

## Cinerary Urn found near Eyam.

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### DESCRIPTION OF FIND.



AN interesting discovery was recently made in the neighbourhood of Eyam, when a cinerary urn was found in the middle of a sloping grass field about one thousand feet above the sea-level. It was about two feet below the surface; not inverted, as is sometimes the case, and with no covering or protecting stones near it. It is evident from the nature of the ground, which, two feet below the surface, suddenly changes from a loose soil to a hard clayey substance, that those who buried the urn had just dug down as far as it was easy to do so, and there deposited it. At the time of discovery the clay of the urn was in a very soft state, showing that it had not been well baked, but after exposure for a day or two it rehardened. Until then the urn was unbroken and complete, except for a piece of the base, which was missing at the time of discovery; but, most unfortunately, when the ashes and remains of bones were turned out, it fell to pieces.

### DESCRIPTION OF URN.

Plate I. is a photograph of the urn as the pieces into which it was broken have been pieced together.

Plate II. shows a tentative reconstruction.

The measurements are as follows: Diameter of bowl, 9 inches; second rim, 9 inches; third rim, 8 inches; base,

$4\frac{1}{2}$  inches; height of urn, 11 inches; average thickness, half an inch.

There are two kinds of ornamentation present: one between the second and third rim (see Plate II.), consisting of short, broad, vertical, incised lines; and the other between the second rim and the bowl, being a fern-like pattern, also composed of these same short, broad incisions.<sup>1</sup>

The substance of which the urn was made is the usual red-brown clay, intermixed with more or less finely-ground gravel. The inside of the urn is blackened, especially at the bottom, showing that the ashes were put in while still very hot.<sup>2</sup>

The clay, where thus blackened, is more brittle, and this may account for the base not being whole at time of discovery—the heat of the impoured ashes having weakened the clay, and so aided decomposition.

#### PROBABLE DATE OF URN.

Saxon and Roman urns were almost invariably globular in form, contracted at the top and well baked. British urns, except of the Iron Age, had usually a broad band and tapering base, and no contraction whatever at the top; they were also often poorly baked. This leads one to believe that the urn in question is British and pre-Iron Age.

This takes us back to the Stone and Bronze Ages. It cannot, however, be of the Stone Age, because inhumation was then practised, cremation not coming in till the Bronze Age. Now, if we compare this urn with others of the British Bronze Age, we shall see that, in spite of the unusual “fern-like” pattern, it must be classed among those of ruder workmanship. In the newer Bronze Age the pattern would probably have been more elaborate and more sharply incised, as if done with some

<sup>1</sup> The pattern was probably made with a bone tool similar to that found by Bateman at Arborlow together with urns. Stone or metal would have made sharper incisions. Cf. Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, p. 66; and cf. Urn No. J 93-53† in Bateman Collection in Sheffield, Weston Park Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Urn No. J 93-767 in Bateman Collection in Sheffield, Weston Park Museum.

metal tool, and not so roughly as is actually the case. The use of bone tools probably almost died out at the end of the older Bronze Age. So it seems safe to say that the urn was made in the older Bronze Age, and the limits of this are usually given as 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C. (Hörnes-Mortillet).

#### CONCLUSION.

The most interesting feature in the find is that the urn was not in the usual stone cist, but only two feet underground, resting on clay and surrounded only by soil. Whether there was ever any kind of tumulus over it cannot be definitely ascertained, as the field, though on a slope, has probably once been ploughed. The plough, however, would not have levelled a large tumulus.

The more simple explanation seems to be that this grave contained the remains of a man who died on a journey, and, owing to the eagerness of his tribe to push forward, was cremated and buried as quickly as possible. Clodd, in *The Story of Primitive Man*, p. 189, says: "While the object of this custom (cremation) was doubtless to destroy the connection between body and soul, it would be especially adopted by nomadic peoples, who, in leaving their dead behind, would be unable to make provision for the appeasing offerings at their graves."

In the neighbouring ground, which has been much cut into in several places, scarcely anything else has been found.

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Note I.—Plate III. shows the outline of rather a curious stone which was found near the above-mentioned urn. Its surfaces are smoothed, as if by rubbing. Its connection with the urn is very doubtful.

Note II.—Plate IV. shows an attempt at reconstruction of the bowl of another urn, a few pieces of which were found not far from the first. It was probably smaller than the other, being made of much poorer clay and much thinner. Only just enough pieces have been found to show the pattern of the first rim.

Plate II.

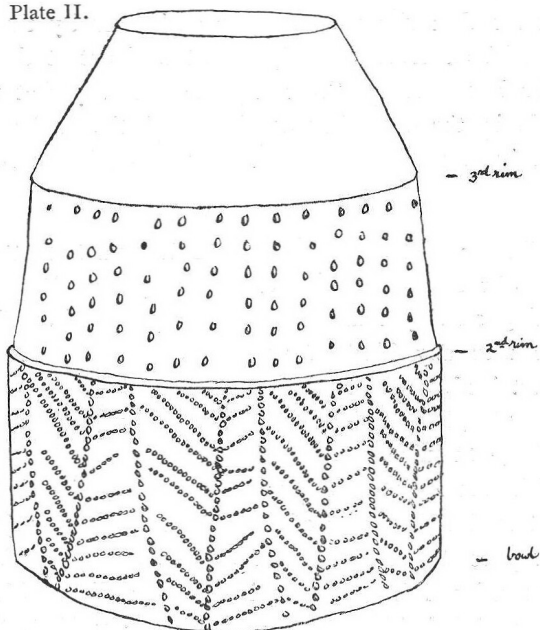


Plate III.

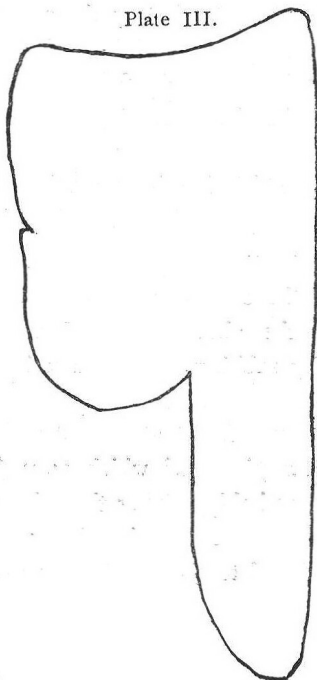


Plate IV.

