

IV.

NOTE ON THE HUMAN REMAINS FOUND IN ANCIENT GRAVES AT
DOUNAN, NEAR BALLANTRAE, AYRSHIRE. BY JOHN ALEXANDER
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According to Mr Carrick Moore's desire, three human skulls and several bones of the arm and leg and part of a pelvis were forwarded for exhibition to the Society through the politeness of Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart. of Monreath, F.S.A. Scot., with a request that they should be carefully examined and reported on. Accordingly, with the kind assistance of Professor Turner, our well-known anatomist, a careful examination was made of these human bones, referred to in Mr Carrick Moore's paper, and the annexed Note gives the conclusions come to by us:—

The Skull No. 1 was very much broken, the face being entirely detached from the calvaria, and the calvaria was so much broken that neither the height, breadth, or length, could be definitely ascertained.

The skull was, however, longer in relation to the breadth than the Skull No. 2. It was probably that of a young adult female, as the bones of the skeleton sent for examination were small, and their muscular ridges were but feebly developed. The arm bone or humerus had sustained a *post mortem* fracture.

The Skull No. 2.—The greatest breadth was 5·1 inches, the greatest length 6·8 inches, and the greatest height from the anterior edge of the foramen magnum to the junction of the sagittal and coronal sutures on the top of the skull (the *basibregmatic height*) was 5 inches. The cephalic index was therefore 75. The skull is accordingly *mesaticephalic*, and was probably that of a female. The calvaria had the face broken off, but the lower jaw was preserved.

The Skull No. 3. was very much broken. It had a persistent frontal suture (*metopic*). Its character was female in configuration of forehead, but the lower jaw was stronger and more muscular than in the other specimens, the chin being especially projected forwards. Evidently it was the skull of an older person, as the teeth were worn so that the dentine was exposed. The apparently dislocated lower jaw of one of these skulls was probably due to *post-mortem* decay.

The presence of a distinct layer of edible shells and another of pebbles covering the bodies, was probably owing to the absence of pavement-like stone slabs in the neighbourhood, to cover and protect the dead, and served in all probability the purpose of preventing the bodies being subsequently exposed or dug up by dogs, &c., from the soft sand of the raised sea beach. With regard to the age of this small cemetery, in the absence of anything of a distinctive character being found with the skeletons, it is not easy to determine its exact antiquity. It corresponds generally in the arrangement of the bodies and also the covering of small stones (which apparently have been used in some cases when stone slabs could not be easily obtained) with other interments found round our coasts. I am not, however, familiar with the presence of a bed of shells covering the rounded stones; these were probably abundant in the neighbourhood, and may have been used as food, and the empty shells then placed as an additional covering and protection to the bodies laid below.

These interments are probably not of a very great antiquity.