

III.

FURTHER DISCOVERIES OF BRONZE AGE URNS IN HUT-CIRCLES IN THE PARISH OF MUIRKIRK, AYRSHIRE. BY ARCHIBALD FAIRBAIRN, WELLWOOD, MUIRKIRK.

The fragments of pottery which are described in this note were discovered during further excavations of hut-circles on the estate of Wellwood, Muirkirk, carried out in the summer of 1919, under the direction of Miss Baird, the proprietrix.

About half a mile south-east of Wellwood House, on the edge of the moor, and 115 yards east of No. 2 hut-circle described by Mr Baird in the *Proceedings*, vol. xlviii. p. 375, is an oval ring formed of stones and earth. It is situated on a low flat knoll, and is enclosed by a circle of small cairn-sized stones. The mound rises in the centre to a height of 2 feet, and the interior measures 34 feet east and west, and 24 feet north and south.

Excavation was begun in the centre after removal of turf, loose earth, and stones. At a depth of 18 inches, charcoal and a small sprinkling of burnt bone were met with on what resembles a trodden clay floor. Over an area of 6 feet, the floor level near the centre is much stained with charcoal; and one stone pushed into the ground end-ways suggests the remains of the kerb of a hearth. The coarser urn fragments were found south of the charcoal-stained area, and immediately west of this, in a crevice between two stones, the remains of the finer urn were discovered crushed together. There were no signs of burnt bone near the pottery. The latter fragments lay near the foundation of what may have been a rude wall, probably of secondary date.

The potsherds which have been recovered are, as a rule, of small size, and their edges are so much crumbled that it was impossible to restore as much of either vessel as would indicate its size or shape. However, by examining the texture of the clay and the style of ornamentation displayed, and by comparing the sherds with the pottery previously found in one of the hut-circles in the same locality which was formerly described, it will be seen that the urns bear a strong resemblance to the beaker type.

The first-mentioned example is of a rather coarse clay of a dark drab colour, tinged on the exterior and interior with a shade of pink. There are indications that the greater part of the wall has been decorated by pinching a small part of the surface between the nails of the forefinger and thumb, so as to make a series of semi-circular hollows with a slight ridge between. Though the sherds suggest a kind of globular pot of a texture resembling a food-vessel type of urn, the thinness of the wall, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, and of three small pieces of the flat rim which is even thinner than the rest of the wall, would seem to indicate that the vessel had rather resembled the beaker type.

There is a distinct difference in the character of the second vessel. It is lighter in colour, but it also shows a pinkish tinge; the ware is harder and of closer texture, with a smoother surface, and the ornamentation is similar to that seen on many beakers. The greater part of the base has survived, and measures about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, while the wall is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. The upper part of the vessel has been encircled with horizontal lines, between two of which there is a band of short vertical impressions; the lower part is decorated with long upright zigzag lines, carried close to the base and possibly unbroken by plain transverse bands such as are usually seen on the sepulchral beaker. All the designs have been impressed on the clay with the toothed comb-like implement which was used so much by Bronze Age potters. It may be recalled that an urn¹ found in 1913 in another hut-circle on the same hillside had no plain bands.

East of this area there are two small circular pits—one 22 inches, and the other 28 inches, in diameter,—both with a kerb or margin of 12 to 14 stones, well arranged in a circle. They are situated close together, and the more northerly one has a flat stone bottom at a depth of 12 inches. The pits have been deepened below the natural level, but nothing was found in them, and both remain intact.

South-east of, and attached to, the main circle is a small circular arrangement of stones enclosing a space, 8 feet in diameter, covered with cairn-sized stones with three large flat stones in line on the south margin. This area, which was filled with dark-coloured forced earth and

¹ *Proc.*, xlvi. p. 376, fig. 2.

small stones, with a sprinkling of charcoal, was cleared out to a depth of 3 feet. Nothing was found down to the sandstone rock floor, but the place now contains much water, even in fairly dry weather.

The outer stone and earth margin of this pit is 2 feet 6 inches wide, and the inner wall 3 feet 6 inches thick and 1 foot high. They are rudely constructed, with smaller stones, clay, and earth tightly packed into the interstices.

So far as the excavation has gone, no relics have been found except the urn fragments, three or four rough flint or chert chippings, charcoal, and a small quantity of burnt bone.

Around the fire-marked area, the floor level clears up smooth, while the other parts are more soft and rough. The whole seems to have been much robbed for the stones it contained; but for the presence of the superior floor and the absence of a circle of heavy boulders, the general appearance is that of No. 2 hut-circle on a smaller scale.

Another low mound, 80 yards to the south of this, has been discovered, and is now cleared of turf and ready for exploration.
