

A LONG CAIRN NEAR GOURDON, KINCARDINESHIRE, AND A BRONZE AGE CAIRN CONTAINING A SHORT CIST AND AN URN AT IDVIES, PORPARSHIRE. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, F.S.A.Scot., DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES.

LONG CAIRN NEAR GOURDON.

The prehistoric burial cairns of Scotland, like the barrows of England, can be divided into two classes according to their general form—the long cairn and the round cairn—the first being assigned to the end of the Neolithic period, and the second to the Bronze Age, although some of the large round cairns belong to the earlier time. In the Scottish Neolithic cairns the burial chambers are of comparatively large size, showing a variety in their general shape and in the arrangements of the compartments into which they are often divided. In addition, they frequently have a low, narrow entrance passage leading into the tomb, so that a series of burials could be made in it. In the Bronze Age cairns there is no large chamber, but the bodies were placed either in a short slab-lined grave or in a cavity under or within the mass of the mound.

Long cairns are to be found in considerable numbers in the northern, western, and south-western parts of the country, but only one example—

the "Mutiny Stones" in a remote part of the Lammermoors, near the northern boundary of Berwickshire—has been recorded in the east of Scotland. It is remarkable that none seems to have been noted in the north-east, in Aberdeenshire and the adjoining counties which are so rich in the implements and weapons of the period. But it is quite probable that there have been examples, which have been cleared away during agricultural operations. Nevertheless, a thorough search of the north-east would probably result in the discovery of some of these monuments or of their remains.

Last summer, while on a visit to Kincardineshire, I was able to locate and survey a long cairn¹ on Gourdon or Bikmane Hill, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of the village of Gourdon. The cairn is built on the terminal height of a short range of low hills which strike inland from the coast, its elevation being 440 feet above sea-level. Immediately to the east there is a very steep descent to the shore 600 yards away, to the north and west the view is interrupted by rising ground, but to the south-west a considerable stretch of the coast and adjoining country is in sight.

The cairn, whose main axis lies about north-east and south-west (65° east of north magnetic), consists of stones and earth, and for the greater part is overgrown with grass. Many rounded stones from the local conglomerate had been used in its construction, and, though few angular blocks are to be seen, it is more than probable that any such stones appearing on the surface had been removed for building, as the monument is much despoiled and there are hollow cavities along both sides of the mound. The ends are rounded, and there is no evidence that the cairn had been of the horned variety, which is seen at its best in the north of Scotland. No large stones which might indicate the presence of a burial chamber or of an entrance passage to one were observed. The length of the monument is 155 feet, its breadth near the northern end 40 feet, near the southern end 25 feet, and its general height, except towards the southern extremity where it is lower, about 9 feet.

BRONZE AGE CAIRN AT IDVIES.

In April of this year, while workmen were digging a cavity for a water cistern in the summit of a mound on the estate of Idvies, in the parish of Kirkden, Forfarshire, a short cist containing incinerated human bones and an urn was discovered. Through the kindness of Mr J. Sharp Callender-Brodie of Idvies, the proprietor of the ground, and Mr A. E. Hutchison, W.S., I was able to visit the site a few days later and obtain a fairly complete record of the discovery.

¹ I have been informed that the cairn used to be called the "War woof."

The site of the find is a circular mound marked "Mote" on the Ordnance Survey Map, but it is generally known in the district as the Law Hill or the Gallows Hill. It lies about 450 yards south of the mansion-house of Idvies, on the brow of a brae on an undulating hillside rising towards the south, at an elevation of 464 feet above sea-level, and commands a wide view of the country towards the west. On the east side the mound rises to a height of about 12 feet above the natural level of the ground, but on the opposite and lower side it is about 5 feet higher owing to the slope; its diameter is about 80 feet.

In excavating for the foundations of the cistern, a cavity some 12 feet square had been sunk in the mound to a depth of 6 feet, when the cover of the cist was encountered. The bottom of the excavation consisted of undisturbed sandy clay, which also extended 3 feet higher on the north, west, and east sides, there being 3 feet of small boulders and pieces of stone mixed with earth above the clay. On the south side was a large wedge-shaped mass of forced soil and stones extending down to the level of the cist. From these occurrences it appears as if a natural hillock had been selected for the interment, an excavation had then been made from the south side, where there may have been a natural hollow, and, after the burial, not only had the cavity and the side cutting been filled in with stones and earth, but a coating of the same materials, about 3 feet in thickness, had been added to the summit and sides of the mound.

Beyond the smashing of the cover, which was an irregularly shaped flag of sandstone about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, no damage had been done to the cist when I saw it. The little chamber was particularly well made, the sides and ends each consisting of a thin slab of sandstone set on edge. At the mouth, which was perfectly flat, it measured internally 2 feet 4 inches in length, 1 foot 8 inches in breadth at the east end, 1 foot 9 inches at the west end, and 1 foot 2 inches in depth, the main axis running about east-north-east and west-south-west (91° east of north magnetic). At the bottom it was about 2 inches more in length and breadth than at the mouth, as the stones on the north and west inclined slightly inwards at the top. The slab forming the west end measured about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, but the others only from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 2 inches. The stone at the east end overlapped the side slabs by about 1 inch, while the slab on the south side overlapped that at the west end, and the latter that on the north side to the same extent.

There was very little soil in the cist, but in the south-west corner was an urn (fig. 1) standing in an upright position, while a deposit of incinerated human bones lay on the floor, none being in the urn. A few fragments of charred wood were found among the burnt bones.

When first exposed the urn was complete, but it was broken afterwards by the workmen. However, the greater part of the fragments were recovered by Mr Callender-Brodie, and it has been possible to make an almost complete restoration. From the illustration it will be seen that it is a vessel of very unusual character, both in form and ornamentation. The paste of which it is made is very coarse, and jet black in the interior, the outside being of reddish colour dotted with dark specks, showing a metallic glint like black-lead. The vessel is lop-sided, being straighter on one side than on the other. It has a slightly everted lip, and practically no constriction at the neck, which is of the same diameter as the part lower down, where there is usually a bulge. The top of the brim forms an acute angle, as it beveled sharply downwards on the inside. The urn measures $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height, 6 inches in external diameter at the mouth, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the neck and body, and 4 inches across the base. The wall is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, but thickens slightly just under the lip. From the base to the rim the wall is decorated with twenty-six horizontal rows of a rouletted or stamped design encircling the vessel. This design differs from the impressions formed by the narrow toothed stamp which are so frequently met



Fig. 1. Urn found at Idvies.

with on Bronze Age pottery, inasmuch as it is about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch broad. Each row of impressions is about this distance from those adjoining it on both sides. The outside of the brim and the bevelled inside are covered with similar impressions placed obliquely and close together.

In form the urn resembles the beaker more than any other class of Bronze Age pottery, but in the thickness of the wall and the texture of the clay it approximates more to the food-vessel. Further, it follows the food-vessel more than the beaker in having its exterior entirely covered with ornamentation. There are a few Scottish beakers decorated in this fashion, but in these cases it has been done by winding a twisted cord spirally round the vessel.

Though it can hardly be classified as a true beaker, the urn may be

placed in this category, but its association with cremated remains is very unusual.

With regard to the human remains found in the cist, Professor Thos. H. Bryce, F.S.A.Scot., who examined them, reports that "the deposit is an ordinary one, except that the incineration is not so complete as usual—some fragments are charred only, and some of the bones of *vertebræ* have hardly been reached by fire. The individual was an adult, as can be determined by certain of the hand bones which have been preserved whole. It is not possible to guess the sex. I think the deposit represents only one individual, as I could not detect any duplicate fragments, and the amount of debris is not more than can be accounted for by one skeleton. A small piece of bone bears a green stain, possibly caused by being in contact with a small object of bronze."