

III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A SMALL CUP-SHAPED URN, OF A VARIETY HITHERTO UNKNOWN IN SCOTLAND. BY F. R. COLES, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

The small urn shown this evening was found in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, on the 20th of October last, by Robert Bryce, when ploughing "the Constables" field at the Whinnyliggate, some three miles east of the county town.

On the 1st of December information of this "find" was brought to Mr M'Kie, hon. curator of the local museum, and on his going out on the 5th to the Whinnyliggate, he was shown the small urn. Towards the close of the month, Mr M'Kie again went out to the site, which he examined. As, however, people had been already turning over the broken remains, Mr M'Kie found nothing of the large urn which must have contained the interment but a very few fragments, a small piece of bone, and earth, in which were the chalky remains of decayed bones.

This urn (which is here shown half-size in fig. 1) being the only object which escaped damage, was at once taken possession of by Mr

M'Kie, and deposited in the local museum. A short paragraph in the local newspaper drew my attention to the above facts; and, in replying to my inquiry for further particulars, Mr M'Kie furnished me with a sketch of the urn. I was at once struck with the peculiarity of its upper half, with its large triangular perforations. Searching among our goodly collection of urns, I found only one at all like it in respect of these triangular perforations; and next, consulting Dr Anderson's work on *Scotland in Pagan Times*, I found that the small urn already in

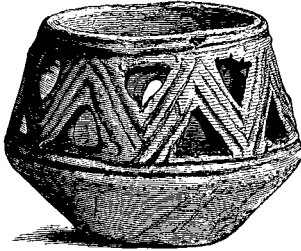


Fig. 1. Perforated Urn found at Whinnyliggate, Kirkcudbright, 2 inches in height.

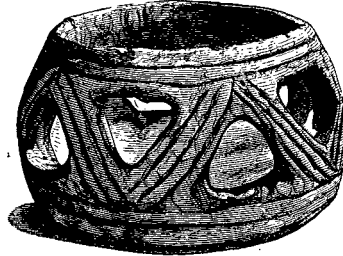


Fig. 2. Perforated Urn found at Killucken, Tyrone, Ireland, 2 inches in height.

the Museum was figured by him, but it is a specimen from Killucken, near Tyrone, Ireland. (See fig. 2.)

This urn, however, which I have the pleasure to bring before your notice to-night, is therefore especially interesting as being the first example of this variety, with the triangular perforations, yet found in Scotland.¹

The urn is of a broad double-cone shape, and measures 2 inches in height, $1\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch across the mouth, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches at its widest bulge,

¹ The site of its discovery is on a low knoll of rotten slateband, about 300 yards N.N.W. of Whinnyliggate school, in the field called "the Constables." In this field was once an old house, and it is supposed that the field took the name of the family living in it. Robert Bryce, when ploughing, observed a cavity in one of the furrows containing reddish earth filled with soft bones, and below this was the large urn, which at once went to pieces; below this again was the small urn; and at the very base of this earthy pit, which was about two feet deep, were two water-worn stones, which he thought must have been brought from the shore.

and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch at the bottom. Besides its salient typical feature of triangular perforations, of which there are fourteen, each measuring about $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch along its three sides, this urn bears the following ornamentation, viz., round the outer side of the lip two parallel incised lines, and lines of the same kind, three in number, placed between the triangular perforations, two similar parallel lines at the base of the perforations. On the line of the bulge of the urn are numerous minute punctures. The under half of the urn is faintly scored with lines curving in the direction of the spokes of a wheel: there are eight or nine of these, and each couple is further scored across with horizontal lines. Owing to a portion of the bottom of the urn having flaked off, this ornament has been partially spoilt. The shape of the urn is not perfectly circular. It has been hand-made, and burnt in an open fire in the usual manner.

In the ninth volume of our *Proceedings*, p. 189, there is a notice of all the small cups or urns then in the Museum: the total number was fourteen, of which one was found in the North of England, two in Ireland, and the rest "are believed to have been discovered in Scotland." Only the specimen from Killucken, Tyrone, has the large fenestra, or triangular perforations. In form it is rounder, and its base is in the line of its widest diameter—it does not narrow downwards, as does this specimen from the Whinnyliggate. Its incised lines of ornamentation are almost precisely like those of the Scotch urn.

In the Introduction to his work on *British Barrows*, Canon Greenwell says:—"The Hon. W. Owen Stanley and Mr Albert Way seem to lean to the belief that these small cups may have been chafers 'for conveying fire, whether a small quantity of glowing embers, or some inflammable substance, in which the latent spark might for a while be retained, such, for instance, as touchwood, fungus, or the like,' with which to kindle the funeral fire. . . . Neither the form nor the peculiarity of the holes and piercings is inconsistent with this explanation of their use. Their size is what we might expect to find in vessels made for the purpose of carrying a piece of ignited touchwood or other suitable material, and the holes and piercings are not ill-adapted for keeping it, by means of a draught, in a state of ignition."