

II.

ON A GROUP OF SHORT CISTS AT LITTLE KILMORY, BUTE.

BY J. N. MARSHALL, M.D., AND PROFESSOR T. H. BRYCE, M.D., F.R.S.

The group of Cists described in the following paper was laid bare by the plough in March 1933. The piece of level ground on which they are placed stands 40 feet above the sea, and some 200 yards from the shore.

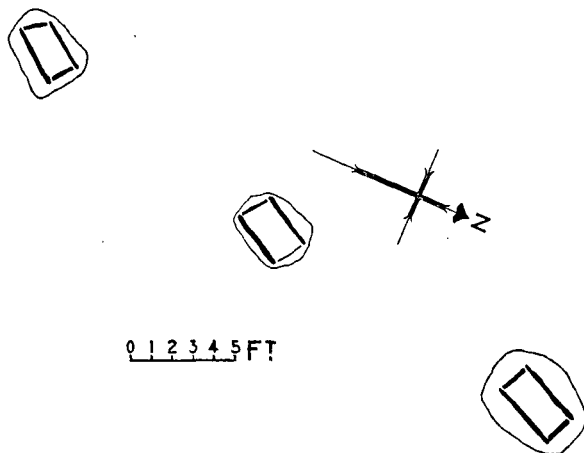


Fig. 1. Plan of Short Cists at Little Kilmory, Bute.

When the cists were first discovered, Mr Charles Duncan, the farmer at Little Kilmory, lifted the capstones, but left the contents as he found them, except that he removed, for safe preservation, the fine food-vessel urn contained in one of the cists, to the Bute Museum. The capstones were carefully replaced and in their exact original position, and the cists were left undisturbed by the directions of the Marquis of Bute until 19th June 1933, when they were re-opened by Dr Marshall and Professor Bryce in the presence of Lord and Lady Bute.

The three cists were placed in a line roughly north and south (fig. 1), and will be named North, South, and Middle cists respectively.

1. *North Cist*.—The capstone of this cist measured 5 feet 1 inch by 3 feet 10 inches. When removed, the cist it covered was seen to have the ordinary characters of a Bronze Age cist. Its inside measurements were 3 feet $\frac{1}{2}$ inch by 1 foot 6 inches, with a depth of 22 inches. It was oriented with its long axis 25 degrees E. of N. (mag.). The constituent



Fig. 2. North Cist at Little Kilmory, Bute.

flags of mica-schist measured on the average 3 inches thick. The side stones were placed outside the end stones, but did not project beyond them.

The bottom of the cist, which was not paved, was covered with gravel with very little admixture of pure earth, and on the gravelly bed were exposed to view a number of very much broken and macerated long bones (fig. 2). Two portions of femora and two portions of tibiae were recognised. As no trace was left of the ends of the bones, no opinion could be formed, from the state of ossification of the bones, as to the age of the individual. The fragmentary shafts were so delicate and

short that it was concluded that the individual must have been of tender years. No trace of skull bones or vertebræ was to be seen. The larger fragments being removed, the gravelly soil was carefully riddled and as many as twenty-one teeth were collected. Some of these were crowns of deciduous teeth, others were permanent teeth, and the conclusion arrived at was that the individual buried in the cist was a child of eleven to twelve years of age. The crucial point in the diagnosis was the crown of a deciduous canine which had been just ready for

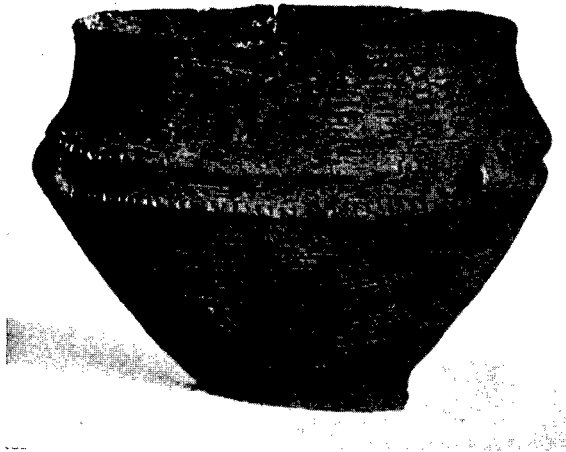


Fig. 3. Food-vessel from the North Cist at Little Kilmory, Bute.

shedding. Assuming that the bones had not been moved it was concluded from the position of the thigh bones that the head of the doubled-up body must have lain at the north end of the cist.

The only relic detected by the riddle was a minute rod-shaped fragment of bright green colour which may have been the fragment of a bronze pin. It was from this cist that the food-vessel mentioned above was recovered (fig. 3). It was placed at the south-east corner of the interior. It was recovered entire, save for a small part of the base. The urn stands 6.4 inches high, with a diameter at the mouth of 6.3 inches. It is provided with a shoulder marked by a groove which is bridged by small imperforate lugs. There were originally three of these lugs placed at regular distances. Two only are intact; one has been broken off. The borders of the groove are ornamented by linear punctations, executed free hand. This ornament extends round both

lips of the groove, but while it is carried all the way round the lower lip, it extends only half-way round the upper one. The mouth is bordered by a broad inward sloping rim .75 inch broad. This rim is rather roughly and irregularly ornamented with incised lines, some running for a longer and some for a shorter distance, the shortest ones being mere dabs. The upper part of the vessel between the slightly everted lip and the shoulder groove measures 1.75 inch; it is ornamented all round by horizontal lines mainly parallel, some horizontally, some more obliquely disposed. Some of these lines are 2 to 3 inches long, others are mere parallel strokes of the tool. The lower part of the vessel is ornamented in the same technique, but the incised lines are more irregularly disposed and sketchily executed. The base is circular and measures 3.2 inches in diameter. The actual surface of the base has been broken away so that the margin on one side is imperfect and the urn resting on its base stands inclined to that side. The under side of the base shows no decoration. The lugs show close horizontal parallel scratched lines on their outer faces.

2. *Middle Cist*.—The middle cist was placed 11 feet south of the one just described. The capstone measured $33\frac{1}{2}$ by $41\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Though of smaller dimensions, it was a thicker slab than the capstones of the other two cists. The covering stone being removed, it was seen that the cist had the same characters as the one already described. It was neatly constructed of thin slabs, the end stones, as before, being received between the side stones without any overlap. While the side stones were 3 inches thick, the southern end one was only 2 inches, and the northern not more than 1 inch thick. The internal measurements were $30\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 18, and the long axis lay 30 degrees E. of N.

The cist was unpaved and had the same gravelly floor as the last, and on it lay exposed some fragments of long bones and a small part of the skull. The largest fragments were portions of the femoral shafts. These were small and delicate and the extremities were absent. The skull was represented by some minute fragments, the largest portion representing part of the parietal bone. With this could be articulated the left temporal bone which was complete but for the zygomatic process. This fragment of the temporal bone showed no mastoid process, but a few air cells were laid bare at the point of its attachment. A fragment of the alveolar portion of the mandible was also recovered, and eight teeth, some deciduous, some permanent. The characters of these dental fragments indicate that the individual was a child of twelve to thirteen years of age. This opinion is based upon the facts that there was a well-developed permanent canine, of which the apex had not quite closed, and the crown of a twelve-year-old molar still rootless.

The only relic yielded by the riddle was a small bit of local lignite.

3. *South Cist*.—This third cist lay 9 feet south of the middle cist, and was the smallest of the group. The capstone was larger than that of the middle cist, being 44 inches by 37 inches, but it was a thinner slab. The cist had the same general form as the other two, being formed, like them, of flags of mica-schist. The construction, however, was less regular. Thus the side stones, roughly 3 inches thick, measured—the west slab 26½ inches long, the east 29½ inches long. The north slab measured 16 inches and the south end stone 14 inches. The cavity was therefore slightly irregular. Its main long axis measured 27 inches, and its transverse axis 15 inches. Its long axis lay 40 degrees E. of N. The floor of the cist was formed of the same gravelly material as the other two, and as in them fragments of the skeleton of a young person lay freely exposed. The long bones included fragments of a femur, a tibia, and a fibula. The shafts were very short and slender and the epiphyses were absent. A minute fragment of the left ramus of the mandible was recovered, with coronoid and condylar processes complete. The bone was delicate and the articular process on the head was small and narrow. A few deciduous teeth were recovered, with two six-year-old molars. As the crowns of these last showed no trace of wear they could only have been recently erupted at the time of the death of the child. In addition there was a typical complete deciduous molar and two rootless crowns of permanent molars. The evidence yielded by both long bones and teeth indicates that this must have been the grave of a child of about six years of age.

This group of short cists is of some interest, apart from the recovery of the fine food vessel. Unfortunately no other relics were forthcoming, save the minute fragment of bronze, which, however, is sufficient to give the archæological horizon of the find.

The relation of the cists to one another clearly indicates some pre-arranged plan. There is no indication, however, whether they were placed simultaneously or in succession. The grouping of three cists on a definite plan, all containing the remains of children, is an unusual feature of this find; indeed we are not aware that it has been previously recorded. In the present instance the cists were all of relatively small dimensions, the largest being that which held the food vessel urn. The long bones were so broken and macerated that they only afforded ground for a guess as to the age of the persons buried. The teeth, however, gave decisive evidence, and we are indebted to Mr Purvis Thomson, Dentist, Rothesay, for help in working out the problem of the ages of the children. It will be noticed that the youngest child was interred in the smallest cist.

This group of burials, inter-related as they are by some common purpose or sentiment, shows that the bodies of their dead children were buried with reverent care by the people of the Bronze Age. This indicates that family bonds were well developed, and that the people had attained a relatively high level of social culture.