

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

1904-1905



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capital of Dalriada, have amply justified the devotion for the first time of a part of the Fund to this class of remains.

Museum.—Among the more important acquisitions for the National Museum were two Collections, both chiefly of stone implements, and from the North-East of Scotland. The first of these was bequeathed by the late Mr William Boyd, M.A., F.S.A. Scot. It includes 47 perfect flint arrow-heads, 21 polished stone axes, and 3 stone balls with projecting discs, also 8 lighting appliances, a miscellaneous lot of 50 articles, and a foreign set of 20.

The second was acquired by purchase, and consists of 156 arrow-heads, 11 stone axes, 3 stone balls with projecting discs, and 1 perforated hammer from Scotland; besides 16 large oval flint implements from Montana, U.S.

The additions to our collection of urns this year include several of the round-bottomed type, one "beaker" and one "food-vessel" from Dr Bryce's excavations in Bute, and another of the food-vessel type from Rosemarkie, recovered by the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer.

Many other prehistoric articles have been added this year by donation or purchase. But for once the additions to our prehistoric department have been eclipsed by the acquisition of a relic of historic times.

For the last twenty-five years the so-called "Queen Mary" harp and the Lamont harp, the property of the Stuarts of Dalguise, had lain on deposit in the Museum, an early offer to purchase them having been declined, on the ground that they were family heirlooms. But the direct line having recently become extinct, the heirs resolved to part with them, and, with scant courtesy, the first intimation of their purpose that we got was seeing the advertisement for their sale by auction, within so short a period that the Council had very little time to approach the Treasury for a special grant for their purchase. This was done, however, and a sum of £1000 was granted for the acquisition of one or both of the harps. But the conditions attached to the grant were so onerous that it was only with much hesitation and under protest that

the Council agreed to accept them. Only £400 was actually granted, the remaining £600 being made up by withholding for three years the annual grant of £200 for ordinary purchases of objects for the Museum and books for the Library.

The grant only sufficed for the purchase of the "Mary" harp, and £890 had to be paid for it. The price was unfortunately enhanced by the quite mythical attribution to Queen Mary; but, for us, the value of the harp consisted not in this, but in its being one of the three ancient harps existing in the United Kingdom, and in the beautiful Celtic carving which adorned it. The Council therefore felt that it would be a national loss if so fine and rare a relic were not acquired for the Museum, at however great a price.

The carving is difficult to make out now upon the harp itself; but a Fellow of the Society, Mr Robert Bruce Armstrong, with singular skill and patience, has traced the design with a needle-point on sheets of gelatine, and has produced a complete illustration of the harp and its decoration in coloured plates in his newly published beautiful volume, *The Irish and Highland Harps*, a copy of which he has presented to the Society, and which now lies on the table.

As the arrangement made with the Treasury was *pro ratu*, the balance of £110 was returned to us, so that we were only mulcted in £90 for the present year; but we have the prospect of getting nothing for the next two years, so that for this long period the progress of the National Museum will be completely paralysed, unless the Treasury can be induced to repeal these obnoxious conditions.

Report of the Departmental Committee upon the Board of Manufactures.

—In so far as this Report regards the National Museum of Antiquities, the Committee have made three important recommendations, founded upon the evidence of our President, who was the only member of the Society summoned before them:—

1. That the Society of Antiquaries should have the right of nominating one member of the reconstituted Board of Trustees.

2. That the annual grant of £200 for ordinary purchases of objects for the Museum, and the purchase and binding of books for the Library, should be made permanent, instead of being, as hitherto, renewable for a term of years.

3. That an addition of £200 a year should be made to the grant for maintenance.

The Council are encouraged to hope that these recommendations will be adopted.

The Treasurer submitted a statement of the Society's funds, which was ordered to be printed and circulated among the members.

The Secretary read the Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, as follows :—

ANNUAL REPORT to the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, with reference to the National Museum of Antiquities under their charge, for the year ending 30th September 1904 :—

During the past year the Museum has been open to the public as formerly, and has been visited by 15,674 persons, of whom 1189 were visitors on pay days and 14,485 on free days.

The number of objects of antiquity added to the Museum during the year has been 543 by donation and 270 by purchase. The number of books added to the Library has been 149 by donation and 28 by purchase.

Among the more important additions to the Museum during the past year may be mentioned the ancient Scottish Harp, purchased at the Dalguise Sale with the aid of a special grant from the Treasury, and the Collection bequeathed by the late Mr William Boyd, F.S.A. Scot., consisting of 395 specimens, chiefly from the Buchan district of Aberdeenshire.

D. CHRISTISON, *Secretary.*