

III.

NOTICE OF A SMALL CUP-SHAPED GLASS VESSEL, FOUND IN A STONE CIST AT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL, AIRLIE, AND NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF AIRLIE. BY JAMES DAVIDSON, F.S.A. Scot., SOLICITOR, KIRRIEMUIR.

The school buildings of Airlie, Forfarshire, are situated on a sandy gravelly hillock on the north side of the highway between Kirriemuir and Alyth, and within a few yards of the road. Prior to 1865 the site formed part of a cultivated field on the farm of Newton of Airlie.

On Friday, 2nd October 1885, a workman engaged digging a drain in a line north and south between the school buildings and the road, came upon a stone cist. The cist lay east and west, right across the track of the drain, and was at a depth of between 2 feet and 2 feet 6 inches from the present surface of the ground. The cist was in a bed of pure sand, and was formed of the two sides and ends only. It had no cover and no stone bottom, and the interior was filled with sand, apparently a shade darker and rather damper than that in the bed surrounding it. The slabs of which the sides and ends of the cist were composed were of thin freestone similar to what is found in the district, about 1 inch thick, set on edge. The cist was from 3 feet 6 inches to 4 feet in length, and about 18 to 24 inches in width. Mr Taylor, the teacher of the Public School, was present at the time the cist was discovered, and to him we are indebted for this information.

Aware that stone cists had been found within the school grounds on former occasions, Mr Taylor directed the utmost care to be exercised in digging about the one referred to. The sides were laid bare, and the sand filling up the space between them was then carefully lifted out. At the west end of the cist, and about the middle of it as nearly as could be judged, the workman discovered the glass cup here figured

(fig. 1). There was a very small piece of bone about an inch and a half in length showing a joint at one end, the other end being decayed, likewise found in the cist. The cup is circular, 3 inches in diameter and $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in depth, outside measurement, with rounded rim. It is devoid of ornament or markings of any sort, with the exception of two raised rings on the bottom of it.

The school buildings were erected in 1865, and at that time the soil on the surface, to the depth of about 2 feet at the place where the cist was found, was removed.



Fig. 1. Glass Cup found in a Cist at Airlie, Forfarshire
(3 inches in diameter.)

The top of the cist would thus be about 4 feet or 4 feet 6 inches below the original surface of the ground. While excavating for the foundations of the buildings in 1865, a stone cist was found about 20 yards to the east of and almost in a line with that now referred to, and it too had freestone slabs as sides. There were pieces of bone in it, but at this date we can get no further information concerning it. In the autumn of the same year Mr Taylor, while digging about 3 yards to the west of where the present cist was found, discovered a stone cist similar in construction to, but much larger than it. It lay in the same direction, east and west, had no cover and no bottom, and the sides were composed of thin slabs like the present. It contained an arm-bone and a skull in a fair state of preservation, the teeth being perfectly sound. The

interior of that cist was also filled with sand. Prior to the erection of the school buildings, a stone cist was found while the road in front of the school was being levelled.¹

The following notices of similar glass vessels were added by Dr Joseph Anderson:—

Since the receipt of Mr Davidson's paper, I have made some research among the published records of the investigations of Iron Age graves and cemeteries in Britain and the Continent, with the result of ascertaining that glass vessels of similar form have been occasionally found in them, though their occurrence appears to be somewhat rare and exceptional. On seeing the vessel itself, when it was sent to the

Museum, I was immediately reminded by its form of the fact that we have long possessed a few fragments of a glass vessel, which must have been precisely similar in shape and texture, though nothing remains of it now but a portion of the bottom (fig. 2), and a few fragments of one side of the lip. The bottom, like that of the Airlie example, has been flat, with a low circular footstand like that of a saucer, but having, as the Airlie example also has, a smaller concentric ring within the exterior ring which surrounds the base.

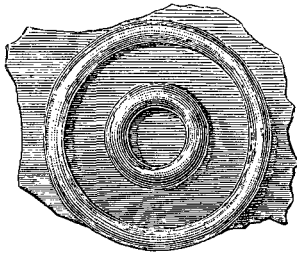


Fig. 2. Portion of Bottom of Glass Vessel found in a Cist in Westray, Orkney.

The lip is formed precisely in the same manner as that of the Airlie vessel, with a slight thickening round the brim. The glass is exceedingly thin and light, and somewhat iridescent from decay. This

¹ About a quarter of a mile north-west from the school is a rising ground called *Cattaw*, where there is said to have been what is locally spoken of as a Beacon Tower. The foundations of this have been removed by the farmer at intervals within the last forty years. About three quarters of a mile south-west of the school is the site of the old Castle of Baikie, where there was a chapel dedicated to St John. (See Jervise, *Memorials of Angus and Mearns*, 2nd ed., ii. pp. 45 seq. and 199; and Jervise, *Land of the Lindsays*, 2nd ed., p. 354.)

specimen was found in a cist in the island of Westray, in Orkney, and presented to the Museum by Rev. Dr Brunton in 1827. I am informed by Colonel Balfour of Trenaby, F.S.A. Scot., that the vessel was quite entire when found, and that it was accidentally broken after it had been brought to Edinburgh to be given to Dr Brunton.

To these two Scottish specimens there is reason to believe that a third may be added. At Kingoldrum, in the neighbourhood of Airlie, in or about the year 1843, several interments were found in the course of some operations in the immediate neighbourhood of the old churchyard. In one cist, with an unburnt interment, were found a small chain of S-shaped links of bronze, and a small cruciform mounting of the same metal, its surface showing traces of enamel. At the same time, and in or about the same place, there was found a small glass vessel, which was described to me by Rev. Mr Haldane as having upright sides like a tumbler slightly rounded at the bottom, and a low circular footstand.

With these objects there was also found a bronze vessel, which has been variously described, but was no doubt analagous to one or other of the various forms of bronze vessels that have been found with similar glass vessels to be subsequently noticed. Unfortunately, the bronze vessel and the glass cup went amissing some time after they were found, and have never been recovered, so that one cannot describe their characteristics with certainty.

We have thus in Scotland certainly two, and probably three, examples of the occurrence of this variety of small cup-shaped vessels of glass, associated with interments which are presumably of Iron Age. It is unfortunate that so little is known of the circumstances and associated phenomena of these burials, because we have as yet no definite knowledge of the archæological characteristics of the interments assignable to the Iron Age of Scotland. It is in striking contrast to our absolute ignorance of the characteristics of the burial phenomena of this period in Scotland, that we find the Iron Age of Scandinavia divided into three well-marked stages, each characterised by specific differences in the burial phenomena, and illustrated in the museums and records by several thousands of carefully-investigated interments.

There are between twenty and thirty vessels of glass of various forms recorded as having been found in Iron Age graves in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. But the only instances of this special form that I have been able to find mentioned have occurred in the island of Seeland, in Denmark. Iron Age interments with glass vessels among the grave-goods have occurred in three localities in that island. Of these three, however, only one has yielded vessels precisely similar to ours, the specimens in the other two cases, though of the same form, being ornamented with figure-designs in colour. As the circumstances of these discoveries are interesting, I will state them as shortly as I can.

In a long low gravel mound at Bavnehoi, in the island of Seeland, a number of interments were discovered at various times between 1828 and 1835. As no one capable of making exact observations was present on any of these occasions, it is not known which of the objects were associated with the several interments, but the objects that were recovered from the mound for the most part found their way in time to the Museum at Copenhagen, and are there preserved. The interments were unburnt, and among the articles which had been deposited with them were four spiral rings of gold, two fibulæ in bronze (one bearing on the back a woman's name in runes), a long hair-pin of bronze with ornamental head, two round-backed single-edged combs of bone, a number of beads of variegated or enamelled glass, a drinking-horn of glass ornamented on the exterior surface with raised thread-like filaments formed in the substance of the glass, a tall conical vessel of green glass, also ornamented on the exterior with filaments of the same substance, and having a short round foot-stalk and circular base like a wine-glass; a pail of bronze, with a swinging handle looped to ears projecting from the rim, the sides vertical, but rounding into a narrow circular footstand, and the rim ornamented with a band of wild animals, and foliage in a style which shows traces of classical influence; a deep bucket-shaped vessel of bronze, also with a swinging looped handle, but plain; and last of all, a wide shallow caldron-shaped vessel of bronze, with upright sides and a projecting spout, which has a cover of bronze extending over one-third of the diameter of the vessel. Within this caldron-like vessel of bronze there were a pair of bronze vessels, with long flat handles and

bowls shaped like saucepans, one fitting into the other, and the upper one pierced with innumerable holes as a strainer; two goblets of silver, the bowls round, the brim vertical, and ornamented with figures of animals, the footstalk short and wide, and resembling that of a wine-glass; and lastly, a small glass vessel, with low footstand and vertical sides, precisely resembling this one from Airlie.

The objects found at Varpelev, in the same island, were also with an unburnt interment, and consisted of a spiral finger-ring of gold; a pair of bronze strainers, one fitting within the other as in the former case; a bronze pail, with a swinging handle exactly similar to that described from Bavnehoi; and two glass vessels of the form of the one found at Airlie, but ornamented with figures of animals in colour.¹

The objects found at Thorslunde, in the same island, were also with an unburnt interment. They consisted of some plaques of silver, possibly portions of a goblet; two round-backed single-edged combs of bone; fragments of a bronze vase or saucepan; a pair of long-handled strainers of bronze; and three vessels of glass of this form, but ornamented with figures of men and animals in colours, one representing a combat of gladiators. Mr Engelhardt remarks on this circumstance, that since these shows of fighting gladiators came into fashion under Nero, and were absolutely prohibited by Honorius, the vases on which they are represented were probably made between the dates of these two reigns (A.D. 50–425); and as these do not appear to be the products of provincial art in a period of decadence, they must be assigned to about the fourth or fifth century.²

¹ "Varpelev Fundet," af C. F. Herbst, *Annaler for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1861, p. 312.

² "Statuettes Romaines, et Autres Objets d'Art du Premier Age de Fer," par C. Engelhardt, *Memoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord*, 1872–1877, p. 57.