

IV.

ACCOUNT OF A CANOE OF OAK FOUND IN THE CASTLE LOCH OF CLOSEBURN, DUMFRIESSHIRE. By JOHN ADAM, Esq., CLOSEBURN CASTLE.

This Canoe (see woodcut, page 435) was found by a party of drainers, on Tuesday the 5th April 1859, in the north-east portion of the Castle Loch, imbedded in the moss about three feet below the surface, and resting on its keel or bottom. It appeared just as if it had been stranded by the receding of the waters; and partly sinking in moss, from its greater specific gravity, the yearly deposits of vegetable matter would soon effectually hide it from view. The position of the Canoe when found was pretty nearly east and west, and the drains, which were being cut 4 feet deep and 18 feet apart, were running south-west from north-east. One of these drains struck the canoe on the stern, and had the drain been two feet out of position, the canoe would still have been lying buried in its mossy bed. The Canoe has been formed, much in the usual way for such craft, out of a single oak tree, and is 12 long and 2 feet wide in the middle. The strangest part of its construction seems the loose stern-board, fitting into a groove. No doubt it would be lighter than the solid timber, but, one could fancy, very troublesome to keep water-tight. The moss was probed carefully all round where the Canoe was found with a pointed iron rod 12 feet long, but no other solid substance was met with. The old site or bed of the Loch was about 195 feet above the level of the sea, and extended to about 12 acres, but in olden times, it is highly probable, the water flowed over 60 or 70 acres. Closeburn Castle, said to be upwards of 1100 years old, stands on the east side of what was known as the Loch proper about thirty feet above its bed, and was at one time all surrounded with water. A drawbridge on the east was the only way of approach to the Castle and its grounds, occupying at that distant date a dry-land area of not more than four acres.

Since the finding of the Canoe, in 1859, the Loch has totally disappeared, being converted with the adjoining mosses into a grass-field, the pasturage of which yields 60s. of yearly rent per statute acre.