

## IV.

NOTICE OF THE BRONZE WEAPONS OF ORKNEY AND SHETLAND,  
AND OF AN IRON AGE DEPOSIT FOUND IN A CIST AT MOAN,  
HARRAY. By J. W. CURSITER, F.S.A. Scot.

At a meeting of the Society in March 1885, I exhibited a few specimens from my collection of antiquities made in Orkney and Shetland, which included a bronze spear-head "said to have been found in Shetland," at which time my attention was called to the fact that there was no positive record of any weapons of the Bronze Age ever having been found in these islands, and that, so far as evidence went, they might have passed directly from an age of stone to one of iron without the intervention of a Bronze Period.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1862 (pt. ii. p. 601) appeared a letter from the late Mr Farrer (an honorary member of this Society), describing his discoveries at the Knowe of Saverough in Birsay, Orkney, in which the following paragraph occurs:—"Small fragments of bone have, it is said, occasionally been observed protruding from the ground, and some years ago an iron or bronze spear-head was picked up by a child on the top of the Knowe. It is stated that the exact counterpart of this weapon was found many years previously sticking in a skull about a mile to the north-west of the Knowe." This will also be found in the Society's *Proceedings* for January 1863. Vaguely uncertain as it is, this statement is the only reference I have been able to discover to such relics having been found in this county.

Ornaments and trappings of bronze have frequently been found in our tumuli and mounds, and the Society's collection possesses a pair of bronze shears from the parish of Birsay, presented by Mr Leask a few years ago, but no products of a Bronze Age proper were known to exist. I am glad to be in a position to-day to submit for your inspection a few specimens of indubitable Bronze Age types, as well as to vouch for the location to Shetland of the find of the spear-head formerly unauthenticated. The specimens consist of a dagger, a dagger-knife, and a socketed knife of bronze.

The dagger is one of the class known as rapier-shaped, having a long narrow blade and short broad base; it measures 10 inches in length, 1 inch in breadth at the base of the blade, which expands to about 2 inches at the butt, which is semicircular, and has been attached to the handle by rivets. It was found in April 1886 by Archibald Smith, tenant of Nether Bossack, when peat cutting, and at a depth of six peats in the Ditch Park Moss, in St Andrew's parish, Orkney, about 400 yards from the house of Sillerdyke, in a straight line between Sillerdyke and Nether Bossack. The rivet holes are broken away, and no traces of the rivets or handle were found.

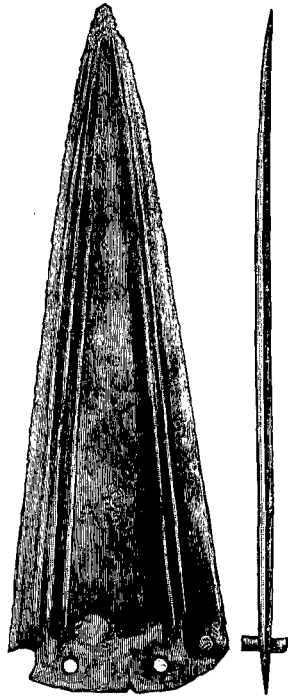


Fig. 1. Broad Dagger-Knife, found in a Moss in Orkney (7½ inches in length).

The dagger-knife (fig. 1), which is of the class of broad flat triangular blades with a broad flat mid-rib, was found on the 6th May 1887 by James Spence of Aikers, St Andrews, when peat-cutting in a moss between St Andrews and Holm parishes, a few yards on the Holm side of the march line, and was brought to me by W. Dover Baikie, Esq. of Tankerness. It measures 7½ inches long, 2⅜ inches broad at the base, and tapers to the point. It has a flat midrib 1 inch wide at the base and narrowing to the point, and two parallel grooves at each side of the midrib on each side of the blade. It has been hafted in the usual manner by four rivets of bronze, only one of which remains in the blade, and measures about ⅝ths of an inch in length and about ⅛th of an inch on the square. The rivets do not seem to have had any flattened heads, and the marking at the base of the blade shows the usual U-shaped notch

in the centre of the handle. On visiting the spot where it was found, I ascertained that it was discovered 2 feet from the present

surface, but that three peats deep had been cut from the same ground within the memory of people in the district. The Howe of Garth is the nearest landmark, and lies by compass N.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N. at a distance of about 500 yards, and the Head of Holland in St Ola bearing NE. by N.  $\frac{1}{4}$  E. in the distance. When found there were three rivets in the blade; two of them were lost subsequently, but were similar in appearance to the one remaining. A little matter remains around the rivet, which shows a striated impression. The blade is about  $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch thick at the base, and gets gradually thinner towards the point, while both edges of the blade are sharp. The outermost rivet hole on one side is broken and the piece wanting, and no trace of a handle could be found.

The socketed knife (fig. 2) is rather a rarity, being I believe the only complete specimen in Scotland at the present time. It was found in the month of April 1886 by James Corrigan, about 70 yards south-east of the house of Little Crofty occupied by him, in the parish of St Andrews, Orkney. He had in the course of ploughing accidentally discovered a stone cist at this spot a few weeks previously, but had not searched its interior. He removed the stones of which it was constructed, and in the hollow caused by their removal he found the knife. The socket is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep, has an oval section 1 inch by  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch, and is pierced at right angles to the axis of the blade, with holes for a single retaining pin. The blade is  $5\frac{3}{8}$  inches long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch broad at the narrowest; has a slight swell  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the point, and is  $\frac{3}{16}$  inch thick. Mr Corrigan informed me that, when found, part of the retaining pin was in the hole; that it was made of bone or horn, but could not be preserved. He also informed me that he destroyed a similar cist a few yards off a short time previously.

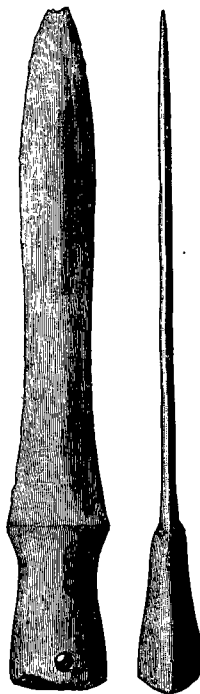


Fig. 2. Socketed Knife found in Orkney. (7 inches in length).

I also exhibit the Shetland bronze spear-head referred to, a description of which will be found in detail in the *Proceedings* for March 1885 (being No. 20 of that exhibit). Mr James M. Goudie of Lerwick, who undertook the inquiry at my request, is informed that it was found by a man named Hughson at the east side of Sweening's Voe, in Lunnasting parish.

It was discovered when cutting peats, the tusker rattling against it in the channel. The ground was 2 "feals" deep, and two peats under that, so the depth would be not less than 4 feet, possibly 5. The spear-head (fig. 3) measures  $10\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length, the socket projecting  $3\frac{5}{8}$  inches beyond the blade, which is  $6\frac{3}{8}$  inches in length by  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in extreme breadth. The blade is strengthened by two ribs nearly parallel to the edge. On each side of the socket is a loop of peculiar character, flat, and formed of a lozenge-shaped projection 1 inch long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch broad.

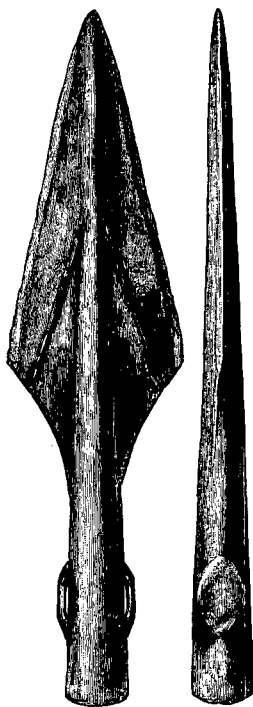


Fig. 3. Spear Head of Bronze, found in Shetland ( $10\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length).

Although few in number, these specimens are all that are known to exist. They are diverse in character, and serve to prove the existence of a period when bronze was used as the material for weapons in the county. Their discovery tends to remove the doubts resting upon the hypothetical nature of the record of the two Birsay specimens, and extends the area of the use of such weapons over Scotland to its northern extremity.

I send a modern Eskimo knife, procured from a whaling ship, to illustrate the survival

of the method of handling of the bronze daggers in that region to the present time.

I also send a small socketed celt of bronze, which was found among the effects of the late James Baikie, Esq. of Tankerness. It was

presented by Dr Baikie of Tankerness to W. Dover Baikie, Esq., who kindly allowed me the use of it. Although there is no evidence of where it was found, there are reasons for believing that it was found in Tankerness, which estate forms half of the parish of St Andrews, in which three of the above exhibits may be said to have been found.

Near the spot where the socketed knife was found was afterwards picked up the accompanying stone mould. It may or may not be associated with the knife or cist, but it is interesting as the only one of the sort that I have succeeded in finding in the course of my collecting.

The last article to which I wish to call your attention (fig. 4) is at first sight a very insignificant-looking object. It was found in a ploughed field on the farm of Quoybanks, St Ola, and has been in my possession for six or seven years, and I was always unable to ascertain what it could be. In a note from Dr Anderson, he informs me that it is a "haarnaal" or hair-pin, and that three similar examples are figured in Vedel's *Bornholms Oldtidsminder og Oldsager*, as having been found in graves of the late Iron Age. I believe this is the first hair-pin of the kind that has been found in Scotland; and although I have been informed that there are some ancient underground structures in the field where it was found, I have been unable to discover their whereabouts.

I now proceed to notice a very interesting and peculiar discovery of a deposit of objects also belonging to the late Iron Age. On the farm of Moan, Harray, occupied by George Flett, there is a small hillock called the Knowe of Moan. There are two other farms in this parish known by the same name. This one is close by the public road which runs through the parish, a little distance north from the parish church. During July of 1886, in the course of ploughing this mound, the plough removed the covering stone from a cist about the centre of the top of

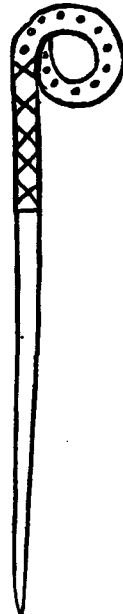


Fig. 4. Bronze Hair-pin (5 inches in length).

the mound. The cist appeared to be half-full of fine earth, and seemed to have been about 18 inches square originally, although the sides and ends seemed to have parted company with each other and the infiltrated earth, leaving a space of about three inches all round. Mr Flett describes the earth as moss-like (*i.e.*, fine black); and looking among it found some beads, which, exciting the curiosity of himself and the children about the place, led to a search, with the result that the find detailed below was made and preserved. Mr Flett reports that five or six feet north-east from the cist above mentioned there was a hollow space uncovered not set about inside with stones, but did not observe any relics or marks of interment. He says that the beads were found both inside and outside of the cist, and is unable exactly to localise any of the individual relics, but thinks the bronze articles were both outside

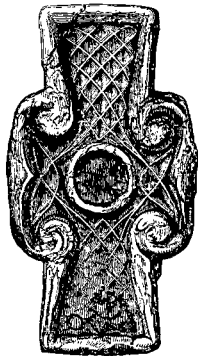


Fig. 5. Brooch of Bronze  
(actual size).

of the cist. The children found most of the beads on repeated searches in a short time. The articles were all taken to Moan and kept in a pasteboard box there till January last, when my friend, Mr A. Peter Macdonald, who was on a visit there, heard of them, was shown them, and, interesting himself in their preservation, so that a record of the find should be made for archæological purposes, was given them by Mr Flett, who consented to his presenting them to me for my collection of county antiquities.

The find, as delivered to me by Mr Macdonald on the 10th of January 1887, consists of:—

(1) A small brooch of bronze (fig. 5), in the shape of a cross patecé, the marginal outlines of which are formed of Celtic spirals, the interior filled with a carefully chased pattern of interlaced work, and the centre studded with a circular setting of amber or glass. The whole field within the raised borders of the cross has been overlaid with gold, which still remains on the sides of the hollows formed by the interlaced work. At the back of the brooch

the attachment for the hinge of the pin, and the catch for its point, are still visible. The form is unique and the workmanship exquisite.

(2) A quantity of beads of amber and glass, comprising 8 amber beads, varying from  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch in diameter to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch diameter, somewhat wasted by decomposition; 34 small single beads of blue glass; 3 larger single beads of blue glass, of different sizes; 2 double beads of blue glass; 1 triple bead of the same, and another broken lengthwise; 2 quadruple beads of the same glass; 1 quintuple bead of the same; 1 large bead of blue glass, with a prominent ring in the middle; 1 bead of dull amber-coloured glass; 2 small beads of yellow porcellanic glass; 2 small beads of light green glass; 1 small bead of whitish glass; 1 flat oval bead of clear green glass; 1 large and highly ornamented bead of blue glass, with ribs of fine white and blue spirals and yellow spots; 1 kernel; 1 bead of blue glass, white lined; 1 double bead of blue glass, white lined; the bowl and handle of a bronze spoon; 3 small fragments of bronze; 1 small piece of slag, and 1 of white pebble; and a fragment of flint, which may have been a strike-a-light.

On visiting the mound, 29th July last, I found it in oats, and on searching among them I found four fragments of a clay vessel, two of them showing a projection running around the vessel; also a piece of very oxidised metal, semicircular in shape, like half of a flat ring. From the mound the steeple of the parish church is S.S.E. about 180 yards. The House of Moan is N.E. by N. about 250 yards. The House of Cuppin is E. about 40 yards.

Looking N.E. from the mound, you see lying at the foot of the slope the Loch of Bosquoy, on the south-east side of which stood the broch of Burrian, excavated by Mr Farrer about twenty years ago. Between that and the broch of Bosquoy there is what looks like a glacial moraine, on the top of which I saw a cist, the cover of which was removed some time ago. The broch of Bosquoy is only about

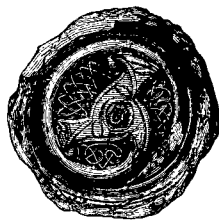


Fig. 6. Terminal Portion of Celtic Brooch found at Stromness.

150 yards from this, while another moraine in the other side of the road is known by the name of Uvigar.

I also send for comparison with the cross-shaped brooch the circular terminal portion of a Celtic brooch of penannular form (fig. 6), found at Stromness some time ago. It contains an interlaced pattern of zoomorphic character overlaid with gold.