

6. BRIMMOND TREASURE TROVE.

Brimmond Hill lies 6 miles west of the City of Aberdeen and, although not quite 1000 feet in height, is a favourite view-point since a range of land and sea stretching to 50 miles is unfolded, the view being enhanced by a hill chart.

It formed the western bastion of the Stocket Forest which was a favourite hunting ground of the Celtic Kings. In later times Robert the Bruce gifted the forest to the Burgh of Aberdeen in recognition of its loyalty to him in the Wars of Independence, after which the territory, 20 miles in circumference, became known as the Freedom Lands of Aberdeen. In the reign of Mary Queen of Scots the magistrates began to feu the lands in various parcels mostly amongst themselves, so much so that Brimmond Hill is about the only section that the town never allowed to pass out of its hands, and this hold has been strengthened in late years by the Town Planning Act and by Provisional Orders.

On 9th August 1942 a party of the local Home Guard was engaged in shooting practice at the southern end of the hill, and when forming a target within 100 yards of the summit came on a hoard of about a hundred coins lying loose under one of the numerous small boulders. A hasty inspection indicated that the coins belonged mostly to the reign of King Charles I, and a later examination by experts has confirmed this view. The latest is dated 1632, which leads one to suppose that the find is associated with the "troubles" arising out of the Covenanting Wars during the years 1639-46.

The histories of the period make mention of hostilities being carried beyond the gates of the town as far as the extremity of the Freedom Lands at Bogfairly and Newhills and tell of casualties not only in the burgh but in the surrounding country. At the elevated point of discovery a great stretch of country lies in view, most of the Freedom Lands being visible up to and including the town. A number of boulders lie near at hand which, if the deposit had been made under excitement, would make rediscovery difficult. A drove road passes close at hand which would have been much in use in a time of flight. It is clear from the absence of any container that the coins had been lodged in a

moment of panic and that the depositor had either fallen a victim to the peril which he was trying to evade or had afterwards failed to trace the place of concealment.

The following are some possible explanations of this interesting find:—

1. The site being near a drove road the hoard may have been a scoop brought off by a robber from some defenceless wayfarer, there being a "robbers' cave" at no great distance.

2. The coins being miscellaneous and of low denomination are such as might have been amassed by a Chapman on his rounds and placed here when he surveyed the signs of disturbance. (It was an ex-Chapman, George Davidson, who bought Newhills (Kepplehills) in 1642 and Bogfairly in 1648.)

3. A citizen may have hastily gathered the contents of his "till" when flying from the sack of Aberdeen. "These townsmen to the number of 150 were slayne in the fight and in the flight chieffie in the day of the battell and thairefter without the toun, at Forresterhill, Newhillis, Shedocksley and uther partis of the freedome. There was also slayne sum countrie people."

4. The owner of the lands near the site was James Cruickshank, of whom it is written: "He fled heir and thair through the countrie and durst not be seen within or without the toun being sore invyit for his loyaltie to the King. They maisterfullie took his rents and living of Newhills and Bogfairly pertaining to him in heritage." He may have formed the cache as a standby when in hiding. It would appear from the Sheriff Court Records that he died in 1643.

5. In 1647 there was a violent outbreak of plague in Scotland, during which Aberdeen and district had its full share, about one-fifth of the inhabitants being victims. Here also is a possible explanation because many would hastily fly from the visitation.

The coins themselves show signs of considerable use and are by no means rare, being largely made up of "Turners" of the time of Charles I. There are a few silver coins, also some of the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary, and a number of Dutch and German origin.

The collection has been handed over to the Regional Museum, Aberdeen. It is made up as follows:—

- 1 Silver Queen Mary Groat (1553-1554).
- 1 Silver Queen Mary Bawbee (1542-1558).
- 1 Silver Queen Elizabeth Threepenny.
- 3 James VI Placks.
- 2 Fragments of Silver Coins.
- 4 Turners of James VI.
- 14 Turners of Charles I (1st Issue).
- 46 Turners of Charles I (2nd Issue).
- 2 Dutch Doits.
- 1 Brass Nuremberg Counter.
- 2 Unidentified.

Total 77

JAS. CRUICKSHANK.