

V.

NOTICE OF A STONE CIST, WOODEN DRINKING-CUP, AND AN OLD DRY STONE DYKE, FOUND IN SHETLAND. BY RODERICK A. F. A. COYNE, Esq., C.E.

A little to the south of Garthsvoe, in the parish of Detling, Shetland, on the west end of a small hill, I made an exploration of an old cairn of stones, presenting no attractiveness externally to warrant the supposition that, if explored, it would be found to bear evidence of man, and of a rude and remotely barbarous age.

In the cairn I found a stone cist, composed of the usual rudely-shaped flagstones, and bearing evident traces of fire. The cist was 3 feet 6 inches deep, by 3 feet wide each way. In process of clearing out the cist, a quantity of water found its way in by percolation. It is worthy of remark, that when I allowed the water to settle, a quantity of oily matter and ashes appeared on the surface.

Having taken home to my lodgings at Garth a lump of the ashes and earth, on carefully examining it I found it to be deeply impregnated with oil, and having a clammy adhesiveness, such as will be found only in the earth belonging to an old burying-ground. I was, however, unrewarded for my trouble, as nothing more was found.

Wooden Drinking-Cup.

The wooden drinking-cup (presented) was found resting on the surface of the gravel or drift, over which there was a depth of 4 feet 10 inches of peat.

The position in which the cup was found was on the top of the hill of Garth, about half a mile from the stone cist. The gradient of the hillside ascends at the rate of 1 in 13, until it attains an elevation of about 200 feet above the present level of the sea. The hill is perfectly dry, and vegetation in the peat has long since ceased. The diameter of the cup is 3 inches, the depth $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and the weight one ounce. The specific gravity of the cup is infinitely less than peat, and, therefore, precludes the possibility of the cup forcing its way by its own weight through the solid peat.

I am of opinion that the cup must have been dropt on the surface at some period before the existence of peat on the hill, and hence I conclude the cup to be of very great antiquity, and worthy of some careful consideration in an antiquarian point of view.

Old Dry Stone Dyke.

About twenty miles distant from where the cup was found, in a south-westerly direction to the hill of Westerskeld in Sandsting, I found the remains of an old dry or raw stone dyke resting on the surface of the gravel or drift. The remains of the dyke was 198 feet long and 2 feet high, and it was covered with peat to the depth of 5 feet. The situation of the dyke was in every respect similar to the place the cup was found—of equal altitude above, but of double the distance from the sea. The configuration of the country in both places is of an undulating contour, hills of no great altitude.