

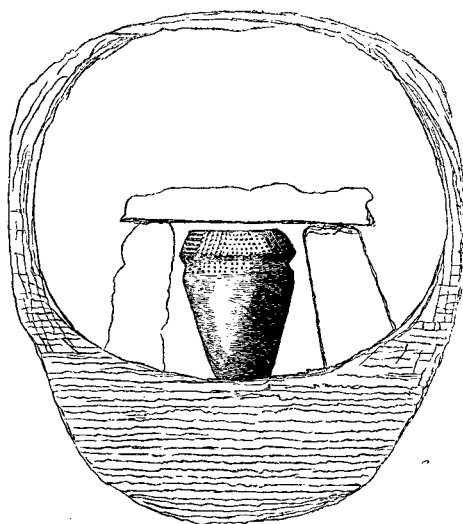
IV.

NOTICE OF AN URN AND OTHER SEPULCHRAL REMAINS, &c., DISCOVERED
IN THE WINDY-GOUL, ON ARTHUR'S SEAT, IN CUTTING THE NEW
ROAD FROM EDINBURGH TO THE VILLAGE OF DUDDINGSTONE. BY
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The Commissioners of Her Majesty's Works, having recently determined to form a new road from St Leonards to the Village of Duddingstone, along the southern base of Arthur's Seat, it became necessary, in the course of the operations, to make a deep cutting through the picturesque little pass or glen known by the name of the Windy-goul. In the prosecution of this work, in addition to features of much geological interest, some ancient sepulchral remains, coins, &c., were discovered, which will now be described.

1. About one-third of the distance from the foot of the glen, and a few feet to the north of the former footpath, a cinerary urn was found, which has since been presented by the Chief Commissioner of Works to the Society. This urn was buried about four or five feet under the surface, in an egg-shaped cavity, about three feet deep and two feet wide: it had been placed, with its mouth upwards, between two rough stones, set up perpendicularly, with a third stone crossing the other two horizontally as a cover, and was standing in a mass of black-looking earth, mixed with small pieces of charcoal, which filled about a third of the cavity; and the urn itself contained a portion of the same substance. The soil in which the hole had been excavated was shingly and gravelly, lying upon the top of the boulder clay, and evidently formed from the decay of the ridge of rock closely overhanging this portion of the glen. The subjoined rough

sketch will suffice to show the form of the cavity referred to, and the manner in which the urn was placed. The surface of the ground had the usual old natural appearance of the remainder of the hill-side, and bore no marks of having been disturbed for ages.



The partially-shaded space shows the manner in which the black soil was placed. The upper part of the cavity was loosely filled with stones and gravel.

2. Between the spot where the urn was found and the top of the glen, the remains of seven human bodies were discovered, all deposited alike in cavities or holes of the same form, but somewhat larger than that which contained the urn. These holes were at short, irregular distances from each other, and varied somewhat in depth under the surface, from probably about two to five feet. Being found higher up the ravine, and not so close to the overhanging rocks, the soil contained fewer and larger stones, and no gravel; and the bones were deposited in the superficial soil lying close upon the drift, which here nearly approaches the surface. They were all in the hollow of the glen, to the northward of the footpath; and the most perfect of the cavities, of which the sub-joined sketch shows a section, was situated close upon the edge of the footpath:—

This grave was within two feet of the surface, about four feet deep, and two and a-half wide. The bones were deposited at the bottom, and the body, when

buried, must have been crushed into the excavation ; and the stones, which were similar to the natural pieces of greenstone now lying about, had apparently been rudely built round and over the body, and had in course of time subsided with its decay, until they pressed closely but loosely upon the bones at the bottom. Among the latter were leg bones, ribs, pieces of the bones of the pelvis, the skull, &c. ; but all of the bones were greatly decayed. The place of their deposit, however, was in its ordinary condition,—exceedingly dry, but subject to occasional heavy inundations. These sudden alternations would, therefore, probably somewhat hasten the process of decomposition. The bones have been preserved which were found in the hole sketched.

3. The hatchet, which has also been presented, with the urn, to the Society, was found in the same hollow of the glen where the graves were discovered, and within a yard or two of that last described. It was apparently pretty close to the surface, but how deep in the ground cannot be exactly stated, as the men were making a four-foot cutting at the time, and it may have rolled down with the earth, deeper than its actual position when first disturbed, as it was not observed *in situ*.

4. A few copper coins were found in the cutting at the Windy-goul, which have been preserved in the office of the Clerk of Her Majesty's Works. When found, they were so corroded that it was not easy to determine their date ; but the most ancient in appearance bore a thistle on the reverse, with three flower-heads rising from one stalk, indicating a coin probably of the reign of James the Sixth. These coins may now perhaps be more easily identified.

Touching the question of the origin of the graves above described, it may be pertinent to mention, that from time immemorial the only path or road communicating with Edinburgh, round the south side of Arthur's Seat, has passed up the little gorge or glen of the Windy-goul ; that, from the steepness and ruggedness of the hill, it formed the only easy access to the city along the southern side ; and, from the natural formation of the pass, it would obviously afford the most advantageous point where an approaching foe might be attacked. It seems rather singular, however, that no weapons were discovered in the whole length of the cuttings excepting the small iron hatchet above alluded to, if that can be, from its shape, substance, and size, held to be a weapon at all, with reference to this question. Another conjecture as to the origin of these human remains may be suggested by the adjoining crag being known by the name of the "Hangman's Knowe." It may have been a place of execution, and the bodies of the criminals may have been unceremoniously interred in the glen immediately below.