

## 5. RECENT EXCAVATIONS CARRIED OUT AT BORLAND CASTLE HILL, CUMNOCK, SOUTH Ayrshire.

Borland Castle hill is a large mound of sand and gravel, situated at a distance of 2 miles S.S.E. of the burgh of Old Cumnock between the L.M.S. railway line and the main road to the south. On the north and east sides of the hill is a shallow depression with a raised outer edge. The depression and raised edge have been mistaken for the fosse and rampart of a mote; but a narrow old road runs from the main road across Borland Burn up the slope towards the Castle hill, and it seems probable that the depression was formed when gravel was carted away from the site.

At the north-east corner of the present sand-pit, where the hill slopes down gently to the depression, the Rev. J. Douglas M'Clymont, B.D., F.S.A.Scot., The Manse, Old Cumnock, and Mr Allan Arthur, East Borland, Cumnock, discovered in 1938 three rim sherds and a shoulder sherd of a cinerary urn of gritty fabric at a depth of 1 foot 6 inches from turf-level above a layer of gravel consisting of rounded pebbles as large as peas, beneath which were found several large rounded boulders. Several fragments of charred wood and a few tiny pieces of broken burnt bone were found in the vicinity.

Twenty yards due south of the above site, along the east face of the sand-pit, was found a U-shaped hollow in the sand, filled to a depth of 6 feet with boulder clay. The excavation of this clay-filled hollow in a direction 60 degrees east of north was commenced by Mr M'Clymont, Mr Arthur and myself on Monday, 3rd October 1938, and the hollow was finally cleared in September 1939. The excavated pit was 12 feet long, with an average width of 4 feet. At a depth of 6 feet from turf-level was found a layer of rounded boulders of an average diameter of 1 foot. Beneath this layer was disclosed a layer of red ashes, surrounded by a margin of unconsumed oak charcoal and fine black earth, from 2 to 3 inches thick. This layer extended a distance of 10 feet 3 inches, with an average width of 3 feet. Among the ashes were found a few small fragments of incinerated bones, none of which exceeded half an inch in length. Beneath the layer of ash and charcoal was found a bed of flat stones from 1 to 2 inches in diameter, resting horizontally on the sand. The thinness and uniformity of the layer of charcoal and ash, its general shape and the scarcity of incinerated bones suggested to us that this was the site of a cremation. The direction would be favourable, being that of the prevailing winds. The incinerated bones must have been collected with care to leave so few fragments.

Along the face of the sand-pit, 20 feet north of this cremation site, at a depth of 18 inches from the turf-level, a rim sherd (2) of fine red Beaker was found projecting from the face by Mr Allan Arthur in autumn 1939.

During August 1939 our attention was drawn to a round patch of wet sand, 3 feet in diameter, on the floor of the sand-pit at the north-west corner. Mr J. D. M'Clymont and myself excavated this pit to a depth of 5 feet and found

that it was a cylindrical shaft, lined with thin red wood, containing short stakes and fragments of wood, one sole of a boot or shoe and animal bones, broken and decayed. Near the bottom of the shaft we found the lower part of the handle of a medieval jug of buff ware, described as No. 3 in Mr Edwards's report appended. This shaft was probably used as one of the kitchen-refuse dumps of Borland Castle.

ALEX. G. M'LEOD, M.A., F.S.A.Scot.

#### REPORT ON THE SHERDS.

The fragments collected by Mr M'Leod belong, as his report indicates, to three vessels and three periods.

1. Three rim sherds and a shoulder sherd of a cinerary urn of gritty fabric quite well smoothed externally and brown to light red in colour. Estimated rim diameter  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The urn has been of the overhanging-rim type, the collar bearing parallel horizontal and vertical lines in alternating panels. The neck had had a lightly traced criss-cross pattern made with the jagged end of a stick. Traces of the building-stages are clear, in particular a half-strip applied to the outside to form the lip.

2. A rim sherd of fine red Beaker, estimated rim diameter about 5 inches. It belongs to the B group, having apparently had an S-profile, and its decoration consisted of shallow incised lines running roughly parallel and horizontal.

3. Lower part of the handle of a medieval jug of buff ware. The handle had been  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. A single groove runs up the middle, at the bottom of which are two finger-tip depressions. The outer surface is coated with grey-green glaze covered with a brown friable film of decay.

A. J. H. EDWARDS, *Director*.