

II.

A SHORT CIST CONTAINING A BEAKER AND OTHER RELICS
AT NEWLANDS, OYNE, ABERDEENSHIRE. BY PROFESSOR
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On 19th September 1935, while workmen were engaged excavating gravel on the farm of Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire, they exposed a large stone slab. On raising the slab they found that it covered a stone cist on the floor of which were seen the remains of a skeleton and an urn. Next day I visited the site, and with the assistance of Miss A. M. Clark, of the Anatomy Department, made a detailed investigation and record of the interment.

The site of the cist (fig. 1) was in a cultivated field on a gravel knoll about 230 yards east-north-east of the farm-steading, to the north of Benachie, and at an elevation of about 400 feet above Ordnance Datum. From time to time gravel had been excavated from this site, and on investigation the slabs of another cist were found on the opposite margin of the knoll, about 4 yards to the north-east of the newly discovered cist. This earlier cist, discovered in 1932, was recorded by Dr J. Graham Callander¹ in the *Proceedings of the Society* for 13th March 1933, and was a typical short cist of the early Bronze Age containing the much decayed skeleton of a young man along with a beaker.

Over the cover-stone of the cist now described there was a depth of about 18 inches of soil; the cover was a large slab of somewhat irregular shape, 5 feet in its greatest length, 3 feet 6 inches at the greatest breadth, and varying from 4 to 7 inches in thickness. All the stones forming the cist were of the local red Benachie granite. The cist was formed by four slabs set on edge, one at each side and one at each end; and the main axis lay north-east and south-west. The side slabs converged slightly at the top; the stone at the north-east end overlapped the stone on the north-west side and just met that on the south-east side, while the stone at the south-west end overlapped the stone on the south-east side and just met that on the north-west side—an ingenious method of preventing the side stones from falling in. The depth of the cist was 1 foot 6 inches, and the inside measurements at the level of the

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1932-33, vol. lxxvii. p. 228.

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mouth were: length along the south-east side 3 feet 6 inches, and along the north-west side 3 feet 1 inch; breadth at the north-east end 1 foot 8 inches, and at the south-west end 1 foot 13 inches.

The position of the rather decayed skeleton indicated that the body



Fig. 1. Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire.

had been placed in a flexed attitude on its left side, with the head at the north-east end and facing the south-east. The bones of the skeleton are in a fragmentary condition, but are those of a man about thirty-five to forty years of age, of medium build and of a calculated stature of 5 feet 4 inches. The skeleton is represented by the right half of the

skull with fragments of lower jaw; fragments of the following: vertebrae, ribs, right shoulder-blade, right humerus and forearm bones; nearly complete right femur and upper three-fourths of shaft of right tibia. The femur is not a stout bone, but its shaft is nicely moulded, showing torsion and flattening of the upper part—*platyermia*; the shaft of the tibia is flattened from side to side—*platycnemia*.



Fig. 2. Beaker from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

The right half of the skull is intact, but as it has undergone post-mortem warping any measurements would not be reliable. It is moderately thick-walled, with well-developed superciliary ridges and mastoid processes. The sutures of the vault are open, except that the lower ends of the coronal suture are commencing to ossify. It has the characters typical of the short cist beaker skull; relatively very broad—*brachycephalic*—with flattened occipital region and short square face. In the north-east corner, beside the skull, lay the urn.

The urn (fig. 2) is a perfect specimen of the beaker class and is formed of hard reddish-brown clay. It measures $6\frac{3}{5}$ inches in height, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, $5\frac{7}{16}$ inches at the neck, $6\frac{3}{10}$ inches at the bulge, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the base; the average thickness of the wall is $\frac{3}{10}$ inch, and the capacity is 75 fluid ounces. The outer

surface is decorated with three zones of ornamentation, one round the rim $1\frac{2}{5}$ inch broad, another round the shoulder $1\frac{2}{5}$ inch broad, and

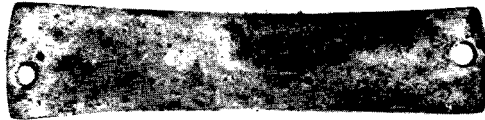


Fig. 3. Bracer in Polished Slate—upper surface—from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{1}{5}$.)

the third round the lower part about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch broad. The decoration of the zones consists of narrow bands of vertical and oblique impressions enclosed by horizontal lines, all evidently executed by impressing the moist clay with a notched tool.

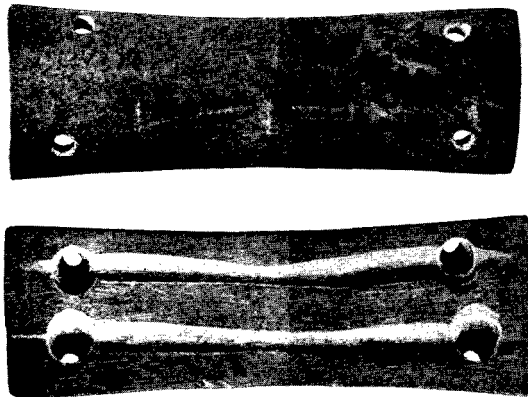


Fig. 4. Bracer in Polished Slate—upper and under surfaces—from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{1}{5}$.)

Contained in the cist along with the skeleton and beaker were two stone bracers or bowman's wrist-guards, a barbed flint arrow-head, two flint knives, two small flint flakes, and three larger roughly chipped flints.

The two bracers are of polished slate, the smaller one being a putty-coloured phyllite, and the larger one a dark spotted phyllite—rocks of this kind are found in the not far distant Hill of Foudland. The smaller bracer measures barely 3 inches in length, $\frac{7}{10}$ inch in breadth,

and $\frac{1}{5}$ inch in thickness; the breadth is rather less in the middle than at either end; the upper surface is slightly convex, while the under surface is quite flat; there is one perforation at each end, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in diameter,

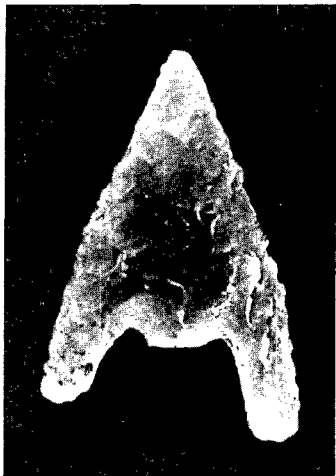


Fig. 5. Barbed Flint Arrow-head from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{2}{3}$.)



Fig. 6. Flint Knife from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{3}{8}$.)



Fig. 7. Flint Knife from Short Cist at Newlands, Oyne, Aberdeenshire. ($\frac{7}{8}$.)

and countersunk from either side (fig. 3). The larger bracer measures $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, $1\frac{1}{16}$ inch in breadth, and $\frac{2}{5}$ inch in thickness; the breadth is $\frac{1}{8}$ inch less in the middle than at either end; the upper surface is convex, the under slightly concave from side to side; at each end are two perforations countersunk from the under surface where the

diameter is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and narrowing to $\frac{1}{10}$ inch on the convex surface; on the under surface two shallow parallel grooves run between the perforations at either end, each groove being about $\frac{1}{5}$ inch wide and $\frac{1}{10}$ inch deep—these grooves were probably for the string used in tying on the bracer (fig. 4). So far as ascertained there is no record of two bracers being found together in a cist burial in this country, and a bracer with two parallel grooves on the under surface seems to be unique.

The barbed arrow-head (fig. 5) is of an almost translucent flint and measures 1 inch by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch; unfortunately the stem is broken. The two small flint flakes are roughly oval in shape, each measuring 1 inch by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. One flint knife (fig. 6) measures $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $1\frac{7}{8}$ inch, is somewhat sickle-shaped, with straight back formed of cortex and the cutting edge convex and finely chipped on one surface.

The other knife (fig. 7), of blackish-brown flint, is oval-shaped, measuring 3 inches by $1\frac{7}{8}$ inch, and its margin showing flaking all round. There are also three pieces of roughly flaked flint, the smallest measuring $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch by 1 inch and the largest $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 2 inches; these have been rather roughly chipped and might be used as scrapers.

R. Laidlaw Smith, Esq., of Pittodrie, Aberdeenshire, has presented the contents of the cist to the University of Aberdeen.