

IX.

NOTES ON ANCIENT PIPE-HEADS—"ELFIN PIPES." BY W. G. GIBSON,
ESQ. COMMUNICATED BY JOHN STUART, ESQ., LL.D., SECRETARY.

In various parts of England, Ireland, and Scotland, specimens of ancient pipe-heads have been discovered, duly chronicled, and sent to museums.

These ancient pipes are known to antiquarians as Celtic, Elfin, or Danes' pipes, and are supposed to belong to an era long prior to that of Sir Walter Raleigh and the maiden Queen, or of the royal author of a Counterblast to Tobacco.

The places where some of them have been discovered, and the objects found in connection with them, would seem to lead to such a conclusion, but as we have many instances of modern articles being found among more ancient relics, it would be well, in such cases, not to form too hasty an opinion.

Here are one or two examples—

The ancient cemetery at North Berwick is in the vicinity of a small Romanesque building of the twelfth century, and close upon the sea-shore. Within the last fifty years the sea has made great encroachments, carrying off a considerable part of the ruins, and exposing the skeletons of the old

¹ Lindsay, vol. i. p. 111.

tenants of the cemetery, along with many interesting relics, Elfin pipes, &c., of former generations, at almost every spring tide.

In the Statistical Account of Scotland, numerous instances of the finding of ancient pipe-heads occur.

Thus, many of the ancient British encampments appear in the parish of Kirkmichael, Dumfriesshire. Upon some of these being opened, ashes have been found, with querns or hand-mills, and in one upon the farm of Gillrig, a basket-hilted sword was found, and quantities of ancient pipe-heads, small at the top, and swelled in the middle. Again,

Till lately, one of these remarkable monuments of antiquity, called "standing stones," existed at Cairney Mount, parish of Carluke, Lanarkshire, but the hope of finding treasure induced some rude hands to destroy it. It is supposed to have stood at the side of the Roman road passing from Lanark across the Bridge of the Mouse, beneath the Cartland Crags. A celt or stone-batchet, Elfin bolts, flint and bone arrow-heads, and numerous Elfin pipe-heads, with coins of the Edwards, and of later dates, were found near the stone.

In the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries, there is a curious collection of Elfin pipes from all parts of Scotland. A great variety of the same objects, found in Ireland, are figured in the third volume of the *Dublin Penny Magazine*.

In the gardens in and about Dumfries, these Elfin pipes are frequently found, and from the academy to the new bridge, which formed the Castle Gardens, they are to be found in every spadeful turned over; the great thickness of the clay accounting for their preservation.

In excavating for the foundation of the Greyfriars' church, Dumfries, built on or about the site of the old castle, at the depth of four feet, among rich black garden mould, mixed with bones of animals, crockery, oyster-shells, &c., 138 of these pipes were picked up. Out of these 138, there were five different forms, each marked with the initials or private mark of the manufacturers. One marked J. C. G. seems to have been the favourite, as it is in the proportion of ten to one. Only one had part of the shank attached, which I have pieced, and from the taper of the stem it may be taken as the average length. I may also mention that, in the same ground, bodles of Charles I. and II. are found in numbers; and, as a proof of what I have before mentioned, that modern articles

are often found along with those of a more ancient date, one of the workmen brought me a large piece of coin which he had just picked up at the bottom of the excavation for the steeple, which, on cleaning, proved to be a coronation medal of Victoria, to the no small consternation of the man who insisted that it was an ancient Roman coin, and would scarcely believe the contrary even after reading the inscription with his own eyes. This medal had no doubt slipped down from the top.

If I might venture an opinion, it is, that these Elfin pipes *are not* so ancient as supposed by some antiquaries, but are the pipes which were generally used after the introduction of tobacco, when that weed was an expensive luxury.

Tobacco, as is well known, was first discovered in St Domingo in 1496; afterwards by the Spaniards in Yucatan in 1520; introduced into France by Nicol in 1560; first brought to England in 1583; prohibited to be planted here in 1624; a tax of 6s. 8d. per lb. laid on it in 1685.

The specimens of pipes found in the castle gardens, one of which is before you, were smoked by the soldiers who garrisoned the castle 200 years ago, and from the great number found, and the marks of five different makers, we may reasonably infer that smoking was very general at that early period. This opinion is strengthened by various extracts in Mr M'Dowall's valuable History of Dumfries, from which we find that the civic authorities indulged in the weed.

Thus, in the treasury account, under date 9th January 1669, the following entry occurs:—"Dew by the Majestraits in company with Sir Robert Dalzell, Patrick Nisbet, Robert Moorhead, and Birkhill, with several other gentlemen, the haill Majestraits being present with several of the Council at the admitting of the said Patrick Nisbet, Burgess, twelf pynts seek quhereoff there was 4 oz. of suggar to ilk pynt of eleven of the said pynts, and the either but (without) suggar, with twa shortbreid, and 3/ shillings for tobacco and pipes."

Mrs Rome, who kept the town tavern in 1687, charged the subjoined account against the council:—

"Spent with Lieutenant-Colonel Windram, Capt. Strauchane, Capt. Bruce, Lieut. Lawder and Livingstone, 6 pynts wine, with tobacco and pipes, £6, 9s. 4d."

Again, "29 May 1672, at the bonfires with Carnselloch, Alex. Douglas

of Penzerie, Mr John Crichton, and the Clerk, 3 chopins wine, and that night with Mr Cairncross the curate, Mr Mair and his wife, three chopins of wine, and 1/8 for tobacco and pipes."

[In the Proceedings, vol. i. p. 182, there is a notice by Dr Daniel Wilson of the discovery of these Elfin pipes at Bonnington, near Edinburgh, associated with a quantity of bodles or placks of James VI., which, as Dr Wilson believed, gave a trustworthy clue to the date of this class of minor antiquities. The subject has been followed out by Dr Wilson in a series of papers on the "Narcotic Usages and Superstitions of the Old and New World," in the Canadian Journal, 1857. Mr Carruthers, however, in his "Highland Note Book" (p. 154), mentions that on a carved stone chimney-piece in Cawdor Castle, Nairnshire, with family arms and groups of grotesque figures, and engraved with the date 1510, there is a rude representation of a fox smoking a tobacco-pipe. Mr Carruthers adds that it is generally believed that tobacco was introduced into England about 1585, and that it is interesting to find such a representation of an earlier date.—EDS.]