

## 2. A BRONZE AGE BURIAL CIST AT BONHILL, DUMBARTONSHIRE.

In February 1943 a stone cist was discovered in Strathleven Sand and Gravel Quarry, Bonhill, in land owned jointly by Brigadier-General Sir Norman Orr Ewing, Bt., C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., V.L., and by Captain David Orr Ewing, D.S.O., R.N., and leased by the Alexandra Transport Company. The discovery was at once reported by Mr Archibald Maclean, Chief Engineer of the Alexandra Transport Company, to Mr Edwards, Director of the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, and at his request I visited the site to make a record of the remains. Unfortunately these were in a very fragmentary condition, but their original appearance and position were made clear from information supplied by Mr Maclean.

The cist was found at a depth of 6 feet below the modern surface, in a cut made from 30 feet below ground level (see Plan). It was smashed by the mechanical excavator, but the fragments of stones and bones were carefully collected. When the stones were fitted together, they proved to have formed the sides and bottom of a small cist about 2 feet square. The slabs were each about 2 inches thick. The cist contained burned bones but no associated objects, and had been covered by a large slab, 3 feet square and 3 inches thick.

By permission of the joint owners, Brigadier-General Sir Norman and Captain David Orr Ewing, the remains were removed to the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, for examination. Dr Ethel Currie, of the Geology Department, identified the stones as brownish-yellow sandstone. It had probably been got locally as the site lies in the Old Red Sandstone area. Professor Blair, Professor of Anatomy at Glasgow University, stated that the bones, although very fragmentary, included a few that were identifiable as human. These belonged to an adult of rather small build (see Appendix).

The find at Bonhill, then, was a short cist of Early Bronze Age type containing cremated human remains. These had not been placed in the usual receptacle, a Beaker or Food Vessel, but had simply been laid in the cist. The absence of a receptacle may possibly account for the small size

of the cist, and for the provision of a stone bottom—a rather unusual feature.<sup>1</sup> The cist appears to have been a “flat grave,” as no signs of a mound or cairn were noted.

Mention may here be made of the discovery of another burial cist in the same sand quarry in the year 1940. The cist was found about 160 yards

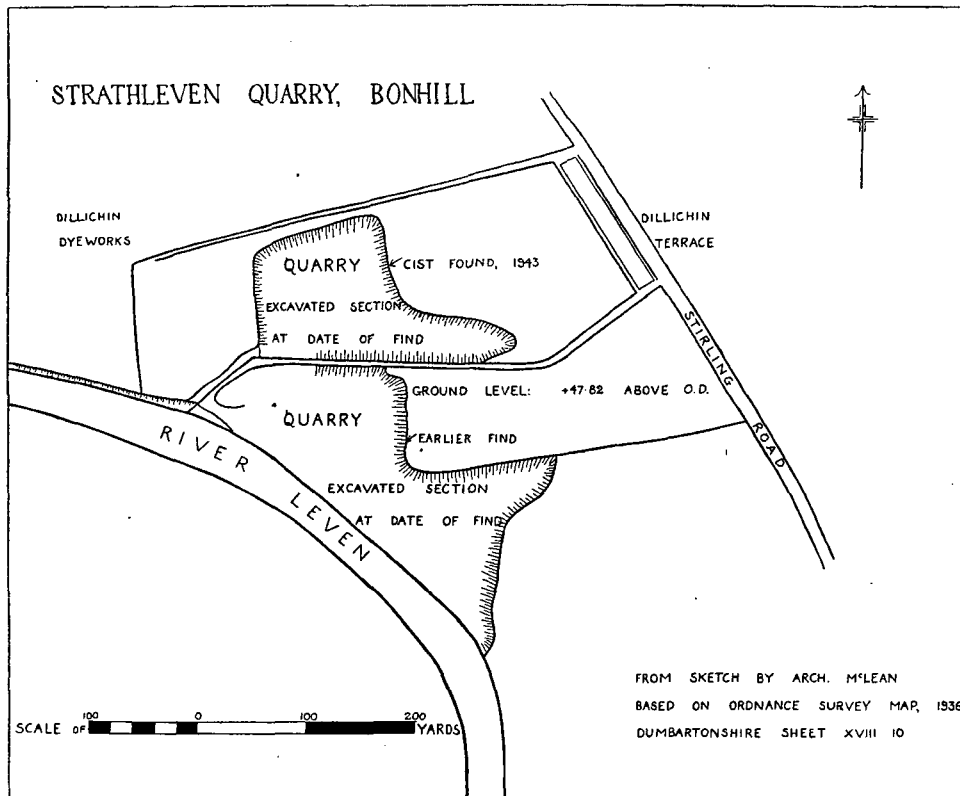


Fig. 1. Plan of Bonhill Site.

to the south of the 1943 find (see Plan), and contained a human skeleton. The discovery was examined and recorded by Dr S. M. K. Henderson, Curator of the Dept. of Archæology and Ethnography in Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, and the bones were removed to the Art Gallery. Publication of the find has, however, been delayed by Dr Henderson's absence on war service.

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<sup>1</sup> Childe, *Prehistory of Scotland* (1935), p. 106.

## APPENDIX.—REPORT ON THE BONES. By Professor D. M. BLAIR.

The only parts definitely identifiable as human are:

1. Part of metacarpal head, almost certainly right half of 4th or 5th left metacarpal.
2. Upper intervertebral articular facet of cervical vertebra with small part of transverse process.

The remainder of the fragments, mostly of minute size, comprise small bits of ribs, vertebræ, and long bones of limbs, with some tiny bits of uncertain nature. These cannot be identified as human with certainty, but again there is nothing to suggest they are not human. It is not possible to give an estimate of age or sex in this case beyond saying that the bones have come from an adult of rather small build.

I should add that the fragments which I have been unable to identify as positively human have certainly come from a mammalian skeleton of approximately human size.