

## I.

NOTES OF SOME ANTIQUITIES IN THE PARISH OF ALFORD, ABERDEENSHIRE. BY THE REV. JAMES GILLAN, MINISTER OF THE PARISH. COMMUNICATED BY JOHN STUART, Esq., SECRETARY, S.A. SCOT.

From the hills to the westward of the farm of Dorzel, in Alford, a long irregular ridge gradually declines till it is lost in the valley of the Leochel, where its height may be still about 150 feet above the level of that stream; and at a distance from it of about half a mile, there lately existed numerous remains of ancient foundations, giving the idea of a village which must have occupied a most commanding situation, having an outlook over the whole valley of the little river, and the slopes which descend into it. The spot, which rejoices in the name of "Jenny Andro," and also of "The Picts' Houses," was uncultivated till nine or ten years ago, when it was trenched over; and under some six inches of dry, brown, mouldering earth, covered with a close green sward, through which the old foundations partially appeared, it was found that the interior of each of these was floored with rough flattish stones, laid close together, or overlying each other, and choked up with ashes, chiefly of wood. These enclosures were of an oval form, and might be 25 feet in their longi-

tudinal, and 15 in their transverse diameter. A stone cup was found on the premises. It is 3 inches in diameter within, and 2 in depth; its sides are thick; and it has a short projecting handle, perforated with a round hole. Several thick flat stones were also dug up, carefully cut out as moulds, of various forms. One is a stone mould of Chlorite slate, measuring 12 inches in length by 10 in breadth, and shows several hollows of different sizes and shapes, cut on its surface, to a depth of fully half an inch, probably for metal castings. The annexed woodcut gives a better idea of the mould than any additional description.

A number of querns of rude construction were turned up; and at one place, behind the Old Clachan as it were, there was a large accumulation of ashes, similar to those found within the foundations, and earthed and swarded over in the same manner. The whole suggested the idea of long-continued habitation; and one could scarcely look at the oval outlines without imagining poles rising from them, and leaning inwards, wigwam fashion. The "lum" would necessarily be in the centre, and right under it the fire, whose ashes would afford the readiest filling up to the interstices of the rough stone floor. The stone vessel and the six-inch covering of earth indicate a very high antiquity. A few hundred yards down the hill to the south, a quantity of splinters of flint, closely piled together, was dug up by some labourers a few years ago. None of them seem adapted for any useful or destructive purpose; they look more like the chips struck off in working some article into shape. Many are outside slices; and they have been cut off with a remarkably neat and even cleavage, so as to leave as much of the stone available as possible.



At a similar distance to the west, one of those articles called "Adder-

Stones," was found. It is of rather more diameter than a sixpence, and four times the thickness, with a large perforation in the centre. It is of blue glass, with a white vein encircling it, by no means unlike a snake, and may have been either an ornament or a charm, though the latter, I think, rarely are so pretty.<sup>1</sup>

At a place called Cunnins, in the southern extremity of the parish of Tough, and about four miles from the spot I have been describing, there were to be seen, some years ago, several round enclosures of big stones, sticking up through the heather on the slope of a hill, near each other, and in size not much differing from those at Jenny Andro. Not far from the place there was dug up a clay urn, with a flat piece of bronze in it, which might have been a lance-head.

A couple of miles down the water from the place first described, and very near to the Church of Alford, there is a spot known as the "Round-about," whose features are still pretty discernible, although the plough-share has been passing over it for many a year. It is on level ground, but approaches the edge of a pretty steep bank; and although it now seems a very indefensible position, it may have been much the reverse when the neighbouring lands were a morass, as they evidently at one time were. The outermost work was a nearly circular rampart, 275 yards in circumference, within which there has been a ditch, sloping from either side to the depth of 7 feet. On the inner side of the ditch there was a breastwork of stones, of which no vestige now remains, but which was very discernible at a recent period; and the interior seems to have been a level space, or to have sloped up slightly toward the centre. I have had it dug across in various directions, but found little to throw light upon its nature, besides ascertaining very distinctly the form and depth of the fosse, as above stated. The soil now in cultivation may be 10 inches in depth: under this we found the circular enclosure overspread with a layer of clay, about 8 inches thick, which had apparently been brought there as a sort of flooring: under the clay there was a black peaty soil of 8 inches; and under this the native boulder clay. In the

<sup>1</sup> The notices of the old dwellings, it is right to mention, are from recollection, and do not pretend to minute accuracy. The place is so completely altered within these few years, that a recent visit to it tended rather to puzzle than to refresh my memory. It is on Sir Charles Forbes's property of Aslounie.

centre were a few rough stones and a bit of bone, all much marked by fire. A small segment of the enclosing circle, both of rampart and ditch, where it approached the bank, has been cut away, evidently by an incursion of the stream, which has now receded 150 yards to the westward, leaving a field of alluvial land between it and the bank it had undermined, and so carrying back the date of the encampment a considerable way into the past.

Half a mile to the north of this, at the confluence of the Leochel and the Don, chippings of flint, and larger masses from which chips had been taken, are picked up in considerable numbers almost every time the fields are tilled. Flint is not native to the neighbourhood. These are on Mr Farquharson's property of Haughton.

About a mile south-west of the church rises a somewhat detached conical hill, about 150 feet in height, called the Damil, which some interpret Danes' Hill. It is now completely cultivated; but some thirty years ago, I am informed that there was a circular entrenchment round its summit, in the clearing away of which a ladle of stone was found, which is now in the University Museum, at Aberdeen.

At Carniveran, the most southerly point of the parish, there was a large cairn on a height, having a diameter of more than thirty yards, but now almost entirely cleared away. Several coffins of flat stones were found in it, containing ashes and bones: one of them an earthen urn. The origin of this cairn well deserves to be recorded:—An old and mighty *Cacodæmon* had a feud with two less powerful ones, which was to be fought out in a stone battle,—he stationed on the hill of Carniveran, they on that of Lynturk, a mile to the southward. Two very considerable cairns at the latter place till recently marked out the very spot. The older combatant, too stiff in the back for stooping, had filled his apron with stones and boulders, and stood ready to hurl them across the valley, when suddenly his apron strings gave way, and the contents fell about his feet, forming this huge cairn.

In the Moss of Tillychetly, also on the southern boundary of the parish, there were dug up, a good many years ago, a couple of brass armlets, of rather neat workmanship. They are about 4 inches in diameter, and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch in breadth on the side, which is fluted longitudinally, and enlarged and rounded off at the opening.

Recently a bronze sword, the blade of beautiful waving outline, 20 inches in length, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in breadth where widest, was trenched up near the edge of the burn on the farm of Wellhouse, and, with the armlets and the stone moulds,<sup>1</sup> are now in the possession of Mr William Anderson, the very intelligent occupant. A very perfect bronze palstave was some time since found on the farm of Kinstair, toward the middle of the parish.