

### III.

#### NOTICES OF SOME IRON RELICS FOUND IN CARLUKE PARISH.

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An iron axe, recently brought under notice, which was discovered in an upper bed of clay, recalled to memory some other interesting relics of past time, the existence of which may be worth recording.

I. *A Helmet.*—In 1820, while stones were being quarried for the restoration and extension of Lee Castle, an iron helmet or basinet was found in Braidwood Till, in a cleft of the rock, deep under washed in earth and sand, which filled up that crevice. This head-piece is in good preservation, the left side being all but entire, and the right retaining the front half in nearly a complete state.

In length (elongated by pressure, it is)	. . .	13	inches.
Width (compressed somewhat),	. . .	6	„
Height,	. . . . .	7½	„
Over ridge,	. . . . .	18	„

The steel plate of which the helmet is constructed is throughout about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch thick, with some exceptions.

Along the welded line or ridge it is fully  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch thick.

At the front edge for a space of  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches, the steel plate is expanded to  $\frac{4}{16}$  of an inch thick. This part presents the appearance of having had something fitted into it—probably a shield for the forehead and face; and is hammered off from the edge inward by a gradual thinning for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, when the plate runs into the average thickness. In corroboration of this view, the corners where the thickness ends, in front of the first rivet on each side, are thinned off from the outer edge, as if to receive something to join by way of splice. A line of eleven rivets had run round the rim, apparently for the purpose of attaching a metallic band, to strengthen what would have been the weakest part. Six of these rivets are still in position, the heads of which, on the inner side, average  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch diameter, and  $\frac{1}{10}$  of an inch thick, while, on the outside, they average  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch diameter, the holes from which the rivets have separated being clear of about the same diameter, so that it is probable the outside fixing would be by counter-sinking. The spaces between the fifth and sixth and tenth and eleventh rivets, or rivet holes, are nearly twice as wide as the others; but the positive need or use of the arrangement is not evident. It is not unlikely that these rivets served a double purpose—namely, to attach a strengthening border on the outer rim, as suggested; and to fix, at the same time, some thick lining to the inside, or a band to which the lining could be connected; because the heads of the rivets, unless sunk in a soft substance, or carefully covered, would have made a very rough and harsh fit. On the top there is a slightly displaced, and evidently broken-short socket, the remains of a peak of hollow iron, an inch high, supported by two lateral parts each an inch long, fitted lengthways to the ridge of the helmet, and fixed, originally by two, now by one rivet. This peak, or socket, has by appearance served the purpose, when entire and in use, of receiving and sustaining a crest, a plume, or an ornament, such as represented in early monumental effigies of North Britain. The badge or trophy would be movable at pleasure, as there is a small hole in the base of the socket, evidently designed for fixing or unfixing objects.

The weight of the helmet, in its present state, is 3 lb 1 oz., and is supposed to date *circa* A.D. 1300.

II. *Horse Shoe*.—In 1840, a horse shoe of true Roman character was discovered,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet in the soil, on the lands of Hillhead, by the Roman way. It is in good preservation, although corroded to some extent. In length it is  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , and in breadth 4 inches. It is preserved by the proprietor of the lands.

III. *Axe*.—An iron axe, lately secured, was in 1864 dug up in making a clay field for the manufacture of bricks and pipes on Braidwood lands, where huge stems of oak and other trees were found in an upper stratum of mossy earth above clay, about 3 feet from the surface. To connect the axe, in any way, with the trees, more intimately, would be venturesome; but the instrument has an antique look, and is constructed of iron alone. The heel and cutting edge bear the marks of hard usage, and the handle is cleft at the end as if for the insertion of wood or iron to lengthen it. The axe is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches long in the blade,  $1\frac{1}{10}$  wide at the heel, and the face measures  $2\frac{8}{10}$  inches across, the handle being  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches long. It is in the possession of the proprietor of the lands.

IV. *Trowel*.—About thirty years ago, when part of the basement walls of Belstane tower were being torn down, to clear away every vestige of the old structure, in order that a kale-yard should no longer be restricted in its limits, a trowel was found which had been built up in the walls at the time of erection. The precise date of this keep cannot be given with certainty, farther than that it was within the cork-screw-stair period; but it was the scene of a fierce encounter recorded in a complaint made by John Livingstone of Belstane, on the 5th of February 1585, to the Council of State, in the following words:—"He walks out," as he stated, "under God's peace and the King's, when suddenly he is beset by about forty people who had him at feud: all bodin in feir of weir—namely, armed with jacks, steel bonnets, spears, lances, staffs, bows, hagbuts, and other invasive weapons forbidden by the law. At the head of them was William, Master of Yester, a denounced rebel," &c., &c.

The trowel resembles the tool still in use by masons in a general way. It is slightly scooped, and has a back like a modern dust shovel, indicating clearly enough, what is otherwise well known, that mortar in the olden times had been applied in a more liquid state than it now is.

From the back to the front it is 6 inches, the broadest part being about 5 inches. The back ledge is raised  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch at the centre, and falls off at the sides to  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch, and the tang of the handle is  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches long. The mode of fixing the handle seems to have been effected by recurving the extremity of the tang. It is evident that the trowel had been used by a right-handed workman, the left side being considerably more worn than the right.

V. *Thumbikins*.—There is no record of this instrument of torture having been applied as an accessory in Regality or Barony Courts; but it may have been so. The specimen that turned up in this locality was a chattel of Maudslie. About 1790, when the old house erected by the Maxwells was about to be supplanted by the existing castle built by Thomas Carmichael, fifth Earl of Hyndford, the displeasing sale filled all the country round with furniture and trappings of very curious and varied character. Amongst the many, a box of “trumpery iron buckles, staples, cleeks, hinges, locks, keys, screws, nails, &c., &c.,” was knocked down to Walter Black, the smith at Law, and lay in his smithy all his remaining days, twenty-five years. At Walter’s death, there being no member of the family trained to continue the trade, another dispersion sale took place—when James Young, a former apprentice, secured the box, as a memorial of the old shop, at Walter’s roup, and carried it to the smithy of Waygateshaw, where it lay for twenty-three years. Time wore on, and the smith at Waygateshaw on removing from that place sold his effects. At the sale, Matthew, the smith at Law, acquired the veritable box; but Matthew being possessed of considerable curiosity, and experiencing temptation at the sight of such a collection of odds and ends—he being master of his own fire-end—tumbled the precious lot out upon the floor of his dwelling. Every article was patiently handled and remarked on, as was the manner of Matthew, and in due course he had the thumbikins under inspection. He could not “*contrive*” the purpose of the instrument, and it lay about the “smiddy vice-board” for a considerable time, for the inspection of all comers, without any satisfactory solution. Matthew at last thought of consulting a local authority, who held the unenviable distinction of knowing about everything, and, as a sequence, the thumbikins changed hands once more. It is of good construction, and

in excellent preservation, in little, if in anything, differing from most other specimens, if it be not in having a screw-driver formed at one end of the lower frame-work.

VI. *Pick*.—In 1834, when the foundation of the first furnace at Castlehill had been laid, evidence of an old coal pit on the site startled the contractor. The pit was cleared out in order to determine whether the foundation was good ; and in doing so, it was found that the pit was circular, not exceeding  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet diameter—that, in fact, it was a spiral stair. In the old waste, baskets of wicker-work, something in form like a fish-wife's creel, with shoulder straps of the same material, lay about, but so decayed that a touch caused the whole to fall to dust. These baskets, no doubt, were alone the means of conveyance between the coal face and the pit-head—for all the underground arrangements admitted of no other method—a fact which carries us back a good way in the history of raising coal. A pick was also found, the shaft of which was totally decayed. It is from point to point 10 inches long (about half the modern length), the one arm, from the centre of the eye or socket for the handle, being  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and the other  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches ; the length of the ovoid socket is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the depth the same, and the width 1 inch. The whole is formed of four distinct plies of iron, imperfectly welded as it seems ; and on one extremity there is evidence of a clumsy eke—a thin piece of steel having been laid on the iron at the point of one of the arms, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch long, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch broad ; and on the other side of the same point, a depression exists as if a similar addition had existed, the opposite arm having no such addition or mark.

After an exhaustive inquiry, no aged person in the district has any knowledge of, or even ever heard of, this mode of raising coal. A pit said to have been worked within the past hundred years still remains open to inspection, which is of small diameter, and is cradled or lined like a well with stones. This pit was worked by a hand windlass and jack, the jack being a counter-weight relieved from the windlass, and passed down the pit by the same action that raised the loaded hutch, thus aiding the lifting power. At this time coal was carried from the pit in sacks laid across horses' backs—a "load" or "laid" expressing the measure or weight of the burden. The earliest notice of coal being worked in the

parish, is an application to the Kirk-Session :—" *Sess. 25, August, 1650.*  
The qlk day, Claud Hamilton of garein desired liberty to sett The water  
off the Coalhaugh upon the sabbath morning qch was Granted because  
it was ane wark of necessity."