

4. REMAINS OF AN URNFIELD BURIAL AT MONKTON, AYRSHIRE.

Situated at an elevation between the 50- and the 100-foot contour level, the farm of Whiteside is about half a mile eastward of Monkton and on the north side of the roadway leading from that place to Tarbolton. The site of the discovery was in a field immediately to the east of the farm buildings and not far distant from the roadway indicated (fig. 1).

In November 1943 the ground in this particular field was being lowered in a major operation and large scrapers were being used for this purpose. These machines, passing over the soil, left broad smooth tracks on a sandy surface: thus it was easy to observe the evidence of any peculiarities. During these operations, Mr Earwacher, chief groundsman of Messrs Scottish Aviation Limited, when inspecting the surface left by the scrapers on one of their tracks noticed some fragments of pottery. Realizing these to be of archæological value, he stopped the work in this particular area and reported the matter to his employers. It was clear from the fragments noted at the time that a group of at least seven cinerary urns had been destroyed—unfortunately a number of the sherds disappeared and have not been recovered. This cluster of urns is shown marked with an X on the plan (fig. 2).

Continuing his investigations, Mr Earwacher located, about 20 feet to the north-west of the disrupted group, another urn buried in an inverted position. This vessel had been damaged, probably in the ploughing of the field, and part of the base was missing. It was carefully removed, without disturbing the contents, and was kept in a place of safety until it was trans-

ported to the National Museum of Antiquities. The relative position of this find is marked on the plan with the letter "A."

At a distance of about 115 feet to the east of the first discovery, Mr Earwacher noticed on the scraped sandy surface a circular area about 6 feet in diameter and 6 inches deep composed of black earth containing small pieces of flint and burnt bone. It so happened that the Scottish Aviation

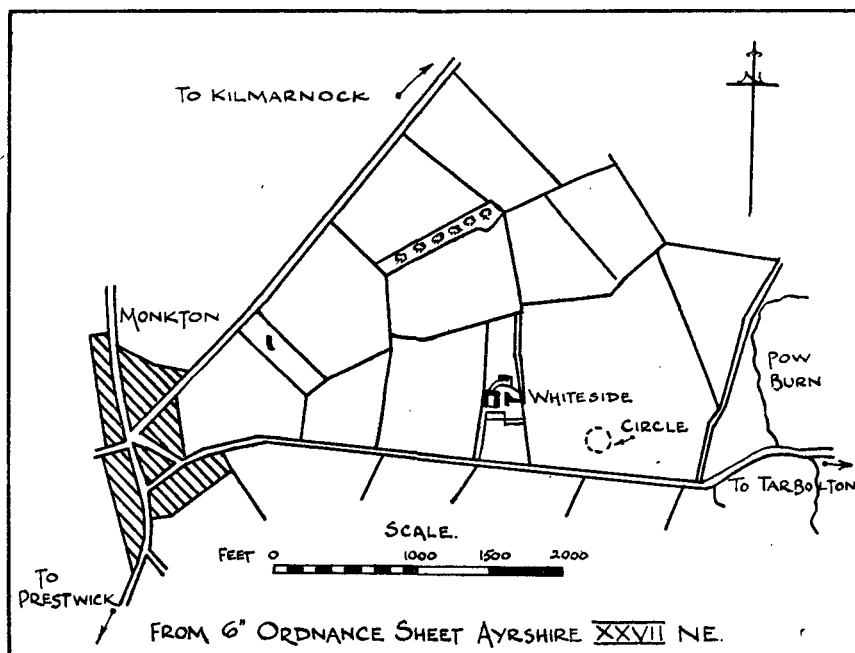


Fig. 1. Site of the Urnfield.

Company had notified Mr Ludovic Mann, F.S.A.Scot., and this particular area was investigated by him. The Company still await Mr Mann's report. Mr Earwacher also found a small pocket of calcined bone under a flat stone which he located about 100 feet to the north-east of the urn group. The bone fragments were later conveyed to the National Museum of Antiquities.

So far as the urns are concerned, Mr Earwacher was of the opinion that all were resting in an inverted position and that there appeared to be clusters of white pebbles arranged in close relationship with these burials.

About a week after the initial discoveries, the Air Ministry officials on the site were notified and they immediately informed the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Works, Edinburgh. Mr Richardson visited the site along with Mr Earwacher and myself, and as there was evidence of a cairn-like structure at the nose of the undisturbed ground, he asked me to investigate this area. Unfortunately, labour difficulties

prevented a thorough examination, and only a relatively small part of the archaeological subsoil was investigated. I was unable to define the limit of the cairn-like structure as it had apparently been disturbed in bygone times and stones from it had been scattered out of position. It was clear, however, that what remained *in situ* was composed of stones packed tightly to a depth of 12 inches. The stones were for the most part rounded and

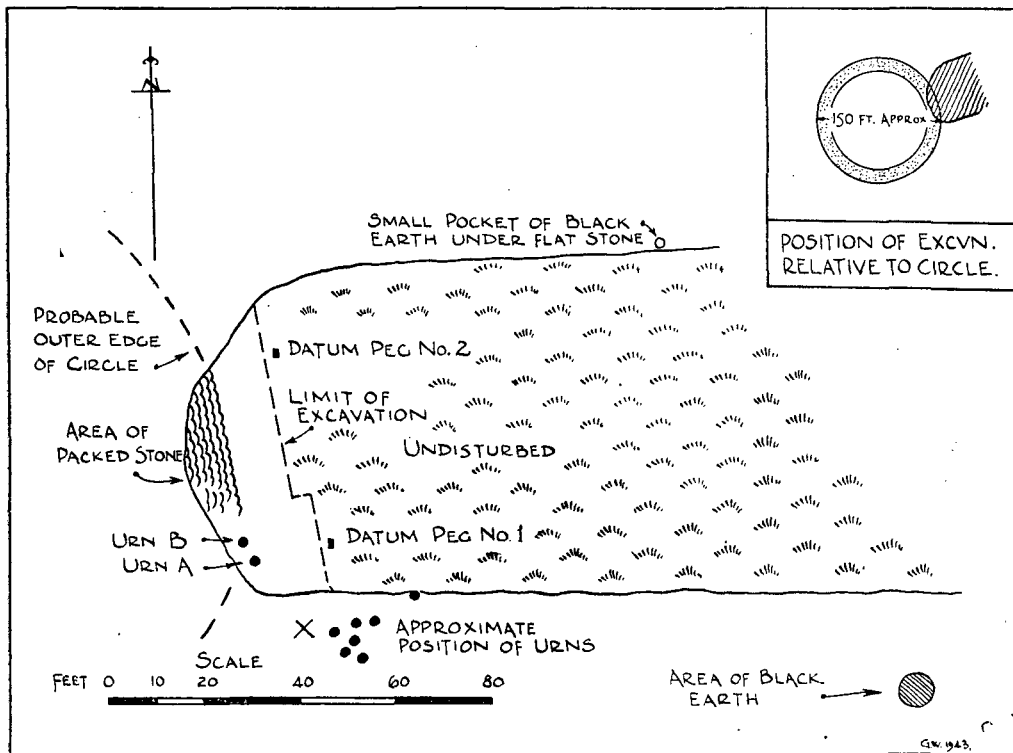


Fig. 2. Plan of Area examined.

were on the average about 6 inches in diameter; but some stones were larger, up to 12 inches cube. A small number of broken flint nodules which had been subject to heat were found in this area. An aerial photograph taken in August 1943 fortunately throws some light on the probable form of this construction. This photograph reveals a feature in the form of a circular ring emphasised on the ground by the parched condition of the grass. This ring was about 150 feet in diameter and about 15 feet wide over the band of stones. No evidence of a central structure was visible in the photograph.

Just outwith the periphery of what remained of the packed stone construction I recovered a further cinerary urn, which lay in close proximity to

urn "A." This vessel (B) was in an inverted position, and, as it lay buried only 15 inches below the surface of the field, the greater part of it had been lost by ploughing and little more than the rim was recovered. It was evident that at the time of the burial a pit 3 feet in diameter had been formed to receive the urn. The rim of the vessel was 2 inches above the undisturbed soil and round it had been deposited a number of (green?) pebbles. A further inspection of the undisturbed ground on the outside of the ring of the remains of the packed stones may lead to further discoveries in the urn field.

There are no records of similar discoveries in the locality except those mentioned in *A little Scottish World* by the Rev. Hewart, where it is stated that urns were found in 1797 in Low Monkton Hall. This name is presumably Low Monkton Hill, a farm formerly situated to the north of Monkton.

I am indebted to Mr Richardson, the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, for the help he has given me in compiling this short report.

G. WEBSTER.

REPORT ON THE URNS by THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM.

The fragments collected and brought to the museum represent at least four distinct urns.

Urn 1 (found at A) was filled with a solid mass of earth intermingled with a few small pebbles of quartz. Under the earth was a large quantity of incinerated bones which have been reported on by Professor Low. The Urn (Pl. X, 1) is made of a brownish clay. It now survives to a height of $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches and measures $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches in exterior diameter across the mouth, the base being wanting. It is of the bucket-shaped double-cordoned variety, the uppermost raised cordon, which is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the rim, being almost vestigial and irregularly formed. The other cordon is $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the rim and, although more pronounced, is also distorted.

The decoration consists of a row of double- and triple-sided chevrons bordered above by two horizontal lines, between which are oblique lines, and below by a single incised line. The ornamentation has been carelessly executed with a pointed tool. Two inches from the edge inside the rim of the urn is a raised moulding which can be seen in the section, and between the rim and this moulding is a decoration consisting of an incised running zigzag.

Urn 2 (B) (Pl. X, 3) is represented by several fragments from the rim of a large cinerary urn of brownish clay with a black core, which, when complete, would have measured some 7 inches in diameter at the rim. The lip, internally bevelled, is $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch wide and is decorated along the bevel with impressions of a very coarse twisted cord. On the exterior, immediately below the rim, is a band of decoration executed with the same coarse twisted cord. It consists of two horizontal lines with a rough lattice of similar impression between and intersecting them.

No. 3 (Pl. X, 4) is a fragment from a similar urn, reddish on the exterior, brown inside, but black in the core, $\frac{7}{16}$ of an inch thick. The rim is internally bevelled but not decorated on the inside. On the outside three horizontal impressions of a coarse twisted cord encircle the urn just below the rim. Below, part of a band of oblique lines executed in the same manner is visible.

No. 4 (Pl. X, 1) comes from the rim of a large urn probably of the cordoned type, possibly not more than 7 inches in diameter, the walls being nearly $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch thick. It is made of coarse clay, but is hard fired and smoothed on the outer surface, which is brown in colour, the core being black. The rim is bevelled externally. On the bevel is a line of punctuations executed with a single blunt pointed tool, and a second line of punctuations immediately below the rim. Between this and the cordon came a band of incised decoration, perhaps a series of filled triangles.

REPORT ON CREMATED BONES FROM CINERARY URNS FOUND AT MONKTON, AYRSHIRE.

The bones from this burial by cremation are, as is usual, for the most part in small fragments. Quite a number of the larger pieces can be recognised as belonging to human skeletons, among which can be identified the following: eighty pieces of the flat bones of the cranium, six petrous bones containing the internal ear, three belonging to the right side and three to the left side, seven pieces of upper and lower jaws with tooth sockets, eleven fragments of ribs and fifteen of vertebræ, the articular surface of a shoulder blade, upper articular ends of six humeri, four small phalanges of hand, piece of socket of hip-joint, six pieces of upper and lower ends of femora, two pieces of tibiæ, and a fragment of calcaneum.

All these fragments of cremated bone reveal no trace of animal matter. Such cremated bone is very persistent and does not decay as do the bones in an inhumation interment. Bronze Age people were certainly experts in the art of cremation.

The total weight of cremated bone is eleven and a half pounds. At Loanhead of Daviot a series of cremation interments of one adult in a single cinerary urn varied from one pound to two and a half pounds. From this one might assume that the Monkton cremation represents at least six individuals.

From Cist No. 2, Monkton, Ayrshire.

Skeletal remains are very fragmentary and consist of twenty-eight small pieces mostly of long bones of skeleton, four pieces of flat bones of skull, and two fragments of upper jaw showing small tooth sockets, suggesting the remains of a young individual.

ALEXANDER LOW.