

9. PADDLES FROM HORIZONTAL MILLS.

The object illustrated in fig. 2, 2A, B and C, was found a few years ago in draining marshy ground at Bankhead Farm, Dalswinton, Dumfriesshire, and has been kindly presented to the Museum by Mr Mathew Aird, through the good offices of our Fellow, Mr R. C. Reid. Its find-spot (25/937847) is almost two hundred yards from the present stream. It is of oak, 1 ft. 3.5 ins. long, 3.85 ins. at widest and 1.05 ins. thick. The surface of the blade is concave and slightly twisted. Rounded at one end, it thickens at the other into a collar 1.85 ins. thick,

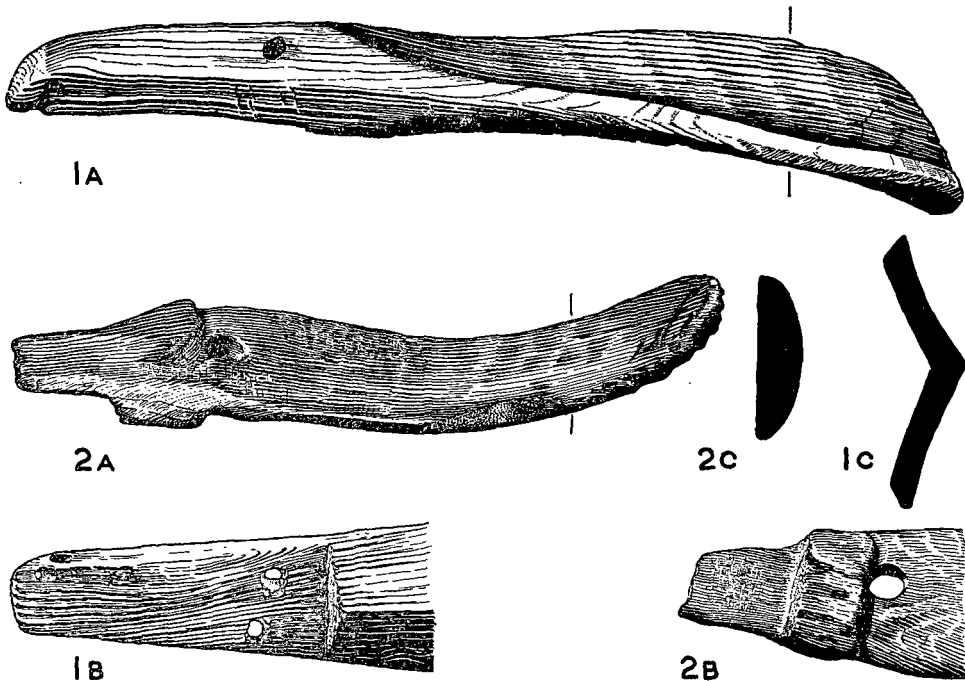


Fig. 2. Paddles from horizontal mills.

extending (on an average) for 1.7 ins. It is 3.0 ins. wide where the collar begins, and beyond the collar tapers to 1.7 ins. The tapering end is an extension of the inner side (*i.e.* on the concave face) of the collar and is 0.5 in. thick at its extremity. A hole 1.05 by 0.85 ins. has been bored in the thickness of the blade at the collar (see 2A, and the detail of the back, 2B).

The object appears to be the paddle of a horizontal water-mill such as was described recently in the *Proceedings* by S. H. Cruden,¹ and by Gilbert Goudie in 1886.² The paddles of Orkney and Shetland mills, however, are normally straight rectangular boards, while this example is of the dished type found in Ireland. Mr A. T. Lucas, Director of the National Museum of Ireland, has discussed the horizontal mill in Ireland in two recent papers.³ He has also kindly commented

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXI, 43-47.

² *Ibid.*, XX, 257-97.

³ *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXXXIII, pt. 1, 1-36, and LXXXV, pt. 1, 100-13.

on a photo of the Dalswinton paddle¹ which he says is very like one which he recovered from the site of a horizontal mill near Horseleap, Co. Westmeath. At page 34 of his first article Lucas wrote: "This [with dished paddles] is also the Mediterranean type of wheel, being vouched for in N. Spain, Mounts Lebanon and Carmel, on the Dardanelles and Salonika. On the other hand, the Scottish and Scandinavian mills lack the refinement of these hollow paddles and are provided instead with simple flat ones, upright or oblique. This fact establishes a close connection between the Irish and Mediterranean mills, the Irish ones being the most northerly extension of the type."

The hollow paddle has, on the contrary, been noted on the mainland of Scotland before, for Goudie (p. 283) says that the paddle of a mill at Kirtomy, near Swordly, in the parish of Farr, Sutherland, had paddles "concave in form." The Dalswinton paddle also extends the Mediterranean type into south-west Scotland, and that at a point where cultural influences from Ireland are to be expected. No date can be hazarded for it.

The other object, fig. 2, 1A, B and C, may also be the paddle of a horizontal mill, but there are difficulties in the way of so identifying it. It was found, by Mr A. Inkster, near Gutcher in the Island of Yell, Shetland (N41/547989), "on the bottom of a peat bank about seven feet from the surface and about 100 yards from the sea-shore, and not near a burn where a water-mill could have been." The Museum is indebted to Mr Inkster for presenting it, and to Mr A. J. Cluness of Lerwick for first drawing attention to it. It is 1 ft. 9.3 ins. long and 6.2 ins. across the blade, which is leaf-shaped in plan and V-shaped in cross-section (see 1C). The broad end of the leaf curves backwards. It is 0.85 in. thick at the point where the cross-section has been drawn (1A and C), and 2.6 ins. at its thickest point where the "handle" begins. The handle, 1.75 ins. thick, is shown in detail in 1B; the other side of it has a flattened ridge down the centre. One inch from the blade the handle is pierced by two holes, side by side, diameter 0.7 to 0.5 in., and near the end a similar hole pierces the handle transversely. The wood is very light in weight, as a result of its burial in peat, but is in no way warped.

To identify it as a horizontal mill paddle would appear to involve flying in the face of a clear-cut cultural distribution, for the authorities from Goudie (*op. cit.*) onwards are quite definite about the shape of Shetland paddles. And although relatively few dished blades are known, this one is very different from any of them, being longer and of much superior workmanship. The V-shape corresponds to the dishing of the others, but it curves backwards as none of them do. On the other hand, the size should not be rejected as impossible on insufficient evidence, and the V-shape would probably fulfil the function of holding water and allowing it to run from the other side even more effectively than the other.

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