

MONDAY, 10th March 1902.

DAVID MURRAY, M.A., LL.D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following Donations to the Museum and Library were laid on the table, and thanks voted to the Donors :—

(1) By Dr R. DE BRUS TROTTER, Tayview, Perth.

A barber-surgeon's Bleeding-dish in pewter, patera shaped, $5\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch in depth, with a flat open-work side-handle $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length.

(2) By Mrs MATTHEW ANDERSON, Milliken Park, Renfrewshire.

A collection of Stone Implements made many years ago by her brother, the late Mr Gilbert Bain, consisting of the following :—

Polished Axe of dark porphyritic stone, $12\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches across the cutting edge, which is curved and slightly expanded, the section in the middle of the length of the implement slightly oval, tapering to a pointed butt, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Broken butt-end of an Axe of polished greenstone, $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches in length by $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in breadth and $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch in thickness, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Oval Knife of porphyritic stone, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches in breadth, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in greatest thickness, highly polished, and ground to a cutting edge nearly all round, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Oval Knife of porphyritic stone, $6\frac{5}{8}$ inches in length by $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in greatest thickness, ground to a cutting edge nearly all round, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Portion of an oval Knife of dark porphyritic stone, $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches in length by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth, and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in greatest thickness, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Oval Knife of grey porphyritic stone of long narrow form, $7\frac{3}{8}$ inches in length by $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in breadth, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Portion of an oval Knife of porphyritic stone, $6\frac{7}{8}$ inches in length by $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches in breadth, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Portion of an oval Knife of porphyritic stone, $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Oval Knife of grey porphyritic stone, 4 inches in length by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Rude implement of Sandstone, of the long cylindrical pointed type, 14 inches in length by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, from Northmavine, Shetland.

Portion of a rude implement of Sandstone, of flatter form, $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches in breadth, from Northmavine, Shetland.

(3) By Mr JOHN CLUNIE, Blythwood Drive, Glasgow.

Four Coins of George III. ; six Coins of George IV. ; two Coins of William IV. ; and twenty-three Coins of Queen Victoria, all of mintages not already represented in the National Collection.

(4) By Miss SLOAN, Ayr, through Sir W. T. GAIRDNER, K.C.B., M.D.

Talismanic Gold Ring, which unfolds into several rings on a common axis.

(5) By DAVID SMITH, 40 Prior Place, Craigie, Perth.

Circular Disc of greenstone, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{1}{16}$ inch in thickness, with indented hollows about one inch in diameter on each of its flat faces, found at Hill of Ruthven, Perthshire.

(6) By Miss GREY, Huntly, through Rev. W. MAGEE TUKE.

Sculptured Stone, with double-disc symbol and rod, found at Leys of Dummies in 1882. It is described and figured in the *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 345.

(7) By Mrs COUPER, Tymon Manse, Dumfries.

Eight miniature Coffins of wood, each containing a wooden image of the human figure dressed as for burial, being all that remains of a group of seventeen found, as described in the following extracts from the newspapers of the time, in a recess of the rock on the N.E. side of Arthur's Seat in July 1836. They are all neatly made, being each hollowed from a solid piece of wood, usually with straight sides, but in some cases more decidedly coffin shaped, and measure from $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches to 4 inches in length by about 1 inch in width and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in depth. The wooden images in the coffins are also all made in the same way, the body and legs carefully cut out of a solid piece of wood, while a hole drilled through the shoulders from side to side has a piece of twig passed through and bent downwards to represent the arms. There is a perceptible difference in the size and make of the bodies as well as in the features, which seems suggestive of the idea that the different effigies are intended to represent individuals. They have all been most carefully, though differently dressed, in various materials, shaped and sewn on to fit the body. Three of the coffins and one of the lids are shown in fig. 1.

The following extracts from three Edinburgh newspapers of the time contain all the information about this singular discovery which is now available:—

About three weeks ago, while a number of boys were amusing themselves in searching for rabbit burrows on the north-east range of Arthur's Seat, they noticed, in a very rugged and secluded spot, a small opening in one of the rocks, the peculiar appearance of which attracted their attention. The mouth of this little cave was closed by three thin pieces of slate-stone, rudely cut at the upper ends into a conical form, and so placed as to protect the interior from the effects of the weather. The boys having removed these tiny slabs, discovered an aperture about twelve inches square, in which were lodged seventeen Lilliputian coffins, forming two tiers of eight each, and one on a third just begun!

Each of the coffins contained a miniature figure of the human form cut out in wood—the faces in particular being pretty well executed. They were dressed from head to foot in cotton clothes, and decently "laid out" with mimic representation of all the funeral trappings which usually form the last habiliments of the dead. The coffins are about 3 or 4 inches in length, regularly shaped, of and cut out from a single piece of wood, with the exception of the lids, which are nailed down with wire sprigs or common brass pins. The lid and sides of each are profusely studded with ornaments formed of small pieces of tin, and inserted

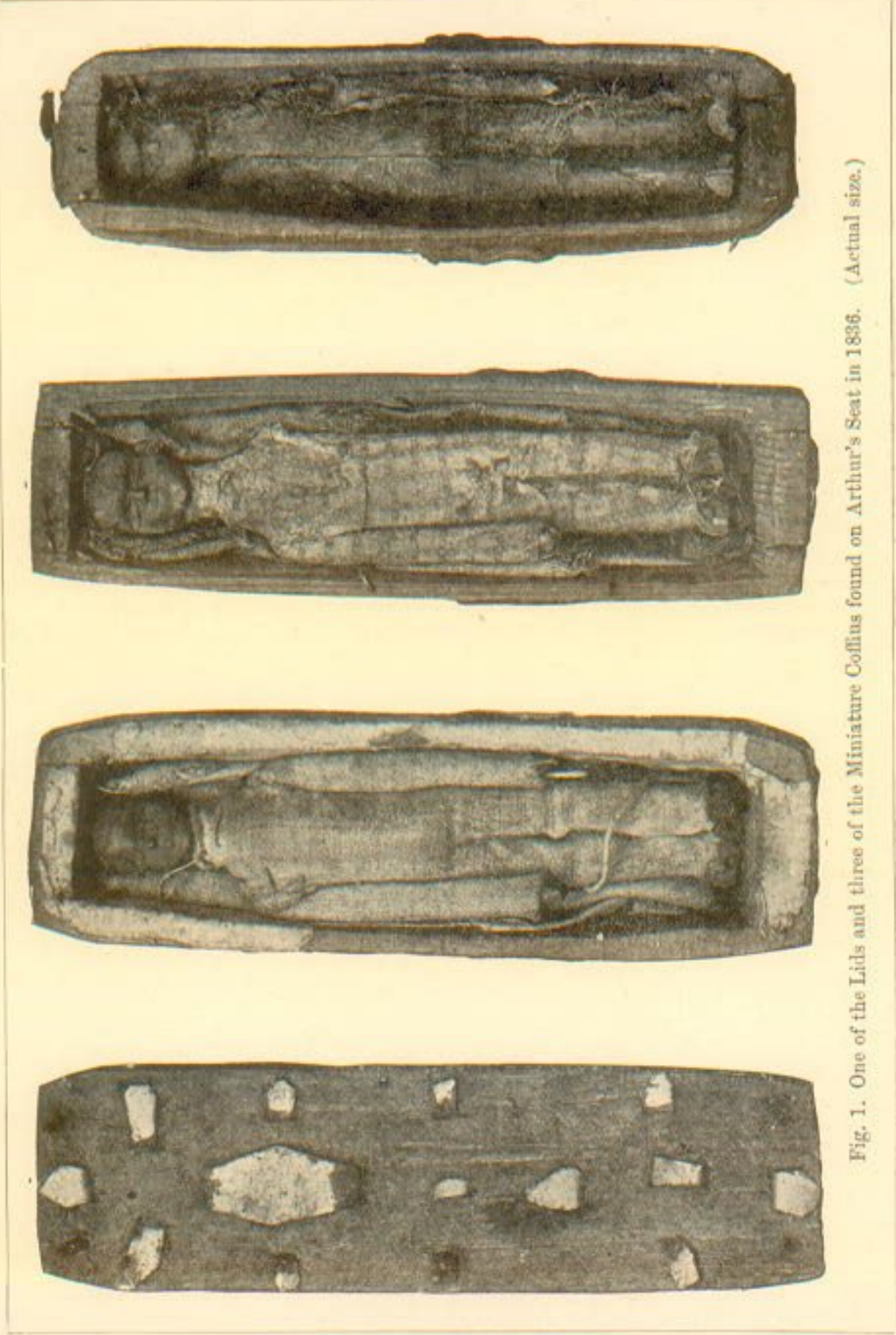


Fig. 1. One of the Lids and three of the Miniature Coffins found on Arthur's Seat in 1836. (Actual size.)

in the wood with great care and regularity. Another remarkable circumstance is, that many years must have elapsed since the first interment took place in this mysterious sepulchre; and it is also evident that the depositions must have been made singly, and at considerable intervals—facts indicated by the rotten and decayed state of the first tier of coffins and their wooden mummies—the wrapping cloths being in some instances entirely mouldered away, while others show various degrees of decomposition; and the coffin last placed, and its shrouded tenant, are as clean and fresh as if only a few days had elapsed since their entombment.

As before stated, there were in all seventeen of these mystic coffins; but a number were destroyed by the boys pelting them at each other as unmeaning and contemptible trifles. None of the learned with whom we have conversed on the subject can account in any way for this singular fantasy of the human mind. The idea seems rather above insanity, and yet much beneath rationality; nor is any such freak recorded in "The Natural History of Euthusiasm."

Our own opinion would be—had we not some years ago abjured witchcraft and demonology—that there are still some of the weird sisters hovering about Mushat's Cairn or the Windy Gowl, who retain their ancient power to work the spells of death by entombing the likenesses of those they wish to destroy. Should this really be the case, we congratulate the public, but more especially our superstitious friends, on the discovery and destruction of this satanic spell-manufactory, the last, we should hope, which the "infernal hags" will ever be permitted to erect in Scotland!—*Scotsman of July 16th, 1836.*

We thought little of the information contained in our contemporary till these extraordinary relics fell under our own notice, the other day, when visiting the private museum of Mr Frazer, jeweller, 17 South St Andrew Street. Whether this mimic entombment has proceeded from some strange fantasy, or in imitation of an ancient custom which prevailed in Saxony, of burying in effigy departed friends who had died in a distant land, it is impossible to determine.—*Edinburgh Evening Post, 20th August 1836.*

Since we narrated the mysterious circumstance of some very small coffins having been found in a little dormitory at the back of Arthur's Seat, we have seen these singular productions in the cabinet of Mr Frazer, jeweller, 17 South St Andrew Street, which has excited in us a desire to know something of their deposition, and to acquire a knowledge of the intentions of this "now unknown" constructor of such strange conceits. A contemporary states that it was an ancient custom in Saxony to bury in miniature-effigy departed friends who had died in a distant land. We would be glad if any of our correspondents could throw light on this remarkable event. We have also heard of another superstition which exists among some sailors in this country, that they enjoined their wives on parting to give them "Christian burial" in effigy if they happened [to be lost at sea].—*Caledonian Mercury, 1836.*

Whatever may be the explanation of the matter—whether it may be attributed to an individual freak, or to a superstitious custom, it is evident that the intention was different from that of the well-known

maleficent superstitious practice of making effigies of individuals which were subjected to various kinds of ill-usage, such as being shot at with "elfin darts," or pierced with pins, or placed before a slow fire to waste away, in the belief that the same effects would happen to the individual represented by the effigy. On the contrary, in this case, the intention seems to be to symbolise honorific burial.

(8) By ROBERT MUNRO, M.A., M.D., LL.D.

A set of five Jet Buttons, found in digging on a hill in Forfarshire. [See the subsequent communication by Dr Munro.]

(9) By ALAN REID, F.S.A. Scot., the Author.

Inchcolm Abbey: a notable Fifeshire Ruin. 8vo. 1901.

(10) By the SOCIETY—GESELLSCHAFT FÜR NUTZLICHE FORSCHUNGEN ZU TRIER.

Der Psalter Erzbischof Egberts von Trier, Codex Gertrudianus, in Cividale. 4to. 1901. With Album of Plates.

(11) By the Right Hon. Sir HERBERT MAXWELL, Bart., M.P., LL.D., *President*.

A History of the House of Douglas. By Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., M.P., LL.D. 2 vols., 8vo. 1902.

(12) By M. C BARRIERE-FLAVY, Corr. Mem. S.A. Scot., the Author.

Les Arts Industrielles des Peuples Barbares de La Gaule, du cinquieme au huitieme Siècle. 2 vols., 4to, and Album of Plates.

(13) By JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. Scot., Rhind Lecturer, the Author.

The Edwards in Scotland. The Rhind Lectures for 1900. 8vo. 1901.