

I.

NOTES OF WOODEN STRUCTURES DISCOVERED IN THE MOSS OF WHITEBURN, ON THE ESTATE OF SPOTTISWOODE, BERWICKSHIRE. IN A LETTER TO JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., Sec. S.A. Scot. ; BY THE RIGHT HON. LADY JOHN SCOTT.

The curious arrangement of stakes and sticks, of which I told you, we dug down upon, having seen the ends of the sticks, near the bottom of a drain in a boggy plantation adjoining Whiteburn Moss.

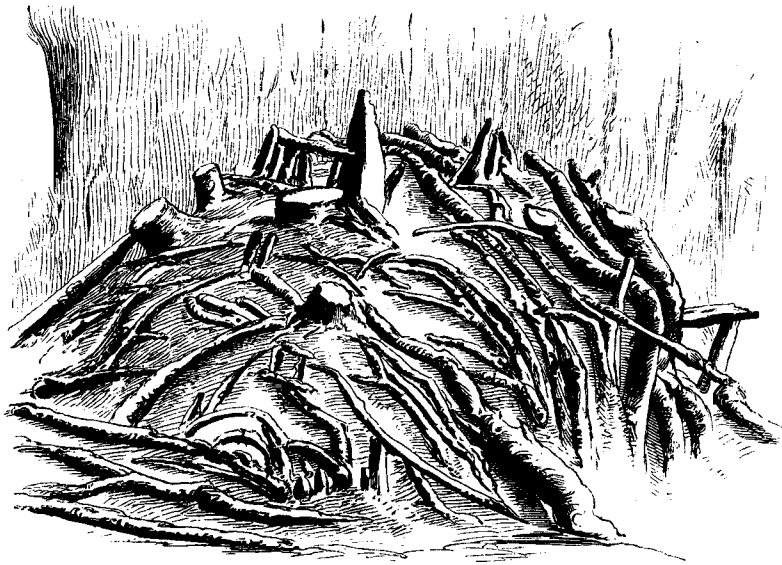


Fig 1. Wooden Structure discovered in the Moss of Whiteburn, Berwickshire.

We found a causeway of wood and branches, leading from west to east into a circular place built over with sticks as thick as a man's arm, interwoven with small sticks and branches, raised like a dome, and coming

to a point in the middle. (See the annexed sketches by Lady John Scott, fig. 1.) At the outside of the circle were several stakes driven into the ground like piles, to the depth of 3 or 4 feet. Almost all the large sticks were roughly pointed at one end, and many had a notch cut a few inches from the point, into which another stick was fitted. We found two or three bones near the circle to be the long ribs of a deer, and some small seeds. We sunk two pits after this in Whiteburn Moss, and in each of them we came on something similar. Several large, roughly-squared wooden beams, the longest and thickest of which was laid from

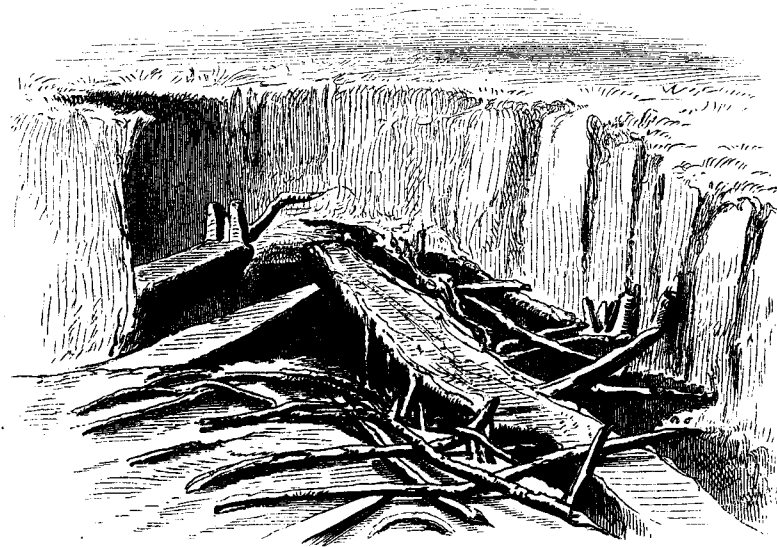


Fig. 2.—Wooden Structure discovered in the Moss of Whitburn, Berwickshire.

end to end on the top of all the others ; from east to west the other beams were laid, close together at one end, and separating like the spokes of a wheel at the other. (See sketch, fig. 2.) Small sticks, branches, &c., were crossed and interlaced, making a chequered framework in all direc-

tions; some were bent into shape like knee timber, and many were notched and laid into each other; the pointed pieces of wood were all cut exactly alike—in every instance a slant cut to the point on one side of the stick, and not cut at the back at all. The wood was much decayed, and we could not get any one of the large pieces out entire. They were all found on the clay between the peat moss and the shell marl.

About twenty years ago my father had some pits sunk in this Whiteburn Moss in search of shell marl. I was not at Spottiswoode at the time, but the men who were employed in the work told me that in each of the three pits that were sunk they found deers' horns and bones, and in one there was the entire skeleton of a deer. The peat moss was from 10 to 11 feet deep, and the bones, &c., were found in the clay between the peat and the shell marl.

Four years ago, in draining this same moss, the workmen cut through two round places like those I saw in summer. They tell me the stakes were driven down perpendicularly round the outside, and were fastened together; they were as thick as their arm. The places were made up with a quantity of branches and twigs woven together, the thicker sticks pointed and notched as in the other places. There was a great deal of withered grass and fern matted together, and some bones; and they also say, that between these two structures they found a good many bones. They saw the beginning of a similar place to the southward of the others, but this they did not cut through or destroy, so it may yet be examined.

The wood found was birch, hazel, and a little oak.

I heard from one of our men an account of a much more entire place of the kind he came upon more than twenty years ago in "Jordanlaw Moss," also on Spottiswoode estate. The stick causeway was quite perfect, and led to a round place formed of thick poles of oak and birch laid alternately, with the thick part to the outside of the circle, and the smaller ends inwards—branches, twigs, &c., woven through them. He said they came on several "caves heaped fou' o' hazel nuts a' about it." He supposed it to be a place "where the little auld folk lang syne dried their corn." I am sorry to say the place was entirely broken up, and the wood divided among several people for burning.