

## III.

## NOTICE OF A BRONZE CUP AND OTHER OBJECTS FOUND APPARENTLY IN A SEPULCHRAL DEPOSIT NEAR TARLAND, ABERDEENSHIRE. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, SECRETARY.

The discovery of a small hoard of relics belonging to the early Iron Age, in 1898, in a sand-pit at Waulkmill, on the estate of Melgum, near Tarland, is recorded in our *Proceedings*, vol. xxxix. p. 214. The hoard consisted of a small penannular brooch of silver, two discs of transparent blue glass, two discs of variegated vitreous paste of turquoise blue, dull red, and yellow colours, and seven flat, rounded pebbles of

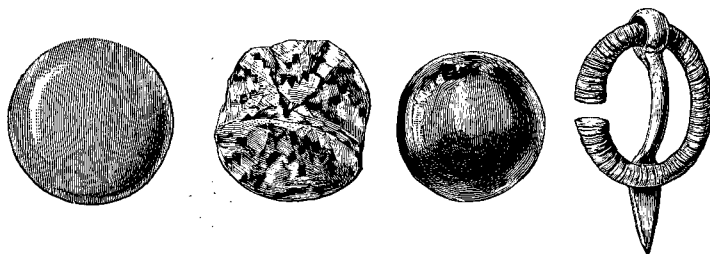


Fig. 1. Discs of quartzite, vitreous paste, and blue glass, and small penannular Brooch of silver found at Waulkmill. (†.)

reddish-brown quartzite, which are illustrated full size on fig. 1; besides these was a baluster-shaped object of clear glass,  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in diameter. The record of the discovery states that a game-keeper digging in a sand-pit "came upon four undressed stones, each measuring about 2 feet broad and 18 inches high, placed one above another, at a depth of 4 feet from the surface," and that on further search he found, along with the objects just described, "two or three pieces of steel or wrought iron, apparently the remains of some weapons, as well as a number of small bones" which crumbled away when lifted. The relics were acquired by a policeman at Aboyne, but they were claimed and recovered by Mr J. A. Milne, proprietor of the estate of Melgum, who afterwards presented them to the National Museum. A year after the discovery a further find seems to have been made, as it was rumoured that "a number of silver articles were found in the same sand-pit," but these could not be traced.

Some years ago I called on a policeman in central Aberdeenshire to see a very good collection of prehistoric antiquities which he had gathered together, chiefly from the Buchan, Garioch, and Deeside

districts of Aberdeenshire. Amongst other things noted were a small cup of cast bronze, the crown of a human molar tooth found in the cup, a disc of translucent blue glass broken in two, and twelve pebbles of brown, grey, and whitish quartzite. The owner said that the glass disc was all that remained of a number of similar objects and other relics found in a sand-pit near Tarland, which were once in his possession but which he had been compelled to give up to the Laird; that he had kept the glass disc, it being broken, and that the cup, tooth, and pebbles had been found afterwards in the same sand-pit and he had secured them, their discovery having been kept secret.

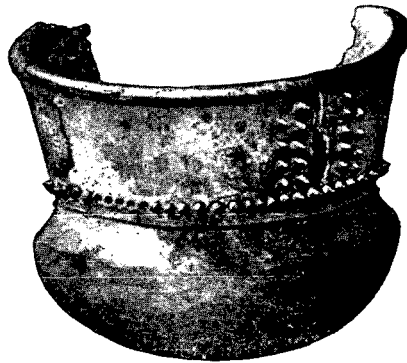


Fig. 2. Cup of Bronze found near Tarland.

After the death of this man I bought the relics from his representatives, and they are exhibited to the Society to-night.

The cup (fig. 2), even with about one-third of the brim and part of the bowl broken off, is a beautiful example of the bronze-founder's art. Gracefully designed and decorated with effective though restrained ornamentation, it furnishes another example testifying to the skill, dexterity, and high state of excellence in craftsmanship and design attained by the metal-workers of this country about the beginning of this era. The vessel has a long, straight, everted brim springing from a slightly constricted neck, while the lower part is semi-globular. The external diameter of the mouth is  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches, of the neck  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch, and of the bulge  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch, and the height is  $1\frac{9}{16}$  inch. Though a casting, the thickness of metal in the bowl is less than  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch; but at the lip, which shows a rounded bevel to the outside, it increases to about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch in thickness. Encircling the neck is a transverse row of small studs less than  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch apart, with sharp conical heads projecting about  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch outside the wall of the cup. Extending from this row to the lip of the vessel there have apparently been three

groups of vertical rows of similar studs, but only one group composed of five rows and part of a second survive, the other portion of the second and the whole of the third group having been on the missing portion of the brim. Between the neck and shoulder of the cup, under the encircling row of studs, is a very delicate raised bead or moulding. The studs have been inserted into carefully drilled holes and are riveted on the inside. As the cup is a casting, and not formed of different plates of hammered bronze, it is evident that the studs are entirely ornamental and not structural. The cup shows several striking resemblances to three of the large globular cauldrons formed of beaten bronze plates riveted together which are preserved in the National Collection. The cauldron found in Carlingwark Loch, Kirkcudbrightshire<sup>1</sup> (which contained the fragments of a small bronze vessel and a Late Celtic bronze handle, as well as many objects of Roman ironwork), like the cup exhibited has a globular base and a long, straight brim, only it is not everted. The example from Kincardine Moss, Stirling,<sup>2</sup> has a single transverse row of round-headed rivets encircling the vessel at the bulge and two vertical groups of five rows each between it and the rim; these rivets, however, are structural as well as ornamental, as they join the different plates of which the vessel is formed. In the third vessel, found in the West of Scotland,<sup>3</sup> there are three transverse rows of conical-headed studs at the junctions of the plates and numerous vertical single rows of round-headed punch-marks between the highest transverse row and the short everted brim. In this case the rivets and studs are both structural and ornamental. It may be noted that similar conical-headed rivets are seen in the fine Late Celtic helmet of bronze found in the Thames at Waterloo Bridge, London, and now preserved in the British Museum.

The glass disc is convex and smooth on the upper side and flat and rough below; it measures  $\frac{1\frac{3}{8}}$  inch in diameter and  $\frac{1}{32}$  inch in thickness. Similar objects are not uncommon on Roman sites, and they have been found in the Roman camps at Newstead,<sup>4</sup> Birrens,<sup>5</sup> and Camelon.<sup>6</sup> These discs, as well as flat, round pebbles and discs of bone which have also been found on Roman sites, are believed to have been "men" or counters in some game perhaps resembling draughts.<sup>7</sup> It may be noted that a board in the shape of a stone slab having

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. vii. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xix. p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>4</sup> James Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post—Newstead*, p. 338.

<sup>5</sup> *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. xxx. p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxxv. p. 397.

<sup>7</sup> I have seen a disc of clear green bottle glass with an inlaid ladder-like design of coloured enamel, similar in size and shape to those described, which was found in the West Highlands. This ladder-like design is seen on a dark blue background in some of our Scottish beads, and consequently may give a hint as to the probable date of this type of bead.

fifty-six squares roughly incised on it was found in the Roman station at Corbridge in the North of England.

Of the twelve pebbles exhibited, only one resembles those first recovered from the sand-pit; it is slightly oval and of reddish-brown colour. The other examples may be ordinary "chuckie" stones deposited by water and not collected by man, but three of them are of an uncommon red or reddish-brown colour, and only a visit to the sand-pit could show if such pebbles are common to the locality.

Regarding the silver brooch found with the first batch of relics, it has its prototype elsewhere in Scotland. Small penannular brooches with the ring circular in section have been found on Roman and native sites, but this brooch has a ring oval in section and is provided with a peculiar bow-shaped pin flattened at the point. In many fibulæ and brooches the shape and arrangement of the pin assist in assigning a date to them, and possibly with such a characteristic pin as is seen on this example we may be justified in placing it in the same period as brooches similarly supplied though of different size. A penannular brooch having a ring of oval section and bow-shaped pin with flattened point, bearing Late Celtic enamelled decoration, and measuring 2 inches by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch in diameter, was found at Newstead,<sup>1</sup> and was believed to date to the latter half of the second century A.D.; and a similar example, but without ornamentation, from the Culbin Sands, Morayshire, is preserved in our Museum.

There seems little doubt that the cup belongs to the same hoard as the brooch, discs of glass and vitreous paste, and flat pebbles. As bones were noted when the first lot of relics were discovered and a human molar tooth was found inside the cup, presumably the deposit was sepulchral. Few burials of the Early Iron Age have been recorded from Scotland, the only examples I know being the cist at Moredun, Gilmerton, Midlothian,<sup>2</sup> and the cairns at Gullane, East Lothian.<sup>3</sup> In the former were the skeletal remains of two persons and a fibula of La Tène type, a circular brooch, and a ring-headed pin, all of iron; and in the latter were human remains, a bronze finger-ring, and an iron dagger or knife.

From the shape, and character of the ornament, of the cup it is evident that it belongs to the time when the large Scottish cauldrons were fashioned, that is the Late Celtic or Early Iron Age; and from the discovery of brooches and glass or vitreous paste discs on Roman sites in Scotland which were occupied chiefly during the second century of this era, similar in character to those from the sand-pit, it seems quite safe to assign the Tarland hoard to the early centuries of our era.

<sup>1</sup> James Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post—Newstead*, p. 327, pl. lxxxviii. fig. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. xxxviii. p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xlii. p. 332.