

### III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A CIST OF THE EARLY IRON AGE, ON  
THE ESTATE OF MOREDUN, NEAR GILMERTON. By FRED. R.  
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On the morning of Monday, 24th August last, I received a telegram from J. Welsh, Esq., the proprietor of Moredun, and a Fellow of the Society, to the effect that an "interesting Cist with skeletons" had been found on the estate. I replied, that I should come out in the afternoon, and asked that nothing should in the meantime be disturbed. Mentioning the discovery to my friend Mr C. W. Dymond, F.S.A., who happened to be in the Library, I gladly availed myself of his offer to accompany me; and, accordingly, on reaching Moredun, we were at once conducted to the site of the discovery by Mr Welsh and one of his sons.

I may here take the opportunity of expressing our warmest approval of the prompt action taken in this matter by Mr Welsh, for the results, as will be seen, prove how important it is that competent investigation should be made at the very outset of a discovery of this nature. Had one half of the discoveries, made in various parts of the country, received the same careful recognition as that bestowed by Mr Welsh in the initial stages of the examination now to be recorded, the results to Archæology would be far richer and better defined.

On Saturday, 22nd August, some digging was being done on the sandy crown of a field called the Leat Hill,<sup>1</sup> which is situated one

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of this place-name to Prof. Mackinnon, I found that the Gaelic root from which it is derived, *leathad*, means a gentle declivity, a broad slope, the idea of breadth attaching to the adjectival form *leathan*. This precisely describes the locality.

furlong to the north-east of the main road and 200 yards to the south-east of the by-road which connects it with Moredun Mains. This Leat Hill is about 260 feet above the level of the sea.<sup>1</sup> It extends its sandy borders to a considerable distance all round the spot where the Cist was disclosed. It has been worked, from the east side, for a number of years and to a depth of some 35 feet; and it was during the removal of the sand near this central crest that the workmen saw, suddenly laid bare at their feet, an upright stone with the edge of another projecting over it. Mr Welsh, who was in the field, was at once informed, and on seeing the stones, conjectured their true purpose. More sand was then removed, disclosing a second and much larger covering slab. The smallest slab (B on the ground-plan, fig. 1) was then carefully lifted, upon which the skeletons were exposed to view. The stone was then replaced and the whole Cist carefully covered with tarpaulin, weighted with stones, so that, at the hour of our visit, the interment lay absolutely untouched.

Our first steps were directed towards obtaining an accurately measured plan of the slabs which covered the Cist (see fig. 1). These were all, as also the slabs composing the sides and ends, of a reddish-yellow sandstone of the same species as that to be seen in the bed of the Burdiehouse Burn, flowing some 400 yards to the west of the Leat Hill through Moredun grounds.

The tops of the largest slabs were level and lay at a depth of 2 feet 4 inches below the grassy surface of the field. The slab A, measuring 4 feet by 3 feet in extreme dimensions, covered three-quarters of the length of the Cist; the second in size, B, 3 feet 9 inches by 2 feet broad, more than covered the east end and projected 9 inches beyond. In the angle of junction between these two, lay a third and most irregular slab, C, 2 feet 5 inches by 1 foot. On the south of A was a

<sup>1</sup> The precise spot occupied by the Cist was ascertained, by careful chaining, by Mr Dymond, to whose great experience both in surveying and in archæological research, much of the value of this account is due. The site is now marked upon Sheet VI., Edinburghshire, of the 6-in. Ordnance Survey. It may prove useful in the event of other discoveries.

fourth, which measured nearly 2 feet in length; but, as part of it had been broken when the east slab was lifted, its breadth could not be defined; but it had evidently been placed to cover as much as possible of the Cist not covered by the irregular south edge of A. It was curious to note, also, what a very small portion of C touched the flat edge of

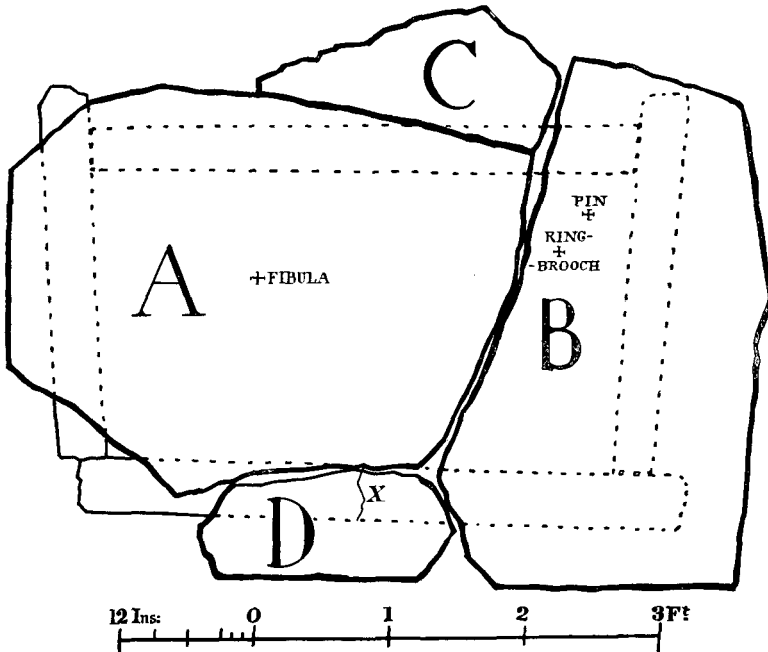


Fig. 1. Plan of the Cist and its Cover.

the north side-stone of the Cist. All the covering slabs were of an average thickness of about 4 inches.

The measurements and drawing having been completed, we had the covering-slabs removed. In doing this, so great was the pressure exerted on the long side-stones, that the short slab at the east end was very slightly pushed outwards over the edge of the sand-cutting, and thus a little fresh sand dribbled in at the north-east angle. In all

other respects, when these great stones were laid aside, the whole interior showed as in the illustration (fig. 2), reproduced from one of the excellent photographs taken by Mr F. C. Inglis for Mr Welsh.

The Cist lay E. 80° S. and W. 80° N. (magnetic reading), practically, east and west.

The stones composing it were now carefully measured ; they are represented by the dotted lines in the ground-plan (fig. 1). The inside measurements were : the North slab 4 feet, the South slab 3 feet 9½ inches, the slab on the East 2 feet 3 inches, and that on the West 2 feet 2 inches. Thus they formed a nearly regular oblong. These slabs varied in thickness from 3½ inches to 5 inches. The North slab was bounded by those on the east and the west ; but the South slab, which was 4 feet 10 inches long, bounded these two. It was broken downwards across at the point marked X. All the slabs were vertically set into the subsoil. At the N.W. and S.W. angles, near the bases of the North, South, and the West slabs, several small pieces had been neatly fitted in to make up for certain fractures there. No artificial markings of any description were found upon any of the stones.<sup>1</sup>

At this, our first examination, we left the true depth of the Cist to be afterwards ascertained ; and, as daylight now failed us, all the stones were replaced, and again covered with tarpaulin to prevent damage from rain. Directions were also given to the workmen that no interference with the Cist would be permitted. It was arranged by Mr Welsh that photographs should be taken, and the Cist thoroughly examined on Thursday of the same week. This was duly carried out on the afternoon of that day, by Mr Dymond and myself.

All my suggestions regarding apparatus having been amply complied with by Mr Welsh, and several excellent photographs taken by Mr Inglis, I began by measuring each of the larger bones and the skull before passing them up to Mr Dymond, by whom they were placed on

<sup>1</sup> The entire space occupied by all the four covering slabs which projected over the sides of the Cist, measured 5 feet 9 inches east and west by 4 feet 3 inches north and south.

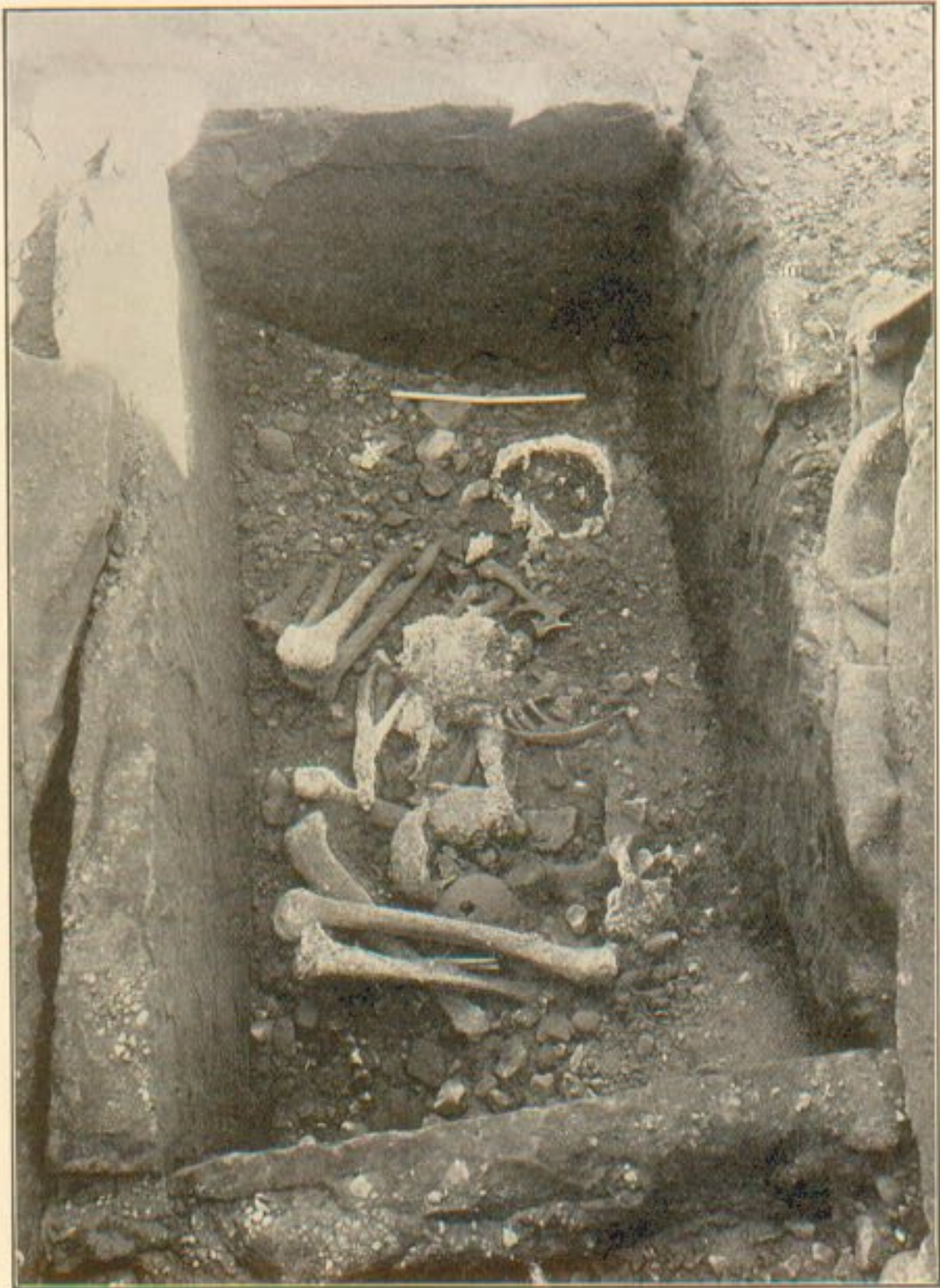


Fig. 2. View of the Cist and its contents. (From a Photograph by Mr F. C. Inglis.)

sheets of paper in a large basket, and on boards prepared for them. I shall not trespass upon the ground to be traversed by Dr Bryce, in his account of the remains of the two skeletons found in the Cist, further than to state, that all the larger bones felt fairly firm and solid, that the skull which lay at the east end of the Cist was lifted out—after a deal of careful manipulation amongst the adhering soil—as complete as it could be, that is, *minus* its left or upper side and jaw; that one of the *femora* showed distinct marks of having been gnawed, a feature clearly shown in the photograph; and, lastly, that nearly all the *vertebræ* and the still smaller bones had either become quite disintegrated, or crumbled at the touch.

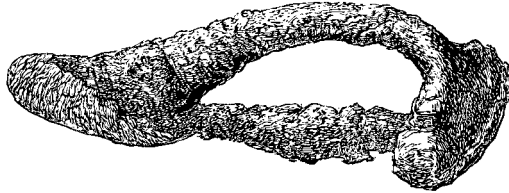


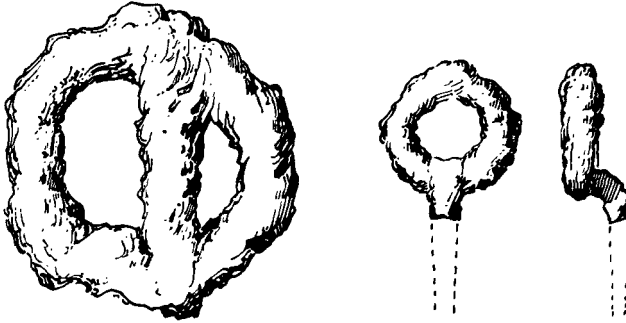
Fig. 3. Fibula of Iron from the Moredun Cist. (†.)

When, as far as possible, the bones had been removed, I proceeded to lift out with a trowel all the soil, amounting to about 4 inches in depth. We both scrutinised every few trowelfuls as they were passed through the two sieves by the men.

The first relic thus obtained was an iron Fibula, of La Tène type (fig. 3). Fibulæ of this type in iron<sup>1</sup> are rare, and this is the first example found in Scotland. It was found close to the loose teeth and the separate half jaw and portion of skull which lay near the centre of the Cist. It measures  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches in length, barely 1 inch in height, and across the hinge exactly 1 inch. A point of interest in connection with this fibula was observed on its being subjected to careful examination at

<sup>1</sup> General Pitt-Rivers found both bronze and iron fibulæ on the same skeleton at Rotherley, Wilts.

the Museum. In common with other fibulæ of the same class, the point of the pin was caught in a turned up and flattened hook or catch at the end opposite the hinge; and adhering to the exterior side of this flattened hook and preserved by the oxidation, is a portion of the cloth in which the fibula was fastened when deposited in the Cist with the interment. This proves that the body had been buried in some kind of clothing or wrapping. There is too little of it left to enable the style of weaving to be accurately made out, but the threads appear to be of some vegetable fibre and not of wool, and the fabric must have been a very light one, loosely woven.<sup>1</sup>



Figs. 4 and 5. Ring-Brooch or Buckle, and head of Pin, both of iron, found in the Cist at Moredun. (†.)

Next, there was found near the skull at the east end, and a few inches to the north of it, a Ring-Brooch or Circular Buckle (fig. 4), also of iron, with its pin attached, measuring  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches by  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches in diameter. Near the same spot I found the open circular head (fig. 5),  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch diameter, of a long Pin of iron, with a small fragment of its stem broken sharply off. At the moment of discovery it was impossible to recognise the true character of this ring as a portion of a Pin of this type; therefore, I presume, the lower part of its stem being very thin through corrosion,

<sup>1</sup> Similar fragments of cloth caught in the fastening of the pin in brooches of the Viking time, from Tیره and from Haukadal, Norway, have been noticed by Dr J. Anderson in the *Proceedings*, vol. x. (1874), p. 561.

escaped our observation and slipped through the sieves. There is no doubt, however, that this Pin is of the same type as those found in the Broch of The Laws, Monifieth, Forfarshire, and in the kitchen-midden of the Fort at Gallanach, Argyleshire, afterwards referred to.

Having cleared out the soil to the level of the base of the side and end stones of the Cist, and proved that there was no flooring-slab, I measured their depth and found it to be between 21 and 22 inches.

All the bones were then carefully wrapped up, and carried in a basket to Moredun House, whence they were, a few days later, forwarded to

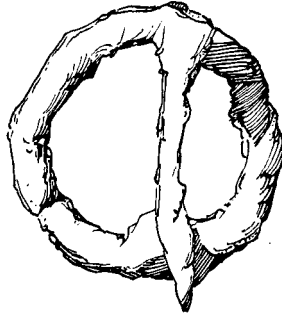


Fig. 6. Ring-Brooch or Buckle of Iron found in the Broch at The Laws.

the Museum by Mr Welsh, who has presented all the relics found on this occasion to the National Collection.

In examining the metal objects, deposited beside this interment, more in detail, it will be well to compare the extremely few similar objects recorded from Scottish sites.

Amongst the relics obtained in the Broch at The Laws, Monifieth, Forfarshire, in addition to the Pin above mentioned, was a Ring-Brooch of iron (fig. 6), precisely similar in form and very slightly less in diameter than the Brooch found in this Cist. There is a considerable difference, however, in the condition of the metal. In both the Pin and the Brooch found in the Broch, the points are quite sharp and the cylindrical shape of the objects well preserved. In all the three orna-



ments found in this Cist at Moredun, so much corrosion has taken place as to disfigure and broaden all the lines of the metal. I do not adduce this feature as a factor in an argument for a greatly more remote period in the case of the Cist-relics; because, I think, we all came to the conclusion, that—as the plan (fig. 1) shows—there were interstices enough between the edges of some of the stones, to admit of the entrance of

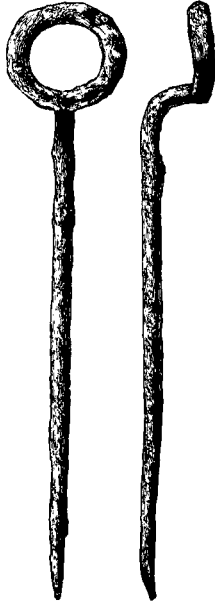


Fig. 7. Pin of Iron from the Broch at The Laws.

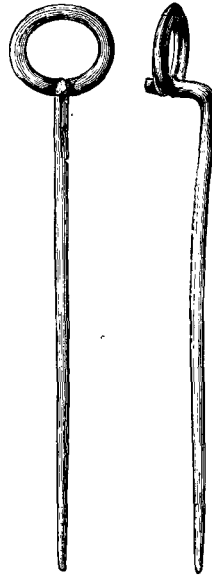


Fig. 8. Pin of Bronze from the Kitchen-midden at Gallanach.

some small rodent, which the gnawed *femur* proved. Necessarily, therefore, the Cist was not air-tight or damp-proof.

Pins with an open circular head, of the type of that found in the Moredun Cist, have the upper part of the stem bent and projected forward at right angles to the planes of the lower part of the stem and of the head which is carried on the forward end of the projection. There are three of these pins already in the Museum. One (fig. 7)

was found in the Broch of The Laws,<sup>1</sup> Monifieth, Forfarshire. It is of iron, like the one from the Moredun Cist, and measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length. The second (fig. 8), which was found in the kitchen-midden of the Fort called Dun Fheurain, at Gallanach, Argyleshire,<sup>2</sup> is of

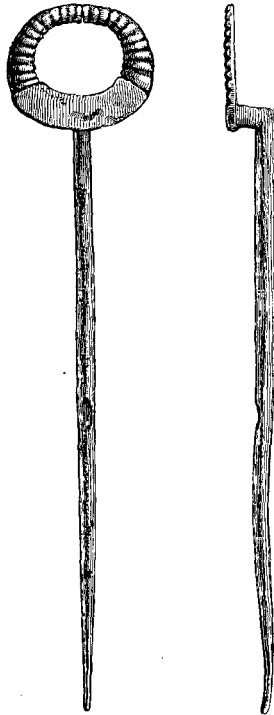


Fig. 9. Pin of Cast Bronze from the Broch at Bowermadden.

bronze, and slightly over 3 inches in length. The third (fig. 9), which is of cast bronze and has the head prettily ornamented, was found in the Broch of Bowermadden, Caithness. It measures  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length. There is also in the Museum a clay mould for

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xvii. p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxix. p. 282.

casting pins of similar form with similarly ornamented heads, which was found in the Broch of Lingrow, Scapa, Orkney.<sup>1</sup>

A still more elegant bronze variety exists, three specimens of which are in the Museum, having the heads enamelled. A pin of this kind from Urquhart, Elginshire,<sup>2</sup> was presented by Rev. James Morrison in 1873. It is almost  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and the head, instead of being open and circular, is approximately semicircular and crowned with a straight row of four projecting small circular discs, the lower flat portion being enriched with "late-Celtic" ornament in red and green enamel. A very similar pin-head, but with only three of the small discs, was found on the Culbin Sands about five years ago.<sup>3</sup> It could scarcely have exceeded 3 inches in length when complete. The last and finest specimen was found in Pabbay, South Uist, and was purchased for the Museum in 1900.<sup>4</sup> This Pin measures  $5\frac{1}{8}$  inches in length, and its head is enamelled in red and ornamented in almost precisely the same style as that of the Culbin Sands pin.

Of the same form are the two large pins of silver<sup>5</sup> found with relics in the tumulus at Largo, known as Norrie's Law, and placed in the National Museum in 1883 by Mr R. Dundas. These pins measure  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length, and are identical in all respects, save that one bears two separate designs engraved on the back of the head. In both it is only the central disc that is socket-like, as if intended for a jewel, those on each side being rounded bosses of solid silver. The same arrangement is observable in the head of a third pin from Norrie's Law, a portion of which is preserved, measuring  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches in length. The lower flat portion of the head is simply ornamented with curves parallel to the contour of the head, with an oval between.

There are no definite indications of the period to which this burial may be assigned, unless they can be obtained from the characteristics of the accompanying relics. The absence of any of the distinctive forms

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. ix. p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. x. p. 359; vol. xxxv. p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xviii. p. 244.

of the Bronze Age Urns, and the presence of iron alone in association with the interment, assign it undoubtedly to the Pagan Iron Age. The circular buckle-shaped brooch is perhaps not sufficiently distinctive, but the pin having the open circular head carried vertically at the end of a bent portion of the upper part of the stem projected horizontally at right angles to the lower part is a very distinctive type, both in bronze and iron. From the circumstances and associations in which this type of pin has been found in Scotland, it appears that the variety with the open circular head must be placed earlier than that with the flat semicircular head often decorated with enamel. The open circular-headed pin found at Dun Fheurain, Gallanach, is approximately dated by the piece of Samian ware and the long-handled weaving comb of bone found in the same kitchen-midden; while the similar pin of iron found at the Laws connects the form in iron with the period of the Brochs, and the occurrence of the same open circular-headed pin in bronze in the Broch of Bowermadden, in Caithness, and of the clay mould for making similar pins in the Broch of Lingrow, Orkney, in the outbuildings of which Roman silver denarii of the latter half of the second century A.D. were found, leads to the conclusion that these pins may be as early as the second century. The evidence afforded by the fibula found with the pin and ring-brooch in the Moredun Cist points to similar conclusions. Fibulæ of this characteristic form have occurred in several of the Roman stations on the German Limes and at other places in the Rhine Province. It is described in the Report of the Limes Commission on Osterbrucken (No. 40, 1895) as a very widely diffused simple form—the fibula of the common folk—derived from the late La Tène Fibula towards the close of the first century, and occurring frequently with coins and other objects assignable to the second century A.D. The conclusion from these concurrent circumstances of the associations of the types of relics found in the Moredun Cist is, therefore, that the burial can scarcely be earlier than sometime in the second century of the Christian era.