

## IV.

NOTE ON SPADE-LIKE IMPLEMENTS OF STONE. BY SIR ARTHUR MITCHELL, K.C.B., M.D., LL.D., FOREIGN SECRETARY.

The first of these implements was sent to the Duke of Argyll from Tiree, and it has been forwarded by his Grace to the Society to be exhibited, described, and figured in their *Proceedings*.

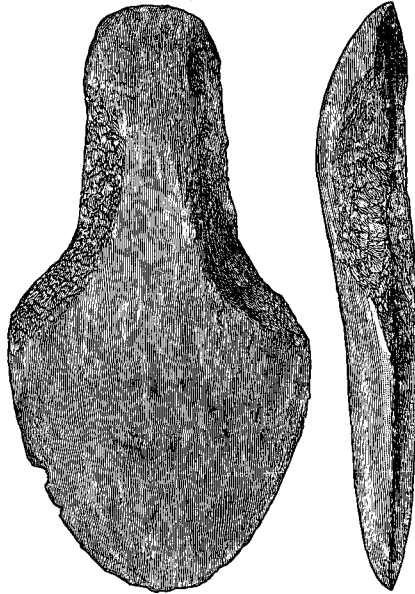


Fig. 1. Spade-like Implement of Stone from Tiree. ( $\frac{3}{4}$ .)

It is a flake from a large ice- and water-polished boulder, which has been worked into its present form. One side of it is thus smooth and one end sharp, without having been made so by the hand of man. The

woodcut (fig. 1), to a scale of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the full size, shows one face and a side view of the implement. Its weight is  $34\frac{1}{2}$  ounces, its length 10 inches, and its greatest width 5 inches. Its greatest thickness is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

There are no grounds for attributing any great age to this worked stone, and it does not show signs of having been much used. It may have been made for some temporary purpose at a time when there was

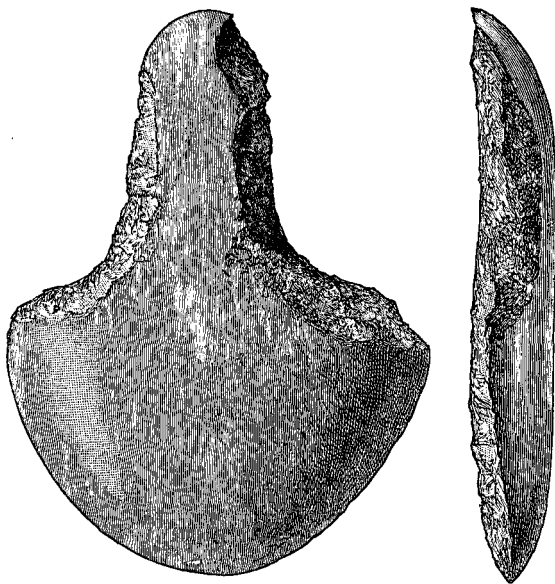


Fig. 2. Spade-like Implement of Stone from Tiree. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ).

a dearth of iron in the island, and it has been suggested that it may have taken the place of the iron shoe of a caschrom. It is not necessary to speak more definitely. Whatever its use was, it may be accepted as an example of the manufacture of a stone implement in the very late iron age, and the same may be accepted as true of the other implements I have to describe.

Since this implement was sent for exhibition to the Society, another implement, also from Tiree, of exactly the same character, has been brought under notice by Mr M. Mackenzie Charleson, F.S.A. Scot., who has been good enough to allow me to describe and figure it. The two implements may be correctly said to differ only in size—Mr Charleson's specimen being the larger. Its weight is 59 ounces, its length  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and its greatest width 7 inches. It is a flake of an ice- and water-polished boulder, dressed into the same shape as that shown in fig. 1. The woodcut (fig. 2) shows one face, and a side view of the implement. A comparison of fig. 1 with fig. 2 discloses what may be properly called identity of pattern, indicating that they belong to a class of objects at one time made in Tiree.

The third of the spade-like stone implements was found by Mr Hall near the farm-house of Blairach, in the parish of Rogart, Sutherlandshire. It was turned up during some trenching operations. I happened to see it at Blairach in 1865, and then made a sketch and note about it in my journal. This was brought to mind when I saw the Tiree implement, and I wrote to the Rev. Dr Joass of Golspie asking him to endeavour to find it and get it sent to the Society for exhibition and description. In answer he told me that it had been given by Mr Hall to the Duke of Sutherland, and that it was in the museum at Dunrobin. Along with his letter the stone itself arrived, and is now here to be exhibited and described.

It is very different from the Tiree implement, resembling it only in being spade-like. Perhaps, indeed, it is even more spade-like. It is a much larger implement, having a weight of 85 ounces, and being 10 inches from top to bottom and 10 inches across at its widest. Its greatest thickness is  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inches. The woodcut (fig. 2), drawn to a scale of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the full size, shows one of its faces, and along with the cut are given two sections, one longitudinal and the other transverse. The form of the implement is thus fully disclosed. The dotted line in the woodcut shows a portion which has been broken off since I saw it in 1865.

The thick ridge running down one side would interfere with its being employed easily as a spade, even in a material as soft as peat, and it

seems to me that it would be liable to be broken if it were used in a way to cause much strain across the middle of the implement. In short, it does not appear to be so serviceable a tool as the implements from Tiree. Then the edges are blunter than we should expect to find

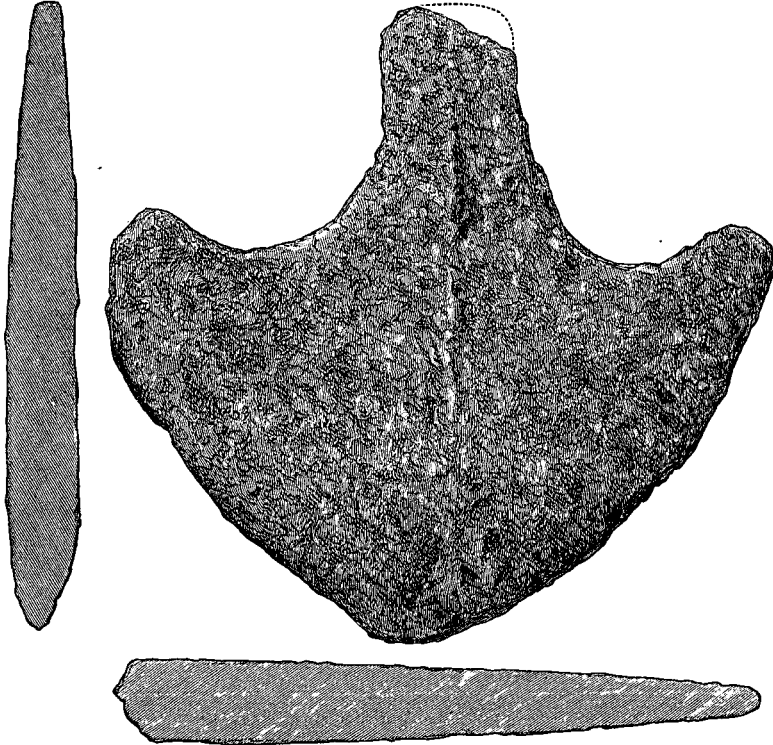


Fig. 3. Spade-like Implement of Stone from Rogart, Sutherlandshire. (3.)

them in an implement to be used in the way in which a spade is used. Altogether it is in this respect more puzzling than the Tiree implement; but I am less concerned at present about its use than I am about putting on record a clear description of it, as this may some day lead to a definite knowledge of its use.

The fourth spade-like implement which I have to describe comes from Shetland. I found it there about thirty years ago, and presented it to the Museum. It is a flake or thin slab of sandstone, dressed into shape

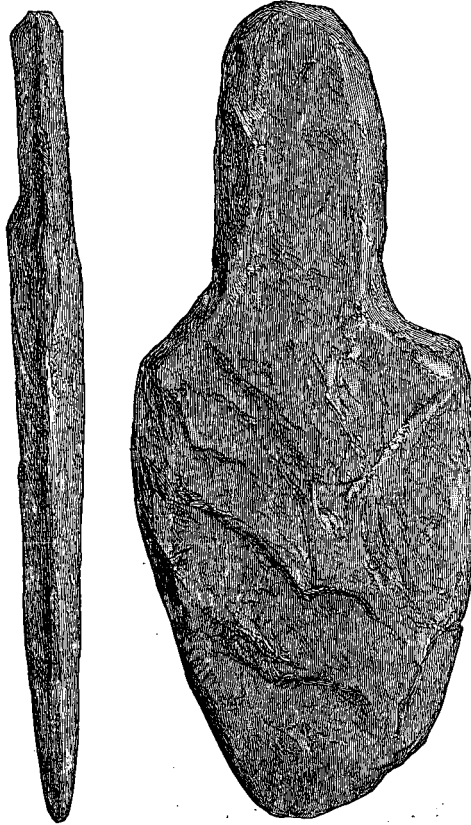


Fig. 4. Spade-like Implement of Stone from Shetland.

by man. It weighs 42 ounces, and it is  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches long and 5 inches across at its greatest width. Its greatest thickness is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch.

The woodcut (fig. 4) is to a scale of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the full size, and it is accompanied by a side view.

It is weaker than the Tiree or Blairach implements; and, though spade-like in shape, it could scarcely have been used as a spade; unless in very loose, light soil. It belongs to a class of rude stone implements, of which there are some hundreds of specimens in the Museum, and which were entirely unknown to Antiquaries thirty-five years ago. They were first found in Shetland—generally in large numbers, close together; but they have since been found in abundance in Orkney, and less plentifully in some other places.

Not even a guess as to their use, that seems feasible, has been made up to this time. But an implement from Uyea in Shetland has now been described which is made of the same stone, and is dressed in a more or less similar way, the use of which is believed to be known. There is no reason to think that the great majority of the rude implements just referred to have any great age. It is proper to point out, however, that some of them have been found in circumstances which might be held to indicate that they have a considerable age—at least, that they could scarcely be spoken of as recent. For instance, this seems true of those from the excavation of the mound in the island of Bressay; and it is of interest to note that most, if not all, of these apparently old specimens are handled, but are more hammer-like than spade-like.

In addition to the specimen I have described, some other specimens of a more or less spade-like shape exist among the rude stone implements from Shetland and Orkney. These pass by degrees into flat ovoid implements, with nothing that we could call spade-like in their form.