IV.

NOTE ON THE FINDING OF AN URN, JET NECKLACE, STONE AXE, AND OTHER ASSOCIATED OBJECTS, IN WIGTOWNSHIRE. By LUDOVIC M'LELLAN MANN, F.S.A. Scot.

On the morning of 26th May 1901, Mr Beckett, Stoneykirk, Wigtownshire, and his young son, John, when out walking near their house, noticed on a patch of sandy ground the lip of an urn protruding from the soil.

On removing some of the surrounding sand, an urn, in a fragile condition, was found placed on its base and inclined at a slight angle.

The vessel was full of dark brown caked sand. Three minute pieces of charred wood were found inside the urn, almost at the top. On carefully removing the sand from the interior, 188 finely-wrought, perforated pieces of lignite were found near the foot. The finder having the same day shown me all these objects, which he had brought home with him, I went with him in the afternoon to the place. I found that the urn had been deposited on fine white sand. The surface-soil had been blown off, probably to a depth of 2 or 3 feet, reckoning from the position of a ledge of dark caked soil, situated about 10 yards to the south, which appeared to be an old land surface. Along this ledge, and in its immediate neighbourhood, I had on previous occasions found many pieces of coarse black hand-made pottery, and there are upon it traces of ancient fires, as shown by patches of reddened and blackened sand, fire-chipped stones and burned bones.

The sand round the place of deposit, and within a radius of 2 feet, was carefully sifted by us by hand.

I found that when the urn was taken from its pocket, the surrounding sand had not been much disturbed, and in this small area I observed, so close to the pocket that they must have almost touched the sides of the vessel, several somewhat irregular thin layers of hardened browned sand, and patches of caked reddish sand, showing apparently that the sand had been acted upon by fire.

In these layers and patches some small fragments of burned bone, and few more small pieces of charred wood were found. Some fragments of stone and flint, probably fire-fractured, were also picked up, and I obtained a small piece of the urn which had escaped notice on the first scrutiny.

The sand for a considerable depth below the pocket was examined, and appeared to be in a natural and undisturbed condition.

The Stone Axe-Head.—Three weeks later I again carefully examined the spot where the urn had rested, and found a fragment (showing an ancient fracture) of a stone axe-head of some kind of greenish stone. One half of the cutting face and two inches of one side remain. The polish of the surface has been destroyed, except at several very small spots. Within a yard or two of the place of deposit I picked up some small chips of flint not acted upon by fire. They do not show any secondary working.

On the 2nd November following I again visited the place, and two or three yards to the east was found a fragment of a hand-made urn of reddish-brown ware, decorated with three parallel lines, smooth and broad, impressed while the clay was soft, each set running at different angles, but this piece is no portion of the urn which contained the pieces of jet.

The Urn.—The vessel which contained the jet objects was of very brittle, pale yellow ware. The clay had been mixed with small pieces of crushed stone. The urn is unfortunately in fragments. It had a bulging moulded rim, and stood about 9 inches high. The diameter across the mouth was about 6 inches, and the greatest diameter, about $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches, occurred at the lower edge of the moulded rim. From the mouth of the vessel the contour curve ran sharply downwards and outwards over the space of an inch. At this point, which was $\frac{3}{4}$ inch down from the top edge, the outline curved slightly inwards for about 2 inches, then outwards for an inch, and thereafter tapered to a base $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter.

The moulded rim was decorated by a zigzag line. The lower angles formed by this line contained a number of short indented strokes, varying in number from two up to six in each angle. The decoration

of the lower parts consisted of two rows of equal-sided lozenge or diamond-shaped panels.

The panels in the lower row were smaller than those in the upper.

A zigzag line seems to have occurred immediately under the lower panels. All the ornamentation was done while the clay was soft. Adhering to the inner surface of some portions of the urn, I noticed several brown fibrous strands. These fibres seem to have occurred about midway between the mouth and the base, and may be the remains of some textile fabric or moss packing.

Fig. 1. Upper part of Urn.

The Necklace.—There can be no doubt, I think, that the lignite objects were strung to form a necklace.

The pieces are intensely black and in perfect condition, all the surfaces being beautifully smooth, and possessing a subdued silken lustre.

There are 187 small, thin, perforated discs, all true circles, and akin in appearance to small "washers," varying considerably in diameter, but not appreciably in thickness. There is a large, flat, perforated, triangular piece which seems to have formed a pendant centre-piece.

I know from previous experience that the finder, Mr Beckett, is keenly alive to the necessity, in these matters, of careful observation, and

in this case he noted that the discs lay well inside the urn, as if strung together, those of smallest diameter being on each side of the pendant, and the other discs being ranged according to the gradations of their diameters, the largest being furthest removed from the pendant, that is, at the ends of the string. No trace of the connecting fibres or cord appears to have been recognised. I have re-strung the beads in this fashion. The grading of sizes was no easy task, so minute are the differences in the diameters.

It seems certain that all the pieces have been recovered. The beads when strung and graded do not show any hiatus, which points to the necklace being entire. Several of the discs, as many as six, in one instance, were found adhering together, apparently in the original sequence of their stringing, and so closely set to one another as to weaken the theory that other beads of a more perishable nature, such as horn or wood, had been interpolated.

The pendant hangs most naturally with its long side inwards, and was probably so worn. The long side measures $1\frac{7}{32}$ inch, and the two short sides each $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. The perforation has been made at the corner opposing the long side, and appears to have been bored perpendicularly from both faces, as the hole narrows towards the interior.

The discs have all been pierced at their centres, and at right angles to the flat faces. Some of the perforations appear to have been picked out, and the walls, like those of the perforation in the pendant, have nearly all been rendered smooth, either by a finishing process in the manufacture or by subsequent wear of the connecting cord.

The perforations of the discs vary slightly in diameter, and judging from the diameter of the smallest holes (the breadth of which is an index to the maximum thickness of the cord or fibres employed with the necklace), the cord must have been very thin.

The discs range in diameter from $\frac{30}{128}$ to $\frac{49}{128}$ inch, a difference of only about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.

When closely strung, the discs form a string $14\frac{5}{16}$ inches long. As they number 187, the average thickness is ·076 inch, or between

$\frac{2}{32}$ and $\frac{3}{32}$ inch. There is practically no variation from the average thickness. Adding the thickness of the centre-piece, $\frac{5}{32}$ inch, the total length of the necklace is $14\frac{15}{32}$ inches, a length sufficient to go completely round a neck of ordinary proportions, but without much allowance for suspension.

I venture to conjecture that each end of the string for a couple of inches was not occupied by any beads, and that the string encircled the wearer's neck loosely and hung free; while the beads, confined to all but the back portion of the string, were just sufficiently pressed together to avoid the occurrence of any angularities in the line of the beads.

If just sufficient play were allowed to each disc, the cylindrical serpentine body of the necklace would reflect every movement of the breathing; and I am inclined to take it for granted that the people who had the skill and the good taste to manufacture such objects possessed also sufficient culture to know how to wear to the best advantage such products of their craftsmanship.

A few "finds" have been made of similar small perforated and carefully made lignite discs, from single specimens to groups of as many as 70, but without the occurrence of centre pieces.

In Scotland Mr Joseph Downs has found 3 or 4 (of average size) at a site on Shewalton Sandhills; 1 or 2 isolated discs (of average size) have been picked up on Glenluce Sands; Dr Bryce has found 14 specimens (varying in size) associated with an urn of food-vessel type at Brownhead, Arran. Dr Joseph Anderson has discovered 70 very small discs in a cist within a chamber in a long-horned cairn at Yarhouse, Caithness.

In England 47 discs varying from about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter, and having an almost uniform thickness of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, have been found in a cairn at Crosley, Ravensworth, Westmorland. From a tumulus at Lake, Wiltshire, 5 very small specimens have been obtained. In Ireland 2 examples, each about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in thickness, were discovered together at Skerry, County Antrim.

Necklaces of small Circular Lignite Discs with Pendant Centre-piece are rare, only four being known. The following Comparative Table focusses the information on the subject.

Where Discovered.	Discs (all centrally perforated).	Description of Centre-piece.	Associated Relics.	References.
I. Weaverthorpe, East Riding of Yorkshire.	No. 122; varying in diameter from a little over $\frac{1}{8}$ to little less than a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch; varying considerably in thickness, maximum and minimum being about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and $\frac{1}{6}$ inch respectively.	Equilaterally triangular; sides about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, and slightly convex; perforation slightly to one side.	In a Barrow, with body of a young woman, associated with a plain food vessel, 5 inches high, $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches wide at mouth, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at base.	*British Barrows*, pp. 53 and 197, 198.
II. *Goodmanham*, East Riding of Yorkshire.	No. 123; measurements similar to those of the Wigtownshire example, No. IV.	Centrally perforated, circular disc, about 1 inch in diameter, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick; about $\frac{1}{8}$th of the periphery cut away with two grooves or rows incised along the flat top of the cut, and running parallel to the line of perforation.	In a Barrow, with body of girl of seventeen years of age; bottom of grave appeared to have been laid with wood; small lumps of ochre lay close to body.	*British Barrows*, pp. 329, 330.
III. Fimber, East Riding of Yorkshire.	No. 169; varying in diameter from $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{5}{16}$ inch, with an almost uniform thickness of $\frac{1}{16}$ inch.	Triangular; practically identical with the centre-piece in the Wigtownshire example, No. IV.	In a Barrow with food vessel, with skeleton of a young woman, and a small bronze awl in a short wooden haft.	*Reliquary*, vol. ix. pl. x., p. 65.
IV. Stoneykirk, Wigtownshire.	No. 187, as described in the prefixed note.	(Details are given in	the prefixed note).	