

3. LATE BRONZE AGE WEAPONS FOUND AT THE ATTON IN GLEN CLOVA.

The Find.

Two large spearheads and a sword of bronze were found some years ago in Glen Clova, Angus. The discovery of the first spearhead was accidental. While Earnest Gilchrist, shepherd, was trying to recover a ferret he felt a hard object in a rabbit's burrow. After a cursory glance he threw it aside. Later, he mentioned this find to others and a young boy, Stewart Milne, went over and picked up the first spearhead. He returned with some other children and in the course of "looking for bones" he found two fragments of metal and Isobella Ross found the second spearhead and another metal object.

It was not till April 1956 that I first saw the objects. The spearheads were in very fine condition and the three fragments of metal fitted together to form a leaf-shaped sword with two of the rivets, which had held the hilt-plates, still in the rivet holes. Later, with Mr James Boyd, Curator of the Dundee Museum, and Mr R. D. M. Candow, both Fellows of the Society, I visited the site of the find, 10 miles up the glen from Cortachy. It is in a slight hollow in the side of the hill, and about 50 ft. above the level of the river (Nat. Grid ref. 37/317727). There is no building near it other than a ruined croft about 150 yds. to the E. The bridge across the South Esk near the Church in Glen Clova is about 800 yds. due E.

There was no obvious trace of a prehistoric dwelling, but we had hopes that careful excavation might reveal something in the raised ground to the N. of the burrow where the weapons had been unearthed. The subsoil was glacial clay and the whole area had been riddled with rabbit burrows. Owing to the wet summer that followed, work was possible, and when Mr Boyd and Mr Candow later visited the site they found that it had been dug over by some other persons and there is little hope of discovering any stratification. Mr Candow picked up a fragment of flint which may have been worked. There is just a hope that future careful riddling may produce the missing rivets and other fragments of metal.

I was told that one of the children picked up something that looked like a bit of charcoal, but it was crushed and thrown away. This may have been part of the sword handle.

There is no record of any previous find of Bronze Age relics in Glen Clova. The nearest sites are at Redhall, S. of Cortachy, and at Auchnacree, near Glenogil, both sites being about 11 miles away from the Atton as the crow flies. The Auchnacree hoard of Early Bronze Age axes, knives and armlets, now mostly in the National Museum, was described in the *Proceedings* for 1921-2, pp. 351-64.¹ On the hill of Redhall, East Kinwhirrie, a late Early Bronze Age flanged axe was found in 1919 by the late Peter Bruce while ploughing near a burial mound called Bell Hillock (Nat. Grid ref. 37/388582). The mound was soon afterwards excavated by a visiting clergyman and produced an Early Bronze Age food vessel and parts of a jet necklace and bracelet now in Sunderland (*J.B.A.A.*, xxv, 1919 268-9). There is an earlier record (in the files of the Ordnance Survey, to which we are indebted for the reference) of an urn and spearhead being found there in 1863.

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¹ *Inventaria Archaeologica*, Great Britain, GB. 26 (1958).

The Objects.

The Atton hoard has been claimed as "treasure trove," like that from Auchnacree, and placed in the National Museum; and a reward has been paid to the finders. Our thanks are due to the Rev. Mr Muir Haddow for recognising and recovering the objects, which can now be seen and studied by all interested.

This is the second important addition in Scotland to the map of spearheads with lunate openings in the blade that E. E. Evans published in 1933 (*Archæologia*, 83). He showed them occurring in hoards at Highfields, Dingwall, at Denhead, Coupar-Angus (omitted from Callander's list of Scottish hoards), and Duddingston, Edinburgh, as well as single examples from Stirlingshire and Roxburghshire. In *P.S.A.S.* (1942-3), V. G. Childe recorded a considerable hoard at Ballymore, Argyll, that included one of these spearheads, and provided a link with their probable origin in Ireland.

All three objects from the Atton are in the main heavily patinated (Pl. XXI). Their edges have been more readily damaged in consequence. The sword, 21.5 ins. long, is of the common, narrow, straight-shouldered type. The two breaks across the blade, and the one removing a piece of shoulder, are modern. The shape of the hilt plate can be seen at the base of the blade on one side (retouched on the photograph). Both spearheads have lost most of their socket, one at least in antiquity. The larger, now 12.5 by 2.85 ins. probably also lost its tip in the past; the rounded projection from the break is a flow of bronze that cooled too soon in casting, producing a weakness. There is also a curious appearance as if the hollow up the centre of the weapon had originally come as far as that, and had then been filled with bronze perhaps to counteract some visible sign of the weakness. The tip is now solid .6 in. back from the break. The openings in the blade are elongated towards the tip, while below them there are two circular holes drilled after casting.

The second spearhead now measures 12.3 by 2.55 ins. Its decorative ridge mouldings are differently arranged: the ones at the side of the central rib run down the socket. The openings are simple segments of a circle. Within the openings of both spearheads the seam indicating a two-piece mould (*cf.* Ballymore) has been imperfectly removed, in contrast to the other surfaces which retain the striations of the final polishing process, as does the sword: all three could well be by the same maker.

The additional holes are not a usual feature, but the Denhead 19 ins. spearhead has no less than ten round holes in the blade, and Irish examples with four and two were illustrated in Wilde's Catalogue of the Royal Irish Academy Collections. The Ballymore spearhead has the unusual upward tapering of the openings.

Professor Hawkes and Miss Margaret Smith in their recent survey of buckets and cauldrons, and the bronzes associated with them, have demonstrated the background of intense international exchange of bronze smiths and their products, and perhaps of population movements too, behind these finds.¹ Central European, Northern European and Mediterranean forms and techniques met in Ireland and Britain in the late 8th and 7th centuries B.C. To this time they date the Duddingston hoard, which has several fragmentary lunate spearheads,² and also more exotic groups, containing amber and gold ornaments as well as bronzes, from Balmashannar, near Forfar, and Covesea in Morayshire, which suggest direct links between Scotland and the Continent. In the caves both at Covesea and at

¹ *Ant. J.*, 1957, esp. 159-60, 189-90 and 197.

² Such spearheads used to be put at before 750 B.C. due to a dating of the Spanish Huelva hoard that is now shown to be too early.

Heathery Burn, Co. Durham, "flat-rim" pottery is associated with Continental bracelets and other evidence for movements. NE. Scotland's direct Continental contacts continued into the 5th century, the date now assigned to hoards from Braes of Gight, Aberdeenshire, and Muir of Ord, Ross-shire; both of these contain Covesea bracelets, showing that at least one type of bronze was long lived.¹

A very fine but not polished lunate spearhead from Perthshire, or Argyll, has sharp ridges that run down to a raised rectangle on the socket (Pl. XXI),² as probably happened on the larger Atton example, and just as similar ridges do on spearheads without lunate openings from Auchtertyre, Morayshire, and Inshoch, Nairn, of which the former is associated with Covesea type bracelets. This decorative feature may derive from the latest of the spearheads with square "basal loops" from which also sharp ridges run along the blade, Evans's sub-type 3. These various ridged types were evidently simultaneous, though in the Ballymore hoard two of them without lunate openings were damaged so that it can not be seen whether or not they had basal loops. A ridged-spearhead without openings, like those from Ballymore, and probably without basal loops, has recently been acquired by Aberdeen Regional Museum along with a leaf-shaped spearhead that has slighter ridges, like Ballymore No. 7. They may have been found together at Freefield, Old Rayne. An early type of basal-looped spearhead from the same house at Oyne is quite differently patinated and so not associated.

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