

I.

NOTICES OF (1) A STONE AXE-HAMMER FROM PERTHSHIRE, AND
(2) PREHISTORIC AND MEDIÆVAL GRAVES ON AIRNGATH
HILL, NEAR BO'NESS. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, F.S.A.Scot.,
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A STONE AXE-HAMMER FROM PERTHSHIRE.

In November 1923 a stone axe-hammer (fig. 1) was found among loose stones at the foot of a scaur on the north side of Rossie Law,

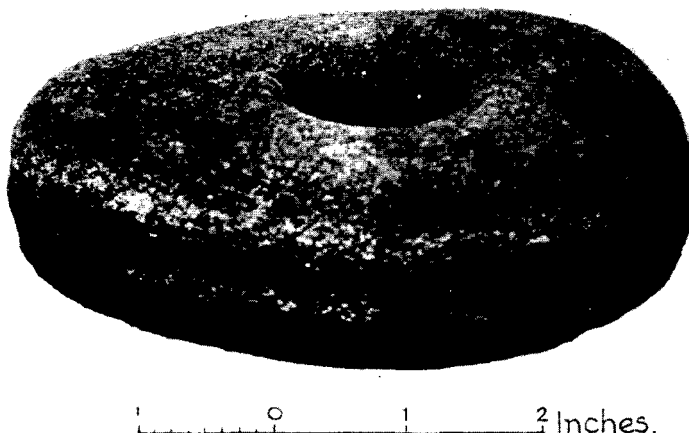


Fig. 1. Stone Axe-hammer from Rossie Law.

in the parish of Dunning, Perthshire. It was acquired by the Perth Museum,¹ and through the courtesy of Mr John Ritchie, the Curator, I have been enabled to exhibit it to the Society. Although the relic is rather badly pitted all over through exposure to the weather, it is an interesting and important specimen, because of its unusual decoration. Looked at from above, it is egg-shaped, with the narrow end distinctly rounded, and the perforation for the haft placed about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch nearer the butt than the other end. Its length is $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches, and its greatest breadth,

¹ Amongst a miscellaneous collection of relics found on Tents Muir, Fife, and recently deposited in Perth Museum, is a fragment of a star-shaped bead of blue vitreous paste similar to those found on the Glenluce and Culbin Sands. The record is interesting, as this class of Bronze Age bead had not previously been reported from this part of the country.

which is opposite the perforation, $2\frac{2}{3}\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It shows a fairly regular thickness of about $1\frac{9}{16}$ inch in the centre from the narrow end to the haft hole, after which it swells out to $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch at the butt, by a curving of the upper and under surfaces, that on the former being quite pronounced while that on the latter is very slight. It also varies from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness opposite the hole on one side to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch on the other. The perforation measures $1\frac{5}{16}$ inch in diameter at the outside and $\frac{7}{8}$ inch at the centre.

So far, except for being more oval than usual in its upper aspect, this axe-hammer shows no features which cannot be paralleled on other Scottish examples. But, extending along both sides and round the narrow end, though not round the butt, are two broad, rounded, raised mouldings, measuring 1 inch in total width and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in height—a peculiarity which I have not heard of before on any Scottish or English specimen.

This new decorative motive adds considerable importance to this axe-hammer, as it confirms the opinion that has long been expressed regarding the use of these objects, namely, that because of the small size and care which has been bestowed on the manufacture of some of them, as well as the absence of marks of tear and wear by cutting or hammering on either the sharp end or the butt, they could not have been intended for implements employed in industry or weapons used in war, but rather they must have been made as insignia of authority or for ceremonial purposes. Had the Rossie Law example been meant for cutting, there was no sense in carrying the mouldings round the narrow end, as this would only have rendered it more inefficient for such a purpose.

Though made of stone, the period of the small wedge-shaped axe-hammer is the Bronze Age, as a considerable number of them have been found in graves belonging to this time. More than a dozen have been discovered in such burial deposits in Scotland, and they have also been found under similar conditions in England.

GRAVES ON AIRNGATH HILL.

While making the new seventeenth green¹ of the West Lothian Golf Course on Airngath Hill—which lies between Linlithgow and Bo'ness—in the month of December last, some workmen laid bare several ancient graves, the discovery being reported to Mr H. M. Cadell of Grange, who immediately let me know about it by telephone. However, on account of a snowstorm, it was the beginning of January before I was able to

¹ Some difficulty had arisen in deciding on a suitable name for this green, but this discovery has supplied one, as henceforth it is to be known as "The Graves." The positions of the different burials are now marked by small mounds.

accompany Mr Cadell to the site, by which time further burial deposits had been encountered.

The place where the graves were found lies near the highest point of the hill, about 40 yards east of a gully which cuts into the top from north to south, and about 400 yards north-east of the monument to Brigadier the Hon. Adrian Hope, the elevation being rather more than 400 feet above Ordnance datum. The view is cut off to the south, but otherwise the site commands a magnificent prospect of the Firth of Forth and the country on either side from Perthshire to East Lothian.

To form the green it was necessary to cut into the slope as it rose towards the south, removing the thin layer of surface soil and penetrating the sub-soil down to the rock in places. While removing the turf on the east side of the green two long slab-lined graves and a very small stone cist-like structure were laid bare, but they had no coverstones, as probably these had been removed at some previous time owing to their being practically on the present surface. The long graves lay almost parallel to each other, orientated slightly south of east and north of west, a distance of 7 feet separating them. The small cist was placed 4 feet 6 inches further north, and lay about east-north-east and west-north-west. The sides and ends of the two graves were formed of small slabs of yellow sandstone, and they were paved with similar material, the side slabs at the east end of each converging slightly. The most southerly grave measured internally 5 feet 2 inches in length, 14 inches in breadth, and 11 inches in depth, and the other 4 feet 6 inches long, 13 inches broad, and 11 inches deep. The main axis of the first grave lay 117° east of north magnetic, and that of the second 115° . The small cist, which was roughly triangular on plan owing to the most easterly of the two stones on the north side being turned inwards, measured only 20 inches in length internally, 11 inches across the west end, and 9 inches deep, the main axis lying 90° east of north magnetic. No osseous remains or other relics were found in it.

In digging into the slope of the hill about 22 feet west of the most southerly of the graves described, at a depth of 2 feet 2 inches from the surface, a quantity of incinerated human bones amounting to about three double handfuls were found, with a slab of yellow sandstone, measuring 3 feet 2 inches in length, 2 feet 2 inches in breadth, and 4 inches in thickness, standing on its edge and inclined over the remains. No other stones which might have indicated the former presence of a cist were found, neither were any other relics. At a distance of 7 feet to the south-south-west another structure was exposed. It consisted of an oval chamber measuring internally 3 feet 6 inches from east to west, 2 feet from north to south, and 2 feet 6 inches in depth measuring from the surface of the

ground. The wall was built of small boulders from the boulder clay, with a large block at the east and west extremities, the first of yellow sandstone measuring 2 feet 6 inches by 2 feet 10 inches. There was evidence of rough causing at the bottom, but no trace of a covering stone. As in the case of the long graves, the cover had probably become exposed by the denudation of the soil, and had been removed at an earlier period. A very few fragments of burnt bone were the only relics found among the soil with which the structure was filled, but some pieces of sandstone which had evidently been submitted to the action of fire were taken from it. Midway between the last two deposits was a small pocket of burnt human bones lying beneath three small flat stones, at a depth of about 2 feet from the surface. Again, as in all the other graves, no further relics fell to be recorded.

It was quite plain that two different classes of interments belonging to very different periods had been brought to light, although there was a complete absence of grave furnishings by which their period might have been definitely indicated. The two long slab-lined graves, from their form, size, and orientation, were probably mediæval, as they were similar to many of those found in the numerous mediæval burying-grounds which have been discovered in the three Lothians. The small cist-like structure might also belong to this period, although this is doubtful, as less care has been bestowed on its orientation.

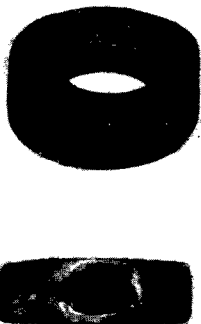


Fig. 2. Jet Ring from Airmgath Hill. (†.)

Regarding the two deposits of calcined bones and the oval structure, which also yielded a few fragments of similar remains, it seemed more likely that they belonged to the Bronze Age than to any other time. Oval graves built of small boulders are very unusual in Scotland, but pockets of incinerated human remains have been found not infrequently under cairns and about stone circles which belong to the Bronze Age. This attribution as to the period of these deposits was, to a certain extent, confirmed when two months later Dr W. A. Shafto of Bo'ness called at the Museum and showed me a small ring of cannel coal which had been found amongst the soil during the subsequent levelling of the ground.

The ring, or rather ring-pendant (fig. 2), as it seems to have been worn by suspension, is of square section, being rather thicker on one side than on the other. It measures $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in external diameter, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in width, and

from $\frac{9}{32}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in thickness. On the periphery, at the thickest part, are two V-shaped perforations, formed by boring two converging holes parallel to the faces till they meet—a method of perforation seen on the jet buttons of the Bronze Age. The septal portion in the “V” of one of the perforations is broken away, which is suggestive that the second perforation had been made after the fracture of the first. But this does not follow, seeing that nearly all the other figured examples of this form of ornament have complete double perforations. The ring shows traces of having been ornamented on both faces and round the periphery by a lattice pattern of incised lines, but these have almost been obliterated by wear. These objects, which have sometimes been called “pulley rings” in England, have occasionally been described as having three perforations; but this is not a very happy description, seeing that the appearance of the triple perforation is caused by the inner slopes of the two perforations being bored from one orifice. Such ornaments have been more frequently found in England than in Scotland, where only another one has been recorded. This example is preserved in the National Museum, and, according to the record that was attached to it, the ring “was taken out of a stone coffin near Craigiehall (Perthshire?) in 1805. The bones were in a state of perfect powder. There was, besides, a wooden button, but (it was) too much decayed to be preserved.” It measures $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter, and has two V-shaped perforations; but it is unornamented, and part of the ring is broken away. The distribution of English examples is wide, as they have been found in Yorkshire,¹ Wiltshire,² and Derbyshire,³ and, generally, have been recovered from Bronze Age graves, sometimes with buttons with V-shaped perforations. The majority of those which have been illustrated are more ornate than our latest example.

Dr Shafto has very kindly presented the ornament to our National Museum, and to him the thanks of the Society are due for the donation of a very rare relic.

¹ Greenwell's *British Barrows*, p. 33 (fig. 5), p. 229 (fig. 119), p. 263 (fig. 123); Mortimer's *Forty Years' Researches*, p. 92 (fig. 216), p. 340 (fig. 1002).

² *Crania Britannia* 58 (2); *Devizes Museum Catalogue*, Nos. 75 and 184a.

³ *British Barrows*, p. 229 f.n.