

6. THE BRONZE BLADE FROM CRAIGSCORRY, NEAR BEAULY.

In January 1925 Dr Callander ¹ reported the discovery of a long cist cut in the rock at Craigsorry, Beauly. It contained an extended skeleton together with an arrowhead and a slug knife of flint, both calcined, and fragments of bronze. He recognised that the four largest fragments of bronze fitted together and "formed part of a pointed implement with a stout, rounded midrib." He was in doubt "whether the two other pieces were remains of a second implement or had been broken off from the edge of the foregoing." On re-examining the group of relics in the course of a routine inspection of objects buried for security, I noticed that the two fragments did actually join on to the rest as Dr Callander had half surmised. Mr Darroch, the Museum's Technical Assistant, has very skilfully effected the junction so that a better idea of the weapon from this unusual grave can now be gained than was given by the earlier description and illustration.

The blade is preserved for a total length of only $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches (12.2 cm.), both the butt and the point (at least 2.4 cm. or 1 inch has been broken off) being missing. The maximum width of the blade preserved is 4.6 cm. ($1\frac{1}{8}$ inch), the edges having perished entirely. It is strengthened by a stout oval midrib 1.4 cm. wide and 0.6 cm. thick near the butt, but tapering to a width of only 0.9 cm., where it is broken off 10 cm. down in the direction of the point. At its extremity the midrib is only 0.4 cm. thick, but its width here cannot be determined precisely owing to the corrosion of the blade.

On each face at the widest surviving point, 0.9 cm. on either side of the midrib, the blade thickens to another ridge which forms one edge of a rounded groove 0.3 cm. wide from lip to lip. The two grooves, as Pl. XI, 2, shows, run parallel to the midrib and consequently converge as it contracts, themselves becoming narrower and shallower. They do not seem to have run the whole length of the blade, as the best preserved appears to fade out after being traced for 2.6 cm.

This grooved blade is unlike any other surviving relic from a burial deposit in Scotland, differing as much from the stout midrib daggers from Blackwaterfoot (Arran) and Wester Mains of Auchterhouse (Angus) as from the common flat round-heeled daggers, though it recalls the description of a blade found in the primary grave at Gilchorn, near Arbroath.² Grooves are notoriously a feature of the early Middle Bronze Age daggers of the Wessex culture, but occur also on some halberds—*e.g.* O'Riordain's No. 62 from Ireland³ and one from Auchingoul, Banffshire, recently acquired by the Museum. The Craigsorry blade, as preserved, is, however, considerably more slender than this and other undoubted halberds. Hence the new reconstruction of the blade does not suffice to settle the question, mooted by Dr Callander, whether the weapon should be classed as a dagger or a halberd. Only the butt or a length of both edges, sufficient to disclose asymmetry, could settle that issue.

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¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lix. pp. 204-8.

² *Ibid.*, vol. xxv. p. 460.

³ *Archæologia*, vol. lxxxvi. p. 263.