

III.

NOTICE OF A STONE CIST OF UNUSUAL TYPE FOUND AT CRANTIT NEAR KIRKWALL. BY JAMES W. CURSITER, F.S.A. Scot.

On 20th October last information was sent to me by Mr Nicolson of Crantit farm near Kirkwall of the discovery of a stone cist there. I at once proceeded to Crantit, and was accompanied to the spot by Mr Walter Nicolson, who discovered it and gave me a very intelligent account of its excavation. In June of last year, in the course of laying down turnips, one of the horse's feet went down in a hole to the depth of his leg; the spot was marked, and on the evening preceding my visit, accompanied by some others, Mr Nicolson commenced excavation by the light of lanterns.

After removing earth to a depth of about 2 feet a heavy flat slab of stone about 2 feet 9 inches long and nearly 2 feet broad was discovered lying east and west; this slab was overlapped on its south side by two longer stones about 1 foot wide, each overlapping each other, and these were overlapped by two shorter ones lying end to end.

On removing these it was discovered that the ends of these slabs had been supported on masonry, leaving a space of about 1 foot deep and 2 feet long, the bottom of which was quite empty. On clearing away this masonry from both ends, the flagstone forming the bottom of the space was found to be a fine large slab over 6 feet in length and 2 inches thick. In attempting to raise it a long wedge-shaped portion of it broke off, affording a view of a lower compartment (fig. 1) constructed of stones set on edge, to which the large slab had served as a

cover. The sides and ends of this compartment consisted of a single stone each, and its bottom had evidently consisted of a single stone originally, which was now cracked across about the middle. The covering slab had been luted to the upper edge of the cist with fine clay, but there were no traces of any on the corners. The cist measured 3 feet 1 inch in length, 2 feet 2 inches in width, and 1 foot 9 inches in depth. Towards each end there was a pile of calcined human bones of mixed yellow, white, and pale-blue colours, while there was a considerable deposit of carbonate of lime over a goodly portion of the bottom

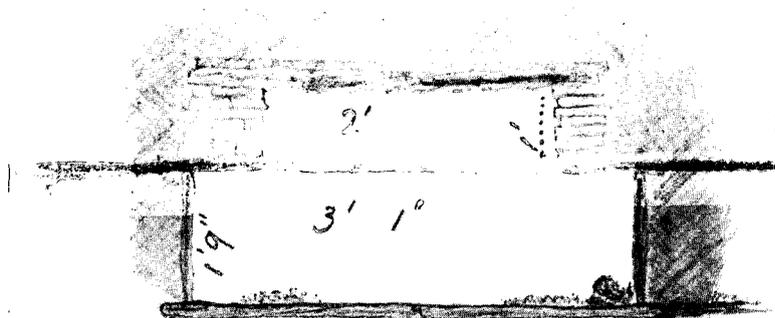


Fig. 1. Section of the Double Cist at Crantit.

of the cist from infiltration. At the east end of the cist, and partially over the pile of burnt bones in this end, lying across the end of the cist, was the skeleton of a young person in a flexed position, with the feet drawn up behind. It was lying on its right side with the head to the north. The skull, which was almost entire, was very frail and so much decomposed that there were several holes in it; indicated an individual of about fifteen years of age; the frontal suture was ossified, but the wisdom teeth had not emerged from their sockets. The femur measured only 11 inches and the tibia 9 inches.

At the back of the skeleton, supported by the bones and the end of the

cist, there was found an implement of deer's horn (fig. 2), oval in section, 4 inches long, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch broad, one end squared off, the other ground diagonally to an edge. A circular hole half an inch in diameter had been drilled transversely through it towards the butt end, so that the implement has the appearance of a hammer-head.

The field in which the cist was discovered is the nearest one on Crantit to the road leading to the old cottage of Tofts and the new house of Orquil. To the north of that road and west of the road to Scapa the

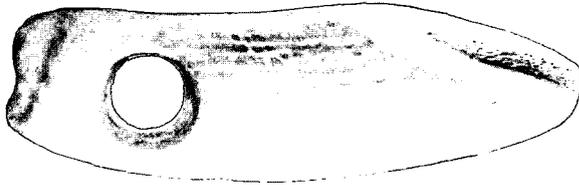


Fig. 2. Implement of Deer-horn found in the lower compartment of the Cist. ($\frac{2}{3}$.)

cist is 54 feet from the Tofts road and 156 yards or thereby from the Scapa road, on the shoulder of a rising ground in the field. It may be interesting to note that this burial is situated about 22 chains east-south-east of the burial cist at Newbigging described in Vol. VI. of the Society's *Proceedings*, p. 411, by the late Mr Petrie, which it very much resembles in construction as well as in the method of disposing of the dead. In both instances the upper chambers were not found to contain any remains, and the lower ones contained traces of interment after cremation as well as of inhumation.