

II.

NOTICE OF A COLLECTION OF FLINT ARROW-HEADS AND BRONZE AND IRON RELICS FROM THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT SETTLEMENT RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN THE CULBIN SANDS, NEAR FINDHORN, MORAYSHIRE. BY HERCULES LINTON, Esq., DUNDEE.

During the summer of 1874-75 I visited the Sand Hills of Culbin, for the purpose of examining some shell mounds, and in the course of my wanderings I came upon a spot of ground which, from careful examination and the discoveries made there, has struck me very forcibly as the site of an ancient settlement. It is situated about half a mile from the mouth of the River Findhorn, and about one thousand feet back from high-water mark. Five hundred feet to the east of this is a shell stratified sand-hill, and five hundred feet south is a cairn of broken stones, of which I shall speak more particularly afterwards.

The site appears to have been occupied for a long period—as evidenced by the articles in flint, bronze, iron, &c., &c., found now mingled together on one common level on the top of an ancient sea-beach. Among the articles which I found were arrow-heads of flint of the ordinary form, well shaped, and highly polished by the constant friction of the sand blowing over them; others extremely rude and unpolished, quantities of flint flakes, chips, scrapers, and some unused flint, mingled with pourings of bronze, scoriæ of copper and iron, fragments of crucibles, iron and bronze rivets, an iron dagger ten inches long, one half of an iron horse-shoe, circular brooch ornamented with Rune-like markings, iron buckles, several bronze needles, a quantity of pins (many of which are made of thin bronze rolled together), one bronze bodkin rolled over a core of wood, one bronze pin with triangular point and engraved head, some small scale-like plates of iron (probably of a brigandine or some piece of quilted armour), part of a bronze chain of peculiar form (fig. 1), tongues of brooches, a number of links of twisted wire, fragments of lead, tin, glass, and a large quantity of pottery made from red clay



Fig. 1. Bronze Chain (3 inches long).

partly glazed. The vessels had been of various sizes, from 8 to 12 inches in diameter, the same in height, and very narrow at the mouth and bottom. They had evidently been used for cooking purposes, as in most cases soot and charcoal adhered to them. There were also found fragments of red hematite, iron ore, cannel coal, and whorls made from fragments of pottery; coins of James VI., Charles II., Mary Queen of Scots, and Francis and Mary; a small hexagonal medal or stamp struck only on one side, with shield, &c.; several iron knives, one with tubular rivets through the handle; some small plates of bronze, apparently belt clasps or tags, rudely engraved; and a quantity of thin cuttings of bronze.

[One of the most common articles in bronze was a kind of fastener or "rivet," of ingenious construction (see fig. 2), quite similar to the recently patented brass "paper fastener" now so well known. They seem to have

been sometimes used for fastening leather, but more frequently for joining together thin sheets of metal, probably in mending dishes and caldrons of thin sheet bronze or latten. There is in the Museum a basin made of thin sheet bronze from a crannog in Dowalton Loch, which has been repeatedly mended

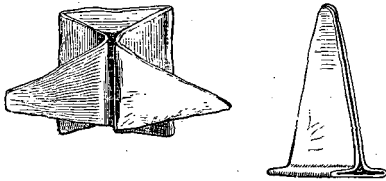


Fig. 2. Bronze Fasteners or Rivets
(actual size).

by patches of sheet bronze fastened over the broken places with fasteners of the same form as those found at Culbin. (See annexed fig. 3.)]

All the articles were found within a radius of 150 feet. On examining a bank of sand, which now apparently covers a portion of the site, the original light alluvial soil can still be seen, and is about 3 or 4 feet thick. This alluvial soil had doubtless covered the flint and bronze implements, the iron implements had occupied a higher strata, and the coins the highest of all, previous to the destruction of the barony by sand about the year 1695.

The gradual blowing away of the sand and alluvial soil would cause the various articles to subside and find their common level on the surface of the ancient sea-beach, which would thus account for a flint arrow-head and a coin of James VI. being found together. Near the site are three small kitchen middens, composed of oyster and mussel shells, containing bronze

rivets and pins of the same make as those previously found; also fragments of pottery, &c.

In the centre of the site I found some pieces of freestone, which had evidently been subjected to great heat, the surface of the stones being fused and attached to the scoriæ of copper. Some of the scoriæ is so light that it has been carried to great distances by the wind; other portions are very heavy, and contain a large percentage of copper in the form of nodules, about half the size of peas. The hematite iron ore was found amongst the scoriæ of copper and iron, along with a number of bronze pins, flint chips, iron rivets, and some rude flint arrow-heads. The ornamented brooch lay only a few feet from the above; the whole ground seems to be

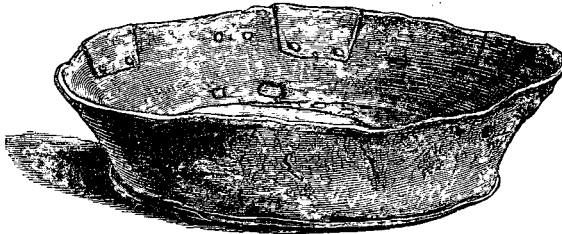


Fig. 3. Bronze Basin, mended, from a Crannog, Dowalton Loch.

dotted with bronze rivets and very thin fragments of bronze cuttings and flint chips, showing at least that articles of the former material were made on the spot. The iron articles (amongst which were about 50 fish-hooks in a solid mass, a number of knife blades, and some articles resembling common nails) were so corroded that the most of them crumbled to pieces when touched.

In the shell stratified sand hill before alluded to, I found a quantity of pottery exactly the same manufacture as that of the site first mentioned; a number of bronze needles beautifully made from thin sheet bronze, rolled in the form of a tube (only one or two of the needles were made from the solid bronze); some bronze buckles of various shapes, one with an iron rivet passed through it; bronze tongues of brooches or buckles, small plates of bronze with rivets passed through them; an iron knife with blade 3

inches long; and handle of wood 4 inches long and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter, which crumbled to pieces on being touched; one horse-shoe of iron quite entire; an iron hasp; and a number of bronze and iron rivets exactly the same as those found on the sites previously mentioned. Immediately above the uppermost stratum (peat or black earth) were found a few silver coins, supposed to be of Edward I.

The sand-hill is about 250 feet from high-water mark, and about 40 or 50 feet in height. The strata of shells are situated about 25 feet above the base of the hill, and in layers from 9 inches to 3 feet in thickness. The whole depth of the strata is about 10 feet, and the thickness of sand between the layer of shells is about 18 inches thick, underlying a bed of black earth or peat about 12 inches thick: on this I found the silver coins; above this was a body of sand about 20 feet deep. The shells were all of the edible kind, principally mussel, a few cockle, oyster, periwinkle, and crab shells, bones of the cod, haddock, and skate being freely mixed amongst them; also a few bones of the sheep and teeth of the dog and ox. To the south-west of this shell-hill is situated the cairn of broken stones before referred to. It is about 20 feet high and about 60 to 70 feet diameter at the base. The stones composing the cairn are all of small size, and nearly the whole of them are split in two, and seem as if they had been subjected to great heat. At the eastern side of this cairn I found a few flint arrow-heads of the ordinary barbed type, and on the western side, close to the base, I found several finely-finished leaf-shaped arrow-heads; also a flint drill (fig. 4) and some common scrapers, the latter being found of all sizes from $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch up to $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch.



Fig. 4. Flint Drill—(Actual size).