

Communications respecting Implements of ancient Brass.

ON the 18th of February, 1815, Mr. Brumell presented to the Society an ancient sword blade, accompanied with the following letter from Mrs. St. Paul, of Ewart, in the county of Northumberland.

Ewart Park, Nov. 14, 1814.

SIR,

In consequence of a letter my son had the pleasure of receiving from you, I have forwarded to you one of the swords found at Ewart in the beginning of February, 1814, and request you will be so good as to present the same to the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle, whose views to preserve and illustrate the antiquities of the county of Northumberland I have much pleasure in endeavouring to promote.

I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

To John Brumell, Esq.

ANNE ST. PAUL.

Mr. Culley, of Akeld, favoured the Society with drawings of two swords found near Ewart, and in a letter addressed to Mr. Adamson, dated November 23, 1814, gives the following account of their discovery:—

The originals, from which these drawings were made, were found last February at Ewart Park, near Wooler, and are now in the possession of Mrs. St. Paul, the Lady of the Manor, by whose obliging permission these drawings were taken. The earth having been turned

up to the depth of six inches, on a grassy knowl hitherto unemployed, discovered the handles, the blades having been forced into the earth in a perpendicular manner, apparently for the purpose of concealment. The earth is a dry gravel, to which may be attributed their fine preservation.

Whether the blades have been used as swords, or as points to long spears, cannot be ascertained, as every vestige of the materials composing the handles is gone. As swords they are unwieldy to the arm, and unfit either for cutting or pushing with advantage.

The colour and weight resemble our mixed metal, called brass; but whether possessing the same component parts can be ascertained by analysis, to which there has been no opportunity of subjecting them. I leave to more able antiquaries to determine to what period or people they may have belonged. They do not possess that hardness which we are led to believe the ancients could impart to that metal, and yield pretty easily to the knife. Time may, however, have deprived them of that quality. It may not be amiss to mention, that they were found sufficiently near to have belonged to the stragglers from the fatal field of Floddon, who might disarm themselves for a more speedy flight. Grose, in the 2nd volume of his *Antiquities*, page 372, being in that part wherein he treats of ancient armour, describes four weapons of this description, and denominates them "ancient brass swords".—One was found on the borders, the place unknown; two in Duddingston lake, a little way south of Edinburgh, under water; and one near Peebles, in Scotland. They were in the possession of John Mc. Gowan, Esq. of Edinburgh. He also gives engravings of them, in plate 60, of the same work, which bear a pointed resemblance, in every respect, to the subject of the present memoir.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

MATT. CULLEY.

In consequence of a communication from the Rev. J. Hodgson, Sec. the Rev. W. Wilson, Rector of Wolsingham, permitted several articles of ancient brass, in his possession, to be exhibited before the Society; and also favoured them with the following letters, addressed to Mr. Hodgson:—

Wolsingham, 6th February, 1816.

REV. SIR,

I received the favour of your letter, requesting information respecting some Roman spear heads, &c. in my possession. They were found by a labourer, upwards of four years ago, in the parish of Stanhope, in the county of Durham, under some large rough stones casually scattered upon the declivity of a mountain, and covering nearly an acre of land. The place is at a little distance from the river Wear, on the south side, near a small farm house called Hag-gate; immediately opposite to a village on the north side, and near the river, called East-gate. The place is well marked. They had probably been hidden there by some deserter, and, in my opinion, are the arms, &c. of a single Roman foot soldier, one of the velites, consisting of five spear heads or hastæ, in sequences of different sizes, part of a sword, fragments of a pectorale, or breast plate, together with all the tools or accoutrements for repairing, sharpening, and burnishing these arms. I consider them as great curiosities; for I never heard that so complete a set was ever found before together. Single ones have been found, I believe; and antiquarians have given such opinions respecting the uses of what they called celts, as were never satisfactory to me. They seemed to be too far fetched. The principle that I assumed for the purpose of discovering the uses of the smaller articles was this. I conceived that a Roman soldier being often at a distance from camp, and seldom having the convenience of an armourer or a carpenter to repair his arms when broken or injured, would be obliged to carry about him such tools as would enable him to repair the lesser accidents

himself, and to keep the arms in bright order. I conceive also that these tools would be made as light as possible, consistent with a due degree of strength, and would be made hollow; the same tool serving for different purposes. You will judge how far these principles and suppositions are illustrated by the following description. All the articles are of fine brass, have been cast in moulds, and the tools are coated over with a curious metallic mixture, the invention probably lost. One ingredient I think is tin.

Five spears—hastæ for war or chase.

No.		Inches.	oz.	drs.
1.	Spear, perfect - - -	9 $\frac{3}{4}$	9	15
2.	Ditto, little wanting - -	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	7	3
3.	Ditto, perfect - - -	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	2
4.	Ditto, perfect - - -	6	4	1
5.	Ditto, part wanting.			
6.	Sword, fragment - - -	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	2	5
7.	The sharper, perfect - -	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	2	4

The use of this is obvious. The spears and edge tools had been sharpened by it. There are two holes nearly together on the same side, for hanging it by a thong to the body. The same side smoother than the other on that account. Some antiquarians supposed that these instruments were used by the priests, as a knife, for flaying the beasts for sacrifice. But that metals were used by the ancients for sharpening metals is clear, from Proverbs xxvii. 17—"Iron sharpeneth iron," &c.

No.		Inches.	oz.	drs.
8.	Chissel, perfect - - -	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	8	8
9.	Ditto, part wanting.			
10.	Ditto, part wanting.			

N. B. No. 8, 9, 10, chissels, for forming and polishing wood, when new shafts were wanting for spears, &c. A thong was probably put through the loop or ear, and suspended to the body. It is singular, that one side of most of them is smoother than the other, as if by such

PLATE I

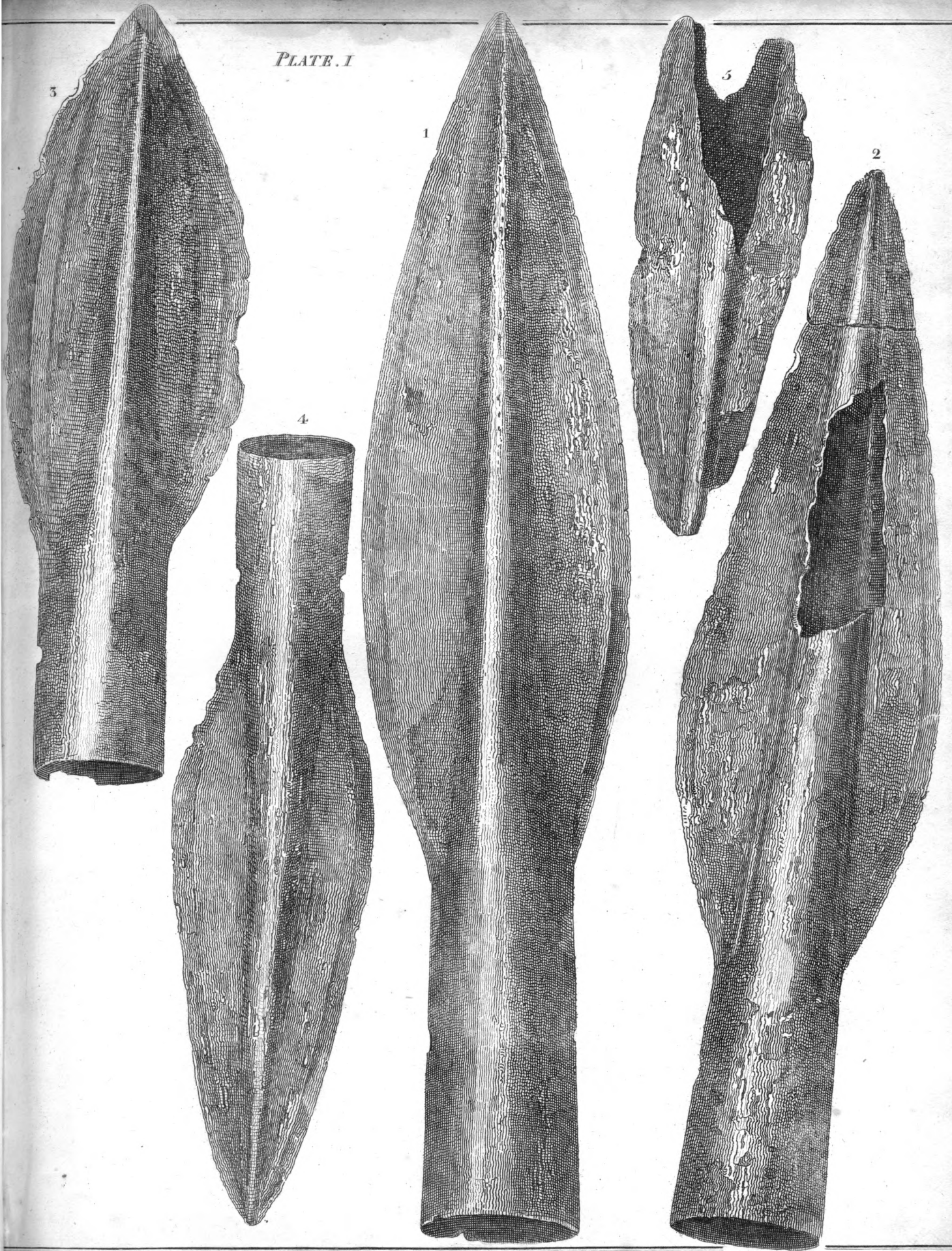


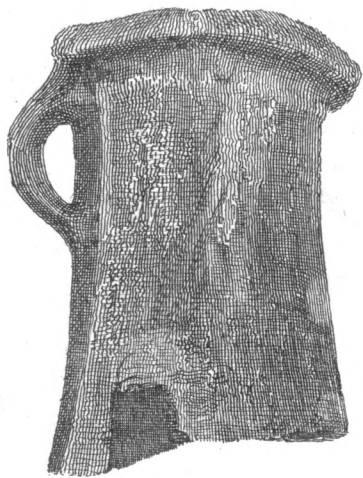


PLATE II.

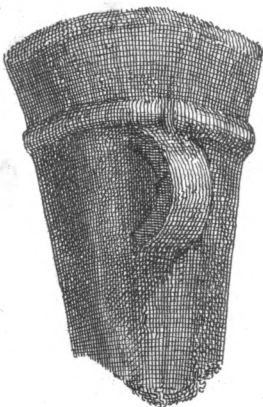
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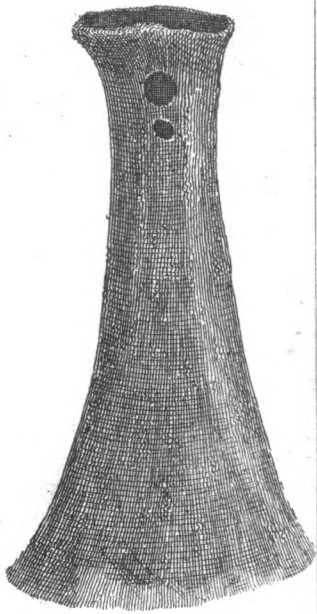
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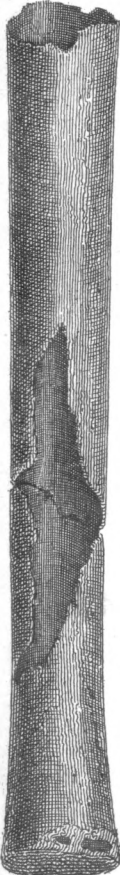
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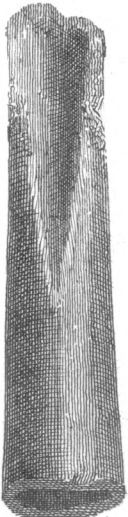
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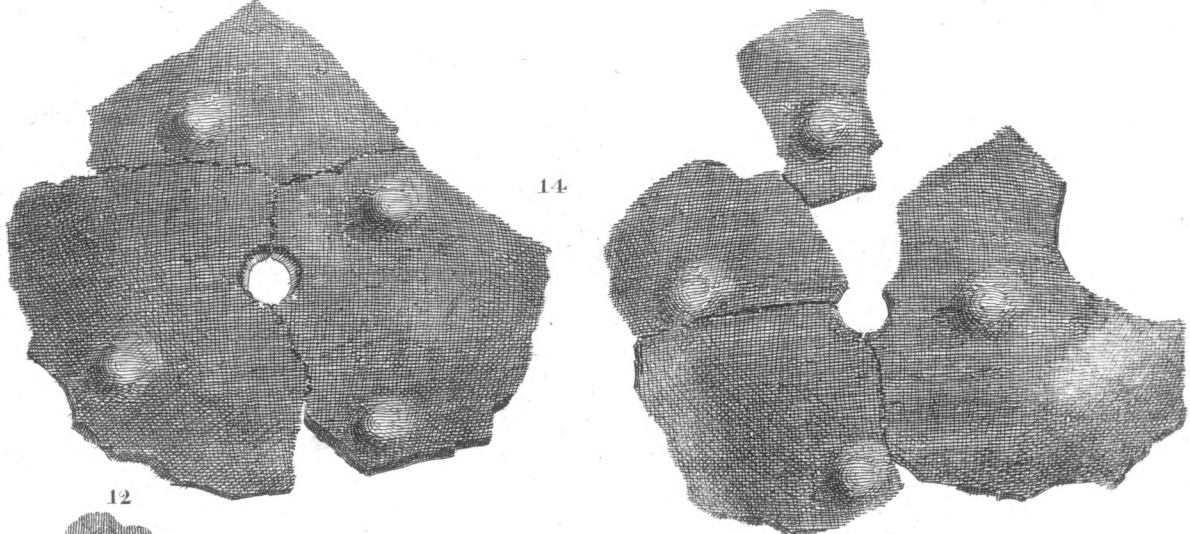
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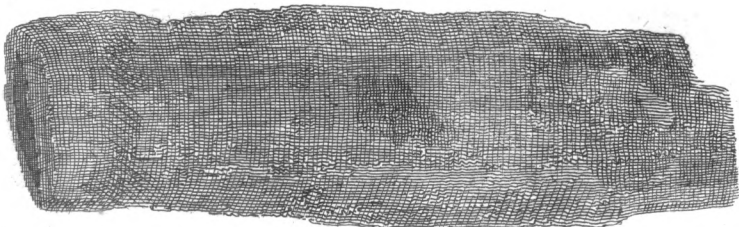
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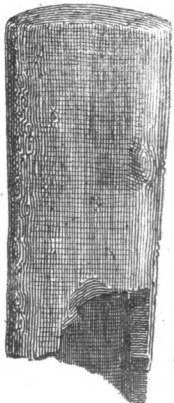
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suspension. I do not think it could happen from that side being undermost when found; because the spears and tools, without loops, are not so. I am still more confirmed in my opinion of this being used as a tool, from recollecting that it does not appear among the Roman arms, either in the Trajan or Antonine pillar. This instrument and the Roman spear heads are commonly found together.

No.	Inches.	oz.	drs.
11. Burnisher for shield, broken and some wanting	$4\frac{3}{4}$	1	12

and exactly fits the space between the bosses or buttons of the shield. I conceive also, that this had been used as a bottle to hold oil for burnishing. The cavity is large, and extends the whole length. I was confirmed in that opinion by the following circumstance:—When found, the close end was smooth, and the edges sharp, without any appearance of fracture; but, on examining with a knife, I picked out some strong cement, like putty, which plugged up a concealed hole. This cement, I suppose, had been put in to make it hold a liquid. The tool had certainly been much used since it was put in, as that part was as smooth as the other parts.

No.	Inches.	oz.	drs.
12. Burnisher for spears, perfect	$2\frac{1}{2}$	1	9

The groove of which fits upon the ribs of the spears, and the convex part opposite fits the hollows between the ribs and the feathers. This opinion was confirmed by observing the coating of the groove and that of the opposite convex to be much thinner, as if by rubbing, whilst the coating of the sides of the groove were very thick, and further proved by drilling small holes in the coating.

No.	Inches.	oz.	drs.
13. Burnisher for sockets and feathers of spears } and swords, broken and some wanting	2	3	11

A part of one of the sockets burnished by it, to shew the effect. It performs that office well. It might also occasionally be used as a stake (small anvil), or sometimes as a hammer.

No.

14. Pectorale, or breast plate, a few fragments, the rest lost. The edges of both the holes are round and hollow on both sides. A thong or small chain had probably been put through them, and hung round the neck, like the gorget of a British officer. It might be in two parts to cover each breast.

I am, Rev. Sir, your obedient humble servant,

To the Rev. J. Hodgson, Jarrow.

W. WILSON.

Wolsingham, 29th February, 1816.

REV. SIR,

As the carrier is going soon I have little time to answer the favour of your's, and to return you thanks for your observations and quotation from Homer, &c. *οἱ ομφαλοὶ κασσιτεροῖο λευκοὶ* might be translated, studs white with tin; which confirms our idea of that metal being used by the ancients in the formation of their arms. The editor of my Livy has given this note on the passage you allude to, respecting the arms of the Roman velites—"Hastis velitaribus inest." *Hastæ velitares erant jaculatoriæ, id est, quibus eminus jaculabantur, proinde leviores.* The sleeve of mail armour I have sent you, was found fifty or sixty years ago, I believe in Hatherburn Cave, near Stanhope; a cave that extends, it is said, a mile in length. I believe it to be Roman. Probably the sleeve of woven brass wire is Norman, and, I think, what they called *avant bras*. It was found under the thatch of an old house at Wolsingham, about ten years ago.

I am, Rev. Sir, your obedient humble servant,

Rev. J. Hodgson.

W. WILSON.