

## III.

NOTES ON THE CONTENTS OF SHELL-HEAPS RECENTLY EXPOSED IN  
THE ISLAND OF COLL. BY DONALD ROSS, M.A., H.M. INSPECTOR OF  
SCHOOLS.

Having, in the course of my ordinary work, arrived at Coll, whose character I had known only from the crude descriptions of stray travellers, I met with several surprises, one of which may be of some interest and value to archæologists.

The island is, when viewed from the sea, a dark brown mass of gneiss, passing in some places into an exceedingly coarse granite, highly charged with large flakes of mica. Above this on the north-west there is, over a wide area, a vast deposit of sand, in many places 100 feet in depth. These sand *dunes* are not unlike the *landes* on the shore of the Bay of Biscay. They are composed mainly, and in several parts almost entirely, of the remains of recent land shells, along with a small and varying proportion of pounded gneiss. I fancy that the bulk of the mass is simply the crumbled remains of such shells as *Bulimus acutus* and *Helix caperata*; and though it is unsafe to make a general statement from only partial evidence, I am inclined to think that only a limited number of species enters into the composition of the mass. But, in any case, the quantity of disguised lime is very large; and this in view of our enquiry is a very important element. Whilst in some places the sand is fine and friable, in other parts of the area extensive layers of the sand have been consolidated into a kind of incipient rock, which has for centuries apparently arrested the progress of the drift. Other agencies also have tended to check the drifting; such as the long-rooted bent, the deposit of sea-weed, and the growths of various plants, which all unite in permanently covering and protecting the *dunes*. At the bottom of a large sand valley the objects now referred to were found. The storm of the 28th December 1879 was very severe in Coll, and helped to expose a large number of middens, remains of oval-shaped dwellings, and the like. But the process of

exposure has gradually been going on for years, and probably for many centuries. The whole area scooped out by the action of wind and storm cannot be much less than a quarter of a mile ; and when all the agencies, such as the force and direction of the wind, the climate, the quality of the sand itself, and the nature and extent of the protection given both by the gneiss rocks around and the covering of shell, are taken into account, an indefinite period of time may reasonably be required to produce the result. At the place where the objects displayed were discovered, probably 100 feet of perpendicular sand has been removed. I think an examination of the locality proves conclusively that the objects now exhumed were found in the site where they were originally deposited. Near each group of dwellings there were massive heaps composed of the shells of limpets, periwinkles, and ordinary littoral shell-fish, split bones, fragments of flint, teeth of various animals, and fragments of rude unglazed pottery. Along with these were found the pin and the penannular ring or brooch now exhibited. Whether a part of these remains that I have seen are those described in the "Proceedings" of the Society for 1878. I do not know. In digging into the heaps we were met by a foul, heavy, and offensive odour.

From the character—the rudeness or the fineness—of the objects discovered no inference can safely be drawn. For in Tyree, which is in weekly communication with the outer world, and in whose cabins products of high art may be seen, pottery as rude as that discovered in Coll is manufactured to this day, and I have found proof upon proof in the western isles that the common brooch worn by the peasantry is a falling off from a more artistic type.

[The brooch and pin referred to in this paper were exhibited at the January Meeting of the Society by J. L. Stewart of Coll, and are described and engraved at p. 79 of the present volume.]

MONDAY, 14th March 1881.

PROFESSOR DUNS, D.D., Vice-President in the Chair.

The Most Hon. the MARQUESS OF TWEEDDALE, a Peer of the Realm, was admitted a Fellow, without ballot.

A Ballot having been taken, the following Gentlemen were duly admitted Fellows.

THE HON. ROBERT BAILLIE HAMILTON, Langton.  
 CHAS. HENDERSON, S.S.C., 2 Doune Terrace.  
 ROBERT LITTLE, 6 Shandwick Place.  
 PROFESSOR T. GRAINGER STEWART, M.D.  
 ANDREW SEMPLE, M.D., Deputy Surgeon-General, Army  
 Medical Department.  
 J. OLDRID SCOTT, Architect, Charing Cross, London.

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

(1.) By the Very Rev. J. R. A. CHINNERY-HALDANE of St Bride's and Ardsheallach, Dean of Argyle and the Isles.

Image or Figure of a Female, in Oak, 4 feet 9 inches high, dug up from the bottom of a peat-moss at Ballachulish, Nether Lochaber. (See the subsequent paper by Sir Robert Christison, Bart.)

(2.) By Sir ROBERT CHRISTISON, Bart.

Four Specimens of the Vitriified Stones of the Fort of Dundhairdgal in Glen Nevis.

(3.) By R. VANS AGNEW of Barnbarroch.

Brooch or ornamental Mounting of Bronze, 2 inches in diameter, ornamented with trumpet-shaped spaces, probably filled with enamel, found in Dowalton Loch, Wigtownshire. Mr Vans Agnew gives the following account of the circumstances in which it was discovered:—

“The bronze ornament or brooch was found last summer in the bed of the Loch of Dowalton by Master Alexander Gibson, grandson of Mr Alexander Cumming, the venerable tenant of the farm of Stonehouse on the shore of the lake. It was then seventeen years since the lake was drained. I have not been able to ascertain the exact spot where it was



Bronze Ornament found in Dowalton Loch.

found, but it was not far from the site of some of the crannogs. A younger brother of the finder applied the back of it to the grindstone to remove the dirt which adhered to it. Having heard that something had been found, I went to enquire, and Mr Cumming handed the brooch to me. I accepted it for the Museum, to which I think it should be considered as Mr Cumming's gift.

“When in my possession I took it to a silversmith to have it copied in silver, giving strict orders that it was not to be altered in any way, but I regret to say that before it was returned to me two small holes near the outer rim had been plugged up, and the whole seemed to have been subjected to the action of great heat.”

(4.) By Sir KENNETH MACKENZIE of Gairloch, Bart., M.P.

Penannular Ring of Bronze, with expanded cup-shaped ends. It is formed of a solid cylindrical ring of cast bronze,  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch thick,

slightly flattened in the middle, and expanding to the extremities, which open in cups of circular form 2 inches in diameter. It formed one of a number of bronze objects found in May 1877 in digging peats on the high ground overlooking the river Ewe on the north side, near the public school at Poolewe, Ross-shire, as described by Mr Jolly in the "Proceedings" (New Series), vol. ii. p. 46. This type of penannular ring in bronze is more common in Ireland than in Scotland, this being the only specimen yet known in this country.

(5.) By ROBERT MUNRO, M.A., M.D., F.S.A. Scot., Kilmarnock.

Fragment of Bead of Red and Yellow Vitreous Paste; small fragments of Pottery, Bone, &c.; and of Polished Stone, found on Donald's Isle, Loch Doon, Ayrshire.

(6.) By W. IVISON MACADAM, F.C.S., F.I.C., Lecturer on Chemistry.

Large Spindle and its Whorl; two large Stone Whorls with iron hooks, and one Leaden Whorl, for twisting "imps"; one large Earthenware Whorl. (See the previous communication by Mr W. Ivison Macadam.)

(7.) By Mr GEORGE SINCLAIR, Bualianvole, Swiney, near Lybster, Caithness.

Stone Ball, of fine-grained Sandstone,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter, with six circular facets, separated from each other by slight hollows worked in the stone. It was found in a peat moss on the hill of Benicheillt in the parish of Latheron, Caithness, and belongs to the class of stone balls described (with figures) by Dr John Alexander Smith in the "Proceedings," vol. xi. pp. 29 and 313.

(8.) By ROBERT SIM, M.D., through GEORGE SIM, F.S.A. Scot.

Large Globular Vase of Reddish Clay, 9 inches high and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter at the mouth, with two looped handles; elongated Vase of Reddish Clay 7 inches in length by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in greatest diameter, tapering to the top and bottom; Oval-shaped Vase of Reddish Clay with long narrow neck 6 inches in length and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in greatest diameter; Flat-bottomed

Vase, globular above, with short neck expanding to the mouth, which is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter, and looped handle at one side of the neck. The outside of the vase, which is of reddish clay, is painted black. These four vases were recently dug up at Cumæ, in Italy.

(9.) By W. FETTES DOUGLAS, R.S.A., F.S.A. Scot.

Bronze Arrow-head, socketed,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and Iron Arrow-head with tang, 2 inches in length; from Italy.

(10.) By JOHN E. SIBBALD, F.S.A. Scot.

Iron Head of a socketed Chisel or Wedge,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, having some resemblance in form to a socketed Celt; from Fribourg, Switzerland.

(11.) By THOMAS CHAPMAN, Hanover Street.

Old Scotch Crusie of Iron (under shell only) with twisted hook.

(12.) By THOMAS CHAPMAN, jun., F.S.A. Scot.

Small Brand in Silver, formed of the initials "I. S." divided by a heart, said to have been for marking Slaves; from St George, West Indies.

(13.) By J. R. FINDLAY, F.S.A. Scot.

Corografia, Fisica, Storica, e Statistica dell' Italia e delle sue Isole, &c., di Attilio Zuccagni-Orlandini. 17 Vols. in 12, 8vo, and Atlas of Plates in 5 Vols., large folio. Florence, 1835-1845.

(14.) By the LORD CLERK-REGISTER OF SCOTLAND.

Exchequer Rolls of Scotland. Vol. IV. Edited by George Burnett, Lyon King of Arms, F.S.A. Scot.

(15.) By ROBERT DICKSON, Carnoustie, F.S.A. Scot.

Who was Scotland's first Printer? 8vo; London, 1881, pp. 24.

(16.) By JAMES CRUIKSHANK ROGER, F.S.A. Scot.

Two Lithographic Impressions of Drawings of Stone Monuments at Govan.

Two Lithographic Impressions of Drawings of Crosses, with interlaced work, Isle of Man, and Fragment found at Castlefield, Manchester.

Pencil Drawing of Urn found at Stirling.

Pencil Drawing of Urn, and small Cup-shaped Urn, &c., found at Keir.

(17.) By ALEXANDER NICHOLSON, LL.D., F.S.A. Scot., the Editor.

A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases. 8vo., Edinburgh, 1881.

The following Communications were read :—