

### III.

#### NOTE OF THE ANTIQUITIES OF UDNY, ABERDEENSHIRE, IN A LETTER TO THE SECRETARY. BY CHARLES S. TEMPLE, Esq.

Three of the battle-axes or celts now presented to the Museum were found on my farm of Cloister Seat, and the other four were found on the farms immediately adjoining. The arrow-heads were all picked up at Cloister Seat by myself, in the process of agriculture, as also were the whorls and pipeheads.

There were some old graves in the neighbourhood some years ago, and a cave or yirde-house, the excavation of which I myself superintended, but no remains were found.

Having minutely examined and measured the whole while it was (much to my regret) redd out from the foundation, I am able to give you, from memoranda taken at the time by myself and another person interested in it, the following account of the cave, on the general accuracy of which you may rely:—

“This subterranean abode of ancient times was situated in a field on the farm of Mill of Torry, barony of Pitmedden and parish of Udney. It was discovered in April 1813 by a man named James Ogston, who had been employed by Mr Pirie, the farmer of Mill of Torry, to remove an upright stone from this field. As he was working about the base of the stone, an iron which he had inserted beneath it fell down into the bowels of the earth with a rumbling noise. On examining the cause of the disappearance of his tool, a cave was unexpectedly brought to light. It was semicircular in form,<sup>1</sup> from north-east to south-west or west, the

<sup>1</sup> This curious building seems to have been similar in shape to one found at Newstead, Roxburghshire, figured by J. A. Smith, M.D., at page 218 of Vol I. of “Proceedings,” but the Newstead building had been much more finely executed.

bend being towards the south. The entrance was in the east end, and in which some remains of steps cut in the earth were visible. In the west end was an enlargement of a circular form, filled with black mould and ashes, interspersed with fragments of pottery and burned wood, and having its walls and roof blackened as it were by fire. Its length was about 60 feet, width of passage 4 feet, its height sufficient to allow a man to walk upright. It was soon closed up again, and remained entire till the latter part of the year 1849, when a new tenant renting the farm caused it to be re-opened for the sake of the stones of which it was built, and then the labour which had been expended on its construction was abundantly evident. The whole had been excavated from a rock of rotten gneiss to the depth of 10 or 11 feet, but as the fragments of this did not suit their purpose, they had conveyed to the spot large blocks of granite, the nearest deposit of which is in the Chapel Hill of Iriewells, at the distance of about a mile. It was covered with long stones of rough unhewn granite, about 6 feet in length, laid close to each other, and then another heavy stone laid over the joints, and then the whole covered with earth. The lintels, which overlapped each other so as to completely exclude all foreign bodies, were remarkably uniform in size, each being about 6 feet long, 2 feet broad, and from 9 to 12 inches thick. The blocks used in lining the sides were not so large, but on none were any marks of a tool to be seen. The whole was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 feet from the surface of the ground, so as to be entirely out of the reach of the plough or spade, and thus, had it not been from the stone erected above, probably to mark the spot, this monument of ancient times might have lain concealed till the last day.

This memorandum of it was made twelve years ago; it contained all the history of its discovery, and the whole measurement, &c., of it. An oblong bead was found in it, which is in the possession of the Rev. G. Sutherland, Falkirk.

About two miles to the north of this, in a commonty mentioned in some of the Spalding Club books as the place where a battle had some time been fought between the lands of Esslemont and Lord Aberdeen's property, there was a cairn called the Cat's, or Cattie's Cairn. (One of the battle-axes sent you is from this commonty). This cairn has disappeared. A Druidical circle of a good few stones existed some years

ago at Hill of Fiddes, about two miles south-east of this, but, with the exception of one stone left for the cattle to rub against, I think no vestige now remains.

At Hitchickbrae, on Lord Aberdeen's property, near the confluence of the rivulet Brony with the Ythan, there were found in a sandbank two urns full of calcined or burned bones. The urns were surrounded with stones, and covered with a large flat one. They were all broken to pieces; I have however, a fragment in my possession.

I have a good many celts, arrow-heads, Pictish knives, &c., still in my possession; I could not, however, part with all these *yet*, but when they reach a certain maximum by subsequent additions, the National Museum shall get its share.

Mr STUART adverted to the varying circumstances under which flint arrow-heads were found. The popular belief which long regarded them as "elf-darts," and which was not confined to Scotland, had been expressed by the well-known Scottish geographer, Robert Gordon of Straloch, about two centuries ago. After giving some details about them, he adds that these wonderful stones are sometimes found in the fields, and in public and beaten roads, but never by searching for them; to-day, perhaps, one will be found where yesterday nothing could be seen, and in the afternoon, in places where before noon there was none, and this most frequently under clear skies and in summer days. He then gives instances related to him by a man and woman of credit, each of whom, while riding, found an arrow-head in their clothes in this unexpected way. The want of intention which was necessary in order to find these arrow-heads, was equally valuable in other matters, as appears from a peculiarity of the oat harvest in Buchan, told by Boece:—"In Buchanane growis aitis but ony tilth or seid. Quhen the peple passis withset purpos to scheir thair aitis, thay find nocht but tume hullis; yet quhen thay pas but ony premeditatioun thay find thair aitis ful and weil ripit."

It appeared that while flint arrow-heads occur in cists in most parts of Scotland, and have been found along with a quern and a wooden wheel, under moss at Blair Drummond; and while there are localities, like Mr Temple's farm, where they are found in numbers in the course of agri-

cultural operations, and as, on the banks of the burn of Rothes, after a flood, there are also places where, from the occurrence of flint chips as well as arrow-heads, there is reason to think there had been manufactories of the article, such as a spot in the sand-hills of Culbin, on the coast of Moray, and another on the sands of Belhelvie, about eight miles north from Aberdeen. It was also worth remarking, that manufactories of flint are found on some of the pile habitations in the Swiss lakes, as at Moosedorf, near Berne, although no flint occurs in Switzerland, thus suggesting the existence of a traffic with other countries—probably Gaul—for supplying the wants of the early inhabitants of these wooden huts.

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