

II.

A CINERARY URN AT HORSBRUGH CASTLE FARM, PARISH OF INNERLEITHEN, PEEBLESSHIRE. BY ARTHUR J. H. EDWARDS, F.S.A. SCOT., ASSISTANT KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES OF SCOTLAND.

The urn (fig. 1) was found in December of last year $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north-east of the ruins of the old castle when ploughing was going on in one of the fields of the farm. It had been placed in the ground mouth downwards, and the base, being only a few inches below the surface, was struck by the plough. This attracted the attention of Mr Napier, the ploughman to whom we are indebted for its preservation. Fortunately only the bottom was broken, and as most of the fragments were recovered it was possible to reconstruct the urn in the Museum. The vessel, which is made of a well-fired brownish coloured clay, is a double cordoned cinerary urn of the Bronze Age. It measures 14 inches in height, $12\frac{3}{8}$ inches in external diameter at the mouth, $12\frac{7}{8}$ inches at the widest part of the body, and $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the base. The cordons or raised mouldings are $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches apart, the distance between the upper one and the rim measuring $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The latter space is the only part which is decorated, and here a series of reversed hatched triangles almost encircle the urn; a space of 5 inches in length is, however, filled with oblique parallel lines only. The rim, which is bevelled sharply downwards towards the interior, is very thin, measuring only $\frac{9}{32}$ of an inch in thickness at the top. The inside of the bevelled part, $\frac{7}{8}$ inch in width,

is ornamented with parallel oblique lines bordered above and below by a single horizontal line. The whole of the decoration has been made by impressing a twisted cord upon the clay when it was soft. The urn contained a quantity of incinerated human bones and three very small fragments of what was probably a bronze knife. When placed together



Fig. 1. Cinerary Urn from Horsbrugh Castle Farm.

these pieces of metal measure $1\frac{13}{16}$ inch in total length and $\frac{9}{16}$ inch in greatest breadth. They were contorted by heat, and doubtless had been placed with the body on the funeral pyre when the cremation took place. It may be noted that another bronze blade similarly contorted had been recorded from Scotland. Four cinerary urns also of the cordoned type were found many years ago at Cambusbarron, near Stirling. All contained cremated human bones, but in addition one yielded part of a burnt bronze blade and another a perforated stone hammer.¹

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. v. p. 213.

This recent find adds yet another to the already numerous records of cinerary urns which have been found mouth downwards. It is a well-known fact, especially to those in museums who have to handle this class of pottery frequently, that many of these vessels are so top-heavy and the base so small compared with the wide mouth that they stand very insecurely when placed in an upright position, and are ready to topple over at the slightest touch. If they were cooking-pots for domestic use it could be said that the large mouth with its rapidly narrowing body and small base might be a convenient shape for placing in a hole in the ground while fire was built round it or heated stones dropped into its interior. But these vessels are recognised as funerary urns, and it is seldom that the outside shows any traces of having been in a fire. There is no soot encrustation such as one sees in pots which have obviously been used for culinary purposes. The small flattened base must then have been necessary for the technique of its building, and in all likelihood the smaller the base the greater was the skill of the maker. There is therefore a possibility that the cinerary urn was never meant to stand on its base but mouth downwards. Its particular shape thus showed a representation of something seen in the daily life of the craftsman—male or female—who made it. I suggest with some diffidence that the inverted urn may have been a reproduction in miniature of a hut, and that the remains of the deceased after cremation were placed in a receptacle which had some resemblance to the dwelling which he had occupied when alive.

It is true that the hut was not always exactly circular, sometimes it was more or less oval, but, generally speaking, the appearance of these dwellings, with their low upright walls and steeply sloping roofs, was probably one of similarity to the cinerary urn when placed mouth downwards. We have for comparison the House Urns of the Continent, and, although the shape of these is different, it is an analogy which cannot be overlooked.¹ Also in certain cases the mouth of our cinerary urns was probably covered by a more or less perishable material so as to keep the contents intact, and observers who have an opportunity of examining these vessels *in situ* should look carefully for any traces of fabric which may still remain.

The Society is indebted to Mr James Fox, who brought the find to its notice, and to Sir John Horsbrugh-Porter, who has kindly presented the urn to the Museum.

¹ *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, vol. v. pp. 221-28.