

I.

A CIST CONTAINING BURNT HUMAN BONES AT PITLESSIE, CULTS, FIFE. BY J. TENNANT GORDON, O.B.E., J.P., F.S.A.Scot.

On 14th April 1927 Mr Harry L. Mackie, Inspector of Poor, while digging in his garden at Pitlessie, in the parish of Cults, Fife, came upon a large stone which he proceeded to uncover by removing the soil over and round it. This stone measured about 3 feet in length, 1 foot 8 inches in breadth, and 10 inches deep.

Under this stone was found another large slab of grey sandstone, measuring about 2 feet 6 inches in length by 1 foot 6 inches in breadth, and in maximum depth about 5 inches. On turning it over it was seen that it had a cavity on the under side, measuring roughly 1 foot 7 inches in length by 10 inches in breadth. As the stone was broken right through, it was seen that the hollow extended to within $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the opposite side of the stone, so that its greatest depth was about $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

The cavity was placed exactly over the mouth of a stone cist, which was formed of four stones, measuring 3 to 4 inches in thickness, set on edge. Internally the cist measured 1 foot 9 inches in length, 11 inches in breadth at one end, 9 inches at the other, and 13 inches in depth. There was no paving or causewaying in the bottom. Probing into the sand below the ground revealed no traces of any other structure. Round the outside of the walls of the cist were found a number of large water-worn stones, some of which were of blue claystone. The main axis of the structure lay about south-south-west and north-north-east, the wider end being towards the former point.

The cist was found to be quite full of fine sand, and intermingled with the sand from the top to the bottom were burnt human bones. No ornament or weapon of any kind has, so far, been discovered, but on three of the fragments of bone were green stains, probably formed by the disintegration of some small bronze implement or ornament.

The cist lay near the top of a sandy knoll, which looks to be the highest point in the village, sloping down to the river Eden some 350 yards distant. It was about 3 feet from the surface (not including the two covering stones), the first 18 inches being composed of ordinary garden soil, and the lower of pure sand.

Professor Thomas H. Bryce, F.S.A.Scot., who has examined the bones, states that the deposit is quite a typical one. The burning has been fairly complete, although a few of the larger fragments of bones with

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cancellous tissue show rather a charring than a complete incineration. The fragments are mostly of middle size, and show the usual white fracture. As no duplicate parts were observed, it may be concluded that the deposit represents the cremated remains of a single individual. Two phalanges have been preserved entire, and from these it may be inferred that the growth of the skeleton had been completed at the time of death and that the individual was of adult age.