

V.

NOTE OF THE EXCAVATION OF SOME TUMULI AT MELVILLE MOOR.
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The following notes contain the results of the examination of some remains of antiquity which are found in Melville Moor, to the north of Ladybank, under the direction of Sir H. Dryden :—

Attention was in the first place directed to a circular trench, between 30 and 40 feet in diameter, which seems to have been originally about 4 feet deep. But nothing was found to indicate the purpose for which it had been made, or to show whether it was the remains of a hasty entrenchment, thrown up to protect a small body of warriors, or an enclosure for some purpose of peace.

Two closely adjoining tumuli, on the east side of the road above the railway bridge, were then examined. The one on the north is about 30 feet in diameter, and nearly 5 feet high. A trench having been cut through it, it was found to be formed of the soft sandy soil that covers the moor around, but had been covered on the top with a quantity of loose stones. A depression was found in the centre. A hollow seemed to have been formed in the original soil about 6 feet long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide. At either end of this hollow was a stone, such as are found in the adjoining soil, somewhat flattened in form, and of a size that would require the united strength of two men to lift. These stones were not set on edge, but lay on their side in the hollow. The direction of this trench or hollow, being from west to east, suggested the idea of a grave; but there was no trace of any bone, nor of any instrument of metal or stone, and no sign of ashes or burnt wood, though some very dark-coloured earth was picked up. Some wood, very much decayed, was found; but nothing was discovered that could show whether it had

been placed there by the hand of man, or whether it was the remains of tree roots that had grown on the mound.

The mound to the south consists almost entirely of the soft sandy earth before described. It is rather more than 5 feet high at the centre, and is about 50 feet in diameter. About the middle of the mound the workmen employed in cutting the trench came upon some bones. These were very carefully exhumed. They were found to be parts of the skeleton of a man, apparently about 6 feet in height. Some of the larger bones, such as those of the thighs, were entire; but most of them were very much decayed. Almost all the smaller bones had completely wasted away. One side of the skull remained whole, showing that the head had been of full average size, and of good phrenological development. The other side was much decayed. The lower jaw was entire, with a full complement of healthy looking teeth, indicating a man in the prime of life. The body lay as in ordinary graves, from east to west, the head lying towards the west. No trace of wood or metal could be found, excepting a single iron nail, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, to which a small fragment of wood adhered. The fibre of the wood was parallel to the side of the nail; this induces the supposition that the nail had been driven into the end of a staff, and that the staff had been broken by some one who had been trying to dig into the mound. It seemed to have no connection with the interment of the body.

The skeleton we have been describing lay about a foot and a half above the natural level of the soil. It may therefore be regarded as a second interment in the place. The body having been buried at full length, and in the direction of ordinary graves, precludes the possibility of its having been that of a murdered man, hastily put away out of sight. The probability is that the remains are those of some unfortunate creature who committed suicide, to which the custom of former times forbade the ordinary rites of burial in consecrated ground.

The trench was carried through the mound down to the natural level of the soil, but no trace of bone, nor any remains of man or of man's art could be found. Another trench, at right angles to the first, was cut, but with the same result.

A third tumulus, rather more than a quarter of a mile to the north-west, was also explored. It is on the top of a little knoll. Like that

which we have last described, it is composed entirely of the soft sandy soil that covers the adjoining ground. At the centre it was about 5 feet high. No remains were found.

These tumuli suggest the idea of a bloody skirmish in times long gone by. The dead seem to have been gathered together, and a mound of turf torn up from the adjoining ground heaped over them. It is remarkable that not the slightest vestige could be seen of bone or weapon, ashes or charcoal.

The smaller mound, on which more care seems to have been bestowed, may be supposed to have been the resting-place of a fallen chief. But no evidence is left to show us what was the cause for which they fought, or what was the race to which they belonged.
