

## IV.

FURTHER URNS AND CREMATION BURIALS FROM BRACKMONT MILL, NEAR LEUCHARS, FIFE. BY PROFESSOR V. GORDON CHILDE, D.LITT., D.SC., F.S.A.SCOT., AND PROFESSOR DAVID WATERSTON, M.D., F.S.A.SCOT.

*Read March 28, 1942.*

The discovery of an urnfield through the exploitation of a sandpit at Brackmont Mill, near Leuchars, was reported to the Society in March 1937 by the late Dr J. B. Mears, who then described the site and the thirteen vessels discovered up to that date. Continued removal of sand led to the exposure of additional urns and unurned burials between 29th September and 10th November 1939. Dr Mears once more assisted the proprietor, Mr Lewis H. Spence, in conserving and recording the burials. But his sudden death, which deprived our Society and Scottish archæology of an enthusiastic and expert investigator, prevented him from describing the new discoveries. Indeed even his rough notes have unhappily disappeared and with them Mr Spence's sketch plan of the urnfield. However, Mr Spence himself has kept not only the urns and their contents but also an accurate record of the circumstances of their finding. This he has kindly placed at our disposal and generously supplemented with verbal information. He has further permitted the urns and cremated remains to be taken to the Museum of St Andrews University for study. Two objects of exceptional interest then found in one of the urns have already been described in a Note, published in the last volume of the *Proceedings*. We present here a catalogue of the new burials and relics arranged in the order of their discovery and as numbered by Mr Spence.

The discoveries of 1939 comprise nine urn burials, together with two unurned cremations and also half a Beaker urn found by itself unassociated with any bones or other relics. It lay a hundred yards or so away from the majority of the burials which were concentrated in an area of 8 to 10 yards square. The urns and burials came to light at depths varying from 1 to 3 feet below the contemporary turf surface. The Overhanging Rims Urns were all inverted over the incinerated remains; their bases in some instances have been destroyed by the plough. The remarkable Food Vessel Urn II and the curious vessel numbered VI stood mouth upward.

CATALOGUE OF THE URNS.

- I. Overhanging Rim Urn, 16 inches high; diameter at mouth, 14 inches; at shoulder, 16 inches; at base,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches; walls 0.6 inch thick.

Decoration: on the rim, 3 inches wide, band of irregular cross hatched lozenges bordered above and below respectively with pendant and erect triangles obliquely hatched; all incised in the clay with a rather blunt-pointed implement probably of bone. On the shoulder row of finger-tip impressions (fig. 1 and Pl. XXII).

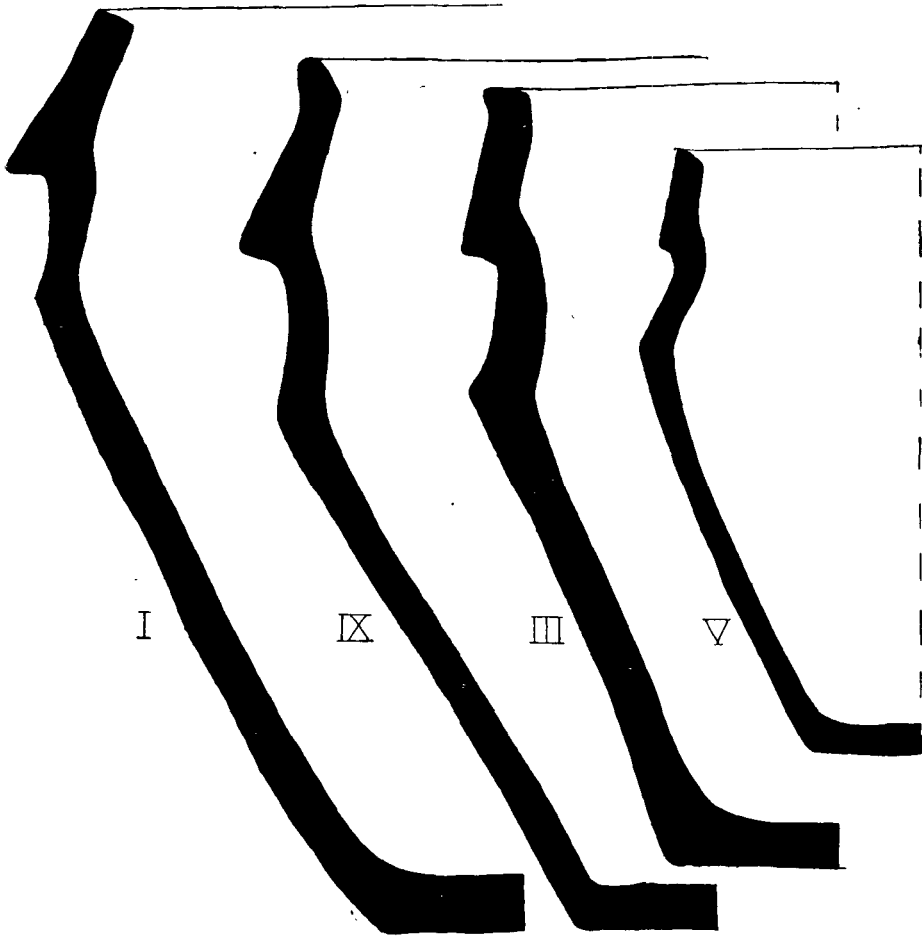


Fig. 1. Urns I, III, V and IX.  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

It contained: Biconical Incense Cup,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch high; diameter, mouth,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch; keel, 2 inches; base,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch. The wall is pierced at the keel by two very small holes set close together. Decoration: upper part erect triangles, lower erect and pendant triangles, all incised possibly with same implement as the containing urn; the base is plain (Pl. XXIV, 2).

- II. Food Vessel of Abercromby's type E,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches high; diameters, at mouth,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches; shoulder,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches; base, 2·8 inches. Decoration: neck, lattice of cord imprints bordered on both sides and interrupted by horizontal cord impressions; on and just below shoulder four horizontal cord impressions; inside rim, oblique cord impressions bounded above by one, below by three horizontal cord impressions.
- Covered by Lid of rather coarse clay, 7 inches in diameter, surmounted by an oval knob pierced along its major axis (Pl. XXV and fig. 2).
- III. Overhanging Rim Urn, 13 inches high; diameter at mouth,  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches; at shoulder, 12 inches; at base,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Walls  $\frac{1\frac{1}{8}}{16}$  inch thick. Decoration: on the rim pendant triangles, obliquely hatched, incised as in Urn I, bordered above and below by horizontal cord impressions; on shoulder rather sinuous, carelessly incised lines vertical or oblique; on lip incised chevron, triplicated in places (Pl. XXII).
- IV. Beaker of Type B, diameter at base 3·1 inches, neck and rim as well as half the body missing; base  $\frac{9}{16}$  inch, body  $\frac{5}{16}$  inch thick; made of rather coarse clay. The interior and core are black, but the outside has been smoothed and burned a reddish mud-colour with black blotches. Decoration: round the edge of the base a circle made by the impression of a single length of cord, the ends of which overlap. On body above base a band of 9 horizontal cord imprints, then a blank band, then another band of at least 11 parallel cord imprints extending across the shoulder as far as the point where the neck is broken off (Pl. XXIV).
- V. Overhanging Rim Urn,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches high; diameter, mouth, 7 inches; shoulder, 9 inches at base. Decoration: on rim band of alternately hatched triangles in impressed cord technique bordered by horizontal cord impressions; on neck incised lattice pattern (Pl. XXII and fig. 1).
- VI. Small Urn,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches high; diameter at rim,  $4\frac{11}{16}$  inches; at shoulder,  $4\frac{7}{16}$  inches; at base,  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inch. Decorated with incised patterns all over exterior and on inside of neck (Pl. XXIV and fig. 2).
- VII. Overhanging Rim Urn, in fragments, probably 14 inches high; diameter at mouth, 15 inches; at base of collar, 16 inches; at base perhaps  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Decoration: on rim two rows of patterns executed by the impression of a length of coarse twisted cord—above, erect triangles filled with eight horizontal imprints, the interspaces being occupied with from three to four imperfect pendant triangles; between two horizontal cord impressions; below alternately hatched triangles. On neck incised lattice. On

shoulder finger-tip impressions. Inside bevelled lip, lattice composed of cord impressions (Pl. XXIII and fig. 3).

- VIII. Overhanging Rim Urn, base missing, diameter at mouth 12 inches. Decoration: on neck, incised chevron the erect triangles formed thereby being filled with generally seven similar but very irregular triangles, while the pendant triangles are hatched with thirteen uneven horizontal lines; on neck incised lattice; inside lip oblique scored lines (Pl. XXIII and fig. 3).

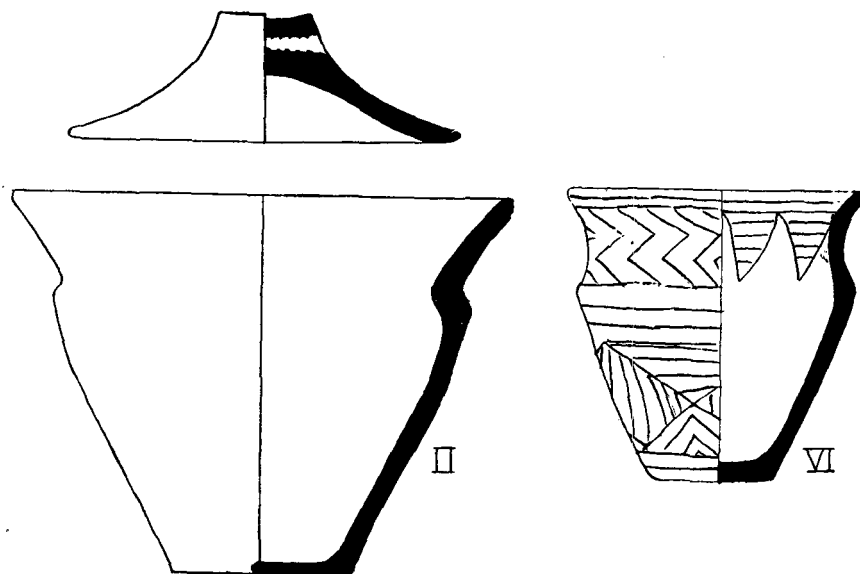


Fig. 2. Urns II and VI.  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

Urn VIII contained: Biconical Incense Cup of black clay 0.7 inch thick at base, 0.5 inch at keel, and 0.4 inch above keel, diameter 1.8 to 1.95 inches inside rim, 3.30 to 3.45 inches at keel. At one side of rim there is a broken projection suggestive of a lug, but at the opposite side the rim is broken away altogether. It is therefore possible that the semblance of lug is merely due to distortion by heat. The clay is certainly cracked at other points by "over-firing," presumably through exposure to the pyre. The walls are decorated with two bands of lattices finely incised, the base with two concentric circles respectively  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter, the innermost circumscribing a chequer pattern. Two small holes pierce the walls at the keel as usual (Pl. XXIV).

- IX. Overhanging Rim Urn,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches high; diameter at mouth, 12 to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches; at shoulder,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches; at base,  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches; walls  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch thick. Decoration: on neck a band of vertically hatched pendant

triangles and then below a band of oblique hatchings between two horizontal lines, on neck lattice pattern, all incised as on Urn I (Pl. XXII and fig. 1).

This urn contained the ivory buckle and bone toggle described in *Proceedings*, vol. lxxv, Note 1 (fig. 4).

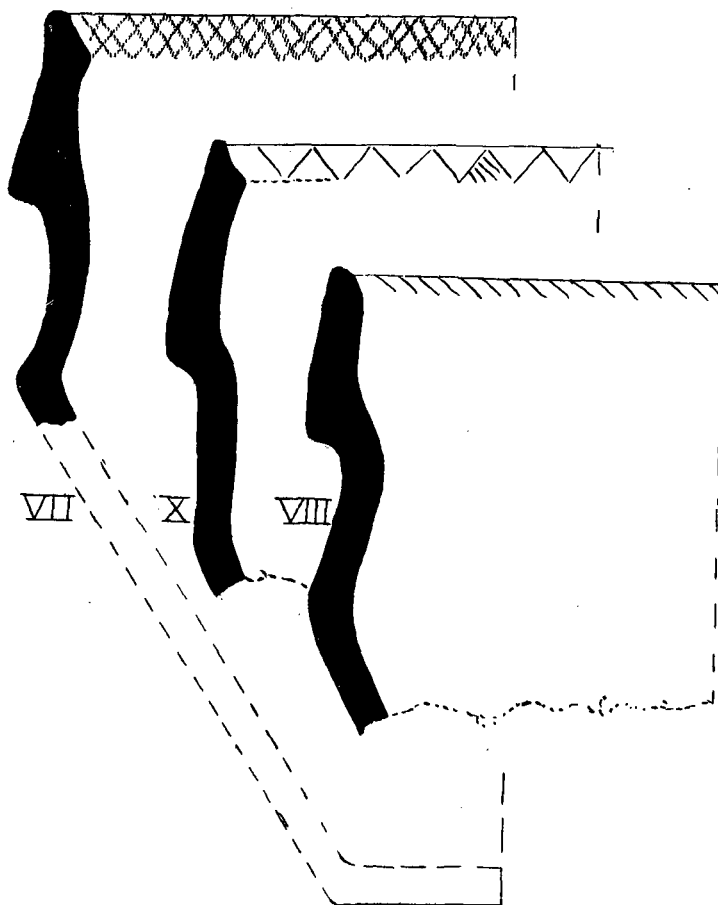
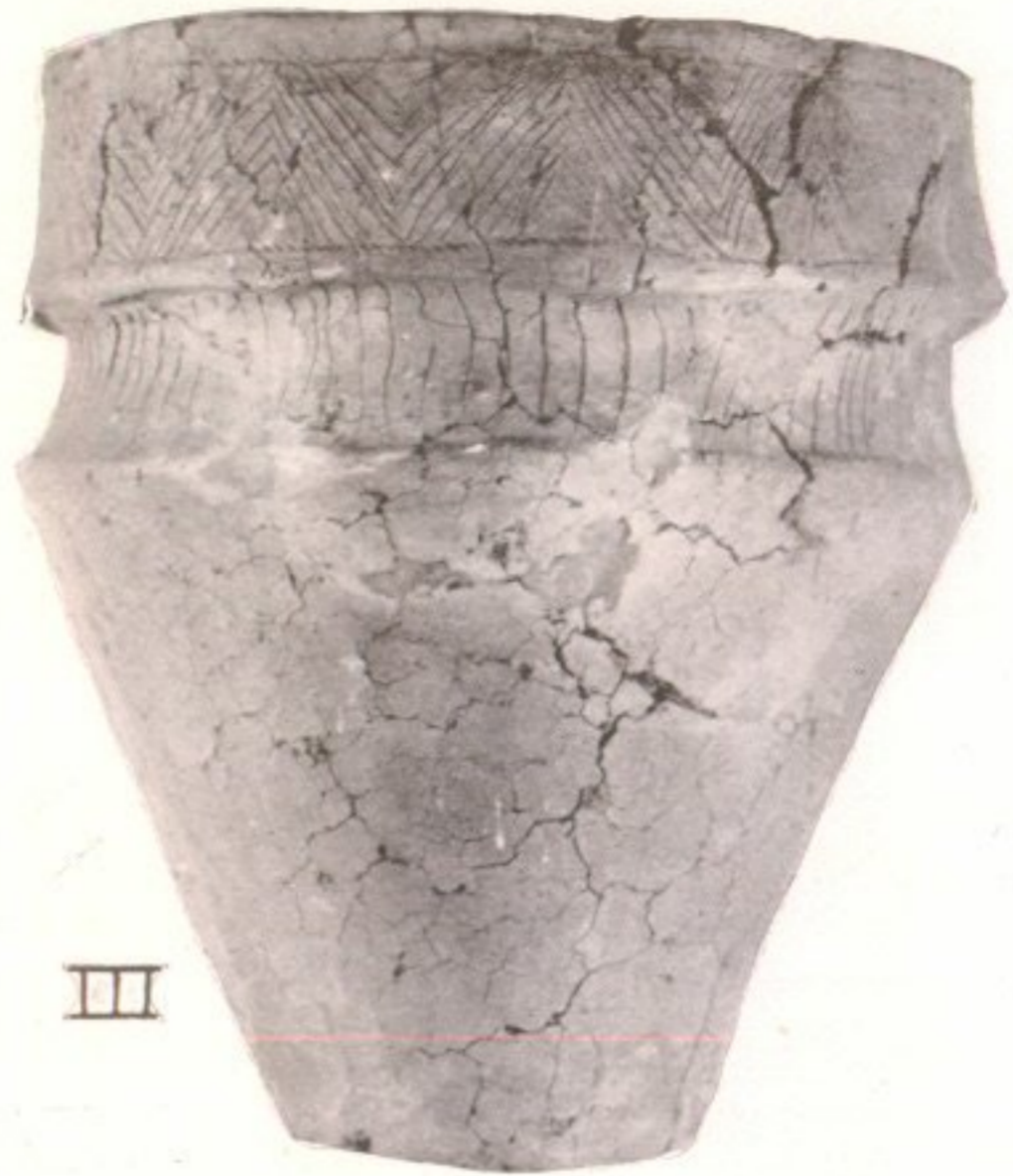


Fig. 3. Urns VII, VIII and X. †.

- X. Overhanging Rim Urn with flattened shoulder and neck filled in, base missing. Diameter at rim 12 to 12½ inches. Decorated on collar with two chevrons between horizontal lines, the triangles thus formed being subsequently filled in with alternating hatchings, all incised. The incisions are rather sharp and sometimes discontinuous, but are not in the true stab-and-drag technique. On the internal bevel of the rim there is a chevron, one surviving



I



III

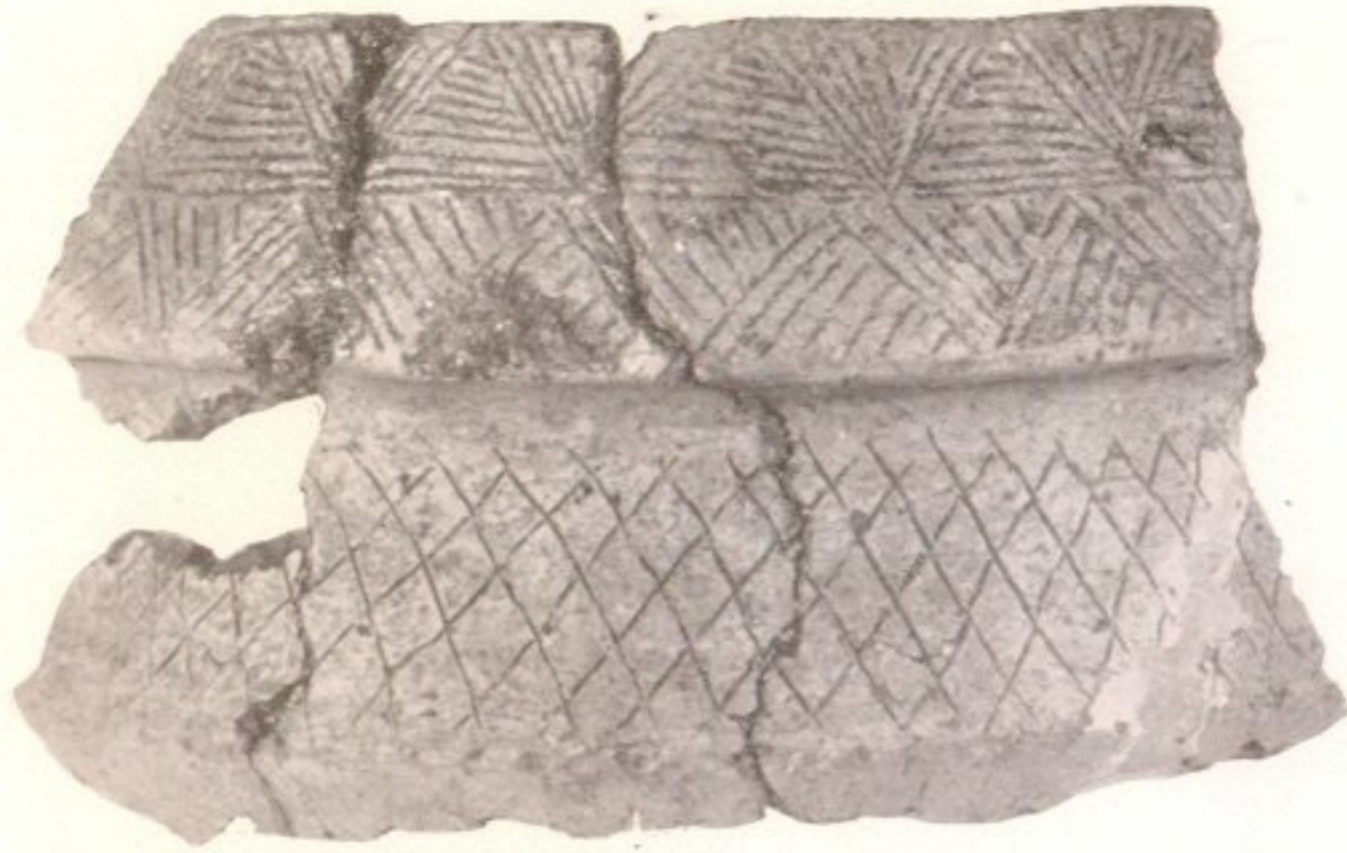


V

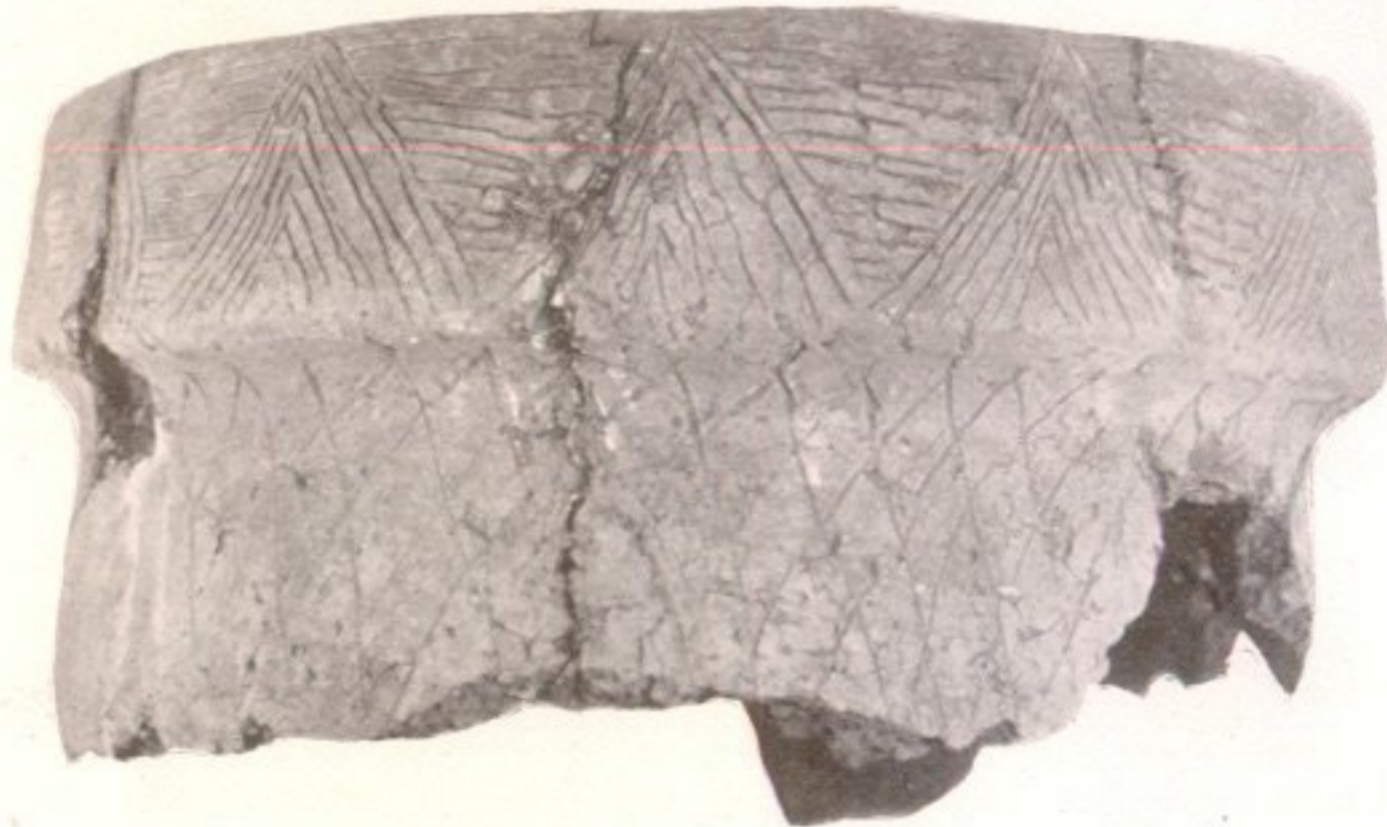


IX

Urns from Brackmont Mill.



VII



VIII



X

Urns from Brackmont Mill.

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Left: Incense cup from Urn VIII.

Right: Urn VI; Incense cup from Urn I; Beaker fragment.

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Food vessel from Brackmont Mill.

triangle in which has been hatched. The vestigial neck lacks decoration (Pl. XXIII).

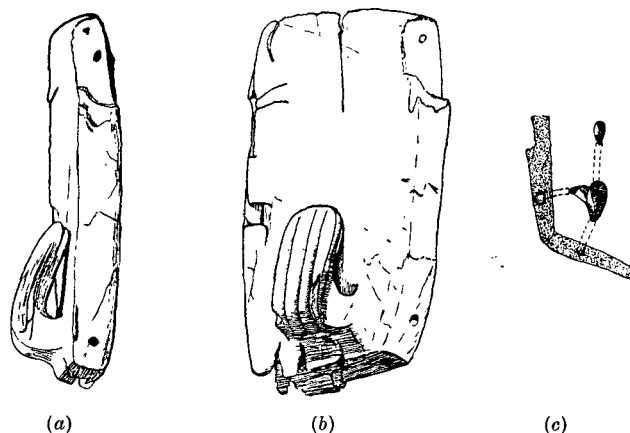


Fig. 4. The ivory buckle: *a*, in profile; *b*, showing fluting on the hook; *c*, diagram of the holes and tunnels at each corner. ( $\times 2$ .)

From the central small pit the tunnels, shown by dotted lines, pass to the end, the edge, and reopener on the same surface as the pit.

#### THE CONTENT OF THE URNS.

- I. The heap under this urn consisted of fragments of bones up to 2 to 3 inches in length. A number could be identified. They included imperfect portions of the head of the right humerus, glenoid fossæ of scapulæ, portions of the radius, hip bone, axis vertebra, and the alveolar margins of the maxillæ, fragments of the mandible, and 24 teeth. The fragments were too small and imperfect to indicate the age and sex of the individual, but it can be said that they were from the skeleton of an adult, and that the smallness of the fragments and teeth would indicate a female rather than a male. Among the bone fragments was a small round bead with a central aperture. This proved to be a fossil encrinite.
- II. Here there was a small quantity of fragments and bone dust, the fragments small, thin, light, and none individually identifiable except the petrous temporal bone of an infant or very young child. Their size and texture confirmed that they were portions of the skeleton of a very young, possibly a new-born, infant.
- III. The heap of fragments was much larger, being sufficient to fill two flat boxes each 9 inches by 12 by 2. The individual fragments also were larger than in the others. Conspicuous among them were portions of the bones of vault of the skull, very white in colour, light in weight, hard and almost like porcelain, they gave almost

a metallic ring when knocked together. They were fissured and bent by heat, some like a twisted dry leaf. The fragments ranged in size from small spicules, rods, or plates of bone, a quarter of an inch in length, up to rods and plates 4 to 5 inches in length. There were some small imperfect teeth, but no clear evidence to indicate age or sex. One portion of the vault with the external and internal occipital protuberances was male in type rather than female, but not conclusively so, and clearly adult.

- V. A small quantity of debris was all that was found here, sufficient to fill only the half of a box 5 by 2 by 3 inches. Among them could be identified the petrous temporal bone of a very young child, and fragments and crowns of some unerupted incisor and molar teeth. These were insufficient to give the exact age, but clearly the remains in this case also were those of a very young and possibly of a new-born child.
- VI. In this case also there was nothing but a small amount of bony debris sufficient to cover the floor of a small box 4 by 5 inches. The fragments included the petrous and squamo-zygomatic portions of the temporal bones of a very young child, the basi-occipital and an ex-occipital, the body of sphenoid, and fragments of the shafts of some immature long bones of the limbs, all of which gave conclusive indication that in this case also the remains were those of a young or newly born infant.
- VII. The remains here consisted of a small quantity of bone fragments, all of which were very white in colour. Among them could be identified small portions of fragments of the vault of the skull and an axis vertebra. They had formed part of the skeleton of an adult, but the sex could not be made out.
- VIII. A box, 5 inches by 4 inches by 4 inches, sufficed to contain all the fragments found with this urn. The fragments were all small, distorted by heat and almost all unidentifiable, but a small portion of the symphysis menti with some alveoli, showed adult characters. The bones had been rather slender, and suggested that it might have been a female skeleton, but this cannot be definitely stated.
- IX. There was a large number of fragments sufficient to fill two boxes each 9 inches by 11 inches by 3 inches. All the fragments were small, a few being 2 inches in length, the others smaller. They were all very white and dry and like those from Urn III. They were from an adult, and the sex was indeterminable, but the external occipital projection on one fragment was almost certainly male, and a talus which had survived was another larger than usual in a female. There were 24 teeth, and they also were larger than in any of the other remains.

XI. (Unurned burial.) There was a mere handful of fragments, the largest about two inches square, from the vault of a skull. The surfaces of the fragments were dark in colour, and a few flakes of charcoal were with them. Some fragments contained parts of some cranial sutures whose condition showed that the remains were those of an adult. Some fragments of bones were too small to be from an adult, but it was impossible to make out whether they were from the skeleton of a child or of an animal.

#### DISCUSSION.

Including those described by Dr Mears in 1937,<sup>1</sup> the exploitation of the sandpit at Brackmont Mill has now brought to light a cemetery of 18 cremation burials, 16 inurned. Of the ossuaries 13 are Cinerary Urns of the Overhanging Rim type. Six urns of this type described above, as well as three of the urns recovered by Dr Mears, are typical specimens of Stage III in the evolution of the Urns as traced by Grimes<sup>2</sup>; in all the distinction between rim, neck, and shoulder is emphatically maintained. Indeed save for their large size all these urns could be matched in barrows of Piggott's Wessex Culture in south-western England. In two of the earlier urns, Mears' Nos. 2 and 3, as well as in his fragment 2*a* and in our Urn X, the neck has been filled out in the manner proper to Stage IV of the evolutionary series. In other words, as far as the large urns are concerned, the traditions of the parent English culture have been pretty consistently maintained throughout the life of the community to which the cemetery belonged.

Two of our urns contained incense cups of the biconical type that is distributed all over Great Britain in association with Overhanging Rim Urns. Though not of the Grape Cup or Aldbourne type peculiar to Wessex, they have the same connections with southern England as the urns that enclosed them.

These connections are happily confirmed by the ivory buckle contained in Urn IX; for, as pointed out in the Note published in 1940-41, this is closely allied to the famous gold buckle from the Wessex burial in Bush Barrow, Normanton, Wilts.<sup>3</sup> Even the bone toggle, although immediately belonging to the group of four other toggles from eastern Scotland north of the Forth<sup>4</sup> and significantly similar to those from Late Bronze Age cremation burials in Denmark, can be compared to a gold toggle bead from the "Gold Barrow," Upton Lovell, Wilts<sup>5</sup>—a good Wessex burial.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, lxxi, pp. 252 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Guide to the Prehistoric Collections*, National Museum of Wales, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Childe, *Prehistoric Communities of the British Isles*, fig. 38, 3.

<sup>4</sup> To the list given by Childe, *Preh. Scot.*, p. 137, add Loanhead of Daviot, Aberdeenshire, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, lxx.

<sup>5</sup> *Devizes Museum Catalogue*, i, No. 52.

In view of the tenacious conservatism of the Urn folk, no certain conclusions as to the absolute date of our cemetery can be drawn from the consistent retention of the Wessex tradition; at most one might suggest that, since the Wessex culture began rather before 1400 B.C. and the cognate Danish toggles are dated plausibly between 700 and 650 B.C., our cemetery should have been in use somewhere between these limits. On the other hand, the facts adduced suggest that the cemetery covers a period not too long to be treated as a unit of the large size that units of prehistoric time necessarily assume.

The remaining urns, not of the Overhanging Rim type, are not incompatible with this assumption. No. II is a Food Vessel of Abercromby's type E, a rare variety hitherto encountered only in Ireland. In comparison with its Irish relatives indeed this isolated Scottish example looks poor and degenerate. Its body is bare of the rich decoration seen on the best Irish specimens, and such ornamentation as it does exhibit is sparse and unimaginative. Nevertheless both the use of cord impressions and the presence of decoration inside the neck are in accordance with Irish tradition.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the plain unbevelled rim leaves no excuse for confusing the Brackmont urn with an "English" Food Vase of Abercromby's type 3.

Moreover, alone among Scottish Bronze Age vases to date, our Food Vessel is provided with a pottery lid. Now this feature too can be paralleled in Ireland. Gogan<sup>2</sup> has illustrated a bowl of type E from Carn Tighearnach Mhic Dheagaid, on Nagle's Mt., near Fermoy, County Cork, that was covered with a lid in the shape of a truncated cone. A similar lid covered a more anomalous urn from Danesfort, Co. Kilkenny.<sup>3</sup> Incense cups were of course more frequently fitted with pottery lids. Since one of these was the éponymous cup from Aldbourne<sup>4</sup> of the Wessex culture, it, like the buckle, provides a cross-link back to that culture.

Chronologically the appearance of a Food Vessel in a cemetery of Overhanging Rim Urns is not surprising; from England and Wales instances indicative of an overlap between Food Vessels and Urns have often been recorded. In Ireland Food Vessels are even found in association with Urns, supposedly later than any here described, *e.g.* with Encrusted Urns. Type E in particular, though associated in one Irish burial with a grooved "Wessex" dagger typical of the earlier part of the Middle Bronze Age, certainly lasts into the Late Bronze Age in Eire.<sup>5</sup> Gogan even treats some as *La Tène* in date!

Hence there is no doubt that Urn II indicates Irish influence in Fife at

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Ballin, Co. Carlow, Childe, *P.C.B.I.*, pl. ix, 2; Belfast Museum, No. Wk. 142, no provenance, both with cord ornamentation.

<sup>2</sup> *J. Cork. Hist. and Arch. Soc.*, xxxiv, 1929, 57-70.

<sup>3</sup> Coffey, *Bronze Age in Ireland*, fig. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Abercromby, ii, No. 213.

<sup>5</sup> Childe, *P.C.B.I.*, pp. 131-3.

the period of our cemetery. Such influence is well attested in the presumably earlier period, usually termed the Early Bronze Age, both by Irish halberds of copper and by Food Vessels of Irish type. In the Late Bronze Age too Irish metal ware was widely distributed in Scotland. Theoretically our urn should illustrate such influence in the intermediate period. But in view of the notorious difficulty of correlating the funerary record with that provided by bronzes after the period of the flat axe, it would be premature to attempt to fix the period of contact so precisely.

The Beaker, Urn No. IV in our catalogue, need not be treated as part of the cemetery since it was found broken and without any associated bones or relics about 100 yards from the main group of urns. It is a cord-ornamented Beaker, presumably of type B, examples of which are not unfamiliar on the eastern coasts of Scotland from the Lothians to Caithness and have already been recorded in Fife.<sup>1</sup>