

XVII.

REPORT ON A BRONZE AGE CIST AT REDDEN FARM, SPROUSTON,
AND NOTES ON ONE AT FLOORS HOME FARM, NEAR KELSO,
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I. CIST, REDDEN FARM.

During ploughing operations in October 1949 on the farm of Redden, 5 miles east of Kelso, a tractor dragged out of position a large slab of stone and revealed a hollow construction of large slabs on edge. The farmer, Mr D. Murray, realizing the probability of the discovery being a grave, notified the editor of the *Kelso Mail*, Mr Kenneth Brough, who visited the site and pronounced it to be a cist of the Bronze Age.

Mr Brough communicated the information to the authors, who inspected the remains and, on confirming the identification, began excavation, with the results herewith submitted in our joint report.



1. Larkhall: Food-vessel from Cist No. 1. ($\frac{1}{2}$)



5. Cinerary Urn from Hamildean Farm, Lyne. (*c.* $\frac{1}{4}$)



2. Larkhall: Bone beads from Cist No. 2. ($\frac{1}{4}$)



3. Redden Farm: Food-vessel. ($\frac{1}{2}$)



4. Redden Farm: Bronze Age Cist.

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[To face p. 220.]

The grave was located in the second field east of the farm about 140 yards north of the road from Kelso to Cornhill and three-quarters of a mile south of the River Tweed at this point (fig. 1). Its position was on the summit of gently rising ground at an elevation of barely 200 feet above sea-level. The field bears the rather significant name of Horse Knowe Cairns, which suggests that cairns or mounds had formerly existed, but if so they are no longer visible. At all events ploughing had levelled and worn away the soil to a depth of only a few inches above the coverstone, which was the stone

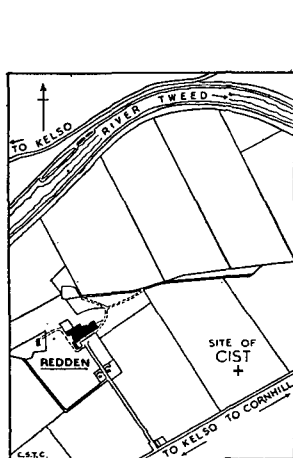


Fig. 1. Site of Cist.

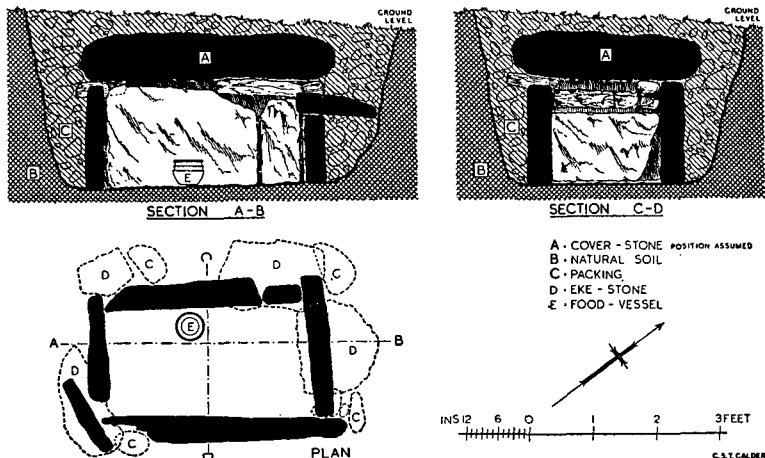


Fig. 2. Plan of sections of Cist.

caught and removed by the tractor. It was split into two unequal parts, but had been roughly oval in shape, and measured 4 feet by 3 feet on the respective axes and 9 inches at most in thickness.

The uneven tops of the slabs of the cist lay at an average depth of 1 foot 2 inches below the present surface, and the dimensions of the space enclosed by them were 3 feet 3 inches in length, 1 foot 9 inches in breadth, and an average of 1 foot 6 inches in depth (Pl. XXXVI, 4, and fig. 2). Where the tops were low in the alignment the discrepancy in height was compensated for by eke-stones on bed as shown in the sections and dotted on plan. The slabs ranged in thickness from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 inches, and the floor consisted of the natural sandy subsoil. Between the slabs and the sides of the hole dug to receive them the voids were packed with many small water-worn boulders amongst the thrown-back soil. There seemed also to be evidence of a similar packing laid against the edges of the coverstone.

The north side of the grave was made up of two slabs, a long one on edge and a narrow one on end, the other sides being formed of one slab each, but an extra slab on end set anglewise across the southern corner closed and strengthened a gap at that part. The cist was orientated north-east and

south-west, and from the silt which had accumulated to a depth of 6 inches or so on the bottom the fragmentary remains of a skeleton were recovered. Dr W. Osman Hill, who examined the bones, is of the opinion that they had belonged to a young adult male; all permanent teeth *in situ*, only molar 3 being recently erupted; all molar crowns unworn. Lying on its left side, with the head to the south-west end, the body had been buried in the usual contracted position of the period.

Between hands and knees a food-vessel had been set (Pl. XXXVI, 3), and beside it a flint blade was found (fig. 3). The outline of the intact rim of the vessel was noticed in the silt by the driver of the tractor when the grave was newly opened, but later interference by some unobservant and unauthorized person had caused damage to the pot before our arrival. Still a good portion was preserved, sufficient to distinguish the type in size, shape

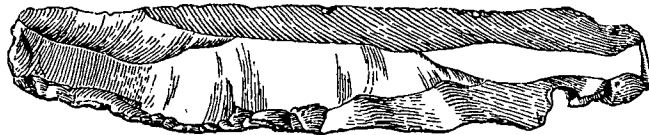


Fig. 3. Flint blade. (†)

and decorative features, and a skilful restoration of the vessel has been made by the Museum technicians.

The flint blade was made of a thin flake, and if it can be regarded as a knife it will be the seventh found in connection with this type of burial in Scotland, and only the second instance of such from the Tweed Basin.

On the relics Mr R. B. K. Stevenson reports as follows:—

Food-Vessel—of friable reddish fabric, having a hollow-bevelled rim and a double carination; height *c.* 5 inches, rim diameter 5.5 inches, maximum diameter 6.2 inches, base diameter 3.4 inches, decorated with whipped cord impressions forming two continuous lines on the rim, a two-line zigzag above each carination, and three rows of vertical lines on the remainder of the wall.

Blade—of grey flint 3.4 × .7 inches, retouched along the proximal half of one edge on the upper surface and having traces of utilization along the opposite edge.

In 1944 Childe recorded 322 food-vessel graves for the whole of Scotland.¹ Since then the number has been increased to 328 by this discovery at Redden, and by five others which have been reported in our *Proceedings* as tabulated on next page.

In the enumeration of Childe's list Nos. 112-3, 195-9 and 272-3 are evidently units of a greater number of immediately associated graves known

Name.	Remarks.	Volume.
1. Gallows Hill, Kirkbuddo .	Food-vessel and unburnt bones from a cist in a cairn.	lxxix. p. 175.
2. Luffness	Food-vessel.	<i>Ibid.</i> p. 177.
3. Luffness	Fragment of food-vessel.	<i>Ibid.</i>
4. Blackness	Portion of food-vessel and a skeleton.	<i>Ibid.</i> p. 179.
5. Gemmil, Lunga	Food-vessel and jet beads.	lxxxii. p. 59.
6. Redden	Cist, food-vessel, flint blade, skeleton.	lxxxiii. p. 222.

at the respective sites, so that the actual total should probably be augmented by the inclusion of some, if not of all of them.¹

Most of the cists have been deposited simply in a hole in the ground, but about fifty of these interments have been found in cairns, and in six instances they have been connected with circles. Cremation as well as inhumation was practised, the burials by the latter method outnumbering those of the former in the ratio of 5 to 3.

In all, some 218 cists and 246 food-vessels are represented, and other relics include at least 7 flint arrow-heads and 6 flint knives, 3 or 4 each of bronze armlets, daggers and pins, 23 jet necklaces and a number of beads, as well as single specimens of battle-axe, beaker, button, carved capstone, cup-marking, flint adze and scraper, gold pommel mount, stone axe and a strike-a-light.

A useful and instructive map of food-vessel distribution in relation to beakers is illustrated in Childe's *Prehistory of Scotland*, p. 270. Beaker burials are shown to cover much the same ground as those of the food-vessel, but it does not follow that the two types are contemporary all over the area. In some pockets beakers predominate and in others food-vessels, but in Aberdeenshire, for instance, where the beaker culture lasted longer than in the South, it is conjectured, with a strong degree of certainty, that both cultures were in use simultaneously. It should be noted that the cist construction of each class is indistinguishable the one from the other, and that only the relics provide the evidence of their separate identities.

The map also shows the food-vessel interments to be most numerous on the east coast of Scotland, especially from Angus to Berwickshire, and they extend in a strong belt across country to the Firth of Clyde, while they diminish in intensity elsewhere, and fade out altogether immediately west of the Caledonian Canal. In the Tweed valley alone forty graves have been discovered.

It would appear that the fashion of food-vessel burial in short cists was introduced in the later stages of the beaker culture of the Early Bronze Age,

¹ *Scotland before the Scots*, pp. 106 ff.

and may therefore be assigned to a period dating from about 1400 to 1200 B.C.

As the cist was considered an encumbrance to ploughing, the farmer has had the stones removed.

II. CIST, FLOORS HOME FARM.

As a full account of this discovery has already been published in the *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, vol. xxxi. p. 145, a brief mention only need be made here.

The cist was found in a field called Wester Anna, on Floors Home Farm, in March 1948, and was in a badly damaged condition when examined by Mr Feachem. It had been constructed of slabs and coverstone in similar manner to the one described above, but as it was barren of relics its true classification cannot be determined.

Embedded in the infiltrated silt were the remains of a crouched skeleton which, Dr Osman Hill reported, had pertained to a male of advanced age.

We would express our grateful thanks to His Grace the Duke of Roxburghe who, through his factor Mr R. Hunter Murray, allowed us to make the explorations, and generously gifted the relics to our Museum; also we are indebted to Mr Kenneth Brough for bringing the find to our notice; to Mr D. Murray for his interest in and protection of the grave until investigation was made; to Mr R. B. K. Stevenson and Dr W. Osman Hill for their reports on the pottery and the bones respectively.