

XVIII.

BURIALS AT BRACKMONT MILL AND BRACKMONT FARM, LEUCHARS. BY LESLIE SPENCE, F.S.A.Scot.

Additional burials have been discovered at Brackmont Mill, near Leuchars, since those recorded by the late Professor D. Waterston, M.D., and Professor V. G. Childe in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* (1941-42).¹ These earlier finds comprised a rare food-vessel with lid, six cinerary urns of overhanging-rim type and a small urn, two incense-cups, an ivory "buckle," a bone toggle, two unurned cremations, also a beaker found 100 yards away. A full description of the site was given in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* (1936-37) by the late Dr J. B. Mears, who recorded previous discoveries, which included at least a dozen cinerary urns complete or fragmentary, two incense-cups and two bone pins, besides two unurned cremations.

¹ Vol. lxxvi. (1941-42), p. 84.

All these recorded burials were on the ridge of a natural spur, in the northern part of the large sand-pit and due west of the buildings of Brackmont Mill; the area now known to have been covered by this cemetery is approximately 90 yards from east to west and 35 yards from north to south. The burials now to be reported were far more scattered, as is shown by the plan, fig. 1.

No. I was found in 1946, 50 yards south-west of the cemetery, at a depth of 2 feet below the surface; an undecorated food-vessel standing upright

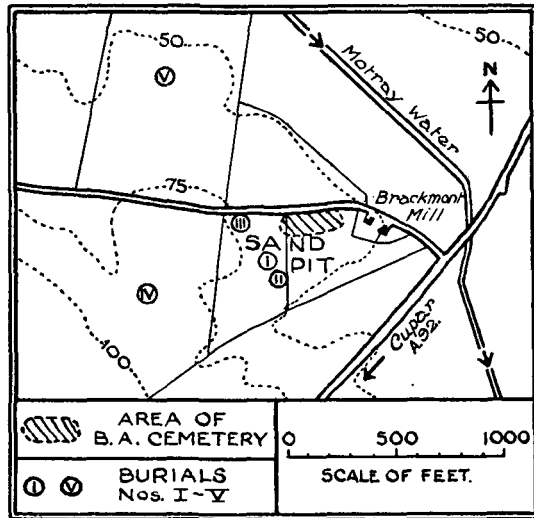


Fig. 1. Plan of Sites.

contained a few small bone fragments, apparently burnt. No. II, found in 1947, was about 25 yards south-east from No. I. It is represented only by a small food-vessel, which was not noticed till it came down in a sand fall, and no details of position and so on can be given. No bones were found. Since then the pit has been extended considerably without other burials being disclosed, until in September 1948 an isolated unurned cremation (No. III) was found 70 yards west of the cemetery, or 200 yards west of Brackmont Mill. The bones were in a circular heap 15 inches in diameter and 24 inches below the surface. A fair amount of bones were found, which Dr W. C. Osman Hill states are all from a young adult of indeterminate sex. There was also a quantity of charcoal, identified as oak (*Quercus sp.*) by Mr M. Y. Orr. The sand below the bones was black to a depth of 1 or 2 inches.

The Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities reports on the vessels as follows: "In shape they both belong to the vase type of food-vessel, but further typological consideration suggests that they are contemporary with

the cinerary urns. No. I is completely undecorated (fig. 2, 1), coarsely made, with fragments of dark stone appearing on the reddish-buff surface; height about 4.5 inches, rim diameter 5.3 inches, base diameter 2.5 inches. The other is considerably smaller (fig. 2, 2), height 3.2 inches, rim diameter 4 inches, base diameter 1.9 inches, with a sharp carination and a bevelled rim projecting internally. Reasonably well, but not carefully, made, it is decorated with rows of impressions from the end of a reed or other hollow

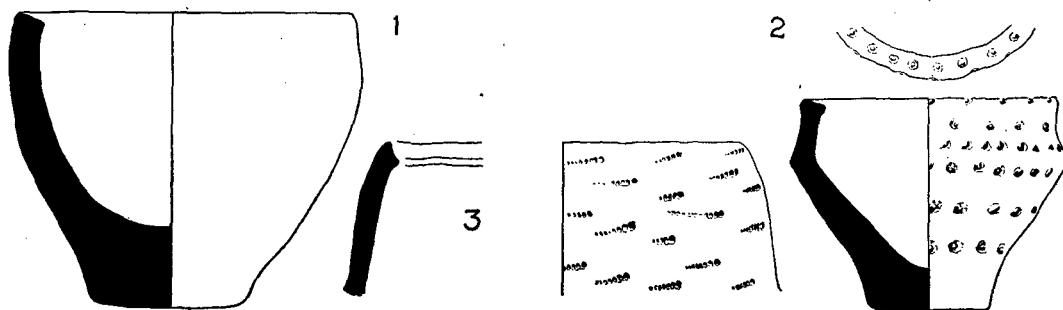


Fig. 2. 1 and 2, Food-vessels from Brackmont Mill. (‡)
3, Part of small Cinerary Urn, Brackmont Farm. (‡)

tube. There is a row in the centre of the rim and one on the outer lip, one in the centre of the neck and one—formed with the tube held at an angle—just above the carination, while three rows cover most of the side. Such impressions occur occasionally in the beaker complex, *e.g.* Muirkirk, Ayrshire,¹ and Rudh' an Dunain, Skye,² and on some cinerary urns, *e.g.* Tillicoultry (overhanging rim),³ North Queensferry (encrusted urn, with incense-cup),⁴ Westerlee, St Andrews,⁵ Loanhead of Daviot,⁶ the last two being 'enlarged food-vessels.'

'While archæological literature is familiar with 'enlarged food-vessels' as a type of cinerary urn, and a number of 'diminished food-vessels' occur as incense-cups, *e.g.* North Queensferry⁷ and Carmyllie,⁸ difficulties of classification lead to little stress being laid on a number of medium-sized pots which may also testify to the fusion of the food-vessel people with the urn culture. Some undoubted food-vessels seem to have borrowed decorative ideas from the cinerary urn, *e.g.* Kirkbuddo⁹ and Inverarity.¹⁰ At Brackmont Mill one food-vessel has lost altogether the profuse decoration that normally forms such a contrast with the plainer cineraries, and the other has a relatively simple decoration in a technique commoner on the larger urns. It may be suggested that here the mixture is seen at an early stage, with cinerary urns as the dominant factor, and a still definite food-

¹ Vol. lxi. p. 273, fig. 6.

² Vol. lxxviii. p. 214, fig. 6.

³ Vol. xxix. p. 190; Abercromby, *B.A.P.*, vol. ii. 201.

⁴ Vol. xv. p. 6.

⁵ Vol. lix. p. 72.

⁶ Vol. lxx. p. 294, fig. 8, 10.

⁷ Vol. xv. p. 6.

⁸ Vol. xxxii. p. 239.

⁹ Vol. lxxix. pl. xviii.

¹⁰ Vol. xxiv. p. 10, fig. 6.

vessel element represented by the two vessels we are considering, and also by the lidded food-vessel with cinerary-urn type of decoration and the almost equally unusual urn VI, both described by Professor Childe. As examples of a later stage when the medium vessels of food-vessel derivation are hard to distinguish from the small derivatives of overhanging-rim urns, the Lanarkshire burials at Sheriff-flats¹ may perhaps be cited."

In October 1948, when the plough was cutting particularly deep in the adjacent field (Brackmont Farm, Mr W. Alston), it flung up a quantity of urn fragments and cremated bones, No. IV on plan. The spot is 370 yards west-south-west of Brackmont Mill, on the ridge of the same gentle spur as the cemetery, but farther uphill. All the remains were together. From the predominance of rim fragments it may be assumed that the urns had been buried bottom upward. Fragments of flint, part of a bone pin and a piece of bronze were also recovered. They were pieced together, as far as possible, in the National Museum, and described as follows:—

The three urns represented may all be assigned to the Late Bronze Age, that is to say, somewhat later than the "Middle Bronze Age" vessels of the cemetery.

(a) The fragments form the whole of the upper section of an undecorated cinerary urn with the usual yellow-brown surface (fig. 3, 2). The lip is

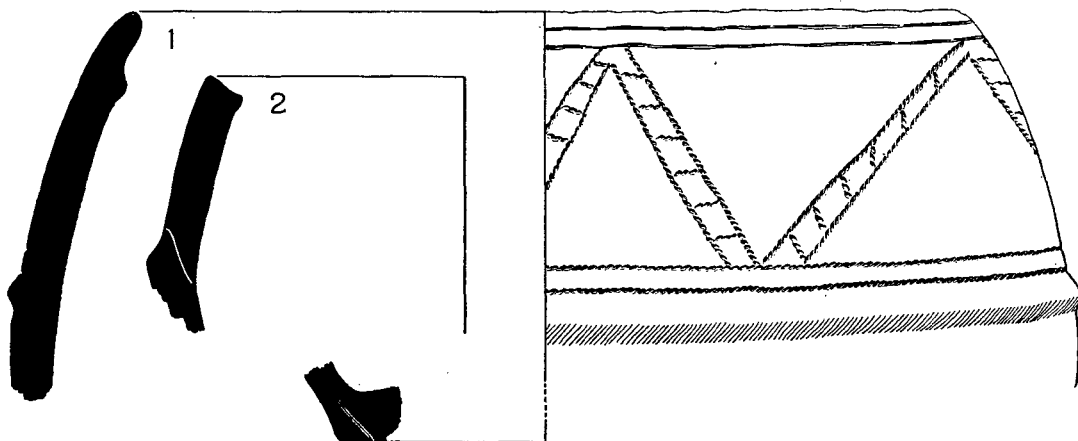


Fig. 3. Two fragmentary Cinerary Urns, Brackmont Farm. (3)

hollow bevelled on the inside, and does not curve out at all. The rim diameter is 8 inches. There had been a raised ridge or cordon on the outside, 3 inches below the lip. These features suggest a type with either two cordons—yet not quite a normal "cordoned urn"—or with one only: a vessel of each kind was found in the circular cemetery at Loanhead of Daviot, Aberdeenshire.²

¹ Vol. xiii. pp. 116-7, figs. 6 and 7. ² Vol. lxx. p. 296, where Mr Kilbride Jones comments on them.

(b) Three sherds of the rim of a hard and unusually thin cinerary urn (fig. 2, 3). Its estimated rim diameter is only 5.5 inches. In forming the steep hollow bevel inside the lip, the potter has squeezed down the clay to form a marked ridge below it, and has turned the lip inwards. The outer surface, grey-brown in colour, has been decorated with widely spaced, roughly horizontal impressions of a comb or notched stick; they are .7 inch long or less, and deeper and wider at one end than the other. Just enough of one sherd remains to show that this urn too had at least one cordon, or less probably an "overhanging rim." It may indeed be considered a variation of the same type as the foregoing.

(c) Cordoned urn (fig. 3, 1) represented by numerous sherds of the upper part of the vessel, and at least two fragments of the base. The surface had been rather indifferently smoothed, and is grey-brown in colour, with some thin black sooty incrustation on the outside of the rim. The upper part of the interior is reddish brown, as is the exterior close to the base. The rim and base have an estimated diameter of 13 and 6.5 inches respectively, and the latter is .9 inch thick. The one remaining cordon is 3.8 inches below the rim. On the inside of the rim, which is incurved, there is, instead of a hollow bevel, a cordon 1.2 inches below the lip; this is a peculiarity occasionally found in cordoned urns. The decoration, confined as usual to the upper third of the urn, consists of cord impressions. There are a pair of horizontal lines just below the lip and another pair just above the upper cordon, with a hatched zigzag between the pairs.

The calcined flint implements number seven, with portions of three more (fig. 4, 1-9). All are made on flakes and were probably scrapers: scrapers are an unusual accompaniment of burials.

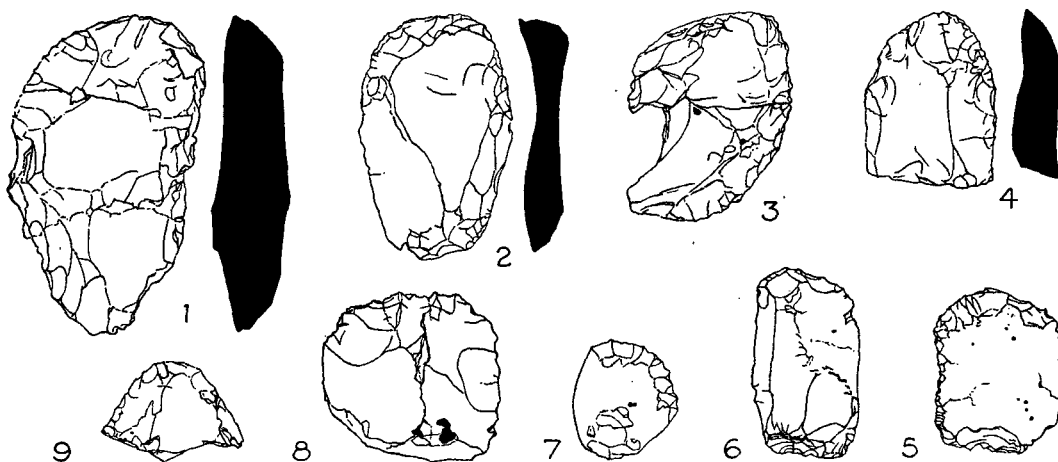


Fig. 4. Calcined Flint Scrapers, Brackmont Farm. (3)

1. A solid tool 2.5 x 1.4 x .6 inches, the broader end rounded by steep controlled flaking, the other, now possibly incomplete, roughly pointed for hafting.

2. Slighter, but also steeply retouched at one end and narrowed at the other: size $1.9 \times 1.2 \times .4$ inches.
3. Side scraper, oval in shape—a small portion missing; one side is retouched; the remaining part of the other side retains the pebble surface: size $1.85 \times 1.35 \times .35$ inches.
4. Shield-shaped, the broad end being the unretouched oblique striking platform, with pronounced bulb of percussion, while the other end is retouched: size $1.3 \times 1 \times .45$ inches.
5. A chip from a pebble, whose outer surface is retained; the scraper end steeply retouched, while at the other end the platform and bulb seem to have been removed originally: size $1.3 \times 1 \times .3$ inches.
6. Also retains part of pebble surface; the bulbar end much battered during the removal of flakes while it was part of the core; crudely retouched at the scraper end: size $1.4 \times .8 \times .45$ inches.
7. Thumb-scraper, retaining on one side the pebble surface except where retouched round at least a third of its circumference: size $.9 \times .8 \times .3$ inch.
8. Apparently part of a stout flake, the *under* surface being roughly worked along one edge, the opposite edge a modern break: present size $1.45 \times 1.3 \times .5$ inches.
9. Tip of a scraper of blunted V shape, the original edges all retouched: present size $.7 \times 1.1 \times .4$ inches.
10. Unworked bulbar end of a flake whose upper face is the original curved surface of a pebble: size $.6 \times .95 \times .4$ inch.

The bone pin, which is also calcined, lacks its pointed end. It has been identified by Miss M. I. Platt as sheep, to judge from its fine texture. The head has simply been rounded off after the removal of the articular surface. The cancellous tissue has also been removed, except for some at the head—which is slightly green-stained as if by contact with bronze. Existing length 2.6 inches, breadth at head .6 inch.

The fragment of bronze is circular in shape and buckled by heat, but retains its original thickness, .08 inch at one side thinning to about .02 inch at the other: size, not flattened out, $1.35 \times .95$ inches. It may have been part of a razor.

Dr W. C. Osman Hill writes of the cremated bones: "Judged purely on bulk it is doubtful if more than one individual is represented. The human remains suggest an elderly person as all the cranial sutures are obliterated, and part of a mandible is definitely senile."

No. V. Subsequent to the preparation of this report, a group of unurned burials was noticed during ploughing in March 1950, nearly 350 yards north of No. IV, and also on Brackmont Farm (fig. 1). The site is the top of a slight mound. At least three separate cremations could be distinguished, two separated by only 6 feet and the third 18 feet north; probably there were more, as quantities of bone were scattered over a large area, having been, one might suggest, blown to the east of the burials by the prevailing west wind.