

V.

NOTICE OF A BRONZE BATTLE-AXE FOUND NEAR BANNOCKBURN
NOW IN THE MUSEUM OF THE SOCIETY. BY JOHN ALEXANDER
SMITH, M.D., Sec. S.A. Scot.

This beautiful bronze axe was presented to the Museum of the Society on the 20th of May 1850, by Robert Mayne, Esq., who, I understand, purchased it from the family of the finder, in whose possession it had remained, ever since it was discovered in the course of digging peat, or draining the morass at Bannockburn, in the year 1785. (The peculiar and elegant shape of this axe is well shown in the annexed carefully-drawn woodcut, the work of our townsman and clever engraver on wood, Mr John Adam.)

The axe-head is of a rich brown or bronze colour, and beautifully smooth or polished on its surface, which, however, is considerably chipped in some places. It measures $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, and has a rounded head behind, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, in front of which it measures on the side $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, increasing to $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, beyond which it expands into the crescentic face, measuring $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches; the greatest thickness across the axe-head at the middle being $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The shaft-hole or socket for the handle, measures at the lower part, $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches across, with an opening of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch inside, which tapers gradually upwards to the top of the pointed projection above the axe-blade, and from the top to the bottom of the socket for the shaft, measures altogether $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches. This tapering projection above, is pointed backwards and rather to one side (the whole axe, indeed, being a little irregular in shape); it is surrounded at its base by an ornamental twisted cord of bronze, and corresponds in character to the solid pointed bosses, one on each side of the blade in front, which project outwards $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch, and are ornamented in a similar manner by a twisted cord of bronze; each of these cords has, at one point of its circumference, the thickened appearance of a knot, as if its extremities had been tied together. The neck of the socket is pierced by a rivet-hole in front, and another behind,

each $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch across, for the purpose of attaching the axe-head firmly to the handle. These rivet holes are not, however, cut exactly opposite to one another.

The weight of the axe-head is 4 lbs. avoirdupois.

At the time the donation of the axe-head was made, the Secretary was unfortunately led into the inadvertence of describing it as being formed of iron coated with bronze,—the sharp eyes of my friend Dr Daniel Wilson having apparently been deceived by the blackened appearance of the metal, where its polished or patina-like surface was broken, and also, perhaps, from the ferruginous character of the clay, traces of which remained in the shaft-hole of the axe. Dr Wilson, in his "Pre-historic Annals of Scotland,"—a work which has done much for the archæology of Scotland, and indeed for archæology generally,—also published the statement of the axe being formed of iron coated with bronze; and, possibly from the place where it was found, the great battlefield of Scottish independence, has been all the more naturally led to consider it as a relic connected with that well-fought field.

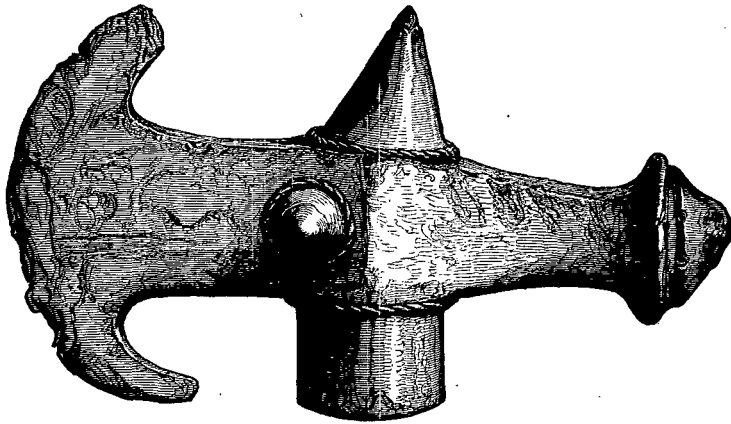
Next, following Dr Wilson, Mr A. W. Franks, M.A., of the British Museum, in the volume published under his joint superintendence, the "Horæ Ferales," or "Studies in the Archæology of the Northern Nations," in which he has brought together, figured, and described so many groups of interesting relics—a contribution of the greatest value to all students of antiquities. Mr Franks, when he refers to the bronze battle-axes,—different examples of which are figured in plate v. of his work,—states that—

"Heavy bronze axe-heads are found in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and the eastern parts of France; several Swiss examples are engraved in the 'Transactions of the Zurich Society,' vol. xiv. part 6, pl. vii.; they seem, however, to be unknown in Great Britain and Ireland. The only exception to this statement is a remarkable weapon found at Bannockburn in 1785, preserved in the Museum (of the Society of Antiquaries) at Edinburgh; but it is composed of iron coated with bronze, and it is uncertain whether it be not a relic of the middle ages. From the decorative character of the ornaments on some of the specimens, it is conjectured they may have been used as war-axes" (p. 147).

This quotation from such an authority shows the extreme rarity, or

rather the total absence of these heavy bronze axes from among the relics of antiquity found as yet in Great Britain and Ireland. I have, therefore, much pleasure in calling special attention to this beautiful specimen of a heavy Bronze War-Axe in our Museum, found in Scotland, which, as tested by the file, is beyond all question formed simply and entirely of a rich yellow bronze, and is therefore unique in its class among the antiquities of our Islands. Though rather unwilling to deprive the Museum of any supposed relic of our famous battle, I cannot but believe that this axe-head belongs, not to mediæval times, but claims a much greater antiquity in connection with the earlier races of our Fatherland.

In the last published Catalogues of the Museum this axe head is described as being formed of bronze ; it was felt to be necessary, however, to call attention to the fact a little more widely, by referring to it, as is now done, for publication in the "Proceedings of the Society."



Bronze Battle-Axe found in a Morass at Bannockburn in 1785.
(Size, 8½ in. in length. Weight, 4 lbs. avoirdupois.)

MONDAY, 12th March 1866.

DAVID LAING, Esq., LL.D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following Gentlemen were balloted for and elected Fellows of the Society :—

WILLIAM SMYTHE of Methven, Esq.

DAVID CURROR of Craigduckie, Esq., S.S.C.

HOUSTON MITCHELL of Polmont, Esq., Trinity Lodge.

RESTORATION OF THE SHAFT OF THE OLD CITY CROSS
TO EDINBURGH.

Before proceeding with the ordinary business of the meeting, Mr LAING said,—that, as he had formerly brought under the notice of the Society and Council some proposals regarding the old City Cross, he begged to add a few words on the subject to what has been published in the “Proceedings of the Society” (vol. iv. p. 420).

The shaft of the old Cross, it is well known, had been preserved in the grounds of Drum (then Lord Somerville’s), near Edinburgh, since the year 1756, when the City Cross was demolished. In the sale of this estate a few years ago, the proprietor, Alexander Mitchell of Stow, Esq., had reserved the ancient shaft, and offered it as a gift to the Lord Provost and Magistrates of the city, to be used in the event of the Cross itself being rebuilt. It was desirable, therefore, as so much time had elapsed, that some steps should be taken for having it brought back to its former locality. Its removal had involved much correspondence, and a great deal more trouble and expense than had been contemplated; but the shaft has at length been happily brought back safe, and erected, under the superintendence of David Cousin, Esq., city architect. Its original site must have been near the Luckenbooths, either where Creech’s Land afterwards stood, or towards the west end of the Tolbooth, perhaps at the head of Forrester’s Wynd.

In wishing to secure for Edinburgh this interesting historical memorial, and to place it where it might be seen to some advantage, without encroaching on any thoroughfare; which has now been done by erecting it within the enclosing rail, to the east of the north door, or principal

entrance of the High Church of St Giles; Mr Laing said, that of course no idea was entertained this should be reckoned as a Restoration of THE CROSS of 1617; and therefore, excepting a simple pedestal, any addition was avoided. It might otherwise, according to Mr Drummond's sketch (see "Proceedings," vol. iv. Plate IV.), have been surmounted with a unicorn supporting a shield of arms. This, if wished, can easily be done afterwards, as the great object aimed at was to preserve in an appropriate place the sole existing portion of the ORIGINAL CROSS. Should the Lord Provost and Magistrates, however, at any subsequent time take up anew the scheme for erecting in the centre of the High Street a handsome new structure as THE MARKET CROSS OF EDINBURGH, the old Shaft, required to form part of the architectural design, now remains conveniently at their disposal.

The cordial thanks of the Society were voted to Mr LAING, V.P., for the great trouble, besides the expense which personally he had incurred, in order to accomplish this object.

The following Communications were read :—