

6. THE JET NECKLACE FOUND AT GREENHOWE, PLUSCARDEN, MORAY

IN 1923 a short cist was discovered on the farm of Greenhowe, at the edge of a small cairn which was being removed to facilitate ploughing. The cist was almost entirely dug out before the farmer realised that he had found a grave. However, the soil was carefully

¹ *D. and E.*, 1965, 24.

sieved a few days later by H. B. Mackintosh, who published an account of the find in the Proceedings.¹ In all two triangular plates and twenty-three beads were recovered, along with a few small pieces of human bone.

The necklace has been lent to the National Museum for study and treatment through the kindness of the Father Prior of Pluscarden Priory. The purpose of this note is to provide a fuller description and illustration of the necklace. The remains represent only a part of an elaborate crescentic necklace of the type described by Craw; presumably it was buried incomplete as is known to have happened on other occasions.²

The two triangular plates are a pair which formed the ends of the necklace at the back of the neck. They are undecorated. The larger (fig. 4a) is 2.02 in. long, 1.08 in. wide and

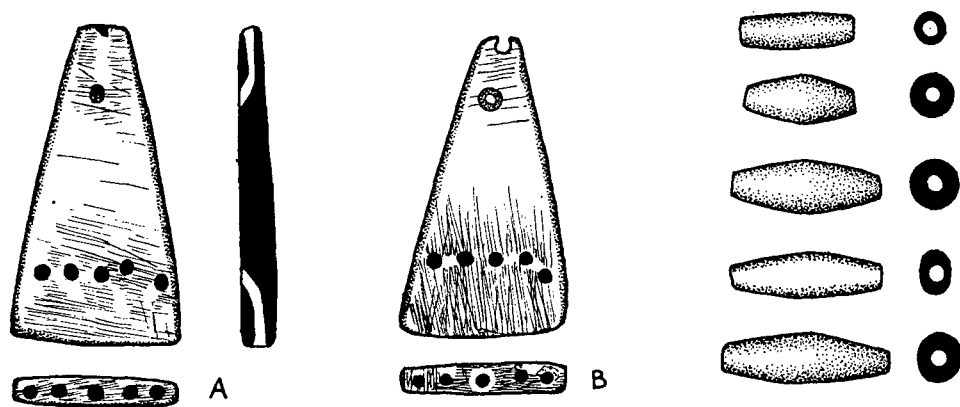


FIG. 4. Plates and beads from a jet necklace found at Greenhowe, Pluscarden, Moray

0.22 in. thick. At the upper end there is a perforation running from the upper edge and emerging on the under surface. Along the lower edge are five perforations which emerge in a rather irregular row on the lower part of the under surface. The outer surface and the two long sides are smooth and glossy except for some surface crazing, but the upper and lower edges are striated from being rubbed down with an abrasive, and the under side retains rather fainter striations.

On the under surface the striations have been worn away between the upper hole and the top edge, and between the three left-hand holes of the row below, in the latter case forming a very slight groove. There is also very faint diagonal wear, running down to the left from the two outside holes, and to the right from the next hole on the left, and from between the central and adjacent hole to the right. It is also noticeable that in the area between the upper hole and lower row of holes the striations have almost worn away, suggesting that the presence of strings above and below has prevented these parts of the plate rubbing on the skin or clothes. Along the lower edge there is wear between each hole and the edge adjacent to the under side (the upper edge on the lower drawing fig. 4).

The other triangular plate (fig. 4b) is 1.9 in. long but the same width and thickness as the other. The perforations in the lower part are similar, but at the narrower upper end there was originally a straight perforation. This broke, and was replaced by an hour-glass

¹ P.S.A.S., LVIII (1923-4), 239-41.

² *ibid.*, LXIII (1928-9), 163-6; examples of incomplete necklaces are fairly frequent, e.g. Brackley, Argyll, LXXXIX (1955-6), 41.

perforation. There are striations at the upper end and on the lower half of the under surface, but they are coarser than on the other plate and appear to be due to a later rubbing down of the glossy surface. There is clear wear between the two outside pairs of holes in the row, and fainter wear between the central hole and its neighbour to the right. There is also an indication of wear below the end hole on the left. Along the lower edge the wear is similar to the other plate, except that around the central hole there is a groove, presumably worn by the end of a bead pressed firmly against the hole.

Twenty-three beads survive. They are of two forms, almost cylindrical and fusiform. Five cylindrical beads are almost the same length, 0.72 to 0.76 in., and the sixth is 0.89 in. long. The fusiform beads range between 0.68 and 1.15 in. long. Most are round in cross-section, but two have a somewhat flattened side, and one is a flattened oval in cross-section. The material of which they are made varies somewhat, from a fairly glossy black to very dark brown, and five of the latter have a badly cracked surface. The ends of most of the beads are cut obliquely. On one bead of each form an error in manufacture has brought the perforation too near the surface resulting in a hole at one side about half-way along.

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