

II.

NOTES OF URNS AND SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS DISCOVERED AT
VARIOUS TIMES IN THE PARISH OF CREICH, FIFESHIRE. BY THE
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In the spring of the year 1816, while some workmen were employed in trenching ground a little to the south-west of this Manse,¹ they came to a number of stones, about 8 or 10 inches below the surface, placed in a regular form. The part of the country in which these regularly arranged stones were situated is very uneven. Three ridges of hills, extending in different directions, terminate on the west in Norman's Law, the most elevated ground in the north of Fife. On the south side of the most northern of these ridges, and about midway between the top of one of these hills and a small rivulet which flows along the strath, there is a lateral shelf, upon which these stones were discovered. This northern ridge extends in a direction from west to east. From the workmen meeting with stones of all sizes in the course of trenching, unfortunately

¹ On East Luthrie, then belonging to the late George Tod, Esq., now called Upper Luthrie, the property of John Russell, Esq.

the regular arrangement of those above mentioned was not attended to until two sculptured stones were cast up, with the figures upon each very entire. This circumstance naturally led to an examination of all the stones, to a consideration of the manner in which they were originally placed, and to an attention to those which yet remained untouched. On examination, no other sculptured stone appeared; but what was remarkable, many of those taken up were sandstone, while the hill on which they were placed, and all the hills in the neighbourhood, are whinstone rock. Those which remained untouched were set on end and arranged so as to form two arches of concentric circles. So far as could be judged at the time of discovery, the whole erect stones, which were in general from $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot to $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, were so placed as to make up two figures, of a circular or perhaps more nearly of an elliptical form, the one contained within the other. In the centre was a cylindrical stone pillar of the same height with the rest, and near to it were the sculptured stones, one of which I lately had the pleasure of sending to you, to put into the National Museum of the Antiquaries of Scotland for preservation, and the other Mr Tod kept for himself.

It is to be regretted that most of the stones had been taken up before their number, their regular arrangement, and individual position were ascertained. This good effect, however, resulted from the discovery of this structure, that it induced some workmen, who were soon after ploughing a field about 500 or 600 yards due east of the place above described, to conclude, when their ploughs repeatedly struck against stones, that they had come to something similar to what had been recently discovered at so short a distance, and to pay particular attention to preserve every stone in its original position. They accordingly proceeded to remove all the earth with the greatest care; and their expectations of finding another curiosity were soon completely realised.

On informing me of the circumstance, I went and carefully examined the situation of this structure, attended to its form and arrangement, then took the dimensions of its different circles, and the stones of which they were composed.

Its situation, like that of the former, was a lateral flat on the side of the same ridge of hills, and also at an equal distance from the summit and the stream below.

In the centre was placed, in an upright position, a cylindrical sandstone 14 inches high, and having the diameter at its base one foot. Around this stone as a centre, at the distance of three feet, were sixteen other sandstones, placed also in an upright position, and in the form of a circle. The stones of which it was composed were of various sizes, from 15 to 20 inches high, from 8 to 18 inches broad, and from 4 to 9 inches thick. Due south of the centre, and between it and the inner circle, there were placed in a horizontal position two sculptured stones, containing hieroglyphics in *alto relievo* very entire. The remaining space between the centre and the circle was laid with pavement. At the distance of $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the same central pillar, there was another circle of stones, thirty-two in number, all of whinstone, placed in an upright position, and much resembling in shape those of the inner circle.

The stones in both circles were placed close together. Between the circles there was neither pavement nor stone of any description. Neither were perfect circles, the diameter of one from north to south being 15 feet 1 inch, while its diameter from east to west was only 14 feet 9 inches; the diameter of the other from east to west was 5 feet 10 inches, while from north to south it was 6 feet 1 inch.

It may be observed that all the stones of the *inner circle* were *sandstone*, while no stones of the same kind can be got nearer than Cupar Moor, which is seven miles distant. The stones of the outer circle were all whinstone, such as may be had in the neighbourhood. The above described monument was allowed to remain in its original position for public inspection ten days; but as some people were beginning to lift and injure the stones, it was deemed necessary, in order to preserve them in safety, to remove them. They were taken up, in consequence, in presence of a concourse of people, who had assembled to gratify their curiosity, when underneath one of the sculptured stones were found small burnt bones and charcoal. The late Dr Smith, a surgeon in the parish, who examined the bones, said that they were *human bones*. They were not in a cist, nor was there a building of any sort under the surface. None of the burnt bones have been preserved, otherwise I would with much pleasure have sent a portion. The late Mr Tod of Luthrie, on whose property these two monuments of ancient circles were found, kindly presented the last-mentioned one to me, and it is now placed in a small

plantation on the glebe near to the manse, each stone in its original relative position,—a good subject for the examination of the antiquary. I gave an account of these monuments in the “Edinburgh Magazine” of December 1817, and afterwards in my account of Creich parish, in the “New Statistical Account of Scotland.” I said that it was supposed by some, at the time of their discovery, that they were small Druidical temples or oratories, but I am fully convinced, with all who have paid much attention to the subject, that they were sepulchral monuments. About the time of their discovery, a few yards to the south of the eastern one, were found two *rather uncommon querns*, one of which I lately sent you, to be preserved in the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries in Edinburgh, and the dimensions of which I stated in the “New Statistical Account of Scotland” (Creich Parish).

In the beginning of July 1845, while workmen were trenching a rocky knoll, in a field having a southern declivity, about a quarter of a mile south of the above monuments of ancient circles, and about 500 yards to the north-east of Carphin House, on the property of Carphin, belonging to the late David Cook, Esq., they discovered *an urn*, containing human bones and black earth. It was a good deal broken by the men when trenching before being discovered, but as soon as discovered the fragments of the urn and of the bones were carefully preserved, and taken to Carphin House. From these fragments, and from the report of the workmen, it was evident that the urn had been 14 inches in height; that it had a margin or border at the mouth 3 inches broad, which projected about an inch; that the margin was ornamented at some places by five horizontal lines, intersected at considerable distances by a vertical one; that at other places there were vertical lines alone; that all the rest was plain; and that the diameter at the mouth, including the thickness of the urn (which was an inch) was 10 inches. This urn was found with its *mouth inverted*, and firmly fixed in a cavity which had been made for it in the rock. After the discovery of this urn, the workmen continued their trenching operations, and on the 10th of the same month (July 1845), they discovered *twenty-one additional urns* deposited in the same small rocky eminence. They all consisted of clay tempered with sand, from the decomposed whinstone of the spot. Unfortunately, most of these were much injured by the workmen in the act of trenching; but

farthest west, between which there was a distance of five feet. Three were placed close to each other at the eastern extremity of the line. Other three were found equally close to each other, a little to the north-west of this extremity, and four feet distant from the line, and two were placed about five feet to the south of the line, in the direction of east to west. All of them were found about a foot under the surface. It is said that some small pieces of charred wood, about half an inch long, were found in one of them. No cist and no cairn were seen near to these urns.

One of the urns is still kept in Carphin House. All the others were some time retained there, but afterwards were interred by Mr Cook in the place where they had been found deposited.

In the month of November 1847, there was found a cemetery of urns, on the east side of Craiglug, a quarry hill on Luthrie, about 150 yards north of the original site of the eastern sepulchral monument above mentioned, and about 200 yards south of my manse. On the 10th of that month a large fragment of an urn was discovered, containing earth and burnt bones. The urn was placed on the top of the rock, with its *mouth inverted*, and was firmly fixed by small stones. It was about 9 inches in diameter at the mouth, and its height was probably from 9 to 10 inches. I soon afterwards employed two men to search for more ancient relics, and within a few feet of the place where this urn was deposited, they discovered *five additional urns* in the course of the month. Their mouths were all *inverted*, and they were fixed in the ground in the same firm manner. One rested on a small flagstone, and the others on the rock. A large and a small urn were found close together, and the others not more than two feet apart. One fell to pieces as soon as observed; but from the great care of the workmen employed in searching for, and uplifting the others, *three* have been preserved wonderfully entire. They are of various sizes, and differently ornamented. Each of them continues to have the same diameter which it has at its mouth for some inches upwards, and those of them which have the upper part nearly entire, taper towards the top, which is narrow and flat. The two which were found very close together, and in a good state of preservation, had bones and earth only in the under part, while the upper part was quite empty. In the larger one, which is 15 inches in height, 11 inches in diameter at the mouth, and rises nearly perpendicularly 6 inches, the

under part alone is decorated, being tastefully surrounded with projecting rings, and the two higher ornamentally conjoined at four equal distances. The upper part, which tapers to the top, is quite plain. In the smaller urn the ornaments are extremely rude, being only a few vertical lines. The upper parts of the other urns appeared to have been broken off for a considerable time, as they were filled with earth and roots of plants. The largest of these urns is $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, the perpendicular height to the point where it begins to slope is 7 inches, and the original height of the whole about 18 inches. All these urns were found from 3 to 15 inches under the surface of the ground. The late George Tod, Esq. of Luthrie, told me, at the time we were searching for these urns, that his father, fifty years before, when quarrying stones at the same place, on observing one or more urns dug up, immediately ordered his workmen to desist, and to quarry stones for his dykes at another place, because he did not wish to disturb the ashes of the dead.

These urns were all of the same texture as those found at Carphin in July 1845; but there did not appear to have been any regular order in their position, and they were crowded together. I presented the Cupar Literary and Antiquarian Society with one of the best of these urns, which was gratefully acknowledged, and it is preserved in their Museum. There is only one now in my possession, which is pretty good. No other sepulchral relics, no cists, nor any sort of buildings beneath the surface have been found near to these urns.