

8. CIST BURIAL AT BO'NESS.

In the middle of October 1946 the discovery of a skeleton buried in a cist at Bo'ness was reported in the press. It was thereafter visited by Mr Samuel Smith, Corresponding Member, and subsequently by myself. The cist lay 5 yards to the south of the Grangemouth road at a point 50 yards south-west of the Snab Brae crossroads (O.S. 6" Map (1921), Linlithgowshire. Sheet No. III. N.E.). On the map the 25 feet contour runs through the site from north to south, and the ground drops from there to the Gil Burn on the west. The upper surface of the ground had been considerably disturbed at various times, there being about 2 feet of fairly recent building rubbish and earth upon the highest side slab. This was 2 feet 2 inches high, the lower 12 inches of it being sunk into a layer of comminuted shells which appeared to mark an old beach-line. The top of the shell layer, according to Mr Smith, is 22.87 feet above O.D. At least three side slabs of the cist had been removed at the time that this skeleton was discovered. This fact,

and also the removal of the bones themselves, made difficult any exact estimate of the original length of the cist. It seems probable, however, that it was at least 5 feet long, the bearing of its long axis being 165° magnetic, the head lying towards the south. On the east side there were at least three side slabs, the only one remaining *in situ* when visited being 1 foot 7 inches wide and, as already stated, 2 feet 2 inches high. Not much more than 1 foot 10 inches west of it a side slab had been removed by the workman, exposing behind it two slabs 1 foot 4 inches and 1 foot 2 inches wide respectively, both of red sandstone, one of which was lying at an angle of less than 45° tilting away from the long side of the cist. It was embedded in dark brown earth, which contained rounded pebbles and boulders. Similar earth but without the pebbles covered the shell heap around the grave to a depth of 1 foot. To the north of these two stones, but overlapping them slightly, and in a line with the one which had previously been removed, was a yellow sandstone slab 1 foot 3 inches wide, whose position indicated that the grave at that point had been less than 2 feet wide.

From these mutilated remains it is probable that the burial in question was a long cist of the type generally ascribed to the Early Christian period.

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