

II.

NOTICE OF AN ANCIENT STRUCTURE AND REMAINS FROM A "KITCHEN-MIDDEN," ON AN ISOLATED ROCK NEAR SEACLIFF, EAST LOTHIAN. BY J. W. LAIDLAY OF SEACLIFF, Esq., F.S.A., Scot.

The site on which the relics which I now have the honour to offer to the Society were found, is a detached rock jutting out from the western point of the little bay at Seacliff, locally known as the *Ghegan*; just isolated at spring tides, but at other times not separated by the sea from the mainland. The surface of the rock, gently sloping towards the south, was covered with a beautiful green sward which presented no indication of the remains found beneath it, or of ever having been disturbed by the hand of man. Accident, however, led to the discovery of some bones of oxen and other animals in a rabbit hole; and this was, almost as a matter

of course, followed up by further research, which terminated in laying bare the foundations of an ancient building of considerable dimensions, with its accompanying kitchen-midden, abounding in the remains of a variety of animals, some few implements of bone, some rude pottery, and a large amount of littoral shells, particularly those of the limpet and periwinkle.

The accompanying sketch (fig. 1) will give a sufficient idea of the rock

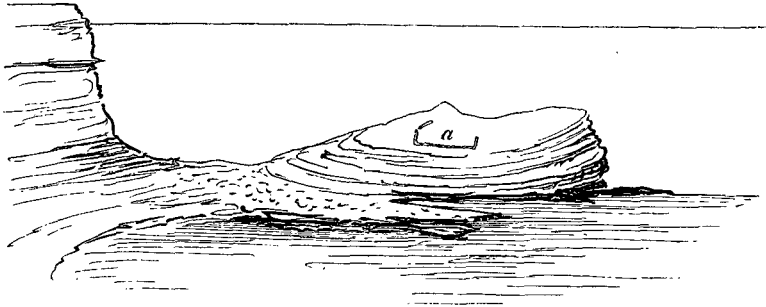


Fig. 1.

The "Ghegan Rock," near Seacliff, East Lothian.
(*a*, low wall.)

itself, and the position of the foundation walls of the ancient building, indicated by the lines at *a*; of which a more enlarged view is given in the ground plan (Fig. 2.) The lower part of the building running east and west, is situated about 22 or 23 feet above the level of the sea at high water, and rises gradually to its highest point at B (Fig. 2), where it is some 6 feet higher. This foundation wall was built of stones, apparently selected from the neighbouring beach, and joined to other without cement, unless it may be mud, or perhaps only earth. It was traceable in the lower part (A) for about 39 feet; on the east side it turned northward at a right angle for some 12 or 15 feet, when it disappeared; and on the west side it turned also northward for 26 feet 8 inches, when it bent towards the north east for about 15 feet, and again all trace was lost; in fact, at these points the wall seemed to emerge from the protecting cover of earth to the naked surface of the rock, and hence was more exposed to removal

from many causes. The soil, I may mention, was of a depth of from 3 to 4 feet on the lower part of the building, and thinned away till the bare rock was exposed on the northern side. In the centre of the area was a rude pavement and a well-made drain (*c* and *b* in the sketch); and at the north west corner (*a*) was a ledge made in the rock, apparently to intercept the water running down from the upper part.

The bones were found for the most part pretty uniformly distributed through the mass of soil within and around the foundation walls, as if the

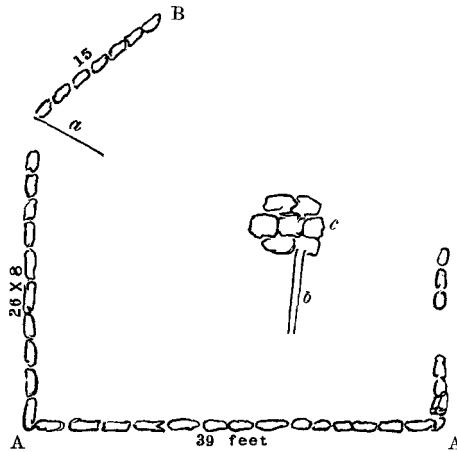
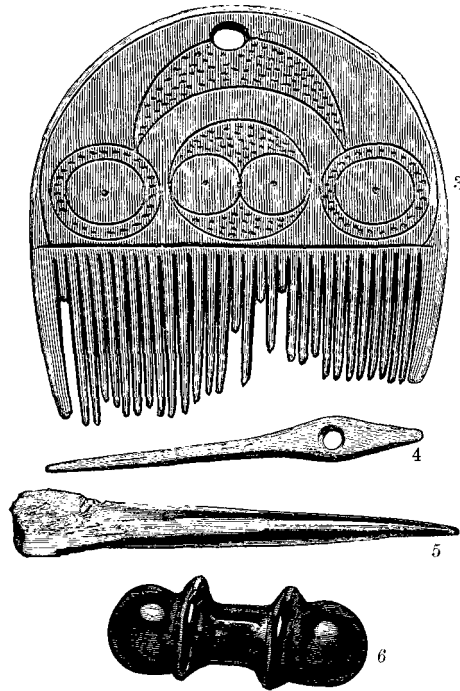


Fig. 2.

Foundations of Walls on the Ghegan Rock.

accumulations of a long period of time, and the result of repeated upturning of the ground, or renewals of the entire building itself. They consist of human bones, a few; of oxen, in great abundance, and consisting of several varieties—the *Bos longifrons*, and others; sheep, also in very great abundance, and of a small size; goats, a few; horses, pretty numerous, of a small size; hogs, a few; deer, the red deer—the roe; dogs, several, of a large size; rodents, the water vole, &c.; birds and fishes, a very few; besides the remains of rabbits, rats, &c., of which, as they might find their way naturally to the deposit, no account need be taken.

Nearly all the larger bones were broken for the evident purpose of getting at the marrow ; and by far the larger portion was reduced to such very small fragments that I dismissed them as of no value ; so that the collection preserved gives by no means an adequate idea of the total



Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6. (Full size.)

Comb, Implements, and Ornament of Bone, found on the Ghegan Rock.

quantity found. It is remarkable that but a very small portion indeed exhibit any marks of the direct application of fire ; that is to say, very few of the bones are charred.

Of the implements found, not one was of metal. They consist of needles of bone (fig. 4), bone awls or arrow points (fig. 5), arrow heads

combs, and bones ground to serve as knives, chisels, &c., in every respect resembling the corresponding implements found in the Swiss lakes. The number of these relics is very small, and these were only obtained by the very laborious process of sifting the earth as it was turned over, to the amount of many tons.

Of the earthenware found, by far the largest portion consisted of fragments of a very rude description, moulded apparently by the hands, and most likely produced on the spot. These were very abundant, and, like the bones, diffused pretty uniformly throughout the soil. Only one small specimen was found entire; it will remind those who have been in India of the crucibles extemporised by goldsmiths and other workers in metals. To what purpose the small vessel could be applied it is not very easy to conjecture. Might it have served as a lamp?

There are a few fragments of a better manufacture among the relics tendered to the Society; and especially those of an earthen vessel of considerable dimensions, and evidently the production of more skilful workmen than the inhabitants of the rock. It appears to me to be of Roman workmanship, and corresponds very closely, both in make and material, with several vases of the same kind in the Society's Museum. It was formed apparently in a mould, as the external surface indicates; the interior surface having been turned, or rather smoothed, by the fingers, guided by a string (or some substitute) radiating from a central rod passing through the bottom of the vase, where, as may be seen in the present instance, a plug of the clay afterwards closed the aperture. This vase, which was probably one of the most valuable articles of furniture in the establishment on the rock, is unfortunately broken into very many fragments. I have endeavoured to restore it, but have only very partially succeeded; sufficiently, however, to show its size and general shape. These fragments are so small, and the ware itself is so hard and thick, that it is difficult to suppose that its destruction was the result of mere accident. Possibly this consideration, and the circumstance of the human bones found on the site, may indicate a state of things not always favourable to the preservation of pottery and life.

Among the objects, not of an artificial character, found on the rock, were a considerable number of round stones, or small boulders, of a few inches in diameter, which had been subjected to heat, and were cracked

in various directions, precisely as if they had been suddenly cooled by plunging them in water. One or two specimens of these will be found in the collection offered to the Society. My friends and myself conjectured that these stones may have been used in cooking, either in earthen ovens, or for heating water in which food was prepared. And this conjecture consists well enough with what I mentioned in a former paragraph, that hardly any of the bones found exhibit the least traces of the direct action of fire.

Finally, there were found one very rude quern, the upper and the nether stones of which are entire; and another in fragments, which I hardly think worth offering to the Society. The former will, I think, prove one of the rudest in the Museum. Such is a brief account of the relics found upon the Ghegan, testifying of an early people of whom many other remains abound in the neighbourhood, and are from time to time brought to light. It is not easy to conjecture why a situation so exposed as this rock should be chosen as a fixed, or even an occasional, place of abode, unless on account of its capability of defence. Whether from the configuration of the lofty cliffs adjoining, or from whatever other cause, the wind often sweeps over it with excessive violence even when comparatively gentle on the mainland; and the spray from the sea in stormy weather must have contributed not a little to the discomfort of the site. As to the period when this dwelling was occupied, although of course no precise date can be assigned, I think that the remains of the animals found, particularly those of the *Bos longifrons* and the very diminutive sheep—the bone implements, and the very rude pottery—and, on the other hand, the absence of all metallic implements—indicate an age not later than the Roman, possibly before it, but extending to it, as the large vase would seem to show. And if this be so, I may perhaps be allowed in conclusion, though transgressing the strict limits of the Society's pursuits, to notice briefly the interesting bearing the whole subject has upon a geological question of the day, namely, the supposed rise of the neighbouring coasts within the historical period. Against this theory the dwelling upon the Ghegan seems to me a cogent protest: a very inconsiderable depression of the rock would render habitation there simply impossible.