

II.

ACCOUNT OF GRAVES RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT HARTLAW, ON THE FARM OF WESTRUTHER MAINS. WITH DRAWINGS BY THE LADY JOHN SCOTT. BY JOHN STUART, Esq., Sec. S.A. SCOT. (PLATE VIII.)

On the summit of a rising ground, called Hartlaw, on the farm of Westruther Mains, part of the estate of Spottiswoode, are two gravel knolls of no great prominence, adjoining each other. The site commands an extensive prospect on all sides. On the south are the Cheviots, the Eildons, Hume Castle, and Mellerstane. On the west are Boone Hill and the hills on Gala Water. On the north are the Lammermoor Hills, and prominently the Twinlaw Cairns, which is the highest point on their south ridge; and on the east, Dirrington Law and Langton Edge.

The two knolls (see Plate VIII. figs. A and B) were lately excavated by orders of Lady John Scott, and the work was done under her inspection. That on the south (B) was found to be a natural formation of gravel with a subsoil of sand. On its north side, part of a surrounding circular wall or foundation was laid bare, formed of small slabs set on edge in the ground. In one place the circle described by this outer wall measured 24 yards across. No traces of it were discovered on the south,

and little on the east side of the knoll ; but it is probable that the stones may have been disturbed by the plough in these parts, as they were found immediately below the surface. Within this external wall vestiges of walls, forming smaller enclosures, were noticed, very irregular and undefined in shape, but with a tendency to a circular or oval form. Some of them were about 6 feet across.

About the centre of the knoll a round pit was found about 2 feet deep, and less than that in diameter, lined with stones, the mouth being formed of small slabs like those of which the inclosures were made. This pit was filled with charred wood and burnt matter.

Small holes formed of stones on edge within the interior enclosures were also filled with charred wood, which also occurred occasionally elsewhere in small portions mixed with the soil.

Two graves formed of stone slabs on edge were found on the south side of the knoll. They were in the direction of east and west, with the head to the west. They were not paved in the bottom, and charred wood was found in and around the coffins, which were of full length.

In the other knoll (A) many graves appeared, fourteen of which were uncovered. They were formed of small stone slabs, with which they were also paved in the bottom and covered above. In the course of digging, the site of a grave was always to be detected by the occurrence of charred wood in the surrounding soil. On opening the graves, ashes of wood were generally found in the centre, and in some cases towards the head, mixed with the soil with which they were filled. In some of the graves portions of human remains were found, generally the portions at the west end, and in some cases the bones appeared very fresh. The coffins were laid east and west, with the head to the west. Their average length was about 6 feet ; but I measured one which was 6 feet 8 inches, and others which were respectively 5 feet, 3 feet 10 inches, and 4 feet 6 inches.

On the north-east side of this knoll were two pits like wells, and near the south are portions of a curving wall, which was only traceable for a short way. One of the pits was deeper than the other. It was lined with stones, and the mouth was formed of slabs on edge like the walls. It was about 15 inches across, and 2 feet deep. It was filled with charred wood and slaky earth, and portions of black matter had penetrated below and outside the well, as if it had escaped when in a liquid state.

The site of the graves, and the appearance of the remains of the walls and pits, will be understood from the accompanying sketches made by Lady John Scott (see Plate VIII.) The general appearance of the knolls appears from the plan (exhibited) made by Mr Spottiswoode.

Portions of the bones, charred wood, and greasy earth, are also produced.

The graves in question may be compared with the cists at Clocharie in the same neighbourhood, excavated by Lady John Scott, and described at one of our meetings of last session. In this case three short cists were found, which had been covered by a cairn. One of these contained a large urn inverted on a slab, filled with incinerated bones and ashes of wood. The other cists also contained burned bones and ashes, but no urns. In the centre of the space covered by the cairn a large pit was found, containing ashes of wood and unctuous earth.

In an adjoining knoll another pit was found, containing a large quantity of charred wood and unctuous matter, and in three spots deposits of ashes and bones were found, and in different places two flint implements, three or four stone celts and round pebbles; and in both knolls many foundations formed of slabs set on end in the ground, like those at Hartlaw, some of which enclosed small spaces, were found.

There was a resemblance between Clocharie and Hartlaw in regard to the occurrence of pits containing burnt matter and foundations of walls; but they differ in that the cists at Clocharie were short, and contained an urn and burned bones, with flint and stone implements near them, while the graves at Hartlaw were long, of a uniform disposition east and west, and contained no relics and no burned bones.

The latter have more the appearance of being the graves of Christians, like those of the Anglo-Saxons, which for a time seem to have been placed in groups in spots not yet attached to the church, although the consecrated cemetery around the church was from the earliest period the idea to be aimed at. We may gather from a capitulary of Charlemagne, what would occur to us as likely in itself, that for a time the converts to the new faith preferred the burial places of their forefathers. "*Jubemus ut corpora Christianorum Saxonum ad cœmeteria Ecclesiæ deferantur et non ad tumulos paganorum.*"¹

¹ Walter's "*Corpus Juris Germanici Antiqui*," vol. ii. p. 107.

In several cairns which I have recently examined, the traces of burning were very marked, as in the cairn of Clocharie; but in these cases the occurrence of calcined bones in urns is sufficient to account for such traces, at least to some extent.

A careful investigation of our early sepulchral remains seems to show that at one time the burning of the body had been all but universal.

The burning of the body was confined to the pagan system, and the custom was denounced by the Christian missionaries. One of Charlemagne's capitularies makes the act a capital offence. "Si quis corpus defuncti hominis secundum ritum paganorum flamma consumi fecerit, et ossa ejus ad cinerem redegerit, capite punietur."¹

But in some cases, as at Hartlaw, there are many traces of burning, where the body does not appear to have been burned.

And in others where the body *was* burned, there are found, in addition to the vestiges of burning which that act would require, great quantities of the bones of animals, such as those of the ox, sheep, and horse.

Many such remains were found in a group of twenty cists, containing unburned human remains at Haly Hill, near St Andrews, along with flint flakes, a broken celt, and other remains. At Law Park, on the opposite side of the Kinness Burn, a group of eighteen large urns, part of a more extensive series, were found. The urns were filled with burned bones, and in one of them two small bronze knives. Among the urns large quantities of the teeth of oxen and sheep, with cores of their horns, were found.

Some long stone cists were recently discovered in and about the ruined chapel on the Kirkheugh of St Andrews, which was the site of an early Culdee settlement there. Among other traces of conformity to the earlier system, I have noted the occurrence of three small circles of sea stones, and within them fragments of charred wood, with bones and teeth of boars, horses, and oxen.

Great quantities of horses' teeth and bones of animals were found throughout the great barrow of Maeshowe in Orkney, and such remains are of frequent occurrence about the graves and Pict's houses in that country.

A notice in the confessional of Archbishop Egbert of York, would

¹ "Corpus Juris Germanici Antiqui," vol. ii. p. 106.

seem to shew that the flesh of the horse was an article of food among the early races of Northumbria. "Caro equina non est prohibita, etsi multæ gentes eam comedere nolunt."¹ An opposite rule was laid down at the Synod of Cloveshoe, A.D. 785, where, it is said "Equis etiam plerique in vobis comedunt, quod nullus Christianorum in orientalibus facit, quod etiam evitate."²

The custom of feasting at the graves of the dead seems to have been common in heathen times. One of the Frankish capitularies is directed against it, "Et super eorum tumulos nec manducare nec libere præsumant."³ St Boniface complains that the Christian priests were apt to join in eating the sacrifices of the dead, consisting of the bulls and he-goats which had been offered to the gods of the pagans.⁴ Two provisions of the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*, in a capitulary of Charlemagne seem to refer to this custom, "De sacrilegio ad sepulchra mortuorum," and "De sacrilegio super defunctos id est dadsisas."⁵

The letter of Pope Gregory to the Abbot Mellitus, preserved by Venerable Bede, refers to the pagan custom of slaying oxen, "in sacrificio dæmonum," and advises that the rite should be changed into Christian feasts, to be held on festival days.

It seems not unreasonable to believe, from the remains found in the cemetery of the Kirkheugh, that the stone cists there mark burials of a transitional character, when the Christian site had been adopted, but the older feasting at the grave was not yet abandoned.

Whether the traces of burning at the Hartlaw are marks of a like character it may not be easy to say—as no bones of animals appeared among the burned débris of the pits—but if we are to conclude from other indicia that the graves were those of Christians of a very early date, it would seem most likely that the traces of burning are in like manner to be accounted for by a continuance of the ancient feasts.

It may be well to record that in the month of November last, a group of nearly forty short cists was discovered on Gallery Knowe, on the

¹ Thorpe's "Ancient Laws and Institutes of England," vol. ii. p. 163.

² Wilkins' "Concilia," tom. i. p. 150.

³ Quoted by Thrupp in his "Anglo Saxon Home," p. 397, et seq.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Walter's "Corpus Juris Germanici," tom. ii. p. 54

estate of Newhall, near Yester House. The site had been long under cultivation, but the land having come into Lord Tweeddale's natural possession, the deep ploughing which the soil underwent brought the cists to light. They were examined by Mrs Warrender, who assisted in the exploration of Clocharie, and although they were all in a state of confusion, she could make out that the cists were short (about 3 feet to 4 feet), formed of slabs, with which they were paved in the bottom and covered at the top.

In the cists there was a quantity of blackish earth, similar to the greasy substance of which so much was found at Clocharie, but no bones or relics of any sort appeared. "Some of the cists had a round stone for a cover, evidently wrought with tools, not unlike part of a quern." (Letter from Mrs Warrender to me.)

The cordial thanks of the Meeting were voted to LADY JOHN SCOTT for carrying out the examination of the graves, and for the beautiful drawings which she made to illustrate the description of them.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE VIII.

(From Sketches by the Lady John Scott.)

*Sketch of two Mounds (A and B) at Hartlaw, Westruther Mains,
Spottiswoode, Berwickshire.*

MOUND A,

Showing series of stone cists, curved wall, and pits.

MOUND B.

1. Remains of a large stone circle, stones put in edgewise, from 1 foot to 1½ foot high.
2. Circular hole about 2 feet in diameter, built with stones like a well to the depth of 3 feet, and containing a quantity of charred wood, ashes, and black adhesive matter.
3. Smaller circle of stones, only rather more than half the circle remaining.
4. Circular hole like No. 2, but smaller, and in the semicircle of stones, containing the same stuff as No. 2.
5. Semicircle of stones and clay, about 6 inches high.
6. Foundation of old building, 8 or 9 inches high, of stones.
7. Bit of old building.

8. Stone coffin, containing ashes and bones.
9. Do. do.
10. Foundation of building, about 1 foot high.
11. Circular cavity in the foundation, filled with charred wood and ashes.
12. Large circular cavity, filled with charred wood and ashes.

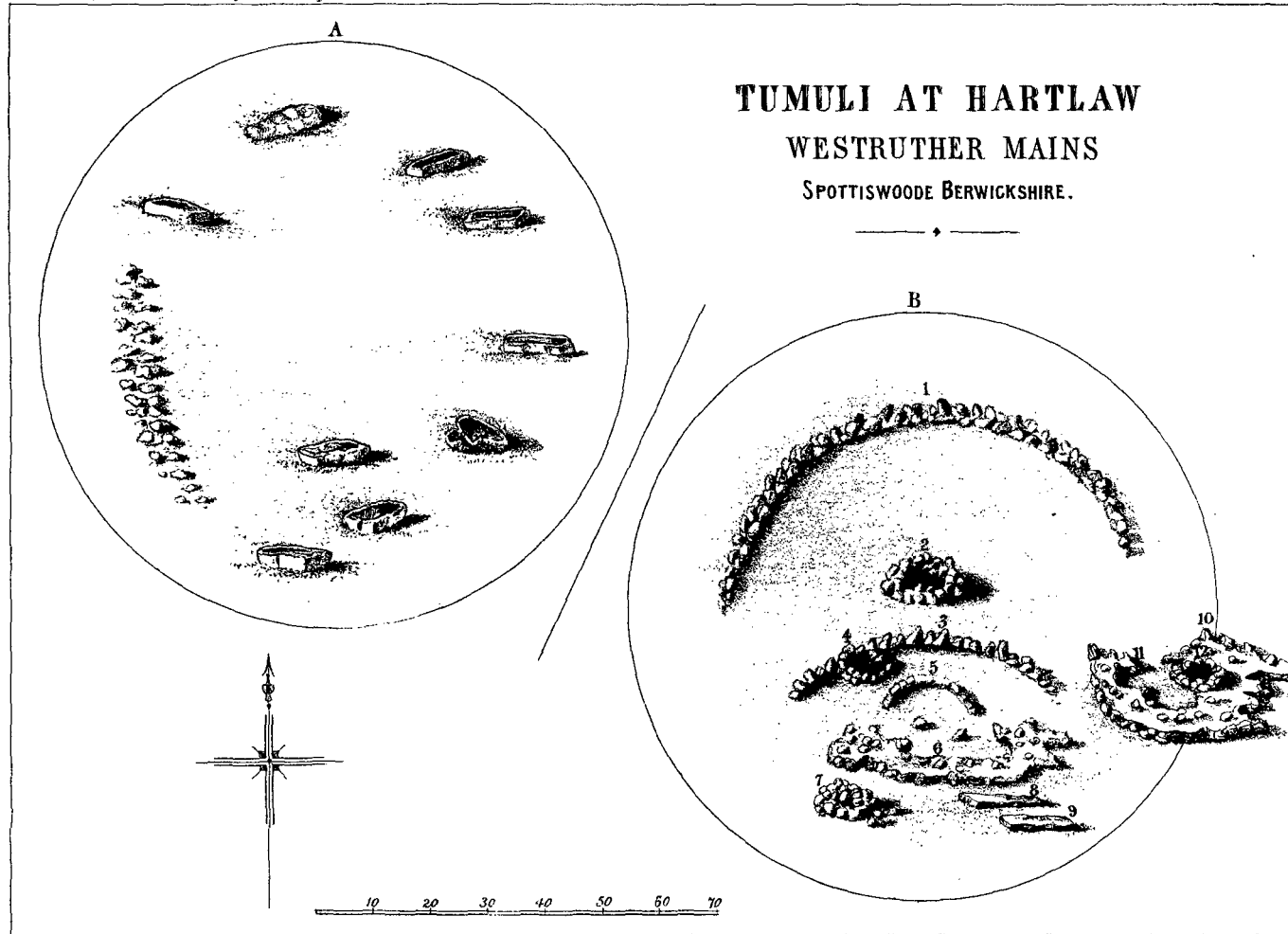
[Mr Stuart, at a subsequent meeting, read the following note connected with this subject :—

18th March 1865.

In company with Professor Simpson, Mr Innes, and other friends, I this day examined two graves on the estate of Mortonhall, which Mr Trotter was so good as open up for inspection. They were discovered in a rough dry knoll on the highest point of the Braid Hills, near a little hollow called the Elf Kirk. A third was said to have been found by probing, and I have little doubt that more are placed round the knoll, but only two were opened up. The first was formed of slabs, of which we were told that none are to be found nearer than Limekilns on the one side, and Hailes on the other. The top consisted of several covers of thin slab, of which the bottom and sides were formed. The grave was about five feet ten inches in length, sixteen to eighteen inches wide at the head, and half that at the foot. When it was opened a few days ago, as I learned from Miss Trotter, she observed portions of charred wood in the grave, some of it in the shape of powder, and some in small pieces, which her brother took up and squeezed between his fingers. When the grave was re-opened to-day, we saw the bones of a human skeleton, in tolerable preservation, the skull in fragments, but no relics of any sort.

The second grave seemed to have partly given way and was filled with rubbish, among which portions of human bones appeared. It was constructed in the same way as the first, lay a few yards from it, and was nearly in the same direction, viz., east and west.]

**TUMULI AT HARTLAW
WESTRUTHER MAINS
SPOTTISWOODE BERWICKSHIRE.**



Lady John Scott fecit.

W. & A. K. Johnston, Edinburgh.