



Memoir on some Ancient Arms and Implements Found at Lagore, near Dunshaughlin, County of Meath. With a Few Remarks on the Classification of Northern Antiquities

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The Archaeological Journal.

JUNE, 1849.

MEMOIR ON SOME ANCIENT ARMS AND IMPLEMENTS FOUND
AT LAGORE, NEAR DUNSHAUGHLIN, COUNTY OF MEATH;
WITH A FEW REMARKS ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF
NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES.

LAGORE is a townland, near Dunshaughlin, consisting, in great measure, of wet and boggy soil. In this spot, about the year 1829, the peasantry discovered a large quantity of bones, and they had been already abstracted and trafficked with to a considerable extent, before the owner's attention was directed to the subject. It was then thought advisable to make excavations, which resulted in bringing to light the remains of a very ancient fort or village, replete with interesting remains of the olden time.

There was a low mound nearly circular, and about 500 feet in circumference; on removing the surface of which, above 150 cart-loads of animal exuviae were found, together with a vast store of weapons, ornaments, and domestic implements. The circumference of the circle was formed by upright posts of black oak, measuring from six to eight feet in height, mortised into beams of a similar material, laid flat upon the marl and sand below the bog, and nearly sixteen feet below the present surface. The upright posts were held together by connecting cross-beams, and fastened by large iron nails. The space thus inclosed was divided into separate compartments, by divisions that intersected one another in different directions, also formed of oaken beams, in a state of high preservation, but joined together with more accuracy than the former, and in some cases having their sides grooved or rabbeted, to admit large panels driven down between them. The interior of the chambers, so formed, was filled with bones and black moory earth, raised

up in some places within a foot of the surface. It was generally found that the remains of each species of animal were placed in a separate division, with but little intermixture with any other ; and the antiquities were found with them, without order or regularity, but for the most part near the bottom.

The most numerous bones were those of oxen. According to Surgeon Wilde, some of the specimens resembled the modern short-horned Durham, and middle-horned Devon and Ayrshire ; others the Irish aboriginal long-horn ; and there were also specimens of a polled breed, similar to the Angus. A great number of the heads had been broken in the centre of the forehead with some blunt instrument, apparently for sacrifice. There were also great quantities of pigs' bones, some resembling the wild-boar ; one or two specimens of the horse and ass ; a number of bones of deer, both male and female (mostly common fallow-deer), large quantities of goats' bones, and one specimen of a four-horned sheep ; some very large dogs of the greyhound tribe, probably the old Irish wolf-dog ; several foxes, but no wolves : with these remains were mixed up shells of limpets and buccina, a few bones of birds, burnt bones, and large quantities of hazel-nuts. Most of the bones of the larger ruminants were unbroken, and none in a fossil state. Near the centre of the heap, and within two feet of the surface, were discovered two human skeletons lying at length, and without any surrounding wood or stone-work ; owing to the superstitious reverence of the peasantry, these could not be removed.

To describe in a few words the antiquities found here, —they consisted of iron weapons, such as swords, knives, spears, javelins, and dagger-blades, and part of the boss or centre ornament of a shield. There were also two querns, sharpening-stones, iron chains, axes, a brazen pot, and three brass bowls, several metallic mirrors, circular disks of turned bone, wood and slate, supposed to be used at the end of the distaff ; small shears, brazen, bone, and iron pins ; brooches, and parts of buckles, containing pieces of enamel and mosaic work ; bracelets, bone and wooden combs (of yew-wood), tooth-picks, and other articles of the toilet. There was also a curious bone, carved with scrolls and marks similar to those observed on the ancient Irish crosses. There were no crosses, beads, or Christian sacred ornaments found during

the excavation ; a number of pieces of stag's-horn sawn across, and pieces of hazel-wood in great quantity, as if laid up for fire-wood, were found in one spot near the bottom. Besides these objects, I have heard it reported that some traveller procured from the workmen an ornament resembling a crown ; but if so, its destination was never ascertained. No ornaments of gold or silver are said to have been found.

It is very much to be regretted, that no regular plan and section of the excavation were then made, and also that the articles discovered were not regularly described as they were found.

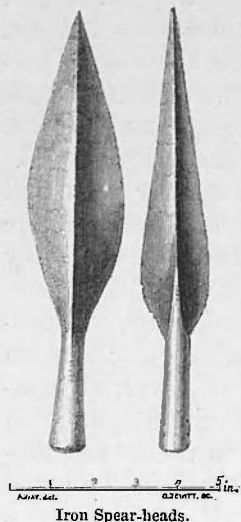
A great portion of these valuable relics became the property of the late Dr. Dawson, Dean of St. Patrick's ; and on his decease were purchased, with the rest of his Irish antiquities, and presented to the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Surgeon Wilde also presented to the same institution, a valuable collection of the bones found in the same locality. Mr. Barnewall, the owner of the soil, still possesses some remnant of this treasure, after having been plundered to a considerable extent by dishonest servants ; and those specimens which I possess, representations of some of which are given in illustration of this paper, I owe to the liberality and kindness of the same gentleman.

A more detailed and methodical account of all these very peculiar antiquities may be published at a future period, and the more remarkable objects in the possession of the Royal Irish Academy, as well as some specimens in the possession of Mr. Petrie and Surgeon Wilde, deserve a full description ; indeed, a liberally-illustrated monograph might be written on the subject. For the present, the readers of the *Archaeological Journal* will have presented to them a few of the most characteristic specimens in my collection ; and the foregoing description of the locality and nature of the treasure found has been chiefly derived from the report of Surgeon Wilde to the Royal Irish Academy.

The following list comprises the various antiquities from Lagore, now in my possession, which were laid before the members of the Institute, at the Monthly Meeting, on February the 2nd.

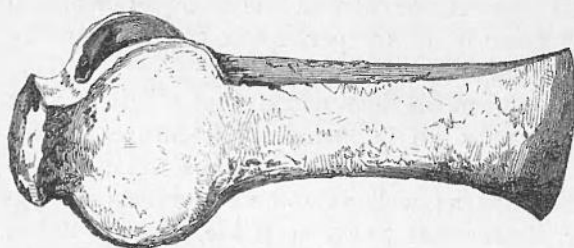
Objects of Iron.—Two double-edged swords, one measuring $22\frac{1}{4}$ inches, inclusive of the strig, or tang, which passed through the hilt ; the blade $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide, formed with a wide shallow groove, or channel, along its

entire length. The other sword measures $15\frac{1}{4}$ inches, length of the blade, which is formed with a central ridge.



Iron Spear-heads.

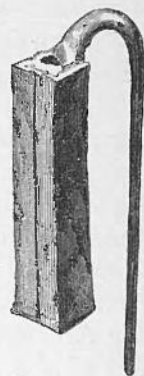
A blade, curved towards the point, in some degree resembling certain oriental weapons: the curved portion alone has a cutting edge, and on both sides. (See cuts.) Length, $13\frac{1}{4}$ in.; width of the curved blade, 1 in.—Two spear-heads, in fine preservation, and very sharp. Length, 10 inches.—A peculiar single-edged weapon, resembling the glaive of simplest form, but of diminutive size, the blade measuring only 8 in.; entire length, including the socket, into which the haft was fixed, 13 in.—An axe-head, massive and of considerable weight, the cutting edge singularly narrow, measuring only 2 in. Length of the head, 7 in.—A small ladle or spoon. A small single-edged knife. A singular object, composed of a square



Iron Axe-head. Length, 7 inches.

iron pipe, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, with a hook attached to it.

(See cut.)—An iron ring, with a portion of chain: it appears to have formed part of a manacle.



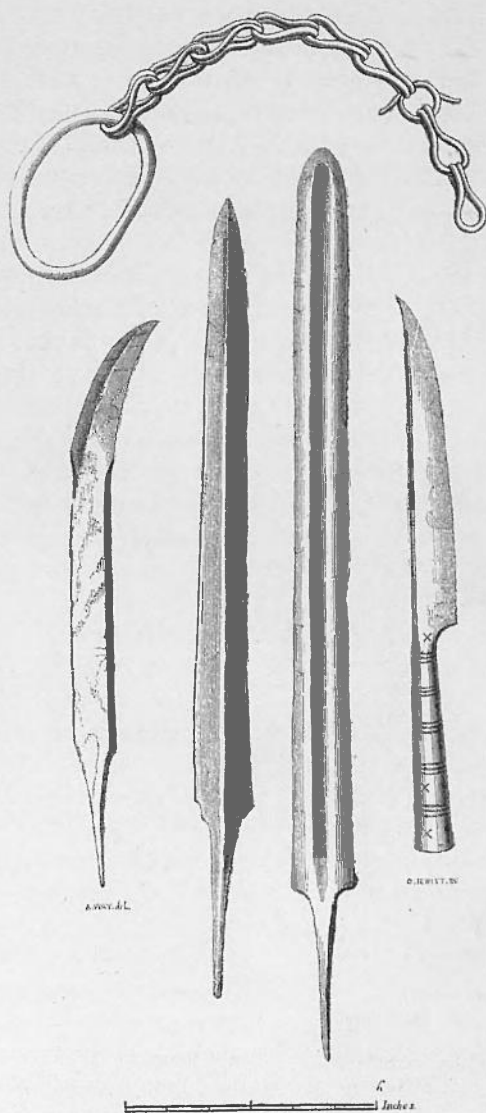
Iron pipe.



Bronze Bowl and iron Ladle.

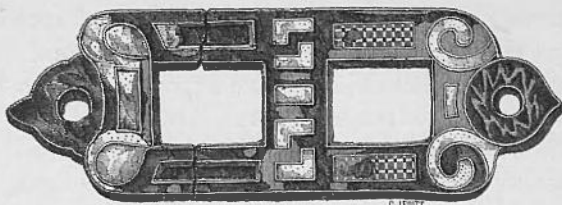
Objects of Bronze.—A small bowl, measuring $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter; height, nearly 3 in. (See cut.)—Three armillæ, of a rude fashion; one of them formed of a thin plate, measuring rather more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. diam. The extremities slightly recurved.

ANTIQUITIES FOUND AT LAGORE, CO. MEATH.



Iron Weapons and part of a Manacle

An ornament of mixed metal, here represented, from a beautiful drawing by Mr. Digby Wyatt. It is very curiously inlaid with enamel of red and brownish yellow colours.



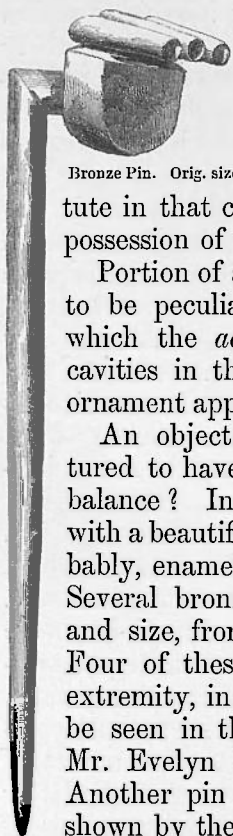
Enamelled Ornament. Orig. size.

It exhibits, also, specimens of a remarkable glass-mosaic, in chequered work of blue and white, incrusting in cavities chiselled out on the face of the metal. This kind of ornament is found occasionally on ancient Irish works in metal; it bears much resemblance to some antique ornaments discovered with Roman remains; it occurs on the curious bronze basin found in the bed of the River Witham, near Lincoln, and exhibited in the Museum formed during the meeting of the Institute in that city. That remarkable object is now in the possession of Mr. Hawkins, of Bignor Park, Sussex.

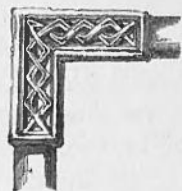
Portion of a small ring-fibula, of a form which appears to be peculiar to Ireland. The extremities, between which the *acus* passed, dilated and flat. There are cavities in the metal, in which enamel or some other ornament appears to have been incrusting.

An object of unknown use, conjectured to have served as the arms of a balance? In one part it is ornamented with a beautiful chased design, once, probably, enamelled. (See cut. Orig. size.) Several bronze pins of various fashion and size, from 3 to 6 inches in length.

Four of these have moveable rings appended to one extremity, in lieu of a head: a similar ringed pin may be seen in the Museum of the Institute, presented by Mr. Evelyn Shirley, and found in the Co. Monaghan. Another pin has a head of very singular fashion, as shown by the representation here annexed, of the same size as the original. This peculiar little ornament may claim



Bronze Pin. Orig. size.



especial notice, on account of the analogy of type which it presents, as compared with the remarkable silver pins found at Largo, in Fifeshire, communicated to the Institute by Mr. Dundas.

Two bone needles, or bodkins, being perforated at the extremity : they measure in length $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches respectively. Similar objects have repeatedly been found in England as well as Ireland : some, discovered in a tumulus on Upton Lovel Downs, Wiltshire, are described by Mr. Cunnington as arrow-heads. (See the *Archæologia*, vol. xv., pl. II. ; and Hoare's *Ancient Wilts*, vol. i., pl. VII.)

A double-toothed comb, of bone, rudely ornamented with lines and the little concentric circles, so frequently seen on objects of bone from the earliest periods. Dimensions, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

In considering the age and people to which these remarkable deposits should be referred, it will be advisable to review the theories which have been established by the Northern Antiquaries, who have devoted much attention to this interesting inquiry ; and first, as to the mode of sepulture adopted by the different primeval races, which in successive waves have swept over the surface of Europe.

They classify tumuli or barrows in the following order :—

1. The earlier ones are circular, and generally surrounded by a circuit of stones. They contain stone chambers, in which the bodies are deposited, often burnt in sand or placed on stones. The objects found are generally of stone, rarely of bronze or gold, and never of silver or iron.

2. Heaps of stone over stone chests, not larger than is necessary to contain a few urns or burnt bones, or the sword of the deceased. These chests are also frequent in the barrows both of England and Scotland.

In these tombs, arms, such as swords, daggers, celts, &c., of bronze, have been found in large quantities, accompanied by ornaments of bronze, gold, and even electrum, it is said, but never silver. Axes and daggers are also said to have been found, of copper, with an edge of iron, which points to a state of transition between this and the succeeding period.

3. Heaps of stones containing a wooden structure, sometimes in the form of chests, and frequently also in that of ships or boats. In these barrows, which belong to the latter period of heathendom, a quantity of arms and weapons of iron are found, accompanied by trinkets and utensils of

bronze, and gold or silver. The bodies were sometimes burned, but also frequently interred without cremation, sometimes seated on chairs with their horses by their sides.

There is also an idea that stone implements may have been used by the poorer classes, and also for sacred purposes, at a late period during the age of bronze. In confirmation of the latter hypothesis it may be stated, that the Jews still, in certain countries, use a stone knife for circumcision. Mr. Pulski also informs me, that in the barrows of Hungary, in nearly a dozen instances, a solitary stone celt has been found deposited with arms and weapons of bronze.

The mode in which the bodies were found at Lagore bears a considerable analogy to that described under the third period, regard being had to the different circumstances and localities which must have influenced the mode of sepulture ; for certainly on a naked stony coast a different system would be followed, than in the midst of woods and morasses. Nearly in accordance with this theory, the Museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen is divided into three different ages, thus defined by the Professor Worsaae in his learned works on this subject.

1. The age of *stone*. This was before the age of written records—all arms and implements were of stone. The men of this period evidently lived by hunting and fishing, like the South Sea islander. The cromlechs were their tombs. They were confined to the British Isles, Denmark, the coasts of the Baltic and German Ocean, Holland, Portugal, and the coasts of the Mediterranean. They appear never to have penetrated into the interior of the Continent, and had but slight acquaintance with the use of metals. Their ornaments are generally of bone or amber ; bronze and gold have also been found, but never silver.

2. The age of *bronze*. At this time a new people colonised Europe. They appear to have been agricultural and civilised, and to have settled in the interior, as well as along the coast. During this period, the arms and cutting implements were of bronze (an alloy of copper and tin), and, in some instances, of pure copper. The ornaments were cast, for the most part, of bronze or gold ; iron and silver were almost unknown.

3. Age of *iron*. Arms and weapons of iron : ornaments still continued to be of bronze and gold. Silver became more common.

This last period must have immediately preceded the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland. It is well known that there was a close intercourse between Ireland and Denmark at that time, both of a predatory and friendly character. In proof of this, it may be adduced that Scandinavia, Iceland, and the Faeroe Islands owed the introduction of Christianity to Irish monks. A considerable part of the east of Ireland was colonised by the Norsemen. Dublin, Waterford, and Wexford, were inhabited by them. They had their bishops, and they first introduced a national coinage into Ireland.

This summary of results arrived at in the minds of the Northern philosophers, after long and patient deduction (in which I beg to disclaim the least pretension to originality), is most lucidly illustrated by the valuable collection of specimens and casts lately presented to the Royal Irish Academy by the Antiquarian Society of Copenhagen.

It is quite evident that everything found at Lagore belonged to the *iron age*. It is, however, a nice question to determine whether it was a real Danish entombment or not. From the rare occurrence of such a one—I am not aware of any other similar instance—it could not have belonged to a people constituting the bulk of the population. Yet several circumstances militate against its being Danish. The situation is rather too distant from the coast. In a Danish rath one would have expected to find some amber ornaments: on none of the articles is there any imitation of ships or galleys, or inscription either in Norse or Runic characters. The swords, also, appear to me to differ materially from those of undoubted Danish origin. The one in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, with the name of the owner on the hilt, and also the three presented by the Northern antiquaries, have all a peculiar knob at the end of the hilt, which is said to be characteristic. Such is not the case with those found at Lagore, which appear to have had wooden hilts, of which we have no remains. The enamel, also, contained in one of the ornaments, is pronounced, by good judges in these matters, to be of the true *opus Hibernicum*. So that, upon the whole, the most probable supposition is, that Lagore was occupied by some half-cast race, who, without abandoning all the habits of their Danish forefathers, had, probably, allied themselves to the Celtic aborigines, and adopted many of their usages and customs.

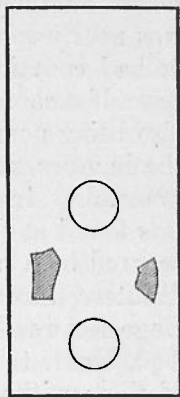
In many of our colonies, such a state of things at present exists ; and in the more fierce and uncivilised ages of the world, instances of individual communities of this kind must have been by no means rare.

JAMES TALBOT.

ACCOUNT OF A ROMAN SEPULCHRE AT GELDESTONE, NORFOLK.
BY JAMES YATES, ESQ., F.R.S.

THIS sepulchre was discovered on the 21st of February last, at Geldestone, Norfolk, near Beccles, on the estate of John Kerrich, Esq., of Geldestone Hall.¹ Two labourers in the employ of Henry G. Dowson, Esq., who rents the land, were digging a trench for the purpose of draining, when they most unexpectedly broke off the top of a large glass vessel, and the appearances hereafter to be described presented themselves.

The spot is very near the present course of the Waveney, where the land rises gradually above the river. The surface of the ground is peat, under which is sand, and then blue clay. An oak board, 2 inches thick at the thickest part, and rudely shaped by the adze, lay upon the clay, four or five feet beneath the surface. The size of this board is 31 inches by 14, but it is not exactly quadrangular. Rough mis-shapen oak boards, about 7 inches high, were placed round it on edge, so as to inclose the space. On the centre of the board was placed the glass vessel, which, having no other protection than the soil, was broken by the labourers, as I have already mentioned. It may be observed, that with the exception of the chalk-flints, which abound in the gravel, no stone of any kind is found in the surrounding country. Planks of oak were consequently the most durable material that could be obtained. Indeed, the large plank which formed the foundation of the sepulchre, is still firm and strong. Those, however, which were used for the sides, are very much decayed. They are in fact reduced to the state of peat.



¹ The Committee would here express their acknowledgment of the kindness of Mr. Kerrich, who readily afforded every

facility and encouragement in preparing this memorial of the curious discovery made upon his estates.—Ed.