

III.

A SHORT CIST CONTAINING A BEAKER AT KIRKHILL, KILTARLITY,
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On 8th March 1933, a short cist was exposed in a field on the croft of Mr James Forbes, South Clunes, Kiltarlity, near Kirkhill, in the Beaully district of Inverness-shire.

A small gravel-pit had been opened, and while engaged levelling this Mr Forbes noted a hollow sound, and on investigating came upon several stone slabs; on raising these, a short cist was uncovered, on the floor of which lay the remains of a skeleton and an urn. Mr Forbes removed the urn to his house, left the bones undisturbed, and replaced the cover-stones.

Fortunately Dr W. J. Leach, Beaully, was visiting at the house and, recognising the importance of the find, arranged that the cist be kept untouched until a more careful examination and record should be made.

On 11th March, Dr Leach and I visited the site, and, with the willing assistance of Mr Forbes, uncovered the cist and obtained a record of the find.

The site of the interment was in a gravelly ridge in a field to the south-west of the farmhouse, at an elevation of 500 feet above sea-level, a situation that commands an extensive view. A short distance to the north-east of the house is a cairn roughly built of stones and in the shape of a horseshoe.

The covering stones of the grave lay at a depth of 2 feet from the surface of the ground. The cist was rather rudely made, roughly rectangular, and with its main axis lying nearly north-east and south-west; it was covered by five irregular flat stones, varying in size from the smallest measuring 17 inches in length, 16 inches at greatest breadth, and 3 inches in thickness, to the largest measuring 36 inches in length, 26 inches in breadth, and 5½ inches in thickness. Around the grave were a number of rounded boulders.

The internal dimensions were 3 feet in length on the north-west side, 2 feet 10 inches on the south-east side, 1 foot 6 inches in breadth at the north-east end, 1 foot 9 inches at the south-west end, and 1 foot 3 inches in depth. The cist was formed of six slabs set on edge, one at each end, and two on each side; the two slabs forming each

side overlapped and diverged so that near the middle of the cist the widest part measured 2 feet 2 inches across.

The slabs were irregular in shape and varied from 3 to 5 inches in thickness. All were of micaceous schist and probably were obtained from the site of a quarry some 300 yards distant. The floor of the cist was formed of coarse gravel and showed no indication of paving.

The skeleton was much decayed, there remained only the right half of the skull, six imperfect ribs and vertebræ, pieces of arm and limb bones, and two pieces of a male pelvis. The body had lain in a



Fig. 1. Profile view of Skull from Short Cist, Kirkhill, Kiltarlity, Inverness-shire.

contracted position on its left side facing south-east, with the head at the north-east end; the urn lay at the north-west side behind fragments of the pelvis.

The bones are in a fragmentary condition, but are those of a young man of medium build and about twenty-five years of age. The skeleton is represented by the right half of the skull with a piece of lower jaw; also fragments of three vertebræ, of six ribs, of a right shoulder-blade and humerus, of a right pelvic bone, and of shafts of right femur and tibia. The piece of pelvis shows male characteristics.

Fully more than the right half of the skull is intact so that it is possible to obtain the measurements detailed in the table. The transverse diameters are approximate, being arrived at by doubling the measurements taken from the median plane. The cranium is of

medium size with walls of medium thickness and a cubic capacity of approximately 1450 c.c. The sutural lines of the vault are all open, and the teeth are very perfect and show little signs of attrition. The skull is relatively short and broad, being *brachycephalic* with a length-breadth index of 84.8.

The profile view (fig. 1) shows a skull somewhat low, with root of nose depressed, a full frontal region and flattened occiput. The face is short and relatively broad, orbit large and rectangular, the nasal



Fig. 2. Beaker from Short Cist, Kirkhill, Kiltarlity, Inverness-shire.

aperture of medium width, on the whole features characteristic of skulls from short cists.

The beaker (fig. 2) is perfectly intact and is formed of a hard light-brown clay. It measures from $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, 6 inches in diameter at the mouth, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the neck, $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches at the bulge, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches across at the base; the average thickness of the wall is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch and the capacity is 63 fluid ounces.

The outer surface is decorated with three zones of ornamentation, one round the rim $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch broad, another round the shoulder $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch broad, and the third round the lower part $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch broad. The uppermost zone of ornamentation consists of a narrow band of vertical

impressions bordered above and below by four parallel horizontal lines. The middle zone consists mainly of a vertical zigzag of three parts bordered above and below by two and three horizontal lines. The lowest zone shows a band of horizontal impressions bordered above and below by two and three horizontal lines.

The proprietor, Lord Lovat, of Beaufort Castle, Inverness-shire, has presented the contents of the cist to the Anatomy Museum, University of Aberdeen.

Measurements in mm. of Skull from Short Cist at Kirkhill,
Kiltarlity, Inverness-shire.

Sex	Male	Alveolar length	44
Cubic capacity	1450 c.c. ap.	„ breadth	62 ap.
Glabello-occipital length	171	Sagittal arc, 1	122
Ophryo-occipital length	168	„ „ 2	111
Nasio-inionial length	162	„ „ 3	105
Minimum frontal breadth	108 ap.		338
Maximum frontal breadth	114 ap.	Length foramen magnum	38
Parietal breadth	145 ap.	Transverse arc	300 ap.
Basibregmatic height	124	Circumference	504 ap.
Auricular height	110		
Biauricular breadth	128 ap.	<i>Indices.</i>	
Basinasal length	96	Length-breadth	84.8
Basialveolar length	88	Length-height	72.5
Nasialveolar height	70	Gnathic	91.7
Orbital height, R.	37	Orbital, R.	90.2
„ breadth, R.	41		