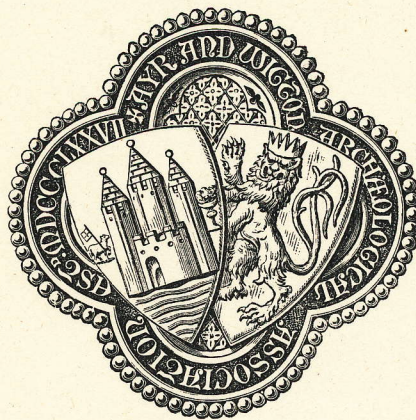


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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF FIVE BRONZE CELTS AND A BRONZE RING AT THE "MAIDENS," near Culzean Castle, Ayrshire. By R. Munro, M.D., M.A., F.S.A. Scot.	1
II. AYRSHIRE CRANNOGS (Third Notice). Additional Discoveries on the Crannog in Lochspouts. By R. Munro, M.D., M.A., F.S.A. Scot.	9
III. MILITARY REPORT ON THE DISTRICTS OF CARRICK, KYLE, AND CUNNINGHAM. By R. B. Armstrong, Author of the "History of Liddesdale"	17
IV. THE CHURCH OF DUNLOP. By John Shedden-Dobie, F.S.A. Scot.	26
V. ILLUSTRATED NOTICES OF THE ANCIENT BRONZE IMPLEMENTS OF AYRSHIRE (First Series). By James Macdonald, LL.D., M.A., F.S.A. Scot.	47
VI. THE LOGAN CHARTER. By Sir Herbert Eustace Maxwell, Bart., of Monreith, M.P.	55
VII. THE HERALDRY OF WIGTONSHIRE (No. V.) By Sir Herbert Eustace Maxwell, Bart., of Monreith, M.P.	58
VIII. ANCIENT PLATES BELONGING TO THE KIRK-SESSION OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF KILMARNOCK. By the Rev. W. Forbes Low, B.D.	59
IX. CORSHILL BARON-COURT BOOK. By John Shedden-Dobie, F.S.A. Scot.	65
INDEX	251

II.

AYRSHIRE CRANNOGS.

(THIRD NOTICE.)

ADDITIONAL DISCOVERIES ON THE CRANNOG IN LOCHSPOUTS.

As mentioned in my previous paper,¹ the selection of the natural basin of Lochspouts, as the most suitable site for a reservoir for supplying the town of Maybole with water, had been announced shortly after the excavation of the crannog (as far as was then possible, without an expensive cutting to reduce the level of the lake,) had been completed. In the course of the subsequent negotiations with the proprietor and his agents, which ended in the final adoption of this scheme, we have another proof of the interest taken by Sir James Fergusson, Bart., in these antiquarian researches. The following extract, taken from the contractor's specification for the work to be done within this lake-basin, preparatory to its conversion into the proposed reservoir, requires no explanation :—"After the water in the present loch has been lowered, the bottom of the reservoir, to the extent to be pointed out, to be excavated to a depth of about 3 feet, or to such further depth as the engineer may consider it necessary, to remove the peat and other matters. At the site of the supposed lake-dwelling the excavations to be so conducted that the structure of the dwelling may be left entire, until such time as it is thoroughly explored by a member or members of the Archæological Society of Ayrshire and Wigtownshire, or such person appointed by them, or by Sir James Fergusson, Bart., of Kilkerran, to see this exploration carried out. Any relics that may be found during the excavation to be at once delivered

¹ *Archæological and Historical Collections*, Ayr and Wigtown Archæological Association, Vol. III. p. 18.

to the party appointed to superintend the exploration, or to such other person as may be in charge in his absence." Just as the proof-sheets of my last chapter on *Scottish Lake Dwellings* had come to hand, I received a note from Mr. William Henderson, C.E., engineer to the Maybole Water-works, stating that the outlet at Lochspouts had been cut about 3 feet deeper, that the water was being drained off, and that the contractor was ready to begin the excavations on the site of the lake-dwelling.

On the receipt of Mr. Henderson's letter I lost no time in making an appointment to meet him at Lochspouts, where I became more fully acquainted with the nature and extent of the proposed excavations. The débris formerly wheeled from the mound lay in two heaps just beyond the margin of the artificial island, but still within the boundaries of the reservoir. These, therefore, together with a complete section of the island, about 3 feet in thickness, were to be removed entirely beyond the rocky barrier. I understood that, in clearing away the contents of this section, the wood-work, especially towards the margin of the crannog, and about the surrounding piles, was to have been left intact for some time, but when I revisited the scene of the operations a few days afterwards I found that a gang of some forty or fifty men had made such progress that the whole section was completely removed, leaving nothing but small pillars here and there for the purpose of calculating the number of cubic yards excavated. All the horizontal beams and other wood-work were taken away, and nothing left above the base of the section except a few of the encircling uprights on the shore side of the crannog. My regret at this unexpected rapidity of the process of demolition was however considerably allayed when I found that Mr. James Mathewson, the inspector of the works, under whose vigilant eye the operations were conducted, had taken a most intelligent interest in the archæological phase of the remains, and had even taken notes of some of the phenomena which appeared to him most important. It is therefore to him I am chiefly indebted for the following details.

During the former explorations, the conjecture that the paved habitable surface, with its remains of hearths, relics, etc., then reached, was a secondary one superimposed upon the débris of a former habitation, was supported by the following observations, which could not, however, be verified by deeper excavations, owing to the rushing up of water:—

1. The level of the log-pavement was considerably higher than the tops of the uprights forming the surrounding circles.

2. In various places, when attempting to dig beneath it, ashes, charcoal, bones, hazel-nuts, and sea-shells were turned up.

The evidence now produced left no doubt that this conjecture was well founded.

On the bank I was shown two heaps of oak beams which had been removed from the excavated débris, and amongst them were some of the ordinary transverses, containing square-cut holes at their extremities. Upon inquiry, I found that some of these, when exposed, were in position in the line of the surrounding stockade, with uprights projecting through the holes. One thick beam was deeply grooved, and resembled one found at Lochlee, figured and described in the article on "Lochlee Crannog," (Vol. II., *Collections*, page 39.) A few large flat planks, having a round handle-like projection at one end, some 18 inches long, had only one square-cut hole, sometimes close to this handle and at other times at the opposite extremity. Another stout oak beam, 6 feet long, contained a series of round holes about an inch in diameter, and from five to six inches apart. The holes, which were on the broad side of the beam, were about 2 inches in depth, but only penetrated half through it, and from one of them a portion of a wooden pin was extracted.

This beam was in a fragmentary condition, being, like many others, partially charred.

On examining the surface of the island, as now exposed, I noticed some very large oak beams, prepared like railway sleepers, and in one place, near the centre, there were some stones and clay as if they had formed the base of a fireplace; but the whole area was so muddy that it was difficult to say whether or not this was the exact surface of a former log-pavement.

On looking at the isolated pillars left standing, we noticed that their substance, which consisted of vegetable débris, mixed with brushwood, ashes, and in one place layers of clay, had a more or less stratified arrangement. The depth of the layer removed varied from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet, and it appeared to me as if the island had sunk less towards its shore side than on the far off side, as the tops of the surrounding piles had become barely visible on the latter, whereas, on the former, not only were the piles exposed for about 18 inches or 2 feet, but some of the transverses were actually found in position lying over them.

At the junction of the gangway and island, a full view of which we now had, the uprights of both structures appeared to be on the same level,

but as those of the former approached the shore they became gradually more elevated, till, as mentioned at page 6 in Vol. III. of the *Collections*, they projected above the grass.

As regards the deeper structures of the island, I was always of opinion, considering the amount of subsidence of its surface that had taken place, that their depth would be correspondingly great. This opinion was now shared by the engineer, contractor, and others, who judged more from the great solidity and firmness presented by the whole mass. In attempting to ascertain some further particulars by digging a hole in its centre, Mr. Mathewson writes as follows:—

“LOCHSPOUTS, 2d May 1882.

“DEAR SIR—I have been instructed by the engineer to forward to you, by Wednesday at latest, any information gained by the sinking of the central shaft in the crannog.

“The mode adopted was to open a place about 12 feet square.

“The pump forwarded was only 3 inches diameter, and it was found that three men bailing with buckets were required to enable other two men to dig.

“A large mortised oak beam was found about 18 inches below present surface; still further down a few oak beams were lifted with broken portions of transverse (soft wood) beams adhering to under surface of the oak. This was at a depth of 3 feet 6 inches. A large flat stone, near to which was a compressed mass of grass, some ferns (common bracken), and fragments of moss, was also turned up.—I am, yours faithfully,

“JAMES MATHEWSON.

“P.S.—5.20 P.M. Men leaving. Found mortised beam (oak) with pin in hole. Beams as far as we can plunge a rod—3½ feet deep.”

Writing subsequently, May 11th, Mr. Mathewson says:—

“The sinking of the shaft was a failure through want of depth at outlet. Oak beams with cross layers of softer wood and brushwood were found all over the bottom of shaft. Some small jaw-bones were brought up from a depth of 2 feet 6 inches below present surface, as also some compressed ferns and grasses, a small quantity of ashes, and a trace of whitish clay. On Friday evening I turned over some of the formerly unmoved oak beams at a corner of the shaft, put the spade a foot further down, and turned up a sandstone which had been used as a whetstone. It was irregularly shaped, 7 inches long and 2¾ broad. One flat face and a sloping edge were ground smooth by whetting. It was 1 foot 6 inches below present floor. In the near surroundings of the spot I also found ashes and traces of tough whitish clay and a few bones.”

Again, writing on the 16th May, Mr. Mathewson says:—

“I sounded shaft to-day, and found hard beams, from 3 feet 9 inches to 4 feet 3 inches below present level of excavations. The shaft is rudely 3 feet 6 inches deep. In some crevices the iron bar went down to 6 feet from top of shaft, and again struck wood.”

RELICS FOUND BELOW UPPER LOG-PAVEMENT.

But the chief evidence that the section now removed from off the island represented the débris of a former habitation, is derived from the relics found among its contents, which are as follows :—

1. *Whetstones*.—Three of these implements, the most modern-like that I have yet seen, were found to the west of the junction of the gangway with the crannog, and at a depth of 2 feet 6 inches. One is rectangularly shaped and beautifully polished on all sides. It is made of a hard dark stone, and measures $7\frac{1}{4}$ by $1\frac{3}{8}$ by $\frac{7}{8}$ inches; another is a smooth slightly oval-shaped rod, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter; the other is about the same length, but of a roughly quadrangular shape.

2. *Wooden Implements*.—A semi-globular piece of soft wood, 7 inches in diameter, and having a shallow cavity cut out of its flat surface, measuring 5 inches in diameter, and a uniform depth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Another cup-shaped vessel or implement, also of soft wood, was surrounded by a deep groove, across which were seen the remains of small wooden pins, some nine or ten in number, which penetrated through both its rims. The diameter of the central cup was $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and that of the whole vessel (including the outer rim, the groove and the rim of the cup), $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches. A third article of wood consisted of a smooth flat beam of oak, 3 feet 6 inches long, 1 foot broad, and 4 inches thick, having a deep groove at one edge, and a stout pin-like projection from one end, as if it had other attachments. In the centre of this beam there was a round hole, over which lay a handle-like elevation cut out of the solid, and having not only a vertical hole corresponding with the one in the lower portion, but also another passing horizontally through it, and immediately between the two former. This handle-like elevation was 2 feet 1 inch long, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad, and rose into a slight arch in the middle, where the horizontal hole passed underneath, and in the line of continuation of the latter there was, on both sides, a slight hollow, as if worn out of the beam by friction. The whole was cut out of one piece of solid oak. These articles were found at a depth of about 2 feet below the former log-pavement.

3. *Bronze Ornament*.—A double-spiral ornament of bronze wire, having six twists at

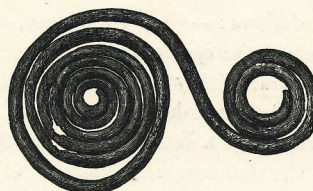


FIG. 1.—Bronze Ornament ($\frac{1}{2}$).

one end and three at the other, was found at a depth of 1 foot 6 inches, and near the centre of the island. Its length is $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch (Fig. 1).

4. *Jet Ring*.—This article was found at a depth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot. Its diameter is $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch. The inside looks as if worn in one or two places by friction.

Besides the above, some hammer-stones, a quern, and two fragments of very rude pottery were found.

ARTICLES FOUND WHILE REMOVING THE STUFF FORMERLY WHEELED FROM
OFF THE MOUND, *i.e.* ABOVE THE UPPER LOG-PAVEMENT.

1. *Rock-Crystal*.—A conical piece of rock-crystal, evidently ground down to its present shape. The diameter of base is $\frac{1}{16}$ less than an inch, and the perpendicular height is $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. The base is not quite flat, but slightly convex, as will be seen from the annexed outline (Fig. 2). It scratches glass, but is scratched by a diamond, and depolarises a ray of light. Its specific gravity is 2.64.¹

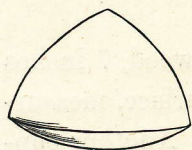


FIG. 2.—Outline of
Crystal Ornament ($\frac{1}{16}$).

2. *A Leaden Spindle Whorl*.—A small bead-shaped portion of lead perforated with a round hole, is supposed to be a spindle-whorl. Its diameter is $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch.



FIG. 3.—Bronze Ornament ($\frac{1}{4}$).

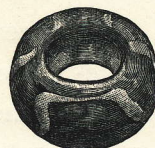


FIG. 4.—Amber-coloured Glass Bead ($\frac{1}{4}$).

3. *Bronze Ornament*.—This consists of a small semi-globular shaped

¹ Regarding this object, a reviewer of my work on *Ancient Scottish Lake Dwellings* remarks as follows:—"Is it a charm, or can it have formed the centre knob or boss in the binding of some richly decorated breviary or gospel-book? Crystals very similar, but oblong in form—like a Brazil nut—may be seen in some of the rich covers of books of early date, and a few that have been detached are preserved in

collections. One such object forms part of a crystal necklace in the Ashmolean Museum; and another, in private hands, was employed not so many years ago, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, for the purpose of seeing spirits. If this relic be indeed a book-boss, it makes it probable that the crannog was at one time inhabited, or at least visited, by Christian missionaries."—*Academy*, October 14, 1882.

cup, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter, to which is attached a triangular-shaped handle-like projection, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long (Fig. 3).

4. *Glass Bead*.—This is a smooth, amber-coloured bead, variegated with a yellowish slag, and measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, and $\frac{7}{10}$ of an inch deep (Fig. 4).

5. *Bronze Ring*.—A small slender ring of bronze, of the size of a finger-ring. It is penannular (but the ends are close, and might have been broken), and is $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch in diameter.

6. *Jet Pendant*.—This is made of a circular piece of polished jet or cannel coal, rather less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, which is perforated by four quadrant-like spaces of uniform size and shape, so as to leave the form of a rectangular cross inscribed in a circle. The arms of the cross become a little broader as they approach the circumference, and on one surface they, as well as the circular portion, are ornamented by a row of incised circles, each circle having a small hollow in its centre. An incised line bounds each row of circles on both sides. All these incised lines, circles, and central hollows, were filled by a yellowish kind of enamel. A little projection from the circle, opposite one of the arms of the cross, is perforated transversely to its surface by a small hole for suspension, but it is evident that, previous to the making of this hole, it was suspended by means of another hole, which perforated it in an opposite direction, but from which one side was broken off (Fig. 5).



FIG. 5.—Jet Ornament ($\frac{1}{4}$).

Dr. Joseph Anderson, to whom I sent this object for inspection, writes thus :—

“I have nothing special to say of the jet object sent to-day, except that it seems to be most certainly Christian, and of an early Christian type. It is the first jet thing I have

Dr. Joseph Anderson has also pointed out that it is extremely like a “large circular rock crystal” which forms the central ornament on the inferior surface of the foot of the famous silver chalice, dug up at the Rath of Reerosta, near Ardagh, County Limerick, Ireland, in 1868, and now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. According to the Earl of Dunraven, “this most beautiful example of our ancient art was executed either in the 9th or 10th century.” (See *Proceedings Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, December 4, 1882.)

seen, having this Christian relationship, from any of the early inhabited sites in Scotland. The ornament is very peculiar, and the form of the trinket most interesting, as it compares with the form of the cross within a circle found on the stones in Wigtonshire, though it has not the peculiar appendage which marks the Chrisma."¹

At the request of Sir James Fergusson all the relics illustrating this and the former article on the Crannog in Lochspouts are now deposited in the National Museum in Edinburgh.

ROBERT MUNRO.

¹ See article on Inscribed Stones at Kirk-madrine, in the parish of Stoneykirk, county of Wigton, by Dr. Arthur Mitchell.—*Proc.*

Soc. Antiq. Scot. vol. ix. p. 568. Also, *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (Second Series), page 252.