

### III.

#### EXCAVATION OF THREE LONG CISTS AT GLADHOUSE RESERVOIR, MIDLOTHIAN. BY THE HON. JOHN ABERCROMBY, *Secretary.*

In the month of June 1903, Mr George Forrest, Linden Cottage, Loanhead, brought some human bones to Dr Joseph Anderson at the Museum of National Antiquities. He reported that he had found them in a cist, the end of which projected from a bank on the edge of the Gladhouse Reservoir, and that there were two other cists beside it.

After obtaining permission from the Chairman of the Water Trust to make a closer investigation of the cists, a permission which was very readily granted, I proceeded on 23rd June with Mr Forrest to the reservoir.

The site where the cists were found lies on the south side of the reservoir, and consists of a slight eminence near the edge of the water. This small natural hillock has fallen in on the west side, and so presents a gravelly face running north and south. Its height may be about 15 feet above the ordinary level of the reservoir. Close to the summit Mr Forrest pointed out the ends of three stone cists, the westerly heads of which had been broken away.

We began operations by digging out Cist No. 1, which lay farthest to the south. The cover-stone lay about a foot below the surface of the

turf, and was directed 70° east of the magnetic north. Allowing 20° for the variation of the compass, the stone coffin was laid due east and west. Its greatest length on the top was 4 feet 7 inches, the west end having broken away. Its width, measured also on the outside, was 2 feet 1 inch, and its depth 10 inches. The cover-stones measured 1 foot 3 inches by 1 foot 1 inch, and 1 foot 5 inches by 1 foot 2 inches. The longest stone at the south side was 2 feet 9 inches by 9 inches by 4½ inches thick, on the north side 1 foot 10 inches by 10 inches by 3 inches thick. The top stones seemed to have fallen in or to have been laid very irregularly and carelessly in the first instance. The skeleton was greatly decayed, but four ribs and the right arm were found in position, and seemed to show that the body had been laid on its back or a little on the left side. The cist was full of gravel, which was carefully riddled with a small-mesh riddle, but no relic of any kind was brought to light.

Cist No. 2 lay 5 feet 4 inches to the north of the last, measuring from centre to centre, and had the same direction. Its outside measurement was 6 feet by 2 feet 4 inches, and 1 foot 4 inches wide at the east end. The northern side was composed of four stones, 12 inches deep; on the south side there were three stones, and one closed the east end. The west end was open and truncated, and at this end the cover was broken in. The skeleton measured 1 foot 8 inches from the shoulder to the top of the thigh, and lay on its back, with the head to the west. The shoulder-blade, part of the left arm and thigh bone, and a portion of the pelvis were in position. The hands were stretched down, with the fingers behind the thigh. The bones of the two legs and ankles were about 5 inches apart. Though the skull was missing, three teeth were picked out of the contents of the cist.

Cist No. 3 lay between 4 feet and 5 feet to the north of No. 2. The length and breadth, measured on the outside, was 5 feet 3 inches by 1 foot 10 inches, and the west end had broken away. This cist was smaller and damper than the others, so that the skeleton, with the exception of a few pieces of bone, had completely disappeared. The ankle-bones found side by side at the east end showed that the body

had been laid on its back with the head to the west. The east end of the cist was so narrow that there was only sufficient room to receive the feet.

In no case was the bottom of the cist paved, and the body had been laid on the natural gravel. The cists seem to have been filled with gravel before laying on the cover-stones. Although the contents of the cists were carefully passed through a riddle with  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh, nothing was found. In spite of the absence of any direct proof, there is reason to believe that interments of this description belong to a late period, possibly as late as the Christian period.

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