

III.

BRONZE AGE URN DISCOVERED IN A STONE CAIRN ON THE KILCOY ESTATE, BLACK ISLE, ROSS-SHIRE, 18TH AUGUST 1908. BY CAPT. O. H. NORTH, LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS. COMMUNICATED BY THE HON. J. ABERCROMBY.

Having been informed by my cousin Mr Evan Burton-Mackenzie of Kilcoy that a large stone cairn, situated in a wood about half a mile above Kilcoy Castle, had been partially removed to obtain stones for a new road, I went to inspect it and see if it contained a burial.

I found that the cairn was a large circular pile of stones with a diameter of 100 feet, but the edges were so overgrown that it was hard to obtain accurate measurements. The outer stones of the circle were fairly large boulders, and the pile rose gradually till near the centre and then ascended more abruptly to a height of about 6 feet above the level of the rest, and about 10 feet to 12 feet above the level of the surrounding ground. I was informed that the heap had been added to from time to time by cartloads of stones which had been cleared from the surrounding land by the farmers.

When I first saw it about six feet of the central pile had already been removed, so I have had to rely for my description of the cairn, as it originally was, mostly upon the description given to me by Mr Grant, the man who was in charge of the work.

I started operations in the centre of the pile, assisted by Mr Grant and an American gentleman, Mr Elliott Fairley. After removing some two feet of the stones I came on a large slab, and removing this found another rather larger one underneath, which I saw was the covering stone of a cist (fig. 1).

I cleared a space round the sides of the grave to see if there were any more burials, but only found earth and stones. Most of the earth was blackened by the action of fire, and contained many fragments of burnt wood. I sifted it all with a fine sieve, but only found what I

take to be a small portion of a human skull and a tooth, probably of an ox. Underneath the black earth there was a yellowish clay which contained nothing but stones. On removing the covering stone I found that the cist (fig. 2) lay east and west, and was 3 feet 6 inches long on the



Fig. 1. View of the Cairn showing covering slab of the Cist.

north side and 3 feet 5 inches long on the south side, and 1 foot  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad. The south side consisted of one long flat slab placed on its edge. It was 3 feet 11 inches long,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad, and about 2 inches thick. The north side was formed by two stones, the smaller 1 foot long at the east end, and then a longer one, 2 feet 6 inches long, and of about the same breadth and thickness as that on the south side. The longer of these stones had fallen from its upright position, and was

lying across the grave, leaning against the south side 5 inches to 6 inches from the top, and a certain amount of stones and black earth had fallen on the top of it. I removed this stone, which I feared would have crushed any urns which the grave contained, and then carefully



Fig. 2. View of the Cist with the covering slab removed.

removed the earth in the cist, which was a yellowish clay, by hand. I afterwards sifted it and found some more charred wood and some minute portions of bones. In the south-west corner of the grave I found an urn (fig. 3), the top of which was 18 inches from the top of the grave. It was lying at an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$  facing the north-west, and had luckily been protected by the smaller stone on the north side,

which had remained in an upright position. The longer stone had just missed it when it collapsed. I uncovered it carefully, and after leaving it exposed to the air for half an hour removed it. I found nothing else in the grave, and before leaving replaced the fallen stone on the north side in its original position and put back the two covering stones. I found nothing in the urn but fragments of burnt wood. The accom-



Fig. 3. Urn found in the Cist. (½.)

panying illustration from a photograph of the urn will give a better idea of its ornamentation than a written description would do. The top pattern, made by pressing a piece of plaited string on the wet clay before it was baked, is also present on the inside rim.

The dimensions of the urn are:—Extreme width across the top,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  inches; width inside at angle, 5 inches; circumference round the top,  $19\frac{7}{8}$  inches; width across base,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches; depth outside, 5 inches; and depth inside,  $4\frac{5}{8}$  inches.

The illustrations show (1) the top covering stone (removed) at the

top, and the second covering stone *in situ*; (2) the same view with second covering stone removed and the earth partly cleared out of the grave, showing the urn rather indistinct in the south-west corner; (3) the urn itself to a scale of half size.