

IV.

NOTES OF AN URN FOUND IN A CIST IN A GRAVEL HILLOCK, NEAR OBAN (IN A LETTER TO THE SECRETARY). BY DUNCAN CLERK, Esq.; WITH NOTICE OF THE SO-CALLED SERPENT-MOUND OF LOCHNELL. BY JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., SECRETARY.

When at Oban last autumn, I had an opportunity of examining the site of the burial places referred to in Mr Clerk's letter, and I requested that gentleman to give me such a note of the details as might be entered in our Proceedings, with the view of adding to our store of facts illustrating early modes of interment.

I took an opportunity, at the same time, of inspecting a gravel hillock on the shore of Lochnell, which has of late attained some notoriety from the wild fancies of amateur archæologists, who, out of a natural eskar, have invented a "serpent mound," and adapted it to theories of serpent worship, neither of which ever had existence beyond the imaginations of sundry writers who have celebrated them both in prose and verse.

The upper end of the eskar had, in early times, been chosen as a place of burial, and the ruins of the cairn by which the deposit had been covered still remain.

From the eskar the lofty peaks of Cruachan are visible, over the shoulder of the group of lower hills which intervene, and it has been gravely assumed that this "serpent mound" was originally placed with some special and mysterious reference to this circumstance.

As such absurdities bring well-merited ridicule on archæological study thus conducted, I have thought it right to draw the attention of the Society to the "Serpent of Lochnell," and to disclaim all sympathy with the wild theories which have invented and magnified it.

The following is Mr Clerk's note of the discovery of the urn at Oban :—

OBAN, 30th Sept. 1875.

DEAR SIR,—I send you herewith a photograph of an urn which was found here lately, in a gravel mound at the side of the road leading to Dunollie. When the workmen were clearing away the gravel, they came upon a stone coffin, which was found to contain human bones of a large size. When removing these, a piece of an urn was observed, and,

on carefully removing a little more of the gravel, the urn was found,— its position being at one end of the stone coffin. I was on the ground at the time, and took charge of the urn, and got the photograph taken the same evening. There was nothing inside the urn except gravel of the same kind as in the rest of the mound. It is at present in the hands of Sir Donald Campbell of Dunstaffnage. The size of the urn is 5 inches diameter at the rim, $6\frac{1}{4}$ at the bulge, and $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches deep. The stone coffin or cist was built of rude slabs of slate and conglomerate, without any dressing. The length was 29 inches, by 16 inches in breadth, and 21 inches deep. It was at no great depth from the surface, only 18 inches or so.



Clay Urn found at Oban
($4\frac{3}{8}$ in. high).

Another stone coffin, found in the same mound, was about the same size as the one above-mentioned. The workmen put it aside carelessly, and having been opened on a Saturday afternoon, the contents (said to have been broken pieces of bone) were taken away by different persons before Monday. There was also a small tomb found, which had its sides and ends made of a thin layer of clay instead of stones, and inside there was a quantity of calcined bones in small pieces.

On the opposite side of the little burn that passes the base of the mound above-mentioned, there is another mound that has much the appearance of an ancient burying place. There was a stone coffin turned up in the course of some field work, and there is a round mound in the north-west corner of the field, supposed to be a tumulus. It is different from the little *eskars* that are so common in this part of the country, and on the crown of it there is one erect stone, and others lying near.

I will be curious to hear what you think of the curved mound at Lochnell. Although I am convinced that it is not artificial, still I would not say but there are stone coffins on the ridge, of which I think there are some indications. The whole being neatly sloped off, is only in keeping with the round hillocks, each with one cist, of which you have seen many.

D. C.

MONDAY, 10th April 1876.

JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., in the Chair.

After a ballot, the following Gentlemen were duly elected Fellows :—

ALEXANDER BALLANTINE, Esq., 42 George Street.
W. S. COOPER, yr. of Failford, Esq., Advocate.
CHARLES SCOTT, Esq., Advocate.

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

(1.) By His Grace the DUKE OF RICHMOND AND GORDON, Lord President of Her Majesty's Privy Council.

Silver Matrix of the Great Seal of Scotland, engraved by Wyon in 1831 for His Majesty King William IV.

Silver Matrix of the Quarter Seal of Scotland, engraved by Wyon in 1831 for His Majesty King William IV.

Silver Matrix of the Privy Seal for Scotland, engraved by Wyon in 1831 for His Majesty King William IV.

The Signet Seal in Scotland of His Majesty King William IV.

Framed Proof Impressions of the Great Seal after defacement.

Intimation of the Donation was conveyed to the Society in the following letter addressed to the Secretary :—

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, 20th March, 1876.

GENTLEMEN;—I am directed by his Grace the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, the Lord President of the Council, to inform you that he is desirous of presenting to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland the Great Seal of Scotland, the Quarter Seal of Scotland, the Privy Seal for Scotland, and the Signet Seal of Scotland, of the time of William the Fourth.

His Grace accordingly directs me to transmit to you these seals which

he trusts the Society will be pleased to accept and place among the antiquities under its care.

Impressions of the Great Seal of Scotland accompany the Seals.—I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

(Signed) C. L. PEEL.

(2.) By ROBERT CARFRAE, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Oval Silver Medal given by the Society for the Defence of the Country, to the best shot at Ball Practice, and inscribed "Robert Walker, 1st Battalion 2nd Regiment R.E.V., 23d March 1804."

(3.) By GILBERT GOUDIE, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Socket of Sandstone, 13 × 10 inches, for a "Grind" or Gate, from Braefield, Dunrossness, Shetland.

(4.) By Mr T. J. SANDISON, Uyeasound.

Collection of Fragments of Unglazed Pottery from an ancient ruin called "Glitna Kirk," near the village of Uyeasound, Shetland.

(5.) By Mr GEORGE SINCLAIR, 131 Princes Street.

Small Bronze Knife or Dagger, with Tang, 4 inches in length, found at Nordrhouse, Sulem, Northmavine, Shetland, and long used as a "trow's sword" for magical purposes.

(6.) By THOMAS BONNAR, Esq., 77 George Street.

Lithograph Copy of Drawing (in glazed and gilt frame) of a Ceiling at Nunraw House, decorated in distemper, 16th century.

(7.) By Professor DANIEL WILSON, LL.D., &c., Hon. Mem. S.A. Scot., the Author.

Prehistoric Man. By Daniel Wilson, LL.D., &c. Third Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1876.

(8.) By Rev. JAMES PETER, M.A., F.S.A. Scot., the Author.

The Peat Mosses of Buchan (Club of Deer). 4to. Aberdeen, 1876.

The following Communications were read:—