

III.

NOTES ON TUMULI IN CULLEN DISTRICT; AND NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF TWO URNS AT FOULFORD, NEAR CULLEN. BY W. CRAMOND, A.M., LL.D., F.S.A. Scot.

A remarkable series of tumuli exist, or rather existed till recent years, in the neighbourhood of Cullen. In the Ordnance Survey map of 1871, in a space representing two miles square, immediately to the west of the town, the word 'tumulus' occurs no less than twenty times, and the additional information is frequently appended, "urns found here." The centre of this locality is designated in the map "site of the battle of the Bauds, A.D. 960."

It is a matter well worthy of investigation whether it was not the presence of such tumuli in the Bauds and other places in the North that suggested to the historian Boethius and others the many fanciful battles with the Danes and other foes that so disfigure the pages of our older historians. Boethius, the Principal of Aberdeen University, partly from being what we should now call a consulting physician, and partly for other reasons, was familiar with the north country; and wherever he saw a considerable number of tumuli, he there seems to have invented a battle. He appears, from record, to have been in this district, and no doubt saw the tumuli for himself, and he would have seen them even had he been privileged to defer his visit for three centuries. If the battles of Boethius originated in these tumuli, they have taken a remarkable hold of the popular imagination,—a hold that perhaps no opposing facts will ever be able to eradicate.

Pennant, in his *Tour*, published in 1774, gives a description of several cairns and urns found to the east of Cullen. Pennant was of opinion that the cairns found on the Cotton Hill, about four miles to the south-east of the Bauds, were probably "in memory of the dead in the victory of Indulphus, A.D. 988." "The battle," adds he, "chiefly raged in a moor near Cullen, where there are similar barrows."

Strange to say, almost every one of the tumuli referred to has disappeared since 1871, their very site being no longer recognisable. Not

only so, but, of all the urns that have been found, only two have escaped destruction, and the many flint arrow-heads, and such-like remains of antiquity, that have been met with, have almost all, without exception, met with a similar fate.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to rescue from oblivion such information as is still available regarding these traces of a bygone age.

Several tumuli appear in the O.S. map in the Bauds, between the farm of Smithstown and the sea.

“ Atween Cædlich and the sea
There lies Kings' sons three.”

The old legend fixes that locality as the burial-place of three Kings' sons, and it is curious to find in such close proximity, namely, in the bay of Cullen, the “three Kings” themselves, three insulated rocks, once believed to mark the scene of the conflict or of the burial-place of a Scotch, a Danish, and a Norwegian king. These rocks, however, doubtless derived their name from the similarity of the word Cullen or Culane to that of Cologne, written ‘Culane’ in the mystery plays, as in that of “The three Kings of Culane.” Another ‘King's cairn’ in the neighbourhood is referred to in the *New Statistical Account* (1842) as being “a large collection of stones on an eminence in one of the Earl of Seafield's inclosures near the farm of Woodside, south of the public road. Tradition has handed it down that it is the grave of King Indulphus.” The writer in the *N.S.A.* adds the following remarks:—

“A great many small cairns are still visible on the moor where the battle of the Bauds was fought in 961, between the village of Findochtie and that part of the Bauds now planted, supposed to be the burial-places of the Danes who fell in the battle with Indulphus. About seventy-five years ago, a countryman found on the lands of Rannes, in a tumulus or cairn which he was removing, a stone coffin, containing human bones of a large size.” “Having obtained permission,” says the late Rev. Mr Donaldson, “to ransack this grave, I found it covered with a large stone, 4 feet long, 3 broad, and about 14 inches in depth. On removing this, we found four other stones set on their edges, which served as a coffin to part of a skull and jaw-bone, with several teeth and some fragments of a thigh-bone. The dimensions

of this coffin were 3 feet 1 inch in length, 2 feet wide, and 1 foot 10 inches deep. There was no stone in the bottom. The bones were removed into a similar chest, a few feet northward of this one, in the same tumulus. This last one was discovered four or five years ago by a man in the neighbourhood, who was removing a few more of the stones for building a house. It is of smaller dimensions than the other, and was originally covered with two stones, one of which was off. No bones were found in it. There are many other cairns near this one, but none of them has been searched."

The stones of the cairn of Cædlich, referred to in the lines already quoted, were used in making the turnpike road about the year 1819.

The three fields north of Smithstown farm-house all show tumuli in the Ordnance Survey map, but it is doubtful if these were all tumuli in the ordinary sense of the word. The most westerly field has one tumulus and two groups of tumuli. The next field has a tumulus and a group of tumuli, to which is added "a stone coffin found here," and in the most easterly field are three groups of tumuli. In a field adjacent, and nearer the sea, is another tumulus, and in another field another group of tumuli. The place where the said stone coffin was found usually went under the designation of the 'King's grave.' The 'King's grave' was opened about the year 1873. It occupied nearly the central part of a mound of stones about 30 feet in diameter and 5 feet in height, and contained six times as many stones as the adjacent tumuli. The stones were utilised in building the dyke that runs along the north side of the field. The site of the cairn is now cultivated, except a small part that seems to resist cultivation. The cist consisted of four stones forming the sides, so roughly put together that small stones were used at the corners to complete the inclosure. No bones or other objects were observed by those who opened the grave, except some pieces of red sandstone. A tumulus, east of the 'King's grave,' when opened about 1881, was found to contain a cist and bones. Several fine arrow-heads have been found in the neighbourhood and throughout the Bauds. A few years ago a piece of ground near the site of these tumuli was being trenched and cultivated for the first time out of the moor, and the present writer took the opportunity of ex-

aming the ground for traces of flint arrow-heads. He found one good specimen and a considerable number of flakes of red flint, a variety which does not belong to this district. When making the main drain from Woodside to Cullen Burn about 1863, the workmen came upon what seemed to have been a manufactory of flint arrow-heads, a large number of which were taken to Cullen House. No trace of any of the numerous tumuli in the fields around Smithstown now appears.

At a place a few hundred yards to the south-west of these tumuli-covered fields, the Ordnance Survey map has the mythical entry: "Site of the battle of the Bauds, A.D. 960." Still farther west, on the Muir of Findochty, and to the east of the farm of Knowhead, are entered in the map two tumuli, nearly adjacent, with the remark "urns containing ashes found here." I am assured on good authority no urns were ever found here. A cist, however, was found under one of the two cairns that were formerly to be seen here. The site is now cultivated. One of the cairns was called the Gallow Hill. North of Carnach farm was another tumulus, but the ground is now under cultivation, and no trace of a tumulus is visible. There was another at Hillhead of Brunton, but not the slightest trace of it now appears. Perhaps there is some connection between its disappearance and the existence of a substantial stone dyke close by. In the woods in Chalmers' Slack, between the Home farm and the Bin, tumuli are noted in the map at three localities, and at one of these it is stated "stone coffin containing urns found here." This last-named spot is after you cross Foulford Bridge, on the north side of the road. There were here found in 1820, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the surface, one large urn, and in the same cairn, a few feet apart, two small urns. They were discovered by workmen when digging gravel, but, for want of sufficient care or other reasons, all got broken. The large urn was covered with a stone, and appears to have been similar to the cinerary urn found at Banff, as figured in Pennant's *Tour*, and to urns found more recently at Buckie and elsewhere in the district. The site of the aforesaid tumulus may still be recognised by the remains of the gravel-pit. The artificial hillock was upwards of 30 yards in length, but is now completely levelled.

About 200 yards north-west from Foulford Bridge is a mound of earth and stones, but consisting principally of stones. It is about 40 feet in diameter and almost circular, and about 6 feet in height. In this mound, not in the centre, but towards the north side, a cist was found about the year 1864, along with broken pieces of an urn. It had apparently been opened previously. Towards the south side was a cist with an urn resting on fine sand, among which were found rounded white pebbles, apparently from the seaside. A third urn was also found nearer the centre. The urns were all small, and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet apart. Unfortunately, they were not preserved. Some of the pebbles referred to and small fragments of the urn are sent herewith. Two years ago the writer dug at the spot and found the sides and ends of the north cist in their original position, and there, for the edification of all, they still remain. The cist lies east and west, and measures about 36 inches by 21 inches. A well-shaped stone wedge of quartzite, 10 inches by 5, was also found, and presented by the writer to Banff museum.

On 9th March 1897 workmen were engaged making a track for the new Cullen water system at a spot 18 yards from the aforesaid cist, when in breaking off the end of a rough unshapen block of gneiss that projected into the track, and removing the earth, the side of an urn was removed along with it. The greater part of the urn remained in its original position, covered by a heavy block of stone, and above the stone, strange to say, there was growing a fir-tree of considerable size. The workmen took a most intelligent interest in the 'find,' and exercised the greatest care, but the roots had so intertwined themselves that even the remaining half could be removed only in fragments. It was found to be a cinerary urn, $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height and 9 inches in width at the mouth. The urn had no overhanging rim. It was ornamented only on the upper part (see fig. 4). Half an inch from the lip a line ran round the urn. A similar line ran parallel, at a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart. The space between these lines was occupied by an X-like ornament, the legs at the base being $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch apart, and the lines forming it being a double series of small divergent markings of an elongated oval shape. The markings are unconnected, and about eight of them go to an inch.

On a shapely oblong slab of mica schist the burnt bones rested in a heap, and over them was placed the urn, with the mouth, as usual, downwards, resting on the slab, and around the mouth clay appeared to have been placed to exclude the air. If this was the object it was entirely successful, for the slightly charred bones were in singular preservation. The teeth, jaw-bones, portions of the skull, and the rounded end of the thigh-bone were specially well preserved. Around the urn were pieces of charcoal. The urn was scarcely 2 feet below the surface. The site for the urn seems to have been specially selected, and it seems strange how it could have been hit upon, for it lay at the edge of a small natural bed of fine sand, not many feet in extent, while for many yards in either direction only a coarse gravel occurs.

About 2 feet farther on the track, and at a depth of 12 inches from the surface, the workmen came upon a small cinerary urn (fig. 1), $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at the base, and $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the mouth, and with no ornamentation except a narrow raised band at the widest part. It lay mouth upwards, with no protecting stone, and contained a considerable quantity of burned bones. This urn was in a condition so soft that it would not bear handling, but was got out

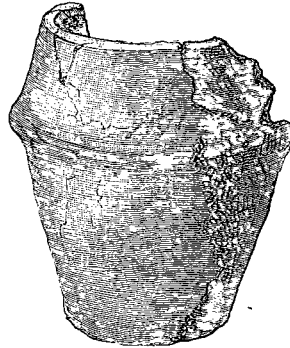
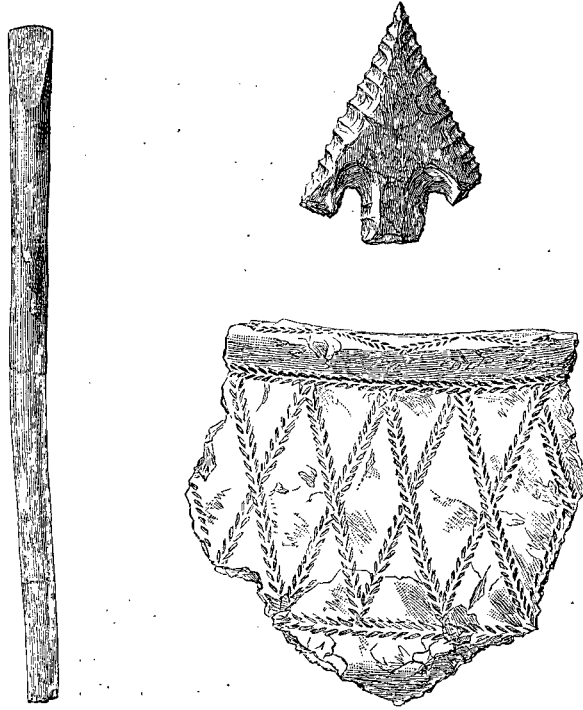


Fig. 1. Small Cinerary Urn from Foulford. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

about three-fourths entire, and it hardened after a time on exposure to the air. An hour or two after the 'find' the writer was on the spot, but even by that time the bones from both urns, with the remains of the urns themselves, were so mixed together that they could not be distinguished, neither, unfortunately, could it be known to which urn belonged a fine arrow-head the writer subsequently discovered among the bones. The arrow-head (fig. 3) is of grey flint, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, with barbs and stem, and serrated on the edge with great regularity. Since the contents of the urns came to the Museum, the broken portions of a finely made bone pin, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, have been picked out from amongst the

burnt bones, and fitted together as shown in fig. 2. The pin is peculiar in form, presenting a curiously flattened head, brought to a blunt-ended chisel shape.



Figs. 2, 3, 4. Bone Pin, Arrow-head, and Part of Urn, found at Foulford.

The arrow-head, with the remains of the urns and their contents, are now presented to the Museum by the Countess-Dowager of Seafeld, who, previous to the operations, issued directions to the workmen to exercise care as they proceeded.

About 250 yards still farther north is another tumulus. It is about 32 yards in circumference, and has not yet been opened up. Flints have been got from the east end of this hillock. About 450 yards west of Foulford Bridge are two tumuli. In the more easterly of the two was found a cist. The flags that inclosed it are about 2 feet in length, and are still lying there. The cavity was about 2 feet deep, and at the bottom was an urn and a quantity of bones. The westerly hillock has never been explored, but it would probably be worth the trouble to do so, as these hillocks seem honeycombed with cists.

About the distance of a few fields south of the farm-houses of Rannes and Westerside are apparently well-marked tumuli, and it is here some authorities place the site of the battle of the Bauds, but these so-called tumuli will probably admit of a different explanation. Still farther west, near Bogside, are marked in the map 'tumuli' at two localities, and at one of these there is added "stone coffins, containing human remains, found here."

Two other sites may also be worthy of explanation—Boulie's or Bouliss' Cairn and the Silver Hillocks. Boulie's cairn is some 200 yards east of the Woodside gate. There is now no appearance of a cairn there, nor probably has there been for a hundred years. Flint arrow-heads have been found at the spot. To the foregoing, it may be added that about the year 1819 an urn was discovered in Rottenhillock Park, near the Barnyards of Cullen House.