

Transactions

OF THE

BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB.



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SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1892.

EXCURSION TO BRAES OF GIGHT AND HADDO HOUSE.

ON Saturday, the members of the Banffshire Field Club had an excursion to the Braes of Gight and to Haddo House. The excursion party proceeded by rail from Banff Bridge to Turriff, driving thence to the destination, where they were met by the Buchan Field Club.

The early morning was not very favourable. Several somewhat heavy showers of rain fell; and the unpromising appearance of the day deterred several people who intended coming from joining the excursion. The Banff members of the party left Banff Bridge with the 8:12 a.m. train; and at King-Edward, Plaidy, and Turriff they were joined by others, the party including—Mr Runcieman, Auchmill, president of the Club, and Miss Runcieman; Mr John Yeats, M.A., Banff, secretary of the Club; Dr Milne, King-Edward Public School, Miss Milne, Mr Thomas Milne, and Mr John Milne; Mr Hossack, Sheriff Clerk, Miss Hossack, and Miss Anna Hossack, St Catherine's; Mr James Forbes, solicitor, Banff, Mr John Forbes, and Miss Forbes; Mr William Forbes, Duff Street, Macduff, and Miss Forbes; Miss Runcieman, Castletown; Miss Alexander, Aberdeen; Rev. Mr Bremner, Fyvie; Mr Barclay, Strocherie, and Miss Barclay; Mr Barclay, Galashiels; Mr Elphinston, Fintry; Mr Morrison, Cotburn; Mr Stuart, solicitor, Turriff; Mr Copland, Tyrie, and Miss Copland; Mr Alex. Greig, Sandlaw; the Rev. Mr Bremner, Fyvie; and Mr Grant, *Banffshire Journal*.

At Turriff Station, Mr Davie had two omnibuses and a brake in readiness, and in a few minutes after the arrival of the train, the drive to the Braes of Gight was begun. At Turriff, the day was much more promising than it had been nearer the sea. There was no rain at all, and, although, the sky in some places was lowering enough, there were confident predictions that the weather would in no way interfere with the day's enjoyment. Happily these prophecies were quite

realised, and after Turriff was left behind, glimpses of blue sky and glints of sunshine became more and more frequent. The route from Turriff was *via* Auchterless, Fyvie, and Woodhead. With Mr Davie's fine turnout, new and smart-looking conveyances and splendid horses, no time was lost on the way. At Fyvie, which was reached at half-past ten, a halt was made at the churchyard to enable the members of the party who had not previously been at the place to visit the grave of 'Tifty's Bonnie Annie.' As proof of the fact that the ardent pursuit of physical science does not necessarily cause atrophy of those faculties of the mind that have to do with matters of sentiment and emotion, it may be mentioned that one member of the party placed a wild-rose on the grave of the miller's hapless daughter, whose love, according to tradition, 'never found its earthly close.'

AT THE BRAES OF GIGHT.

After a short stay at Fyvie, the conveyances were again under way; and the remaining part of the journey was soon accomplished. Gight was reached shortly after eleven o'clock. By this time, the dark clouds, which, in the early part of the day, had been so threatening, had broken up, and no one had the slightest fear of the complete success of the excursion. At Gight, the party was met by Mr Muirhead, F.R.S.E., F.S.A. Scot. factor for Lord Aberdeen, and Mrs Muirhead; Master George Muirhead; Mr Duthie, Collynie; the Rev. Mr Brebner, Forgue; and Mr Ingram, Belvoir, Leicestershire. The following members of the Buchan Field Club, who had driven from Maud, also joined the excursion at Gight:—Dr Trail, Fraserburgh, President of the Club; Mr Campbell of Strathellie; Mr Macarthur, 'Peterhead Sentinel,' and Mrs Macarthur; Mr Bremner, Savocho; Mr Fergusson, Savocho; Mr Scott, Backmoss; Mr Findlay, Auchnagatt; and Mr John Milne, Atherb, Maud.

The first part of the programme at Gight was the exploration of the Old Castle. There was no lack of guides. Mr Muirhead was most attentive in communicating information and in pointing out particular spots of interest. Mr Duthie, Collynie, also placed his services at the disposal of the excursionists, and did all in his power for them. Dr Milne and Mr Bremner had each prepared notes on the subject of the Old Castle of Gight, on the party entering which, Dr Milne began by pointing out that the shape of the Castle—that of the letter L—indicated that the building belonged to the period commencing 1542—the date of

the accession of Mary Queen of Scots—a view that was confirmed by a stone in the hall, taken from the gablet of a dormer window, inscribed M A R. The Castle, the doctor pointed out, had a strong resemblance to the Castle of Towie. The entrance is near the angle facing the east. The groined arching in the roof of the lobby was next described. It has a pendant or boss, showing such sacred emblems as a pierced heart on the lower side; and, on the sides, such sculptured figures as Christ on the cross, with a cock on the top of the crucifix, pincers for extracting the nails fastening Christ to the cross, a scourge, and pierced hands and feet. Behind the door is a chamber in the thickness of the wall for a porter, as at Towie. On the right of the passage are three vaulted rooms:—first, the bakery, shown by the oven and chimney, the second and third store-rooms, the last communicating with the hall above by a stair in the corner. On the left of the passage is the kitchen, with a large fireplace. The main stair is in the thickness of the wall on the south side at the end of the passage. This leads to the hall, which was the chief room in the castle. From the two large windows at the west side of the hall, a beautiful view is obtained of the valley. The fire-place in the north end was pointed out; and attention was called to the two recesses under a wide arch with windows. One of these recesses had given a view of the approach to the Castle, and the other had been a place for the family priest when performing service for the household assembled in the hall. Off the hall is a room above the entrance passage where the master of the house transacted business with strangers. The floor of the hall rests on the vaults below, but the storey above had had a floor of wood, as seen by the corbels in the west wall for the joists to rest on. The room above the kitchen is the withdrawing room for the ladies after dinner. The upper floors were for the family and domestic servants. Dr Milne, Mr Muirhead, and the Rev. Mr Brebner also explained the meaning of some of the sculptured stones about the Castle, an interesting sketch of the history of which was given by the Rev. Mr Bremner.

When the ruin had been thoroughly explored, the party proceeded under Mr Muirhead's leadership, along the Braes of Gight. This was certainly not the least enjoyable part of the day's outing. The trees were in beautiful foliage, looking all the fresher after the morning showers. The richness of the district as a field for botanical research is well known. Several interesting 'finds' were made during the day, one of the most

valuable perhaps being that of the *Corydalis* (*Corydalis claviculata*, DC.) with pale yellow racemes of flowers, and delicately green pinnate leaves, which, as well as its branched tendrils, the plant uses to climb by. Crossing the Ythan, the excursionists went along the south bank of the river, and again crossing returned by the north bank. On the way, Mr Muirhead was most obliging in giving information on matters of botanical, or ornithological, geological, and archæological interest. After a most delightful walk, the party returned to the Old Castle, where

PRE-HISTORIC REMAINS AT GIGHT.

Mr MUIRHEAD exhibited and described a collection of bronze ornaments and a bifid blade of bronze, which had been found by some workmen when making a private carriage road from Haddo House to the Braes of Gight about twenty-five years ago. The ornaments, which consist of three necklets, six armlets, and three small rings rudely attached together by short, narrow, and flat bands, were discovered on the removal of some large fragments of old rock lying at the bottom of a lofty precipice at the Braes of Gight. Two of the necklets are somewhat oval in shape. They are of plain construction and similar to each other, but vary in size, the larger being 20 inches and the smaller 17 inches in diameter. They have rings attached to their ends. The third necklet is of very beautiful and elaborate workmanship, having, besides the two end rings, eighteen others, about half-an-inch in diameter attached to its outer edge. One of the latter has been lost, and unfortunately the necklet itself is now broken in two pieces, but otherwise it is in a very perfect state of preservation. The armlets, of different sizes, are of the usual penannular form with slightly expanding extremities. The three rings, it may be mentioned, are attached together by small metal bands, each one and five-eighths of an inch in diameter. The tanged bronze blade appears to have been of bifid construction. The blade measures about two and a-half inches long and two inches broad, whilst the tang for insertion in the handle is about an inch and a-quarter long. Mr Muirhead, who has published an interesting account of the ornaments, which appeared some time ago in the 'Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,' explained that the articles exhibited could not be less than two thousand years old. They were believed to be unique in Scotland; and probably belonged to the close of the Bronze Age, and certainly to a period anterior to the Roman Invasion.

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL DISCOVERY AT MUIRDEN.

Dr MILNE then showed to the company, and described, an old urn found at Muirden, in the parish of Alvah. Having explained the difference between food and

cinerary urns, the doctor said that the Muirden urn showed no traces of ever having contained ashes. It was made of the common clay of the district; and mixed with the clay there were small stones. Having indicated how the urn was probably shaped, Dr Milne directed the attention of the company to the peculiar markings on the outside of the vessel, round which were twenty-four lines, in all likelihood traced with a bronze knife. Between the lines there were etchings made with a piece of flint or something sharp. In the place where the urn, which is a food urn, was found, the fragments of the bottom of another urn were discovered.

AT HADDO HOUSE.

After the company had had an opportunity of examining, with some minuteness, the articles exhibited and described by Mr Muirhead and Dr Milne, half-an-hour was allowed for luncheon. As soon as that *al fresco* meal was over, the conveyances were got ready, and a start was made about half-past one for Haddo House. For a large part of the way from Gight, the road, which runs parallel to the river, has on each side of it magnificent woods of pine. At intervals along the road were large masses of foxglove and hair-bell, with their rich colouring of purple and blue. Before Methlick is reached, the valley becomes more open. Between Methlick and the entrance to Haddo House, a splendid view is obtained of the River Ythan, the banks of which are here lined with valerian, bur reed, canary reed grass, meadow-sweet, all in endless profusion. On arriving at Haddo House at half-past two, the excursionists had, through the kindness of Lord Aberdeen, an opportunity of seeing over the house—an unexpected pleasure, which was very highly appreciated. Mr Grant, the house steward, was extremely courteous in directing the visitors through the public rooms and the various galleries. The fine pictures and the many archæological and other treasures were viewed with keen pleasure; and the enjoyment of the visit was much increased by the Rev. Mr Brebner and Mr Duthie describing some of the things of special interest and of historical association. A visit was paid to the beautiful chapel, where Mr Matthews was good enough to favour the company by two voluntaries upon the organ.

It was arranged that, after going over the house, the company should re-assemble in the library, where several papers were read. On the company all returning to the library,

Mr MUIRHEAD, on behalf of Lord Aberdeen, welcomed the Clubs to Haddo House, and expressed the

hope that members would enjoy their visit thither. He also said that he had received the following telegram from the Earl of Aberdeen:—'Please offer hearty welcome to the party from Banff and Buchan; and an assurance that we regret not being able to meet them on this occasion. We shall be pleased if they care to go over the house, if time for this.'

Mr RUNCIMAN, on behalf of the Banff Club, assured Mr Muirhead that they had a very grateful sense of the extreme kindness and courtesy shown to them by the noble Earl of Aberdeen, who had granted them the privilege of being able to see the Braes of Gight, and allowed them the great honour of being allowed to see over Haddo House. (Applause.) They should have been much pleased had Lord Aberdeen been at home, so that they might have had an opportunity of thanking his lordship in person; but they knew that his lordship had been called away in view of responsible and onerous duties that awaited him. (Applause.) He (Mr Runciman) had, therefore, to ask Mr Muirhead to convey to Lord Aberdeen the sincere and hearty thanks of the company present. (Applause.) They had had a most enjoyable day at the Braes of Gight; and he was sure that the pleasure they had had was not less at Haddo House, where everything had been thrown open to the party, fitted to gratify every taste. (Applause.) It would afford the members of the Banff Club much pleasure if Lord Aberdeen would allow himself to be made an honorary member of the Club. (Applause.)

Dr TRAIL, on behalf of the Buchan Field Club, concurred in what Mr Runciman had said with reference to how much they all appreciated Lord Aberdeen's kindness. The present was the second occasion on which the Buchan Club had visited Haddo House. On their first visit, Lord Aberdeen himself was present to receive them; but on the second occasion they had been received with similar courtesy by his representative, Mr Muirhead. (Applause.) All would remember with gratitude their visit that day; and all joined in asking Mr Muirhead to convey to Lord Aberdeen their warmest thanks for the privilege that had been allowed to them.

Mr MUIRHEAD, in reply, said that he should have pleasure in conveying to the Earl of Aberdeen the thanks of the two Clubs, and he was sure that his Lordship and Lady Aberdeen would be delighted to know that the members of the Club had enjoyed their visit to the Braes of Gight and to Haddo House.

EXHIBITION OF LOCAL ANTIQUITIES.

Mr MUIRHEAD then exhibited and described to the company several objects of archaeological interest which had been found in the neighbourhood of Haddo House. The first was an urn found some years ago at Bruckle, seat, Fyvie, and presented by the Messrs Mitchell to

the Haddo House estate museum, which is now in process of formation. Another somewhat similar urn shown was discovered at Keithfield, about a mile from Haddo House. An object of no little interest was an old dagger found in a bog near the old Castle of Gight. The dagger had a heart cut in the blade, and Mr Muirhead suggested that perhaps that indicated some connection with the Douglases. Mr Muirhead next showed an oblong piece of black oak obtained from the Moss of Cairns by Mr Kirton, photographer, Methlick. Mr Muirhead stated that, so far as he was aware, no indigenous oak trees were to be found in the district, where, evidently, they once grew plentifully. The remains of birch, alder, and other kinds of trees were often found in bogs, showing that the country at one time had been covered with extensive forests. Now-a-days, had it not been for artificial plantation, there would have been very few trees. Before the Premier Earl of Aberdeen planted the woods round about Haddo House, the country was practically bare. After showing a celt or stone axe, presented by Mr Stephen, Mains of Inkhorn, near Deer, Mr Muirhead exhibited an exceedingly large and beautiful specimen of a cinerary urn. Having explained the purpose for which it was used, and having described the position in which urns of that kind were generally found, Mr Muirhead mentioned that the urn which he was exhibiting had been found near a place called the Dead Woman's Burn near Keithfield. Two other urns were found in the same place, but unfortunately they were broken. The third, however, was preserved, and a photograph taken of it *in situ*. After having shown a second celt, Mr Muirhead exhibited several flint arrows. One was found in a field near the Church of Millbren by Mr Alexander Webster, Millbren; whilst another had been discovered by Mr John Duncan, Parkhill of Gight, near a cairn on his farm. The arrow-heads were admirable specimens. It was mentioned that Mr Henderson, chemist, Fyvie, possessed a flint arrow-head, having part of the shaft attached to it by sinews; and that this was believed to be the only one known in Scotland. In conclusion, Mr Muirhead said that he believed that much good work, in the way of archaeological research, remained to be done in the north and north-east of Scotland; and he believed that peat-bogs contained many treasures which would be only yielded up after patient and minute research, which he advised the members of both Field Clubs to make.

Mr RUNCIMAN moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Muirhead for his interesting communications, and said that the success of the excursion to Haddo House and Gight that day was in no little measure due to the extreme courtesy of Mr Muirhead, whose eminent attainments in many departments of science they all recognised, and who had shown to the members of the Field Clubs

a kindness and sympathy which they could not have got but from a gentleman of scientific tastes and pursuits. (Applause.) Mr Runcieman concluded by nominating, amid applause, Mr Muirhead as a member of the Banff Club.

Mr JOHN YEATS seconded the nomination, which was unanimously agreed to.

Mr MUIRHEAD briefly acknowledged the vote of thanks, and said that he should be much pleased to become a member of the Club.