

OPENING OF THE FAIRY KNOWE OF PENDREICH, BRIDGE OF ALLAN.
BY COLONEL SIR J. E. ALEXANDER, K.C.L.S., F.S.A. SCOT. (PLATE LXIV.)

“ A few of those simple structures, which are generally considered as monuments of Druidical worship, are discernible in this shire. But a description of them would convey small entertainment, and still smaller instruction, as it could cast no new light upon that ancient and once extensive mode of heathen religion.”

So wrote Mr Nimmo in his “History of Stirlingshire,” published in 1777; and it was this almost universal indifference towards the pre-historic remains of Scotland which induced Mr Pennant, in his celebrated tour, to charge our countrymen of that time with a culpable neglect and ignorance of the archæological relics of their native country. Now, however, times are changed for the better; and through the labours of

the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the writings of Sir Walter Scott, the publications of the various learned societies, and the zealous and persevering efforts of individual antiquaries in every district of Scotland, a valuable mass of information has been obtained, which, with some desirable additions, may in a few years enable our future historians to present us with a lucid and rational account of the first appearance of man in Scotland, so far as that can be gathered from the remains of his own body, and from what yet remains of the works of his hands; and every contribution, however humble, towards the realization of this object, should be gladly welcomed by the student of man, and the lover of history.

The Fairy Knowe of Pendreich—a corruption of Ben Rhi, the King's hill—has been long known to the lovers of the picturesque as one of the most interesting spots in the romantic neighbourhood of Bridge of Allan. Situated high up on a spur of the Ochils, immediately behind the village, it commands one of the grandest views of the Grampians, and of the *Carse of Stirling*; and it is exactly such a position as the Pictish king might be expected to select for watching the approach of the Dalriadic Scots, when Kenneth MacAlpin and his predecessors made their attacks upon this portion of the Pictish territory; and the generally received opinion that Kenneth gained his decisive victory over the Picts in the immediate vicinity of this place, renders it highly probable that the Pictish scouts were actually stationed at Pendreich whenever their services were required.¹ Let not any one, however, suppose for a moment that the Fairy Knowe was raised for the purpose of a beacon or a watch-tower of any description; for whatever opinions might have been held on that point formerly, they have all been set at rest by the explorations of April 1868, which distinctly prove that the Fairy Knowe of Pendreich was a sepulchral monument, and nothing more. The knowe is on the property of Lord Abercromby; and his lordship having given permission to open it to myself, and Dr A. Paterson of the Bridge of Allan having joined in the undertaking, we associated with us Mr Miller of Thurso, F.G.S., then a visitor at the Bridge of Allan. We began our task on the 3d of April, and brought it to a satisfactory close, and replaced the knowe in its original form. The knowe is 26 yards in diameter, 80 yards in

¹ In the neighbouring park of Airthrey Castle, a large stone set on end indicates a battle-field apparently.—J. E. A.

circumference, and 21 feet in height above the level of the field in which it is situated.

In the course of the operations the mound was literally cut in two, from the top to the bottom, leaving both sides standing, with an open space in the centre of about 12 feet in diameter, and sufficiently large to ascertain satisfactorily the entire contents of the mound. Commencing then at the bottom, there was found a grave of an oblong form, built on the surface of the ground, of undressed stones, which might have been picked up in the surrounding field. First, the bottom of the grave was formed of a large flat stone; on this flat stone rested the two ends, each of one stone, and the two sides, each of two stones, all set on edge. This part of the grave measured internally 30 inches in length, and 18 inches in breadth. Above the stones set on edge, the grave was built up with stones laid above each other, like an ordinary stone dyke without mortar, and arranged in a somewhat circular form, the entire depth being now 3 feet. Over all was laid a flat sandstone, 3 feet long and 2 feet broad, completely covering the mouth of the grave; leaning against the flat covering-stone were other flat stones all round it, and set with a slight slope as if to keep it in its place.

Above the grave or cist was piled a great mass or cairn of stones, of considerable size, such as a man could carry from the neighbouring stream of Coxburn; many of them were water-worn, chiefly composed of old red sandstone and greenstone, also sulphate of barytes, the rocks of the adjoining Ochil range; and a large proportion of these stones forming the cairn were strongly blackened by fire. This cairn was about 8 feet in diameter at the base, sufficiently large to protect the grave from wolves, and extended upwards in a rude pyramid to within 8 feet of the top of the mound. Above and around this cairn of stones, the mound was entirely composed of earth from the neighbouring field; and imbedded in this earth, about 2 feet from the top of the mound, was found an urn 5 inches high, and 4 inches in diameter, filled with the same earth, apparently, as that of the mound, and not containing any ashes or human remains, so far as could be ascertained. Two or three fragments of a second urn were picked up, with different ornamental markings from the first-mentioned urn; but the fragments of the second urn were so small, that little can be said about it. A large portion of

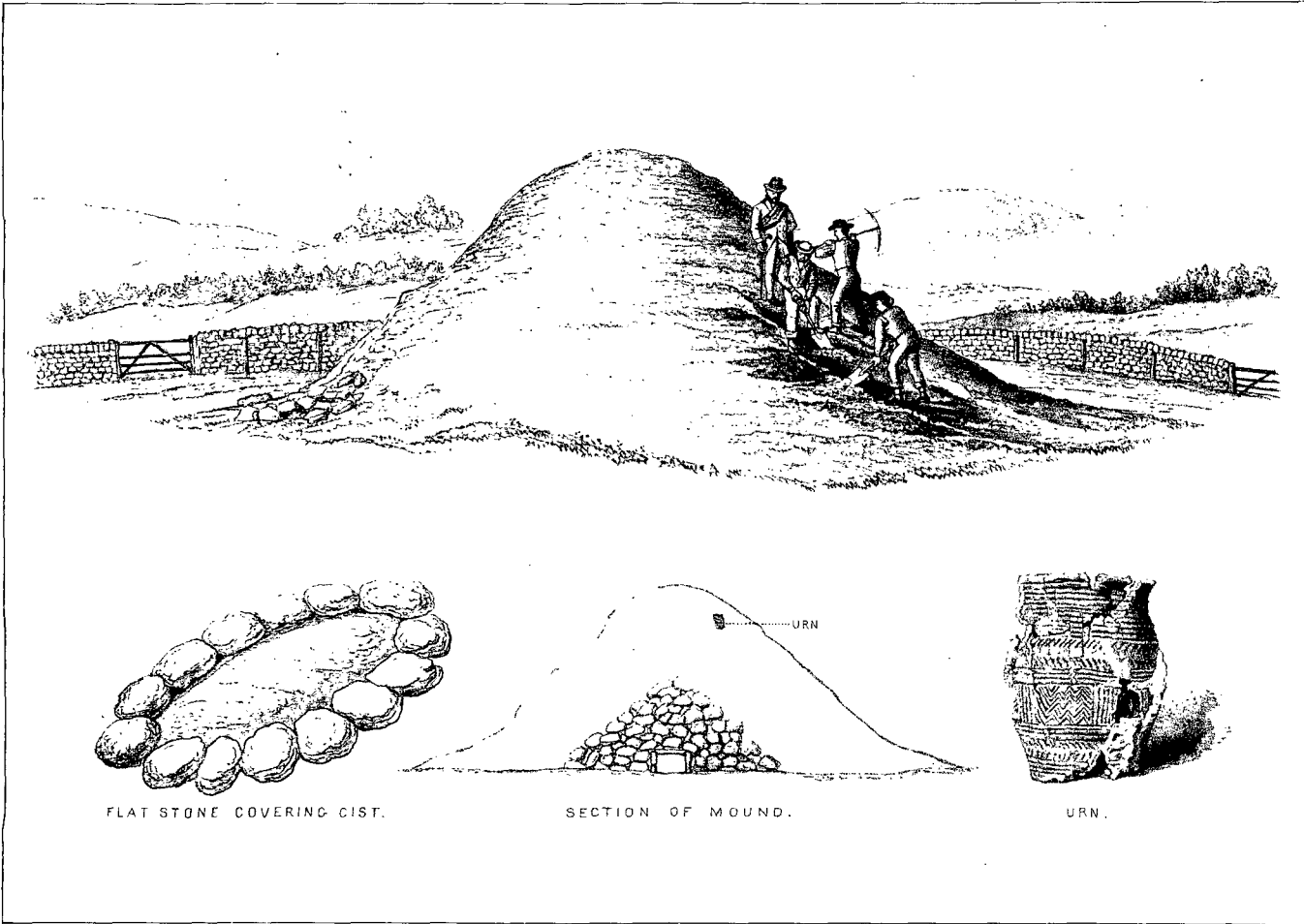
the earth in the centre of the mound, surrounding and mixed up with the loose stones forming the cairn above alluded to, was mixed with fatty or animal matter to a large extent, giving to the earth an unctuous or greasy appearance, with a strong animal smell. Small fragments of charcoal were found here in considerable quantity, indicating, perhaps, that the fatty matter, whether forming the residuum of human or of other animal bodies, had been deposited in this place by the action of fire, and the blackened stones corroborate this opinion strongly. Several fragments of decayed bones of men and of other animals were found scattered through the entire excavations, never more than 2 or 3 inches in length, and generally much smaller. Half a dozen flint arrow-heads were also found, only one of which was entire, the others being more or less broken, one fragment of stone having the appearance of a spear-head, and a few inches of decayed pine, looking very like a portion of a spear-shaft, complete our list of the most interesting things found between the grave and the top of the mound. And now for the contents of the grave itself. No indications were discovered of its having been previously opened. From the length and depth of the grave, it was expected that the skeleton should have been found doubled up in a crouching position, but no skeleton was there. The bottom of the grave was covered to the depth of 6 inches with a fatty black earth, mixed up with fragments of charcoal and small bits of human bone, particularly of the skull, the largest about the size of a half-crown, and appearing to be a portion of the parietal, and another, which was undoubtedly a fragment of the sphenoid. Some of these portions of bone bore evident marks of fire; and the most puzzling thing was a small splinter of wood, about an inch long, charred on one side, and quite fresh on the other; and after surveying the whole contents of the grave, the only conclusion which could be arrived at was, that the body had been burned, that we looked upon its residuum or remains; but whether the body had been burnt in the grave or outside of it, and the ashes interred there afterwards, it was impossible to determine.

After considering the whole circumstances of the case, we are inclined to believe this grave or sepulchral mound to have been of great antiquity. The absence of metal implements of any kind, bronze or iron, shows that it belongs to the Stone Age, *par excellence*, probably long anterior to

the Roman invasion. The supposed fragment of a spear-head, and of a spear-shaft, with the arrow-heads, indicate that a warrior slept below. The two urns were probably filled with the ashes of members of his family, and might have been placed in the mound long after his interment. In the "Transactions of the Glasgow Archæological Society" for 1866, Professor Cosmo Innes, at page 316, suggests the idea, that in many cases these urns were not cinerary urns, but the jars in domestic use, which were filled not with the ashes of the deceased, but with broth or other food which he was thought to require on his last long journey. In the present case, it is difficult to decide for which of these two purposes the urns were used; we merely state the facts, and allow every one to draw his own conclusions. It is right, however, to mention, that a few years ago, in digging the foundations of the house of Annfield, Bridge of Allan, at nine feet from the surface, there was found in the sand, and apparently undisturbed, a fine cist, containing the skeleton of a young female; and under the right arm was a small clay urn, corroborating the opinion of Professor Innes, that in many cases the so-called urn was simply a domestic jar to contain food for the deceased.

In regard to the unctuous or fatty earth mixed up with the blackened and other stones forming the cairn above the grave or cist, various opinions have been advanced; and after due consideration of all the circumstances, we venture to say that the Fairy Knowe of Pendreich is the last resting-place of an ancient king, or chief, or great man of this district; that at the interment of his remains, several of his slaves, along with other animals, were sacrificed on his grave, the cairn of blackened stones forming the altar for the purpose, and the whole structure of the grave and cairn being then covered over with earth, received its present shape and contour. This theory accounts for all the facts disclosed in the course of the excavations, and harmonizes exactly with the descriptions given us by Herodotus and all the ancient authors regarding the various modes of sepulture practised in their times by the different races and nations of Asia and Europe.

In examining tumuli which may contain human remains, the antiquary should disturb them as little as possible, and treat them with respect; of course stone or metal weapons and implements are very properly deposited in museums.



FLAT STONE COVERING CIST.

SECTION OF MOUND.

URN.

OPENING OF THE FAIRY KNOWE, PENDRICH.