

II.

NOTE ON TENTS MOOR, FIFE, AND ON FLINT ARROW-HEADS, IMPLEMENTS, ETC. FOUND THERE. BY THE REV. ROBERT PAUL, F.S.A. SCOT., DOLLAR.

Tents Moor forms the extreme north-eastern corner of the county of Fife, lying between the estuary of the river Tay on the north and the river Eden on the south. If we take the North British Railway line between Leuchars and Tayport as its boundary on the west and the sea on the east, it is about six miles long by three broad. The larger part of it is in the parish of Leuchars, though a small portion of it, towards the northern end, is in that of Ferry-Port-on-Craig, or Tayport, to give it its modern name. The entire district consists of sandy bent or downs, covered with coarse grass and whins, and here and there a little heather. It owes its formation, in all probability, to the deposits laid down by the rivers Tay and Eden, and was apparently at one period quite under water, as sea-shells and waterworn and rounded stones and pebbles are everywhere to be found over its surface. At no very distant period it seems to have been somewhat thickly inhabited by a number of small crofters, but it is now divided into several extensive farms. The greater part of it, however, is incapable of cultivation, in consequence of the sandy and shifting character of the soil, though patches of arable land are here and there to be seen. The strong winds from the North Sea which sweep with great force over its flat surface, especially in spring and autumn, make almost every year an appreciable difference in its conformation. The land is therefore mostly used for the feeding of sheep and as rabbit warrens.

All over this tract of country traces of various kinds are to be found of the inhabitants who occupied it at different periods. A good many years ago, having occasion to visit the neighbourhood frequently, I had several opportunities of exploring it, when the flint arrow-heads, beads,

coins, pins, etc. now produced were found by myself and some friends who were with me.

The remains of numerous kitchen-middens are to be found in different parts of Tents Moor, the contents of some of them being much scattered, and some occurring alone, and not in groups, especially in the northern portion included in the parish of Ferry-Port-on-Craig. A large group, however, is situated towards the southern end of the district, at the distance of about half a mile, nearly due west, from the mouth of the Eden.

This group consisted of some eleven or twelve distinct mounds, running N.E. and S.W., and varying considerably in height, size, and shape. The largest of all was about $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet high; the next in size about 9 feet high and 66 yards in circumference; while other two were found to be 8 and 5 feet in height respectively. Like many of the Danish "kjökken-moddings," those on Tents Moor are all about 10 feet above the sea-level, and about half a mile from high-water mark. It is possible, however, that at the period of their formation they were considerably nearer to the sea, since the rivers Tay and Eden are constantly depositing large quantities of sand and mud along the coast, a process which is clearly seen at the mouth of the former, where what are known as the Abertay Sands—so fatal to vessels in stormy weather—are being rapidly increased in size, and bid fair by and by to enlarge very considerably the solum of this tract of country. I was told by a retired naval officer, long resident in the locality, that almost every year the fairway of the river Tay was shifting farther to the north and east, in consequence of the growing accumulations in the neighbourhood of the Abertay Sands.

The shells of which these kitchen-middens are composed consist exclusively of four species, viz., the cockle (*Cardium edule*, L.), the mussel (*Mytilus edulis*, L.), the periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*, L.); and the common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*). The cockle and mussel shells largely predominate in the mounds towards the southern end of the district, near the mouth of the Eden, while in those towards the

northern end, nearer the estuary of the Tay, the cockle is not to be found at all, the whelk, however, being much more abundant in the latter than in the former. It is an interesting fact in this connection, that at the present day the cockle lives and thrives in the sea at the mouth of the Eden, while it is practically unknown on the northern coast of Tents Moor, bordering on the estuary of the Tay, showing thus that the habitat of these species of shellfish has not changed even after the lapse of centuries, since these kitchen-middens were first formed. In the case of the few mounds which I was able to examine particularly, no flint implements or fragments of pottery were found, and only one fragment of bone, split open longitudinally to extract the marrow, in one of the mounds towards the north. Flint arrow-heads and knives and scrapers, however, are to be found in considerable quantities over almost the entire area. Not far from where the largest group of mounds is situated, near the mouth of the Eden, there seems to have been a regular manufactory of arrow-heads, scrapers, etc., judging from the number which have been found there, and from the number of nodules of rough flint and innumerable flakes and splinters of flint which everywhere abound. In this vicinity a rounded hammer-stone with abraded ends was found.

Not a few implements of larger size have, I understand, been found by other explorers from time to time. Two of these, a small whetstone of quartzite, perforated at one end, and another small whetstone of micaceous sandstone, were exhibited to the Society in 1890 (*Proceedings*, vol. xxiv. p. 382). Large quantities of fragments of coarse pottery are turned up over the whole district whenever the soil is disturbed. Cinerary urns have also been met with. A fine specimen of the "drinking-cup" or "beaker" type of urn found here is figured in the Society's *Proceedings*, vol. xvii. p. 384.

The small whorl, two brass pins, and the six small coins now produced were found by me on the sites of some of the old houses; also the three glass beads and two tobacco pipe-heads. It is interesting that one of the latter bears on it the same stamp or mark (a five-pointed

star) as a similar pipe-head found among the ruins of Castle Campbell, near Dollar. Were they probably made by the same pipe-makers? A communion token was found amongst the almost entirely obliterated foundations of what apparently had been a dwelling. Made as usual of lead, it has become considerably oxidised. It bears on the obverse the letter L, and on the reverse (fig. 1) the initials A H in the



Fig. 1. Token of Leuchars. (†.)

form of a double or reversible monogram—being those of Alexander Henderson, the famous Scottish ecclesiastical leader, who was minister of Leuchars for twenty-four years, viz., from 1614 to 1638. This token is believed to be unique, no other specimen, so far as I have been able to learn, being known to collectors. I was able to identify it by means of a seal attached to an autograph letter of Henderson, addressed to the Countess of Mar, dated

from Leuchars, 26th June 1631. The seal is exactly the size of the token, and bears the same monogram.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the inhabitants of Tents Moor did not bear a very good character, many of them being notorious smugglers and wreckers. An old tradition alleges that they were the descendants of Danes who were shipwrecked upon this part of the coast, but the writer of the first Statistical Account of the parish (the Rev. Thomas Kettle) says that he had been unable to find any authority for the statement. Sibbald in his *History* says—“Two miles eastward (from Earls hall), unto the ocean, is a plain heath and full of marishes, with a few cottages scattered over them called Tents-muir, and inhabited by a very rustic sort of people,” to which in the edition of 1803 this note is appended:—“It has been supposed that these people are the progeny of some shipwrecked Danes, or the remnant of a defeated army; but it is probable that the rusticity of their manners arose merely from their residence in a desolated wild, secluded from the intercourse and comforts of society.” In one of Henderson’s sermons which has been preserved, and which was preached in the church at Leuchars on the 15th July 1638, he

rebuked his parishioners for working on the Sabbath during his absence on national ecclesiastical business, "whilk ye were not wont to do," he says, as also with "running from the one end of the parochin to the other to see a dancing" on the same day. About this the editor of Henderson's sermons says, in a footnote,—“It is probable that the dancing took place near the coast, among the seafaring part of the population.”—(*Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses by Alexander Henderson*, 1638. Edinburgh, 1867, p. 363.)

LIST OF FLINT ARROW-HEADS, ETC., FROM TENTS MOOR, FIFE.

- 3 cards with flint arrow-heads, scrapers, etc.
- 1 parcel of flint flakes.
- 1 parcel of rough flint nodules.
- 1 hammer-stone with abraded ends.
- 3 parcels of shells—cockles, mussels, and whelks.
- 1 fragment of split bone.
- 1 parcel of fragments of coarse pottery.
- 2 clay pipe-heads (and one with similar stamp from Castle Campbell, for comparison).
- 3 glass beads (2 blue and 1 white).
- 1 card with whorl, 2 brass pins, communion token of Leuchars parish, and 6 coins (small).

These, with the exception of the pipe-heads, and the token, are now presented to the Museum.