

I.

UNRECORDED URNS FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF SCOTLAND. BY
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CINERARY URN FROM TOXSIDE WOOD, MIDLOTHIAN.

On the 6th May last (1931) Mr John Smail noticed the side of an urn appearing just under the surface soil at the eastern face of Toxside



Fig. 1. Cinerary Urn found in Toxside Wood, Midlothian.

Quarry, in the wood of that name, near Gladhouse Reservoir, Midlothian. With the assistance of a fellow-workman, Mr James Bryden, he was able to extract the urn from the cavity in which it had been buried without further breakage. The urn was handed over to Mr James C. Kay, one of our Fellows, who informed me of the discovery and motored me to the site.

The urn (fig. 1) stood in an inverted position, 12 inches below the surface of the ground, and contained a considerable amount of calcined

human bones. There were about 3 inches of dark compacted soil in the mouth of the vessel. Formed of dirty brown clay, the urn is of the cinerary type, with a heavy overhanging rim. It is of unusual shape and quite unsymmetrical. Below the overhanging rim it widens to a pronounced shoulder and then contracts to a narrow base. It is unornamented, and a small part of the rim is wanting. The vessel measures $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter externally at the mouth, $13\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the lower part of the overhanging rim, $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the shoulder, and 5 inches across the base. The lip is almost flat and measures $\frac{1\frac{1}{8}}$ inch in breadth.

A small fragment of what seems to have been another cinerary urn of red clay, measuring only $1\frac{5}{16}$ inch by $\frac{7}{8}$ inch and $\frac{1\frac{1}{8}}$ inch in thickness, which showed two horizontal cord impressions on the outside, was found amongst the dark material removed from the cavity in which the first urn was buried, and two small fragments of a bronze awl, measuring $\frac{1\frac{3}{8}}$ inch and $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in length, amongst the calcined bones in the urn.

Professor Alex. Low, M.D., F.S.A.Scot., has examined the remains and has kindly supplied the following report:—

“The bones are from a burial by cremation and for the most part are in small pieces.

“All the larger pieces which can be recognised are human, and as there are no duplicate parts, are such as could belong to one person.

“There are some thirty-six pieces of the skull bones; the flat bones of the cranium being especially represented as well as pieces of the upper and lower jaws with tooth sockets. Quite a number of these pieces show open sutures and one piece shows the basilar suture of the skull, still unossified, indicating an individual under twenty-five years of age.

“Pieces of vertebræ can be identified and numerous pieces of the limb bones—upper and lower ends of both arm and forearm bones, the heads and pieces of lower ends of both thigh-bones, as also pieces of shafts of leg bones. The ends of these are all completely ossified, small and delicate, so that one might infer that we are dealing with the skeletal remains of a woman of from twenty to twenty-five years of age.

“The total weight of bony pieces is two pounds. It is of interest to note how thoroughly the bones have been calcined; chemical analysis shows only a trace of organic matter—about 0.2 per cent. instead of some 30 per cent. Organic matter is remarkably persistent in bones, in short-cist burials by inhumation the bones give some 25 per cent. of organic matter still present.

"Pieces of wood-charcoal, the larger up to half an inch in length, are found among the bones. Professor A. W. Borthwick of the Forestry Department, Aberdeen University, kindly examined the pieces of charcoal, and reports that the structure can still be made out without sectioning so that he can identify Birch and Elm."

FOOD-VESSEL FROM COCKENZIE, EAST LoTHIAN.

On the 8th June last the Rev. Thomas Osborne, F.S.A.Scot., brought into the Museum a food-vessel which had been found a few days before



Fig. 2. Food-vessel from Cockenzie, East Lothian.

at Winton Park, Cockenzie, East Lothian, where a number of houses had just been erected under a new housing scheme. The same afternoon I visited the site with Mr Osborne, and obtained the details of the discovery from Mr David H. Allan, who had rescued the vessel and suggested that it should be sent in to the Museum.

In digging a trench for a drain that runs parallel to and about 3 feet west of the gable of 20 Winton Park, about 6 feet from the north-west corner of the building, at a depth of 15 inches below the surface, the corner of a small cist, formed of brown sandstone slabs, was encountered. On displacing one of these stones, the interior of the cist was exposed, and the urn was found lying in the south corner. In

addition were a quantity of cremated human bones and some small pieces of charcoal. No other relics were found.

Of small dimensions, the cist was almost a cube, measuring 16 inches in length, 14 inches in breadth, and 16 inches in depth. The four slabs forming the sides measured from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 2 inches in thickness, and the two slabs with which it was covered were rather thicker. The grave was not paved.

The urn (fig. 2), as already stated, is of the food-vessel type. It is in a good state of preservation, only a small piece of the rim being wanting. Formed of a reddish clay with a considerable admixture of rather large crushed stone, it measures $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches in height, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter externally at the mouth, $6\frac{1}{16}$ inches at the shoulder, and $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the base. It has a vertical rim with a slight moulding at its junction with the tapering lower part. The top of the lip, which is $\frac{5}{8}$ inch thick, is sharply bevelled downwards towards the inside and is decorated with three concentric lines formed by the impressions of a twisted cord. On the outer edge of the rim are vertical indentations, and below this, but separated by three horizontal cord impressions, at the shoulder, are similar marks. The space between the lower two lines of impressions are filled with reversed hatched triangles. Just under the shoulder are four horizontal cord lines with large hanging hatched triangles below, and round the base are other four cord lines.

SHORT CIST AT ALTYRE, MORAYSHIRE.

In July last I received a telephone message from Sir Alister Gordon Cumming, Bart., of Altyre, saying that a stone-lined grave containing fragments of pottery and bones had been discovered on his estate, and that he was sending on the relics to the National Museum. As I expected to be in the North during the following week it was arranged that I should visit the site. Accordingly I went there on the 9th July and met Sir Alister, who took me to the place and furnished me with the details of the discovery as well as providing me with the photograph which is reproduced in fig. 3.

The burial was exposed through the removal of gravel from a sand-pit near the west side of the Loch of Blairs, some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, as the crow flies, south-south-west of Forres, on undulating ground at an elevation of about 150 feet above sea-level. The grave, which had been dug into coarse sandy gravel, was formed of four stone slabs set on edge, with a large stone cover, the sides and ends of which projected well beyond the chamber. The top of the cover-stone lay from 12 inches to 18 inches below the surface of the ground. With its main axis lying 72° east of north magnetic, approximately north-east by south and south-west by

north, the cist measured 2 feet 7 inches in length, 1 foot 8 inches in breadth, and 1 foot 9 inches in depth internally. The cover, which was oblong in shape, measured 4 feet 9 inches in length, 2 feet 7 inches in breadth, and 11 inches in thickness. As the grave had been examined by taking out the slab at the exposed southern end, and the cover had not been removed, the exact dimensions of the side and end slabs could not be ascertained, but so far as could be seen they measured about 4 inches in thickness. All the slabs consisted of a coarse grit. In covering in the grave a number of large water-worn pebbles had been placed on the cover-stone. The end slab, which was removed for the purpose of examining the grave, has been replaced, and it is Sir Alister's intention to leave the cist *in situ*, and fence it in.

When opened there were about 10 inches of gravel in the grave, and a small quantity of incinerated human bones, including a bit of the skull, were found in this deposit. In the most northerly corner were some fragments of a Bronze Age urn, while on the surface of the gravel, at the south-western end, were a number of pebbles, up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in greatest diameter, partially covered with a white, limy deposit.

All that remains of the urn, which is a food-vessel, are a wall and rim fragment, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length and $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches in height, and a few more negligible shards. It has a vertical rim measuring 2 inches in height, a tapering lower part, and a lip bevelled downwards towards the inside. It had measured $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches in diameter externally at the mouth, and the wall is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick.

Made of brown ware, the vessel is encircled by a raised moulding, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch below the rim. It is ornamented by impressions of a thin blunt instrument pressed into the clay at a very acute angle. One row set radially appears on the top of the brim, and the whole of the wall seems to have been covered by horizontal rows not quite parallel, four being above the moulding; three rows are seen on a shard from the lower part of the vessel.



Fig. 3. Cist at Loch of Blairs, Morayshire, showing end slab slightly displaced.

FOOD-VESSEL AND CINERARY URN FROM KERRERA, ARGYLL.

A good many years ago Mr Dugald MacIsaac, Oban, excavated an artificial mound at Slaterach, Kerrera, Argyll. Two short cists, formed of slabs set on edge, were unearthed, one containing a food-vessel and the other a cinerary urn. The graves lay practically alongside each other, a few feet apart.

One grave, measuring 4 feet 5 inches in length, 1 foot 3 inches in

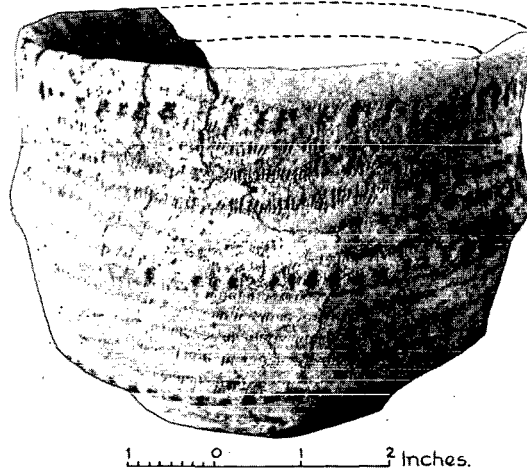


Fig. 4. Food-vessel from Kerrera, Argyll.

breadth, and 2 feet 2 inches in depth, contained a food-vessel (fig. 4) of brownish-yellow ware, measuring $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches in height, 6 inches in external diameter at the mouth, 6 inches at the shoulder, and about 3 inches across the base. The vessel is encircled by two mouldings, each of which is decorated by a single row of maggot impressions. A similar line of these markings appears under the rim. The rest of the wall is decorated by transverse rows of broad roulette impressions about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart. On the top of the lip, which is bevelled sharply on the inside, are maggot impressions set radially. More than three-quarters of the vessel survives. Seven water-rolled pebbles of cream-coloured quartzite were also found in the cist.

The other grave, which was also formed of slabs set on edge, measured 3 feet 3 inches in length, 2 feet in breadth, and 2 feet 2 inches in depth. It contained a cinerary urn (fig. 5) of brownish-yellow clay,

measuring $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height, $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in external diameter at the mouth, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the widest part, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the base. It is encircled slightly above the centre by a single cordon, the upper part being nearly vertical. The top of the rim, which is $\frac{5}{8}$ inch broad, is bevelled on the inside and decorated by impressions of a triangular pointed instrument, forming a zigzag line in false relief. On the



Fig. 5. Cinerary Urn from Kerrera, Argyll.

exterior of the wall are incised hatched lozenge patterns, a large lozenge in the centre, with the lower and upper halves of other two just under the rim and above the base. The vessel has been restored, and about three-quarters of it survive.

CINERARY URN FROM AULDYOCH, ABERDEENSHIRE.

In our *Proceedings*, vol. ix. p. 157, there are recorded a number of circular foundations (hut-circles) and small cairns on the Gallow Hill, Auldych, Auchterless, Aberdeenshire. On the O.S. 6-inch map, Aberdeenshire, xxvii., N.E., within an area of less than a mile wide, round what is now the farm of Auldych, there are noted "Remains of Picts'

Houses" (hut-circles) in three places, and "Tumuli," where human remains have been found, in two places. Fragments of urns were found in several of the cairns, and "portions of three nearly complete,

with a quantity of calcined bones and bone-earth," were preserved, and in 1871 were in Knockleith House; pieces of a fourth were sent to Hatton Castle, but the writer of the paper in our *Proceedings* apparently had not seen them. Two of those at Knockleith House were about 7 inches in greatest diameter, and the same in height. These proportions suggest that they were food-vessels, but as it is definitely stated that they were found with calcined human remains there is a shade of doubt whether they were so, even though we know that food-vessels occasionally are found with cremated interments.

As for the fragments which were preserved in Hatton Castle, it seems very probable that they consisted of the pieces from which Mr Edwards has built up the cinerary urn exhibited by Mrs L. Duff Dunbar of Ackergill, *née* Duff of Hatton, one of our Fellows.

The urn is of very plain form, being of flower-pot shape, with two raised cordons approximately $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch and $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches below the brim, without ornamentation. It measures from $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches to $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, from 8 inches to $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter externally across the mouth, and 5 inches across the base. The rim is flat and measures $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in thickness. The ware is of brownish colour, tinged with red in places.



Fig. 6. Cinerary Urn from Auldyoch, Auchterless.