

4. TWO CINERARY URNS FOUND AT BALROWNIE, BRECHIN, ANGUS.

In the middle of September 1940 the finding of two cinerary urns on the estate of Balnamoon, Angus, was reported to the Society by W. B. Carnegie-Arbuthnott, Esq., F.S.A., who enclosed an account of the discovery which has been freely drawn upon in the following note, and who subsequently very generously presented the urns and their contents to the National Museum. I visited the site on 17th September along with the Factor, Mr T. M. Wood, to whose help I am greatly indebted.

The site of the discovery is on a natural knoll—the Knap of Balrownie—at the end of a gravel ridge, 600 yards west of the Mill of Balrownie, about 4 miles from Brechin. The Cruick Water flows 60 yards to the south. To the north one can look across to the Caterthuns. There are no recognisable traces of a tumulus.

Part of the knoll has been dug away by a gravel pit, and as a result the side of an urn only just below the turf was exposed in the mouth of a rabbit hole about the middle of the knoll. Mr Carnegie-Arbuthnott carefully removed the broken vessel, of enlarged food-vessel type, which was mouth downwards. It was full, the contents consisting largely of bone fragments with a good deal of fine matter and earth. The latter could have got in through the broken bottom, which had been completely ploughed away. The urn had apparently been simply deposited in the ground; there were no stones which might have served as cover or sides of the hole.⁴

Seven feet away to the south-west, and at a slightly lower level, a second urn was discovered. Part of it had been disturbed and sherds and fragments of bone were lying about. After some investigation Mr Carnegie-Arbuthnott covered it over again pending further examination. Along with Mr Wood I exposed it completely and removed it. It was also mouth-downwards, and of the same type. Although broken near the shoulder, pieces of the sides and

¹ Oriordain, "The Halberd in Bronze Age Europe," *Archæologia*, vol. lxxxvi. pp. 195-321.

² See preceding Note.

³ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiv. p. 149, pl. lvi.

⁴ Mr Carnegie-Arbuthnott noted a compacted even surface at the same level as and extending close to the urn, which he cleared of overlying soil for several square feet out into the gravel pit. I am not, however, convinced of its antiquity.

a fragment of the base had fallen in on the cremated remains, which lay in a clean white layer across the mouth of the urn. The vessel would thus appear

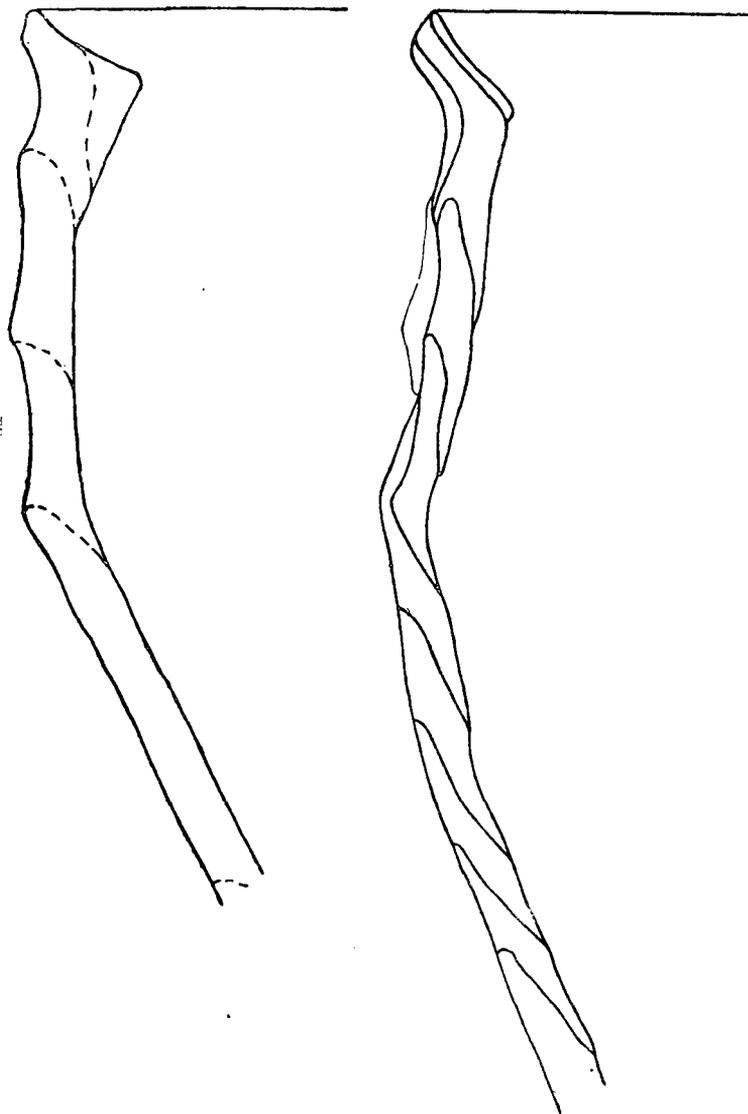


Fig. 1. Urns 1 and 2 from Balrownie (1:2).

to have been to a large part empty, with a cover over the mouth, at the time of interment. What remained of the hole in which it had been placed was fairly steep sided, with a flat bottom only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch greater in diameter than the urn.

Professor Alex. Low has reported that each urn contained the thoroughly cremated remains of an adult human skeleton:

Burial I. Identified—numerous pieces of flat bones of skull—parietal, occipital, frontal; and of the face, a left malar bone and part of upper jaw; fragmentary vertebræ and ribs; pieces of humerus and ulna; fragments of femur and tibia, also a patella and talus. Weight of cremated bone 2 lbs. 1 oz.

Burial II. Identified—numerous pieces of flat bones of skull, with part of a right petrous bone and several teeth; fragmentary vertebræ and ribs; pieces of humerus, radius, ulna and phalanges of hand; fragments of pelvis and warped pieces of lower limb bones. Weight of cremated bone 2 lbs. 3 oz.

In each case a few of the bones bear green stains, which indicate that a small object or objects of bronze or copper had accompanied each burial.

The first urn is of a soft friable texture and has a large amount of grit in the clay. The surface, mostly reddish or dull buff on the outside and grey or black on the inside, is slightly sandy. The rim diameter is 11 inches, that at the shoulder $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Above the shoulder the neck takes the form of three grooves. Each of these, as also the broad interior bevel of the rim, is decorated with two rows of oblique impressed-string "maggots" forming a chevron. A single row of "maggots" runs along the outside of the rim, and there are a few impressions just below the shoulder. Bold vertical "stop-ridges"—probably four originally—cross the lowest groove. Partly because of the very coarse fabric, the different rings of which the vessel was built are not ascertainable with certainty. Such evidences as there are suggest a join at each swelling and a two-piece rim (fig. 1 and Pl. L, 1, b).

The second urn is of much better and harder fabric, although as is usual the clay has been mixed with fair-sized grits. The core is black. The outside is mostly buff coloured with patches of light red, the inside grey and dark brown. The forming of a smooth "mechanical slip" on the outside has uncovered numerous grits which are mostly concealed on the more uneven interior. The urn is one of the largest, the diameter of the rim being 15 inches, of the shoulder 16 inches. From the one fragment of base, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick, which is all that remains, the base diameter appears to be $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches, indicating a height of perhaps 18 inches. Clearly the vessel was never meant to stand on its base. The neck takes the form of three grooves. The decoration, extending from the outer edge of the rim to a little below the shoulder, consists of horizontal rows of close-set oblique jabs. Two rows of similar jabs, but vertical, decorate the broad bevel of the mouth. Across each of the two lower grooves there had been seven applied "stop-ridges," those in one row being intermediate between those in the other. Half of the ten of which trace remains have scaled off.

A full diagram of the construction is available, owing to splitting along the lines of building (fig. 1). Below the shoulder there is a join every $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch or so, morticing at the outside. On occasion a slight swelling may be noticed on the inside where the lower part of one strip has been smoothed over the one below. The strip starting below the shoulder was squeezed up and bent inwards to take the thrust of the neck. We may compare the sherd illustrated in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiii. p. 235, fig. 4, 6. A new strip was added for each of the upper two grooves of the neck. The topmost was thinned out and everted to form the rim, and a small strip added outside to give increased thickness and support. A fillet was also laid over the upper surface of the bevelled mouth. The inner edge of this fillet is quite distinct on the inside of the vessel, where there are also surface indications of the two strips below it. The illustrative section shows one of the

ornamental stop-ridges that were added last, before the whole was smoothed over and burnished.

Among the ashes in this urn there were pieces of two burnt flint implements, whitened, pitted, fissured, and partly covered with a calcareous incrustation which obscures the details of secondary flaking. They have been pieced together as far as possible.

The one (fig. 2) is a broad knife or scraper, $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches long, $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch across, with a maximum thickness of $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. It is made on a flake; a pronounced bulb

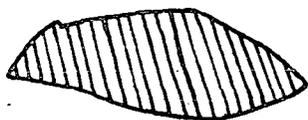
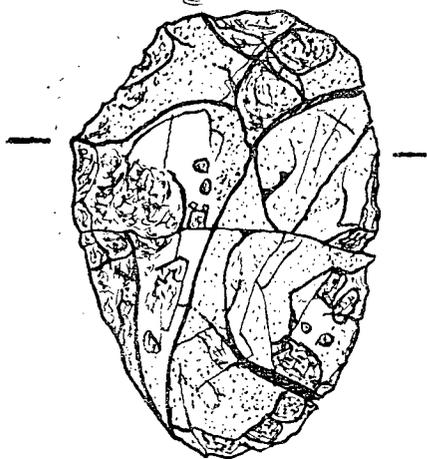


Fig. 2. Flint knife (1/1).

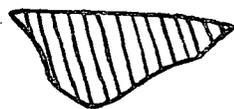
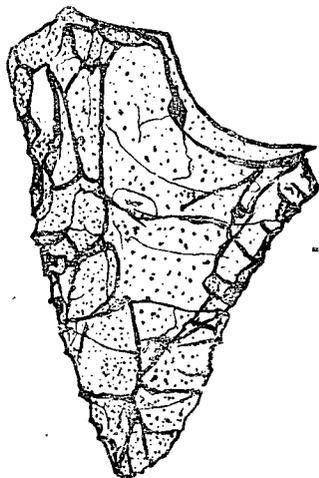
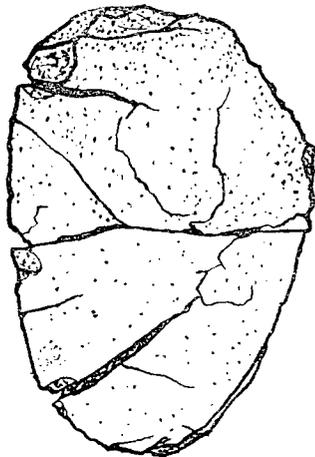


Fig. 3. Flint implement (1/1).

of percussion is to one side of the broader end. The features of the upper surface seem chiefly due to thermal fractures, as is the shape on the dexter side. It may thus have originally been less symmetrical.

The other implement (fig. 3) is also a flake, but the bulbar half is missing. The break is unfortunate, since the tool is carefully worked and of rather a baffling shape. The present maximum length is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and thickness $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. Two sides, one straight, the other curving outwards, each with secondary flaking on the upper surface, meet in a point. The straight median ridge is closer to the straight side. I have not been able to find a parallel from which the implement could be reconstructed, or its purpose deduced.

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