

## II.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF EARTHENWARE JARS OR JUGS BUILT INTO THE WALLS OF DWELLING-HOUSES IN SCOTLAND. BY ALEXANDER HUTCHESON, F.S.A. Scot.

In a paper to the Society in 1883 (*Proc.*, xvii. pp. 426-32), I directed attention to two different buildings (since then removed) in Dundee, in each of which earthenware jugs had been found inserted in a peculiar manner in the external walls.



Figs. 1 and 2. Jugs found built into the wall of a house in Dundee.  
( $5\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 inches high.)

The jugs, several of which were preserved (figs. 1, 2), varied somewhat in form and dimension, but neither of these characteristics seemed essential to the original purpose, whatever that may have been, of their insertion in the walls, since we cannot but suppose that in such a case

a uniformity of design would have been displayed. On the contrary, that purpose had been apparently effectually served by the use of the ordinary household jugs of the period. The jars discovered in Dundee were all of the ordinary "jug" variety, having the common bent or bow handle on one side, and a spout or slight eversion of the lip at the opposite edge. The jugs were of a coarse dark reddish-brown glazed ware, of sixteenth or early seventeenth century. They had been inserted when the walls were being built, and were therefore at least coeval with the age of the house. They lay on their sides with their mouths flush with the external face of the wall; and as they were not filled up internally with plaster, they presented to the spectator a series of small circular orifices placed at a uniform level in the walls, and (with one or two exceptions) between the upper floor windows of a three-storey structure.

In considering the object for which the jugs had been so placed, it was, I think, evident that the spout and handle served no apparent purpose in the wall. For any evidence to the contrary, a vase without either handle or spout would have served the purpose quite as well.

We may, therefore, conclude that the custom was not widespread enough to call for the supply of a special form of jar, hence the use of the ordinary water jug of commerce. This, at all events, was the character of the jugs which came under my notice in Dundee in 1883.

Whether this was also the type of the jugs or jars used in such large numbers in the inside walls of the Wedderburn house, also noticed in the same paper, I cannot say, as unfortunately no particular notice seems to have been taken of them at the time, and when it came to my knowledge no definite information was obtainable.

I have mentioned that only two instances of the practice were brought under my notice in Dundee. Other examples were suggested by tradesmen and others whom I consulted, but a careful search in the localities indicated failed to locate any other instance.

Still, the fact that two different houses in 1883, presumably the residences of persons of means and estate in the 16th century, exempli-

fied the peculiarity, removed it out of the region of singularity, and raised a presumption of an established usage.

Since then I have, as occasion served, kept a sharp look-out for other examples, but it was not until the spring of last year that I was fortunate in discovering another example of this curious custom, for such we are now entitled to consider it.

On the 29th March 1904, I happened to be visiting my friend Mr Wm. W. Moncrieff of Annfield, Abernethy, when he mentioned the old mansion-house of Innernethy not far off, which he said was empty and getting into a ruinous condition, but well worthy of a visit.

Accordingly we started off, and I had not been many minutes at the old house, a building of three storeys in height, when my eye was caught by a small circular opening like the end of a drain-pipe, about 3 inches in diameter, situated in the top storey and midway between a window and one of the corners of the south gable. It immediately occurred to me that this might be a jar, an instance of the practice exemplified in Dundee, and if so there might be more of them. I moved round to the west side of the house, and to my delight saw that on this side several other examples presented themselves. I could now also determine the fact that they were indeed jugs like the Dundee examples, because one or two showed a spout, and at least one exhibited a handle. Careful examination of all the sides of the house showed that at least nine jugs had been placed in the walls. They were all at a uniform level of about 3 feet below the wall head and between the upper floor windows, but so placed that they could not have been easily reached from the windows.

The house of Innernethy is a plain rectangular structure, measuring about 60 feet long by 21 feet 6 inches wide over walls, three storeys in height, and having a gable at each end. The entrance door is placed about the centre of the east front, whence a passage leads directly across the ground floor giving access right and left to other portions of that floor and ending in a circular stone staircase which, projecting from the western wall, forms a sort of tower on that side and gives access to the upper floors. Internally the walls of the principal apartments had been

pannelled with wood, some fragments of which remained, but no date or armorial bearings could be anywhere discovered in the building. I should attribute its erection to somewhere about the end of the 17th century, a period less remote than the Dundee examples, which were certainly older than this. This would seem to indicate that the practice of placing jugs in the walls of dwelling-houses in Scotland prevailed at least for about 100 years.

Immediately on reaching home I wrote to Dr Joseph Anderson, making the discovery known to him, and proposing to furnish the Society with



Fig. 3. Six Jugs found built into the walls of the Mansion-house of Innernethy.  
( $9\frac{1}{4}$  to  $10\frac{1}{8}$  inches in height.)

notes of an investigation of this new instance of a practice so singular. Unfortunately, a severe illness laid me up for some months, and the proposed investigation had to be postponed. Meanwhile, unknown to me, the walls of the old house had been broken into for materials for the repair of some farm building on the property, and in the course of taking down the jars had been uncovered, a circumstance noted in a paragraph in the *Dundee Advertiser* of 26th September 1904. Recognising the desirability of the utmost care being taken of the jugs, I wrote at once to Dr Anderson, requesting him with this view to communicate with Sir

Robert Moncrieffe, Bart., the owner of the property, and I was glad shortly thereafter to receive Dr Anderson's assurance that the jugs were being taken care of, and that Sir Robert had agreed to present a specimen jug to the National Museum.

Since then I have had the pleasure of inspecting and photographing six of the jugs in Moncrieffe House. I have not heard what has become of the other three, but a visit lately made to the old house showed that all the nine specimens I saw in March 1904 had been removed from the walls.

Of the six jugs preserved at Moncrieffe (fig. 3), five are of one pattern, although differing slightly in dimensions. These five range from  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches to  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  to  $3\frac{7}{8}$  in diameter at the mouth, about 4 inches at the base, and from  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in thickness.

All have handles, and are of a yellowish-green glazed ware with brown streaks. One is not glazed inside. One is filled up in the neck with lime mortar, but appears from the weight to be empty below. Three out of the six had remains of a bird's nest inside. Several of them have had handles and necks broken, doubtless from age and removal, as the breaks appear fresh, and in some cases the fragments have been preserved.

The jugs, like those in Dundee, do not appear to have served any other purpose, as evinced by the scoriæ adherent to the bottoms.

The handles have a double depression at the sides of the upper extremity and a single central depression at the lower end, as if from the impress of a thumb in the soft clay at their formation.

The sixth jug is of much more interest than the others (fig. 4). It is of smaller and more graceful shape, of a light-brown colour, highly glazed, and ornamented with raised decoration, and a band about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch wide with an inscription round the widest part. At the neck is a bearded face; round the body is the band with an inscription as follows:

❖ WES : AEF : EST : VAR : IST : WER ❖

three times repeated: above and below the band are acanthus leaves (inverted below) and small circular medallions containing profile heads in relief. The letter S is inverted in the inscription.

In my former paper, in considering the origin of this strange custom which seems to have hitherto escaped notice, I suggested the jugs might have been inserted in the walls to serve as birds' nests. In point of fact, as already mentioned, three of the six jugs preserved at Moncrieffe contained portions of birds' nests, but the object of the builders in making such provision for birds seems far from clear. I formerly referred to a superstitious belief that the presence of birds' and especially swallows' nests insured the safety of a building from lightning ;



Fig. 4. Inscribed Jug found built into the walls of the Mansion-house of Innernethy.

but is it certain, granted such a superstition prevailed in Scotland, which has not been proved, that swallows would have preferred such a form of nest to their usual "clay biggins" under the eaves?

It really seems as if we must wait for more light on the subject. Perhaps the additional publicity given by the present instance may lead to other like discoveries when old buildings are being removed.

I cannot but think, however, that the slight accident of my visit to

Innernethy in March 1904, when I pointed out the holes to the farmer, and explained to him what they would be found to be, led to the public notice given to the discovery of the jugs at the removal of the walls.

But for this the chances are that the jugs would have shared the fate of those which perished by hundreds—so it was said—when the Wedderburn house was taken down in Dundee, no one of the many persons concerned thinking the matter worth a moment's consideration.