

IV.

NOTES ON A CRANNOG AT HYNDFORD, NEAR LANARK, RECENTLY
DISCOVERED AND EXCAVATED BY ANDREW SMITH, Esq., F.S.A.
SCOT. BY ROBERT MUNRO, M.D., SECRETARY.

My last communication to this Society on Scottish Lake-dwellings was in March 1893, the chief discovery then recorded being the crannog of Lochan Dughail, Argyllshire. Although, since then, no discoveries of the kind in Scotland have come under the notice of the Society, yet lake-dwelling researches have made considerable progress elsewhere within the United Kingdom. The most remarkable of these later discoveries, and, indeed, the most important lacustrine investigation hitherto carried out within the British Isles, is the lake-village of Glastonbury, Somersetshire. This station, though of the crannog type, differs from all those previously investigated in this country in being actually a village, containing the ruins of some 70 huts, and covering an area of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres. Another point in which it differs from the ordinary crannogs is that it can be assigned to a definite chronological horizon, viz., the "Late Celtic" period, and so can be dated almost with certainty to the two centuries immediately preceding the Christian era. Being pre-Roman, but without any well-attested Roman remains, it is thus among the oldest-dated habitations of the kind in Britain. Hence, when the excavations are completed, the vast assortment of objects recovered from its *débris* will form an invaluable chronological standard of comparison for contemporary relics, especially late Celtic remains, throughout the British Isles.

Although the Hyndford crannog, now to be described, cannot compete with the Glastonbury lake-village either in size or antiquity—the former being a single dwelling and post-Roman—yet it presents some special

features which give it an exceptional importance among the Scottish crannogs previously explored, as will be seen in the sequel. Its ruins are situated on the margin of a pond occupying the bottom of a small hollow in a cultivated field close to the farm-house of Hyndford. It may be observed that the elevated plateau, which stretches along the east bank of the river Clyde, in the vicinity of the Bonnington Falls, consists of a series of sandy deposits interspersed with circular basin-like hollows without any visible means of drainage—this being supposed to be effected through the porous soil. But, however this may be, the little basin at Hyndford has no water-channel leading from it. Hence the pond in its middle, although never dry, is subject to considerable fluctuations in the level of its water according to the state of the weather. The circumstances which led to the discovery that a low mound at one end of this pond was a crannog, are well worth recording, as they show on what slender incidents important antiquarian discoveries often depend. The following letter, dated 29th August 1898, and addressed to myself, explains the successive steps and reasons which induced Mr Smith to undertake the excavation of this crannog.

“DEAR SIR,—A gentleman here, Mr Watson of Wheatpark, having about three years ago acquired the lands of Hyndford, in the parish of Lanark, and two miles east of the town, proposed to have what is described on the Ordnance Survey as a ‘mote’ opened, and I was taken to see it. It bore such a remarkable resemblance to your illustrations of crannogs in your book on ‘Lake-Dwellings’ that I at once remarked it was a crannog, and sent him your book to satisfy himself on the subject. I asked to be informed when excavations were resolved on, so as to acquaint archaeologists of the fact—but I heard no more of the project, and nothing was done. Quite recently, while on a drive with Mr Robert Dunlop, Whiterigg, Airdrie—mentioned in your book on p. 230 in connection with the crannog at Buston—talking, *inter alia*, of Lake dwellings, I remarked that I knew of one example which the landlord spoke of excavating. Mr Dunlop volunteered to visit the locality, and so we went to Hyndford on Saturday. We made two cuts into the mound and found near its centre charred wood, burnt bones, and other evidence of fire. Near the margin, on one side, which we approached to see if there were any traces of a built foundation of a house, we came on a large deposit of broken bones, some fragments of horns, a lot of teeth, the half of a bead of a blue opaque substance, and

what appeared to be a chip of soft pottery of a dark red colour. We met with no timbers, but our diggings did not reach down to the present level of the water. I think this must have been a lake-dwelling, as the water still surrounds it in wet weather.

"Mr Dunlop suggested that I might communicate with you, as he felt sure that, if you had nothing else on hand, you would take a run out to see it and tell us if it was worth while to pursue the investigations. He would also be glad to avail himself of the opportunity of meeting you again. Neither of us can identify the bones, with the exception of a portion of the horn of some kind of deer, measuring $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches round at the base ; but perhaps you can tell me who would examine and report on the character of the animal remains.

(Signed) "ANDREW SMITH."

This letter had such a sound archæological ring about it that I at once accepted the invitation, and a visit to the crannog was arranged for a few days afterwards. I was accompanied to the locality by Mr Smith and his sister, Mrs Gibson, and later on Mr Robert Dunlop and a few other friends joined us. I need scarcely say that it is to Mr Smith and Mrs Gibson, who have all along followed the operations with the keenness and intelligence of experts, I am indebted for the following details. But although I was kept well informed of the progress of the excavations and the discovery of relics, I made occasional visits to the scene of operations, and thus became practically conversant with the structural features and other details of the habitation. I am indebted to Mr James Kerr, Architect, Lanark, for the accompanying plan of the crannog (fig. 1).

On inspecting the site and the tentative diggings already made, I found everything precisely as described in Mr Smith's letter, so that the only preliminary question we had to decide was as to the best plan of conducting the proposed excavation. It appears that some 20 years ago the site of the crannog was a small wooded island, but immediately prior to the excavations the stumps of the trees only remained ; otherwise the surface was covered with a coating of rich meadow grass. Its form was nearly circular, measuring between 70 and 80 feet in diameter, and slightly raised towards the centre, so that it may be described as a low mound. This mound projected into the pond and was nearly

surrounded with water, so that access to it could only be got on its north-east side, where the *débris* just touched, and appeared to be continuous with, the cultivated land. The pond close to the edge of the mound is several feet deep, and has the appearance of having been

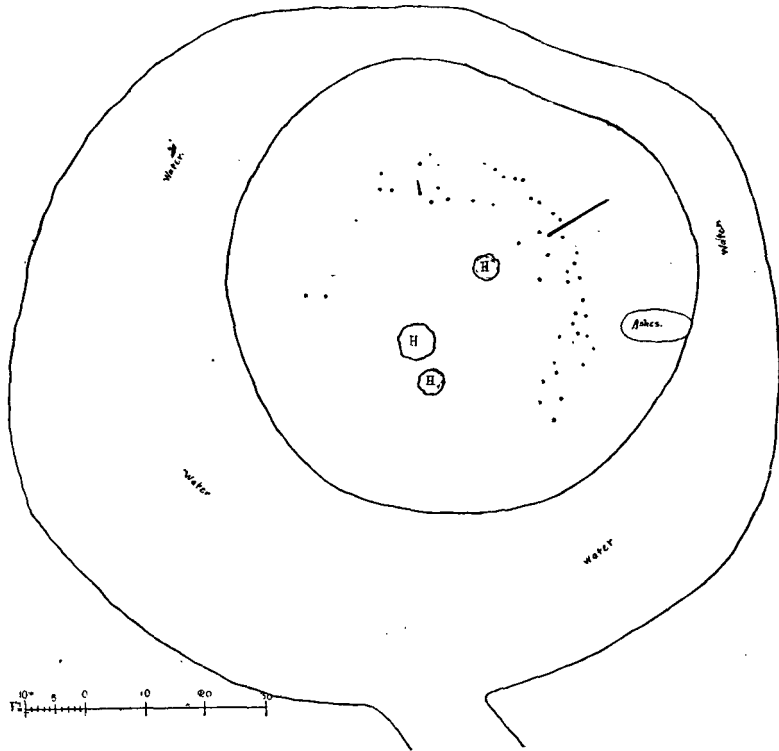


Fig. 1. Ground-plan of the Crannog at Hyndford.

artificially deepened at some former period, as it presents a crescent shape like that of a new moon embracing the old. It was probably this feature which led the Ordnance Surveyors to call it a "mote." The greatest breadth of this crescent-shaped water boundary was 43 feet,

but at both ends it was only about 9 feet. From near the middle of its convex side the pond extends like an artificial canal for 45 yards in the direction of the farm-house, where it assumes an expanded form. Here there is a pump-well for supplying the farm with water. The surface of the pond is 660 feet above sea-level.

At a very early stage in the day's proceedings a portion of a large Roman jar was turned up from only a few inches below the surface, and in proximity to it the workmen came upon the stump of an oak pile. This pile had been sharpened at the base, but it did not penetrate deeply, so that it became at once apparent that it was in connection with some kind of wooden superstructure and not with the substructures of the mound. Three other similar piles were soon exposed, and from their position we rightly inferred that they formed part of a circle about 10 or 12 feet inside the margin of the mound. After some further explorative digging we ascertained that the *débris* reposing on the original habitable floor did not exceed $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 feet. So we came to the conclusion that the most satisfactory results would be obtained by clearing away the entire mass down to this level, leaving, of course, all woodwork and anything having a structural appearance *in situ* for future examination and to be inserted correctly on the plan. Mr Smith selected intelligent workmen, who, being themselves greatly interested in the discovery, kept a careful look-out for relics, and scanned every spadeful of the stuff before it was wheeled away to the adjacent field. During the autumn of 1898 the whole of the central area of the mound a little beyond the circle of piles was cleared away. An outer rim some 10 to 15 feet broad still remained to be excavated, when the place became flooded and stopped all further operations. Within the area thus cleared the following are the chief points which now fall to be described: (1) the circle of piles; (2) the fireplaces or hearths; (3) the clay flooring and its understructures; and (4) the relics. These points will now be described *seriatim*.

(1) *The Circle of Piles*.—From the very beginning of the excavations it became apparent that the circle of piles, which became gradually

exposed, were not analogous to the stockades which are usually found as a component part of the structure of the artificial islands, and whose main object was to bind their materials together. The stakes at Hyndford penetrated firmly into the substance beneath the clay flooring, but their primary function was to form the surrounding walls of a timber house. The tops of the portions still remaining did not show above the surface of the mound, and it was evident that the larger or upper portions, which were originally above ground, had completely decayed from exposure to the weather. From a glance at the plan it will be seen that they were disposed, not as a single row, but in groups of twos and threes placed more or less close to each other, as if several circles had been combined into one. The internal space actually clear of the piles measured about 34 feet in diameter, but the outside diameter varied from 45 to 49 feet. On the south-east side ashes, charcoal, and burnt fragments of bones were so thickly amassed that the *débris* here was regarded as the kitchen midden, and what is somewhat curious, it lay both inside, outside, and between the piles.

(2) *The Fireplaces.*—Within the area circumscribed by the piles, and situated at irregular distances, were several fireplaces, at least three in number, each rising about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the clay flooring. These hearths consisted of rude circular pavements of flat stone slabs surrounded by ashes, and measuring a couple of feet or so in diameter. One of them, which had been left standing, contained two other intermediate hearths similarly constructed and super-imposed one above the other. We may therefore safely conclude that these successive hearths had been resorted to in consequence of some general but gradual subsidence of the flooring, the cause of which will be immediately referred to. The position of the hearths is shown by the letter H on the plan (fig. 1).

(3) *The Clay Flooring, etc.*—The ordinary *débris* cleared away was composed of mixed materials interspersed with a large number of stones, most of them small, and amongst the few larger ones there were none which could not be readily transported by one man. None of them showed any signs of workmanship. In the vicinity of the fireplaces thick

patches of coloured ashes, charcoal, and clay were to be seen. Beneath this heterogeneous mass was the original habitable floor, which, being composed of fine clay overlying a stratum of decayed brushwood, could be readily distinguished. This brushwood was found all over wherever a hole was dug to the depth of a foot or so. It appeared to me from the uniformity in the size of the fragments that this brushwood had been selected, and nothing suggestive of beams was observed. What may be found at the margin of the mound we cannot say until this portion is explored. The lowest fragments of the brushwood blended with the original silt or pure lake-sediment. It would thus appear that the internal flooring of the establishment was first of all a bed of faggots, over which the clay flooring and hearths had been placed. In the course of time, owing to the decay of the underlying brushwood and the weight of the accumulated *débris*, it would appear that the floor kept gradually sinking, to counteract which, and to prevent flooding, the floor and hearths were proportionally raised. That subsidence had taken place was practically demonstrated from what I witnessed on the occasion of my last visit to the crannog. After heavy rain the water had risen so high that not only was the site of the crannog inaccessible (as shown on the plan, fig. 1), but the original floor all around the hearths was covered with water to a depth of several inches.

(4) *Relics, etc.*—One of the special features of the Hyndford crannog is the comparatively large number of Roman remains it has yielded; among which may be mentioned fragments of at least six different kinds of vessels of the red "Samian" ware, and of four dishes of the usual white earthenware, including two handles of large jars. There are also numerous fragments of glass, armlets, beads, etc., as well as iron implements, precisely similar to the objects usually found on Roman stations in the South of Scotland. On these grounds I think we are justified in dating the occupancy of this crannog to the early Romano-British period, possibly to the time when the Romans were in occupation of the surrounding country. The following is a detailed list of the relics.

Stone.—A small axe-head (fig. 2), 3 inches long, 2 inches broad at the

cutting edge, and 1 inch at the other. A fragment of another axe showing a clean fracture. A circular disc (fig. 3), beautifully polished on both surfaces, measuring 3 inches in diameter, and rather more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness. Another object of the same class, but rectangular in

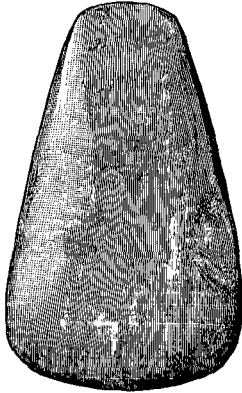


Fig. 2. Stone Axe. (3.)



Fig. 3. Stone Disc. (3.)

shape, measures 3 by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and rather less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness. Three or four small whetstones—one, rectangular in shape (fig. 4), is 3 inches long, 1 inch broad and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. A polished stone of the

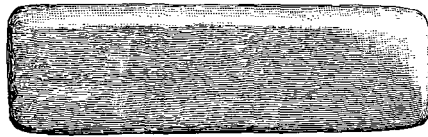
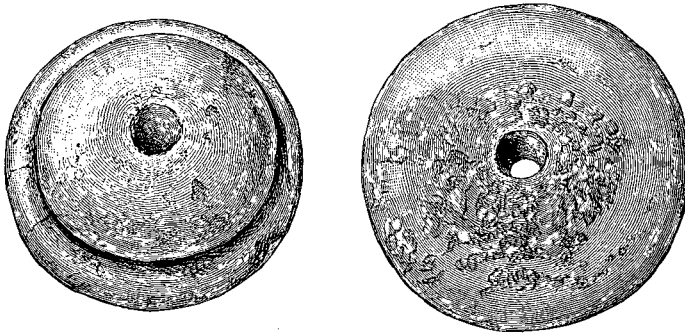


Fig. 4. Whetstone. (3.)

form of an ordinary stone celt, but rounded at the cutting edge, is 7 inches long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad at one end, and bluntly pointed at the other. One flat whorl of sandstone $1\frac{7}{8}$ inch in diameter, and two of a light yellowish shale—one showing a groove round its margin as if two discs had been

united (figs. 5, 6). A small mortar about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter showing traces of metal said to be gold (fig. 7). A portion of a broken cup made of steatite, with a perforated handle, indicating a diameter (internal) of 3



Figs. 5, 6. Whorls of Shale. (†.)

inches and a thickness of nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (fig. 8). Fragment of a mould strongly resembling a complete specimen found in Ayrshire (fig. 9) (see *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. i. p. 45). Portions of three querns,

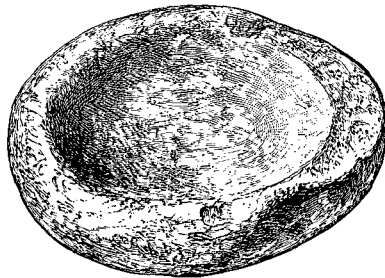


Fig. 7. Small Stone Mortar. (‡.)

and several mortars and pestles. A large number of hammer-stones of water-worn pebbles; also portions of sandstone and shale with perforations or otherwise worked.

Bronze.—Three spiral finger-rings (fig. 10), with 3 and 4 coils: two rings, $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter; a portion of a slender rod (rectangular on section),

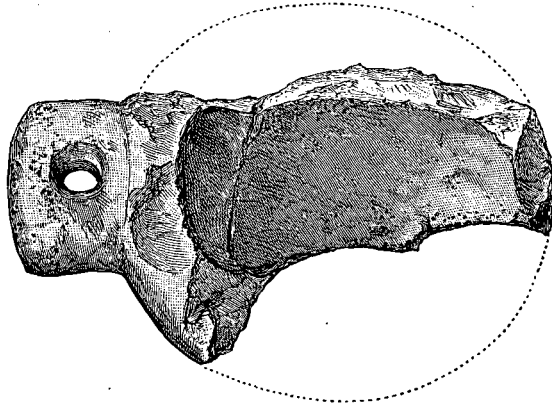


Fig. 8. Portion of a Steatite Cup. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

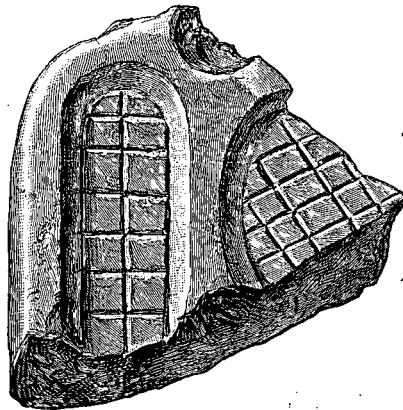


Fig. 9. Portion of a Stone Mould. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

9 inches long; and some indeterminate fragments, apparently of some kind of tubing.

Iron.—A number of greatly corroded implements like axes, hammers, and picks, similar to those recently found at Birrenswark (*Ibid.*, vol. xxxiii. figs. 6 and 7, p. 248). A flat circular band, 1 to 1½ inch broad, and 6 inches in diameter, like the collar of a dog. Also some portions of



Fig. 10. Bronze Finger-ring. (†.)

iron objects of an indeterminate character, and several masses of iron slag.

Lead.—A small portion of lead, a spindle-whorl, and a large mass of this metal showing deep cuts and weighing 13 lbs. 9 oz.

Glass.—Three melon-shaped beads of different sizes, and an elongated drop, apparently formed when the glass was in a fused condition.

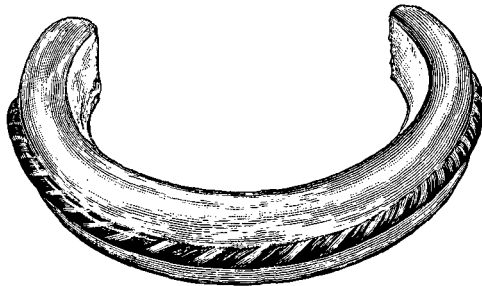


Fig. 11. Bracelet of Green Glass. (†.)

Fragments of ordinary transparent glass such as the Romans used in the manufacture of bottles, etc. Portions of three bracelets. One is of a clear greenish glass with a cable-like ornament, in white and blue strands, surrounding its outer surface (fig. 11). Another (fig. 12) has

spiral bands in yellow enamel on a blue ground. A small portion of a third (fig. 13) showed a mixed pattern in blue and white.

Pottery.—Portions of at least six different vessels of red "Samian



Figs. 12, 13. Portions of Glass Armlets. ($\frac{1}{4}$.)

ware," one (fig. 14) showing artistic designs and figures. Handles and other portions of Roman jars of four different vessels. Fragments of

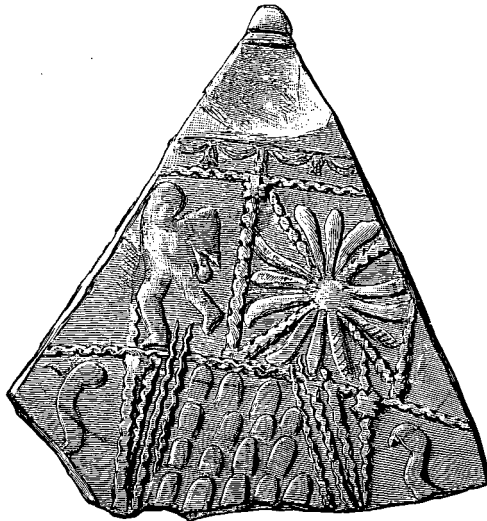


Fig. 14. Portion of Bowl of "Samian ware." ($\frac{1}{4}$.)

a large vessel of glazed pottery, showing a wide mouth and a bulge in the middle. The pottery is very hard and compact, and gives a metallic ring when sharply struck, which reminds me of the pottery found in

the Burgwalle of Germany—a resemblance which is strengthened by an ornamentation in wavy lines like the characteristic *Wellenlinie* of Slavish pottery.

Among miscellaneous objects are a small hemispherical object of red enamel, in form and size like a half shell of a hazel-nut, showing a check-pattern, like the impression of coarse cloth, on its inside; and a number of large bronze beads, supposed to be portions of a beaded torque.

This latter (fig. 15) is the most remarkable relic hitherto found in the crannog. The remains consist of ten beads, strung on an iron

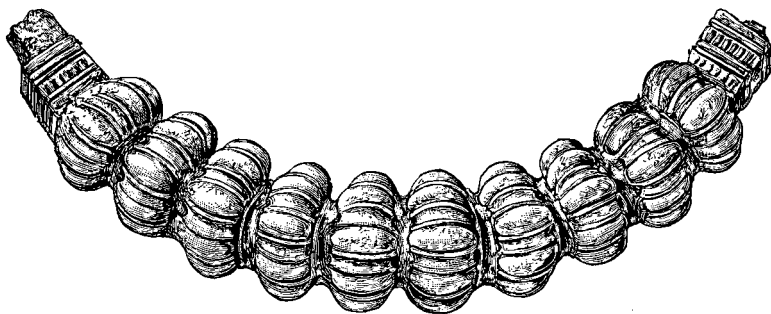


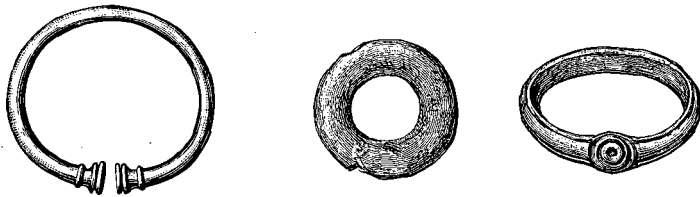
Fig. 15. Portion of a Beaded Torque. (3.)

rectangularly-shaped rod, which passed through a hole in the middle of the beads. Between each bead there is a thin disc, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick, which is now adherent by rust to the adjacent beads. The beads show 6 arch-like projections, with intervening hollows, ornamented by curved lines running in the direction of the circumference of the torque. Their anterior portion is shown on fig. 15, but posteriorly they are flat. Some of the beads are detached, and it is not known if there were any more, although the general opinion is that a few are wanting. However, the two terminal beads with their rectangular endings remain, and these latter show an ornamentation of lines and cross lines. The beads when found were embedded in a mass of iron rust, and it is supposed that the back part of the torque was an iron rod, portions of which still remained.

in a greatly oxidised condition. Calculating from the curve shown by the few still in position the diameter of the torque would be 7 inches.

Another beautiful specimen of the beaded torque, of a similar character to that from Hyndford, was found, enclosed in a bronze bowl, by a labourer while cutting turf in Lochar Moss, Dumfriesshire. It consists of (1) a solid piece highly ornamented, and fourteen ribbed beads, with a smaller bead separating each pair, like the vertebral bones of a fish. "The beads," writes Sir Daniel Wilson, "are disconnected, having apparently been strung upon a metal wire, as was the case in another example found in the neighbourhood of Worcester. A waved ornament chased along the outer edge of the solid piece seems to have been designed in imitation of a cord,—the last tradition, as it were, of the string with which the older necklace of shale or jet was secured. Altogether this example of the class of neck ornaments styled Beaded Torcs, furnishes an exceedingly interesting illustration of the development of initiative design, in contradistinction to the more simple and archaic funicular torc, which, though continued in use down to a late period, pertains to the epoch of primitive art" (*Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 141). For other specimens of this kind of torque, see *Horæ Ferales*.

Since the above notes were communicated to the Society, Mr Smith has made some further excavations in the undisturbed portion of the



Figs. 16, 17, 18. Bronze Ring, Bead of Shale, and Finger-ring.

crannog, *i.e.*, the zone between the circle of piles which formed the wall of the dwelling-house and the pond (see fig. 1). Nothing, however, of any consequence was turned up; and so the excavation was discontinued

and the men were set to riddle the stuff previously removed. By these means several additional relics were discovered, notably two more beads of the torque (fig. 15); also a small bronze penannular ring, having the ends expanded and ornamented (fig. 16); a flat shale bead (fig. 17); a portion of thin bronze, curved to the shape of a small globular vessel; a fragment of a vessel of amber-coloured glass; a finger-ring in the form of a bronze band having a slight expansion ornamented with incised concentric circles (fig. 18); and another portion of the steatite cup (fig. 8).