

II.

NOTICE OF TWO BURIAL URNS FOUND IN THE PARISH OF
MUIRKIRK, AYRSHIRE. BY J. G. A. BAIRD, F.S.A. SCOT.

The two urns which are the subject of this notice were found in a cairn on Wetherhill, a grassy knoll surrounded by moss, at 1128 feet above sea-level, at the western end of a ridge which, beginning near

the village of Glenbuck, in the parish of Muirkirk, close to the county march with Lanarkshire, runs in a westerly direction for about a mile and a quarter, with its highest point at 1273 feet. The knoll is formed by an outcrop of dolerite rock which comes to the surface at the cairn. Round the top of the outcrop the cairn is formed of stones two or three deep according to size. Its shape is circular; it measures 30 feet from N. to S., and 25 feet from E. to W., and has no kerb at the edges. The first urn (fig. 1) was found in a cranny of the rock about 4 feet to the north of the core. It had evidently been laid on its side safe from any pressure except from the top, but a stone had slipped from above and crushed



Fig. 1. Food-vessel Urn from Cairn at Muirkirk. (c. $\frac{1}{3}$.)

it badly. Nothing was found with it. The second urn (fig. 2) was lying bottom upwards in another nook about 7 feet to the south of the core, and was very badly crushed. When found it was a mere lump of earth, charcoal, and burnt bones, with only its rim remaining. Fragments of charcoal were scattered over the rock, and about 7 feet from the core and 9 feet to E. of the second urn there was a deposit of charcoal and burnt bones on the spot where, it may be presumed, the burning of the corpse took place. The story of the funeral of a person probably of distinction seems complete. The rock, a suitable spot for the pyre and a conspicuous place of burial; and the urns—one filled with the ashes of the dead,

for their better preservation placed where it might be supposed to be safe from destruction; the other similarly placed but empty, a relic of a common superstition,—appear to form a faithful record of one method of disposing of the dead during the Bronze Age.

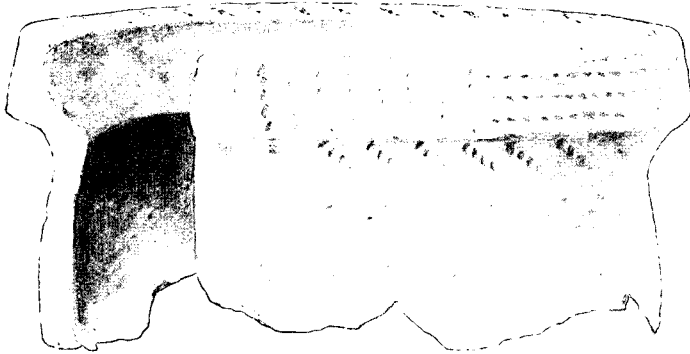


Fig. 2. Sectioned view of Cinerary Urn from Cist at Muirkirk. (3.)

By the kindness of Professor Bayley Balfour, an examination was made by his assistant, Mr H. F. Tagg, of certain fragments of carbonised wood found beneath the cairn, and which were identified as remains of birch and oak.

REPORT ON THE BONES. By Professor T. H. BRYCE, F.S.A.Scot.

The deposit of bones found in the urn is a small but typical one. The bones are very much comminuted, and no fragment is present which conveys any information regarding either the age or sex of the individual.

The second deposit from the separate burial represents only a portion of the original deposit. It consists of burnt bones of chalky appearance and fracture. Only one fragment is recognisable, and represents the neck of the mandible. Its size suggests the possibility that the individual was of small stature and a woman.