

## II.

NOTE ON A CINERARY URN, OF A TYPE NOT COMMON IN SCOTLAND, LATELY FOUND NEAR CRAMOND. BY JAMES MACDONALD, LL.D., VICE-PRESIDENT.

The urn now on the table is part of a collection of objects of antiquity formed by Mr James Mackenzie, F.S.A. Scot., to whose courtesy I am indebted for an account of the circumstances under which it was found. This I give in his own words:—"In December 1889 a field near Cramond was being ploughed. One of the horses, while walking in the furrow, slipped his foot. On examination it was seen that a flat stone had given way under the weight of the horse, and on removing it a jar was observed in an upright position, and with the mouth partly broken by the displacing of the stone. The pieces were collected and the jar dug out, when it was found to contain fragments of burnt bones. These were turned out and carefully gone over. I was at once informed of the discovery by my friend the farmer, who was on the field at the time. Next day I visited the place along with him. We had the earth all around the spot turned over, and recovered a few more small bits of bone and of the mouth of the jar. For some feet near where the vessel had stood the earth was mixed with a dark substance resembling charcoal. At the depth of the jar there was a number of small water-worn stones, such as may be seen on the shore (from which the spot was distant more than half a mile), the largest about the size of a walnut. What connection, if any, they had with the jar, such as forming a bed on which it rested, or a ring round it, was not ascertained. On replacing the earth which had been removed, a black-coloured space was seen, extending to about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet square, and different from the rest of the field.

"An examination afterwards made showed the bones to be the burned remains of a human body. As the fragments are varied in colour, cremation appears to have been performed in the open air, and by some rude process. Evidently they had been gathered off the surface of the ground, some particles of earth and small stones being among

them. The jar is thus an urn, or was used as such; and from its character and form it is apparently of Roman, or, to speak more correctly, of Romano-British manufacture."

The urn (fig. 1) is 14 inches high,  $32\frac{1}{4}$  inches in circumference round the middle,  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches at the base, and it is 5 inches over the mouth. It is wheel-made, and what a potter would call 'soft-burnt.' The surface is smooth, but unglazed, and of a bluish or greyish black colour. It has a band round the shoulder about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch in width, ornamented with parallel lines. During the Romano-British period there were extensive potteries in England for the manufacture of fictile ware of all kinds. The best known are those of Castor in Northamptonshire, on the Severn in Shropshire, and in the Upchurch marshes in Kent; but there were others. This Cramond urn is probably the product of some pottery in the southern part of the island. The clay used was for the most part fine, and the vessels turned out were light and thin. The sepulchral urns were of various shapes, but generally plain, or only slightly ornamented.

The modern village of Cramond is built, it is generally believed, on or near the place where a Roman settlement of some kind had once stood. The limits of this, however, cannot be now determined. Of defensive works, if any there were, no trace remains to guide us. But there are various reasons for supposing that the manse and manse garden must occupy part of the site. Wood informs us that when a new manse was built in 1745, the workmen, in digging the foundations, came upon stone walls running in different directions, seemingly the remains of buildings. These were on an average 3 feet in height, and lay under

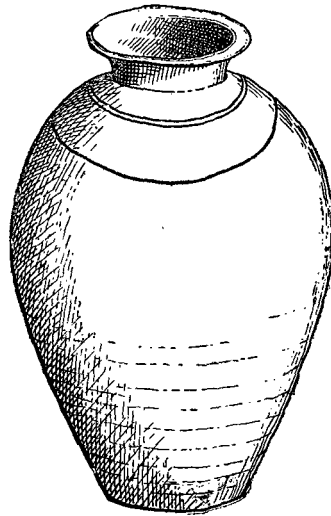


Fig. 1. Cinerary Urn, found near Cramond. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

4 feet of accumulated earth. At the same time Roman coins, fibulæ, and abundance of pottery were turned up. In the grounds of Cramond House, which adjoin the manse, there was dug up an altar, seen by Sibbald, Gordon, and Horsley. It was dedicated by a cohort of Tungrians to the Alatervan Mothers and the Mothers or Deities called Campestres. Altars to the latter have been met with at Auchendavy and Newstead. The mention along with them of another set of Mothers distinguished as Alatervan has led to the supposition that Alaterva was the Roman name of Cramond. But it is much more likely that the designation was brought by the Tungrians from their native land. This altar has long since disappeared. Two parts of a pillar said by Sibbald to have been "found near to the mansion of Inglistoun," in the neighbourhood of Cramond, are now in the National Museum of Antiquities. The inscription, which is incomplete, bears that the pillar had been erected by the first cohort of Cugernians in the reign of, or in honour of, one of the Antonine emperors. Other Roman stones have been found at Cramond, the precise locality of which is uncertain. Gordon, who was well acquainted with Sir John Clerk's collection of Roman antiquities, gives some particulars of from forty to fifty Roman coins from Cramond, including a medal of Severus, with the inscription *Fundator Pacis*; and these were but a portion of what the place had yielded. In the same collection there were also preserved a bronze stamp, a lancet similar to one discovered in a surgeon's house in Pompeii, steelyards, strigils, and fibulæ,—all found there.

Thus the discovery of a relic of the Romans at Cramond is nothing new. The great interest attaching to the urn lies in its being the only properly authenticated example that has as yet been recorded in Scotland of a Romano-British burial by cremation. In the Statistical Accounts, references are made to 'Roman urns' in connection with various localities. But in the majority of cases certainly, and in all of them possibly, the urns belong to the Bronze Age of the people of our own country.