

NOTES

I. TWO FLINT DAGGERS FOUND IN SCOTLAND

INCLUDED in the Ludovic M. Mann archaeological collection, bequeathed to Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum in 1955, were two flint daggers found in Scotland, one of which has been broken and retrimmed (fig. 1). The damaged dagger, found in the Isle of Arran, Buteshire, does not appear to have been published before, but it is hoped to show that the other may be identified with one originally published by Sir John Evans as found in Blows Moss, South Ronaldsay, Orkney.

The undamaged dagger, presumed to be from Orkney, is of pale grey flint extensively mottled with ivory and dark grey; it is $5\frac{5}{16}$ in. long, $1\frac{7}{8}$ in. in greatest width and nowhere more than $\frac{5}{16}$ in. thick.¹ It is in perfect condition. Both faces are completely flaked, with edges delicately retouched; even the butt has been trimmed and rounded. On each of the straight sides there are slight notches which might have assisted in hafting.

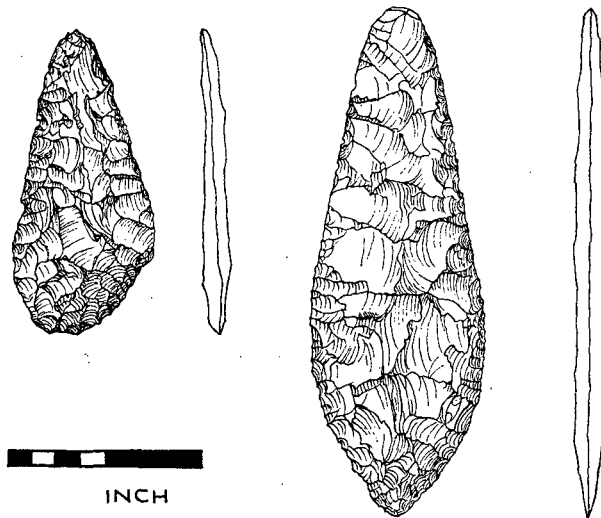


FIG. 1. Flint daggers from Corriegills, Arran (*left*) and Blows Moss, Ronaldsay (*right*) ($\frac{1}{8}$)

When received this dagger had pencilled upon it, apparently in Mann's hand, the word 'CURSIT'. Admittedly this word is susceptible of more than one interpretation, but in this context it probably denotes the Orkney antiquary, J. W. Cursiter, whom Mann knew well; indeed, Mann told me that he had been prevented only by a mischance from buying Cursiter's whole archaeological collection. However, Mann obtained a few things from Cursiter, of which the dagger would appear to be one. A flint dagger blade was exhibited by Cursiter at the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, held in Glasgow in 1911: this is probably the dagger under discussion, but unfortunately no details are given.²

Happily Evans, though brief, is more explicit about what must be the same dagger – 'Mr J. W. Cursiter, of Kirkwall, has a very symmetrical blade like Fig. 264, but smaller,

¹ Reg. No. '55-96ch.

² Catalogue of Exhibits, *Palace of History*, II, p. 832, No. 19.

found in Blows Moss, South Ronaldsay, Orkney.¹ Fig. 264 shows the fine flint dagger from Lambourn Down, Berks., which appears to be $6\frac{3}{4}$ in. long and thus longer than the dagger under discussion, whilst in shape the general resemblance of the two is indeed close. However, a reference by J. G. Callander in a description of prehistoric relics found in Orkney renders the identification almost certain – ‘A beautifully flaked flint dagger, measuring $5\frac{5}{8}$ in. long, and about 2 in. broad at the widest part, was found while cutting peats in Blows Moss, South Ronaldsay, in 1888.’²

The Arran dagger was found at Corriegills. It is of greyish-brown flint, with ivory and dark grey mottling, $3\frac{3}{8}$ in. long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide and about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick.³ Both faces are completely worked, with retouch of the edges more obvious on one face than the other. The butt is shouldered and ends in a slight point. On one side there seem to be two hafting notches.

The blade of the dagger is missing, having apparently broken off obliquely. The line of the break has been somewhat steeply retrimmed, apparently to convert the surviving part of the dagger into a knife or scraper. It could, of course, be argued that the implement was never other than a knife or scraper, but its proportions and style of its workmanship are in my opinion such as to suggest that it is the reused haft of a dagger perhaps originally a little shorter than the Blows Moss, Ronaldsay, dagger.

The dagger from Corriegills, since it has been reused, cannot certainly be taken as evidence of Beaker influence or settlement in Arran. No such objection applies to the dagger from Blows Moss, Ronaldsay. The recognition of this dagger merely confirms the ascription to Orkney originally published by Evans and, however archaeologically unexpected this may appear, it must be accepted.

J. G. SCOTT