I.

ON AN ANCIENT WOODEN IMAGE, FOUND IN NOVEMBER LAST AT BALLACHULISH PEAT-MOSS. By Sir ROBERT CHRISTISON, Bart., D.C.L., LL.D. M.D., F.S.A. Scot.

In November 1880, in digging through peat at Ballachulish for the foundation of a wall in the grounds of the Very Rev. J. R. A. Chinnery Haldane, LL.B., Dean of Argyll, the workmen came upon a wooden human figure, apparently of great age, representing a female of almost life size. An interesting popular account of this discovery was given in the "Inverness Courier" of 9th December by a well-known archæologist, the Rev. Alexander Steuart, minister of the parish of Ballachulish; who has arrived at the conclusion that the image is an idol representing one of the deities of the ancient Scandinavians, who were in the habit of visiting the coast of the West Highlands, especially about a thousand years ago, for the sake of pillage and plunder. As farther inquiry by experienced members of the Antiquarian Society led to the surmise, that the object thus brought to light is in some measure unique, and in all respects of a denomination extremely rare, it became desirable that a scientific account of the matter should be put on permanent record. Mr Steuart, on whom this duty naturally fell, declined to undertake it on the ground of his distance from the necessary opportunities of literary research; and was good enough to request that I should be his substitute. I have accordingly made inquiry into the facts of the case, which have been carefully

investigated, some of them at my suggestion, by Mr Steuart and Mr Chinnery Haldane. These I beg now to submit to the Society. They derive peculiar interest, owing to the liberality of the latter gentleman, who has presented the image to the Society's Museum, where it is now safely lodged.

The situation where this image was found is peculiar, and deserves description at the outset. It is a flat plain, in most places a dead level, bounded abruptly on the north and south by steep hills of the first and second order among Highland mountains. This plain is the bottom of a deep bay, or arm of the sea, which branches eastward from the Linnhé Loch, and meets the western opening of the united magnificent gorges of Glencoe and Loch Leven. The plain separates the bay from Loch Leven, which extends eight miles farther inland eastward as a land-locked salt-water lake. For there is a communication with it from the bay by a long, very narrow, deep, river-like cut at the very foot of the steep bounding mountains on the south. This strait is Ballachulish Ferry, a familiar but picturesque obstruction to travellers and the neighbouring population. Tradition and a few names of places indicate that the bay was visited in ancient times by the Scandinavians, probably for safe anchorage as well as the facility of plunder. The bay affords good refuge for vessels except in northerly storms, from which small craft can obtain shelter by running through the strait to Loch Leven.

The highway from the north, after following a very narrow tract on the north side of the bay between the steep hill-slope and the sea, turns abruptly at right angles across the valley on the sea-edge of the plain for three-quarters of a mile to Loch Leven Hotel and the ferry. The geologist, in travelling by this highway, can easily see, as he approaches and follows the crossing, that the road over it runs on the top of a raised beach. Numerous evidences exist on the west coast to show that the sea had stood about 50 feet higher on the land than now. I have myself recognised this fact at Cuilquaonna, the northern point of Ballachulish Bay, at the beach before Ardsheal House on the shore opposite, and above all many years ago at the rocky conglomerate bluffs forming both horns of the bay of Oban. The Ordnance Survey map indicates 46 and 47

feet as the elevation of the roadway and other parts of the plain above the present high-water level; so that at one time the entire plain, including the place where the image was found, formed the bottom of the sea.

The plain at its northern edge is abruptly connected with a high hill, whose slope is steep, partly grassy, and partly covered with natural wood, chiefly consisting of oak. A stream descending from the hill crosses the plain, and is joined by small tributary rills arising within the plain itself. It will be seen afterwards that there is here every condition for the speedy formation of a peat-moss, on the outflow of water becoming accidentally obstructed. The plain in fact was at one time nothing else but a peat field three-quarters of a mile long and about a third of a mile in breadth. But much of it has been reclaimed and converted into agricultural fields; and the level has been altered in some places by peat digging.

The annexed plan, copied from the six inch Ordnance map, shows the plain of Ballachulish Moss and the ferry. The site of the image is indicated by an *; that of two cairns containing cinerary cists by a ×; the stones of a cist found not far from the image by a +; a great store of arrowheads and other flints, discovered some years ago, by an (arrow mark); the trunks of buried oaks by =; a small plot of ground, known as Fridda's Field [Gorstain Fridaig] by a ‡; an adjoining bay, known as Camus-Fridaig, by a **; and Mr Chinnery Haldane's house, not in existence at the time of the survey, by a ¶. Besides the archæological remains here enumerated, five other cists have been disinterred in Mr Steuart's time, and a great part of the field remains still unexplored. But nothing had been previously found at all analogous to the discovery of November last. The localities here mentioned have been fixed by Mr Steuart.

The image lay on the gravel about 130 yards from the nearest shore of Loch Leven; and by levelling, Mr Steuart, at my request, ascertained that its elevation above the sea is almost 50 feet. I have since observed that one of the Ordnance numbers, 47, happens to be near the very spot. This is the height of the raised beach here, as well as at various other parts of the west coast. The image lay on its face, covered with a sort of wicker work; and several pole-like sticks lying near it suggested the idea that it

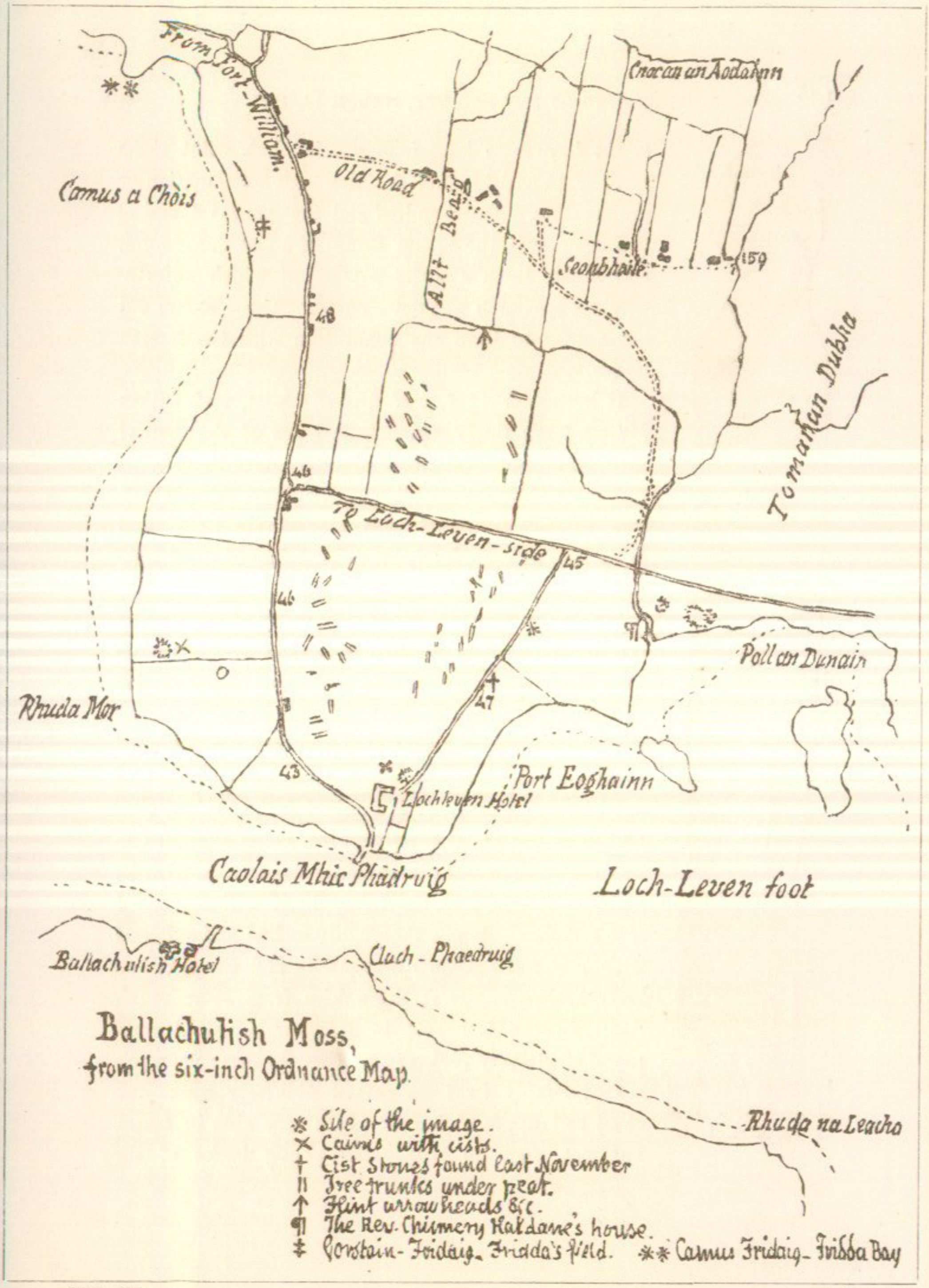
From Fort-William.
Old Road
Camus a Chòis
Allt Beag
Cnoc an Aodainn
Seombhaile
159
48
46
45
47
43
Tomakan
Dubha
Loch-Leven-side
Poll an Dunain
Rhuda Mor
Port Eoghainn
Lochleven Hotel
Caolais Mhic Phàdruig
Loch-Leven foot
Ballachulish Hotel
Cluch - Phaedruig
Rhuda na Leacho
Ballachulish Moss,
from the six-inch Ordnance Map.
* Site of the image.
× Cairns with cists.
† Cist Stones found last November
|| Tree trunks under peat.
↑ Flint arrowheads &c.
¶ The Rev. Chirmery Haldane's house.
‡ Corstain-Fridaig. Fridda's field.
** Camus Fridaig - Fribba Bay

Fig. 1.
Image of Oak from Ballachulish Peat Moss, 4 ft. 10 in. high.

might have been kept in a wattled hut. But these remains proved too frail for thorough examination or preservation. One hundred and ten yards off, and at the same level, the square stones of a cist were found, and beside them a white powder, of which unfortunately a specimen was not secured. These stones did not appear to have any connection with the human image.

It lay under $4\frac{1}{4}$ feet of firm wet peat, and within Mr Steuart's thirty years' knowledge of the district there had been 6 feet more of peat above the present surface. The peat over it is of the finest mossy structure, without trunks, branches, or woody twigs, and dries into a dense, hard, heavy peat-fuel of good quality.

The image (fig. 1) is made apparently of oak such as is often met with in Scottish bogs; and Mr Sadler has recognised in its microscopic characters the structure of the common oak of the country. It had been intended for an erect figure, standing on a flat-bottomed pedestal. Pedestal and figure have been cut out of one block of wood. It is nearly 5 feet in height over all. The feet are not represented, being supposed to be sunk to the ankles in the pedestal, so that, with an addition for the feet, the figure itself will measure 4 feet 9 inches. It was thoroughly soaked and softened with peat-water when I first saw it, and the legs had been broken across at the ankles from some rough usage in the transport to Edinburgh. It is well rounded in every part, except that the arms are represented simply by lines carved obliquely across the chest and upper abdomen. It is very slim in figure, but not more so than some young ladies of the

present day swathed in the swaddling-clothes now in fashion. Its chief peculiarities are the large size of the head, the absence of mammæ, and the development of the pubal region. The head is as wide as the trunk, and in length nearly a fourth of the whole stature. The face is oval and plump, the ears large, the nose injured, probably by pressure on the gravel, the chin round, the eyes provided with quartz pebbles for eye-balls. It is singular that there is not the slightest prominence to denote mammæ. On the contrary, the prominence of the pubal region is much exaggerated, as well as the extent of the rima upwards. This exaggeration, as will be seen presently, is not without significance. In the front of the pedestal is a large, shallow, quadrangular cavity, which probably had contained some ornament, or a decorative plate; but if anything of the kind had once been there, it has been irretrievably lost. Nowhere does there appear any trace of the figure having been attached to anything, except perhaps at the crown of the head. The very top is cut across by a level round incision, as it were the section by which the image had been separated from the rest of the block from which it had been carved. This section and the flat surfaces of the pedestal did not present any character from which might be inferred the nature or material of the tool used; and everywhere else the surface was rounded off uniformly.[1] Such being the facts, what do they indicate? What does the image purport to be? For what nation was it carved? what is its age? Could any one of these questions be answered satisfactorily, an opening would be obtained for a reply to the remainder.

This is a subject involving an amount of literary antiquarian research for which I am personally not competent. I have therefore proposed it to other able members of the Society for their investigation, but they have declined, and urged me to undertake the duty by being compiler of the

[1] The drawing is from a photograph taken in unfavourable circumstances by Moffat, and requiring a few details to be supplied from the original. The figure was long kept damp, and without the slightest fissure. At first it was proposed to preserve it permanently in a liquid. But no suitable receptacle could be devised for so long an object. It has therefore been allowed to dry, though certain to split in the process. Accordingly, already it is much deformed by wide cracks.

information which they have kindly offered me from their ample resources. With the help therefore of the Rev. Mr Steuart, of Dr Mitchell, and especially of the fund of information at the command of the Society's assistant-secretary, Mr Anderson, I venture to offer the following considerations.

In the first place, can any plausible idea of the age of the image be formed from the situation where it has been found? This question, I fear, must be answered in the negative.

It is a common observation that, when an object, the evident work of human hands, is found under a great depth of previously undisturbed peat, there is in that circumstance alone evidence of extreme antiquity. It may, but not must, be so. It has been assumed that a peat-field may be formed on any low-lying flat from which the outflow of water is accidentally obstructed, so that it becomes a swamp. Sphagnum and such other mosses, whose remains are known to constitute the principal part of peat, soon spread over the whole surface. These in long successive years constantly push new living shoots upwards, while the dead growths of previous years are gradually consolidated, with other water plants, by superincumbent pressure. At last the surface rises high enough to admit of its becoming dry by natural drainage, facilitated perhaps by some new accident removing an obstruction. Grassy and shrubby plants gradually obtain a footing in the soil, and at last the omnipresent *Erica Tetralix* and *Calluna vulgaris*. As soon as a uniform heath displaces the mosses, there is no subsequent formation of peat.

On taking a cursory survey of the section of such a peat-field, say 10 to 12 feet thick, a casual or even scientific observer will be very apt to come to the conclusion, that an enormous length of years must have passed before so great a mass of dead matter could be formed from such apparently insignificant living materials. But I am not aware of any convincing evidence from either observation or experiment, to prove very great age for a peat-field, much less to show what may have been its rate of growth; and moreover, even if that measure could be got at, where is the means of ascertaining how long the surface has become a dry heath after the mossy peat had ceased to increase? What is positively known of the

formation of peat under other circumstances should inculcate great caution in assuming extreme antiquity for any description of peat-field. For there is at least one other, and probably more frequent way for the formation of peat mosses. This is by the previous destruction and overthrow of a forest. There is positive evidence that peat fit for fuel may be thus engendered in the course of half a century, and consequently within the lifetime experience of any observant elderly man. Such evidence may be seen in a very remarkable paper in the "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London" by the first Earl of Cromertie. His lordship's account is so terse, clear, and satisfactory, and seems to be so little known in the present day, even to the learned, that no apology is needed for my transferring the main facts he describes to my present statement in his own language. The whole paper indeed might be advantageously reproduced in some work more easily accessible than that in which it is now hidden.

After a luminous general account of the origin and growth of peat, he supplies the additional information that, if dug out down to the subjacent soil, peat is not reproduced; but that, if a layer of it be left, it grows again. He adds that he had himself seen peat fit for fuel thus reproduced oftener than once in the same place; and consequently that he had instructed his people on his estates in Ross-shire to attend to this as a rule in peat-casting. His narrative then proceeds with the following graphic account of the rapid formation of a peat-field.

"In the year 1651, I being then about nineteen (twenty-one) years old, and occasionally in the parish of Lochbrun, passing from a place called Achadiscald to Gounazd, I went by a very high hill, which did rise by a constant steepness from the sea; only in less than half a mile up from the sea there is a plain about half a mile round; and from thence the hill rises in a constant steepness for more than a mile of ascent. This little plain was at that time all covered over with a firm standing wood, which was so very old, that not only the trees had no green leaves, but the bark was totally thrown off, which the old countrymen who were in my company told me was the universal manner in which firr woods did terminate; and

that in twenty or thirty years after the trees would ordinarily cast themselves up from the roots, and that they would lie in heaps till the people would cut them and carry them away. They likewise did let me see that the outside of these standing trees and for the space of 1 inch inward was dead white timber; but what was within that was good solid timber, even to the very pith, and as full of rozin as it could stand in the wood.

"Some fifteen years after or thereabouts I had occasion to come the same way, and called to mind the old wood which I had seen. Then there was not so much as a tree, or appearance of the root of any, but in place thereof the whole bounds, where the wood had stood, was all over a plain green ground covered with a plain green moss. I asked the country people who were with me what became of the wood, and who carried it away. They told me nobody was at the pains to carry it away, but that it being all overturned from the roots by winds the trees did lie so thick and swarving over one another, that the green moss [there in the British language called Fog] had overgrown the whole timber, which they said was occasioned by the moisture that came down from the high hill which was above it, and did stagnate upon that plain; and they said none could pass over it, because the scurf of the fog would not support them. I would needs try it; and accordingly I fell in to the arm-pits, but was immediately pulled up by them.

"Before the year 1699 the whole of that piece of ground was turned into a common moss, where the country people are digging turf and peats, and continue so to do. The peats are not yet of the best, and are soft and spongy, but grow better and better, and, as I am informed, it does now afford good peats.

"This matter of fact did discover the generation of mosses; and whence it is that many mosses are furnished with such timber. These highland woods are ordinarily stored with other kinds of timber, as birch, alder, ash, besides shrubs and thorns, yet we never find any of these woods remaining in the mosses.

"What the reason may be that the firr and oak do not now grow in

several countries where they are found so plentifully in the mosses, *inquirendum est*" ("Phil. Trans." 1710, vol. xxvii. 296).

The conclusions to be drawn from this remarkable testimony are amply confirmed by the investigations of De Luc, in his visit to the enormous peat moors of Bremervörde, between the mouths of the Elbe and Weser in 1778, when the rapid reclaiming of the moors laid open numerous sections of the peat. It was the custom of the inhabitants to obtain their peat for fuel by digging pits from 15 to 20 feet square and 6 feet deep. These pits soon became filled with water, in which sphagnums and other mosses in a few years covered the surface; ere long other water plants also sprung up; the vegetable mat, at length reaching the bottom, became gradually consolidated by the pressure of constantly increasing growth at the surface; and in the course of thirty years heather and other shrubs had obtained such a footing as enabled men and cattle to pass over them as on the unbroken moor. The new peat being inferior in quality, it was not dug up again for fuel; but De Luc thought from his other investigations, that a century more would in general suffice to compress and alter it into hard, dense peat of good quality. Various other facts are to be found in his elaborate inquiries, in proof that peat may be formed with a rapidity which could scarcely be preconceived. ["Lettres Physiques et Morales sur l' Histoire de la Terre et de l'Homme," 1779, v. 189, *et passim.*)

Observations to the same purport are to be seen in the work "On the Origin and Natural History of Peat Moss," published by the Rev. Dr Rennie, minister of Kilsyth, in 1807, after epistolary correspondence with De Luc. In another treatise, chiefly on reclaiming peat moss, published in 1826 by Mr Steele of Crosswoodhill, the following too brief contribution to the facts illustrating the present question also calls for careful attention. "By replacing the surface turf of a moss cut for fuel, I am informed a peat moss near Coupar-Angus grew again so as to admit of being cut for fuel twice in fifty years" ("The Natural and Agricultural History of Peat Moss," p. 15). Unfortunately no reference is given by means of which this information could be supplemented by what may have occurred since 1826. The Rev. Mr Stevenson, minister of the

adjoining parish of Glamis, has kindly undertaken to attempt the search, but with slender hopes of success. He contributes meanwhile, however, the significant fact that in that district of the country it was the custom, in letting farms with the right of peat-casting, to require the tenant to preserve and replace the surface turf, as a necessary condition for renewal of the peat. It is not very likely that this troublesome restriction would have been imposed for the benefit of a coming generation a thousand, or even an hundred years afterwards. In an able pamphlet, published in 1875 by the Rev James Peter, minister of Old Deer in Aberdeenshire,—being a paper on the extensive peat fields of the lowland or Buchan district of that county, presented to "The Club of Deir" not long before,—the author adds valuable facts and views parallel to those advanced by the preceding writers; and he gives the following unique information as to the probable age of a great, deep, old peat moss. The Buchan peat moss originally covered a district 27 miles by 15 on the average. Very much has been reclaimed. That which remains shows that the peat had varied from 1 foot to 20 feet at least in thickness; and that in very many places the foundation consists of a crowd of vast oak trunks, proving that the district had at one time been widely covered with fine forests. Now Mr Peter has shown from authentic records that these forests must have existed down to the beginning of the fourteenth century, when Edward I. of England was lord paramount over most of Scotland. But soon afterwards began the levelling of the Scottish woods; and in the course of another century so much damage thereby was held to have accrued, that the parliament passed a series of prohibitory acts, beginning in 1424, and gradually raising the penalty, till in 1587 the offence of "wilfully destroying trees" involved the punishment of death. Thus it is rendered highly probable that—since little or no increase can have taken place in the growth of the peat-field since the reclaiming improvements were in full progress near the close of last century—its age must, for the most part at least, be about 450 years. This period of time is very much under what has been generally claimed for the formation of black, firm, sound peat of good quality for fuel.

Among other home writers who may be justly considered also authorities on this subject, I must for brevity's sake confine myself to the most recent publication of the ablest scientific author who has lately investigated the question of the growth of peat. Dr Angus Smith communicated to the "Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester for 1874–75" an elaborate paper on the formation of peat, its value as fuel, and the policy and methods of promoting its cultivation. In the course of this inquiry he has entered into the question of the age and rate of growth of peat; and this is of course the only part of his important essay which I have to do with at present. He has collected many valuable facts bearing on the question, chiefly from German experience. I would advise any one who may still entertain doubts as to the rapid growth of peat, to study these details for themselves. In the present place I must be content with stating that they powerfully confirm the luminous description by Lord Cromarty, and the clear, painstaking investigations of De Luc. The conclusions at which Dr Smith arrives are such as ought to secure the concurrence of all careful inquirers, viz.:—(1) That a spongy, light, pale peat, fit for fuel, though inferior in quality, may be grown, to many feet in depth, in much less than a man's lifetime; (2) that dark, dense, heavy peat of fine quality is formed far more slowly by condensation and chemical changes of the young peat, and therefore denotes antiquity, and possibly great antiquity; (3) that there are no characters yet ascertained as intrinsically belonging to old peat,—and apart from the works of human industry or other foreign objects found in it,—which will bear out a feasible inference as to the number of centuries which it has taken to form. These are identical with the conclusions of De Luc, and at which I had myself arrived before my attention was drawn to Dr Smith's convincing researches. There is, however, another element of difficulty in the way of age-guessing to which authors have perhaps scarcely paid sufficient respect. When a peat moss, whether by merely growing to a certain level, or more generally in consequence of accidental or express drainage, has passed into the state of a permanent, dry, firm, heathery moor, the growth of peat ceases, and the firm turf may cover it for century

after century unchanged, or at least without any such change as will convey any indication how many these centuries may have been.

Here I think the matter must rest for the present. Dr Smith's paper is entitled Part I., and he informs me he has Part II. in his immediate view. We may be not without hope that the farther researches of so acute an observer may end in his supplying the antiquarian with some better measure than any now possessed for ascertaining the age of a peat field.[1] Meanwhile it is incontestably proved that peat generically may be largely formed in a few years only; and it is rendered probable that ripe-peat may form considerably faster than has been commonly supposed. There ought therefore to be an end for the present to all inferences of extreme antiquity for objects of human workmanship merely because found at the bottom of peat mosses previously undisturbed. It would probably indeed be in most instances safer to say that the antiquity of such objects gives some insight into the age of the superincumbent peat, than that any peat-field presents in itself any such characters of age as will prove antiquity in the objects found under it.

In the present case we have all the necessary elements for the rapid formation of a peat field,—a low-lying dead flat, extensive oak-clad heights immediately adjoining, oak trunks actually found in abundance under the peat, a stream from above discharging into the flat, with tributary rills from the plain itself, and a rather moist climate. At any time during past ages some Lochaber centenarian may have witnessed in his own life

[1] It is by no means difficult to subject the rate of growth of peat to experiment. Here and there, both among the Lowland hills and Highland mountains, small peat-mosses are met with called "Wall-ees" (Well-eyes) covered with bright green *Sphagnum*, on which the inexperienced, in running down a slope, are apt to leap as an inviting green turf, but with the result of immersion. They are often only a few feet or yards in length and breadth; but I have thrust a stick four feet down without reaching the bottom, and brought up sure indications of ripe black peat from below. It would be an easy matter to empty one of these well-eyes, to observe the progress of renovation of the peat, and, after complete renewal, to ascertain the progress of change at the bottom by driving a hollow tinned-iron cylinder down to it, and bringing up specimens from time to time.

time the Ballachulish peat moss formed from bottom to top by a repetition of the very process described by Earl Cromertie.

Turning, in the second place, to the image itself for indications of its age and nationality, it may be at once acknowledged to impress on the beholder an instinctive sense of very ancient, by no means venerable, barbarian art. Having regard to its last habitat, three nationalities may be kept in view,—heathen Celtic, heathen Scandinavian, and Celtic Christian.

That the Celts in pagan times worshipped idols there is clear testimony in early Irish manuscripts, as quoted by Mr O'Curry in his "Manuscript Materials for Ancient Irish History, 1861." Three instances are therein mentioned of such idols having been destroyed in different parts of Ireland by the early pioneers of Christianity. But no description is given of them; it is not even said whether their material is stone or wood; and no wooden idol has been hitherto disinterred, so far as now known, in any Irish peat-field or elsewhere. When the Irish Celts successfully invaded Scotland, they would naturally carry with them their idols or the memory of them, and propagandism to establish them in the land which they conquered. If they did so, no trace of the fact exists in any figure with which to compare the Ballachulish image. To refer it therefore to the prehistoric Celts would be nothing short of pure assumption.

Dr Mitchell has referred me to evidence of some remarkable instances of the worship of wooden images in an era not very remote from the present in Christian Scotland. A wooden image of the Virgin Mary, that stood at one time on the Bridge of Don at Aberdeen, is said to be still preserved at Brussels. During last century a statue of St Bar on the island of Barra was clad in a linen sheet every year on his own birthday. A statue of Kessog, Mackessog, or Mackess-agus, a sainted martyr of the sixth century, was found more than a century ago in a cairn near Luss, in the making of a road, and was removed to the family burying-ground of the Colquhouns at Ross-Dhu. But Mr John Colquhoun has pointed out to me that this statue, now in the chapel at Rossdhu, is a tasteful work of art in stone, handsomely dressed from

crown to foot in priestlike habiliments, and in no respect whatever analogous to the Ballachulish image.[1] The most remarkable instance of all, however, is one for which we are mainly indebted to Dr Mitchell's own testimony. About fifteen years ago he met in Morayshire an old man, who remembered that in his youth he had seen in the parish of Botriphnie a wooden image of St Fumac, which had been preserved immemorially there and was in the keeping of an old woman; and that on the occasion of an annual pilgrimage he had witnessed the procession of the saint, to be purged of his sins by washing in his own well. It appears that some time after this witnessing the figure was swept by a flood down to Banff, where the burghers, more enlightened than their rustic neighbours, burnt the effigy as a relic of bucolic superstition. These are very curious historical facts. But no such image has been described for comparison. Meanwhile it is hard to imagine without such means of proof, that in any period of Christian government the priesthood would have allowed a sainted lady, and much less a person venerated above all female saints, to be represented in a shape so indelicate as that of the image of Ballachulish.

These negative results lead us on to the probability that the image is of Scandinavian device and execution. Such is the conclusion to which is inclined the Rev. Mr Steuart, who has supported it with great force in his article in the "Inverness Courier." He there informs us that tradition in the neighbourhood commemorates the deep bay of Ballachulish as a favourite anchorage in the Viking times for the Scandinavian fleets, both for safety from storms and a convenient centre, as well for predatory excursions by sea as for incursions on land. He refers to several apparently Scandinavian names of places left behind them as memorials of their visitations. A retired bay in Loch Leven, opposite the house of Dr Campbell, about half way between Ballachulish Hotel and the slate quarries, is the Camus-Thorsta or Thorsta Bay from a Scandinavian chief of that name; a small bay at the turn where the Fort William road enters

[1] See drawing, &c., in "The Chiefs of Colquhoun and their Country." By William Fraser, 1869, vol. ii. 55.

upon the raised beach is the Camus-Fridaig, probably from the Scandinavian goddess Fridda (or Frigga) ; a field on the same roadside towards the hotel is the Gorstain-Fridaig, or Fridda's Field ; a boulder on the Appin shore near Ardsheal is the Clach-Ruric, or Ruric's Stone, because it was hurled down the hill-side by the natives upon a band of Norsemen and killed Ruric their chief and several of his men; the old name of Ballachulish Ferry was Caolais Mhic Phaedruig, the strait of Peter's son, and a boulder near the hotel is still called Clach Phaedruig, or Peter's Stone, because the son of a Norse leader of that name was drowned in the strait by the capsizing of his boat, and the father tried to save him by stepping upon that stone. In all these designations Mr Steuart recognizes Norse and not Celtic names. That Norse names in that case are not more numerous at Ballachulish it is easy to understand; for it is well known that primitive names are in general pertinaciously retained for mountains and valleys, lakes and rivers, promontories and other natural features of a country, in spite of alien conquest and alien possession. Dr Campbell has acutely pointed out to me that the Scandinavian names prove the visits of the Norse invaders to have been posterior to that elevation of the western coast in which the Ballachulish peat-field partook; because, when that plain was under the sea, there could have been no Thorsta Bay or bay of Fridaig, the ferry or strait of Peter could have had no existence, and Peter's Boulder, which is uncovered only at low tide, must then have been under 50 feet of water.

Ulterior inquiry serves only to confirm the view taken by Mr Steuart. Mr Anderson has referred me to numerous passages in the Sagas, and the works which treat of them, to show that the heathen Scandinavians carved wooden images of their gods and goddesses,—Odin, Thor, Frey, Fridda, and others, and set them up in their galleys as patron deities. One of these references is of special interest in the present case, as the incident described will also represent what may have happened to the image of Ballachulish. At the battle of Svoldr, Eric Hakonson had Thor standing in the prow of his ship; but having embraced Christianity, he

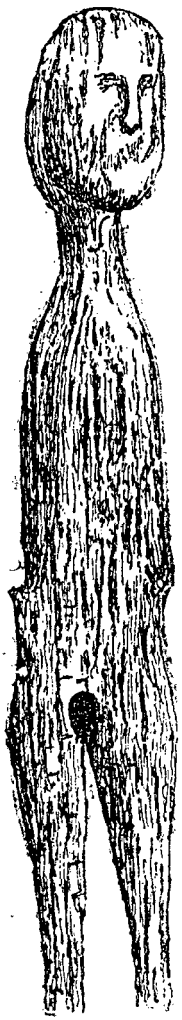

Fig. 2.
Image of Oak found in a Peat Moss at Alt Frisach, Mark Brandenburg. (Nearly 5 ft. high.)

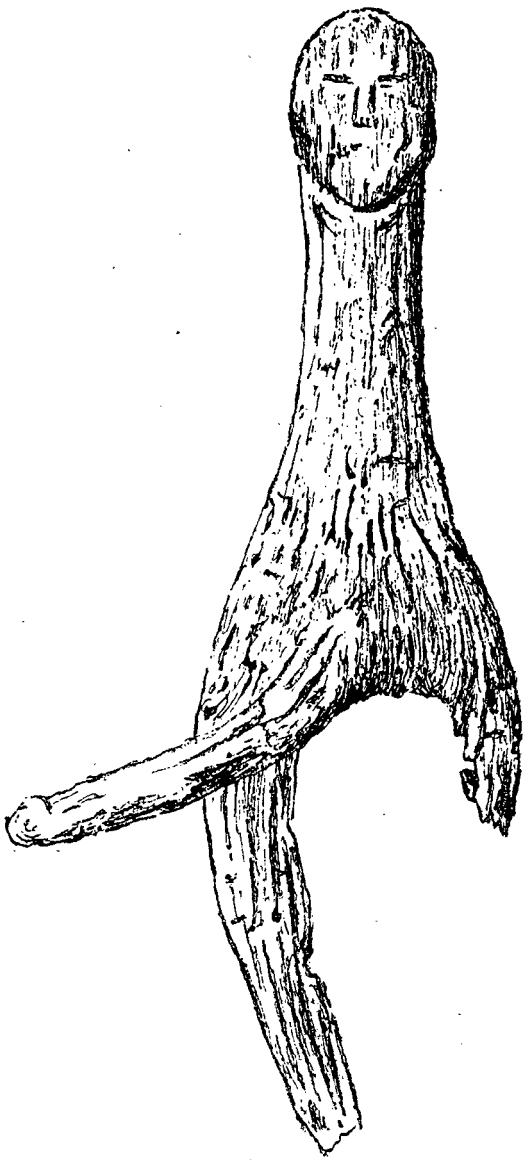

Fig. 3.
Image of Oak found in a Peat Moss near Viborg, Jutland. (3 ft. in length.)

took Thor down, and set up a cross in his place as a more suitable guide to victory (Olaf Tryggvason's "Saga," p. 252).

It was therefore desirable to learn whether there is now extant any specimen of such idols with which the Ballachulish figure might be compared. Mr Anderson accordingly corresponded with Mr Worsaae at Copenhagen, who has had the kindness to communicate the following interesting information. Three wooden images, undoubted ancient idols, are known to him as having been discovered in different parts of Scandinavia or the adjacent German mainland. One found in Brandenburg is preserved in Berlin; another, discovered in Denmark, is in his own custody; and a third, also of Danish origin, was unfortunately not preserved. They were all of the male sex. From drawings of the two survivors, sent to Mr Anderson by Mr Worsaae, it is evident that the figure in the Berlin Museum (fig. 2), which is 5 feet in stature, presents a close analogy to the Ballachulish image. That in Mr Worsaae's custody (fig. 3), which is 3 feet in height, is of ruder and more fantastic design. The latter is provided with an enormous organ of reproduction. In the former that organ has been lost, but seems also to have been exaggerated. They are made of oak, and the only difference in style of sculpture from the Scottish image is that they have not pebbles for eyeballs. Mr Worsaae adds that he has succeeded in decyphering the symbols which denote the several deities. On that account it is worthy of remark, that those who saw the Ballachulish image in its fresh state observed on the breast impressions which might prove significant. But the marks are obscure, and I fear amorphous, such as might be produced by the soft soaked wood pressing on the gravel. Mr Anderson has also communicated with Mr Rygh, keeper of the Antiquarian Museum of Christiania. But he replies that no ancient wooden images have been found in Norway, and that he possesses no materials for throwing light on that of Ballachulish.

It has been stated above that nothing at all analogous is known to have been hitherto discovered in Scotland or Ireland. But in England in 1836 a somewhat analogous discovery was made in the district of Holderness on the Humber. In a field there, at a distance from the sea, but which

had formerly been under water, constituting a part of the Humber, there was found below 6 feet of clay, eight human figures, standing erect on a log, rudely fashioned like a canoe, with the head of a serpent for the prow. This group was first described, and one of the images figured in 1840 by Mr Poulson in his "Antiquities of the Seigneury of Holderness," iii. 98. Four of the images having been preserved in the Museum of the Royal Institution at Hull, the Rev. Dr George Dodds had them photographed, and has given a drawing of them, and discussed their origin and

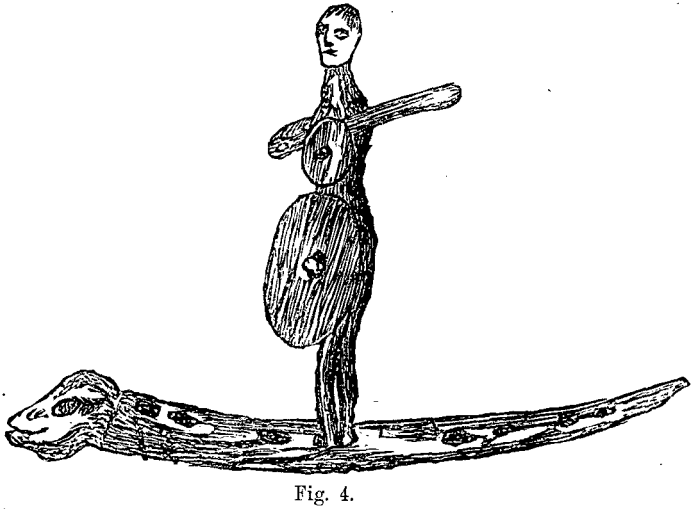

Fig. 4.
Canoe-like figure, with one of the eight human figures, found at Holderness.
(From Mr Poulson's Drawing.)

indication in a learned article in the Derby "Reliquary," April 1831. At the request of Mr Anderson, Mr Evans, keeper of the Hull Museum, has had the courtesy to send the photograph for the inspection of this Society; and I owe to Dr Kelburne King of Hull, the favour of information on a few points overlooked in previous accounts.

The figures were eight in number, crowded together, with their ankles stuck in the canoe. Four of them fell to pieces, and four only were

preserved. They were all alike male figures, entirely naked, and bearing each two shields and a club. Each was carved from a piece of oak about 2 inches thick. They are mere dolls compared with Worsaae's images or that of Ballachulish, being only from 14 inches to 16½ tall. That of which Mr Poulson gives what he calls "a very accurate drawing" (fig. 4), presents an exceedingly slim figure, with a countenance not unpleasing, a very long neck, a club borne across the upper chest, and two shields singularly placed, a small one covering the chest, and a large one covering the abdomen and thighs, with the boss on a level with the brim of the pelvis. It does not appear from the drawing how the shields were supported, as the arms are occupied otherwise. The canoe is about 22 inches long and very rudely designed. Its serpent eyes, and those of all the human figures, consist of quartz pebbles. Both legs of the image are stuck in one hole up to the ankles, and the feet are consequently not represented. There are seven other holes for the remaining figures.

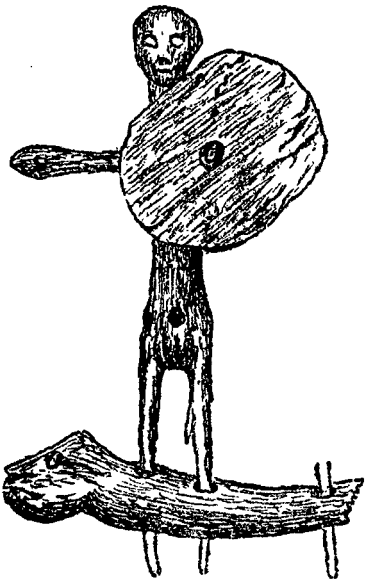

Fig. 5.
One of the Figures found at Holderness, as now in the Hull Museum.

Before the photograph was taken for Dr Dodds, the figures must have been rearranged by the renovator. Each of the four has two holes for its feet, and the footless ankles are thrust several inches through the bottom of the canoe. One only bears a club (fig. 5). Of the eight shields one only is left, the larger of the two with which every one had been provided; and it has been removed from the abdomen and hung on the left arm, giving the figure of course a much more martial appearance. The removal of the shields shows the

male organs in all four to have been exaggerated, and also displays in each a large round hole above the brim of the pelvis, which had served to suspend the shield by means of a projection from the boss inwards. There is a hole at every shoulder for the insertion of arms, of which a single curved left arm alone remains. Dr King observes that each of the four figures has an individual character, and that they are by no means carved of one pattern.

Mr Poulson gives strong reasons for the opinion that the group represent Scandinavian deities, and had been left behind when the Danes visited the Humber between 864 and 867. The Rev. Dr Dodds in his essay in 1871 rather scouts that view, and urges that the eight figures were "evidently the Noëtic Ogdoad," or human inmates of the ark, adopted as their gods by the ancient Phœnicians, who are considered historically to have visited the east coast of England. But Dr Dodds appears to have lost sight of the fact that the eight figures were all "naked male warriors with shields and clubs," while four of the family of Noah were females, If one were inclined thus to let loose the imagination, it might be suggested with equal plausibility, that when some Danish prince was on the Holderness station, his ship's carpenter had amused his leisure hours by carving his rude ideal of his captain's gig and her crew.

In fine, there seems to be no serious obstacle to the conclusion that the Ballachulish figure was the workmanship of the Norsemen. In general design and execution it corresponds with ascertained specimens of their idols, and especially it partakes of that strange character of exaggeration of the organs of reproduction which was adopted by them for their deities as the emblem of Scandinavian fecundity.