

10. A STONE BATTLE AXE FROM ABERDEENSHIRE.

A remarkable stone battle axe, 5·9 ins. long (fig. 8), found in 1898 at Thistley-crook Farm, Torphins, Aberdeenshire (Nat. Grid ref. 38/6402) has been secured for the Museum by Mr W. G. Aitken, F.S.A.Scot. The material has been identified

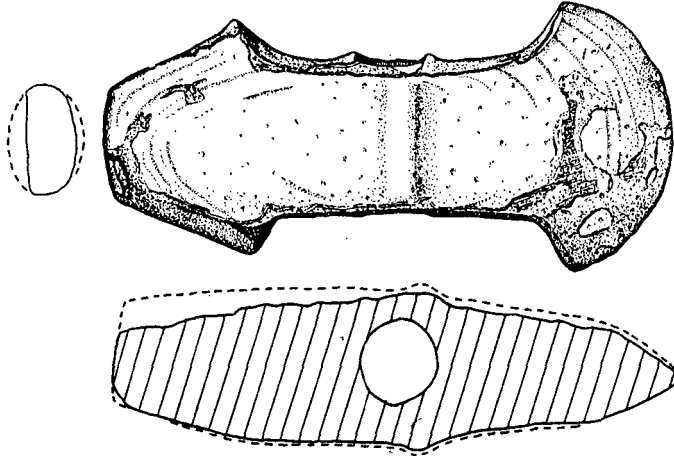


Fig. 8.

by Dr James Phemister, Geological Survey, as "sandy blaes." "A bedded silty or muddy sediment hardened into a material resembling shale. The bedding is parallel to the plane containing the longest and the mean axis of the axe, and since the bedding is accompanied by small changes in hardness of the layers of the stone a natural ornamentation is produced, seen best where the shaped surface of the artefact cuts across the bedding at a low angle as at the axe end. The knobby appearance of the surface is probably natural, arising from the existence of nodular secretions in the blaes. This rock is not native to Aberdeenshire. Similar material could be got in the Carboniferous districts of the Midland Valley of Scotland, and Mr R. Wilson of our staff suggests that similar hard sandy

shale might come also from the Jurassic strata of the Brora district." The outside has been weathered and bleached, and much has scaled off more or less parallel to the worked surface.

The shape is unusual, having Danish and N. German affinities: a raised ring around the shaft-hole on a flat surface with flaring ends—as on some passage-grave axes¹—combined with central vertical ridges and, seen from the top, rather parallel sides and hammer butt—as on some contemporary single-grave axes.² But the central position of the perforation is un-Scandinavian and the butt in side view is entirely British, as on the weapons from Snowhill and Hove, both assigned to the Wessex Culture.³ The Thistleycrook find by emphasising the Continental relationships does not seem, at present, to help with the chronological dilemma which is now even worse than when demonstrated by R. A. Smith over thirty years ago.⁴

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