

III.

NOTICE OF A GROUP OF CISTS AT TEINDSIDE, TEVIOTDALE.

BY THE HON. LORD ROSEHILL, F.S.A. SCOT.

The group of cists under notice, on the Farm of Teindside in Teviotdale, was discovered, as so commonly takes place, whilst ploughing over a spot where some signs of a low mound still remain.

Soon after two of the cists were opened and examined by Mr Govenlock, the occupier of the farm, and Dr Brydon of Hawick, who reported to Sir James Simpson what had been discovered. Sir James was of opinion that those found were possibly part of a circle of cists; and some days afterwards I visited Hawick, and in company with Dr Brydon, drove to Tindside, where Mr Govenlock had made all necessary arrangements for thoroughly examining the spot.

Before this another small cist had been discovered by a labourer, and almost destroyed in his attempts to find the jar full of gold which he supposed it would contain; and his disappointment must have been great when a flint flake alone rewarded his trouble.

Our party was enlivened not only by the presence of the poet, Rev. Scott Riddell, but by several neighbouring farmers and their wives, and I cannot help taking this opportunity of saying how much the cause to which we, as antiquaries, are devoted, would be aided and promoted if it were only usual to find elsewhere anything like the zeal, intelligence, and liberality shown by the Duke's tenants in that neighbourhood, to say nothing of their hospitality and the cordiality of their assistance.

¹ These have already been commenced.

The result of the diggings I have attempted to show by the plan and section exhibited, as also by the articles exhibited on the table, and a few words will suffice to give an idea of the position and general character of the burials.

The site chosen does credit to the taste of those who, in bygone ages, laid their friends to rest there, for it commands probably one of the finest views to be met with in the district.

It is on the north side of Teviotdale, and at a considerable height above the river, which can be seen winding for miles in each direction.

Looking west, the view extends for nine miles up the river to Teviotstone, and the blue summit of the Wisp appears beyond the Bowan Hill heights; whilst eastwards the prospect is still more extensive, and is only bounded by the Minto Crags, some eleven miles distant.

On the opposite side of the valley an undulating range of hills of considerable height stretch away to the south, on the summits of most of which appear traces of camps or forts. To the north only is the view shut out by a higher ridge of rising ground.

The mound itself was on the highest and most projecting point of a narrow tongue of land immediately above Teindside farm-house, and, therefore, on the brink of a steep slope. So much did the low mound conform to the natural shape of the ground, that it had never been considered artificial by Mr Govenlock.

The cist marked No. 1 on the plan was the first opened. It was 5 feet long, 3 feet broad near the head, and 21 inches deep. It lay east and west, or as nearly so as possible, with the foot or narrowest end towards the west. Its two sides were each formed by one large irregular slab of whinstone standing on edge. The head was formed by two smaller stones somewhat overlapping each other, whilst the foot consisted of four or five stones lying flat. The lid was a large flat stone of triangular shape, measuring $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, by 3 feet 10 inches wide, and 10 inches thick.

This cist contained nothing but earth and stones above, and bones at the bottom; with the exception of a whitish substance resembling slaked lime, which, at the east end, was mixed with the clay about half-way down the cist. The bones were human, and seemed not to have been subjected to fire. Dr Brydon gives the following account of them,

and considers them to have belonged to a male skeleton:—"The limbs were lying horizontally, and with the feet towards the west; the thigh bone of the right side was entire, but the other scarcely so well preserved. The 'tibiæ' were incomplete, but the right one was entire at the knee-joint, where the knee-lid (patella) was uninjured.

"Near the head of the left thigh-bone were some bones of the hand and arm of the same side. Between the 'tibiæ' was found one of the bones of the foot (astragalus), and the bones of the pelvis were not far from the extreme end of the cist, showing that the corpse must have been placed in a sitting or contracted position. The skeleton of the head and trunk was no doubt represented by the slaked-lime looking substance met with at a higher level." The floor was formed of the natural subsoil of the place, and no flints or other objects were met with.

"The second cist was only about 10 inches from the west end of that described. Its direction was also east and west, but its west end was as much to the north of west as that of the other was south. It was a regular parallelogram, 2 feet long, 1 foot 3 inches wide, and 1 foot 9 inches deep. Its two sides were formed by small flat stones neatly built, and its ends by a single stone each, standing edgewise, and fitting into the side walls very accurately. It was filled with dark-coloured earth mixed with charcoal, and closely intermingled in every part with fragments of bones, which had been exposed to the action of fire. These bones were not human, but to what sort of animals they had belonged it was impossible to determine. About 10 inches from the top we came upon the upper edge of a piece of pottery. The earth was carefully removed from around it; and when exposed, one-half of it, that which lay undermost, was found to be entirely lost. It lay obliquely with its mouth towards the north, and contained nothing but earth of the same appearance as that in which it lay imbedded, but entirely destitute of bones."

At the other end of the cist a flint flake was discovered. The floor was regularly paved with rounded water-worn stones, and about a foot below the level of No. 1 cist. Close to the urn was a rounded piece of metallic-looking substance, which appears to be "radiated iron pyrites," and which I have myself discovered in several interments. The lid was 3 feet long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad.

Two feet four inches north of No. 2 was another cist, No. 3. This one was pentagonal in shape, and had a flat stone for each wall, standing on edge. It was 21 inches across at the widest part. Immediately under the lid lay a thin layer of rounded gravel; the rest of the cavity was filled with dark-coloured, finely powdered earth. With the exception of a small chip of flint, nothing was discovered in it.

No. 4 was a very neatly made cist, 18 inches long, 12 inches wide at bottom, and 6 inches more each way at the top. It was fifteen inches deep, and flagged at the bottom; but as in the former cist, no bones could be found, and only some charcoal, flint chips, and a flint stone, from which, possibly, flakes had been chipped off.

Finding no signs of the circle of cists being continued towards the north-east, we turned our attention to the centre, where the probing-rod descended easily to some depth. After removing a great many stones, a stratum of unctuous earth and clay, mixed throughout with fine charcoal, was reached, and the pit began to assume the form of a common grave of large size, its shape being easily followed by the junction of the clay with the unmoved subsoil, which formed its sides and ends. From its shape, and the absence of side slabs, and from the fact that it must have been excavated for more than four feet out of the rocky subsoil, I have marked it as the "grave" on the plan, to distinguish it from the cists.

Proceeding downwards, we came to a thick layer of stones and gravel, still much mixed with charcoal. Most of these stones, especially near the bottom, were blackened by fire. Some human teeth and bones, several fragments of an urn, and in one corner the bones of some small animal of the size of a rabbit, were found in this part. Between the stones and the flat slabs which formed the bottom of the grave, we found a layer of compressed charcoal, in which were two flint knives, a rough arrow-head, a considerable number of flakes and chips of flints of different colours, and the remains of what seems to have been a large-sized body. One nearly entire leg, showing scarcely any traces of fire, lay *across* the grave, apparently indicating that the body had been placed there in a sitting or contracted posture.

With the exception of a few teeth and charred fragments, no other bones could be distinguished, and all these were deeply embedded in the layer of almost solid charcoal. Is it therefore wrong to imagine that the

fire which consumed the corpse must have been lit at the bottom of the grave; that before it was entirely extinguished the stones had been thrown in; and that, in some way, the one leg had to a great extent escaped the action of the fire, and alone remained unconsumed? Pieces of an urn were found among the lower stones, so that it is possible the ashes may have been collected in it, and scattered when the urn was broken by the stones thrown in; or again, more than one body may have been consumed at the same time.

I have omitted to state that this "grave" was about 7 feet long by 3 feet wide. The bottom was 3 feet 3 inches below the natural level of the subsoil, about 5 feet 9 inches below the top of the mound, and 2 feet 6 inches below the bottom of the cists Nos. 1 and 4.