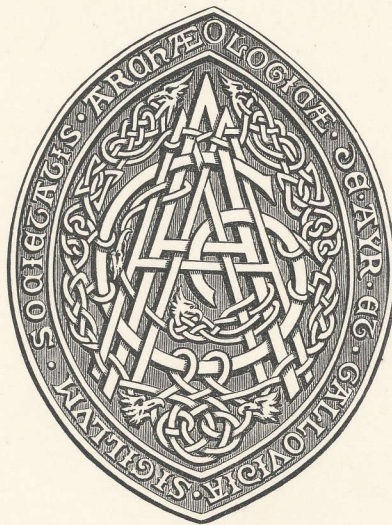


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IV.

ON A STONE CRANNOG IN ASHGROVE LOCH NEAR STEVENSTON.

MR. STEVENSTON, Farmer of High Smithstone, in digging a hole for a fence post on the east side of Ashgrove Loch and not far from the water's edge, came upon a bed of shells, mostly *Littorina littorea*, fragments of deer's horns, and bones.

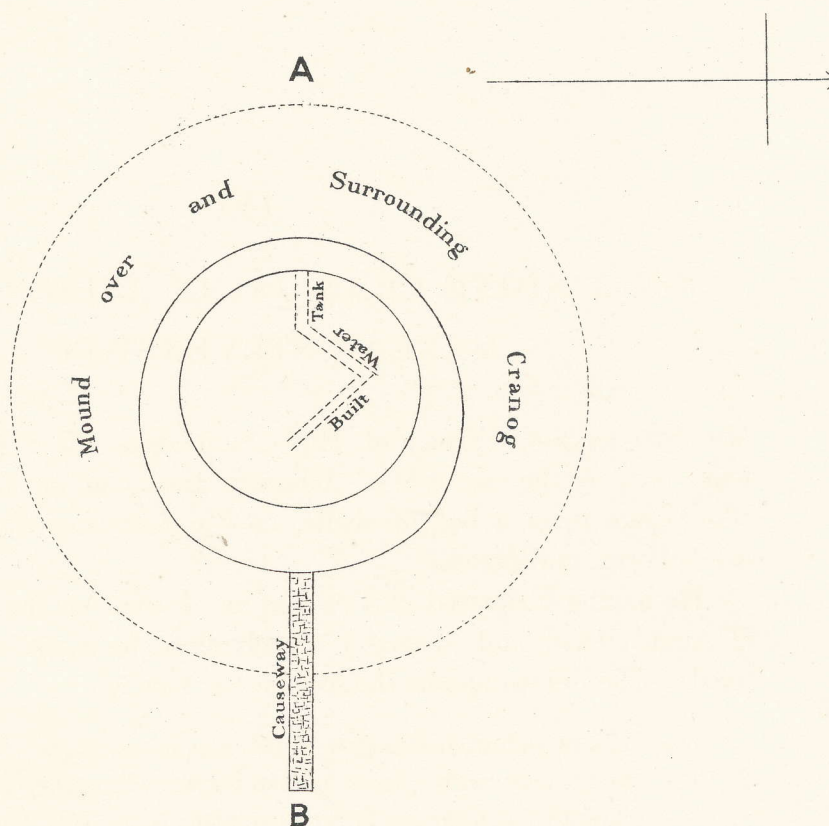
He having intimated this find to me, I went on the evening of the 9th of August 1886, and opened a trench close to where the post had been fixed. The following was the section cut through :—

	ft.	in.
1. Rotted bits of yellowish sandstone and lumps of sandstone	1	2
2. Dark sandy clay with pieces of sandstone, whinstone, and large quantities of <i>Littorina littorea</i> , complete bones, split bones, jaws, horns of red deer, etc.	2	0
3. Brown peat	1	1
4. Fine bluish clay (top part only dug into).		

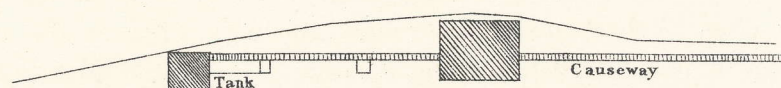
In No. 2 bed were got two fine bone chisels (Fig. 1), and a bone needle (Fig. 2) sharpened at both ends, and with a hole in the middle.

Only a few yards from this opening is a mound about 25 yards in diameter, which, before the loch was partly drained by bringing up a large ditch at its south-west corner, was surrounded with water, and still is so when the sluices are shut in the winter season.

I resolved to trace out the limits of the bed containing the shells, bones, and implements; and in doing so, in the direction of the mound, came to a stone wall.



Section on Line A.B.



J. Smith, del.

Leading from this wall towards the land, at a depth of two feet from the surface, a causeway of rough sandstone slabs was discovered, and in working round by the side of the stone wall I got a number of branches, all in a very rotten state, some of them extending under the foundation of the wall and on the surface of the peat, showing I think that before the wall was

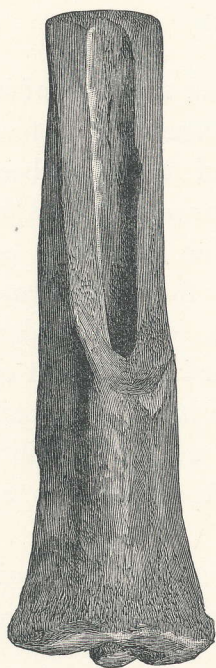


FIG. 1.—Bone Chisel. Scale $\frac{3}{4}$.

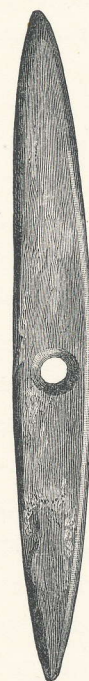


FIG. 2.—Bone Needle. Scale full size.

Both from Crannog in Ashgrove Loch.

built a layer of branches had been first laid down by way of stiffening the foundation. Making a trench across the wall, it was found to be 9 feet in thickness, built of rough blocks of sandstone, and a few whinstones, laid in a mortar of *tough yellow clay*.

Having got thus much information, trenches were opened to ascertain the extent of the wall, when it was found to form a circular enclosure, 30 feet in diameter, and to enclose the higher part of the mound already spoken of.

On the side towards the loch, the wall was only about the half thickness it was on that towards the land, and from this circumstance, and the number of bones, etc., on the outside of the wall, the conclusion was drawn that the area within the wall had been a place of human habitation as well as a fortress.

Trenches were then dug within the area of the wall, and the following sections gone through:—

	ft.	in.
1. Sandstone rubble (under the turf)	4	0
2. Wattling of heather	0	3
3. Causewaying of rough sandstone slabs	0	4
4. Built drain covered with sandstone slabs (depth)	2	0

The drain had been excavated in the moss, and the sides of it built with rough sandstone blocks. It was got in several trenches, and found to have been built in a zigzag fashion. It appeared to have been entirely constructed within the area of the wall, and no trace of it was found either through, or on outside of, the wall. When the sandstone covers were taken off it was in perfect condition and nearly filled with water.¹ From these appearances the conclusion was drawn that here we had a primitive water tank so as to insure a supply of good water in the event of the place being besieged, and the zigzag manner in which it has been built possibly indicates that the area within the circular wall was divided into compartments, as if the place had been inhabited by different families, each having an independent water supply.

The kitchen midden was to the south-east side of the building, and close up to the wall, tapering away at a distance of a few yards, and the following relics were gathered from it:—

1. A large number of bones, both entire and split, of red deer, ox, pig, sheep, and goat.
2. Several bone chisels and a bone knife, a bone wedge (Fig. 3), a large bone needle (Fig. 2), perforated in centre, similar to the one still used by fishers in mending their nets, a well-made bone spoon (Fig. 5), and a narrow bone needle.
3. Several hammer-stones, and a few smooth stones.
4. Bit of gas coal with a hole bored through it (Fig. 6).
5. A pair of steel sheep-shears (Fig. 7).
6. Numerous specimens of *Littorina littorea*.

From the details given above, I think the history of the spot may be read thus: On top of a bluish clay bed, there had accumulated a bed of brown moss, possibly entirely from the decay of water plants, one foot in

¹ It is still in its original condition.

thickness on the land side of crannog, and four feet thick on the loch side. Then the position was occupied by man, who laid on top of the moss a layer of branches, and on this built a *stone* crannog, 43 feet in largest outside diameter, with a built water tank under the floor, the interior of the dwelling being possibly divided into compartments, roughly paved, and carpeted with heather.

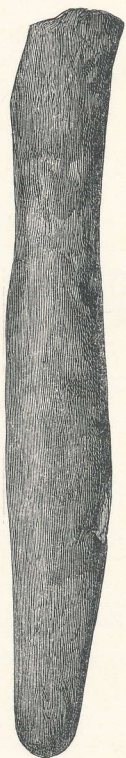


FIG. 3.—Bone Wedge.
Scale $\frac{2}{3}$.



FIG. 4.—Bone Needle.
Full size.

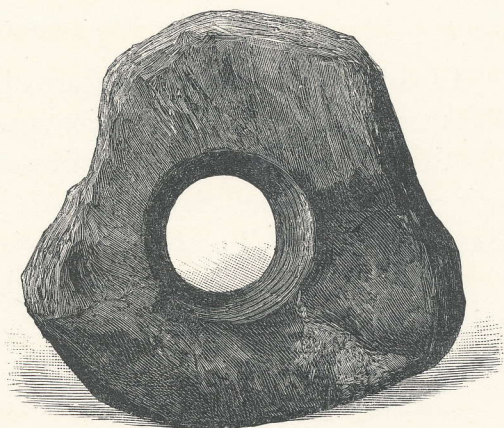


FIG. 6.—Bored Gas Coal.
Full size.

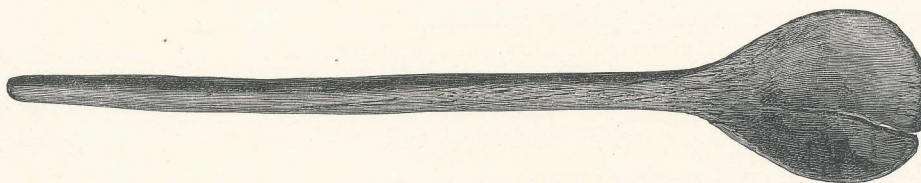


FIG. 5.—Bone Spoon. Full size. All from Crannog in Ashgrove Loch.

Along with very primitive tools of bone and stone, the inhabitants had at least one pair of steel sheep-shears of the modern pattern, although very much smaller in size (Fig. 7). There could be no doubt about the position of the shears, as I took them out of the relic bed with my own hands.

All round the dwelling there is evidence of its decay in the layers of sand and occasional stones that had fallen from the wall and got embedded in the sand layers, after which came the final overthrow, indicated by the sandstone debris; and possibly a large amount of which had at one time been taken away to build a neighbouring dry-stone dyke, the tail end of the debris and "kitchen midden" being covered over by a deposit of fine mud, a foot in thickness, laid down by the waters of the loch.

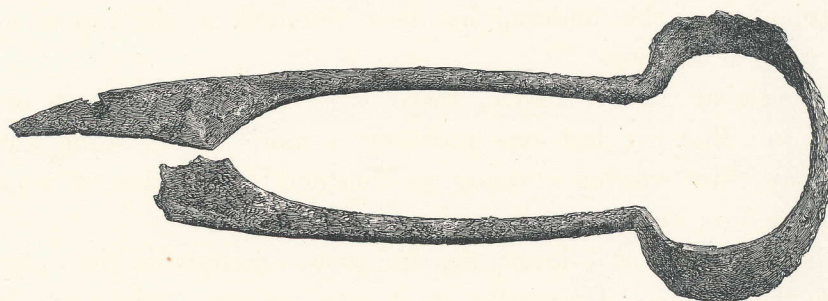


FIG. 7.—Shears from Crannog in Ashgrove Loch. Scale $\frac{3}{4}$.

In no part was there any charcoal found, nor any evidence of fires, but of course the whole of the interior space was not turned over.

All the deers' horns got were divested of the tines except the brow one, and look remarkably like picks, and have possibly been used as such. Some of them are pretty well coated with vivianite.

There are no traditions in the neighbourhood about this ancient dwelling, neither does the little green mound in the loch, formed by the debris from its ruin, bear any name.

There are possibly remains of five other crannogs in the loch, but nothing has been done to explore them, and the place when in its "glory" must have formed a very quaint little lake-village, the loch being nearly completely surrounded by rising ground.

It is still rather a pleasant spot during spring and summer, with abundance of the beautiful bog-bean flowers, water lilies both white and yellow, cowbane, loosestrife, and the tall "binnels," *Scirpus lacustris*, with many other flowering plants and mosses.

Crannogs built entirely of stone appear to be very rare, if indeed the one under consideration is not unique.

G. H. Kinahan, Esq., has shown that stones were sometimes substituted for wood in the construction of artificial islands in lochs.¹

¹ *Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy*, fourth series, vol. ii. p. 11.

In the Airrieoulland crannog described by Sir Herbert Maxwell for Dr. Munro, there is a wall 3 feet high, enclosing a circular space 54 feet in diameter, built of thin flags, but in this case the stone wall was founded on piles driven into 7 feet of moss, which probably formed an original pile dwelling.¹

In the White Loch of Ravenstone, near Ravenstone Castle, there is the foundation of a rectangular building, 55 feet by 47 feet, divided into five compartments, but this building has been founded on the top of a more ancient wooden crannog.²

In Kielziebar Loch, Argyle, there is a crannog, not yet properly explored, but like the last one probably a more recent stone structure raised on an older wooden crannog, as considerable remains of woodwork are to be seen on its east, south, and west sides.³

So far therefore as I know, the Ashgrove example is the only Lake-Dwelling that has been *originally constructed of stone*; the few branches under the foundation could not possibly ever have formed a pile dwelling.

From the bones found in the "kitchen midden," it is evident that the inhabitants of this place must have had extensive hunting privileges in the neighbourhood, and were in all likelihood "lords of the manor."

No remains of any cereals were got, so that the inhabitants probably lived by the chase, and by what shell-fish they gathered on the stones of the Firth a few miles distant.

JOHN SMITH.

MONKREDDING.

¹ Munro's *Lake-Dwellings of Europe*, p. 434.

Arch. Assoc., vol. v., under "Lake-Dwellings of Wigtown."

² *Ibid.* p. 438; and *Col. Ayr and Galloway*

³ Rev. J. Mapleton, *Proc. S. A. Scot.*, vol. vii.

