

II.

NOTICE OF THE EXCAVATION OF HARELAW CAIRN, ON THE ESTATE OF GLENCRAIG, FIFESHIRE. By GEORGE W. CONSTABLE of GLENCRAIG.

This paper contains a description of excavations undertaken last August for the purpose of ascertaining the composition of a large mound or cairn called Harelaw, situated on the eastern boundary of Ballyngry Parish, in the county of Fife.

The mound, which is 430 feet above sea-level, lies about one mile south-east from the base of Benarty Hill, and forms a rather prominent feature in the flat-lying district surrounding the ancient Castle of Lochore.

For many years this cairn at Harelaw has lain undisturbed, and was completely overgrown with broom and whins, leading many to suppose that it was but one of the numerous outbursts of whinstone so common in the neighbourhood.

In the beginning of last June Mr Burns Begg, F.S.A. Scot., Kinross, was spending the day at Glencraig, with the view of examining several well-defined hill forts on Clune hill, the western portion of Glencraig.

Having some time to spare, we walked to Harelaw, more for the sake of the view to be had from its summit, than from any idea of antiquarian research. On reaching the top Mr Begg proposed that we should ascertain the formation of the mound, which was found to be of human construction, formed of loose stones, gathered and piled on each other with more or less regularity. It was about 225 feet in circumference, gradually tapering from its base to a height of over 20 feet. Further examination brought to light the foundation of a wall surrounding the cairn, about 12 feet from its base. Between the wall and the cairn were a number of mole-heaps, and in sifting the upthrown soil from one of those I found a small piece of hand-made pottery, which was evidently a fragment of a cinerary urn, and this naturally led to the belief that the cairn was an ancient tumulus, or burial mound. Another fragment of pottery of similar description was discovered shortly afterwards at the base of the mound.

On Saturday, the 23rd of August, a party of volunteer explorers, among whom were Mr Burns Begg, Kinross, the Rev. Mr Dewar of Lochgelly, the Rev. Mr Houston of Auchterderran, and others, met at Harelaw, and, assisted by workmen, a start was made to endeavour to reach the centre of the cairn. We began by driving a broad trench, level from the base, into the western side. After penetrating a distance of 21 feet, an arched-looking piece of building, packed with tough clay, was noticed in the bottom of the trench. This was lifted, and immediately below it a neatly formed stone cist was exposed to view. It measured 2 feet long, 18 inches broad, and 15 inches deep, and was composed of four flat and rudely dressed slabs of freestone set on edge—a freestone cover—the bottom being roughly paved or laid with flat whinstones.

The cover having been carefully removed, the urn (fig. 1) was seen



Fig. 1. Urn found in the Harelaw Cairn.

standing on its base in one corner, while close beside it were the remains of several teeth, the enamel of which was entire. A few fragments of much decayed bones were the only other contents.

The urn is composed of blue clay common to the district. It measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, $20\frac{1}{4}$ inches in circumference at its greatest girth, tapering to 9 inches at its base, and, as you will observe, is highly ornamented with zigzags and notches. It closely resembles in size,

shape, and pattern one found in Cist No. 4, Barnhill, and recorded in the *Proceedings* of 13th June 1887 in an article by Mr Hutcheson, F.S.A. Scot., Broughty-Ferry. As it was late in the day before this cist and urn were discovered, nothing more was done; but it was arranged that the same party should meet the following Saturday, and continue the trench, and, if possible, reach the centre of the cairn. The cist was left in its natural position, and the cover laid on, so that any one interested might have an opportunity of seeing it; but the following day the spot was visited by crowds of people, chiefly miners, some of whom, either from thoughtlessness or malice, drew out the freestone slabs, smashed them to pieces, and excavated the spot where the cist lay to a depth of 3 or 4 feet, but, so far as known, they got nothing for their trouble.

On Saturday the 13th August the excavators met as previously arranged, Mr Hutcheson, F.S.A., Broughty-Ferry, being one of the party. This time work was commenced simultaneously on both sides of the tumulus, and two carts being employed to drive away the stones, much greater progress was made than on the previous day. When nearing the centre from the west side, the stones disappeared, and light, sandy soil took their place, as if a considerable quantity of the stones had been removed, and the hole filled up with soil from the surrounding fields. This has been proved to be the case, as an old residenter remembers, when a boy, of a field close by having been drained with stones carted from Harelaw Cairn.

When both sides of the excavation met in the centre, the end of a cist (No. 2) was laid bare, lying east and west.

The two sides were single slabs of freestone, 3 feet 7 inches long by 1 foot 4 inches deep, the ends being slabs of the same material 2 feet broad, while the bottom was paved with flat whinstones.

The whole structure was carefully daubed at every joint and crevice with tough yellow clay, and showed more care in its construction than the one discovered the previous week. On the covers being removed, the cist was found to be nearly one third full of finely powdered earth and sand, evidently washed down from the surface through the loose stones. The contents were carefully examined by Mr Hutcheson, with the following result:—

In the right side or south corner were found the outer shells of six human teeth, the crowns being very little worn. Midway down, on the left or north side, lay a quantity of much decayed bones, the largest pieces being from 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, while between these and the teeth an unmistakable strip of metal was seen, but so oxidized as to render it impossible to say with any degree of certainty what it had originally been.

The body had been interred in the usual contracted posture, and it seems probable from the position this cist occupied that it may have contained the remains of some person of importance. There was no urn in this cist.

No further excavations have been attempted. Next spring, however, I hope to be able to reach the bottom of the cairn, as I anticipate there may be earlier interments than those discovered, and it may be that the space between the outside wall and the cairn, where I found the fragment of an urn in a mole-heap, may yield something of interest. The trench we dug is at least 8 feet above the bottom of the cairn, at the point where cist No. 2 was found. This is accounted for by the fact that, although the trench was driven level, the original surface seems to have sloped downwards towards the centre.