

By J. N. MARSHALL, M.D., F.S.A. (SCOT.)

## TOWNHEAD.

A raised beach of gravel, 100 feet above sea level, occupies a site some little distance behind the Churchyard of Rothesay and parallel with the west side of the road leading from Rothesay to Kingarth.

For fifty years or more gravel has been removed from this place for commercial purposes, but it was not until the year 1914 that it became apparent that the site was one of great archaeological interest. In that year Mr Lyle, who was lessee of the gravel pit, found a polished stone axe among the roots of an old ash tree. A sharp lookout was then kept by Mr Lyle and his brother and his man, Dugald M'Lachlan, for further objects of interest, and in the course of the next year or two, while the gravel was being removed, many relics were found, the most striking of which were a saddle quern and numerous fragments of pottery.

About this time Mr Ludovic Mann was informed of the finds, and he kindly came and examined the place and what we had found, and came to the conclusion that the site was that of a Neolithic village. Mr Mann kept in touch with what was going on and what was being found, and after a year or two he published an account of the place in "The Glasgow Herald."

About 1919 the digging of gravel came to an end and the pit was filled up, but, as is narrated below, some further excavations for scientific purposes were undertaken in 1929.

A plan of the whole area has been prepared by Mr Robt. M'Fie and a reproduction of it will be found on plates 1 and 2, that on plate 2 being the area of recent excavations drawn on a larger scale.

While the gravel pit was being dug out a sharp face was presented, which made the detection of relics fairly easy.

A series of "post holes" was found more or less in line which suggested the supports of some sort of building, or as Mr Mann thinks, a surrounding fence.

The gravel was covered by a layer of soil from one to two feet deep, containing nothing of interest beyond a few sherds of glazed pottery of comparatively recent date.

At a depth of about two feet from the surface of the gravel there was a dark layer in which many of the relics were found. A list of these with their positions will be found on the plan.

A saddle quern was found with the rubbing stone *in situ*. It was photographed at the time of finding and a reproduction will be found on plate 3.

A hearth stone with charred remains of hazel nuts and a single grain of wheat showed that agriculture had been practised by the occupants.

Numerous fragments of pottery occurred, none of them very large, but many of them showing ornamentation of various kinds, punctulations, straight lines and V shaped stab markings. Many of the fragments showed the top of a vessel, others the side, but none the actual base, so that it seemed doubtful whether the vessels were of the usual round-bottomed variety found in domestic Neolithic pottery or whether they were flat based as was rather suggested by the straight side fragments.

A photograph on plate 4 shows three groups of sherds from different places in the area, and from the third group (C) Mr M'Fie has made a drawing of what is the likely shape of the vessel. On plate 5 is shown the outline of the rims of the vessels. Those numbered 1 to 5 were found in the earlier excavation; 6 and 7 in the later.

All the material found has been placed in the Bute Museum.



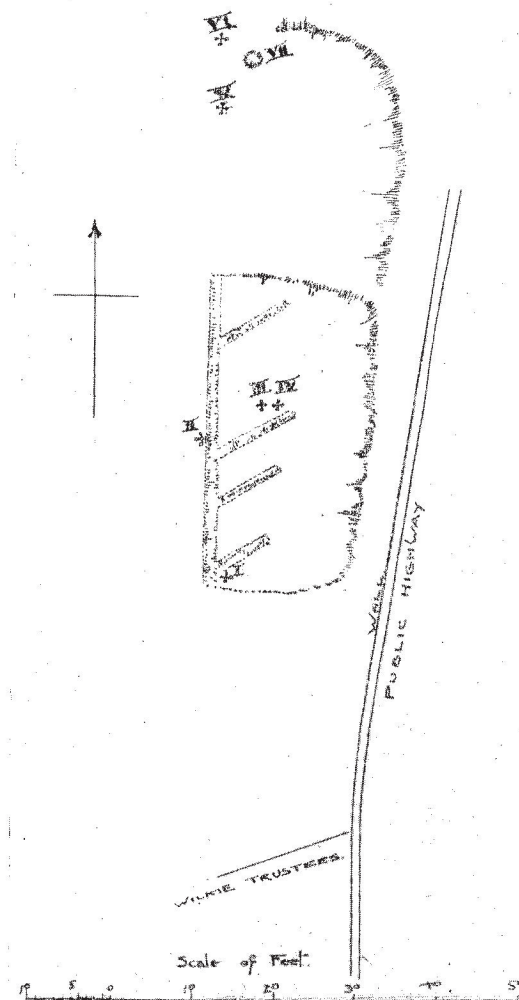
# Plate 2.

## RECENT EXCAVATIONS

1929  
Portion of Gravel Bed.

PLAN No 2.

(A)

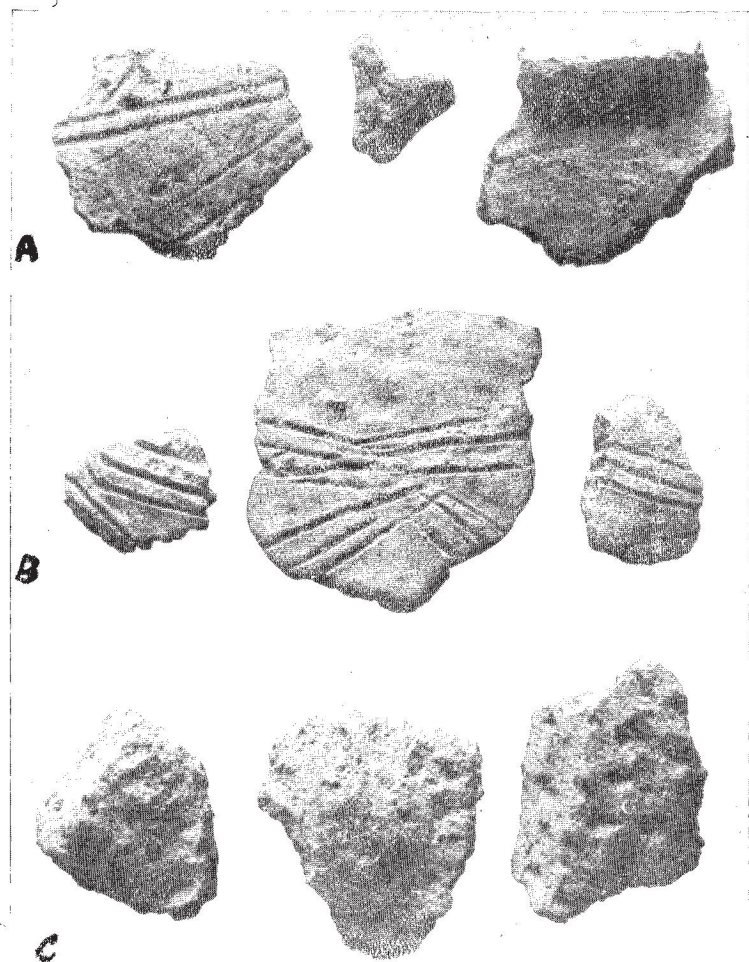


# Plate 3.



SADDLE QUERN WITH RUBBING STONE IN SITU  
TOWNHEAD.

Plate 4.

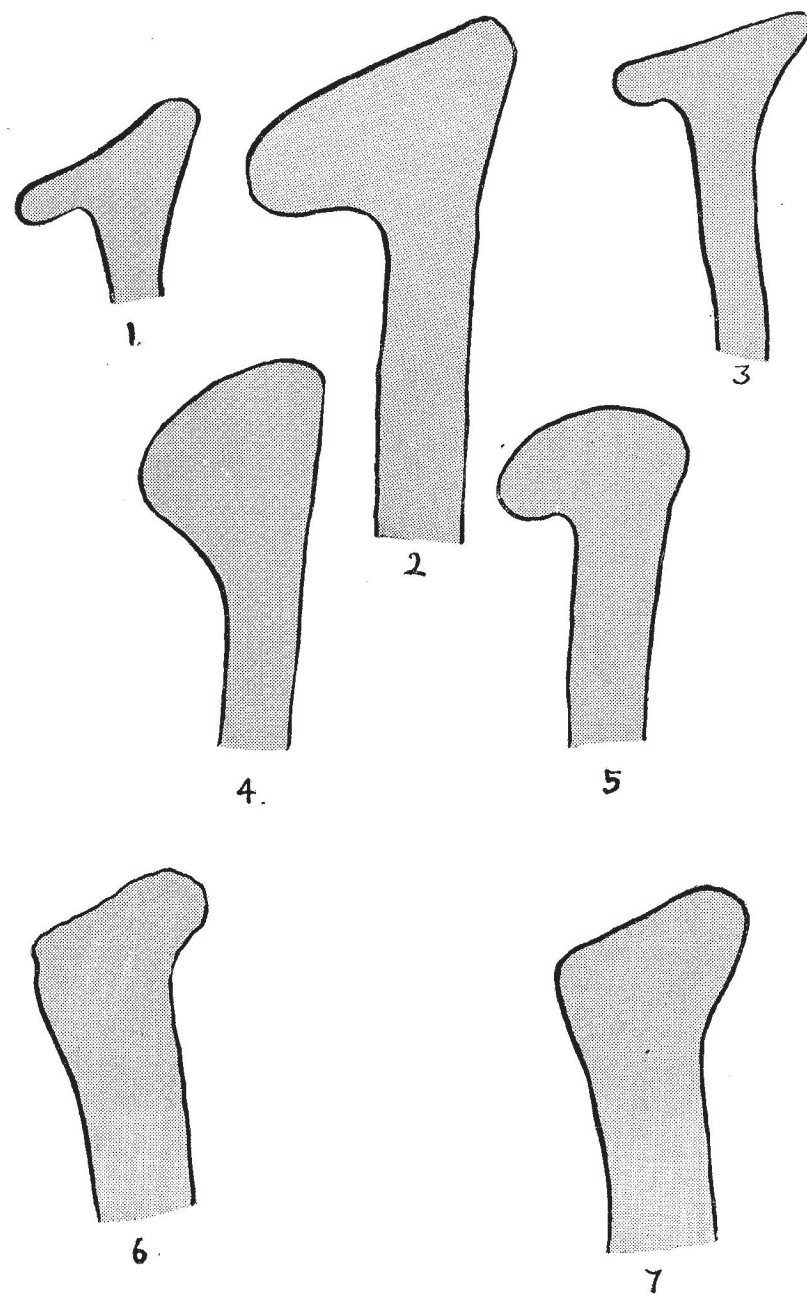


POTTERY FROM TOWNHEAD.

A and B—Excavations, 1919.

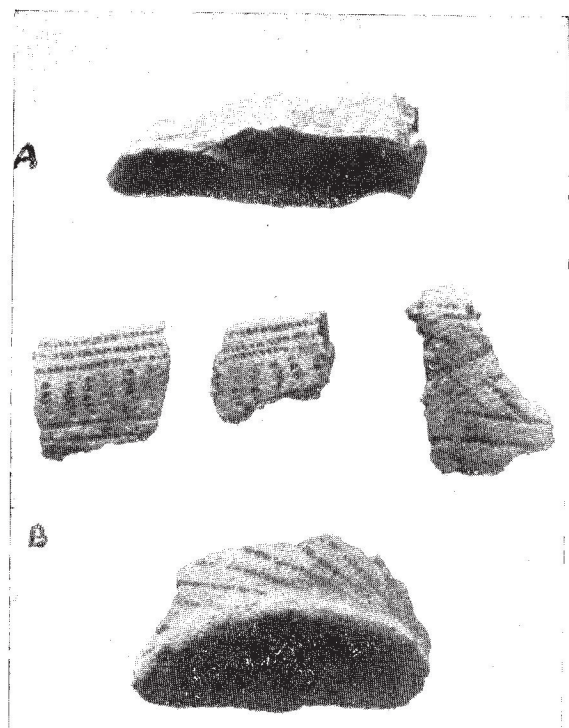
C—Excavations, 1929.

Plate 5.

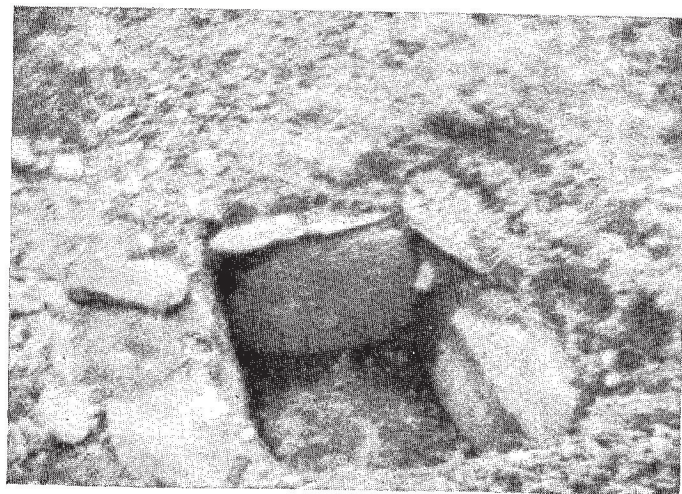


OUTLINES OF RIMS OF VESSELS FROM TOWNHEAD.

Plate 6.



POTTERY AND FLINT FROM CIST AT KILMICHAEL.



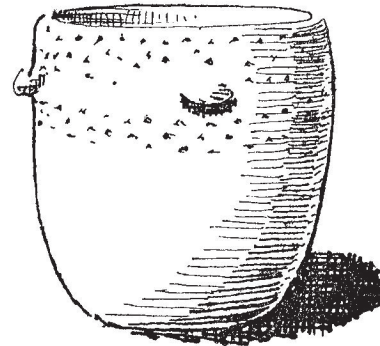
CIST.

Plate 7.



STONE MOULD FROM KINGARTH.

2ft. and carefully riddled. It was at this depth that the fragments of pottery were found in 1912, when the gravel was removed for commercial purposes. This time also fragments of pottery were found, and at two separate places in the excavated area, the character of the sherds being slightly different at the two sites. A few pieces found at No. 3 in the plan and B in the photograph were thin, of reddish brown colour and marked with deeply incised lines running more or less parallel and some of them (6) cut at an open angle. As the fragments included neither base or lip, little or no indication of the shape of the vessel is given. At site No. 4 in the plan, two small fragments were found, without markings of any kind. At site No. 5 ten fragments were found, coarse in the grain and light brown in colour, four of which were decorated with triangular markings very roughly made as if with the point of a stick, C in the photograph. Two of those showed a flat rim also decorated and one a projection which might have been a lug. The fourth fragment also decorated was probably part of the side of the vessel. It was but slightly curved. The indications seem to be that the vessel had nearly straight sides, had a flat slightly incurved lip with a circumference of about 7 inches (woodcut). At site No. 1 a



few flat stones and some wood charcoal suggested the place of a hearth. A short hammer stone beautifully smooth in the middle and faceted at both ends was found at the same level as the pottery (site No. 6). Also at another place (site No. 2

a roundish stone of schistose rock, flat on one side and convex on the other, which might have been the rubbing stone of a saddle quern.

The pottery which corresponds closely in character to that described as Neolithic by Mr Callander and others must have been used for domestic purposes and is specially interesting as having been found along with other articles such as the saddle quern and the stone and hammer used by the Neolithic people.

Neolithic sites containing domestic pottery are comparatively rare, this being the first which has so far been found in Bute, but many examples of burial pottery of Neolithic age have been found in this island, and in a paper by Professor Bryce already referred to, chambered cairn burials notably at Glecknabae and at Bickers houses are described. Each of those graves contained one unbroken urn besides many fragments. The urns were round bottomed and the texture and the decoration of the pottery was not unlike that which we have found at Townhead.

## BURIAL CIST AT KILMICHAEL.

In the early part of the year 1929, Mr Morrison, farmer at Kilmichael, while ploughing the field in front of the farm house, came upon a large flat stone. On removing this stone, he found that there was a cavity underneath bounded by flat rectangular stones; in short, there was a well-defined cist, and in the cist he found the fragments of a vessel and a piece of worked flint. The upper stone was heavy and massive and was broken before being removed to the stack yard. Fortunately, the cist was photographed before being covered up. Photograph on plate 6.

Some weeks later I was shown the stone in the stack yard and also the fragments of pottery and the flint which I obtained permission to place in the Bute Museum. The approximate position of the cist, as pointed out by Mr Morrison, was found to be 66 yards east from the wall bounding the farm house and 80 yards from the boundary wall to the south. The spot chosen for the burial being, as is often the case in Bute, on an eminence gently sloping to the sea—the sea here being the East Kyle of the Kyles of Bute.

The stone was found to measure 31 x 27 inches and was 6 inches thick, but its dimensions had been considerably curtailed by being broken.

The fragments of pottery did not constitute the whole vessel, but sufficient was found to show that its character was probably that of what is technically known as a "food vessel" of the Bronze Age type. Mr M'Fie has very cleverly and artistically reproduced on paper what was probably its approximate shape. (See woodcut). The ornamentation

