

V.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A CIST CONTAINING THREE URNS
OF FOOD VESSEL TYPE AT DUNCRA HILL FARM, PENCAITLAND.

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MUSEUM.

I first heard of this interesting discovery from Mr A. Agnew Ralston, factor to the Right Hon. the Earl of Hopetoun, on whose property the farm of Duncra Hill is situated. Mr Ralston kindly called here with one of the urns, suggesting at the same time that I should write to Mr James Elliot, the farmer, requesting him to bring in the other two that they

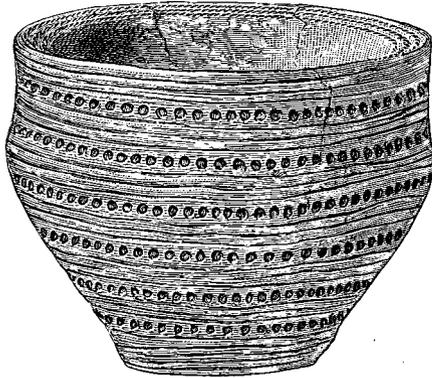


Fig. 1. Urn (No. 1) found in a cist at Duncra Hill. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

might be all exhibited to the Society together and the description of the discovery placed on record in the Society's *Proceedings*. Mr Elliot was kind enough to comply at once with my request, and so far as he knew explained the circumstances of the discovery.

The place where the cist was found is a sandy knoll in one of the fields, and the cist was discovered when ploughing, the cover being only 11 ins. under the surface. Unfortunately Mr Elliot was not present when the discovery was made, but the urns were recovered entire and carefully preserved. The cist was of the usual type, the cover and sides

of flat undressed stones, and the bottom unpaved. There were few indications of the burial left, the only portion of the bones recognisable being the shafts of two femora. Besides the three urns, no other objects of an artificial character were found in the cist. The cist, though enclosing this unusual number of urns, was not of unusual size. It measured 3 ft. 6 ins. in length, the width at one end being 2 ft. 11 ins., and at the other end 2 ft. 5 ins., the depth being about 2 ft. Unfortunately the relative positions of the urns were not noted at the time.

The largest of the three urns (fig. 1) is $5\frac{1}{4}$ ins. in height by $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter across the mouth. It has a slight shoulder at 2 ins. below the rim. Above the shoulder there is a very slight contraction towards the

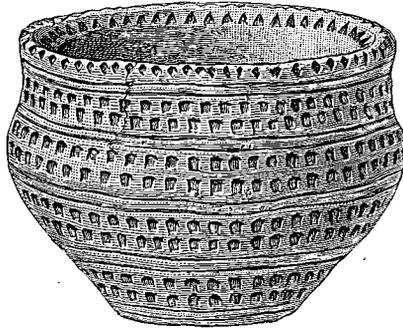


Fig. 2. Urn (No. 2) from a cist at Duncra Hill. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

rim, and below it, the lower part tapers to a base of $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter. The rim is fully $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in thickness, slightly bevelled inwards, and is ornamented with four parallel rows of what look like impressions of a two ply twisted cord of coarse fibres, or perhaps hair, of which eight to twelve distinct impressions may be counted in each of the plies. The exterior is ornamented from lip to base with horizontal bands of impressions of a thong, arranged three in a band, the bands alternating with single rows of impressions of the end of a cylindrical piece of wood or bone (more probably the latter) about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter, the impressions being about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch in depth, and showing the end of the cylinder as

neatly cut off and rounded as the flat end of a pencil. There are six of these bands and six rows of the circular impressions, and the part next the base has the width of the band of thong impressions increased to five. The bottom is plain and slightly concave externally.

The second urn (fig. 2) is similar in character and measures $4\frac{3}{4}$ ins. high by $6\frac{1}{4}$ ins. in diameter across the mouth. It is much the same shape as No. 1, but deeper in proportion to its width, and slightly more curved between the lip and the shoulder. The lip, which is bevelled inwards, is about half an inch in thickness, and is ornamented with a single



Fig. 3. Urn (No. 3) from a cist at Dunera Hill. (3.)

row of rather blunt impressions of an irregularly oval shape, which are repeated round the outer margin of the rim. The exterior of the bowl is also ornamented from lip to base with horizontal bands of two lines each, alternating with two rows of impressions of a squarish ended punch, apparently of a softish material, such as the end of the stem of a plant. The lines between appear to have been scored in the soft clay and not impressed. They are done in lengths, imperfectly joined, and occasionally with a very short length inserted between the ends of two longer lengths that have not joined fairly. The bottom is plain, $3\frac{3}{8}$ ins. in diameter, and slightly concave exteriorly.

The third urn (fig. 3) is $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in height by $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in diameter across the mouth, widening to about 7 ins. at the shoulder, which is about the middle of its height, so that its shape is that of a truncated cone both upwards and downwards from the shoulder, with a slight collar above the bottom, which is $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in diameter and quite flat, not concave externally, as in the cases of the two previously described. The ornamentation also is different, but, as in the other cases, it covers the whole exterior surface. The lip, which is slightly bevelled inwards and is $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in thickness, is ornamented by a single row of impressions as if made by a pointed implement thrust obliquely into the soft clay. A similar row of impressions encircles the exterior of the brim. Underneath them is a horizontal line of impressions as of the teeth of a comb, and below that a wide band of herring-bone ornament, also made by the teeth of a comb. Immediately above, and immediately under the ridge of the shoulder, is a row of oblique impressions strongly marked, underneath them a wide band of herring-bone ornament, and round the collar of the base another of the strongly-marked rows of oblique impressions.

Each of these urns is specially interesting on account of its ornamentation, and the discovery of three of them of this particular form in one cist is, so far as I know, a most unusual, if not unique, experience in Scotland.

It is pleasant to add that since this paper was written the three urns constituting this unique find have been presented to the National Collection by the Earl of Hopetoun.