

V.

NOTICE OF A SMALL BRONZE BLADE FOUND IN A CINERARY URN AT BALBLAIR, SUTHERLANDSHIRE, ALSO TWO SMALL BRONZE PLATES; IN THE COLLECTIONS OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND. By JOHN ALEX. SMITH, M.D., Sec. S. A. Scot.

The curious bronze implement now exhibited (see the annexed wood-cut, where the bronze is figured full size (fig. 1) was discovered, about twenty years ago, by a crofter at Balblair, Sutherlandshire. He was removing some stones from a cairn, when a coarse sepulchral urn was exposed resting in an inverted position on a stone slab. The urn contained small portions of bones—which were very brittle, and were believed to have been exposed to the action of fire—and also this highly finished bronze implement.

The urn was so coarse and rude in its character that the crofter's wife refused to admit it into the house, it was accordingly placed on an adjoining knoll or hillock, where it attracted the notice of some school-boys as a mark for trying their skill in stone-throwing, and was soon smashed to pieces. The bronze, however, was fortunately preserved, and

was presented to His Grace the Duke of Sutherland, and to his kindness, through the Rev. J. M. Joass, I am indebted for being able to exhibit it.

The bronze, which is a good deal chipped at the edges, measures about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in greatest breadth; it has a narrow part or handle about one inch in length by about a quarter of an inch in breadth, and gradually expands from it into a somewhat sharp and pointed leaf-shaped and double-edged blade. The edges of this leaf-shaped or oval portion are very thin and sharp (fig. 2), and running along the centre of the blade there is a thicker raised portion or rib which measures

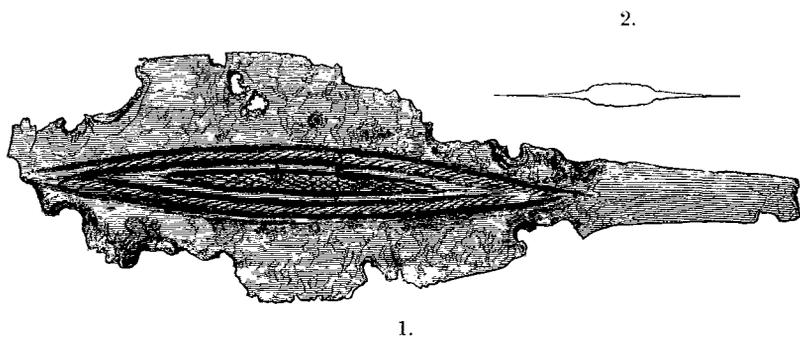


Fig. 1.—Bronze Blade found in a large Cinerary Urn at Balblair, Sutherlandshire.
(Full size.)

Fig 2.—Transverse Section of Blade, showing its midrib and very thin edges.

about three-eighths of an inch in breadth in the middle, and tapers gradually to a point towards each extremity; it is ornamented with simple incised patterns of oblique and crossing lines. Altogether this implement, which is composed of a fine yellow bronze, is very peculiar, and, as far as I am aware, almost unique in pattern. It seems much too slender, thin, and delicate for a spear or arrow head, and appears to me rather to be allied to the class of small bronze implements, of a closely corresponding size, which are believed to have been articles connected with the toilet, and used possibly as depilatory instruments.¹ It is pecu-

¹ See Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot. vol. v. p 84, vol. vi. p. 357.

liarily interesting to find this very highly finished bronze, as the only relic connected with this rude form of apparently early urn burial.

The Rev. Mr Joass has also forwarded, from the Duke's collection, two small somewhat square-shaped portions of highly polished bronze plates (which are now exhibited), the broken portions of one plate, possibly part of an ancient mirror; they measure together about $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by a little more than 2 inches in greatest breadth, and the narrowest extremity of the plate shows apparently a rivet hole, by which it might have been fixed to a frame or handle. These plates are believed to have been found in the county of Sutherland, but unfortunately, except the name of the finder, no details of the discovery have been preserved.

The Society has been indebted to the Rev. Mr Joass of Golspie, on many occasions, as well as in this instance, for so kindly enabling us to exhibit and place on record the discovery of various curious relics and remains found in the northern districts of Scotland.

MONDAY, *June 8th*, 1868.

DAVID LAING, Esq., Vice-President, in the Chair.

A ballot having been taken, the following Gentlemen were admitted Fellows:—

THOMAS H. DOUGLAS, Esq., St Bride's, Morningside.
JOSEPH A. HORNER, Esq., Great Yarmouth.

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

(1.) By the Rev. JOHN MILLIGAN, A.M., F.S.A. Scot., Twynholm.

Polished Celt of Serpentine, 6 inches in length, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches across the cutting face, found in the bottom of an ancient circular moat a few yards from Twynholm Church.

Three polished Celts, found in the parish of Twynholm. One measures

6 inches in length, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the face; another, 5 inches in length, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the face; and the third, which is broken in the upper part, is $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the face.

A polished Celt, measuring $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in greatest breadth, found in the parish of Tongland.

Wedge-shaped Stone Axe or Maul, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, 4 inches in greatest breadth, and 2 inches thick. It is pierced for a handle in the centre, the hole being $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. It was found in the parish of Kelton.

An Axe of polished stone, from New Zealand, broken at the upper end. It measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the face. Its greatest thickness does not exceed a quarter of an inch.

A cylindrical Stone Vessel, 5 inches high, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, having a cup-shaped cavity on the upper side, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth. The bottom of the stone is worked flat, and has a small hole about an inch in depth, as if for fixing or steadying the vessel on the top of a stand. It was found on the estate of Glenlair, parish of Parton.

An Andrea Ferrara Sword, with wood and leather Sheath, stated to have been worn at Drumclog and Bothwell Brig. The hilt has been renewed.

An Iron Anchor, the shank of which is 6 feet in length, and the distance between the fluke points 2 feet 8 inches. It was dug up under twelve feet of moss when draining a mossy meadow near Kirkcudbright, which had formerly been a loch surrounding the castle of Fergus, Lord of Galloway.

A small Quaich, made of the metal of the bell of the Tron Church, burnt down in 1824.

Small Terra Cotta Lamp from the Catacombs at Rome.

Basket, made of grass, from New Zealand.

Vase of bell metal from Japan.

(2.) By LAWSON TAIT, Esq., Surgeon, Wakefield.

A Human Skull, fragment of a Belemnite, and Nodule of Shale, from a grave at Kintradwell, Sutherlandshire.

(3.) By JOHN KEITH, Esq., Auchrynie, Old Deer.
Three Stone Spindle-whorls from Auchreddie, New Deer.

(4.) By D. K. HALL, Esq., Fithie, Brechin.
Portions of Samian Ware, portion of Iron, &c., found in a "Pict's"
house at Fithie.

(5.) By Miss GRAHAM of East Whitburn.
Old Silver Watch. Gordon, London.
Pair Silver Shoe Buckles, with Pastes.
Embroidered Needle Case.
Five Silver and eleven Copper Coins.

(6.) By J. SANDS, Esq.
Sketch of a Painted Ceiling of the time of Charles II., at Old Craigh-
hall, near Musselburgh.

The donor, in a note accompanying the donation, says:—"I observed, from a report in the 'Scotsman,' that at a meeting of your Society on the 9th ult., a description was given of two examples of decorative painting brought to light by the demolition of an old house at Linlithgow. This has led me to think that the Society might perhaps feel some interest in the painted ceiling of an old room of the cottage in which I at present reside, although it appears to have been executed a century later than those at Linlithgow. The painting is done in tempera, upon boards nailed to the under side of the joists. Although effaced in parts, it is on the whole in tolerable preservation. The sun is represented in the centre of the ceiling,, which is divided into four triangular compartments, containing pictures of the Seasons. To prevent mistakes, the painter (like the one mentioned in 'Don Quixote') has inscribed the name of each subject above it. The room is only fifteen feet square, but some difficulty seems to have been experienced in getting boards so long. Each length consists of two pieces, strongly scarfed together. I beg to send herewith an outline sketch. I may mention that the room is pannelled, and that the royal arms (C. R. II.) are painted and gilded in an able style above the chimney piece."

(7.) By JAMES HUNTER, Esq., Banff.

Three Copper Coins of Charles I.

Stone Whorl.

(8.) By Dr A. ANDERSON, F.S.A. Scot.

Photographs of Inscribed Stones at Malta and at Gozo.

Certificate of having communicated in the Parish Church at Grantham, 1st September 1734, on vellum.

(9.) By the ROYAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL INSTITUTE.

Archæological Journal. No. 95. Lond. 1808.

(10.) By the ASSOCIATION.

Journal of the Historical and Archæological Association. No. 1. 1868.

The following Communications were read :—