

I.

ACCOUNT OF EXCAVATIONS AT HURLEY HAWKIN. BY ANDREW
JERVISE, ESQ., BRECHIN, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT. (PLATE XV.)

All our historians agree that Alexander I., King of Scotland, had a palace or residence at or near Invergowrie. Local tradition affirms that it stood upon a sort of peninsula, formed between two considerable burns, about a hundred yards west of the Parish Church of Liff, and within the woods of Gray. The spot, which is from one to two miles north of the Tay and the old church of Invergowrie, is about three hundred feet above the level of the river. It is known as Hurley Hawkin, a name which suggests an affinity to that of the hill of "Hurly

¹ These articles were afterwards presented to the Museum, and are described in a subsequent part of the volume.

Hackit" at Stirling, which is popularly believed to have originated from its having been the scene of a childish diversion of that name, thus celebrated by Sir David Lyndsay, in speaking of the amusements of the Prince, afterwards James V. :—

“ Ilk man efter thair qualitie,
Thay did solist his Maestie.
Sum gart him rauell at the racket,
Sum hurlit him to the *hurlie-hakket*.”

It would appear that the sport of “hurlie-hakket” consisted in sliding down a slope or precipice; ¹ and as Hurley Hawkin slopes rapidly towards the south, and is otherwise well suited for such an amusement, possibly the name had originated from much the same cause as that ascribed to Hurly Hackit. Doubtless the sport or pastime had been known to, and practised in old times by, the young people of Liff, the kirktown of which, centuries ago, appears to have been pretty populous.²

It is several years since I first noticed the artificial appearance of Hurley Hawkin; and it then struck me to have been dug about at some previous time. On looking into the old Statistical Account, I found my surmises were verified, for it is there stated that, “In digging about the remains burnt ashes were found, and an iron spur of the kind long ago worn.”³ Thinking that the search had been efficiently made, and possibly under the eye of the Rev. Dr Playfair of Meigle, I thought nothing more of it until some years afterwards, when I was told that Lord Gray's forester had found some pieces of bones, also rings of bronze and iron. Supposing that further traces of the old occupiers of the place might yet remain among the rubbish, and that something of the form and construction of the building might also be ascertained, I made application to Lord Gray, upon whose property it is situated, to allow me to have the place investigated. To this his lordship not only at once acceded, but in the most courteous manner instructed his factor, the late Mr H. J. Bell, to place several labourers at my disposal. And now that Mr Bell is unfortunately no more, it is only due to the memory of that gentleman to say that he not only took a deep interest in the excavations, but did everything in his power to facilitate operations, in

¹ Jamieson's Scottish Dict. *in voce*.

² Liber Eccl. de Seon, App. *passim*.

³ Vol. xiii. p. 116

which able and valuable assistance was also rendered by Mr Gray, the forester, and a son of the latter.

The excavations were carried on over two days in the month of March last, and trenches of from two to three feet in width were made (see plan of ruin, Plate XV. fig. 1), every spadeful of earth and the whole area being carefully examined. The area of the building presented a circle of about 40 feet in diameter; and the floor, at the depth of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, was paved with unshapely flags. The wall (A) was constructed as shown upon the plan at (a), and built of grey freestone, of which there are old quarries in the very vicinity.

At the point (B), about $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot below the surface, a flat stone projected, under which were scattered remains of a human skeleton, lying upon a lower flag, the latter of which rested upon the floor. On removing the bones and mould, a deposit of charcoal was found on the south and west sides, among which were several bronze cup-shaped relics, formed somewhat like, and about the size of, small brass-headed nails. Only one of these was got entire, but the stalk of it was so much corroded that it soon crumbled down. Its appearance, in a perfect state, is shown in Plate XV. fig. 2. Of the use of these tiny articles I can form no conjecture, not having before met with anything like them. Possibly they had been used as buttons, or fasteners, for a jacket or some other part of female attire, of which the fragment of grooved metal with the pin-(upon the latter of which they may have been hooked), had possibly formed a portion (fig. 3). Flat bits of metal were got in the same place; and here, too, but not so deeply embedded in the soil, or rather rubbish, were found most of the articles above alluded to, which I saw in the hands of the forester.

Boars' tusks and a tooth of some other animal of the chase, as well as a piece of corroded iron, and an unbored whorl, were found in different parts of the trenches, mostly upon the north-east side. Charcoal and burnt barley were got in considerable quantities throughout the area, as well as bits of cockle and mussel shells; and near to (C), among a quantity of ashes, lay a small piece of wood with rude carvings upon it (fig. 1). It appears to have suffered from fire. There were also traces of human bones at (D) and (E), mixed with what appeared to be "sheep-shanks." Another deposit, wholly of animal bones, was at (F); but the largest de-

posit was at (G), among which were shoulder and leg bones, more or less decayed, and parts of the skull and the lower jaw of a horse. The jaw was almost entire, with most of the teeth pretty fresh. These remains were huddled together below two or three large-sized flags, and had all the appearance of having been previously disturbed.

In consequence of the rubbish in the area of the circle having been turned over at a former period, no satisfactory account can be given of the true disposition of the human or animal bones, nor the relation which the bronze or other relics bore to either, points very much to be regretted, but which must continue to be the case so long as indiscriminate investigations are carried on, and no note taken of the peculiarities of the construction of such places, or of the relics found in them. This, it is to be feared, is not unfrequently the case even now, some *diggers* having more in view the wish of being considered learned in the now somewhat fashionable study of antiquities, than of enriching either the treasures of our National Museum or the records of the Society.

So little remains even of the walls of the reputed palace of Invergowrie, that we are left much in doubt as to their plan or construction. That the building was of a circular form, and, as far as can now be seen, built of *dry* or uncemented stones,—the larger or boulder-sized being used in the outer part of the wall, and distributed through the middle or heart of the building, as shown at the parts marked (H) upon the plan, mixed throughout with mould and landstones of various sizes, and that this wall, as now seen, was of the enormous thickness of from 19 to 20 feet,—is almost all that can be said of the building with certainty. It will be seen that the courses had been pretty regularly laid (*a*); and the disposition of a few of the remaining stones of the outer wall at (I), (J), and (K), is given at (*b*), (*c*), and (*d*), respectively. The burns or rivulets which run on each side of the mound upon which the ruins are situated, join at a point from 60 to 80 feet south of the outer wall, and about 60 feet below its height. Upon the north is a foss or ditch, apparently artificial: the ditch is from 6 to 10 feet in depth, by from 20 to 40 feet in breadth.

It were vain to conjecture, in the sadly dilapidated state of Hurley Hawkin, whether it had been of a similar construction to the remarkable “burgh” of Mousa, in Shetland, of which we have excellent drawings

and descriptions—the first by Sir Henry Dryden, the latter by Mr Stuart.¹ Possibly the remaining traces favour such a notion; if so, I am not aware that a “burgh” of so large dimensions, and of such a thickness of wall, has been found in any other part of Scotland.

Whether tradition is right in setting down the site of Hurley Hawkin as that of the palace of Alexander I. at Invergowrie, may possibly be questioned; and the common tradition that a female died of the plague and was buried within the area of the building, forms no clue to its origin. So far as I am aware, no other foundations have been got in the neighbourhood to warrant the existence of a castle in remote times; nor is there any other place with which the name of Alexander is associated. Yet, I cannot help thinking (unless this building had been intended merely as a temporary residence) but it belongs to an earlier period, from the fact of its being in such a primitive kind of architecture, and so very inferior to that which was common in buildings of note long before the time of Alexander I.

However this may be, it is certain that the earliest records concerning the district invariably connect the name of Alexander I. with Invergowrie and Liff. Fordun states that the lands of both places were given to that king as a baptismal gift by his godfather, the Earl of Gowrie, and that when Alexander succeeded to the throne he built a royal palace at Liff (“apud Lyff regale cœpit ædificare palatium”), in which he was soon after assailed by a band of rebel subjects; and that, in commemoration of his victory over them, he founded the Abbey of Scone.² Wyntoun, in confirming the story of this affray, as well as the foundation at Scone, says, in regard to the king’s residence and possessions here:—

“ In Invergowry a Sesowne,
Wyth an honest Curt he bade,
For thare a Maner plas he hade,
And all the land lyand by
Wes hys Demayne than halyly.³

We also know that Alexander’s grants to the monks of Scone included the churches of Invergowrie and Liff, together with lands in each of those places,⁴ and that the church and lands of Logyn Dundho (Logie-

¹ Proceedings of Society of Antiquaries, vol. iii. pp. 187–95. Plates IX. XXIII.

² Fordun, lib. v. c. 36. ³ Cronykil, vol. i. p. 283. ⁴ Liber Eccl. de Scen, p. 2.

Dundee), which have been ecclesiastically attached to Liff for many years, were given to the same convent by Richard, Bishop of St Andrews.¹

I have not been successful in my inquiries as to the names of the patron saints either of Liff or of Logie-Dundee; and, barring the remains of a pretty large and rather rudely-shaped font, and an enigmatical inscription upon a tombstone (erected in memory of an Agnes Gray, who died in 1707, aged 62 years), there is little of general interest in the burial-ground at Liff. The epitaph is curious, and may be quoted:—

“ With husbands tuo I children
 had eleven ;
 With two of odds I lived
 Sixty even ;
 My body sleeps in hope,
 My soul I gave
 To him who suffered
 death, the same to save.”

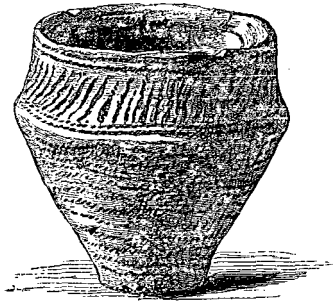
All trace of the church of Logie-Dundee has been removed; and in building a burial-aisle upon its site nearly thirty-five years ago, several carved stones, now lost, were got in the old foundations. The church stood upon a hillock in the hollow between the Law of Dundee and the Hill of Balgay; and the enclosure, or burial-place, which is a large space of ground on the west side of the Dundee and Lochee road, is still used for interment, chiefly by the inhabitants of the latter place. The gravestones are numerous, but none of them old, if we except the fragment of a coffin-slab, 15 inches broad, by 27 inches long, which was found some twenty years ago while digging a grave near the site of the old church (Plate XV. fig. 4). The sexton told me that the remainder of the slab still lies in the ground, and that it was cut by him and a fellow-labourer, owing to its being in their way at the time referred to.

Upon a previous occasion, I communicated notices regarding certain points of antiquarian interest connected with Liff, Invergowrie, and

¹ Liber Eccl. de Seon, p. 26.

Benvie.¹ Since then I have learned that about forty years ago two or three underground chambers or weems were exposed upon the rising ground between the woods of Gray and Camperdown, but that they were ultimately destroyed.² In the hollow to the south-east, upon the farm of Charleston, a stone cist, containing an urn, the latter of which is in fine preservation, was recently found in the course of agricultural operations.

But possibly the most interesting discovery was that of a stone cist and urn at Ninewells, near Invergowrie, on 30th March 1863, upon which day, and within an hour or two from the time it was found, I luckily met with a labourer taking the urn home, or, as he called it



Urn found in a short Cist at Ninewells.

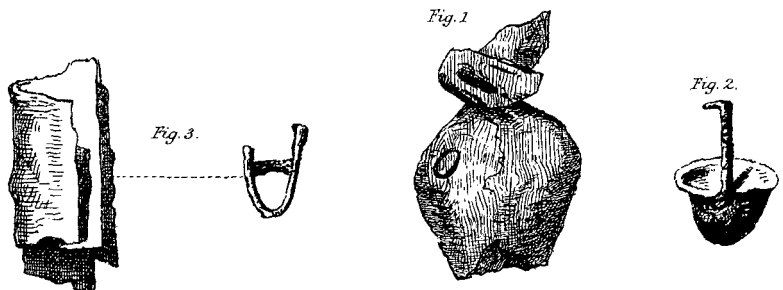
“a cappie,” as a plaything to his “bairns!” This peculiarly-shaped and interesting object was presented to the Society in April 1863, and is now in the National Museum (“Proceedings,” vol. v. p. 81), see the annexed woodcut. The bones found in the cist were supposed to be those of a young female, from 12 to 15 years of age.

As now constituted, Liff consists of four parishes, viz., Liff, Inver-

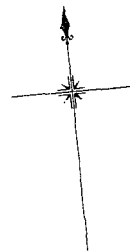
¹ Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, vol. ii. pp. 442-5. The “flumen *Gobriat* in Pictavia,” is an early form of the name of *Gowrie*.—*Transactions of Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxiv. p. 163.

² Possibly this is the place referred to in the Old Statistical Account (vol. xiii. p. 119, note †), where there is an interesting notice of a similar chamber near Lundie House (now Camperdown), which is said to have been minutely surveyed by Lord Hailes. Did Lord Hailes give any account of this to the Society at the time?

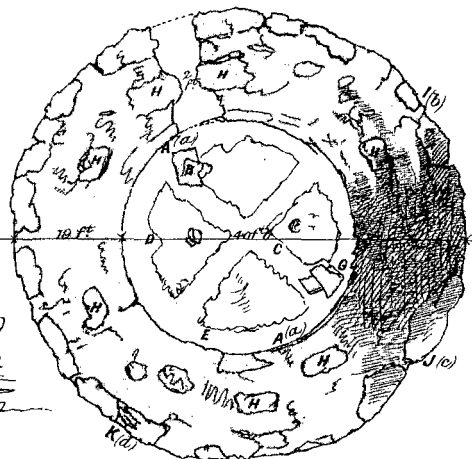
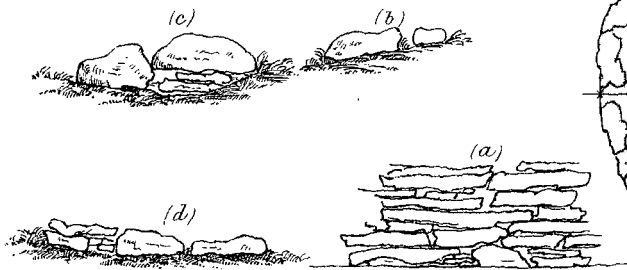
gowrie, Logie-Dundee, and Benvie. The last-named was joined to Liff in 1758, the others some time before the middle of the seventeenth century.¹ A handbell at the school of Liff is thus inscribed:—"FOR THE PARISHES OF LIFFE ENNERGOURIE AND LOGIE. PAID BY THE POORE, 1718. MR. ALEX^r. SCOTT, MINISTER." Another bell, which belonged to the kirk of Benvie, now at Liff manse, bears these names and date:—"MICHAEL BVRGERHVYS M.F. 1631: M. HENDRIE FITHIE."



RELICS FOUND WITHIN THE AREA OF THE BUILDING. (TRUE SIZE)



IN BURIAL GROUND, LOGIE DUNDEE.



PLAN OF RUINS AT HURLEY HAWKIN, LIFF.

