

IV.

NOTICE OF A LARGE CINERARY URN, RECENTLY DISCOVERED ON EASTER GELLYBANK FARM, NEAR KINROSS, AND NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM BY MR HAIG OF BLAIRHILL: BY ROBERT BURNS BEGG, F.S.A. Scot., KINROSS.

Having learned from Mr David Kennedy, farmer, Easter Gellybank, on 10th November last, that he had exposed a cinerary urn while ploughing in one of his fields, I went to the farm on behalf of the proprietor of the lands (Mr Haig of Blairhill), accompanied by Mr David Marshall, Kinross, a Fellow of the Society.

At a distance of little more than a mile to the south of the town of Kinross, we found the spot indicated by Mr Kennedy. It is situated in a field to the south of the public road leading from Kinross to the village of Cleish. We found the urn embedded in a slight eminence near the fence between the field and the road. It had been partially laid bare by Mr Kennedy's plough, but had not been in any other way moved or disturbed.

On examining the urn before proceeding to uncover it, we found that it had been originally deposited in the ground in an inverted position, and that the plough had entirely removed the bottom of the vessel, leaving it and its contents otherwise intact. Through the hole which the plough had formed, we found that the urn was about a fourth part filled with calcined bones. We also found that a quantity of soil had got into it through the hole made by the plough. Having removed with great care the soil all round the urn, we contrived to lift it quite entire, as well as to secure the whole of its contents. The urn (fig. 1) proved to be a very large and perfect specimen of the usual coarse and imperfectly baked clay, and measured $16\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height by $12\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter at the mouth. The ornament round its rim was of the usual character and design, and appeared to have been made with a pointed implement. We took very special care to examine the subsoil in which the urn was embedded, and we satisfied ourselves that the substratum around the deposit had never been disturbed. There was no

trace of wood ashes at the bottom of the hole, although there were traces of them among the contents of the urn. The bottom of the urn in its original inverted position was not more than nine inches or a foot below the present surface of the ground, but originally the eminence in which it was buried must have been fully a foot or 18 inches higher than it is now, the successive ploughings of the field during past centuries having

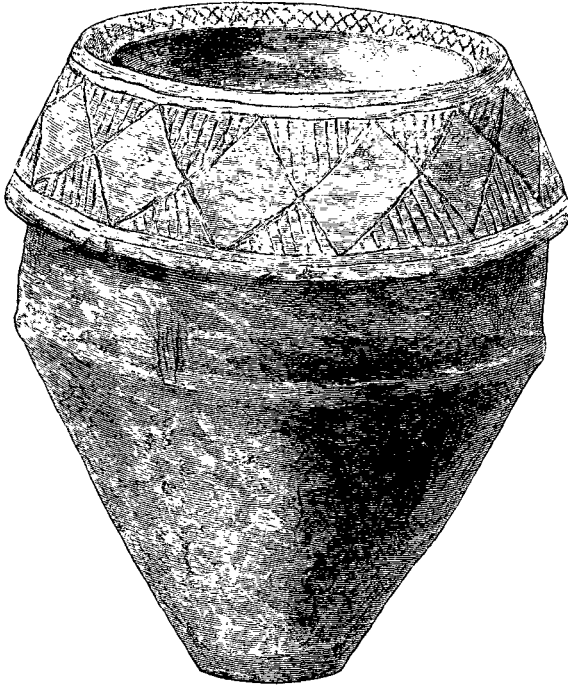


Fig. 1. Urn found at Easter Gellybank, Kinross (16¼ inches in height).

no doubt gradually transferred a considerable quantity of the original surface down into the adjoining hollow. After carefully securing the urn and its contents, I carried these with me to Kinross, to await Mr Haig's instructions. While they were in my custody, I carefully and

minutely examined, along with Dr Oswald, surgeon, Kinross, the whole contents of the urn, in the hope of finding among them some deposit besides the bones. In this we failed, but from his inspection of the bones, Dr Oswald was very decidedly of opinion that they formed the remains of more than one fully-developed human body. We only found two teeth, and from this fact, as well as from the appearance of the soil under and around the urn, I am of opinion that cremation may not have taken place at the spot where the urn was deposited. On receiving Mr Haig's instructions, I lost no time in forwarding the urn and its contents to Dr Joseph Anderson, for the purpose of its being deposited in the National Museum. Having learned from Mr Kennedy that on a previous occasion, while ploughing near the spot where the urn was found, he had turned up one or more small fragments of pottery similar to that of which the urn was composed, I considered it my duty to make some inquiry as to whether or not any deposit of a similar character had ever been discovered in the neighbourhood, and I was so fortunate as to find that about forty years ago an urn similar in character, though smaller in size, had been unearthed within a few yards from where the urn above described was discovered. Mr David Barclay, now farmer at Pittendreich, in the county of Kinross, whose late father was sometime tenant of the farm of Easter Gellybank, made to me a very minute and thoroughly reliable statement as to the finding of the urn on that occasion. He was then engaged in assisting his father on the farm, and while rooting out an old thorn tree which grew on a slight eminence near the side of the public road, he came upon a portion of an urn buried a foot or eighteen inches under the soil. It was only a fragment, but it was quite of sufficient size to indicate its character, and besides the impression of the portions of it which had been previously removed could be distinctly traced in the subsoil. There were no traces of the contents of this urn, these having probably been scattered at the time the earlier portions were removed.

This deposit is the first of its kind which has yet been discovered in the immediate neighbourhood of Kinross, but it forms only one of many similarly interesting discoveries which have been made within short distances to the west and south in the same locality, viz., at Craigton

Farm, about a mile to the west, where one or more urns were some years ago found in a mound lying to the north of the same line of road,—at Coldrain, about half a mile still farther to the westward, where a curious underground building of ancient construction in a large mound which forms a prominent object in the district has been laid bare,—and at Shanwell, about two miles to the northwards, where during the past year three cinerary urns, one of them containing an oval bronze blade, were discovered in a gravel mound.

These, as well as other previous discoveries, all indicate the county of Kinross as a locality not unworthy of some archæological research.
