

II.

A SYMBOL STONE FROM FISCAVAIG, SKYE; AN EARLY IRON AGE HOARD FROM CRICHIE, ABERDEENSHIRE; AND CINERARY URNS FROM SEAMILL, WEST KILBRIDE, AYRSHIRE. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, F.S.A.SCOT., DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES.

A SYMBOL STONE FROM FISCAVAIG.

Some years ago information was received by the Ancient Monuments Commission (Scotland), that there was a carved stone lying about the high-water mark on the beach at Fiscavaig, Loch Bracadale, Skye, but, as it had been covered by shingle, its exact location was unknown. Fortunately, a sketch of the sculpturings had been made when it lay exposed, and it was known that it was an undoubted symbol stone. As it was desirable that a monument of such importance should not be lost, a search was made for it, but without success. Nothing more was done about the stone until the 28th January last, when the great gale that swept the country again laid it bare, and it was removed beyond the reach of the waves. As it was found impossible to preserve the stone at its original site, H.M. Board of Agriculture for Scotland, who were the owners of the ground, handed it over to the National Museum for preservation.

The stone (fig. 1) is an irregular, oblong block of schist, and measures 3 feet in length, 20 inches in breadth by 10½ inches in thickness at the top, and 16 inches by 8 inches near the foot. On one face are sculptured two symbols, the upper consisting of the so-called spectacle ornament and Z-shaped rod with floriated ends,

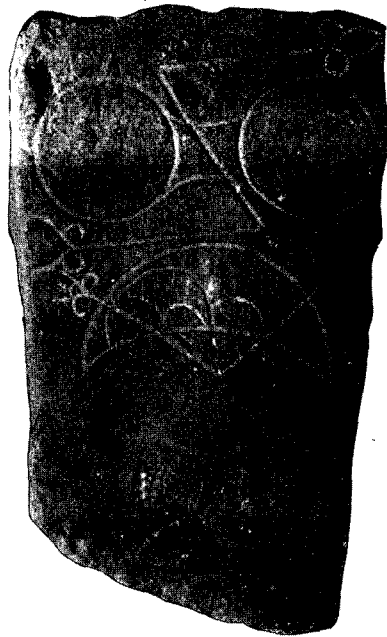


Fig. 1. Symbol Stone from Fiscavaig, Skye.

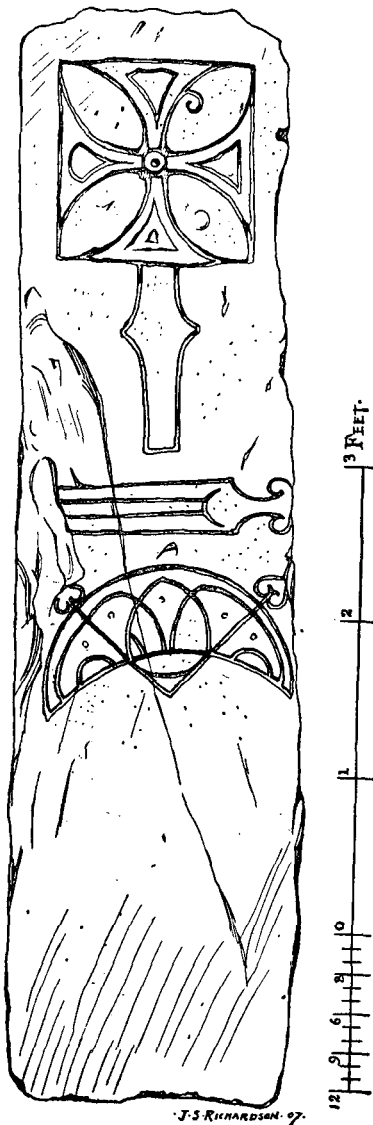


Fig. 2. Cross-slab with Symbols on Raasay.

and the lower, the crescent symbol and V-shaped rod also with floriated ends. The discs and the bridge connecting them in the spectacle ornament are plain, but in the left half of the crescent are three curved lines, and in the right half the remains of one—possibly others have been worn out. Both symbols are incised. In spite of the polishing action of the shingle, as it was rolled backward and forward by the waves, the designs are well preserved, except at the end of the right limb of the V-shaped rod on the crescent symbol, where the floriations are worn away.

These two designs belong to a group of symbols which are found only in Scotland. Their meaning is lost, but it is known that many of them were carved in Early Christian times, because they are found on slabs bearing crosses and other sculpturings in relief. An earlier group of monuments than those with the crosses in relief has, with one exception, only symbols, and these are incised. Possibly the latter may belong to the period immediately preceding the introduction of Christianity into Scotland.

The crescent symbol with V-shaped rod and the spectacle ornament with Z-shaped rod are the commonest of all the Scottish symbols. The former is now found forty-seven times on incised slabs (Class I.) and nineteen times on cross-slabs carved in relief (Class II.), and the latter thirty-three and twenty-two times respectively. The combination of these two symbols, without any others, occurs only on one stone of Class I.—at Logie Elphinstone, Aberdeenshire;¹ it is seen three times on stones of Class II.—at Elgin Cathedral,² and Aberlemno³ and Cossins⁴ in Forfarshire. Only

¹ *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. iii. p. 175, fig. 188.

² *Ibid.*, pt. iii. p. 135, fig. 137A.

³ *Ibid.*, pt. iii. p. 214, fig. 228B.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pt. iii. p. 216, fig. 230B.

at Elgin is the spectacle ornament placed above the crescent as in the Fiscavaig stone.

Although the Hebrides are peculiarly rich in sculptured stones of late mediæval times, very few belonging to the Early Christian period have been found. This is only the fourth recorded from Skye and the adjacent island of Raasay. The others are at Tote, near Skeabost, at Dunvegan Castle, and at Raasay House. These three are also incised and belong to Class I. The stone at Tote, which is known as Clach Ard, bears the crescent, spectacle, and mirror and comb symbols; ¹ that at Dunvegan, the crescent and what seems to be the spectacle ornament; ² and the one on Raasay, the crescent symbol and the one like a tuning-fork, in addition to a cross of peculiar form ³ (fig. 2); the only other recorded example of such a cross being seen incised on a sloping face of rock near the seashore at Churchton Bay about one-quarter of a mile away from the cross-slab. ⁴ The Raasay cross-slab is the only one which I know of that bears symbols and cross all incised.

The thanks of the Society are due to the Board of Agriculture, not only for presenting the stone, but for assistance rendered in having it dispatched to the Museum.

EARLY IRON AGE HOARD FROM CRICHIE, NEAR INVERURIE.

In our *Proceedings*, vol. vii. p. 110, there is a paper submitted by J. Hay Chalmers, F.S.A.Scot., in which he states that "several balls of shale, about 1¼ inch in diameter, slightly flattened on one side, and with the remains of iron fastenings inserted in the centre of the flattened side, and a *bronze implement*, with iron fastenings inside, similar to the one figured in the *Proceedings of the Society*, vol. v. p. 341, were found while trenching some woodland on the hill of Crichtie (O.S. Map, Aberdeenshire, LIV.), under a large stone." A glance at the illustration referred to shows that the so-called *bronze implement* is in reality a terret or rein-ring of true Late-Celtic ⁵ character.

Part of the hoard was presented to the British Museum, and some of the objects were retained by the family of Mr Chalmers. Recently the

¹ *Inventory of Ancient Monuments (Scotland)—The Outer Hebrides, Skye, and the Small Isles*, No. 640, fig. 263.

² *Ibid.*, No. 528, fig. 264.

³ *Proc. S.A. Scot.*, vol. xli. p. 435.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. xli, p. 435.

⁵ Late Celtic is a very unfortunate and misleading term to the Scottish archaeologist, because we have two distinct later styles of Celtic art in Scotland. The first of these began in the Early Christian period and survived until the sixteenth century, by which time it had become greatly debased. The second is seen in the revival which took place in the seventeenth, and continued on until the second half of the eighteenth century, during which time powder-horns, dirk-handles, brooches, and targets were decorated with true Celtic designs.

latter were handed over to the Anthropological Museum in Marischal College, Aberdeen University.

As the group of relics is one of the earliest of its period (the Early Iron Age) found in Scotland, and as the old account, previously quoted, is incomplete, it is desirable to have a fuller description of the relics placed on record. Thanks to the kindness of Professor R. W. Reid of Aberdeen,

who has supplied me with full-size photographs of the objects now in Marischal College, and to Mr Reginald A. Smith, who has furnished me with the measurements of those in the British Museum, I am able to give the following description of the hoard.

The articles in the British Museum consist of a bronze terret, a bronze ferrule for the butt of a spear shaft, three complete pin-heads of shale, and half of a fourth.¹

The terret (fig. 3) is of an early type, and shows the art of the Late-Celtic or Early Iron Age at its best. The ring is oval and cast hollow. From the top of the bow, where it is thinnest, it gradually swells out as it curves round on both sides, until in the lower part it assumes the form of two trumpets placed mouth to mouth with the typical lip-shaped moulding between. On

the under side is an oval opening, in which is inserted a thin iron bar to retain the strap that attached it to the harness. The terret measures $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches in width and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height externally, and the oval opening below is 1 inch by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch internally.

Although the bronze ferrule (fig. 4) is not mentioned in the original report of the discovery, it was received by the British Museum as part of the hoard, and it certainly is of a type which belongs to the period of the terret. The height of the ferrule is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, the diameter

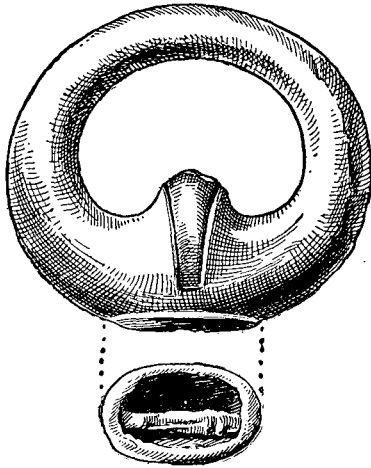


Fig. 3. Bronze Terret from Crichtie, Aberdeenshire.

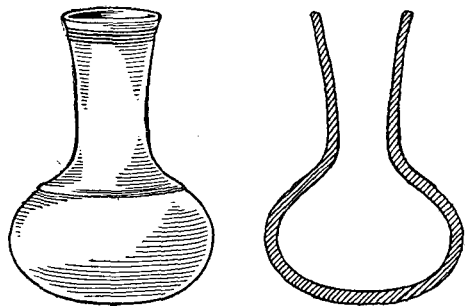


Fig. 4. Bronze Ferrule from Crichtie, Aberdeenshire.

¹ British Museum, *Guide to the Early Iron Age Antiquities* (1925), p. 158, figs. 189 and 190. Through the courtesy of the Director of the British Museum I have been permitted to reproduce these illustrations.

of the mouth of the socket $\frac{5}{8}$ inch, and the breadth of the oblate, spheroidal lower part is $1\frac{9}{16}$ inch. Four incised lines encircle the socket just below its mouth, and a slight moulding runs round the upper part of the bulbous terminal.

The pin-heads (fig. 5) are not exactly spherical, as they are flattened on the under side. In the centre of the flattened part is a hole drilled into

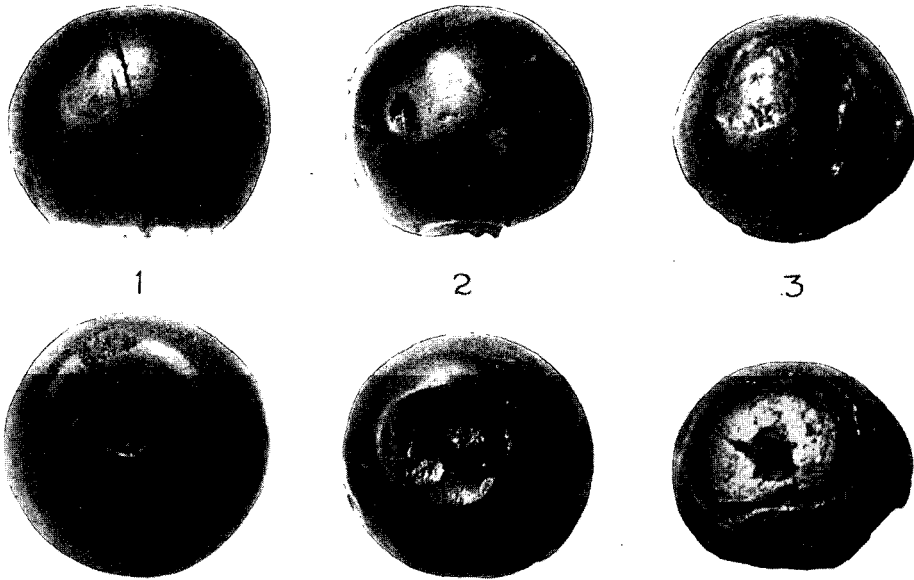


Fig. 5. Pin-heads of Shale from Crichtie, Aberdeenshire, showing views of side and under part of the two complete examples, and two views of the broken specimen. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

the ball to receive an iron pin, the remains of which are still to be seen in some of the heads, though the stems are gone. Two of the specimens in the British Museum measure $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in height, the third measures $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch by $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch, and the half $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch by $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch. The two complete examples in Aberdeen measure $1\frac{7}{16}$ inch by $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch and $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch by $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch respectively, while the broken fragment is $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in breadth. As the broken specimen in the British Museum is split vertically it shows the pin-hole drilled from the bottom to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the top, the hole measuring $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter at the mouth and tapering to less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch at the inner end.

We have thus in the two Museums a terret, a ferrule for spear-shafts, both of bronze, five complete pin-heads of shale, and fragments of two more from Crichtie.

Terrets of the early form described above are not so common as those of later date found in the fort on Traprain Law and elsewhere in Scotland. In the later examples the ring is sometimes plain and the trumpet-like expansions do not meet, but are connected by a narrow bar; in others the ring has decorative projections round the bow.

The only Scottish examples of the early form, that I know of, are one from Kirriemuir, Forfarshire, one locality unknown but probably Scottish, one from Clova, Aberdeenshire, and two from Hillockhead, Towie, which are all in the National Museum; one from Ballestrade, Cromar, Aberdeenshire, and the Crichtie example, both in the British Museum; and one from the Culbin Sands, Morayshire, one from Sheelagreen, Culsalmond, Aberdeenshire, and one from Sorrowlessfield, Oxnam, Berwickshire, which are in private hands.¹ The last example has been of very large size, but as less than half of it survives, its original dimensions cannot be obtained; it must have measured more than 4½ inches in width.

Regarding bronze ferrules of the Crichtie type, two others have been found in Scotland—a small one in the fort on Traprain Law,² and a more elaborate and larger specimen in the broch of Harray, Orkney.³ Three fragments of moulds for casting these objects were found on Traprain Law,⁴ dating to about the second century A.D., and pieces of another in the vitrified fort of Dun-a-goil, Bute, dating probably to the first century B.C.⁵

As for pin-heads of shale, nearly a dozen broken and whole have been found on Traprain Law. Like those found at Crichtie, some retain part of their iron pin in the hole drilled to receive it, but otherwise the metal has entirely rusted away.

CINERARY URNS FROM SEAMILL, WEST KILBRIDE.

Recently two large cinerary urns were presented to the National Museum by Miss Boyd, St Clair, West Kilbride. They were found close to each other, in 1883, in the bank at the side of the road, near the fort which lies close to the junction of the road to Seamill and the turnpike between Ardrossan and Largs (O.S. Map, Ayrshire, X.). The spot where they were found is quite near the house known as The Fort. We have

¹ *Proc. Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, vol. xv. p. 157, Pl. iii., No. 5, and *Proc. S.A. Scot.*, vol. xl. p. 33.

² *Ibid.*, vol. liv. p. 69, fig. 8, No. 16.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. vii. p. 103.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. liv. p. 89, fig. 20.

⁵ *Trans. Butehire Nat. Hist. Soc.* (1925), p. 58, Pl. 40.

another cinerary urn in the Museum which was found during road-making operations near the same place.¹ There are also records of two other urns having been found in the same neighbourhood. One of these, a cinerary urn, found its way into the possession of Mr Robert Hunter of Hunterston, and the other urn found near it went to the Museum in Anderson's College, Glasgow.² These two urns were found about 1830



1 0 3 6 Inches

Fig. 6. Cinerary Urn from Seamill, West Kilbride.

“Near the Castlehill at Seamill, while the new line of coast road was being executed . . . three feet below the surface, but without the addition of any mound being raised over them.”³

The Castlehill is no doubt the fort marked on the Ordnance Survey map, near the junction of the roads mentioned above, and it would seem very probable that there had been a small Bronze Age cemetery at this place.

The larger of the two urns just received into the Museum (fig. 6) had been broken into pieces and reconstructed. It has a heavy overhanging

¹ *Proc. S.A. Scot.*, vol. xvii. p. 72, fig. 5.

² *Arch. Collections of Ayr and Wigton*, vol. i. p. 40, fig. 2.

³ *New Statistical Account of Scotland—Ayrshire and Bute*, vol. v. p. 258.

rim, a vertical neck, and tapering lower part, and is formed of a drab stone-coloured clay, with crushed stones mixed up with it. The vessel measures $12\frac{7}{8}$ inches in height, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the bottom of the overhanging rim, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the neck, and 4 inches across the base. The top of the rim is bevelled obliquely downwards towards the inside, making an acute angle at the lip. The urn is devoid of ornamentation. It contained burnt bones, some of which



1 0 3 6 inches.

Fig. 7. Cinerary Urn from Seamill, West Kilbride.

were stained green, no doubt, through the disintegration of some small bronze implement or other object which had been placed amongst them. The smaller of the two urns (fig. 7) is in a perfect state of preservation, the ware being of a purplish-red colour and containing crushed stones amongst the clay. It also is of the variety with the heavy overhanging rim, but the neck is slightly concave, and the lower part tapers less towards the base than in the first urn. It measures from $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height on one side to $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches on the other, $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, $10\frac{5}{8}$ inches at the bottom of the overhanging rim, $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the hollow of the neck, 10 inches at the widest part of the body, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the base. There is no decoration on the wall of the vessel, but on the top of the flat rim, which is $\frac{5}{8}$ inch thick, is a zigzag, formed by the impressions of a loosely twisted cord of two strands, running round the

mouth. The urn was contained in what seems to have been a small cist-like structure formed of small slabs set on edge, with a thin slab of red sandstone for a cover. Calcined bones were found inside the vessel. The third urn, which was presented to the Museum in 1883 (fig. 8), is of the cordoned variety, and of brownish-yellow clay, containing the usual mixture of crushed stones. It has been made up slightly. The wall of the vessel is encircled by two cordons or mouldings, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, the higher one placed $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the lip, and the other $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches lower down. From the upper cordon to the mouth the wall of the vessel curves in



Fig. 8. Cinerary Urn from Seamill,
West Kilbride.



Fig. 9. Cinerary Urn from Seamill,
West Kilbride.

slightly, and from the lower the wall shows a slight convexity as it narrows towards the base. The urn measures $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, $8\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the widest part, and $5\frac{1}{8}$ inches across the base. The top of the rim is bevelled slightly downwards towards the inside, and measures only $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in thickness, which is much thinner than in the usual cinerary urn. There is a transverse row of small punctulations, formed by a toothed stamp with rounded teeth, just under the lip and another immediately above the higher cordon, and in the space between the cordons there is a similarly punctulated double zigzag, bordered above and below with a single transverse line, so as to form a design of reversed triangles. What it contained is not recorded.

Of the other two urns, the one preserved by Mr Hunter had a heavy overhanging rim, a concave neck, and a tapering lower part (fig. 10). It measured $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter across the mouth, and $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches across the base. The overhanging rim was decorated by impressed vertical lines between single transverse marginal lines, and the concave neck showed a lattice design between single marginal lines. The urn contained burnt human bones. It is not clearly stated whether the urn, which was given to Anderson's College Museum, was of the



Fig. 10. Cinerary Urn from Seamill, West Kilbride. (4.)

cinerary type, but it is more than probable that it was. The archæological collections from Anderson's College Museum are now in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, but this urn cannot be traced. There is, however, in the Glasgow Gallery a cinerary urn found at Seamill, West Kilbride, about 1880, which probably came from the same cemetery as the urns described above. The vessel (fig. 9) is of the cordoned variety, and bears a very strong resemblance to the first Seamill urn received into the Museum, which is illustrated in fig. 8. Formed of a clay of light brown colour, it measures $12\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height, $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the widest part, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the base. It is encircled by two raised cordons or mouldings, the space between the lip and upper cordon being decorated by a zigzag of three lines between two marginal lines above and below. On the top of the rim, which is bevelled

obliquely downwards towards the inside, are two concentric lines running round the mouth. All the designs have been made by impressing a cord of two strands on the clay before it was fired. The urn contained burnt human bones. I am indebted to Mr R. Lockhart Bryden, F.S.A.Scot., for a photograph and measurements of this vessel.