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A HOARD OF BRONZE OBJECTS FROM WESTER ORD, ROSS-SHIRE, AND AN EARLY IRON AGE BURIAL AT BLACKNESS CASTLE, LINLITHGOWSHIRE. BY JAMES S. RICHARDSON, F.S.A.Scot.

HOARD OF BRONZE OBJECTS FROM WESTER ORD.

In October last, I perceived in the shop of Mr Murdoch, Dealer in Antiquities, Inverness, a collection of bronze objects, one of which I recognised as having been illustrated in Dr Joseph Anderson's *Scotland in Pagan Times, Bronze and Stone Ages*. Realising the importance of my discovery, I secured the entire collection, which Mr Murdoch told me he had purchased at the sale of household effects at Invergordon Castle. The hoard consists of two socketed axes, a curved socketed tool, a gouge, a socketed knife, a penannular armlet, and two fragments of a neck-ring.

All these objects belong to the end of the Bronze Age, exhibit the same degree of patination, and have now been identified as the hoard unearthed from under the corner of a large earth-fast boulder on the farm of Wester Ord, on the Invergordon property, in 1859, where apparently they had been buried wrapped up in cloth.

At a meeting of this Society held on 14th February 1870, the curved socketed tool and the neck-ring fragments were exhibited by Mr M'Leod of Cadboll, on whose property they had been found, and a full description of these two exhibits and an illustration of the former is given in *Proceedings*, vol. viii. p. 309. From this note we learn that there were at that time three fragments of the neck-ring in existence, and also that there was another penannular armlet.

DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECTS.

Socketed Axes.—The larger (fig. 1, No. 1) measures $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches long and $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches across the cutting edge. The external diameter at the mouth of the socket, which has the lip thickened by a moulding, is $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch by $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch. The other (fig. 1, No. 2) is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch across the cutting edge, and has a similar thickening at the lip of the socket mouth, the external diameter of which is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch; the lip is imperfect, as is also the loop.

Curved Socketed Tool.—This implement (fig. 1, No. 3) measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches along the outer curve. The socket is $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches deep, and has a moulding on the outside of the mouth, its external diameter being $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch. The socket tapers rapidly into a midrib which is confined to the inner side of the blade; it is furnished near the mouth with pin-holes piercing the socket from front to back. The blade is leaf-shaped, and measures $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch at its greatest width.

Gouge.—This tool (fig. 1, No. 4) is $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches long, and the external diameter of the socket is $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Below the lip on the outside the implement is encircled by four incised lines. The mouth of the socket is imperfect on one side.

Socketed Knife.—This object (fig. 1, No. 5) is $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches long; the blade is broken at the point, damaged on the cutting edges, and measures $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch at its greatest breadth. The remains of a rectangular socket with rounded corners show one of two rivet-holes which had pierced the socket from side to side.

Penannular Armlet.—The ornament (fig. 1, No. 6) measures in diameter 3 inches by $2\frac{9}{16}$ inches; the ring is of oval section, measuring $\frac{3}{8}$ inch by $\frac{5}{16}$ inch in section, and expanding at the terminals, which have a greater projection on the outside.

Neck-ring Fragments.—These (fig. 1, No. 7) measure $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches and $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches long respectively. The diameter of the rod is $\frac{5}{16}$ inch. Round the outside of the ring, placed at centres varying from $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart, is a series of small cup-like hollows, having lips of greater projection on the sides than at the ends. These are the remains of small loops in each of which was probably hung a small ring similar to those on the fine necklet found at the Braes of Gight, Aberdeenshire,¹ illustrated in fig. 1, No. 1, on p. 156 of this volume. One of the fragments has an expanding end, which is pierced by a small hole running obliquely from the end towards the inside of the curve, possibly for the purpose of fixing a ring or other terminal.

The curved socketed tool is the finest of the three known Scottish

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxv. p. 183.

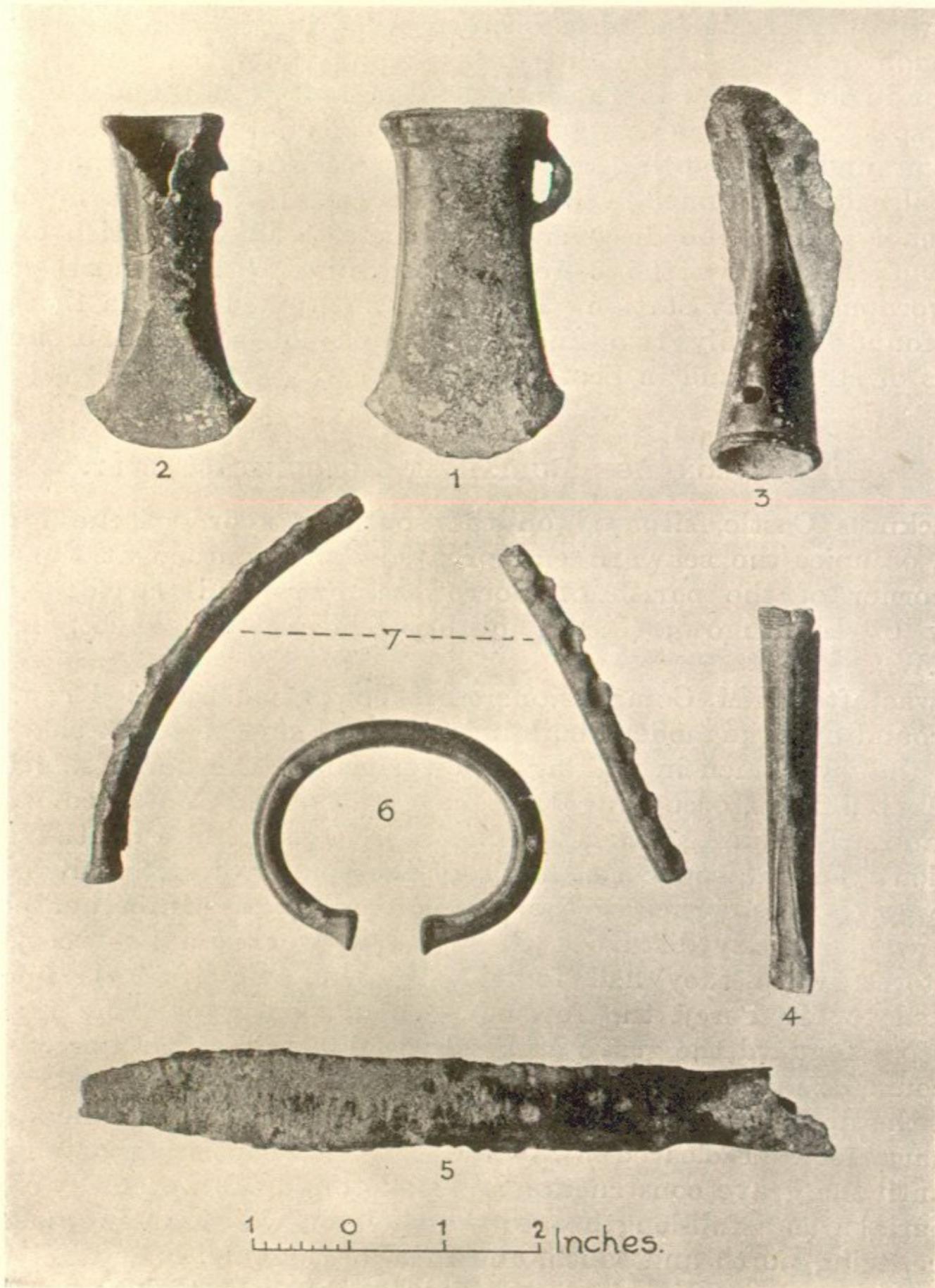


Fig. 1. Hoard of Bronze Objects from Wester Ord, Ross-shire.

examples, all of which are preserved in our National Collection. The socketed knife must also be considered a rare type of implement, as only five other specimens have been recorded in Scotland. Gouges also are seldom found in this country, this being the seventh noted. It is singular in length and in the incised ornamentation round the mouth of the socket. The neck-ring is the second example of its kind which has come under my notice, the other being the one from the Braes of Gight already mentioned. On the 6-inch O.S. map, the farm of Ord, presumably where the discovery was made, is in the parish of Ross-keen, and lies below the 50-foot contour-line, $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile north-east of Invergordon Railway Station. It may be mentioned that in this parish were found the only two known examples of socketed bronze axe moulds of stone found in Scotland.

EARLY IRON AGE BURIAL AT BLACKNESS CASTLE.

Blackness Castle, situated on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, occupies the seaward end of a low promontory at the north-east corner of the parish of Borrowstounness and Carriden, in the county of Linlithgow; (O.S., Linlithgowshire, 6-inch sheet, ii., N.W. and S.W.).

It was after H.M. Commissioners of Works had assumed control of the ground and the modern buildings, situated on the south side of the castle, that workmen in making a flower-bed on the north side of the barrack buildings, occupying the south side of this outer court, came upon an Early Iron Age burial. The site is 70 yards in a south-westerly direction from the south-east angle of the south tower, and 10 feet east of the north-west corner of the barrack buildings. Unfortunately, the grave was partially disturbed through the workmen not recognising its interest until they had found a bronze armlet. This find was reported to Mr Percy, the foreman, who at once took the necessary steps to safeguard the grave and its contents until a proper examination could be made.

On the discovery being reported to me, I went to Blackness on 8th February 1924. I cleared away the covering consisting of shell and grit until the grave construction and skeleton (fig. 2) were fully exposed. The burial was a full-length one; the skeleton was 14 inches below the surface, lying north and south, and face downwards. The head was to the north, the legs being inclined slightly to the east. The arms were against the sides, bent at the elbows, the hands lying near the chin. It was evident that the skeleton had been disturbed, as I found the right humerus inverted.

The sides of the grave were formed by a setting of small seaworn stones, but I found that the workmen had removed those which had enclosed the legs of the skeleton (fig. 3). The surviving part of the

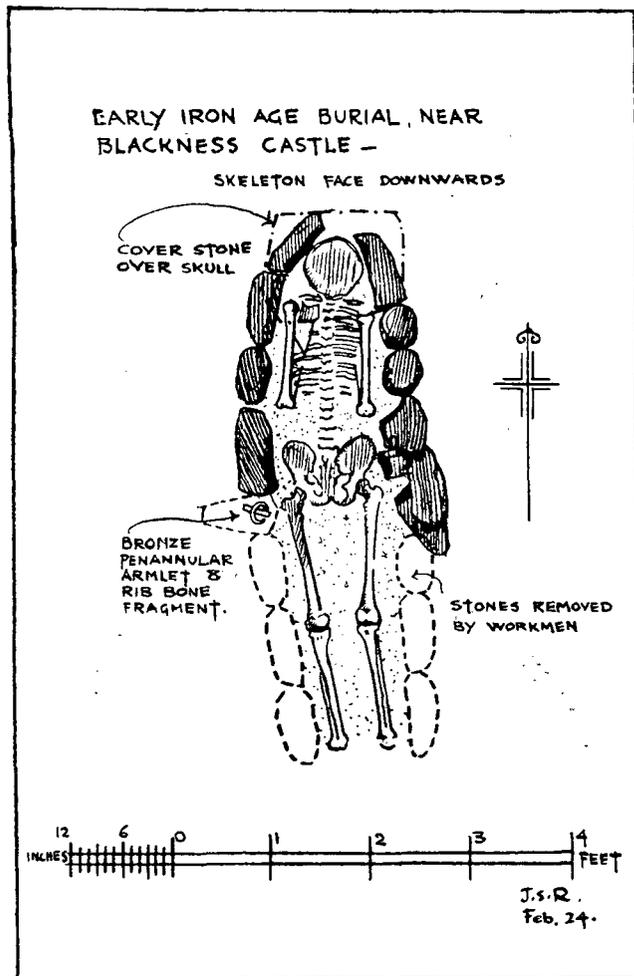


Fig. 2. Plan of Grave at Blackness Castle.

grave was 3 feet long, and measured on an average 15 inches wide. A flat stone measuring 17 inches at its greatest length, 13 inches at its greatest width, and 3 inches deep, covered the skull, which lay crushed, and this appears to have been the only remaining cover-stone. Probably the others were removed at some previous time.

The bronze armlet (fig. 4) was lying below one of the small stones near the pelvis on the west side. It had been replaced here by Mr



Fig. 3. Photograph of Northern Half of Grave at Blackness Castle.

Percy, where it was stated it had been found. Adhering to this relic was a small fragment of a rib bone, stained green owing to its long

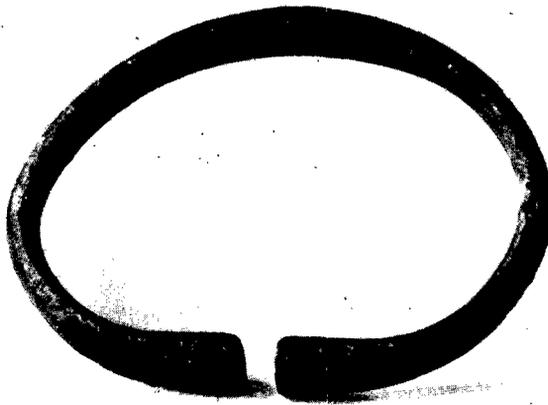


Fig. 4. Bronze Armlet from Blackness Castle. (†.)

contact with the bronze. The workman who made the discovery was positive that he had found the armlet lying in the position described. The close association of these two relics leads to the assumption that the armlet was on the arm and lay against the ribs. Its removal from

the original position probably accounts for the disturbing and misplacing of the right humerus as described.

The armlet is of a type new to Scottish archæology; it is of bronze, penannular, and of oval section, flattened in the inside. In outline it presents a swelling in the middle, fining down, then expanding gradually towards the ends. It is ornamented on the outside in low relief. The ends and the middle have vertical ridged bands, the spaces between these being filled with horizontal reeds. On the thinner part of this object there is an indication of a chevron ornament. The armlet measures $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in cross diameter externally, and must have been subject to long use, as the pattern on the periphery is much worn.

This is the fourth single grave of the Early Iron Age recorded in Scotland. Of the three previously recorded, the examples at Moredun, Liberton parish, Midlothian,¹ and Kippit Hill, Dolphinton parish, Lanarkshire,² were short cists resembling those of the Bronze Age, while the third, discovered at Burnmouth, Berwickshire,³ was a long cist like the example described. Two groups of burial cairns discovered in the sand-dunes near Gullane, East Lothian,⁴ also belong to this period.

Professor Arthur Robinson, Edinburgh University, who examined the bones, states that "they are those of a female about thirty years old.

"The femora are platymeric and the tibiæ are platycnemic, a condition which is present in other skeletons of the Iron Age.

"Most of the bones are broken and parts of them are absent. The skull is broken, and some of the fragments are not present, but with the exception of the conditions mentioned above, none of the bones show any features of special importance which would enable them to be separated from bones of present-day people."

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxviii. p. 427.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. lviii. p. 143.

² *Ibid.*, vol. lv. p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvi. p. 654, and vol. xlii. p. 332.