

III.

NOTICE OF TWO STONE AXES, ONE ORNAMENTED WITH AN INCISED
INTERLACED PATTERN, FOUND AT BALNAHANNAIT, LOCH TAY.
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The late tenant of Balnahannait, on Loch Tay (for there is another Balnahannait in Glenlyon, also an interesting ecclesiastical site), used to pit his potatoes in a small field which lies between the lake and the farmhouse. In doing so, he had to dig deeper than for ordinary ploughing. On one occasion he came upon and dug up what was I have no doubt rightly considered a stone cist. Some of the stones then removed are still to be seen, and are undressed slabs of schist. Nothing was found then, or perhaps even looked for. Some years after, the present tenant, in gathering stones off that field, found three celts, two of which he has lent to me for exhibition. The third was quite of the ordinary type.

The name Balnahannait ought to have suggested to me that this was the original site of the ancient worship of the district, and to some extent it did so; but finding nothing visible at my first visit, I extended my search to Blairmore, about half a mile further west, and there found a number of cups cut both on boulder and foundation stones. The cups were about fifteen in number and of quite ordinary type. There was also lying there a font, which seemed to indicate a church site. It, however, turned out to have been brought from Dull, by a former tenant, as a useful vessel.

As soon as my attention was turned again to Balnahannait by the finding there of these celts, I made further inquiry, and was shown a portion of an old wall, which I was told was a fragment of an ancient church. It may or may not be so. It merely shows, I believe, that there still lingers a tradition that an ancient church was there.

The larger of the two axes is of greenstone and of the ordinary lenticular shape, measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches across the cutting face, where it is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in greatest thickness. The cutting

edge is nearly semicircular, the sides rounded, the cross-section in the middle of the length being nearly oval, and the upper part tapering to a slightly oval, blunt-pointed butt. The surface is well polished, and on one face near the middle of the length is an oblique depression or groove, which is deepest and widest in the middle of its length, and runs

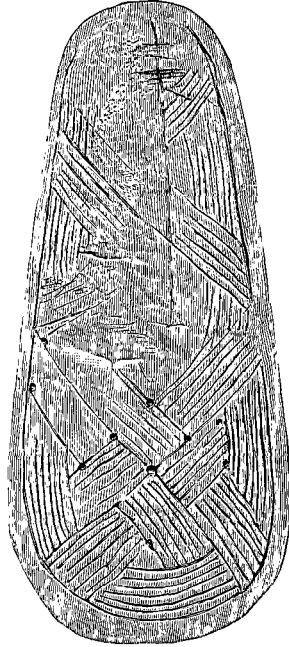


Fig. 1. Stone Axe, ornamented with Interlaced Work, from Balnahannait, Loch Tay. ($\frac{3}{8}$.)

out quite shallow and narrow at both ends, as if it had been used for sharpening the point of a slender awl or wire, scarcely thicker than a sixteenth of an inch.

The smaller of the two axes (fig. 1) is, however, the most interesting, by reason of the ornamentation with which the surface has been covered, though now it is in some parts much defaced. It is of a soft micaceous

stone, and measures 5 inches in length by $2\frac{1}{4}$ across the cutting face, having a thickness of nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in the middle, where the cross-section is oval; the sides are rounded off, the cutting edge also rounded and slightly fractured, and the butt end also rounded off, and slightly damaged by use. The whole surface appears to have been covered with a pattern of interlaced ornamentation. On the one face, however, it is almost completely worn away. On the other face, it appears as shown in the accompanying illustration (fig. 1), from which it will be seen that the style of the interlaced work is that of the late, and not of the early variety of this ornamentation.

As to the original date and subsequent use of this ornamented celt, there is room for much difference of opinion. It clearly cannot have been intended for the rough work of an ordinary domestic or warlike implement. The people who had tools which could execute such ornament must have had a knowledge of metals, and consequently could manufacture far superior implements for either purpose. It is unfortunate that so much of the pattern should be defaced. One can, however, make out quite enough to see that it follows the general plan of such work in the latest style of Celtic ornament, common throughout the Highlands. Assuming that the celt thus ornamented was scarcely intended for ordinary use, I think we may safely conclude that the ornament was added later, after it had ceased to be used, and had acquired some kind of a venerated or ceremonial character.

At the third milestone from Kenmore, on the banks of the Lyon, and about 60 yards from the road to the south, there rises a nearly circular mound of boulders, gravel, and sand, to a height of about 60 feet above the field, from which it rises steeply on three sides. It is about 100 yards in diameter, and on the south side it is prolonged at a slightly lower level till it joins Drummond Hill. Between the mound and the prolongation there are the foundations of an ancient wall, but nothing to indicate its use or character. The mound is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the north of Dun M'Uail, which is on a spur of Drummond Hill above it. It may have been used as an outwork of the fort. It was on or near the

top of this mound, in the sand scraped from a rabbit's hole, that the fine celt obtained for the Society through the Marquess of Breadalbane, and figured in the *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 272, was found. This axe also might have been a sacred or ceremonial one, not intended for ordinary use.