

II.

NOTICE OF CISTS AND OTHER REMAINS DISCOVERED IN "CAIRN CURR," ON THE FARM OF WARRACKSTONE, IN ABERDEENSHIRE.
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This cairn was placed on the top of a rising ground on the farm of Warrackstone, overlooking on the one side the glen of Terspersie, and on the other commanding a wide prospect through the vale of Alford. It was a circular structure, about 52 feet across, formed of small boulders, which rested on a foundation of large stones on the outside. A huge pillar, about 11 feet high, had stood on the west side, but it had been overthrown, and after lying on its side was removed out of the line into a dyke. A smaller pillar stood slightly outside the cairn on the east side, and is now used as a gate-post. About eight feet from the outside, the cairn was formed into a ridge all round, somewhat higher than the general surface, and from this it sloped downwards to the centre, which appeared depressed.

On the south side of the cairn two urns, one of them much larger than the other, were found in the ground, in holes surrounded by slabs. One of them had been broken since the place was first opened about a week before; and the bottom of the other, which had been inverted on a slab, was also broken off. A cist like the others was close to them. It had contained an urn, of which only broken fragments now remained. The portion of the remaining urn was found to contain a great quantity of incinerated bones. It was carefully dug out by Mr Chalmers, and is now in the Museum. It had measured about a foot across the mouth, and swelled much out, after which it tapered to a narrow bottom, and probably was about 18 inches high. A cist had been first observed on the north side, in the removal of some of the stones for drains, and further operations were stopped till the whole structure could be examined. This cist seemed to have been about 3 feet in length, and 2 feet 7 inches wide, and 1 foot 7 inches in depth. In the subsoil portions of an urn were recovered.

After some work, it appeared plain that the remains were to be found

in the raised circular ridge to which I have referred, and in which the urns on the south side and the cist on the north had been discovered. Accordingly a cist was soon found, formed of great slabs, on the east side, 3 feet in length, 32 inches wide, and 20 inches in depth. The bottom was of the till. It contained no urn nor bones. Little bits of charred wood appeared in the east corner, and the yellow till was mixed with blackish soil, like what was around the other cist.

Close to this, but nearer the surface, a slab was found; and above it a small cist, of irregular shape, about 15 inches in length, appeared, with some unburnt bones. Another similar hole, with similar bones, was found near this one.

On the west side a cist, formed of great slabs, was found, measuring about 2 feet 10 inches in length. A small urn appeared on its side near the east end, resting on the yellow subsoil. The portions which were recovered are now in the Museum. The other cists were in a line with the direction of the ridge. This one lay, in its largest axis, east and west through the ridge.

In the centre great deposits of black charred earth and stones were found, with small fragments of an urn and bits of charred wood. Among the stones many small fragments of white quartz¹ appeared.

The spot is overlooked by the hills of the Coreen range. On the slopes of some of them are many pits, both round and oblong.

A circle of stones is on the adjoining hill, towards the parish of Forbes.

The monument now described was a very remarkable one, from the mode in which the group of cists was arranged, from the extensive traces of burning,—the occurrence of large quantities of burned bones in urns separate from the cists, and the scanty vestiges found in most of the cists, while in one of them no trace of deposit appeared.

¹ The appearance of quartz in connection with cists is familiar to excavators. Under a cairn in East Kilbride, twenty-five urns were found in a chamber. They were inverted, and a piece of white quartz was found in the mouth of each.—*Wilson's "Prehistoric Annals,"* p. 300.