

II.

NOTES ON SOME NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES. BY THE REV. JAMES M. JOASS, EDDERTOUN, ROSS-SHIRE, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

Herewith I beg to send a rubbing from the lower part of the stone with archaic crosses in Eddertoun Churchyard. I think it must have been in the "Notices of Plates" in Mr Stuart's "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," that I saw some reference to these figures as having been noticed long ago, but do not wonder that they escaped the eye of the artist, as they are entirely under the present surface of the ground. I had the earth dug away that I might examine the designs, but it was filled in again after they were copied. The near hind leg of the foremost horse seems to have been altered by the sculptor; the upper outline being the more deeply cut is probably the amendment.

I have lately examined the cup and ring marked stones discovered by my brother near Dingwall, and without anticipating a paper on the subject which he is just about to send to Professor Simpson, accompanied by rubbings and plans, I may mention that I think two of the stones bear markings different from any which I have hitherto seen figured.

On two of the stones forming the inner of two concentric circles at Beaufort (Lovat) I lately observed distinct cup-markings. The diameter of the inner circle is 13 yards, that of the outer 16 yards.

On a hillside a little to the westward of Bonar Bridge, Sutherland, I recently had a large cairn opened, and found it to contain two large and well-formed cists at right angles to each other. They were empty, as was also another peculiarly formed and almost triangular cist in a very large cairn at Skibo, on the northern shore of the Dornoch Frith. Associated with both cairns are many smaller tumuli, evidently of artificial

origin, but so far as I could ascertain they contain no cists, and may have been common graves. Hut circles, generally in pairs, occur both at Bonar and Skibo.

I opened many of the tumuli, which I described as occurring among the hut circles in Strathnaver, near Syre, but found only one cist 5 feet 9 inches long, formed of flattish stones on edge, and roofed with six small cross slabs. It yielded only a small fragment of bone.

I now find hut circles and associated tumuli on almost every southward moorland slope that I examine, both in Sutherland and Ross. When I come upon tumuli I am rarely disappointed in my search for the hut circles, and *vice versâ*.

The only instance which I have noticed of a surrounding wall or fence was at Sword Dale, on the flat north-east of Ben Wyvis, where three hut circles, 34 feet in diameter, and about thirty tumuli, are surrounded by a low fence of stones and turf. I could find no cists there, but in a detached cairn about a mile to the eastward I examined a short cist which had been previously opened, and found in it burnt bones and bits of chevron-marked pottery.

Near Scotsburn, ten miles west from Eddertoun, I lately had several tumuli opened without finding cists. These tumuli, to the number of about one hundred, with eleven distinct hut circles, and two very large cairns, yet unexplored, occur on a moor about a mile long, high on the hillside that overlooks the northern shore of the Cromarty Frith.

On the Mor'aich Mor, a sandy flat to the east of Tain, when examining some sections recently exposed by draining 4 feet deep, I found, near two hut circles, a flint flake near the surface, which is occasionally peat moss of varying depth, overlying, where it occurs, an undulating surface of sand. I also found the skull of a young ox, several bones of a large deer, one tyne of a palmated stag's horn, and the jaw of a large canine animal. All these bones lay beneath the moss, and on a natural shell-bed in which occurred the *Scaphander lignarius*, believed from its size and delicacy of structure to indicate warmer conditions of climate during its existence in such a situation, as well as considerable subsequent elevation of the sea-bottom. The coast line is now three miles distant.

The piece of pumice stone, to which I formerly referred (see page

273), was found in an eirde-house in Strathnaver—the whetstone about a foot deep near the same place. Another eirde-house, ruined, occurs on the opposite side of the Strath.

I have just seen a stone implement formed like the spade on playing cards; it is made of hornblende rock, and is 11 inches long and broad. If meant for a battle-axe, it is uncommonly heavy and rude. It was found in clearing land among tumuli at Rogart, Sutherland.