7. Short Cist at Knockhill, Kirkden, Angus.

On 18th February 1948 the coverstone of a short cist was discovered during ploughing on Captain Bruce Gardyne's estate of Middleton, near Friockheim.

6 P. 254.
Angus. The cist was empty but for a food-vessel, which Mr Ernest Mackay, the ploughman, removed for safe keeping. Subsequently Mr F. A. Ferguson, F.S.A.Scot., visited the site, and some days later, at his invitation, I accompanied him to undertake a further examination. Our thanks are due to Mr Leslie, the tenant, for having kept the grave undisturbed.

Situated two-thirds of the way down a hillslope at about 350 O.D., the spot provides a relatively restricted view in undulating country. Cotton of Gardyne lies 350 yards to the north, and Knockhill Cottage less than 100 yards to the west (Nat. Grid ref. 37/577476).

The coverstone lay only a few inches below the surface, there being no trace of a tumulus, and was a single slab (an irregular parallelogram) of sandstone with a much-pitted surface, measuring 4 by 2½ feet and about 2 inches thick. The cist was rhomboidal (Pl. LIV, 5), the main axis being N.N.W.—S.S.E. and the true bearing of the longest side 25° E. A small slab lay across the north corner, probably to level-up the cover. Three sides each consisted of a slab of pinkish-grey sandstone about 19 inches high (max. 21 inches) and at most 5½ inches thick, which had clearly been obtained by splitting a single glacial erratic into three. Striae were very distinct on the inner side of the south-west slab, while the other flat surface of the block was the outer face of the north-west stone, the centre of the “sandwich” forming the north-east side. These sides measured internally 26, 25 and 33 inches respectively. The south-east, 21 inches long, was in contrast made up of half a dozen small slabs in three rows one behind the other, the largest stone being 16 inches long. Covered by a couple of inches of fine soil, in which no trace of bone remained, one stone formed the bottom of the cist 15 inches below the coverstone; it was roughly a right-angled triangle 24 by 18½ inches, with the base at the south-east end. This stone rested on a layer of clean clayey sand 4 to 6 inches thick. The side stones, however, chiefly rested on the underlying gravel, like that against which they were backed. The layer was found to continue at least for a couple of feet beyond the south-east end, but further examination was not possible. It seems as if the cist-makers had simply incorporated a natural fluvio-glacial stratum, but Professor F. E. Zeuner notes that a sample had a looseness of texture that suggests, inconclusively, either an upper weathering horizon or spreading by man.

The food-vessel (Pl. LIV, 4), placed in the east corner, is reddish buff in colour, bowl-shaped and rather clumsy; height 4½-9 inches, rim diameter 5-9 inches, base diameter 3-8 inches. The flat rim, ½ inch thick, is decorated with two lines of cord impressions. Similar lines decorate the outside in five zones, with which alternate five zones of extremely debased false-relief consisting merely of two rows of subtriangular depressions with their apices all upwards. The profile has what seems to be a blurred reminiscence of the broad central groove of southwest Scottish bowls, Childe’s Type C.1 It is from that type that the Knockhills specimen has clearly devolved, and helps to show, indeed, that we may generally for East Scottish food-vessel bowls choose Childe’s second alternative and classify as C rather than B. A closely comparable specimen comes from Bo’ness and also serves as a link, while others even more devolved have been found at Pencaitland in East Lothian.

Captain Bruce Gardyne has generously presented the food-vessel to the National Museum.

R. B. K. Stevenson, Keeper of the Museum.

1 Scotland before the Scots, p. 105.
1. Gold armlet from Kirkmaiden (†).

2. Neolithic pot from Roslin, Midlothian (c. ½).

3. Beaker from Pettercairn (†).

4. Food-vessel from Knockhill, Kirkden, Angus (†).

5. Cist at Knockhill, Kirkden, Angus (food-vessel replaced).

6. Food-vessel from Balbie Farm, Burntisland (†).

R. B. K. Stevenson and Stuart Piggott.