

II.

AN ABERDEENSHIRE IRON AGE MISCELLANY: (1) STONE CIRCLE AT FOULARTON; (2) BRONZE TERRET FROM RHYNIE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE TYPE. BY H. E. KILBRIDE-JONES, F.S.A.Scot.

1. STONE CIRCLE ON THE FARM OF FOULARTON, KINTORE.

In the neighbourhood of Inverurie there are the remains of four stone circles which were once of a common type—a type, that is, common to themselves, but apparently unique in the north-east of Scotland. All four circles have suffered virtual extirpation to satisfy an idle curiosity; but something yet remains of the circle at Broomend of Crichtie, which has been more fortunate than the remaining three of the type, and is therefore recorded.¹ The example which forms the subject of this note has suffered a less happy fate; when Coles visited it there was little to

¹ Best account is given by Ritchie, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. liv. p. 154. See also Dalrymple, *ibid.*, vol. xviii. p. 319.

indicate the former existence of such a monument, and time has not dealt lightly with what remains. The accumulation of new data provides the sole excuse for reconsidering the available evidence.

The stone circle at Foularton is said to have had a diameter of 28 feet, and to have consisted of six or seven stones.¹ Like the circle at Broomend, it had apparently been surrounded by a ditch.² "In the centre was a circular space immediately under the surface, 9 feet in diameter and marked by fire; and in the centre of this space was a grave, 5 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 2 feet 3 inches deep (1 foot being into the sub-soil). In this grave lay the skull and other bones of an unburnt skeleton. The grave lay east and west, and at the east end were fragments of an urn and incinerated bones. Around this central grave, in seven places, there were found deposits, some of which were protected by small stones built around them like circular cists, as at Broomend of Crichtie, and with flat stones above and below. In some of these were fragments of urns, and in small cists there were also fragments of urns found. In all the seven deposits, however, incinerated bones were found."³

This delightfully vague account is the inheritance of modern research. It is felt that, with so many "fragments of urns," there ought to be rather more extant than the thirteen sherds gifted to the National Museum more than half a century ago. It would also have added interest to this discussion had some note been taken of the localities of these fragments, and we should then have had something more specific than mere analogy with which to content ourselves. This indifference to the need of adequate recording is all the more lamentable since none of the sherds preserved are of the "usual well-known type belonging to the Bronze Age" as Coles imagined;⁴ instead, they may all be safely assigned to the Iron Age.

This pottery, therefore, at once assumes a new interest, chiefly because it was found within one of four stone circles belonging to a common type. One of that type is the Broomend of Crichtie circle, which has never been regarded as belonging to any other period than to the Bronze Age; the fact is indisputable. At precisely what period of the Bronze Age the Crichtie circle was erected is not very evident, although the finding of the unburnt skeleton in the central cist might give some hint of its antiquity. No less than two cinerary urns containing calcined human bone were found to have been deposited in front of the two remaining monoliths, whilst a third was found near a socket of another monolith long since removed.⁵

¹ Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times, Bronze and Stone Ages*, p. 108.

² Coles, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxv. p. 218.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁵ Ritchie, *loc. cit.*, p. 164.

The discovery of quantities of calcined bone elsewhere shows that the interior of the stone circle formed a regular burial-ground during the late Bronze Age.

With such evidence before us from Crichtie, we turn with renewed interest to the pottery from Foularton. Here the "excavator" was not so fortunate as to discover evidence consistent with a Bronze Age dating, but that does not imply that the stone circle must be unconditionally dated to the "Hallstatt" period¹ merely on the evidence of thirteen sherds of early Iron Age ware. There is the presence of an unburnt skeleton in the central cist, paralleled at Crichtie, with which to contend. It would be rash indeed to attempt an impossibility merely on the value of superficial evidence, especially since not only had others decided the matter for us,² but we had already convinced ourselves beforehand that the four stone circles of Broomend, Foularton, Tuack,³ and Cairnhall belonged to a type common to themselves. On the evidence from Broomend they were therefore all erected during some period of the Bronze Age.

But what of the discovery of potsherds of the early Iron Age at Foularton? The explanation is simple enough. We have already seen from the excavation of the Bronze Age recumbent-stone stone circle at Loanhead of Daviot that such monuments witnessed a succession of cultures, and continued in esteem well into the Iron Age.⁴ We have at last definite evidence of that fact, and there is insufficient grounds for assuming otherwise. In a country where people were acquiring new ideas by assimilation, there is no adequate reason why the dawn of a new age should herald the launching of an intensive campaign of megalithic building any more than it would be expected to sweep away entirely the old order of religious and social organisation. Such tenets as were possessed by the population of the late Bronze Age, in the absence of any all-devastating conquest from without, would tend to die slowly, and it is impossible to assume a megalithic revival in the absence of any definite reason for such a revival. Obviously, then, the stone circle at Foularton, like that at Loanhead of Daviot, continued in favour and in purpose at least as late as the early Iron Age.

We thus have a continuation of the Bronze Age tradition into the Iron Age from both a Recumbent-stone stone circle and from one not possessing that unique feature. We shall doubtless find, with further

¹ Cf. Childe in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxvii. p. 37 *et seq.*, and vol. lxviii. p. 372 *et seq.*

² Keiller, *Megalithic Monuments of North-East Scotland*, p. 5.

³ Dalrymple, *loc. cit.*, p. 324. The Tuack stone circle yielded three cinerary urns of the cordoned type.

⁴ Kilbride-Jones, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxix. p. 168.

scientific investigation of other sites, that the history of the stone circle was a long one, commencing in the early Bronze Age and extending well into the Iron Age, the concept of culture being the sole essential change throughout the passing centuries.

The thirteen potsherds from Foularton represent as many vessels. Amongst them are two rims (fig. 1, (1, 2)). The ware is very coarse: the paste seems to be of the usual quality associated with this type of pottery; but it often contains large pebbles, and the potter has not

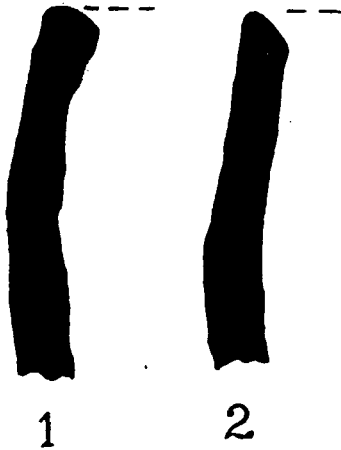


Fig. 1. Sections of Iron Age Pottery from Stone Circle. (i.)

troubled herself with the smoothing away of small protuberances. The pots must have been roughly pinched into shape, finger indentations being common; and although many have been slipped, this has not been sufficient to hide the imperfections of manufacture. The sherds are mostly of different textures and colours; some are red, others are of a pale pinkish buff, rather reminiscent of certain ware from Ireland.

Rim No. 1 is of blackish-coloured paste containing small grit and one or two large pieces of stone. Fairly hard, pinkish buff on interior, with patches of bluish black on exterior, caused by excessive heat. Ware is slipped on both faces. Iron Age, Type 2, Period 2.

Rim No. 2 is black throughout, and consists of coarse paste as before, containing some fairly large pebbles. Both faces have been slipped, and interior is somewhat shiny. Iron Age, Type 4, Period 2.

2. OBJECTS IN THE POSSESSION OF MR ALEXANDER SHAND, LONGCROFT, RHYNIE.¹

The objects to be noted were collected by the late Mr W. Shand, farmer, mostly, it is believed, from his own farm and from local cottars and crofters. It may therefore be assumed that most of the objects were discovered within a restricted radius of Rhyynie. To the west of the village, be it noted, is Tap o' Noth, the famous hill rising to close on two thousand feet in height. Crowning the summit is the well-known vitrified fort, below the ramparts of which, especially on the south side,

¹ I am indebted to Mr Mansfield D. Forbes for drawing my attention to these objects, and to Mr Shand for the facilities extended to me for their examination.

are numerous hut sites. They appear as crescents in the hillside, and sometimes a track may be observed linking several together. With such a fair-sized prehistoric village in the neighbourhood one may well expect to discover sporadic finds in the surrounding land.

(a) The bronze terret (fig. 2 (1)) is apparently unique of its kind.

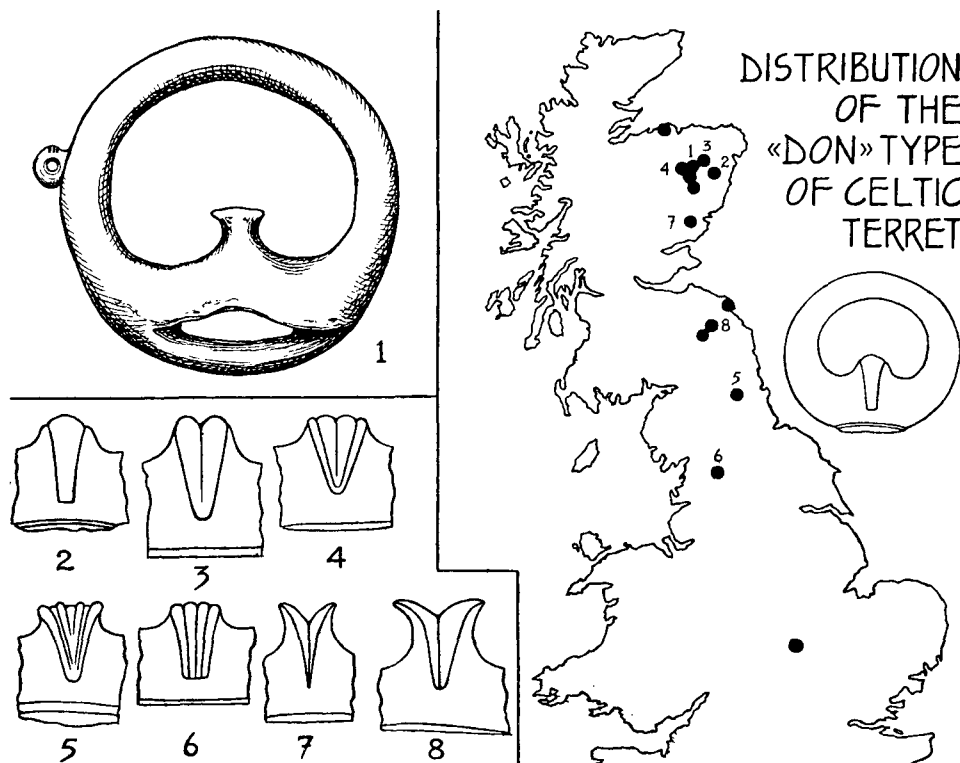


Fig. 2. Donside type of Celtic Bronze Terrets: No. 1 full size. Nos. 2-8 half size.

Three features distinguish it from most examples of this type of harness mounting: firstly, the small perforated attachment at the side; secondly, the curious manner in which the bar at the base, for mounting it upon the harness, has been provided; and, finally, the total lack of ornamentation. The purpose of the first of these features is not very clear: it consists of a small ring of bronze, cast on to the main ring and having about the centre thereof a small perforation. This perforation is so small as only to admit of a thread or of a thin wire to pass through it, and it may thus have served for suspending some embellishment therefrom. The second feature, the bar, has been fashioned in an interesting

manner. The ring for the most part is of even girth and cast solid; but the basal part, where there is a sudden expansion in girth, is found to have been cast hollow in such a way as to provide a splay which, from having a straight edge apart from the circumference, allows of free access to a bar. This bar, $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in thickness, apart from being part of the casting as a whole, also forms part of the circumference of the ring. Maximum strength is thereby given to the bar; but the idea is a clumsy one, and this terret seems to be a prelude to the forms discussed in the series below. Above the base, on the inside, is a plain projection. The third feature mentioned above will be referred to later.

The Rhynie terret belongs to a class of terret in which the ring is narrow in girth at the top, but gradually swells out as it curves round on both sides, until at the base it is perhaps twice as much in girth as at the top. The ring is usually, if not always, cast hollow, and on the under side is an oval opening concealing within it a bar, usually of iron and fixed in with lead. Above the opening in the base, on the inside of the ring, is a projection, which is usually ornamented in simple style, perhaps with no more than a vertical rib; but sometimes this projection increases in height and is bifurcated. Usually the sole variation in such terrets is the manner of treating this projection, and it therefore serves as a valuable indication of development, and gives some idea of the centre of origin of the type.

In regard to the distribution of these terrets, we have lately been nourished upon theories which will not bear the light of scrutiny. On the one hand, and with justification, the specimen from Crichtie, Inverurie¹ (fig. 2 (2)), has been claimed to be of early type,² whereas elsewhere the whole class is claimed to be late,³ the argument advanced in support of the latter theory being that the iron bar concealed in the base has been run in with lead. This can hardly be claimed to serve as an argument at all for placing the terrets in any particular period, especially since some specimens do not possess an iron bar, but instead the bar is of bronze and forms part of the casting—such are the Sheelagreen example⁴ and another in the National Museum without locality. Then there is the method adopted in the case of the Rhynie terret. It is thus obvious, as Mr Leeds admits, that the iron bar run in with lead will never serve as a sound criterion of date; neither will the presence of an iron bar in the decorated enamelled terret from the Fayûm⁵ provide

¹ *B.M. Guide to Early Iron Age Antiquities*, p. 158.

² Callander, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxi. p. 244.

³ Leeds, *Celtic Ornament*, p. 122.

⁴ Callander, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xl. p. 33.

⁵ *B.M. Guide to Early Iron Age Antiquities*, p. 86; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, 2nd series, vol. xx. p. 57. The Fayûm terret is probably of British origin.

sufficient excuse for assigning the type to the second or third centuries.¹ Such ideas, however, have occasioned more definite assertions elsewhere, and not only are we led to believe that the type is late, but the claim is made that it is of Northern English origin, and spread "even into Aberdeenshire."² A little research will serve to show how inept are such remarks.

On the question of date we have, unfortunately, very little to help us. Only four terrets were associated with other objects: that from Crichtie was part of a hoard, which also contained a bronze ferrule and several jet objects, which were probably the heads of iron pins;³ the two from the farm of Hillock Head, Towie, were found with numerous other bronze objects in a cairn, but the terrets alone were preserved;⁴ and the terret from the Roman supply base at Corstopitum was not thought of sufficient importance to merit any details of location and association.⁵ There is thus nothing by which it is possible to form any adequate opinion of date, and we must content ourselves by basing our arguments mainly upon the discovery of the last-named example at Corstopitum, a Flavian site, perhaps a castellum of Agricola.

In regard to the distribution of the type of terret under consideration, we find that we are limited to fifteen examples bearing localities from both Scotland and England. These are distributed over a fairly wide area as follows: Morayshire—one from the Culbin Sands;⁶ Aberdeenshire—one from Crichtie, Inverurie,⁷ one from Clova, Lumsden,⁸ one from Ballestrade, Cromar,⁹ two from Hillock Head, Towie,¹⁰ one from Sheelagreen, Culsalmond,¹¹ one from Rhyndie; Angus—one from Kirriemuir;¹² Berwickshire—one from Eyemouth;¹³ Roxburghshire—one from Oxnam.¹⁴ In England one was found at Chesters, Northumberland,¹⁵ and another at Corbridge,¹⁶ in the same county; one was found at Giggleswick, Yorkshire;¹⁷ and, finally, one was found as far south as Billing in Northamptonshire.¹⁸ Of the total number eleven were found in Scotland, and no less than seven within a restricted area in Aberdeenshire. Such concentration within so small an area would seem to suggest certain implications.

The series begins with the terret from Crichtie¹⁹ (fig. 2 (2)). It is

¹ Leeds, *loc. cit.*, p. 122.

² Childe, *Prehistory of Scotland*, p. 231.

³ Callander, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxi. p. 243; *B.M. Guide*, p. 158.

⁴ Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times, The Iron Age*, p. 122.

⁵ Forster and Knowles, *Arch. Aeliana*, 3rd series, vol. vii. p. 46, pl. iv.

⁶ Callander, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxi. p. 244.

⁷ *Ibid.*; *B.M. Guide*, p. 158.

⁸ Callander, *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹⁰ Anderson, *loc. cit.*, p. 122.

¹¹ Callander, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xi. p. 33.

¹² Callander, *ibid.*, vol. lxi. p. 246.

¹³ "Roy. Comm. on Anc. and Hist. Monuments in Scotland," *Berwickshire Inventory*, p. xxxviii.

¹⁴ Callander, *loc. cit.*

¹⁵ Leeds, *loc. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁶ Forster and Knowles, *loc. cit.*, pl. iv.

¹⁷ *Yorks. Arch. Jour.*, vol. xxii. p. 237.

¹⁸ Leeds, *loc. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁹ For the moment we are omitting the Rhyndie terret from this discussion.

fairly certain that this must possess an immediate prototype, but it is as yet undiscovered. The Crichtie terret is ornamented in simple fashion; it bears on its projection a single vertical rib, which seems to suggest that this formed an experiment in ornamentation. Such a form of ornamentation offered several possibilities, so that we are not surprised when we discover that the single vertical rib has been expanded and divided into two sections (fig. 2 (3) in the example from Sheelagreen). Further expansion would be impossible without producing a projection of ungainly proportions, so other methods were resorted to for developing the ornamentation. The twin-sectioned vertical rib therefore remains the same, but it is now improved and embellished with a beaded edge (fig. 2 (4)), from Towie. All these improvements, be it noted, had taken place within a restricted area. Development proceeds apace, but the scene is now transferred to the south. At Corstopitum (fig. 2 (5)) we find that the divided vertical rib has now been pulled apart to form two narrow vertical ones, which are narrow only because the beading remains untouched except for a slight *retroussé* effect at the top. Such confinement apparently appeared both unwarranted and ugly to the craftsman who made the Giggleswick specimen, so he simplified the ornament into four vertical ribs of equal size (fig. 2 (6)).

It is thus obvious that the initial stages in the development of the ornamentation of the series of terrets under review took place upon Donside—a fact so striking, indeed, that we have been tempted to name the series the 'Don or Donside' type of Celtic terret. It is not until that development is well advanced that it is necessary to leave that area and turn southwards to see what subsequently happened. The lesson, therefore, seems obvious enough. We find confirmation of this southerly trend in the clumsy copy, from Oxnam (fig. 2 (8)), of the neat, northern, bifurcated projection upon the Kirriemuir specimen (fig. 2 (7)). There is even a further degraded example of this form in the National Museum, but unfortunately without locality. This eccentricity in decoration, that is by bifurcating the projection, was probably suggested by the divided vertical rib, possibly of some example similar to that from Sheelagreen (fig. 2 (3)).

The above considerations make it possible that the Rhyne terret might be the earliest example of the type yet discovered. It is obviously far removed from any others that have come under consideration, not only because of its several unique features, but because of its remarkably small size. It measures only $1\frac{13}{16}$ inch in greatest diameter, and, taking the bar as part of the circumference, the ring forms an almost perfect circle. The remaining terrets are large in comparison, the smallest

being the Crichton specimen, which is $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches in greatest diameter, and they are mostly oval in shape. In addition, all are free of attachments, with the possible exception of the Sheelagreen terret. Mr A. O. Curle has drawn my attention to the "two small holes broken in the upper and thinner part of the ring."¹ It will be noticed that both holes are equidistant from the central vertical axis, so that it would be safe to infer that these holes represent the positions of attachments to the ring. Mr Curle is of the opinion that these attachments probably took the form of decorative knobs rather than of small plates such as the Rhynie example possesses. This attachment of decorative knobs might have been suggested by the pierced one on the Rhynie terret, an idea which probably by this time had long been out of date. We thus seem to be well on the way to establishing Donside as the centre of this development.

There only remains the necessity of hazarding a few remarks in regard to the date of the Donside type of terret. Let it be understood at once that we profoundly disagree with the notion of assigning to the type a second or third century date as suggested.² Were we to presume that they belonged to such a period we would expect to find at least a single specimen at Traprain Law, a site which yielded no less than ten terrets of other forms, since it was during this period that the hill camp was enjoying a time of comparative prosperity. The abundance of Roman ware of the second century testifies to that fact. Yet we look in vain for anything in the nature of the Donside type of terret, and, presuming it to have flourished at this period, it seems hardly possible that the people of Traprain should remain ignorant of its form when others in the north-east and in the Border regions were fully acquainted with the type. A specimen or two would also be expected from our earth-houses, since such structures are numerous in the north-east. But we have not far to look for the explanation. If we assume that the terret from Corbridge arrived there during the Flavian period, the matter adjusts itself. There would still be the possibility of finding a specimen at Traprain Law; but, on the other hand, we would not be surprised at its absence at this date, and the reason for the absence of the type from our earth-houses is self-evident. Such considerations tend to place the Aberdeenshire specimens in an even more remote period than would be suggested by the distribution of the type in the Lowlands.

However, in spite of meagre data, we can fairly claim to have established three facts: (a) that the type originated in the north-east of Scotland; (b) that it is an export to England; (c) that an earlier date is more suitable in view of the available evidence. Probably in the north-

¹ Callander, *loc. cit.*, vol. xl. p. 34.

² Leeds, *loc. cit.*, p. 122.

east the Donside type of terret would belong to the first century before Christ. At least it seems hardly possible that it could be later than the first half of the first century of our era.

(b) Included in Mr Shand's collection are three beads. The first, a fine one of clear amber, was found in a moss at the foot of the Tap o' Noth whilst casting peats. It is in the form of a circular ring, $1\frac{1}{3}\frac{3}{2}$ inch

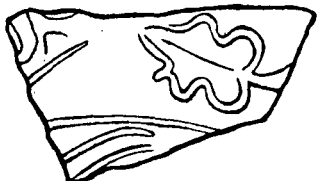


Fig. 3. Samian Ware from neighbourhood of Rhynie, Aberdeenshire.

in diameter and nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness, having a central hole $\frac{1}{3}\frac{3}{2}$ inch in diameter. This hole is slightly irregular, and has a counter-sunk appearance on either side of the bead. It has obviously been made subsequent to the shaping and smoothing of the bead as a whole.

The second bead, which is of glass, is a black triangular specimen, $\frac{2}{3}\frac{1}{2}$ inch from tip to tip, with yellow spiral decoration at the apices, the apices here being flattened to such an extent as almost to give the bead a six-sided appearance. Such beads are of common occurrence in the north-east. The third bead is of turquoise blue, $\frac{7}{16}$ inch in diameter.

(c) Also in the same collection are three sherds of Roman ware—two of decorated Samian and one of a plain grey ribbed pottery. None bears any locality. The nearest Roman camp was at Glenmailen, a temporary marching camp of short occupation, about fifteen miles distant. One sherd of Samian here illustrated (fig. 3) bears upon it a fig leaf, and in the top left-hand corner the hind leg of some animal and a portion of the tail, perhaps those of a lion.