printed in 1849 as an "Antique Bronze Armilla, in form of a snake, found in the district of Bunrannoch, Perthshire, on the northern declivity of Schiehallion." Although only one armlet from Bunrannoch is entered in the catalogue of the Museum of 1849, and nothing is said of its having been one of the two which were found together, it is fortunate that this fact can be established from the Society's records, for the two

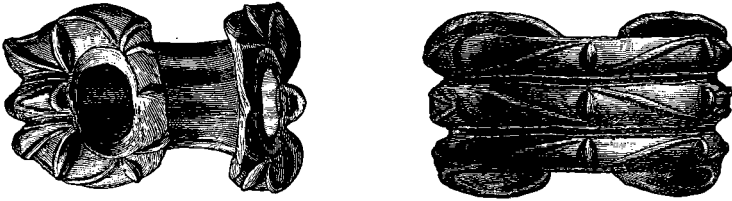


Fig. 3. Late Celtic Armlet found at Stichel. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

had been exhibited together at the meeting of the Society held on April 22nd, 1833, as appears from the following entry in the minutes of that date: "There were also exhibited two bronze bracelets or armlets in the form of serpents, the one weighing 1 lb. 2 oz., the other 1 lb. $14\frac{1}{2}$ oz. avoirdupois. These armlets were found in the district of Bunrannoch, Perthshire, on the northern declivity of the mountain Schiehallion, and were exhibited to the Society, and temporarily deposited in the Museum, by Mr Alexander Stewart, Edinburgh."

The weight of the armlet now presented to the Museum being exactly 1 lb. 2 oz. avoirdupois, there can be no doubt of its identity with one of the armlets exhibited in 1833 and temporarily deposited in the Museum by Mr Alexander Stewart. In all probability this armlet was subsequently withdrawn and given to Sir John Macdonald, while the larger

armlet remained in the Museum, as testified by the entry in the catalogue of 1849. It is there described as being "in form of a snake," and though not so obviously serpentiform, it differs from the majority of the massive armlets of its class in presenting the appearance of a snake-like band, folded in opposite directions against the middle part of the body. There is indeed a discrepancy in the weight, which is given in the minute-book as 1 lb. 14½ oz. avoirdupois, whereas the armlet actually weighs 1 lb. 15¾ oz. avoirdupois. However this may be accounted for,

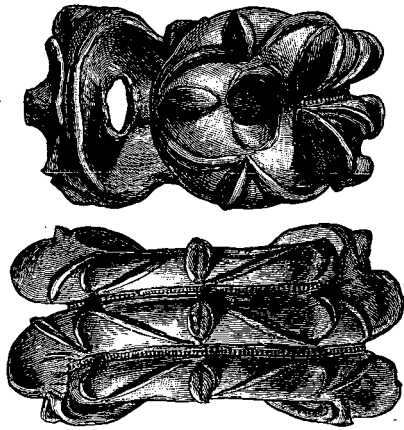


Fig. 4. Late Celtic Armlet found at Bunnanoch. (½.)

there is no question that in 1849 there was one of the Rannoch armlets in the Museum, which then possessed only two armlets of this class. They are described by Dr Daniel Wilson in the first edition of his *Pre-historic Annals of Scotland* (1851), p. 448, as being then in the Museum, without definite localities, but as one of them is figured, it is recognisable as the one which Dr Smith also figured as from Bunnanoch. Its weight is given by Dr Daniel Wilson as fully two pounds avoirdupois. The other, which is described as slightly smaller, was believed to have been dug up in Argyllshire, on what evidence Dr Wilson does not say, but as its dimensions, as given by him, correspond with the measurement of the armlet figured by Bishop Pococke and seen by him at Stinchell

in 1760, there can be no doubt that the two armlets in the Museum 1849-51 must have been these two, and that the larger came from Rannoch and the smaller from Stitchell.

There is in the Museum another Late Celtic ornament of bronze from Stitchell, which was presented in 1782 by Sir James Pringle of Stitchell, the son and successor of Sir Robert Pringle, who entertained Bishop Pococke in 1760. It is a massive collar of cast bronze formed in two moieties, jointed in the middle so as to open on a hinge in the back, and fasten in front by a pin and socket. The width of the slightly oval



Fig. 5. Late Celtic jointed Collar found at Stitchell. ($\frac{1}{4}$.)

opening is 6 inches one way and 5 inches the other, the breadth of the flattened ring being $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in the middle of the front. In the minute-book of the Society in which the presentation is entered, at June 25th, 1782, it is described as "an ancient Roman cestus of brass, discovered in the year 1747, when digging for a well, about 7 feet below the surface at the east end of the village of Stitchell." It is accordingly entered in the catalogue of the Museum of 1849 in the "Roman" section, while the other two armlets are entered under the "Bronze Period." The characteristics of the form and ornamentation of the

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collar, however, leave no doubt that it belongs to the Late Celtic; and not to the Roman group of relics. The evidence does not suffice to show whether this well which was being dug at the east end of the village of Sticheil in 1747, was the same well out of which the armlet seen by Bishop Pococke in 1760 came. But the probabilities appear to be against the view that there were two finds from two different wells, and perhaps Pococke's reference to the half of another armlet may be explained by the fact that this collar is jointed in the middle, and one-half of it may have been shown to Pococke.

MASSIVE BRONZE ARMLET FROM ROGART IN SUTHERLAND.

In the present connection there is an opportunity of putting on record the recent discovery of another of the massive bronze armlets of the Late Celtic period at Rogart in Sutherland (fig. 6), which has been communicated to me by Rev. Dr J. Joass, Golspie. It was found in April 1901 in ploughing a field on the croft of Achavrail, in the parish of Rogart. The crofter noticed it on the coulter of the plough, and threw it aside at first, but subsequently bethought him that it might have some interest for the Sutherland Museum at Dunrobin Castle, and brought it to Dr Joass "as some sort of old curtain-ring." It is of the transition variety, which assumes a conventional serpentine form, the band being folded in opposite directions against the middle of the body, and terminating abruptly at each side a little short of the commencement of the swelling of the bend to form the loop round the opening in the centre of each rounded end of the penannular armlet. It thus resembles the similar armlet from Bunnanoch, and also the one from Seafield, near Kinghorn, and makes the third of this particular variety found in Scotland. The ornamentation is of the same general character of design and execution which is peculiar to this class of bronze armlets: As in the majority of cases, the enamel plaques which presumably filled the circular perforations have perished. The weight of the armlet is $28\frac{1}{2}$ oz. avoirdupois.

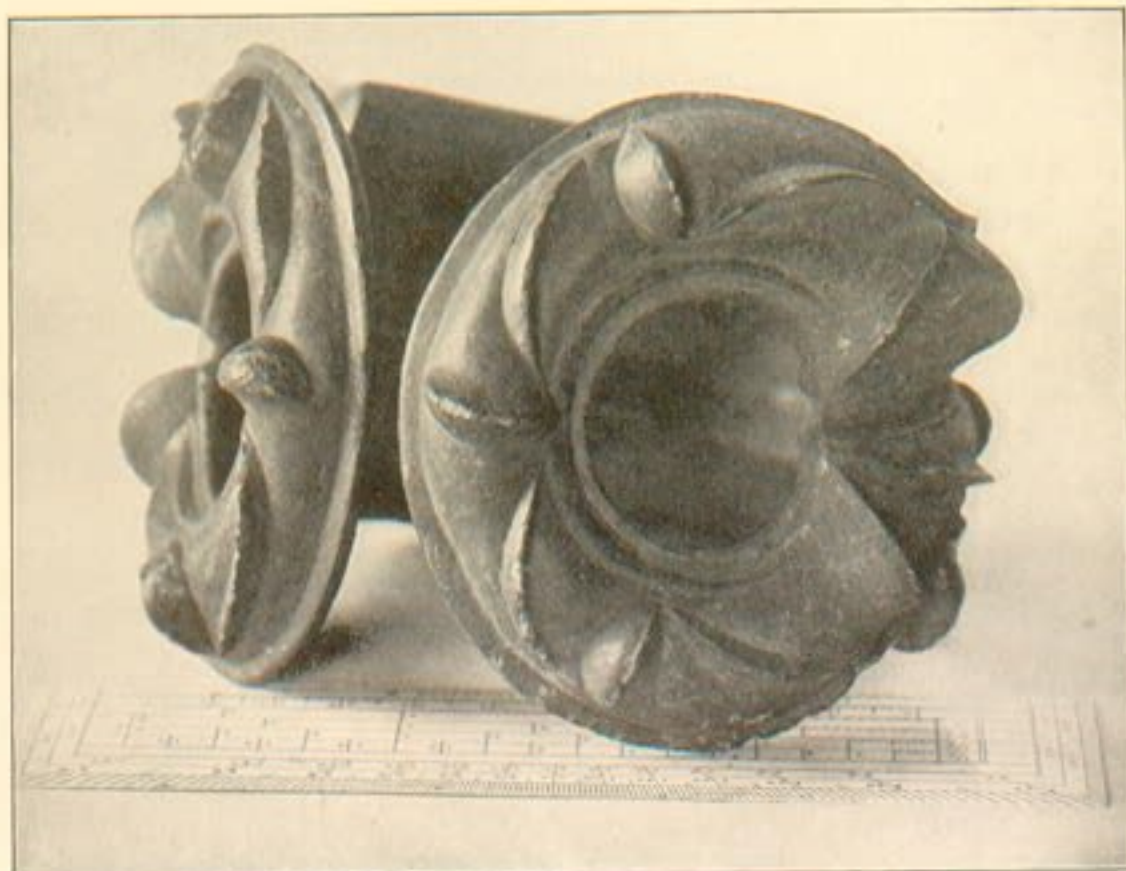


Fig. 6. Bronze Armlet found near Rogart, Sutherland. (8.) (From a photograph by A. M. Dixon, Golspie.)

MONDAY, 9th May 1904.

Mr GILBERT GOUDIE in the Chair.

A Ballot having been taken, Mr ALEXANDER MACKIE, Clerk of Works, Abernethy, recommended by the Council, was elected a Corresponding Member of the Society.

The following were duly elected Fellows :—

Sir MATTHEW ARTHUR, Bart., of Carlung, Fullarton, Troon.

EDWARD J. BROOK, of Hoddam Castle, Ecelefechan.

Rev. JAMES STEEL, D.D., Vicar of Howorth, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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

(1) By LUDOVIC M'LELLAN MANN, F.S.A. Scot.

Two *Tribula*, or Threshing-Sledges of wood, having their under surfaces studded with rows of chipped flints, for threshing corn on a threshing-floor, from Cavalla, in European Turkey. (See the subsequent Communication by Mr Mann.)

Three Oval Trimmed Flakes of Quartz, which the donor saw made at Broussa as "teeth" to be mounted in a *tribulum* or threshing-sledge; and one similar Flake of Flint from Xanthi.

(2) By J. M. MACKINLAY, F.S.A. Scot.

Influence of the Pre-Reformation Church on Scottish Place Names. 8vo. 1904.

(3) By ROBERT MUNRO, M.D., LL.D., *Vice-President*, the Author.

Man as Artist and Sportsman in the Palæolithic Period. Reprint from the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

(4) By the FRANCO-SCOTTISH SOCIETY.

Transactions of the Franco-Scottish Society. Vol. iii., Part 2.

- (5) By J. T. WALKER, Senator for Sydney, N. S. Wales, through JOHN HUME, London.

Photographic copies of the Charters of East and West Reston to George Achincralb, of which type-written copies were previously given by Mr John Hume, as noticed in the present volume at p. 254.

The following articles acquired by the Purchase Committee for the Museum and Library during the session, 30th November to 9th May, were also exhibited :—

A Flint Knife and Scraper, ten Whorls, and three pierced Stones, from Hawick.

A Collection of Flint Implements, from Low Mye, Stoneykirk.

Urn, of food-vessel type, from a cist at Rosemarkie. The urn (fig. 1) is 6 inches in height and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter across the mouth,

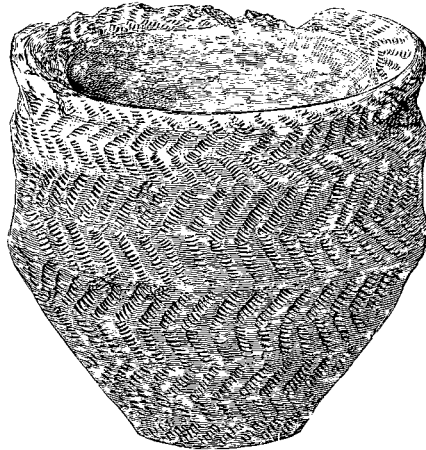


Fig. 1. Urn of food-vessel type found in a cist at Rosemarkie. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

widening slightly to the shoulder moulding about 3 inches underneath the rim. The rim is slightly everted and bevelled towards the interior, and there is a slight moulding nearly half-way between it and the

shoulder. From the shoulder the under part slopes regularly to the base, which is 3 inches in diameter. The whole exterior surface is covered with a chevrony ornamentation, as with the teeth of a comb-like instrument, the markings being about an inch in length, fully $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in breadth, and having about 17 tooth-marks in that space. The interior bevel of the lip is also ornamented in the same manner. It was found in a cist which was discovered in digging a drain in the grounds of the Manse at Rosemarkie last autumn. The cist was about 3 feet long by 26 inches wide at one end and 23 inches at the other, and about 30 inches deep. The cover was a large boulder stone, 4 feet 6 inches in length, from 3 to 4 feet in width, and about a foot thick. The sides and ends of the cist, which lay nearly north and south, were rough flat-sided boulders of whinstone. The interment was unburnt, and the urn was in the south end of the cist. The site of the grave was on the top of a rising ground facing the Moray Firth. The circumstances of the find were kindly communicated by Rev. J. Macdowal, Minister of Rosemarkie, and the urn was recovered by the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer.

Stone Ball, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, with four slightly projecting discs, found on the top of Ben Tharsom, Ardross, Ross-shire.

Two Crampits of Leather, with long spikes in the soles, worn by shepherds in winter, from Killin.

Silver Badge Prize, of the Académie Française de Le Brun, Edimbourg, 1780.

A Sewed Sampler, in frame, dated 1853.

A Collection of Stone Implements, chiefly from Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, comprising—11 Stone Axes; 1 perforated Hammer; 3 Stone Balls, with projecting discs; 54 Flint Arrow-heads, with stems and barbs; 100 Arrow-heads, of leaf and lozenge shape; and 2 hollow-based Arrow-heads; also 16 large oval Flint Implements from Montana, United States.

Ancient Scottish Harp, long in possession of the family of the Robertsons of Lude, and afterwards of the Steuarts of Dalguise. This

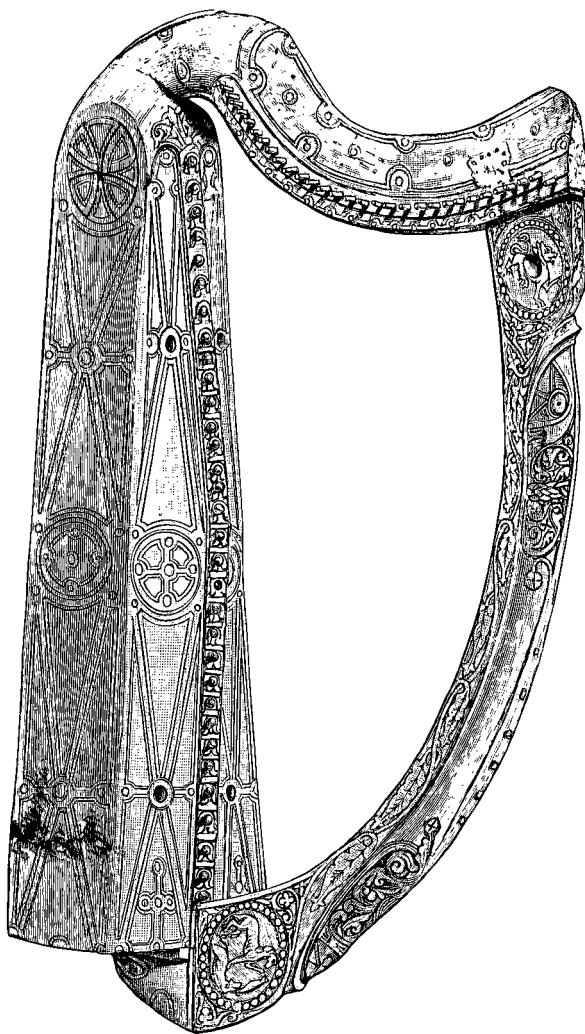


Fig. 2. The Dalgwise Harp.

fine example of the ancient Scottish harp, which, with another of larger size and less elaborately ornamented, has been exhibited on loan in the Museum since 1880, was acquired at the Dalguise sale in March last. It has been previously figured and described by the late Charles D. Bell, F.S.A. Scot., in the *Proceedings*, vol. xv., and the illustration of the harp and a summary of the description are here repeated:—

The length of the harp (fig. 2) is 31 inches, and the extreme breadth 18 inches. The sounding box, which is hollowed out of the solid, is 5 inches wide at the top and 12 inches at the bottom, with a thickness of $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and has a swell of front from ends and sides to the middle of the string-hole band of $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The string-hole band is pierced by 29 holes, each of which is protected on the upper side by a horse-shoe-shaped brass border.

The upper arm of the harp, which carries the pins for the strings, has a peculiar double curve, altering in section from oval at the junction with the top of the box to triangular at the outer extremity. It is strengthened on each side by a brass band $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in width, pierced by 29 pin-holes, in each of which is a pin. There is an additional pin-hole below the line of the others in front, in which there is a shorter pin.

The bow or front of the harp rises 4 inches from the chord of the arc of the inner curve, which measures 23 inches. The flat part at the upper insertion measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and the corresponding part of the lower insertion $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 2 inches in width and thickness. The front of the middle portion has a rounded swell, ending both ways in boldly carved heads of animals, and the projecting block at the bottom of the box against which the lower end of the bow is fixed is also carved into the similitude of an animal's head.

The ornamentation on the box and upper arm of the harp consists of geometrical patterns of lines, circles, and crosses, except on the upper part of the front of the box (fig. 3), where there is a fine semicircular panel of foliaceous ornament. The right and left sides of the bow or front of the harp have each near the upper and lower ends a circular space 3 inches

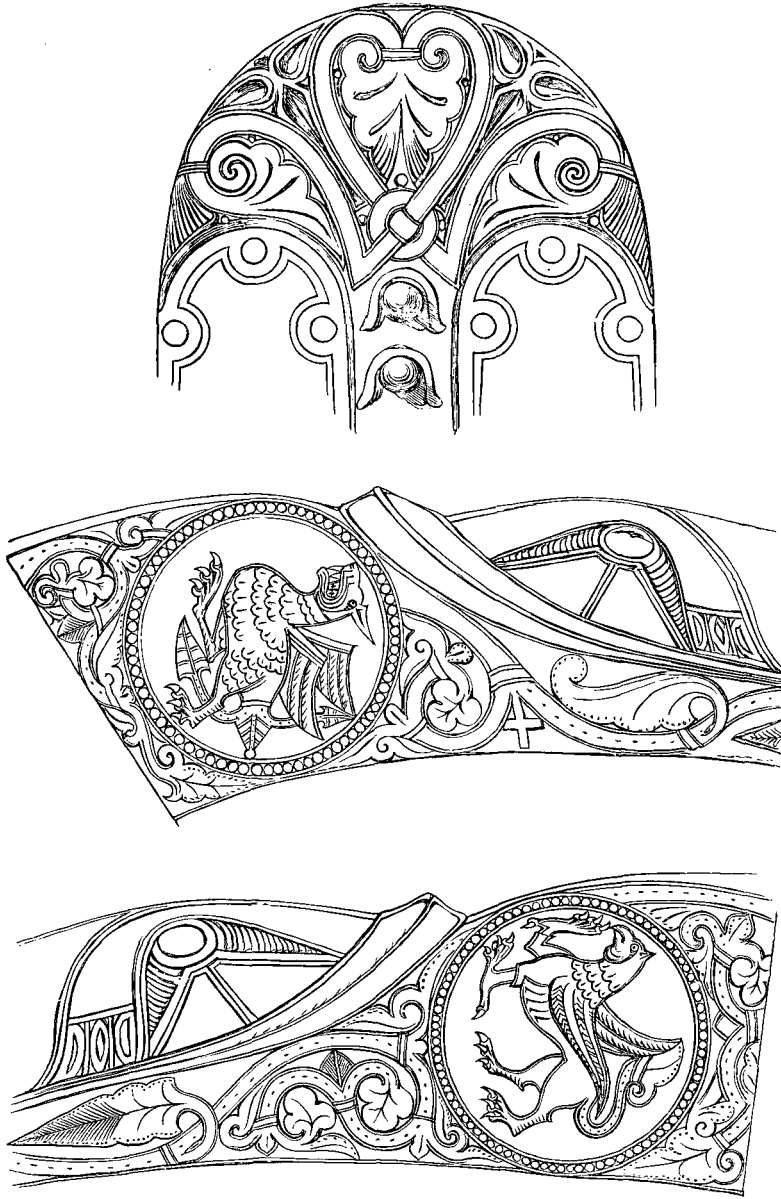


Fig. 3. Ornamentation of the upper part of the box and of the upper and lower ends of the bow of the Dalguise Harp on the left side.

in diameter surrounded by a pellet border. That on the upper right side is filled with a figure of a lion, unfortunately disfigured by a circular sunk space made subsequently for a setting of some kind. On the lower end the medallion-like space contains a group of animal figures consisting of a horse with its left fore-paw, uplifted over a crouching animal with a twisted tail ending in a triangular-shaped leaf, and holding a fish in its mouth by the head. On the lower left side (fig. 3) the medallion-like space contains a griffin with its right fore-paw uplifted, and the upper a nondescript animal with wings and a triple tail ending in triangular leaves. The flat part of the bow between these medallions is ornamented with a running pattern of foliageous scroll-work, while the inner curve or edge is occupied by a pattern of interlaced linear ornament. On the rounded swell of the front, next to the animals' heads, are two symmetrical patterns of interlaced work of foliageous scrolls carved in bold relief.

Both these harps were described and figured by Mr John Gunn in his *Historical Inquiry respecting the Performance on the Harp in the Highlands*, published under the patronage of the Highland Society of Scotland in 1807. They have also been recently described and figured with great care and accuracy by Mr R. B. Armstrong, F.S.A. Scot., in a work on *The Irish and Highland Harps*, 1904.

The following books purchased for the Library :—

Thoyt's How to Decipher Old Documents; Laking's Armoury of Windsor Castle; Taylor's Journey to Edenborough in Scotland; Chrystal's Kingdom of Kippen; Joyce's Social History of Ireland; A Royalist Family and Prince Charles Edward, 1689-1789; Fittis's Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth, Renwick's Peebles in Early History; Forrest's History and Antiquities of St Leonard's Hospital, Edinburgh.

There was also exhibited :—

By Mr ALEXANDER GRAY, New Deer, Aberdeenshire.

A Mould of Sandstone, for flat bronze axes and bars, 9 inches by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in thickness, much weathered on one face,

bearing on the best-preserved face a mould for a flat bronze axe $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth at the cutting end and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the butt end. The cavity is smoothed, about half an inch in depth in the middle, rising towards either end. On the reverse face are two cavities, both much weathered. One is for a flat bronze axe $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, by about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth across the cutting face, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch at the butt end. The other cavity is for a bar $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by about $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in width. On one of the edges of the mould is a cavity for a chisel-shaped instrument 6 inches in length by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in width at the broader end, narrowing very gradually to little more than half an inch at the other end. The difference is so slight that it may be merely intended for a mould for a bar or ingot. This mould was found about two years ago in the parish of New Deer, Aberdeenshire, and is now in Mr Gray's collection.

The following Communications were read :—