

NOTE ON A COLLECTION OF SHERDS OF MEDIAEVAL POTTERY FROM
THE ARTIFICIAL MOUND AT KIDSNEUK, BOGSIDE, AYRSHIRE.

By ALEXANDER O. CURLE, F.S.A. Scot., Director of the Museum.

Unfortunately the knowledge which we possess of the chronology of mediæval pottery is very slight, though the broken fragments of such wares are by no means scarce. It is therefore very desirable when a collection of fragments, such as Mr Watson has recovered from this site, is forthcoming to examine each piece so as to note all peculiarities of form or of ornamentation, and if we have no other chronological clue incident to the find, by a process of collation with similar finds from other sites to endeavour to provide one.

The quantity of sherds sent to the museum was sufficient to fill a small packing-case measuring 18 inches by 11 inches by 9 inches. These consisted of the remains of numerous round unglazed vessels, with thin walls, mostly blackened with the action of fire, obviously cooking-pots, and also of a lesser number of fragments of partially glazed pitchers. Of the cooking-pots the pieces of one were sufficiently numerous to make it worth while having it restored, and this has been

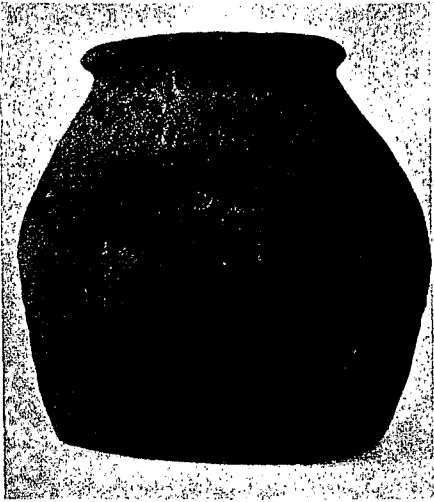


Fig. 1. Cooking-pot from Kidsneuk.
(Height, 5 inches.)

done. It is shown in fig. 1. In height it measures 5 inches, in diameter at bulge $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches, and at mouth $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches. A number of sections of the rims of similar vessels are shown in fig. 2.

The pitchers, after the manner of such vessels, are partially coated with a green or brown glaze. As not infrequently one hears such glaze described as salt glaze, it may be as well to state that pottery of mediæval times was treated, where glazed, with a lead glaze, and received its colour

from an admixture of metallic oxides, the commonest being oxide of copper, which produced the various shades of green.

No complete pitcher was recovered, nor a sufficient number of fragments of any one to enable it to be reconstructed, but the fragments included two complete mouths, a number of pieces of rims, several portions of bottoms, and a large quantity of odd sherds, decorated and plain. The rims, a number of sections of which are shown in fig. 3,

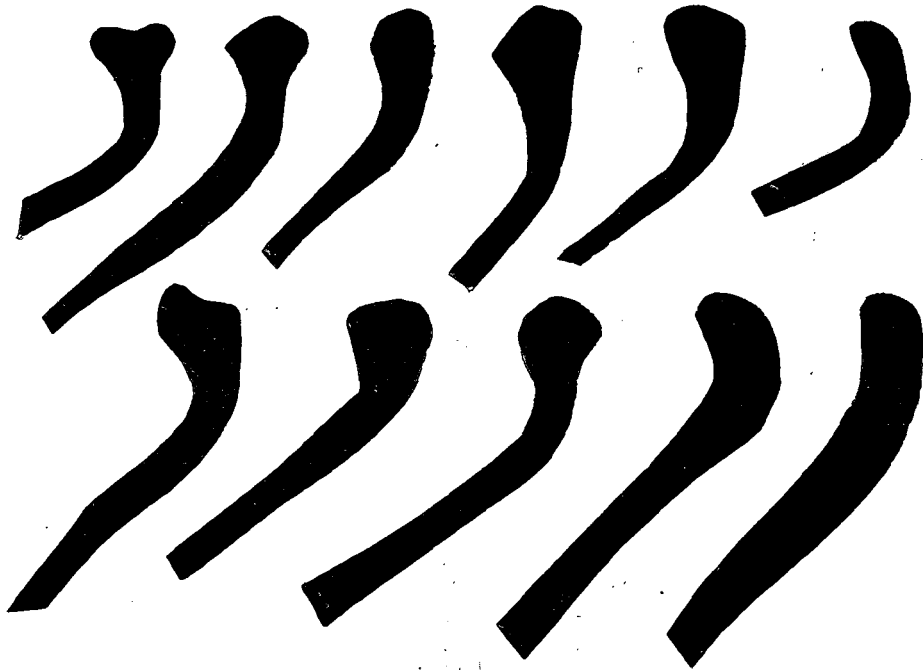


Fig. 2. Sections of Rims of Cooking-pots from Kidsneuk. (4.)

indicate a prevailing type of pitcher with, in addition to the usual rim moulding, a second parallel moulding about an inch lower down. The bottoms were slightly convex, and only two showed thumb impressions on the edge; on one piece, however, which may possibly have belonged to a later period, the impressed markings were continuous. From the indications of shape I infer that the vessels have been of spherical and also of bag-shaped form.

The handles of the pitchers, of which there are a number, have leaf-shaped depressions where they were joined to the body at the lower end, and a single groove running down the centre for the whole length.

The forms of the pitchers, the leaf-shaped impressions at the bases of the handles, and thumb impressions round the slightly convex bases, are features of vessels of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; but as the thumb impressions tend to become more numerous in proportion to the lateness of the pot, we may infer from their almost complete absence here that this pottery belongs to the very commencement of the period, if not to an earlier date.

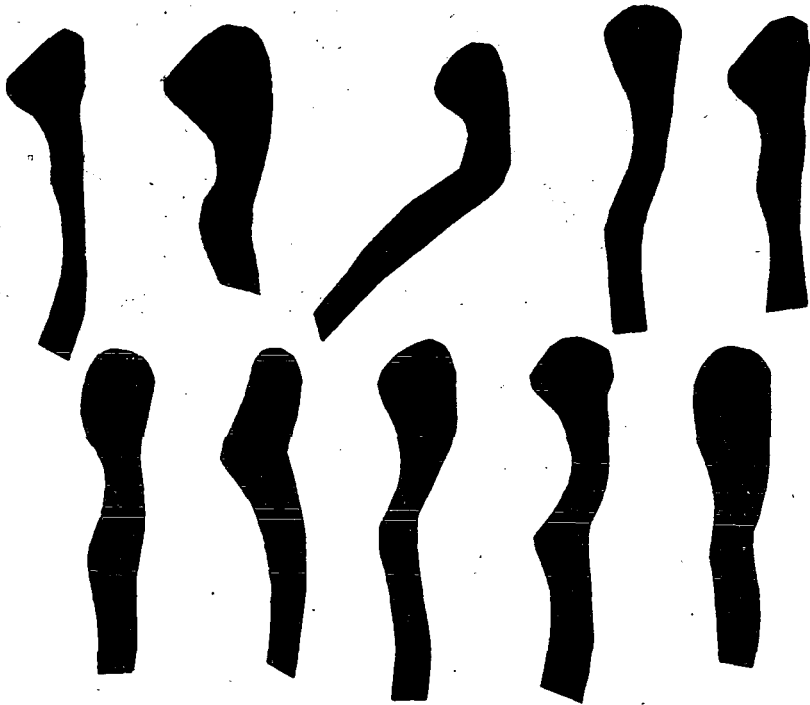


Fig. 3. Sections of Rims of Pitchers from Kidsneuk. (4.)

A consideration of some of the ornamented fragments points to the same conclusion. There is a small portion of a rim having attached to it just enough of the remains of an applied ornament to enable one to recognise an eye and a portion of the cheek of a grotesque mask similar to those found in excavating the ruins of Kirkeudbright Castle, a structure dating from the end of the thirteenth century and surviving but a short time into the fourteenth.¹ Several small fragments, roughed on their surface with leaf-shaped pieces of clay, exhibit a form of ornament

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xlviii. p. 393.

in vogue in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹ There are two



Fig. 4. Three-handled Jar from Glasgow, 1 foot $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high.

handles, and part of the mouth to which one handle is attached, of a large three-handled pitcher coated with a brown glaze. Down the centre of each handle and passing on to the body runs a strip of clay to which has been given a wavy surface by finger pressure. Similar strips have also run down the body of the pitcher. Now there is in the National Collection (Cat. ref., ME. 321) a large three-handled jar (fig. 4) coated with a greenish glaze, $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter at the bulge, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the base, found with two others, whether identical or otherwise I do not know, in the foundations of a back tenement between Rotten Row and George Street, Glasgow. The handles of this vessel are of the same general form as those from Bogside, with the groove down the middle and the leaf-shaped depressions at base; and further, the ornamentation which it bears of bands of incised zigzags has its exact counterpart in the ornamentation on

another sherd from Bogside. We are justified, therefore, in attributing the Glasgow pitcher to the same period as the remains from Bogside.

A considerable fragment of one side of a vessel covered with a rather bright green glaze has a handle placed sideways at the level of the mouth, which, with no neck intervening, seems to have been immediately above the body of the pot. For this form I have not, so far, found any analogy. Notched or twisted strips of clay laid up and down the pitcher have also been employed in the ornamentation of some of these vessels, likewise lines of small square markings produced

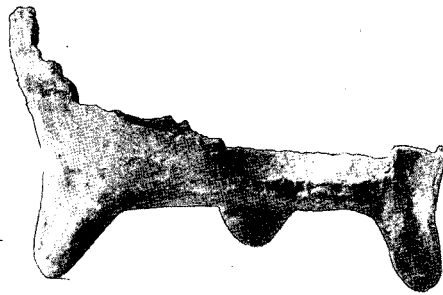


Fig. 5. Tripod Base of large Vessel of Pottery from Kidsneuk.

¹ *Burlington Fine Arts Club—Catalogue of Exhibition of Early English Earthenware*, 1914, No. 22, p. 6, pl. iii.; *British Museum, Guide to English Pottery and Porcelain*, p. 7.

by the impression of a stick or comb, both methods employed on pottery found at Kirkcudbright. There are one or two pieces ornamented with raised chevrons or dog-tooth pattern in longitudinal bands between two applied strips. We have also a tripod base measuring $7\frac{5}{16}$ inches in diameter belonging to a large vessel which has been partially covered



Fig. 6. Specimens of Shards of Ornamental Pottery from Kidsneuk.

with brown glaze (fig. 5), and the foot of another. Fig. 6 illustrates several of the ornamented pieces.

Presuming that particular fashions in form and ornament had their vogue in pottery during mediæval times, as they have had in all others, it is unnecessary to point out the importance of noting and recording all such details whenever a find is made, for only by so doing shall we be able to arrive at a proper chronology of this subject.

MONDAY, 11th February 1918.

The RIGHT HON. LORD ABERCROMBY, LL.D.,
President, in the Chair.

A Ballot having been taken, there was elected a Fellow:—

Mrs MARJORY JANET TURNBULL of Hailes, Hailes House, Slateford.

The following letter from Lord Glenconner, in reply to a letter conveying the resolution of the Society passed at their meeting on 14th January, was read:—

34 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, S.W. 1,
20th January 1918.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have received the excerpt from the minutes of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland regarding the acquisition of Dryburgh Abbey on behalf of the nation.

“I beg the Society to accept my thanks for its acknowledgment and gratitude for my action, an expression which I value very highly, coming as it does from the greatest authority on the antiquities of Scotland, and to whose efforts our country owes so much in the preservation of her historical treasures.—Very faithfully yours,

“GLENCONNER.”

“To the Secretary of the Society of
Antiquaries of Scotland.”

There was exhibited the Cloth of Estate described by Mr W. Balfour Stewart (see subsequent Communication).

The following Communications were read:—