

#### IV.

NOTICE OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS FOUND AT LOWER LARGO, AND OF THE SILVER ORNAMENTS, &c., FOUND AT NORRIE'S LAW, NEAR LARGO, RECENTLY PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM BY ROBERT DUNDAS, ESQ. OF ARNISTON. BY JOSEPH ANDERSON, LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

The gold ornaments now presented to the National Collection by Mr Dundas of Arniston are four in number; three of these are complete, the fourth being a fragment. They belong to the class of personal ornaments known as *torcs*, from their twisted form (see figs. 1 and 2). Described by their use they appear to be armlets, each making a circle of about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. They are all very nearly of the same size and weight.

No. 1 is (when straightened)  $11\frac{1}{8}$  inches long, and weighs 7 dwt. 15 grains.

No. 2 is 11 inches long, weighing 7 dwt. 17 grains.

No. 3 is  $10\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, weighing 8 dwt. 2 grains.

No. 4 (a fragment) is 3 inches long, weighing 54 grains.

They are made of fillets of thin gold, worked into a spiral like the thread of a screw. The fillet is broadest in the centre of its length, where it measures in Nos. 1 and 2 about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in width, and in No.

3,  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch in width. They taper gradually to the extremities, where the flat spiral passes into the form of a slender cylindrical rod, recurved and terminating in a conical knob. These hook-like terminations interlock, and so serve to fasten the circlet when worn. They are most



Fig. 1. Gold Armlet found at Lower Largo,  $11\frac{1}{8}$  inches in length (actual size).

elegantly made, the gold fillet having been brought to a uniform thinness and worked to a regular spiral in a very clever and careful manner.

These four armlets were found together in the winter of 1848 "on

the top of a steep bank which slopes down to the sea, among some loose earth which was being dug to be carted away. It was at a place close to the sea-shore, called the Temple, which is part of the village of Lower Largo. An old woman, who has lived close to the spot all her



Fig. 2. Gold Armlet found at Lower Largo, 11 inches in length (actual size).

days, says that in her youth several burials in stone cists were found there, and one man was supposed to have found a treasure, having suddenly become rich enough to build a house."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Communication by Mr Dundas, *Archaeological Journal*, vol. vi. p. 53.

There are in the Museum similar armlets from four other localities in Scotland.

A hoard of such ornaments, "amounting to more than three dozen, were turned up by the plough on the farm of The Law, in the parish of Urquhart, Elginshire, in the spring of 1857.<sup>1</sup> They were all, as far as could be ascertained, similar in style and pattern, with the exception that some had simple hooks at the extremities, serving to clasp the armlet on the arm, whilst in a few instances these hooks terminated in little knobs." The spot where they were turned up in ploughing a field is about 40 yards from the basis of a large tumulus locally called "The Law," from which the farm derives its name, but there is nothing to show that they were in any way associated with this tumulus.<sup>2</sup> It is stated, however, that a small cairn had formerly covered the place of their deposit, and that it had been removed when the land was brought into cultivation a few years previous to the discovery of the hoard. Four of these ornaments are now in the Museum. They differ from the Largo examples only in the spirally twisted fillet being of nearly equal width throughout, and the recurved hooks being less distinctly knobbed at the extremities. They vary in size; two of them form circlets of about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter, that might encircle the neck, the other two form circlets of about  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter. The following are their measurements and weights:—

No. 1 (when extended) is  $14\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length, and weighs 8 dwt. 2 grains.

No. 2 is 14 inches in length, and weighs 8 dwt. 18 grains.

No. 3 is 12 inches in length, and weighs 8 dwt. 16 grains.

No. 4 is  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and weighs 9 dwt. 2 grains.

One found at Belhelvie, Aberdeenshire, and purchased for the Museum in 1857, greatly resembles the Urquhart specimens, but the

<sup>1</sup> *Archæological Journal*, vol. xvi. p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> "The Law" is a conical mound, about 50 feet in diameter and 15 feet in height. There is a local tradition that a golden cradle lies buried in it. It has been partially broken into since the date of the discovery of the armlets, but is still unexplored.

fillet is slightly broader and heavier and more open in the spiral twists, the recurved ends being simple flattened hooks without knobs. It measures (when extended) 12 inches in length, and weighs 8 dwts. 14 grains (see fig 3).

One found at the head of Little Lochbroom, in Ross-shire, and presented to the Museum in 1860, by Hugh Mackenzie, Esq. of Ardross, has much resemblance to the Largo specimens, in the breadth of the fillet, which is somewhat over a quarter of an inch in the centre tapering to about half that width at the extremities, which terminate in



Fig. 3. Gold Armlet found at Belhelvie, Aberdeenshire, 12 inches in length ( $\frac{1}{4}$  actual size).

recurved hooks with bluntly conical knobs. It forms a circlet of about 4 inches diameter, measuring when extended  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length. Its weight is 8 dwts. 8 grains.

A more massive and beautiful specimen (fig. 4), found on the Moor of Rannoch, is represented in the Museum by a cast. It forms a circlet of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter. The width of the fillet in the centre is almost half an inch, tapering to about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch at the extremities, which terminate in simple recurved hooks without knobs.

A variety of torc armlet, in which the twisted part consists of three rods twisted spirally round a common centre and uniting at the ends in a single rod which is recurved, and forms a long terminal hook, is represented by the splendid specimen (fig. 5) found at Slateford in 1846, during the construction of the Caledonian Railway. No other example

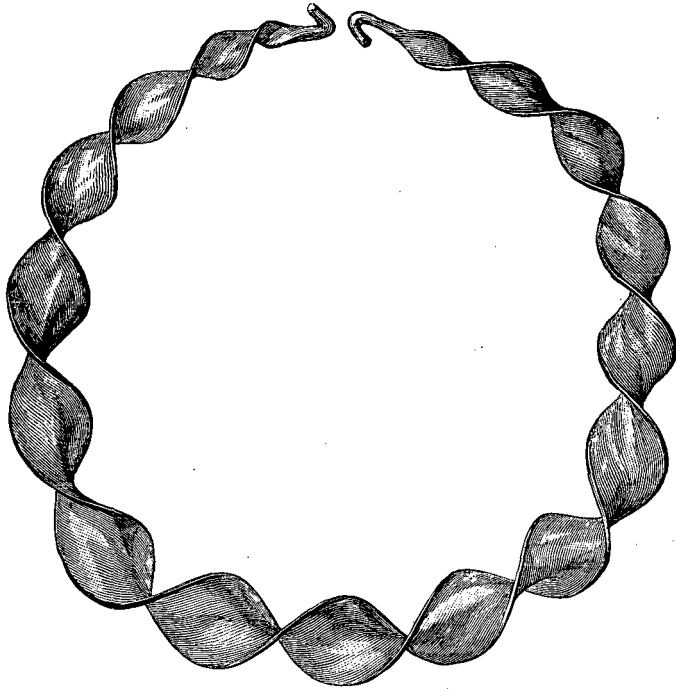


Fig. 4. Gold Armlet found in the Moor of Rannoch (actual size).

of this variety is known to have occurred in Scotland, and unfortunately the original no longer exists. A cast taken from it by a jeweller before it was clipped down for the melting-pot is now in the Museum.

The Silver Ornaments, now also presented to the National Collection by Mr Dundas, form the remaining portion of the Norrie's Law hoard,

part of which had been presented to the Museum by Mrs Dundas Durham of Largo in 1864.<sup>1</sup> They consist of—(1) a pin of silver with semicircular head, almost precisely similar in size and shape to the larger of the two already in the Museum; (2) a penannular brooch  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter; (3) a leaf-shaped plate of silver, with an incised representation of the “spectacle” or double-disc symbol of the Sculptured Stones; (4) forty-five fragments of thin silver plates, some with ornament, others plain; and (5) a third brass coin of the Lower Empire.

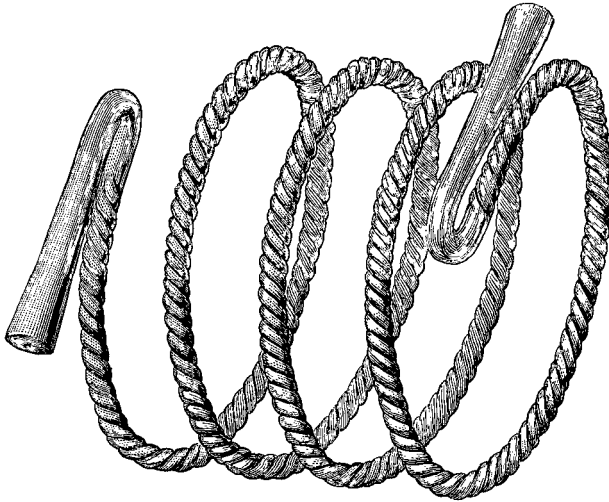


Fig. 5. Gold Armlet found at Slateford, Mid-Lothian, 4 feet in length  
( $\frac{2}{3}$  actual size).

Along with these Mr Dundas also presented several letters on the subject of the relics from the late Dr John Stuart and others, and two copies of the scarce “Report, by Mr George Buist, on the Silver Fragments in the possession of General Durham, Largo, commonly called the Silver Armour of Norrie’s Law, to the Fifeshire Literary and Antiquarian Society, printed in the *Fifeshire Journal* Office (with three lithograph plates) 1839.”

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. vi. p. 7.

It appears from Mr Buist's Report that the original hoard from which these objects came, was found about the year 1819, in or near a stone coffin in an artificial heap or tumulus of sand or gravel, called Norrie's Law, on the boundaries betwixt the estates of Teasses and Largo." "They were withdrawn piecemeal and sold, by a hawker, for what they would bring." Mr Robertson, jeweller, Cupar, first made a purchase of £5 worth, subsequently two of £10. He knew of another purchase made by some one about Edinburgh to the amount of about £20, and he is under the belief that perhaps as much as that may have been carried away and bestowed on various uses. This, says Mr Buist, by rough computation (together with what remains), may be reckoned not much under four hundred ounces of bullion.

The late Dr Stuart, in describing the circumstances in which the objects were found, states that when his inquiries were made Mr Robertson was still alive, and when requested to state all that he knew of the details of the original discovery he readily did so, adding that he, along with Mr Leighton, who wrote a history of Fife, had made a full investigation of the circumstances, and that the result was given in Mr Leighton's work published in 1840. It is there stated that in 1819 the relics were found on an artificial tumulus. A man digging sand at this place came accidentally upon a stone coffin, in which he found them, but they are erroneously described as "a complete suit of scale armour, which, with the shield, sword-handle and scabbard, was entirely of silver." The account which Mr Robertson himself furnished to Dr Stuart was "that the relics were discovered in a stone coffin by two labourers while digging for sand." Dr Stuart gives the following description of the tumulus of Norrie's Law from personal observation:—"The Law is tumulus of about 53 feet in diameter, surrounded by a fosse and wall on the outside of the ditch. From the outside of the wall surrounding the ditch to the base wall of The Law is 16 feet. On the inner side of the ditch the base of The Law was defined by a circle of large boulders. Portions of an inner concentric wall were also observed. Between these walls a quantity of travelled earth was found, and within the inner circle the eminence was mostly formed of a cairn of stones. Here, towards the centre, vestiges of charred wood appeared, and many of the



stones of the cairn showed that they had been under the action of fire. A small triangular cist, found in the foundation of the outer base of The Law between two of the stones and covered with a flat stone, contained incinerated human bones. On the west and on the outside of the base in which the triangular cist or hole was discovered, a small urn of baked clay was found lying on its side among charred wood. Nothing was found in the urn. The tumulus rests on a hillock of sand on the summit of a ridge commanding an extensive view, and there can be no doubt that the remains which it covered had been burned." Dr Stuart further states, on the authority of Mr Charles Howie of Largo, that about 1854, a cut was made from the north side to the centre of The Law, where a large flat undressed stone was found resting on four undressed slabs forming a cist, in which nothing was found.

The tumulus of Norrie's Law is thus determinable as a pagan grave-mound of Bronze Age type, occupying the highest point of a natural ridge or hillock of sand and gravel; and the outcome of the several statements regarding the discovery of the original hoard is that it was found in the sand at the base of the grave-mound, and not in the grave-mound itself. It is true that the objects are said to have been found in a stone coffin, but none of the parties making this statement were eye-witnesses of the discovery, and there is no evidence of the presence of bones burnt or unburnt in association with the relics.

All this refers to the original discovery of the hoard "in or about the year 1819." Some time after the first discovery (and consequently after all the objects then found had been sold and melted), General Durham having heard of these circumstances, employed men to search in the sand-pit at the base of The Law, on the apex of which the grave-mound is situated. This search in the sand-pit (which is stated to have been made in 1822) was so far successful that a number of objects, amounting in all to 24 ounces in weight of silver, were discovered, These are the objects which were for some time preserved by General Durham, and part of which were presented to the National Collection by Mrs Dundas Durham in 1864; the remaining portion having now been presented by Mr Dundas of Arniston.

From the exceptional interest of this hoard of silver articles, I have

thought it advisable to append here a complete descriptive list of the whole of the objects found in the sand-pit by General Durham, as now reunited in the National Collection :—

1. Two penannular brooches of hammered silver, the ring of the brooch spirally twisted, the ends flattened and expanded, in the form so characteristic of the early Celtic type of penannular brooch, but without ornamentation. The larger of the two measures  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter; the smaller, which is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter, has been broken and re-joined. The pins of both are wanting. The larger specimen was presented by Mr Durham, the smaller by Mr Dundas.

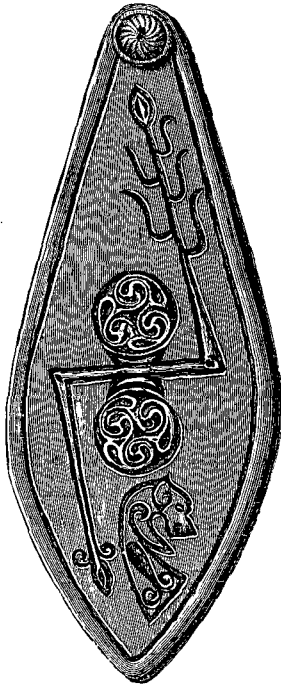


Fig. 6. Leaf-Shaped Plate of Silver found at Norrie's Law (actual size).

2. Two leaf-shaped plates of solid silver, each  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, having a raised boss or knob at one end, ornamented with spirally-divergent lines. The centre of the plate in each example is occupied by a device consisting of two equal circles placed about half their own diameter apart, and their circumferences connected by two incurved lines. Across this connecting central portion there passes nearly at right angles the middle part of a rod, which bending to right and left on opposite sides, terminates in both directions in conventional floriated forms. The circles are filled with triplets of the divergent spiral ornament so characteristic of the Celtic manuscripts and metal-work of the Christian

period. Underneath them is the representation of an animal's head executed with a peculiar conventionalism which is also recognisable in the Celtic manuscripts, but is more characteristic of the Stone Monuments of Scotland. Both plates are precisely similar in shape, size, and

ornamentation, except that in the case of that now presented by Mr Dundas the incised line is wanting which forms a border round the plate formerly presented by Mrs Dundas Durham (fig. 6). The reverse of both plates is plain, slightly concave, and hammer-marked. The sunk spaces of the ornamental designs on the obverse of both appear to have been filled with enamel of a reddish colour, slight traces of which are still perceptible. In the only other case in which this symbol of the double-disc and bent or broken rod occurs on metal-work, on the terminal link of the silver chain found at Whitecleuch, Lanarkshire (fig. 7), the sunk spaces also appear to have been filled with red enamel. The symbol,

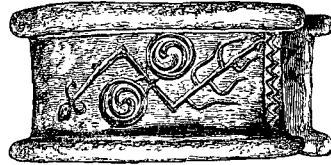
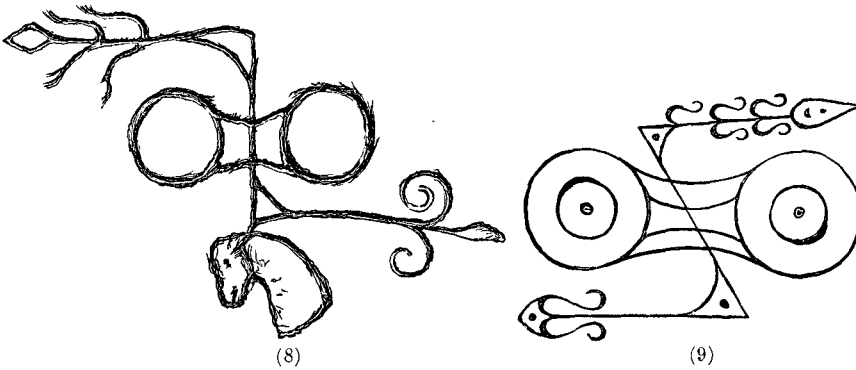


Fig. 7. Terminal Link of Silver Chain found at Whitecleuch, Lanarkshire (actual size).

as is now well known, appears among the symbolic sculpturings of the Fifeshire caves, and also occurs with great frequency on the



Figs. 8 and 9. Symbols (8) cut in the Rock in a Cave at East Wemyss, Fifeshire ; and (9) on a Sculptured Stone at Inch, Aberdeenshire.

Sculptured Monuments of Scotland (figs. 8 and 9), but has not been met with in manuscripts.

3. Three pins of peculiar form, of which two are almost precisely

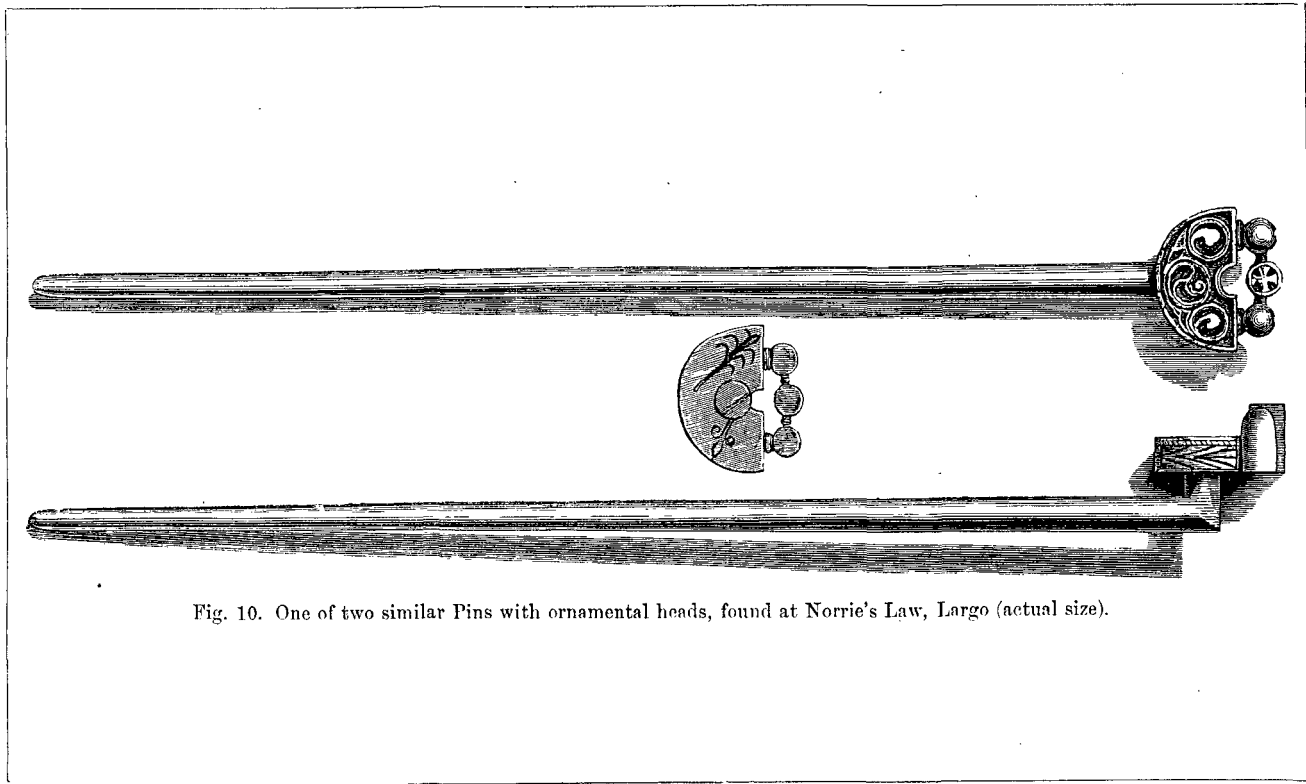


Fig. 10. One of two similar Pins with ornamental heads, found at Norrie's Law, Largo (actual size).

similar in size and style of ornament (see fig. 10). They are each  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length. The pin-head, which is carried on a short portion of the upper part of the pin, bent at right angles to the lower portion is of semicircular form, surmounted by three short cylindrical projections, of which the central one alone bears any ornament. It presents an equal armed cross within a circle, while the semicircular space on the obverse of the pin-head is occupied by a triplet of diverging spirals. The sunk spaces in these appear to have been filled with red enamels. The edges of this semicircular part of the pin-head are also ornamented with a very peculiar pattern, which does not occur on any other object, so far as I know, unless on the ornamented band of silver to be next described, on which a more regular variety of the same ornament occurs. On the back of the semicircular part the two pins have different ornamentation. In the pin given by Mrs Dundas Durham, the ornament on the back of the semicircular part is a modification of the zigzag rod with floriated ends, but without the double disc as on the plates before described; while the back of the semicircular part of the other pin, given by Mr Dundas of Amiston, is simply covered over with small circles made by the circular punch used for the circles in the ornament on the edge of the pin-head. The third pin is very much smaller than these two. It measures only  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch in length, the point being wanting. The head is ornamented with a simple pattern in the same style as the others, which has also been enamelled, and the central projecting cylinder on the top has apparently had a setting of stone. There is a portion of the point end of a third pin of the same size as the two first mentioned.

4. A band of silver (fig. 11), slightly convex in outline from side to

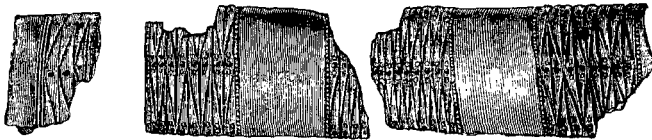


Fig. 11. Band of Silver, with engraved ornamentation, found at Norrie's Law, Largo (actual size).

side, but apparently flat longitudinally, though much broken, ornamented

with a peculiar pattern alternating with plain spaces. The pattern is a modification of that on the edges of the pin-heads previously described, and is differently impressed in the different spaces.

5. A spiral finger ring,  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter, formed of a narrow band of silver, flat on the inner side, convex on the outer, tapering to the extremities from the centre, serrated, and rolled spirally in three revolutions.

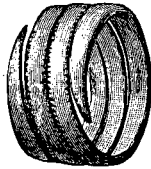


Fig. 12. Spiral Finger Ring of Silver, found at Norrie's Law, Largo.

6. A disc of thin plate, 3 inches diameter, with a raised circular margin, and a central boss nearly half an inch in diameter.

7. A portion of plate,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter, bearing divergent spiral and trumpet scrolls in repoussé work. The plate has been roughly cut round, and an irregular portion cut out of the centre from one side. The projecting ornaments hammered up from the back are in very bold relief, projecting fully a quarter of an inch from the surface of the plate. The two contiguous spirals are combined with a peculiar variety of trumpet-shaped scroll which is specially Celtic.

8. Two portions, apparently of an arm-band or bracelet, penannular in form, convex externally and slightly concave internally, the extremities flattened and rounded off at the points.

9. A thin riband, half an inch wide, and fully 3 feet long of beaten silver.

10. A small fragment of a chain of fine silver wire.

11. A large quantity of fragments, clippings, and broken portions of thin plates of silver, some of which bear a border of repoussé work, and others portions of engraved lines, but for the most part unornamented.

12. Roman second brass coin : *obverse* ANTONIA AVGVSTA, with bust ; *reverse* TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG PM TR P IMP, with Antonia habited as a Vestal holding a simpulum in the right hand and a sacrificial vase in the left. This coin was given to Miss Dundas by a labourer, along with a greatly defaced coin of the Byzantine series, assignable to the period of Tiberius Constantius, who died in A.D. 682.

It is stated that there were other coins found with the objects first discovered in 1819, but there is now no distinct evidence of this

fact, and no record of the character of the coins. Two silver coins are stated to have been found along with the relics now in the Museum during the examination of the sand-pit by General Durham in 1822. These coins were lost, but Dr Stuart states, that from sketches of them preserved by Mr Skene, they appear to have been coins of the Emperors Valens and Constantine II.—from A.D. 360 to 380. Two brass coins were also given to Miss Dundas by a labourer, who said he found them in the sand-pit. One of these (which is not now known to exist) was a greatly defaced coin of the Byzantine series, assigned by Mr George Sim to about the time of Tiberius Constantine, who died in A.D. 682. The other was the coin of Antonia now presented. When coins are associated with undated objects, the presumption is that the latest coin indicates a limit beyond which the age of the deposit cannot be extended. The association here is not conclusively established by the evidence, but judging by the art of the objects the seventh century is not perhaps an improbable limit to which their age might be assigned, seeing that the character of the double disc symbol on the leaf-shaped plates is precisely that of the same symbol as represented so frequently on the Sculptured Stones of Scotland.