

III.

NOTICE OF A BURIAL MOUND AT CAVERS, ROXBURGHSHIRE. By D. CHRISTISON, M.D., SECRETARY.

The remains here noticed are situated $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north-east of Cavers church, in Belvedere Wood, a small plantation crowning an eminence on the south side of the Teviot, and about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile distant from it. Although inconspicuous, from the gentleness of its slopes, except 60 yards north-west of the centre of the tumulus, where there is a sudden precipitous descent upwards of 40 feet high, the hill, nevertheless, as its name implies, commands an extensive view, particularly down Teviotdale. It rises about 600 feet above the sea, and 300 above the Teviot.

On the highest point is the tumulus, which has been mistaken by the Ordnance Surveyors for a fort, but the accompanying plan (fig. 1), prepared by Mr Manoel, Hawick, for the accuracy of which I can vouch, shows that it bears no resemblance to a fort. It consists of a central part, measuring from 60 to 70 feet across from N. to S. and from E. to W., but of an irregular shape, in consequence of giving off four limbs or horns. Two of these run nearly north, but with a curve westward, leaving a horse-shoe space between them. The other two follow a straight and nearly parallel course to the S.W., the southernmost being continuous with a shallow trench, which has a slight mound on its S.E. side, and which ends abruptly at the edge of the wood, about 200 feet off.

The eastmost of the curved horns, E, measures 100 feet along the top from the centre of the tumulus, and diminishes in width and height, with perfect regularity, to a mere point. The other, F, falls rather suddenly from the centre, and is not so regular. The westmost of the straight horns springs from the foot of the centre tumulus, and is

also not so regular. It has little elevation, especially on the north side.

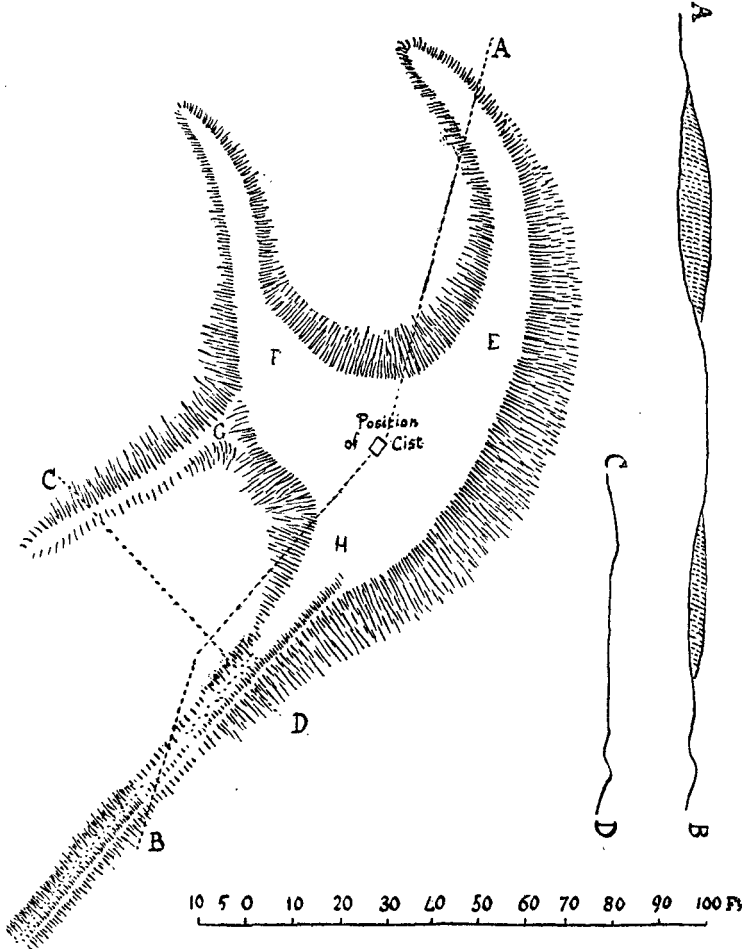


Fig. 1. Plan of Tumulus at Belvedere Wood, Cavers.

The other, H, falls rather steeply upon the trench, opposite D, the mound of which runs up to near the top of the tumulus.

The singular shape of the mounds attracted the attention of Captain J. H. Anderson, 2nd East Lancashire Regiment, when on a visit to Midgard House in November 1896, and he made an exploratory cutting, which proved that the central part, from which the limbs proceeded, was in reality a cairn, covered by green turf and a few inches of soil. He also discovered on the north side of the cairn the remains of a human skeleton, from a foot to 18 inches below the surface, where the superficial earth was somewhat deeper. The remains were not inclosed in a cist, and there was nothing to indicate that they were of any great age. Captain Anderson having been called away, Captain and Mrs Palmer Douglas continued operations by opening the cairn from the centre at the top. It was found to consist of the ordinary whinstone or greywacke of the neighbourhood, in small, easily lifted fragments, mixed with some rolled pebbles. At a depth of 3 feet 9 inches below the top of the cairn a large slab of whinstone was uncovered, measuring 7 feet 2 inches in length, 2 feet 10 inches in breadth, and 18 inches in thickness. This rested on a smaller slab, of which the corresponding dimensions were 4 feet 7½ inches, 3 feet 9 inches, and 8 inches. Beneath this was a cist, which had been constructed in a space hollowed out of the solid rock.

On the 12th November the cist was opened in presence of Captain and Mrs Palmer Douglas, Mr Walter Haddon, the Rev. Mr Johnman, president of the Hawick Archæological Society, and others. As I happened to be staying in the neighbourhood, I was kindly afforded the opportunity of being present. The upper slab was first raised on its side by the use of tackle, and then the lower one by the hands of six men, under the careful superintendence of Mr Leishman, forester on the estate, and the interior of the cist, with its contents uninjured, was exposed to view.

The cist lay with its long axis directed a little E. of N.E., and after removal of the contents its dimensions, as ascertained by Mr Haddon, were—

Length.	Breadth.	Depth.
S.E. side, 3 ft. 10 in.	S.W. end, 2 ft. 4 in.	S.W. end, 2 ft. 3 in.
N.W. side, 3 „ 8 „	N.E. end, 2 „ 6 „	N.E. end, 2 „

The S.W. end and S.E. side were formed of single slabs, although the one on the latter side was broken. The other end and side were of smaller slabs, set on edge at the bottom, and made up at the top, as



Fig. 2. View of Cist, with Skeleton uncovered. ($\frac{1}{12}$ Near.)
(From a Photograph by Mr J. E. D. Murray, Hawick.)

required, with other stones. The bottom consisted of clay and small stones, so hard at the S.W. end as almost to resemble stone.

The slabs appeared to have been displaced about a couple of inches,

and some fine stony debris had fallen into the cist, but this did not hinder the originally deposited contents from being fully visible. Photographs of the cist and its contents were taken by Mr Murray, photographer, Hawick, from one of which fig. 2 has been reproduced. The remains consisted of an unburnt skeleton and a quantity of cremated fragments of bones. The skeleton was in a fair state of preservation,

except the bones of the feet and hands, which were entirely gone. The body had apparently been laid on its right side, with the head at the S.W. end of the cist, the arms flexed so that the hands were opposite but at some distance from the face, and the knees drawn up so that the left femur was at a right angle and the right femur at an acute angle to the body. From the position of the vertebræ, scapulæ, and ribs, the body in process of decay appears to have fallen on the back. The skull stood on its base, looking as it were towards the knees, with the lower jaw clear of it and a little to the left.

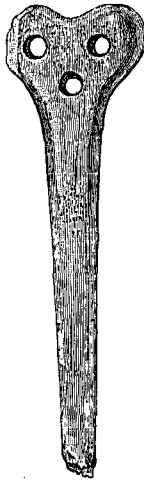


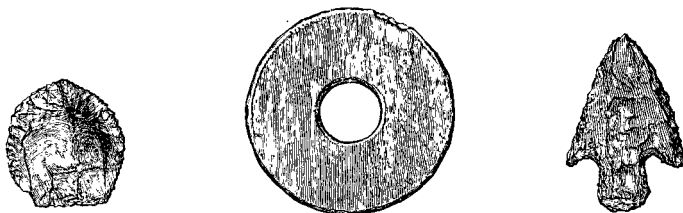
Fig. 3. Bone Pin
found in the
cist. (†.)

The cremated bones were fragmentary, and lay in large heap in the space in front of the body. In the view, which was taken before anything was disturbed, the right humerus is seen partially concealed by the cremated bones, which entirely cover the bones of the forearm. The bones of the left forearm rest partly on the skeleton, partly on the cremated bones.

After removal of the cremated bones, the bones of the right forearm came into view. Slightly covered by the cremated bones, and opposite the neck of the skeleton, a bone pin was discovered (fig. 3). It is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long (but a considerable part of the point had been broken off and was not found) and $\frac{2}{3}$ inch in breadth below the head, which is flat, cordate, $\frac{2}{3}$ inch wide and $\frac{5}{16}$ inch thick, and is neatly perforated by three holes forming a triangle. The sides of the holes were bored straight through. A similar pin, with three holes in the head, from Scratchbury, Wilts, is figured in *Archæologia*, xliii. 433.

The bones of the skeleton were in a soft condition, and required careful handling. Unfortunately, a stone, detached from the top of the cairn by a careless onlooker, fell on the crown of the skull and broke it in pieces; but before this happened, all present were struck with its fine form, and marked brachycephalic type. The teeth in both jaws were regular and perfect. Sir William Turner, to whom the bones were submitted, pronounced them to be those of a young man, not above twenty-three years of age. Sir William succeeded in piecing a great part of the skull together, and found it to be of good average capacity. The recognisable fragments of the incinerated bones were carefully examined by Emeritus Professor Struthers, and pronounced to be undoubtedly human. Several bones of the fingers and toes were perfect.

The whole of the fine stony debris at the bottom of the cist was removed and carefully sifted, but nothing of consequence was found except a flint scraper, fig. 4, and a bone disc. The latter, fig. 5, was $1\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch in diameter and $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch thick, and was perforated in the centre by a circular aperture $\frac{1}{3}$ of an inch in diameter, with straight



Figs. 4, 5, and 6. Flint Scraper, Disc of Bone, and Flint Arrow-head found in the cist (†).

sides. About the third part of a bone disc of nearly the same dimensions was found along with cremated bones in an urn at Sheriff Flats, Lanarkshire. It is not recorded in the notice of the cemetery there (*Proc. S. A. Scot.*, xiii. 113), but it is preserved in the National Museum, and Dr Joseph Anderson is cognisant of the facts. On subsequent examination of the cremated bones, after their removal to the Museum, a flint arrow-head (fig. 6), much burnt, was found among them.

The description being now completed, it remains to make a few general remarks. And first, as to the singular branched form of the tumulus. Were the earthen horns or tails originally added to a cairn built on the surface of the ground, or are they remains of the original surface, elsewhere scooped away by some natural or artificial process? and was the cairn, as happens in other cases, an inverted one, so to speak, and built under ground? These are questions that can only be satisfactorily answered by further excavations, for the purpose of ascertaining the shape of the cairn, and its connection with the earthen tails.

As for the trench and mound given off to the south-west, all that can be said of it is that it may be modern, although it does not serve any apparent purpose, but that it does not differ from similar works traced by me, still more frequently by Mr Francis Lynn, and quite recently by Mr Richard Bell of Castle O'er, for a long distance from many forts, and not distinguishable in structure from the Catrail. In this instance the trench stops abruptly at the edge of the wood; but as the field beyond has been long cultivated, it may have extended much further.

Secondly, the conjunction of an unburnt with a cremated burial in the same cist, although rare, is not unknown in Scotland already. The first recorded was by Mr George Petrie, at Newbigging, near Kirkwall, Orkney, if I may venture to call that in Scotland (*Proc. S. A. Scot.*, vi. 411). The covering-stone of the cist was on the level of the ground, and formed the floor of a bilocular empty cist in the substance of the cairn above. The dimensions of the lower cist were 4 feet 8 inches by 3 feet 1 inch in length and breadth, and 2 feet 2 inches in depth. It contained two skeletons, laid on their sides, with the skulls at opposite ends of the cist, and their backs towards the same side of it. The lower limbs of one were on the top of those of the other, and opposite the knees of both, but partly under those of the upper skeleton, lay "a quantity of ashes, intermingled with small fragments of calcined bones, in a small heap." It could not be ascertained if they were human, but Mr Petrie thought they probably were, as in numerous instances of cremated burials in Orkney he had found fragments of human skulls.

The only other instance with which I am acquainted is at the remarkable stone circle of Crichtie, Aberdeen (*Proc. S. A. Scot.*, xviii. 319.

"Excavation of the Stone Circle at Crichtie." By Charles Elphinstone Dalrymple). This circle was formed of six stones standing on a platform 50 feet wide, surrounded by a moat 6 feet deep, with a high vallum on the outside. In front of each stone, deposits of calcined bones were found, some in little pits, others in cists, some with inverted urns over them, some without urns. But in the centre of the circle was a monolith, under which was first a deposit of burnt matter 18 inches below the surface, then an underground cairn, as it were, $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, filling a hole 15 feet in diameter at the top, narrowing to 10 feet at the bottom, where it rested on a pavement of heavy slabs, two of which overlapped a third, beneath which was a cist containing a skeleton, and about the centre of the cist "a quantity of incinerated human bones," but no urn or implement of any kind. The position of the skeleton is not mentioned. An important question is whether the cremated bones were deposited in these cists along with the unburnt bodies, or were independent burials? From the position of the cremated with regard to the unburnt bones, both at Newbigging and Cavers, the former theory seems the more probable of the two.

From the descriptions given, it will be seen that the three burials agree in some respects and differ in others. One important point in which they agree is the absence of urns, which is the more remarkable in the case at Crichtie, as they were present in what would seem to be the subsidiary burials opposite the surrounding circle-stones.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to congratulate the investigators of this interesting tumulus, and particularly Mrs Palmer Douglas and Mr Walter Haddon, on the thorough and careful manner in which they have carried out the work as far as it has gone, and to express the hope that the intention of completing it by further excavations may shortly be fulfilled.