

IV.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A STONE CIST, WITH AN IRON AGE INTERMENT, AT SKAILL BAY. BY W. G. T. WATT, SKAILL HOUSE.

Last week I was informed that a human jaw-bone had been picked up among loose stones in a sandy brae on the south side of the bay close to the boat-house. I immediately visited the place, and on removing a little sand satisfied myself that there was an interment in a stone cist, and had it opened up. The grave lies north-west and south-east, is 5 feet 11 inches long, 2 feet 2 inches at bottom, and 2 feet high. The ends and sides are formed by stone slabs, the one on the south-west side being the full length of the grave. In it, about the middle of its length and a few inches from the top, there is a small perforated hole about half an inch in diameter. The bottom of the grave is roughly paved with flat shore stones. The top had been covered with several large flat stones, above which there seems to have been a heap of smaller sea-worn boulders placed. Unfortunately, the side flags of the cist next the sea had bulged out at the top, so that the cover stones had fallen in. On carefully removing these and the sand which filled the grave, human remains appeared. The bones were much scattered and damaged by the falling in of the cover stones. The skull lay in the west corner. Close to the head stone lay the head of a spear of iron (fig. 3), measuring $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The socket was under the

head. About a foot from where the skull lay, and lying parallel to the south-west side of the cist, an ornamented bone comb came in sight, along with several pieces of carved bone, which have since been put together by Dr Anderson, and turn out to be the case (fig. 1) in which the comb was carried when not in use by the owner. This, Dr Anderson tells me, is the first occurrence of the comb-case in Scotland. A little farther along, among the bones of the hand, was an iron weapon 6 inches long, probably a knife, with some remains of the handle attached to the

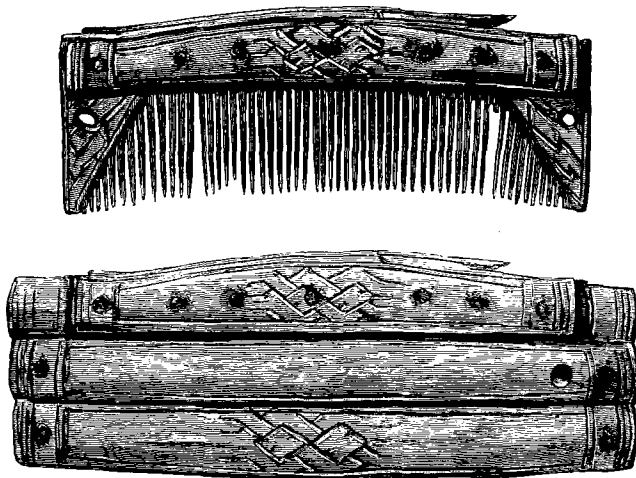


Fig. 1. Comb, and Comb-Case, with the Comb in it (actual size).

tang. Alongside of this a large iron rivet, and another iron weapon of small size, which from appearance may be an arrow-head; also a small whetstone (fig. 2), about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, with hole bored through the top end. At the foot of the grave was a rough stone disc, and near it a large bone, thought to be one of the leg bones of a horse. At the head of the grave on the north-west side there were some bones of small birds; and a bit of the jaw, with teeth, of the frog-fish. There was also a small knuckle-bone of some animal.

[The Secretary announced the gratifying fact, that although Mr Watt had a large and valuable collection of Orkney antiquities, he was so convinced that the National Collection was the proper place for such an



Fig. 2. Whetstone
(actual size).



Fig. 3. Spear-Head of Iron
($15\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length).

unique and exceptionally interesting group of remains as those found with this interment, that he has generously presented the whole of the objects above described to the National Museum.]