

NOTE ON COMMUNICATION OF LADY JOHN SCOTT, DESCRIPTIVE OF WOODEN STRUCTURES AT SPOTTISWOODE, IN BERWICKSHIRE. BY JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., Sec. S.A. Scot.

It would seem that these remains had been designed as places of retreat and safety at a time when the place was a marsh amid wood.

Among the early British people the woods and marshes were places of frequent resort. Eumenius speaks of these among the Caledonians; and Herodian tells us that Severus, on his expedition into Britain, in following the natives into their marshy refuges, had to form causeways by which his soldiers might reach them and fight on firm footing; and both he and Xiphiline, in describing the people, advert to their custom of living in marshes.

In several parts of Scotland, wooden structures and relics have been found in mosses and marshy spots which had formerly been under water.

As an instance, I may refer to the Green Knowe on the farm of Nisbet, in Culter parish, Lanarkshire. It consisted of a mound of stones resting on moss, penetrated in all directions by oak piles, and approached by a causeway of stones. The old name of the site of this relic was "Cranney Moss," obviously derived from the word Crannock, or Crannog, which was the term used for structures of this description in Scotch records of the beginning of the seventeenth century; and as it is a word of frequent occurrence in the topography of Scotland, in connection with mosses and bogs, it is very probable that the occurrence of crannogs might be traced by an examination of sites thus named.

Dr Mitchell has described a remarkable wooden structure found in the moss at Corncockle, in Applegarth. It consisted of a platform formed of oak trees resting on moss, and covered by a bank of the same substance of great depth. On this platform was a layer of birch twigs, above which was another of common bracken, and at one part of it was a pavement of flattish whin-stones. Here were many fragments of burnt wood, and seven large bowls or cups cut out of oak, with a rude oak mallet. This remain had not yet been completely cleared of moss, but it seems to have formed the platform on which rested the frail buildings of a group of the early inhabitants in the midst of a morass.

In the moss of Knaven, in Aberdeenshire, a canoe was dug up; and in

the moss of Ravenstone, in Wigtonshire, five paddles were found lying close to a mass of timber, about 6 feet under the surface, all implying the resort of the primitive inhabitants to these localities when they were marshes or shallow lakes.

The circular remains described in Lady John Scott's communication, seem to have been formed by large beams going round the edge, with smaller trees radiating inwards to a centre, and covered with layers of grass and fern mixed with branches and twigs, and they all point to structures analogous to the crannogs in the Loch of Dowalton, described at length in Vol. VI. of our Proceedings.

The occurrence of the wooden causeways by which they were accessible makes it probable that the locality was then a marsh; and the bones which have been discovered in connection with them would lead us to believe that, like the Islands at Dowalton, they had been places of frequent or continuous resort.

The Society is indebted to Lady John Scott's interest in such matters for this communication, and will, I am sure, welcome any farther details which future examination may enable her to give.