

II.

NOTICES (I.) OF THE DISCOVERY OF A CIST AND BRONZE BLADE AT LETHAM QUARRY, PERTH; (II.) OF THE STANDING STONES AT HIGH AUCHENLARIE, ANWOTH, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE. BY FRED. R. COLES, CORR. MEM. SOC. ANTIQ. SCOT.

Information of the discovery of a cist and a bronze blade, at a quarry near Perth, on the 5th February, having come to Dr Anderson through the Exchequer Office, I was deputed to investigate it. On the morning of Tuesday the 8th we were arranging for this to be undertaken on the following day, when a telegram from Perth arrived stating that, as the contractor could not possibly leave the cist intact for even half a day longer, the examination must be made at once. I therefore started at 1.20, and soon after 3, immediately on my arrival, I placed myself in the hands of Mr Melville Jameson, the Procurator-Fiscal, and we drove to the spot, on the brow of Newhouse, or Letham Quarry, which is situated on a rising ground over 200 feet above sea-level, in Tibbermuir parish, about $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles distant from Perth. At the north end of the quarry, we noticed, in passing, a very distinctly artificial mound, suggestive of a long oval cairn. This I do not find marked on the O. map. The quarry at Letham, which is about 200 yards south of the mound, is of pale red sandstone; but the stones of the cist are not of the same rock, but of the redder and harder sandstone worked at Cherrybanks, $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the south-east.

(a) *Structure of the Cist.*—The first part seen, as we stood on the edge of the quarry, was the upper surface of the cover-stone (fig. 1). It lay about 20 inches below the surface, and measured 6.4 inches by 5.9 inches, the longer axis facing N.W. and S.E. Its thickness varied from 13 inches to about 10. In the angle nearest the north there were eleven cup-marks, arranged as shown in the drawing: their exact positions, however, were not ascertained with the accuracy I should have liked. The front stone (shown as C in dotted lines) was not *in situ* when my examination was made, the proprietor having caused its removal to the quarry-top, where I saw it. It measured 2 feet 10

inches by 2 feet 6 inches by 7 inches. The two side stones, A and B, each measure 4 feet 11 inches by 3 feet 1 inch, the space thus built in

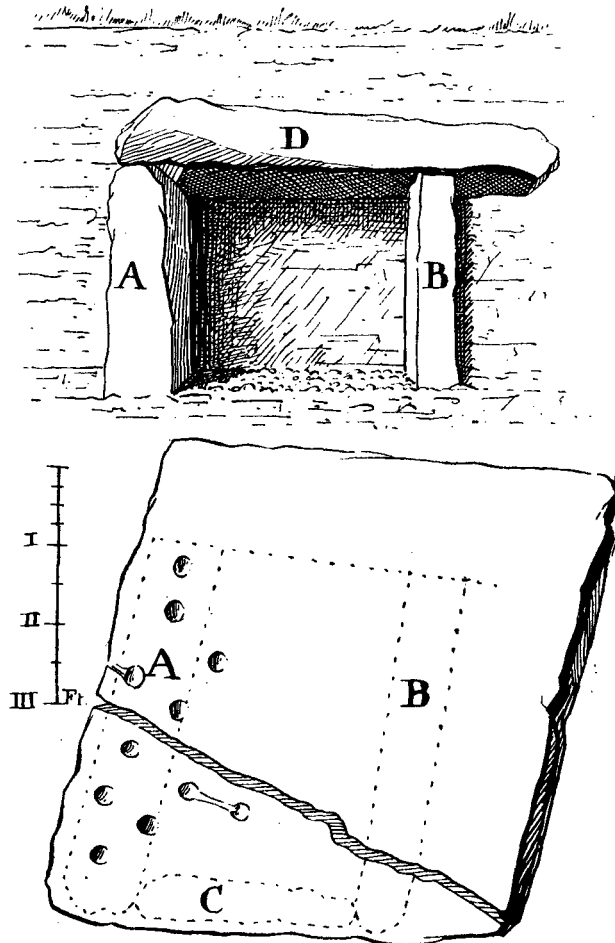


Fig. 1. Section of Cist at Letham, near Perth, and upper surface of cover-stone, showing cup-marks.

narrowing from 2 feet 10 inches at the outer edge to 2 feet 5 inches at

the inner, where these stones, and the cover-stone also, touch the rock. All these upright stones were plastered together with red clay, the front stone (C) being particularly well fitted in. The floor of the cist consisted of a thickish layer of sand, gravel, and pebbles¹ of about the size of a hen's egg, laid upon the natural bed of rotten sandstone. There were no other cup-marks than the group above mentioned.

(b) *Contents of the Cist.*—The navy who first saw the cist and removed the front stone says there was such a quantity of bones—unburnt—as to suggest the remains of two bodies. But of all this mass there was no fragment larger than a florin. On the instant of exposing the burial, however, it had been possible to observe that the head lay at the inner, that is, the S.E. end of the cist. This utter decay of the bones, the whole of which, we were informed, had been removed by the Antiquarian Society of Perth, is partly to be accounted for by the extreme dampness of the site, which is proved by the very moist condition of the clay used in its construction. During the very brief time at my disposal, though diligent search was made, not a vestige of any implement of bone, of metal, or any other material, nor of any pottery, was discoverable. It remains, therefore, now only to describe what, after all, is the really valuable fact in connection with this cist, that is, the presence within it of a small, thin bronze blade, of a somewhat rare type, the form of which is shown in fig. 2. It has been considerably damaged, and measures $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches in length, near the butt it is $1\frac{7}{16}$ inches wide, tapering to about $\frac{7}{8}$ inch at the broken point, and when complete probably measured nearly 4 inches in length. It is oblong-oval in contour, very thin, and the handle has been attached to it by three small rivets, one on each side of the central one, which is the lowest. The striated marks of the handle, probably of wood, are just faintly discernible below a horizontal line. The rivets, one of which is preserved, are square-cut, and their heads



Fig. 2. Bronze Blade from cist at Letham.

¹ Cists of almost exactly the same dimensions, and with pebble-strewn floors, are described by Dr Anderson in *Scotland in Pagan Times*, p. 10.

swell out of their main thickness, without being sharply and abruptly defined. Oval, short blades of this type, unornamented, destitute of a mid-rib, and fastened by three rivets, are accepted as being the most ancient form of bronze blades known in Britain.¹

They are decidedly rare: one found at Butterwick, E.R. of Yorkshire,² is extremely like our Letham specimen; and, out of several described by Evans, only one other corresponds in size and character to these. It was found at Rudstone, Yorkshire. Both the English specimens, however, belonged to barrows. In the forty-third volume of *Archæologia*, fig. 3, on plate xxxiii., shows a blade, also from a barrow at Lett Low, Derbyshire, very similar in form, but much larger, between 5 and 6 inches long; and on the opposite page Dr Thurnam says: "There are two strongly contrasted varieties of riveted dagger-knives, which belong to two distinct methods of manufacture. The rarer flat and thin blades seem to have been simply cut out of hammered metal, whilst the more common, but more beautiful, leaf-shaped blades must have been cast in carefully prepared moulds." But the means by which the original piece of bronze was cut is not suggested. Is not the real distinction, rather, between the leaf-shaped blades which were cast and so left untouched, and these plainer and broader, thinner blades which were subsequently hammered down into their flat form and fine edges? Among our own specimens in the Museum, that which comes nearest to the Letham blade in size and character is a portion of one, originally about 5 inches long, found in Carlochán Cairn, Chapelerne, Crossmichael, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright; presented in 1782 by Mr Alex. Copland of Collieston. But even this blade differs in having just above the central rivet one of those deep lunations in the handle-plate,—a feature which characterises most of the English and Scottish specimens. Of the general class of bronze blades, whether tanged or riveted, found in association with interments, the Museum possesses eleven specimens. In his description of the contents of Cairn Greg, at Linlathen, Forfarshire, however, Dr Anderson figures a little blade, which in all particulars bears an extremely close resemblance to the specimen from Letham,

¹ See Evans' *Ancient Br. Impl.*, p. 222.

² Figured *ibid.*, p. 223.

and it is there noted that the probability is that the interment it accompanied was that of an unburnt body.¹

Summing up all the facts, we see that this specimen of the Early Bronze Age blade from Letham, in its association with an unburnt burial in a solitary cist, and unaccompanied by any other relic, presents features of special interest,—an interest which is strengthened when we have discovered by comparison that its own specific points warrant us in placing it among the rarest of its type, and that its association with such an interment as this confirms the conclusions of Dr Anderson and others as to the occurrence of the type in Great Britain alone. See *Proceedings*, vol. xii. p. 457.

STANDING STONES OF HIGH AUCHENLARIE.

My object in writing this brief paper is twofold. I wish, first, to refer to errors in the representation given in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* of one of these stones; and next, as I was, a year or two ago, unwittingly the medium through which these errors were perpetuated, to make what amends I can, by placing on record a faithful drawing of the stones.²

These two rather remarkable stones are figured in plate cxxii. in the first volume of the great work on the *Sculptured Stones*; and there they are shown as if in their original position, the taller one to the left. The text describing them runs as follows:—"The rudely sculptured stones at High Auchenlary are situated on the elevated part of a field about 500 yards west of a point where there is still seen a few upright stones, apparently the remains of a 'Druidical circle.' The standing stones, which are placed quite close together, and have an acute inclination to the north, having evidently sunk into the ground on that side, are surrounded by a cairn of boulder stones. In the adjoining field, about 200 yards to the west, the stone represented at the top of plate cxxiii. was found." The last stone here referred to is the well-known

¹ *Scot. in Pag. Times*, p. 12.

² A copy of the lithograph in *Stuart* will be found among the illustrations to my paper on *The Standing Stones of the Stewartry*, contributed to the *Dumfries and Galloway Transactions* for 1894-95.

and elaborately cup- and ring-marked (supposed) cist-cover, afterwards figured and described by Simpson.¹

About thirty-three years ago all these three stones were removed to the garden at Cardoness, where, nearly overgrown with ivy, and under the fancied shelter of heavy-dripping yews, they now stand. It is needless, therefore, to make any inquiry into the truth of the statement that the two standing stones "were surrounded by a cairn of boulder stones"; but I may just remark, in passing, that a cross-sculptured stone of primitive type was said to have been found among the stones of a cairn at the Holm of Daltallochan, in Carsphairn, and that it is one of a couple of stones so found.²

On the Ordnance map (six-inch scale) the two standing stones are shown,—that on the east being exactly 1000 feet west of the central stone in the irregular group described by Stuart as a 'Druidical circle,' and between the two stones is a space of about 35 feet. There is no indication whatever of a cairn, or of the rim stones of a cairn, at this spot. Having, last April, the opportunity of seeing these stones in the garden at Cardoness, I made a carefully measured drawing (here reproduced as fig. 3) of the two tall upright ones, the slab with the cup- and ring-marks being worn down to such a degree that I doubt if any useful drawing of it could now be made. When this drawing is placed beside the print in *Stuart*, it becomes plain, first, that the outer thick line on the left of the taller stone in the plate, so long a puzzle to those who have studied the design, should not have been engraved as a line of the sculpturing, but is really only the edge of the stone itself; next, that the base of this line does not run horizontally across the stone; and thirdly, that at the apex of the stone the two perpendicular lines are not continued right up, but end in two cups out of a group of four, a repetition of the central group. The shorter stone presents two points of difference. Its base-line of sculpture does not run to the edge of the stone on one side (as shown in the plate), but stops about two inches beyond its contact with the upright lines.

Both figures, moreover, are shown narrower and neater than they really

¹ See plate xiii. fig. 3 in the appendix to volume vi. of the *Proceedings*.

² One of these is irrevocably lost; the other is at Garryhorn.

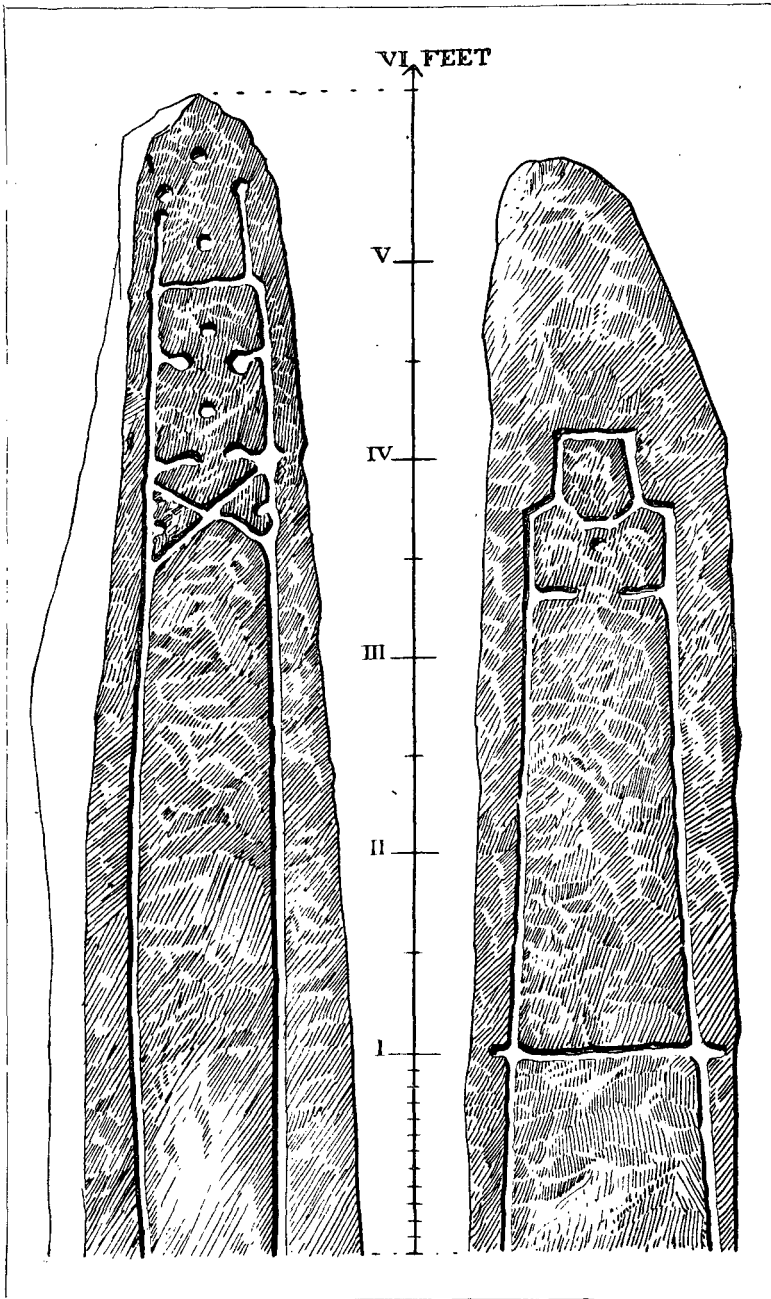


Fig. 3. Standing Stones of High Auchenlarie.

are, and I can see no cup below the arms of the cross. In short, the incised designs on the originals display a quaint feeling of the archaic, which, I submit, is quite lost in the plate.