

I.

NOTICE OF ANTIQUITIES ON THE ISLE OF EDAY, ORKNEY, RECENTLY
EXAMINED BY JAMES FARRER, OF INGLEBOROUGH, Esq., M.P. COMMUNI-
CATED BY JOHN STUART, Esq., SECRETARY.

Ingleborough, Lancaster, October 29.

[DEAR SIR,—I propose sending off this week a box containing the things found by me during my investigations in Orkney last summer. I forward to you a list of them. Probably you will not attach much value to some of the articles ;—the iron chisel and knife I myself think must be modern, but they were under a great mass of rubbish. I have thought it best to send everything that *could* be

worth keeping, though, probably, you will consider many of the things sent as worthless.

I inclose also a short account of the Weem opened by me in Mr Hebden's Isle of Eday, which may be interesting to you. I have lately been engaged in excavating in a cave in this neighbourhood, and have found many articles of bone and bronze, and some few of iron. The coins found (which belong to the Roman era) prove the period at which the cave was inhabited; the quantity of broken pottery, and the superior workmanship of some of the things found, seem to place the date of the occupation of the cave at a much later period than the Pictish burghs. I hope to complete the excavation of this cave next summer. Believe me, yours very faithfully,

JAMES FARRER.

The box containing portions of the ancient hearthstone, with charcoaled bere or barley, was considered by Mr Petrie as not the least interesting portion of my discoveries. As it was found impossible to pack the box sufficiently tight to prevent shaking, I have thought it best to inclose a quantity of the corn in its burnt state, and which I collected myself from the interior of the Pict's house.

To the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.]

In July 1855, being on a visit to Mr Hebden of Eday, I crossed over to the Holm, an adjoining island, for the purpose of examining some curious relics of antiquity, amongst which the WEEM or subterranean house was not the least interesting. Its external appearance was that of a circular hillock, and it was at first supposed to have been merely an accumulation of rubbish in digging for stone. The entire length of the building was found to be 16½ feet; the entrance was very narrow, and a large stone was placed at the mouth. There were four chambers, the largest being at the end of the building, and measuring 6 feet 2 inches long, 4 feet 6 inches in height, and 2 feet 6 inches wide. The doorway or entrance to this chamber was 1 foot 11 inches wide, but partially blocked up with large stones laid horizontally, and over which the occupant of this dark abode must have climbed. At right angles to this chamber, and on the left side, was one still smaller, being only 4 feet long, 1 foot 8 inches wide, 3 feet 8 inches high, and 1 foot 1 inch in width at the entrance. On the right side was a third room 4 feet 6 inches long, 2 feet 6 inches wide, 4 feet high, and the entrance to which was 2 feet in width. On the same side, but nearer to the entrance of this strange habitation, was a fourth chamber, 3 feet 6 inches long, 2 feet wide, and 3 feet high. Nearly opposite this room was a stone placed perpendicularly against the wall, apparently for the purpose of strengthening it; large flat stones resting upon portions of the

natural rock that protruded into the chambers, or, artificially supported, formed the rude beds of the occupants, leaving ample room underneath for any water to run off, and for the eventual carrying off of which a drain, now nearly blocked up, had been provided. There seems reason to believe that heather had been laid on these rude couches; as, though not a particle of any such substance was found within, yet the impress of the fibres and stems was distinctly traceable on those parts of the floor, now rotten with age, on which the stones bearing the heather had fallen; the walls gradually converged to the top, over which large cover-stones were laid. Nothing was found inside; and the existence of the place does not seem to have been known to the inhabitants of the islands. Whilst the size of the stones used in its construction is evidence of great personal strength on the part of the builders, the small and narrow rooms seem to indicate a diminutive race; and the entire absence of even the rudest kind of implements renders it probable that the object sought for was only temporary shelter or concealment.

On the same Island are the remains of an ANCIENT RAMPART of stones and earth, somewhat resembling the letter S in form. At each end were the foundation-stones of towers; there were fragments of standing stones within the line of rampart, and also outside, and at some little distance from it. An old man, a tenant of Mr Hebden's, stated that he remembered many standing stones having been removed when he was quite young. The foundation-stones were laid regularly, but without any kind of cement, presenting an even face of wall, but buried in the accumulation of soil and decayed stone; the wall itself, which was of great thickness, was composed of stones of various sizes, and mixed with earth and debris. A stone dyke, or rather the remains of one, extends seawards.

There is a similar dyke, only of larger dimensions, on the main island, inclosing an area 80 yards in diameter; it is almost entirely buried in the ground, and is 7 feet thick at the base. There are also the remains of standing stones, the stumps of which, in some instances, only just appear above ground, extending over a great part of the main island of Eday; they appear to have been larger than those found in the Holm; only one now remains uninjured save by time, and doubtless owes its security to the determination of the proprietor, Mr Hebden, to preserve from destruction these interesting relics of antehistoric times. This stone is 19 feet high, 7 feet wide, and 16 inches thick. It has possibly been both higher and thicker, as the upper part is broken, and the sides partially decayed during its long exposure to the weather.

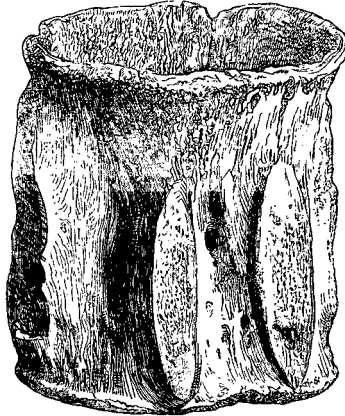
At the distance of a couple of hundred yards from the Weem is a place of

similar character, but consisting of only one room, the entrance to which is now overgrown with heather. It was covered with a single flagstone, 4 feet 6 inches long by 3 feet 4 wide, and in height is 2 feet 4 inches. The stone had evidently been quarried from the immediate neighbourhood.

Collection of Antiquities from the Pict's House in Burray (July 1855), presented to the Museum of the Society. (Vide Proceedings, vol. ii. pp. 5 and 56.)

Circular stone resembling a miniature querne; broken circular mica plate; two circular perforated stones, and three bones similar; large bone drinking-cup, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height (apparently formed from the body of the vertebra of a whale, hollowed out, fig. 1); bone scoop; five combs—four of these, in different

Fig. 1.



degrees of preservation, resemble that figured by Mr Rhind (*vide Proceedings*, vol. i., p. 264); the small one figured below (fig. 3) was found at the bottom of the rubbish in the Pict's House; it has the remains of an iron knob or pin

Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

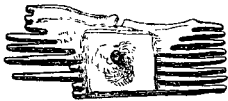


Fig. 4.



projecting from its centre;—fragments of handles apparently belonging to some instruments; a rounded perforated bone, pierced with broken iron pin; rounded

bone, like a button (fig. 2), with iron pin projecting from its centre; bone resembling a petrified reed; a bone instrument in a bone sheath, and fractured at both ends; fragment of a bone arrow-head; two small bone pins, one an inch and a half, the other three inches and a half in length (fig. 4); several pointed bones, some with heads like the smaller one of fig. 4; a large piece of deer's horn, with a longitudinal opening made in it, apparently for the purpose of inserting a thong or handle; one bronze pin (fig. 5); an iron knife and a chisel (these two last have a modern appearance, but were found at

Fig. 5.



a great depth below the surface; it is, however, quite possible that they belong to a comparatively recent era, and may have been accidentally dropped among the ruins.)

The charcoaled bere or barley was found at the bottom of the rubbish, and mingled with burnt bones and remains of fuel.

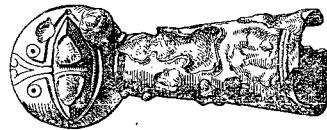
From the Grave on the Links near Pierowall in Westray.

Iron knife incrustated with rust; circular iron instrument; iron instrument perforated at one extremity, with a hook at the other; fragments of wood and iron, suggested to be portions of a shield or buckler, and a small handle for some weapon, or perhaps the point or termination of a sheath or scabbard

Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



(fig. 2); curiously ornamented at the head (fig. 1), and apparently composed of silver and copper.¹ (This last was in a small mass of black unctuous matter, possibly the *decayed hand of the dead*).

Small portions of iron, nails and nail-heads. (*Vide Proceedings, vol. ii., p. 62.*)

(¹ It is made of copper, plated with silver, the pattern on the head, which is hollow, is chased, and not engraved; and it must, to all appearance, have been finished on a turning-lathe.—Ed.)