

## III.

## NOTICE OF FURTHER EXCAVATIONS IN HARELAW CAIRN, FIFE-SHIRE. BY GEORGE W. CONSTABLE OF GLENCRAIG, F.S.A. SCOT.

In giving you a short account of further excavations made in this interesting cairn, let me recall to your recollection the result of our former investigations.

This burial-mound measures about 225 feet in circumference, tapering gradually from its base to a height of over 20 feet, and was surrounded by a wall about 12 feet from its base, the foundations of which have been laid bare.

Our first attempt to penetrate to the centre of the cairn was made on the 23rd August 1890. We commenced by driving a trench 6 feet wide, level or nearly so, from the base into the western side, and after attaining a distance of 9 feet, a stone cist (No. 1), 2 feet long by 1 foot 6 inches broad, and 1 foot 3 inches deep, was exposed to view, containing a very perfect urn (figured in the last volume of the *Proceedings*, vol. xxv. p. 70),  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches high,  $20\frac{1}{4}$  inches in circumference at its greatest girth, tapering to 9 inches at its base. It was standing on end, in one corner of the cist, while close beside it were a few fragments of decayed bones and the remains of several teeth.

On the 30th of August we continued our operations in the trench where we left off the week before, and at the same time started another trench on the other side of the mound in order to reach the centre. When the two trenches met, the end of a cist (No. 2) was uncovered, lying east and west. It measured 3 feet 7 inches long, by 1 foot 4 inches deep, and 2 feet broad, and appeared to have been much more carefully put together than cist No. 1, every joint and crevice being firmly closed with yellow clay.

It contained no urn, but a few fragments of decayed bones and teeth, and a thin line of brownish dust was observed extending half the length of the cist, which disappeared when touched, and was supposed to be an oxidised piece of metal. This cist apparently occupied the centre of the

cairn, resting on loose stones, and about 6 feet from the bottom of the tumulus, which is accounted for by the fact that although the trenches were driven level from the base, the ground sloped downwards towards the centre.

To reach the bottom or foundation of the cairn was the object we had in view on our third day, the 22nd August last, and a short account of our work may not be uninteresting. We commenced by excavating in the bottom of the trench, immediately below the position occupied by cist No. 2. This was no easy or safe task, as the trench at this point was over 10 feet deep, and, the sides being perpendicular, loose stones were every now and again falling in on the workmen, one of whom got a severe bruise on the leg. Still we persevered, and after five hours' work we reached the bottom, but unfortunately found nothing to reward us for our trouble, there being no cist, nor any sign of a burial, nor of the soil ever having been interfered with.

Nothing deterred by our want of success in the centre of the cairn, we now turned our attention to a point near the base, at the same distance from the centre as the position occupied by cist No. 1, but about 20 feet further to the north. Here we began another trench, driving it towards the middle. About 7 feet in, and 3 feet from the surface, a large flat whinstone was struck and laid bare ; but after seeing its immense size, and knowing the difficulty we would have in raising it, most of us were in favour of letting it lie, more especially as the two cists formerly discovered had been found to be covered with slabs of freestone, and no large whinstones of this description met with.

Had it not been for the practical advice of a mason, who was helping the workmen, this day would have proved a blank, but he, after tapping the whinstone with a pick, firmly declared there was a hollow beneath it. Orders were at once given to have the stone raised, which was accomplished with no little difficulty, as it weighed considerably over half a ton. On its being turned over, a carefully-formed cist (No. 3) was found underneath, composed of four flat stones, placed on edge, forming a small compartment 18 inches long,  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad, and 16 inches deep.

In the south-east corner, the urn here shown (fig. 1) was seen lying in a slanting position, with this flat stone covering its mouth. It is, you will observe, composed of yellow clay, hand-made, and covered with the usual rude ornamentation. It measures 4 inches high, 16 inches round the lip, and 8 inches round the base. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch below the lip you will notice a projecting flange, about 1 inch in breadth, to which are attached five small handles or brackets, pierced with eyelets as if for the purpose of suspension.



Fig. 1. Urn found in Harelaw Cairn.

Close to the base of the urn there is an indentation, as if caused by the maker's thumb, which appears to have been done in its soft state, by him taking it up and holding it in his fingers as if to scrutinise his workmanship. Unfortunately there is a slight flaw on one side of the urn, which may have been caused by being exposed to too great a heat, which had produced a skin on the outside, part of which had peeled off.

The cist differed from the others in two respects. It was the smallest in size, and while the others contained only a small quantity of bones, this was crammed full of bones. No less than 12 lbs. weight of them were taken out.

The placing of the urn in this cist seemed as if it had been an after-thought, because it was found lying among the bones in a slanting position, to prevent the immense whinstone cover from injuring it, whereas if it had been put in before the bones, being only 4 inches high, it could easily have rested on its base without the slightest fear of being crushed.

The bones were kept for some days, and were thoroughly cleaned and sifted, in order to ascertain if any piece of foreign substance could be found amongst them; but as nothing was discovered, they were carefully examined by Dr Dendle of Lochgelly, and afterwards re-interred.

Dr Dendle reported, that in his opinion they formed the remains of at least two persons—an adult and a child; but the pieces were so fragmentary it was difficult making a definite or decided statement in regard to them. From the position this cist (No. 3) occupied, and the

result of this day's work, it seems without a doubt that that cist (No. 2) was the only one *immediately underneath* the cairn, the others being round the base.

The inference is that the occupant of cist No. 2 had been some one of considerable importance, as this immense cairn, composed of several hundred cart-loads of stones, seems to have been erected solely over this one burial in the centre, and that subsequent interments had taken place between the surrounding wall and the base of the cairn.