

7. AN ENCRUSTED-URN BURIAL AT SCOTLANDWELL, KINROSS-SHIRE.

The burial here described was found in the spring of 1946 during ploughing, as often happens; a horse's hoof sank into a hole in the ground, which was discovered by the farmer, Mr David Nicol, to be lined with earthenware and to have burnt bones in the bottom. The hoof had destroyed the base of an inverted urn, which remained otherwise intact. Fortunately there was no further disturbance till on Good Friday I visited Kilmagad Farm, close to the village of Scotlandwell, Kinross-shire, accompanied by Mr John Frew, a visitor from Edinburgh who had learned of the find and kindly informed Professor Childe.

The site was a low sloping knoll 40 yards below the road from Scotlandwell to Kinnesswood, and 250 yards north-west of the farm buildings of Kilmagad. The hillside slopes south-west and overlooks Loch Leven, 70 feet below and now about a mile away. If the low ground of Portmoak Moss were flooded the loch would only be a quarter of a mile away or less. Above the main road the ground slopes up more steeply to the top of the Bishop Hill (O.S. 6" Map (1913), Kinross-shire, Sheet No. XVIII S.E.).

A number of large stones had been removed from the knoll by Mr Nicol, but they may have had no direct connection with the burial. The knoll seemed, however, rather stony in comparison with the rest of the sandy soil of the field.

Though the original ground-level was not distinguished, the hole in the solid sandy subsoil which had been made to take the urn could be recognised. The filling was less compact than the natural, and of a browner, less yellow, tinge. The hole was circular, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet across or rather more, with nearly vertical sides slightly undercut before contracting to the fairly flat bottom, which was 2 feet 2 inches to 2 feet 4 inches across, and which lay at most 2 feet 11 inches below the present surface. On a layer of clean laid sand some 2 inches thick there was a paving (Pl. XXV, 3). Three of the main stones met close together, but the fourth had been laid with a rounded side instead of a corner toward the centre—thus leaving there a strange triangular cavity which became filled with ashes. A fifth slab supplemented one of the four at the side, while six smaller stones were also set between the edges of the main ones and the sides of the hole. Two small pieces further levelled up cracks between main slabs. The largest slab varied from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, and its longest side was 16 inches. Subsequent to the laying of the paving two rather chunky stones, the larger 9 inches long, had been placed on the uphill (north-east) side of the bottom, but not clear of the flatter stones. Was this a symbolic protection of the mouth of the urn against the dangers of the North? At any rate no very practical purpose is obvious.

The mouth of the urn rested on the paving, the wide shoulders of the vessel being 5 inches from the sides of the hole all round (Pl. XXV, 2). Little but the actual base was missing when examined; it must have been just less than a foot below the present surface. Apart from a rather small amount of ashes (some had been removed when first found) the great urn was empty. The earth seen in the photograph fell in only during my excavation.

The urn (Pl. XXV, 1) is of the encrusted type, reddish outside and dark inside. As already explained, the base is now wanting. As is usual in this type of pottery, the fabric is very crumbly, and the urn collapsed completely when being removed from the ground. The present height is $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the diameter at the shoulders about $16\frac{1}{4}$ to $17\frac{1}{4}$ inches, the urn not being exactly round. The inner side of the rim slopes inwards for $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches and is decorated with rows of reed-end impressions. There is a similar row on the lip and two on the neck, which is sharply hollowed above an upper cordon, from which the wall of the vessel slopes outwards slightly to a cordon on the widest part, which is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches lower down. Between these two cordons is an applied zigzag outlined by a row of reed impressions on either side. This has not been calculated before being applied, and as a result the pattern becomes completely irregular where the two ends meet.

The Museum is indebted to Mr Nicol, not only for his assistance in excavating the burial, but also for presenting the urn to the National Collection.

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