

## I.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF TWO DRINKING-CUP URNS IN  
A SHORT CIST AT MAINS OF LESLIE, ABERDEENSHIRE. By  
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Near the summit of a small cultivated hill in the parish of Premnay, Aberdeenshire, called the Hawk Hill on the O.S. map, a name now apparently forgotten in the locality, a short cist containing a beaker urn, and the skeletal remains of a man of about middle age lying on the right side and facing the south, was discovered in November 1906. A second grave of slabs, from which a beaker urn was recovered, was found in April 1908, about 18 inches distant from the first. The field in which they were found forms part of the farm of Mains of Leslie, and accounts of the discoveries are to be seen in our *Proceedings*, vols. xli. p. 116 and xliii. p. 76. I am now able to record the exposure of a third slab-lined grave at the same place, which yielded two beaker urns. Fortunately I heard of the discovery of the first two cists within a day of their exposure, and so was able to get a fairly good record of both. I was less fortunate with the third, because, although I had asked that any future discoveries which might happen to be made might be notified to me, and although the third grave was found two or three days after my visit to the second, it was three years before I heard of it, by which time the discoverer, a farm servant, had left the locality, and the two urns had passed into the hands of a local collector of antiquities. In this way my information is second-hand.

The grave was very similar in structure to the other two, which were formed of finely split slabs of the local Coreen stone, andalusite mica-schist, set up on edge, and covered by similar slabs. They measured about 41 inches by 28 by 20, and 32 inches by 20 by 13. No measurements of the third grave were taken. It was found within

a few feet of the others, and like them was full of fine soil, which had percolated through the joints of the cover stones, but as this soil was carelessly thrown out with a spade, the two urns were smashed. They had been placed in opposite diagonal corners, but whether any osseous fragments or any other relics accompanied them was not noticed. While the first cist contained a finely preserved skull and other bones, any human remains which probably had been placed in the second had quite disappeared, and it is not unlikely that the same thing had occurred in the third.

As it is not a common occurrence to find two beaker urns in one grave, it is a pity that the chamber was not measured. I only know of four examples found in Scotland, and these were in Aberdeenshire, two of them being recorded by me in the *Proceedings*, vol. xl. p. 23. The graves were of large size, 6 feet and 5 feet 3 inches in length respectively, and were quite capable of holding the bodies of two adults. The other two were rather smaller, 4 feet 2 inches and 3 feet 10 inches long, but still larger than the generality of short cists. Had the last discovered cist at Mains of Leslie been of greater dimensions than the average example, it would have strengthened the idea that graves of more than average size, and containing more than one beaker, had perhaps enclosed more than one body. But in England, graves have been discovered where more than one beaker were found associated apparently with one body, so that further evidence is required before we can say that a plurality of urns of this type in one cist often implies that more than one person had been buried in it.

As has already been stated, the vessels were broken before their presence was observed, but it has been possible to restore the larger one and the lower half of the smaller.

The larger vessel (fig. 1) is a rather squat example of the drinking-cup or beaker type of urn, and is of a reddish colour. It is about  $5\frac{7}{8}$  inches high, the exterior diameter of the mouth is  $5\frac{3}{8}$  inches, of the neck  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches, of the bulge  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and of the base  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches,

while the wall is  $\frac{5}{16}$  inch thick. Three zones of design encircle the urn, the first, covering the space from the neck to within  $\frac{5}{16}$  inch of the brim, measures  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches in breadth; the second, encircling the bulge, is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches below the first, and measures  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in breadth; and the third, 1 inch from the second and  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch from the base, is



Fig. 1. Urn from the cist at Mains of Leslie. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ .)

1 inch broad. The upper zone is formed by four roughly parallel transverse lines on the upper margin and five similar lines on the lower margin, with a narrow band of hatched lines forming a diamond pattern between. The central zone has a herring-bone design, with the angles to the left, between five transverse lines above and four beneath. The lower zone comprises eight transverse straight lines. The top of the rim, which is curved, has a series of oblique straight lines from left to right impressed upon it.

The smaller urn (fig. 2) is also of the beaker type, but only the lower part along with a small section of the lip has been preserved. It is of a dirty yellow colour, and has been fashioned on more pleasing

lines than the other, while the scheme of decoration is more restrained. It has a more globular lower half, and probably the neck was not so much everted. The vessel is  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter at the bulge and  $3\frac{3}{8}$  inches at the base, where it curves out slightly, and the wall is  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick. The ornamentation comprises two zones of design, one under the brim and the other round the bulge, while a single line goes round the vessel  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch from the latter band of ornament and  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inch from the base. The top zone of ornamentation, which begins  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch



Fig. 2. Urn from the same cist at Mains of Leslie. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ .)

from the brim, is 1 inch in breadth. It is composed of a herring-bone design, with the angles to the left,  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch broad, with a single marginal line above and two below, under which are crossed lines forming a row of transverse lozenges. The band of ornamentation round the bulge,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch broad, is composed of a series of inverted or hanging triangles, filled in with three or four lines parallel to the sides, with their bases impinging, while two transverse lines below the apices form the lower margin, and one straight line and a row of zigzags above it form the upper margin. The rim is devoid of ornament, but is bevelled at an acute angle towards the interior.

The clayey paste of which the urns are made contains the usual small crushed stones, and the design has been impressed on the clay

with the toothed or comb-like implement so often used in the decoration of bronze-age pottery.

The discovery of three short cists almost adjoining shows that this site had been a small cemetery in bronze-age times, and it is quite possible that further discoveries may be made.

The vessel from the first cist is preserved along with the skeleton in the Anatomical Museum at the Marischal College, Aberdeen University; that from the second grave is in the Laird's house, Leith-Hall, and the two just recorded are in the hands of Mr John Reid, shoemaker, Inverurie.