

III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A CIST, WITH THREE SKELETONS, AT INNERTOWN, NEAR STROMNESS. By W. G. T. WATT, Esq., KEIRFIELD HOUSE, STROMNESS.

On the 24th April last, while cutting a boundary ditch between the farms of Westerleafea and Kingshouse, the drainer came upon a stone cist eighteen inches from the surface, and which was placed in the centre of a mound about 12 feet deep, through which he had to cut. The cist was 4 feet 1 inch in length, 2 feet 5 inches in breadth, 2 feet 10 inches in depth, and lay due east and west. The sides and ends were of particularly fine slabs, in excellent preservation, of $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, evidently taken from the sea-shore, which is distant from the spot about half-a mile.

The flags had been carefully shaped and set on their edges. The covering was a flag fitting closely, as also did the one at the bottom ; thus forming a very complete and neatly constructed cist. The slab on the south side of the grave was supported by placing a flag of equal length against it, about half way up at an angle of 45 degrees.

The grave contained nothing but the bones of three skeletons of full-grown people. It may, therefore, be supposed from the length and size of the grave, that they had been placed in it in a crouching position, and one might also infer that the three bodies had been interred at the same time. Two of the skulls lay in the east end, one in each of the corners, the third in the north-west corner ; all the other bones were together in the centre.

Notwithstanding that the mound is of loose sand, none had found its way into the grave. The mound stands on a gentle slope of a hill running toward the sea-shore, but from its general appearance it is difficult to say whether it is an artificial or natural mound, though it is considered to be the latter.

It is believed that there are a number of graves in the immediate neighbourhood, because, from time to time, people ploughing have come upon what they took to be graves, but which were never examined.

It may here be interesting to mention that an old man, who was present at the opening of the grave, told the writer that a number of years ago he

found, a few hundred yards from the place, a half of a highly polished granite hammer-head, which he gave to the late Mr William Watt. This hammer-head is at Skail House, among the collection of implements of stone and bone, &c., formed by Mr Watt, and derived principally from the curious group of underground houses at Skail.