

## IV.

NOTES ON THREE SEPULCHRAL MOUNDS ON THE FARM OF BALMUICK (THE PROPERTY OF COL. WILLIAMSON OF LAWERS), NEAR COMRIE, PERTSHIRE. BY THOMAS BOSTON, BALMUICK.

My attention was drawn, a few years ago, to three apparently artificial mounds on the hill grazing of Balmuick. They are situated about 900 feet above sea-level, and lie in a line on the crest of a low ridge running N.W. to S.E., which, though now covered with heather, shows by the marks of the plough, still visible, that it has at one time been under cultivation.

The two end mounds of the row are 80 yards apart, and the intermediate one is 6 yards from the south mound. All are of a circular form, and rise in the centre 3 to 4 feet above the natural surface of the ground. The south mound is about 36 feet in diameter, and the other two each about 22 feet.

Curiosity led me, along with a friend, some three or four years ago, to explore the middle mound. A stone cist about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, formed of eight or nine stones on end, covered by a slab, was found in the centre. The cist had contained a clay urn, which unfortunately was all broken into small fragments. The pieces showed ornamental markings round the urn, which appeared as if they had been made by a twisted string. Nothing else was found.

The most northerly mound was next opened. On digging a trench from the outside towards the centre I found two or three pieces, lying separately, of a largish plain urn. In the centre was a stone cist much the same as above described, only this was roughly paved on the bottom. What seemed to have been the covering slab was lying on edge at the side of the cist, and in the cist itself were one or two more fragments (not lying together) of apparently the same urn. Wood ashes were scattered all through the bottom of the mound.

The south mound, the largest of the three, was examined lately. From its appearance it had evidently, at not a very remote period, been explored or roughly disturbed near the north side. But Dr Joseph

Anderson, to whom I showed it last autumn, suggested that from its size it might have originally enclosed more than one cist, and that the apparently undisturbed portion of it might be worth examining. On digging trenches through most of it, I found wood ashes all along the original surface of the ground, and a stratum of fragments of bone (few of them more than 2 inches long) was found towards the centre, below a part of the mound which showed a slight depression on the top. This bone stratum extended to about 10 by 4 feet, and lay generally just above the lowest stones of the mound. Several fragments of what seemed to have been a large unornamented urn were also found up and



Urn found in a Cist at Balmuck, near Comrie ( $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height).

down in the mound. Close to the edge of the bone stratum, and to the south of the mound centre, was a stone cist lying E. and W., formed of four flat stones resting on the original surface of the ground, and measuring 2 feet long by 12 inches broad inside. Lying on its side, at the west end of the cist, was the handled urn, shown in the accompanying woodcut. The handle was upwards, and the urn was somewhat squeezed out of a true circular shape, evidently by the weight of the earth with which the cist was filled. The cist had no slab on top. The urn was also full of earth, with a few small fragments of bone in the bottom. On being got out it was apparently whole, but when its contents of earth and bone were taken out it was found to be full of

cracks, and went into a number of pieces. These I have cemented together again so far as possible. The urn measures  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height, and the same in diameter of the mouth. Nothing else of interest was found.

The three tumuli I have called "Mounds," but really they are composed principally of stones with the interspaces filled up with earth, and with a covering of earth, turf, and heather on the top.

I may mention that there is a small stone circle about half a mile from these mounds, and in sight of them. It has been formed of some six stones, all of which have fallen but one, which stands about 5 feet out of the ground. This circle is on the top of a hill about 1200 feet high.