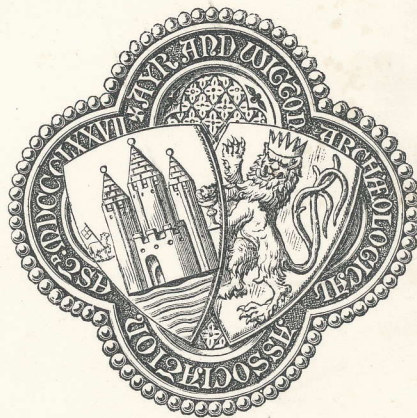


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RELATING TO THE COUNTIES OF

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## II.

### NOTE ON A STONE AXE-HAMMER, FLUTED ON THE SIDES,

FOUND IN THE PARISH OF COLMONELL.

As introductory to an Illustrated Catalogue of the Ancient Stone Implements of Ayrshire, now in preparation for an early volume of the *Collections*, a perforated stone axe, found on the property of the Earl of Stair, which presents some peculiarities worthy of special notice, may be figured and described here.

This axe-hammer belongs to the third of the classes into which these implements have been divided by Mr. Evans,<sup>1</sup> viz. those with the cutting edge at one end only and the shaft-hole near the other end, which is rounded. It was turned up by the plough seven years ago on the lands of Prieston, lying along the north bank of the Stinchar, and now forming part of the farm of Garnaburn in the parish of Colmonell. Before being disturbed it lay six or seven inches below the surface of the ground. Close beside it there was dug out at the same time a boulder, apparently of whinstone, a portion of which had been carefully hollowed out in a cup-like fashion. Such a connection,

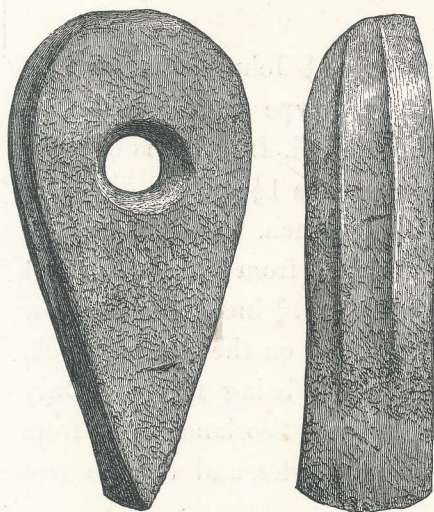


FIG. 1.—Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

however, between the two may have been purely accidental.

The axe, which is of whinstone, weighs about 8 lbs. Its greatest length is  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches, its breadth is  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and its thickness  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The shaft-hole has been bored from both faces, and has a diameter to begin with

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain*, p. 164.



of 2 inches, narrowing to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch in the centre. One of the faces (that shown in the accompanying woodcut) is nearly flat; but the other slopes decidedly from the shaft-hole to the rounded end, as may be seen from the view here given of one of the sides. This is possibly due to the implement's having been used at some time or other for a purpose different from that for which it was made; or, as Canon Greenwell suggests, to the piece of rolled stone from which it was fabricated having had that part rounded off.

But the chief peculiarity of the axe is the ornamentation on its sides, consisting of a kind of fluting. Instead of being either rounded or flat, as is usual in those of its class, both edges of each side are bevelled or chamfered for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch from their respective faces; while the intervening space, of about the same breadth, is grooved or fluted. The three spaces thus formed present the appearance of being divided by two raised lines sharply defined. This fluting extends over both sides from the commencement of the rounded end to within  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches of the cutting edge.

Ornamental work of any kind on implements of this particular class and size is very rare. One in the possession of Canon Greenwell, and figured by Mr. Evans, has "the rounded sides slightly chamfered all round the flat faces."<sup>1</sup> It is, however, much smaller than the Ayrshire example. A similar remark holds of an axe "with beaded mouldings round each side of the edges," figured by the same authority.<sup>2</sup> Specimens of small axes of a different type, with incised lines round the margin of the hollow faces, have been found in Ayrshire and elsewhere. But only one other example with flutings on the sides is known to exist—an axe of greenstone, found at Wollaston Park, Notts;<sup>3</sup> though Canon Greenwell possesses a cast of another, of which the present location and place of finding are unknown to him. Both of these, however, differ greatly, the one in shape and the other in size, from the Prieston axe.

As regards such work on these implements, it may be said mainly to interest us in connection with its probable bearing on the question as to whether those so fashioned were intended for the ordinary purposes of life or for war. "It is somewhat strange," remarks Mr. Evans in a letter to Mr. Cochran-Patrick regarding this Ayrshire axe, "that so much trouble should have been taken with a tool. Can it have been a weapon?"

AYR, December 1879.

JAMES MACDONALD.

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 182.