

Another Dagger from a Scottish Grave

by J. K. Thomson

In the course of dealing with enquiries about objects in the collection of the Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling, a frequent request by research workers is for information on a dagger blade from Doune Road, Keir near Dunblane, Perthshire.¹ Since this dagger is not included in Henshall's list² and bears three rivet-holes, a feature the existence of which has been doubted,³ it is considered worthwhile to give a brief description in these notes.

In 1879 a knoll of coarse gravel lying in the SE corner of a field about quarter of a mile W of Dunblane on the Doune Road (NN 77790137) was levelled when building two blocks of

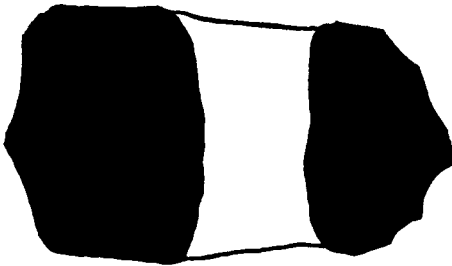
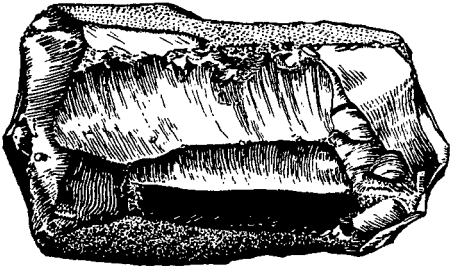
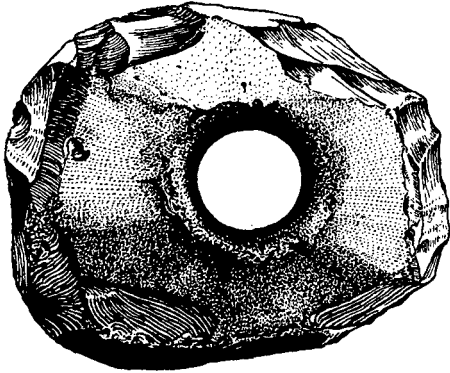


FIG 1. Flint mace-head from the River Tay (4)

cottages. In the highest part of the mound four cists were found.⁴ The first two were destroyed, only a fragment of pottery being picked up. The third, without its cover-slab, consisted of four thin slabs of stone, 'the corners meeting very closely'. It measured 3 ft 3 in by 2 ft 2 in and 2 ft deep. In the cist were the remains of an inhumation burial, the dagger and a number of small bones, 'very white apparently the bones of animals . . . the appearance of being burned, and might have got into the cist along with the earth with which it was filled'. The fourth cist was also filled with earth and similar small white bones, while on the bottom at the right side a food vessel and a cinerary urn were placed in the corners.⁵

The dagger (fig 2) is in fair condition, and bears a green patina and some corrosion. The edges are damaged, except at the heel of which only a small part is missing, and the inner edge of the bevel can be traced in places. A little of the glossy surface can be seen. The blade measures

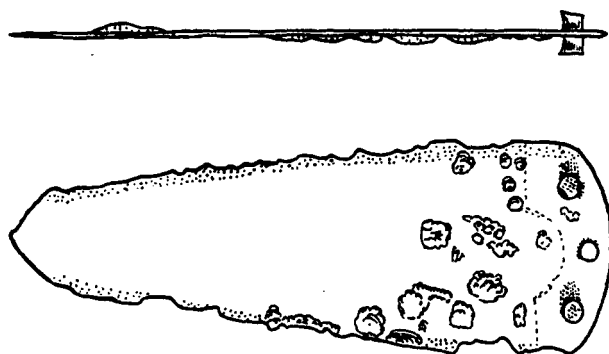


FIG 2 Dagger from Doune Road, Keir, Dunblane (3)

11.8 cm long by 4.1 cm wide. At the heel are three rivet-holes; the outer pair are 0.35 cm in diameter, the centre one 0.4 cm. Two flat-ended rivets are in position in the outer holes; one is fixed and measures 0.8 cm in length, while the other is loose in its hole and 0.9 cm long. They are on average, 0.5 cm across their slightly slanted ends. The Ω-shaped mark of the lower edge of the hilt is clear on one side of the blade, rather less so on the other and indicated on both faces by differences in the corrosion.

As the heel of the blade is complete along the upper edge, the presence of three rivet-holes, in contrast to two holes and a central notch, is established for this specimen of a Scottish flat dagger. According to the 1879 report, when first seen the dagger had all three rivets in position. The centre one, whose hole is slightly the largest, has been lost since the initial discovery.

REFERENCES

1. Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling, Acc. No A259.
2. Audrey S Henshall, 'Scottish dagger graves', in J M Coles and D D A Simpson (eds) *Studies in Ancient Europe* (1968), 173-95.
3. *op cit*, 176.
4. *Trans Stirling Nat Hist Arch Soc*, 1 (1878-9), 28-31.
5. Confusion has resulted in the past through an error of Childe in associating the dagger with the cist holding the food vessel and urn, see *PSAS*, LXXVIII (1943-4), 113.