

I.

NOTICE OF ANTIQUITIES IN THE PARISH OF AIRLIE, FORFARSHIRE.

By A. JERVISE, Esq., Cor. Mem. S.A. Scot., Brechin. (PLATE XXI.)

LANDS AND CASTLE OF AIRLIE.

The parish of Airlie (the name of which is spelled Erolyn, Erolly, and Erolly, in ancient records) is of considerable extent, and situated in the north-west of Forfarshire. The proprietary history of the lands, so far as I am aware, is unknown until towards the close of the fourteenth century, when, in 1376, John de Capella, keeper of the King's Chapel, had charters of Erolly, which Simon de Preston resigned, John de Capella performing the same service to the King's Chapel that his predecessors used to perform in it for the third part of the lands of Craigmillar, near Edinburgh.¹ In the following year (1377), William de Camera, usher of the King's Chapel, had the lands of Erolly annexed to the office of usher, by resignation of De Camera.² Subsequently, John Cuthris had confirmation charters of the half-lands of Early from John Stratoun.³ The Ogilvys appear to have acquired the lands of Airly sometime before 1432, since in that year Sir Walter Ogilvy of Lintrathen⁴ received a license from King James I. to erect his tower of Erolly,

¹ Robertson's Index, p. 120, 65.

² Reg. Mag. Sigil. p. 131, 25.

³ Robertson's Index, p. 149, 54.

⁴ Sir Walter of Lintrathen was brother to Sir John Ogilvy of Inverquharity. The seniority of the brothers is as yet doubtful. They were the younger brothers of Sir Alexander Ogilvy of Auchterhouse. In 1420, John Ogilvy acquired from his brother, Walter Ogilvy, "dominus de Luntrethyn," a charter of gift of the lands of Inverquharity, which had been previously acquired by purchase, February 8, 1403, from Sir John Allendes.—*Inverquharity Charters*. Sir John of Inverquharity died before January 1, 1434, and Sir Walter of Lintrathen died in 1440 (*Ibid.*) Both are still represented in the male line, the first by Sir John Ogilvy, Bart., M.P., the latter by David, tenth Earl of Airlie. Alexander, son of Sir John Ogilvy of Inverquharity, had a license from the King, in 1444, "to fortifie his house, and put ane iron yet therein."—*Memorials of Angus and the Mearns*, *17.

in form of a castle.¹ In 1482–83, Sir John Ogilvy had the lands of Airlie included within the barony of Lintrathen.

The Castle of Airlie stands upon a rock nearly 100 feet high, upon the south side of the Isla, and near the point where that river is joined by the Melgam. The ancient foss and portcullis gate still remain, as well as a portion of the older building, probably that of 1432. The walls of this portion are about 35 feet high, and about 10 feet thick, and, being covered with ivy, their appearance is somewhat picturesque; but the modern portion of the building, erected about 1790–94, forms a sorry contrast to the natural grandeur of the site, and the magnificence of the adjoining scenery. The fragment of a grotesque, rude, hair-covered figure—possibly that of the pastoral god Pan—stands in a niche of the old wall. It is of freestone, and from 3 to 4 feet high. It had possibly been a gateway or garden ornament; but nothing is known of its original position.

It is well known that the castles of Airlie, and Forther in Glenisla, were burned by the Earl of Argyll in 1640,² during the absence of Lord Airlie—a circumstance which gave rise to the fine old ballad of the “Burnin’ o’ the Bonnie House o’ Airly.”³ Forther, which is still a fine ruin, stands near the Balloch, or pass, between Glenisla and Glenshee.

CASTLE, LOCH, AND CHAPEL OF BAIKIE.

The Fentons, lords of Baikie, whose lands and castle were on the south side of the parish, were the more notable of the old landholders. John,

¹ Spalding’s *Trubles* (Club edit.), ii. 291.

² Gordon’s *Scots Affairs*, iii. 164; Spalding’s *Trubles*, i. 290.

³ “I have seen an original letter of the [1st] Marquis of Argyll, directing a famous raid into some country neighbouring his own, for this purpose [cattle-lifting], and it ran somewhat in this fashion, addressed to one of his vassals ‘Dougald, you will go with so many hundred men into the country of my Lord Ogilvy, and you will lift his cattle, and you will drive them to the Straan Mhor and ye will go forward to the hoose of my Lord Ogilvy, and ye will destroy the hoose, and ye will pull doon the yetts and the windows, and gin it be langsome ye will fire the hoose.’ This is the history of a famous raid, which is the subject of a song well known—‘The Burning of the Bonnie House o’ Airlie.’”—*Speech by Duke of Argyll at Stirling, August 2, 1864.* [*Notes and Queries*, 3d ser. v. 388.]

sheriff of Forfar in 1261, is the first recorded of the family in Angus; and here the Fentons subsisted until about the middle of the fifteenth century, when they failed in co-heiresses. The castle stood upon a natural mound within and near the west end of the now drained loch of Baikie. In course of time Baikie became Glamis property; and being forfeited after the disgraceful murder of the beautiful Countess of Glamis for witchcraft, it appears by the account of the Lord Treasurer for the year 1537, that a payment of L.40 was made to "Master Alexander Brand, keipar of the Glammys and Baky."¹ Baikie Castle is said to have been reached by means of a causeway and drawbridge; and the last traces of the causeway and the castle were removed within these few years. I only recollect of seeing small portions of the north-east walls. They were of great strength and thickness, and indicated the building to have been one of a square form, at least on the north-east side.

While draining the loch of Baikie, remains of animals of the chase, of very considerable size, were found. A deer's horn, weighing about 24 lbs., was presented to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries,² and some specimens are preserved at Lindertis House. Bronze celts, and other objects of antiquity, were also found in the moss of Baikie. Only five or six years ago several stone coffins, containing human bones, were trenched up upon the very summit of a rising ground to the north of the Baikie. It is interesting to know that the place is still called "*Fenton Hill*," notwithstanding that, until recently, the very name of the old lairds was unknown in the parish.

It appears that there was also an early place of worship at Baikie, for in 1362 the lands of Lunross were gifted to the Chapel of St John of Baikie. But of this chapel nothing remains; and its site is now doubtful, although so late as 1641 it is described as being "adjacent to the Smiddylands of Baikie."³

North-west of Baikie stands a remarkable unembellished obelisk, upon the farm of "*Baitland*." Local story says that the name is a corruption of *Battleland*; also that there was a battle fought here at a remote period, and that some of the leaders were slain, and buried under the

¹ Pitcairn's Crim. Trials, i. #290.

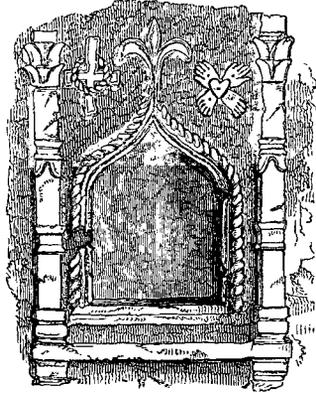
² Old Stat. Account, xi. 213, in which *Baikie* is misprinted "*Balrie*."

³ *Registrum de Panmure*, MS. ii. 95.

obelisk. I am told that the site of the obelisk was excavated by the late Rev. Mr Playfair of Meigle, about the end of the last century, and that human remains were got in the mixed earth and stones among which the obelisk is placed. To the south-west of the parish, upon the farm of Powmire, are the remains of a so-called Roman camp;¹ and until very lately, portions of the Roman road were to be seen in the woods and muir of Reidie, within about two miles of Kirriemuir.²

PARISH CHURCH OF AIRLIE.

About one and a half mile north of the site of Baikie Castle, snugly situated in a valley, stands the parish church of Airlie. It was in the



Old Aumbry, Church of Airlie.

diocese of St Andrews, and is rated at 50 merks in the ancient *Taxatio*. Although the building is in the *barn-style*, which, until recently, was the common form of the architecture of Scottish churches, there are some objects of antiquity, both in the church and church-yard, which merit preservation.

An old aumbry, here represented, is built into the porch, on the east

¹ Proceedings, ii, 246.

² Roy's Antiquities of North Britain, 108; New Stat. Account, Forfarshire, 679.

side of the church; and an inverted stone, forming the back of it (not shown in woodcut), bears "three crescents" (the Fenton arms), and the initials *W. J.* The five passion wounds of our Saviour, with which the aumbry is decorated, are also carved upon the coping-stones of a wall which surrounds the burial-place of an old parish minister, with the addition of the scourge, the pillar to which Christ was bound, the spear and the pincers, with carvings of three fleurs-de-lis, the centre one being crowned. It is said that these embellished stones were taken from the previous church—if so, it had possibly been a work of taste, and of some interest to the student of antiquities; and its destruction, like that of the old parish church of St Mary at Auchterhouse, which appears to have been a goodly fabric in the Second Pointed Style, is much to be regretted.

There is also built into the outer and west gable wall of the church a gaunt male effigy, here represented (fig. 1). It is about 3 feet high, dressed



Fig. 1.

in a loose habit, with an apron somewhat resembling chain armour, which terminates in the curious heart-shaped pendent, separately represented (fig. 2). This figure has been called that of St John the Baptist, to whom, it is added, the church of Airlie was dedicated.¹ If the effigy represents St John, it may possibly have been brought from the chapel of Baikie. Of this no tradition exists; and it is much more probable that the church of Airlie was inscribed rather to St Medan, or St Madden, since in the immediate vicinity there is not only a spring-well which bears his name, but also a hamlet of houses, and a knoll or hillock.²

A coffin slab of red sandstone—embellished upon the face with a slightly ornamented cross, a shield and hunting or powder horn on the right side, and on the left a sword, as if suspended by a string—bears the names of two individuals, pro-



Fig. 2.

¹ New Stat. Account, Forfarshire, 680; Memorials of Angus, &c. 73-75.
² The church of Lintrathen was dedicated to St Madden.—*Spalding Club Miscell.* iv. 113. St Medan, bishop and confessor, whose feast is held on 14th November, was in great favour with King Conran, c. 503.—*Coll. for Aberdeen and Banff*, 432.

bably famous in their day, but of whose connection with the district I have found no record, written or oral. The inscription, which is in raised Roman capitals, is thus briefly set down :—

Lpis Heir Roger and Holom Holok qba died in Aidie 1640.

Till lately, another coffin slab formed a door-lintel to one of the out-houses at the manse. It appeared to be much older than the one here noticed. Unfortunately, however, a mere fragment of the older slab remains (showing little more than the point of a sword incised), for a few years ago, on the occasion of repairs being made upon the manse offices, the lintel was removed and cut down to suit some other place, by, as the mason told me (for I happened to visit Airlie while the alterations were going on), the order of one from whose status and education better things might have been looked for.

The oldest gravestone which I noticed bore the name of "ANDROW VRIGHT," and the date of 1606. A tablet (within the enclosure before referred to) is thus inscribed in raised Roman capitals :—

This burial buildet by M. William Malcolm 1609.

Disce mori ut bene moriaris

Dulcis et umbra sumus

M. W. M. : G. M.

Heir Lpis GIBSON MATHEW spobs to Maister William Malcolm minister at Airlie qwha departed this lyl the 23 day of Febrair and of his age 38 Zeir 1609.

Many of the more modern tombstones present specimens of mortuary poetry. The well-known English epitaph—beginning, "Our life is like a winter's day"—is repeated here; and the following (upon a stone erected by John Archer in memory of his father and mother, 1764) is a fair example both of the style and quality of the rhymes to be met with at Airlie :—

**This worthy pair both free of fraud,
Made Truth their constant aim;
You might depended on their word,
For still it was the same.**

**They lov'd to live with all around
 In unity and peace ;
 And with a spotless character,
 They finished their Race.**

"EIRDE" OR PICTS' HOUSES. (Plate XXI.)

About a mile north-west of the kirk of Airlie, on nearly the highest point of the district, is situated an "Eirde," or Pict's House. The mean length of the *weem*, or cave, is about 67 feet; its average breadth (from the south or inner end, until within about 12 feet from the entrance) is about 7½ feet. From within about 12 feet of the entrance, it takes a pretty abrupt turn towards the south-east, and narrows gradually from about 5 feet 8 inches to about 4 feet 6 inches. The height at the entrance is about 22 inches; and, as shown in the plan (Plate XXI.), the floor slopes towards the south, the first 20 feet rather rapidly, the remainder at a more moderate gradient. The southern portion follows the natural slope of the bank in which the cave is situated. About 12 feet from the entrance, a smoke-hole was visible within these few years.

From E to F the floor of the weem is composed of the natural rock; and, as the irregular markings upon the sketch indicate, it is strewn with earth and boulders. From F to G the floor is made up of the rock and earth; and the portion which slopes suddenly, from G to H, is composed of earth and loose stones, a great many of the stones having been thrown in from the field. C represents a deposit of earth, which has fallen through between the covers above. The end of the weem (which is slightly rounded in form) and the side walls are built of regular courses of rude undressed boulders, many of them "water-worn." The larger sized stones form the base-course; and the walls converge from a breadth of about 7 feet at the bottom or floor, to about 4 feet at the top or roof. Like similar works, no mortar or other cement has been used in the construction of this weem.

Only seventeen separate stones cover the weem, giving an average breadth of nearly 4 feet to each stone. None of the stones can be less than from 7 to 8 feet in length, and being of various thickness, they present the irregular facial appearance shown upon the plan. The face

of the ninth, or key-stone (if it may be so called), is marked in the manner shown at B; and, at first sight, one of these markings suggests a resemblance to the symbolical figure of a *serpent*, so peculiar to the ancient sculptured stones of Scotland, particularly to those in Angus. The face of this cover is smooth and slightly rounded; and, from the peculiar appearance of the horizontal markings, I am inclined to think that the whole has been the work of nature, and that the marks had been produced by the action of water many ages, of course, before the stone was placed in its present position. It is possible, however, that the marks in question may be artificial; and, were the stone exposed to the light, the *true* cause of the indentations might be ascertained. This cover is of the soft red sandstone, apparently of a sort of conglomerate, most of the other covers being of a harder type. The covers have barely a plough-depth of soil upon them; and the farmer informed me that, although poor crops are raised upon the top of the weem, those on both sides, and for a considerable space around it, are always luxuriant. This he accounts for by supposing that the virtue of the manure of the "old tenants" still remains in the ground.

This weem was accidentally discovered about seventy years ago by Mr John Lowden, then tenant of the farm of Barns of Airlie, upon which it is situated; and the way in which it was found, as told to me by two of his sons (now pretty old men, and still tenants of the farm), may be interesting. Agricultural operations were so often obstructed by the plough coming in contact with large boulders in the "Cave Field," as it is called, that the ploughmen were furnished with iron punches or levers, for the purpose of removing them. One day, "just at the close o' the forenoon yokin'," a stone of more than ordinary size was met with, and the ploughman, fixing a punch in at the side of it, went to dinner. On returning, he brought the farmer to assist in lifting the stone, by which time, however, the punch had disappeared, the head of it only being above ground; but, upon drawing it out, and lifting the stone, the weem, or "eirde" house, was discovered.

It was then carefully searched by Mr Lowden, and "a brass pin" (? bronze) was found in it, which was afterwards given to Mr (now the Rev. Dr) Macvicar;¹ also quantities of charred wood, the remains of

¹ Since this paper was read, I have communicated with Dr Macvicar upon the

bones (possibly those of animals), and querns, whole and broken, the last mentioned being found both within the weem, and in its neighbourhood. A piece of freestone, with a nicely scooped hollow in it, somewhat resembling a *trough* or mortar—precisely similar to the stones marked E upon the plan of the “Eirde” house at Migvie, in Tarland—was also found inside the cave, and is preserved at the farm-house.

At one time there were two other “eirde” houses upon the farm of Barns of Airlie, also other two in the same neighbourhood, making no fewer than five in all.¹ The circumstances which led to the discovery of one of these weems is curious. Local story says, that the wife of a poor cottar could not for long understand why, whatever sort of fuel she burned, no ashes were left upon the hearth; and if a pin or any similar article was dropt at the fireside, it could not be recovered. Having “a bakin” of bannocks, or oatmeal cakes, on some occasion, one of the cakes accidentally slipped from off “the toaster,” and passed from the poor woman’s sight! This was more than she was prepared for; and, believing that the house was bewitched, she alarmed her neighbours, who collected in great numbers, and, as may be supposed, after many surmises and grave deliberation, they resolved to pull down the house! This was actually done: still the mystery remained unsolved, until one lad, more courageous and intelligent than the rest, looking attentively about the floor, observed a long narrow crevice at the hearth. Sounding the spot,

subject of “the pin.” He writes that it was not he but his elder brother, nearly fifty years ago, who brought a relic from the cave at Airlie, and adds that, “if you had not mentioned a pin, I should have said that it was a fragment of a coarse urn.” Dr M. supposes that the pin, or whatever the relic was, had been deposited by his brother in a museum at Dundee, which was then forming in connection with the “Rational Institute,” of which his brother was a leading member. As is commonly the case with *unendowed* local museums, the contents of this one were long ago dispersed. The fate of this “pin” adds another to the too many instances of the propriety of enforcing the law of Treasure-Trove, and of having all relics of antiquity deposited in the Society’s Museum.

¹ I am told that one or more caves were found at Littleton of Airlie sixty or seventy years ago. An “eirde” house was found in 1830 at Lintrose (the site of a Roman camp), in the parish of Kettina, which measured from 50 to 60 feet in length. There was another (*supra*, p. 82) on the adjoining lands of Pitcur; also one at Ruthven, near the church.

and believing the place to be hollow, he set to work and had the flag lifted, when the fact was disclosed, that the luckless cottage had been built right over an "eirde" house.¹ The disappearance of ashes, and the occasional loss of small articles of household use, were thus satisfactorily accounted for; but, unfortunately, although the site of this weem remains, as well as that of another near the same place, both were long ago destroyed, and the materials of which they were constructed used for a variety of utilitarian purposes. It is pleasing to have to add, however, that the Earl of Airlie, afraid that a like mishap may befall the "eirde" house, of which a plan and account is now given, had a clause inserted in the lease of the farm of Barns of Airlie, by which the tenant is bound to protect this singularly interesting and primitive example of the engineering skill and style of the architecture of "our ancient forefathers." Would that Lord Airlie had, in so praiseworthy a cause, more imitators among the landed proprietors of Scotland.

ST MEDAN'S KNOWE.

I am not aware that there is anything remarkable concerning either the well or the hamlet of St Medan's of Airlie; but, before certain portions of the hillock, called "St Medan's Knowe," were removed, which was within the last five years, it was about 300 feet in circumference, and rose from 6 to 7 feet above the level of the field. The hillock is about 200 yards north-east of the church of Airlie, and is sometimes called the "Battle Cairn."

The farm of Cant's Mill and Wellton, upon which the barrow or cairn stands, having changed tenants about the year 1858, the new tenant determined to remove the barrow, with the view of facilitating agricultural operations; and when thus employed, in the month of October 1859, the labourers came upon a large cinerary urn, a little to the north-east of the centre of the mound. The urn was in an inverted position, from 6 to 8 inches below the surface, and protected by a red sandstone flag, in a somewhat similar, but in a less finished style than the urn which was found in the Windy-Gowl, on Arthur's Seat.² It was made of coarse baked clay, about 14 inches wide at the mouth, and about 15 inches

¹ I am told that the Castle of Colquhanny, in Strathdon, stands upon a weem.

² Proceedings, ii. 421.

high. It appeared to have been sun-dried, and was about half filled with human bones. The urn was quite whole when discovered, but was unfortunately broken to pieces soon afterwards through the incautiousness of a herd-boy.

After the urn was found, care was taken in removing other parts of the hillock; and on further reducing the surface, the top of a large boulder was exposed, upon and around which the mass of loose stones and earth appeared to have been raised which composed the mound. The boulder, as far as ascertained, measures about 6 by $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet; and the urn was found about four feet to the north-east of the stone. At the distance of about four yards from the spot where the urn was found, there appeared to be separate a circle, rudely constructed of stones and earth,—stones predominating. In this circle, at pretty regular distances, deposits of human and animal bones were found; and each of these deposits appeared to have been protected by two flat stones set up in a triangular form, resembling the letter Λ inverted, much in the same fashion as was found in the case of the head and feet of a skeleton under one of the sculptured stones in the churchyard of Meigle.¹ None of the deposits were more than eight inches below the surface.

As the work of removing this mound was one of great labour and expense, it was gone about only when leisure permitted, so that it was not until the spring of 1861 that excavations were resumed; and upon that occasion, 23d February, a stone cist was found a little to the south-east of the boulder. I was not present on this occasion, but the Rev. Mr Haldane of Kingoldrum, who happened to be there, kindly wrote me the following particulars:—"It (the stone cist) was 5 feet long by 2 in breadth. The lid, a single slab, was upwards of 6 feet in length. The side and end stones were entire. The depth of the cist was 2 feet. It is altogether a very fine specimen. It was nearly empty, but one could see, from the soft, black, unctuous earth that was taken out of it, that it had contained a body."

Since the spring of 1861, nothing further has been done in the way of reducing the mound—the affairs of the tenant who began the operations having, like those of too many of his class, become embarrassed, and he himself has left this country for Australia. I expect to be able, however,

¹ Proceedings, ii. 245.

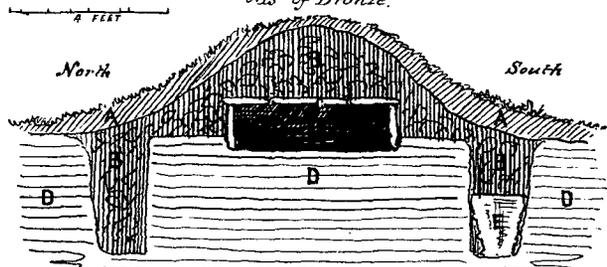
to make further searches at this interesting barrow, for Mr William Grant, Kirriemuir, the original contractor for the work (who had a lithographic drawing of the urn executed at his own private expense), kindly promises to lend a few men for that purpose at some after-period.

The name of *St Medan's Knowe* is certainly significant, but, whether it would imply that the place had been that of his burial, or one of those of his ministry, and so been the original place of worship at Airlie—are interesting particulars upon which history and tradition are alike silent. One point seems probable, however, viz., that the presence of the boulder may have suggested the raising of the barrow; and, from what I have noticed in the course of my researches at similar places, I would not be surprised although a cist, or the remains of human bones, were found even below the boulder itself.

Fig. 1

Section of Tumulus
EDDERTOUN, ROSS-SHIRE,

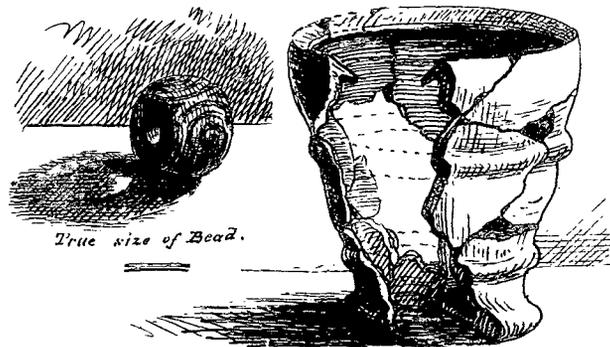
Containing central stone cist, with streaked glass bead and point of bronze blade, also, in surrounding trench, a rude urn with incinerated bones and bits of Bronze.



A, Peatmoss & heather. B, Black mould & stones. C, Cist, of rough sandstone slabs. D, Boulder clay. E, Urn.

J. M. Joass del^o

Fig. 2.

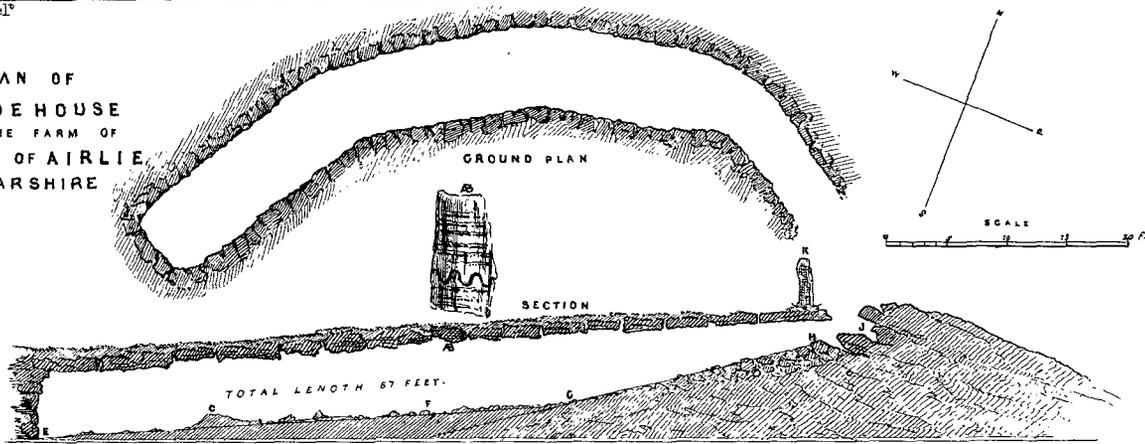


1 Foot.
 Scale for Urn. (E)

Urn & Bead Found in Tumulus at Eddertoun

(S)

PLAN OF
 EIRDEHOUSE
 UPON THE FARM OF
 BARNS OF AIRLIE,
 FORFARSHIRE



A. Jervise del^o

W. & A. Johnston, Edinburgh.