

### III.

BEAKER FROM A CIST AT MILL FARM, RATHEN, NEAR FRASERBURGH, ABERDEENSHIRE, AND A CIST CREMATION INTERMENT AT URY, STONEHAVEN, KINCARDINESHIRE. BY PROFESSOR ALEX. LOW, M.A., M.D., F.S.A.Scot.

#### BEAKER FROM A CIST AT MILL FARM.

This very fine specimen of a beaker or drinking-cup urn was unearthed in May 1934 at the Mill Farm, Rathen, near Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. While one of the fields was being prepared for cropping, the cultivator displaced a large flat stone, and on removing this, the farmer's son, Mr Patrick Catto, discovered the beaker. After an interval of some days intimation of the find was sent to Dr W. Douglas Simpson, Librarian, University of Aberdeen, and together we visited the farm. In the meantime what was evidently a stone cist had been covered up. The site of the discovery is on the top of a natural knoll or mound in a field about 800 yards north-west of the farm buildings. The cist was again uncovered, and we saw the flat stones that had formed a cist with internal measurement approximately 24 inches long by fully 12 inches broad and about the same depth; there was no trace of bone. There was some evidence that the cist may have been disturbed at some previous time.

Bearing on this we are indebted to Mr George Dawson, Fingask, Fraserburgh, for the following information. Mr Dawson was for many years tenant of the Mill Farm, as also was his father. He says that about fifty-five years ago, whilst his father was having the "mound"

levelled, a stone cist was opened up and two urns were found; there were no bones but probably "ashes." On the suggestion of the proprietor, the then Lord Saltoun—grandfather of the present peer—the urns were re-interred in the mound. Both urns were said to be chipped, and so it is doubtful whether the beaker now unearthed is one of these urns. In 1914 the Buchan Field Club obtained permission from the late Lord Saltoun to investigate the mound, but owing to the European War this was not undertaken.

The beaker (fig. 1) is a perfect specimen and is formed of a hard reddish-brown ware. Embedded in the clay are small glistening particles of mica. It is very symmetrically made and measures 7 inches in height, 6 inches in diameter at the mouth,  $5\frac{2}{5}$  inches at the neck,  $6\frac{1}{5}$  inches at the bulge, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches across the base; the average thickness of the wall is  $\frac{2}{5}$  inch, and the capacity is 67 fluid ounces.

The outer surface is decorated with three zones of impressed linear ornamentation, one round the rim  $\frac{2}{5}$  inch broad, another round the neck and shoulder 3 inches broad, and the third round the lower part barely 3 inches broad. The uppermost zone consists of a narrow band of lattice design, the middle zone shows a band of elongated triangles, the triangles being filled in alternately with lattice design and oblique lines; the band of triangles is bordered below by three horizontal straight lines and with four similar lines above; the lowest zone repeats a very similar pattern of ornamentation, but the triangles are inverted with apices pointing towards the base. Further, the inner surface of the everted rim (fig. 2) shows a carefully executed band of ornamentation; the band is  $1\frac{1}{5}$  inch broad and consists of radiating lines enclosed above and below by a horizontal double chevron design.

A band of ornamentation on the inside of the rim of the urn is a



Fig. 1. Beaker from Cist at Mill Farm, Rathen.

rare feature. It is of interest to note that Mr J. Graham Callander<sup>1</sup> recorded the finding, in a cist at Upper Boyndlie, Tyrie, the neighbouring parish, of an urn with a similar broad band of ornamentation on the inside of the rim.

The impressed patterns on the Rathen beaker are filled in with a white powder-like material which brings out the ornamentation. A sample of this white powder was removed from the impressions and submitted to chemical examination,<sup>2</sup> and the analysis shows the powder to consist of a large proportion of phosphate, a small amount of calcium, and traces of carbonate. A similar white powder was present in the impressed patterns on a beaker from a stone cist at Johnston, Leslie, Aberdeenshire,<sup>3</sup> and chemical analysis showed this powder to consist of a large proportion of phosphate, a small amount of calcium, and traces of carbonate and chloride.

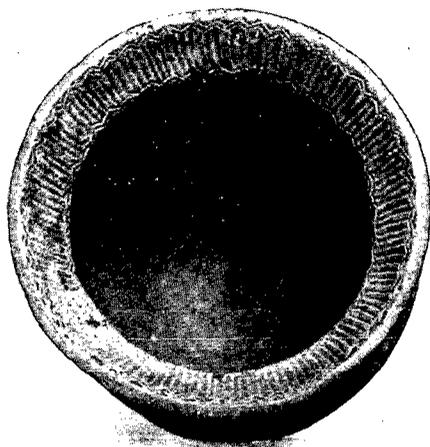


Fig. 2. Beaker from Cist at Mill Farm, Rathen, showing ornamentation on inside of rim.

Mr Peter Catto, the proprietor of Mill Farm, Rathen, has presented the beaker to the University of Aberdeen.

#### CIST CREMATION AT URY.

On 28th March 1934, while workmen were engaged taking out the foundation for an electric pylon in the West Findlaystone Park, in the policies of Ury House, Stonehaven, they uncovered a small stone cist.

Dr Ogg, Director of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen, who was using the opportunity of obtaining samples of soil for investigation, recognised the interest of the find and arranged with the engineer in charge to have the cist left undisturbed till next day.

Dr Ogg and I visited the site next morning, but unfortunately it

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xliii. p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> For this analysis we are indebted to T. Harold Reade, M.A.(Cantab), M.Sc., Chemistry Department, University of Aberdeen.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxiv. p. 218.

had been necessary for the workmen to proceed with the excavation and they had carefully removed the cist and its contents—the contents had been placed in a box and the slabs forming the cist arranged against the neighbouring garden wall.

The site of the cist is on a gravelly knoll on steeply rising ground in a field about 300 yards from the Cowie Water.

With the help of the engineer it was possible to obtain a record of the dimensions and structure of the cist. The cover of the cist lay



Fig. 3. Contents of Cist Cremation Interment at Ury: 1. Pieces of flat bones of cranium and of jaws with milk teeth, child 3 to 5 years. 2. Pieces of flat bones of cranium and part of left orbit, adult. 3. Articular ends of lower limb bones. 4. Pieces of shafts of upper limb bones. 5. Bones of hands and feet. 6. Flint implement (imperfect). 7. Charcoal and clay.

about a foot under the surface of the ground and was formed by a relatively large irregular slab of sandstone which measures 4 feet 4 inches in its greatest length; 2 feet 4 inches in breadth; and about 3 inches in thickness. The sides and ends of the cist were made of smaller slabs set on edge—the two side slabs being inserted within the end slabs. One side slab measures 23 inches in length,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches in depth, and 3 inches in thickness; the other side slab measures 20 inches in length, 15 inches in depth, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch in thickness. One end stone measures 23 inches in length, 12 inches in depth, and 2 inches in thickness; the other end stone measures 20 inches in length, 17 inches in depth, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch in thickness. All the slabs are of local sandstone.

From the markings on the slabs the internal dimensions of the cist

could be determined fairly accurately—internal length, 20 inches; breadth, 9 inches; depth, 12 inches. Clay had been used to close the joints between the slabs. The floor was not paved or covered by clay.

The small cist contains the bones—for the most part in small pieces—from a burial by cremation (fig. 3). Quite a number of the larger pieces can be recognised as belonging to an adult human skeleton—pieces of flat bones of cranium as well as parts of upper and lower jaws with tooth sockets; pieces of vertebræ; ribs; and numerous pieces of limb bones varying in length from  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to 2 inches. Several of the smaller bones of the hand and foot are also present. The ends of these are all completely ossified (*i.e.*) remains of adult bones. Mixed with the numerous pieces of the adult skeleton are pieces of the flat bones of the cranium and the upper and lower jaws with milk-teeth, indicating a child, perhaps about 3 to 5 years of age.

Thus there is evidence that the cist contained the cremated remains both of an adult and of a young child. The bones show evidence of being very thoroughly cremated.

Among the pieces of cremated bone was found a "worked" flint implement which had been subjected to fire and unfortunately is not complete, the pointed end having been broken off. The implement shows secondary chipping along its margins and measures  $1\frac{1}{5}$  inch in length by  $\frac{9}{10}$  inch in breadth and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in thickness.

Mr H. McLaren, Factor for the Ury Estates, was most helpful in providing facility for the examination of the cist and in obtaining the permission of the proprietor, Lord Stonehaven, to have the contents of the cist removed to the Anatomy Department, Aberdeen University, for detailed examination.