

NOTES OF AN ANTIQUARIAN DISCOVERY

MADE AT MOORDOWN, DECEMBER, 1873.

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Communicated by Reginald G. Pinder, F.R.I.B.A.

The site of the discovery is a barren mound of coarse sand and gravel projecting into the Valley of the Stour, called in old documents Red Breast Hill. It is situated on the western extremity of Hampshire, within a few hundred yards of the border line dividing that county from Dorset, two miles from Bournemouth, and about the same distance (as the crow flies) from Dudsbury, on the north bank of the Stour, an ancient entrenched camp, probably of the Durotriges, and the eastern limit of the Dorset Tumuli. Its altitude being considerable, it commands an extensive and magnificent prospect over the surrounding country, and the "sepulchral bonfires" which took place here in very ancient times could have been seen a great distance. Numerous fragments of bone of a whitish colour and incinerated substances having been dug up in the recent excavations, clearly indicating acts of cremation. With the object of turning this sterile spot to some useful purpose, Mr. Cox planted its area (about an acre) with fir trees, and the workmen, while engaged in trenching it for this purpose, discovered an urn of the ancient British type, containing cinerary remains; being in a mouldering state of decay it unfortunately fell to pieces immediately the earth was cleared away for its removal. The work was continued for a few days, when ninety-six similar urns were exhumed, all *except one* in the same friable condition. The majority of them being very near the surface was no doubt the cause of their disintegrating. Rain and frost acting on such rude pottery for so many centuries would naturally cause their decay; so that about two-thirds of them could only be distinguished from the surrounding soil by a small black circle. On the top of the mound, encircled by a two-feet vallum of black soil, is a Tumulus. Close to the trench five small urns were found, about two feet apart, and the

same number on the east side, but not quite so deep in the soil, the remaining eighty-six were deposited nearly in parallel lines on the slope of the mound, south of the barrow, in the very small space of about *twenty square* feet. They were from six to sixteen inches in diameter, twelve to eighteen inches deep, and from a quarter of an inch to one inch thick. Many of them in colour nearly black, others brown, inclining to dark red, a few had a small dog's tooth pattern on the neck, with one scored line above and eleven below. Many of them were inverted, and all without covering of any kind, a noteworthy fact which may perhaps be accounted for from the absence of any flat stone or slate in the locality. In some a few small fragments of bone were found, and at the mouth of one of the inverted urns a plate of thick glass, of a dark blue colour, about nineteen inches in circumference, but this must in some way have got there in recent times. None of the urns contained any coin or metallic substance whatever, and this fact, coupled with the coarseness of the pottery, would seem to indicate very great antiquity.

