

## III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF URNS AT MILL OF MARCUS, NEAR BRECHIN, FORFARSHIRE. BY ALEXANDER HUTCHESON, F.S.A. SCOT., ARCHITECT, BROUGHTY FERRY.

About the middle of September 1888 while workmen were removing gravel from a mound situated close to the Mill of Marcus, nearly five and a half miles from Brechin, they uncovered two urns of different patterns and dimensions. The urns lay at a depth of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the surface. The first discovered was a cinerary urn, enclosing wood ashes and calcined bones. Unfortunately, it was much broken before it was observed, and only a few fragments of it have been recovered. These are quite sufficient, however, to furnish a correct idea of its dimensions and ornamentation. From an examination of them it seems to have been not less than 15 inches in inside diameter at the mouth. It was of a highly ornamented pattern, consisting of the usual herring-bone and line and puncture characteristics, presenting at least one novel feature. The everted lip is ornamented inside with a double row of punctures, as if produced by the nail of the little, or at least of a small, finger being impressed point-wise upon the clay. Beneath the lip, and on the outside, and covering the hollow of the neck, are a series of lines arranged herring-bone-wise, below which, where it begins to bulge, a novel feature encircling the urn is a slightly raised band, also bearing the nail-like punctures, from which on the lower side depend a series of offsets, which shortly lose themselves in the sides of the urn, and have the effect of throwing the space immediately under the band into a series of little sunk panel-like divisions which, as well as the sloping lower sides of the urn, are thickly covered with the same nail-like punctures.

The other urn (fig. 1) was fortunately recovered quite entire. It is of the food-vessel type, of barrel shape, and measures  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches high, 5 inches across the mouth, and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches across the base, bulging slightly between. It is encircled on the outside by a double row of single lines enclosing a series of right lines crossing each other so as to

form a rude diamond pattern. When found it lay on its side, and was quite empty.

[When examining the bones in this urn a small bead, here described, was found among them. It is of a glazed greenish-coloured paste,  $\frac{7}{16}$  inch in length by  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter, and is constricted round its circumference, so as to resemble three small globular beads joined together.

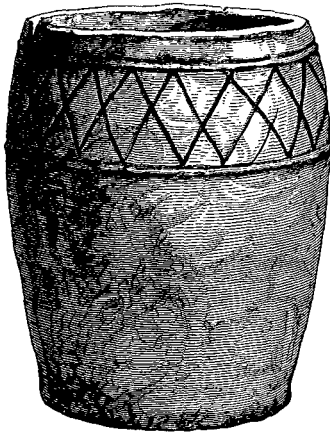


Fig. 1. Urn found at Mill of Marcus, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches high.

Several beads of this type have been found in the round barrows in England, especially in Wiltshire, but the one here described is the first known to have been found in Scotland. Dr Thurnam, in his *Memoir on the Round Barrows*,<sup>1</sup> has collected together a number of instances of the finding of beads of this description, and has also figured three specimens. In twelve of the tumuli described by



Fig. 2. Bead of greenish paste found in the Urn.

Sir R. Colt Hoare, beads of this type were found, "in every case with interments after cremation. With one exception they were associated with beads of amber, and in more than half the number with others of jet or shale."

Among the fragments of the large urn there are also two portions of a smaller and unornamented urn, so that the number of urns was at least three.—G.F.B.]

Some years ago several stone coffins with bones were discovered in the same mound, and somewhat less than a year previous to the discovery of the urns a short burial cist enclosing human remains was uncovered. The urns referred to were found, one on each side of the

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia*, vol. xliii. pt. ii. pp. 494, 495.

site of the last discovered cist, and, as near as could be ascertained, about 2 to 3 feet therefrom.

The farm and mill of Marcus are tenanted by Mr George Stewart, whose son, Mr David Stewart, Secretary to the Samnugzur Spinning Company, obligingly informed me of the discovery, and accompanied me to the spot. Mr Alexander Wilson, 36 Nethergate, Dundee, also accompanied me, and gave valuable assistance in photographing the urns. By permission of Mr George Stewart, I carefully excavated a short distance on either side of the site of the recent discovery, and uncovered several fragments of other urns—one of them of a perfectly plain and unornamented description, from which it was evident that some previous disturbance had taken place; and it is quite possible that these fragments may have been the relics of earlier burials disturbed by those who deposited the later urns. It is not improbable that such mounds of sand and gravel, from ease in excavating, would be used as places of burial by many successive generations of early tribes. When, therefore, cists are discovered in such mounds it would be well to give close attention to ascertain whether any evidences present themselves of earlier burial.

Before leaving the mound I carefully searched the débris in the gravel pit, but with negative results.

I was fortunate in securing by purchase the perfect urn and the fragments of the other one for the Society's Museum. It is proper to mention that after the urns, and such of the contents of the larger one as had been preserved, reached the Museum, Mr George F. Black, assistant in the Museum, discovered amongst the bones and ashes the small bead of greenish vitreous paste.