

I.

NOTICE OF A CANOE FOUND IN LOCH LOTUS, PARISH OF NEW ABBEY, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE. BY REV. JAMES E. GILLESPIE, MINISTER OF KIRKGUNZEON.

There has been lately added to the National Museum of the Antiquaries of Scotland a portion of an ancient canoe, found, in July 1874, at Lotus Loch, in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, a short account of which may not be uninteresting to the members of the Society. Loch Arthur, or Lotus Loch, lies at the foot of Lotus Hill, about a mile east from Killywhan station, on the Dumfries and Castle Douglas Railway. It is about 1000 yards long by 500 wide. The only outlet of the lake is Lochend-burn, at the northern extremity. Partly owing to the deepening of this stream, and partly, no doubt, owing to the great drought, the dimensions of the lake last summer were considerably curtailed, one result of which was the discovery of this canoe.

On the 11th of July George Currie, a mason residing in the neighbourhood, when passing along the side of the lake, had his attention drawn to a dark-looking object projecting above the mud close to the shore. On examining it more attentively he found it to be the figure-head of a boat, and was able to trace the outline of a canoe appearing above the mud. Mrs Hyslop of Lotus, having been communicated with, at once gave instructions to have the interesting relic excavated and cleaned out.

In company with the Rev. Mr Murray of Balmaclellan, I visited the spot on the 20th July, during the work of excavation, which was accomplished without injury to the canoe. It is to be regretted, however, that

the suggestion, that Mrs Hyslop, who was then in London, should be communicated with before any attempt was made to drag it to the shore, was not adopted, as the sides sustained some damage in the process. This injury was afterwards increased by exposure to the sun, and also, I am sorry to state, by the thoughtlessness of visitors. When fully exposed to view by the trench which was dug around it, the canoe was seen to be of great size, ornately finished, and in a fair state of preservation. It had been hollowed out of the trunk of an oak, which must have been a patriarch of the forest, the extreme length of the canoe being 45 feet, and the breadth at the stern 5 feet. The boat gradually tapers from the stern to the prow, which ends in a remarkable prolongation resembling the outstretched neck and head of an animal. When excavated this portion of the canoe was entire. At the neck of the figure-head there is a circular hole about 5 inches in diameter from side to side. At the prow a small flight of steps has been carved in the solid oak from the top to the bottom of the canoe. The stern is square, and formed of a separate piece of wood, inserted in a groove about an inch and a half from the extremity of the canoe. The stern-board when found was in a fragmentary condition, so that it is impossible to say whether it consisted of one or several planks.

Along the starboard side (which when found was in good preservation except near the stern) there could be traced seven holes about three inches in diameter. The three front holes were nearly perfect, but at the stern the side was so broken that only the lower parts of the holes could be observed. They are about five feet apart, and the front hole is about that distance from the prow—the last being about seven feet from the stern.

The whole of the other side was much broken, and the only hole of which I could notice any trace was about five feet from the stern. It may be here stated that, owing to causes to which I have alluded, the stern portion of the canoe became nearly a total wreck. I have omitted to mention that there are three holes pierced through the bottom at irregular intervals. With the exception of three large stones in the bottom, the only article found in the canoe was a short portion of what appeared to be a paddle handle. It was about two inches in diameter, and had a carved beading round the end. It is much to be regretted that this

interesting fragment, along with the remains of the stern, were lost soon after the canoe was brought to the shore.

In connection with the discovery of this canoe it is worthy of remark, that on the opposite side of the lake, between three and four hundred yards from the spot where the canoe was found, there is a small circular island, which is evidently artificial. It is about a hundred feet in diameter, and is approached by a stone causeway about thirty yards long, which was laid bare last summer by the lowness of the lake. The artificial nature of the island may be seen by the remains of the oaken piles driven in in rows, with horizontal beams between, which can still be traced in the water round the north-east and south sides. The lines of two small enclosures can be followed on the south side of the island.

No excavations have been yet made on the island, but ashes and other signs of fire were found many years ago.



Forward half of the Canoe found in Loch Lotus ($22\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length).

