

I.

THREE BRONZE AGE CIST BURIALS IN NE. SCOTLAND.

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During the late summer and autumn of 1954 farming operations in NE. Scotland produced their customary crop of Bronze Age cists. On 30th August farm workers removing gravel with a mechanical excavator from a rounded hillock on the farm of Nether Criggie, parish of Dunnottar, Kincardineshire, 3 miles SW. of Stonehaven, unsettled the side stone of a short cist containing skeletal remains and three beakers (Nat. Grid ref. 37/838823). Ten days later workmen bulldozing trees from Bught Park on the outskirts of Inverness were responsible for raising the capstone of a cist which had become entwined in the roots of an ancient beech, and revealed a grave containing a skeleton and a bronze dagger (Nat. Grid ref. 28/656437). Then on 1st November a third cist was exposed by a firm of agricultural drainage contractors while cutting a trench to the smallholding of Upper Cairn, Memsie, in the parish of Rathen, 3 miles SSW. from Fraserburgh (Nat. Grid ref. 38/973622). This contained the sherds of a broken beaker but no skeletal remains. Each of the sites was examined shortly after their discovery by members of the Geography and Anatomy Departments of Aberdeen University, and by kind permission of the landowners concerned the Criggie and Memsie finds are to be housed with the related collection in the Anthropological Museum of Marischal College, and the Bught Park finds in the Inverness Museum.¹

DESCRIPTION OF GRAVES AND CONTENTS.

1. *Nether Criggie, Dunnottar.*

As the mechanical excavator had only unseated one side stone, the short stone cist and its contents were found in a remarkably fine state of preservation, and it was possible to obtain a good stratigraphical section of its position in the working face of the gravel quarry (fig. 1). The cist had been built of local sandstone slabs in the floor of a steep-sided pit sunk some 6 ft. below the upper surface of a natural mound of fluvio-glacial gravels. Such mounds are common features of the north-east zone of Strathmore and often, as in this case, consist of a skin of pebbly drift mantling a core of consolidated sand and fine gravel. Under the outer skin freely-drained conditions obtain,

¹ We are indebted to Professor R. D. Lockhart for his help during these investigations and for the photograph of the Bught Park cist.

and it is significant that at the time of inspection, following a very wet summer, the cist was found to be bone-dry. Further protection was afforded by the use of a single capstone seated firmly upon and overlapping the squared upper faces of the side and end stones of the cist. These were firmly bedded in the gravel, with side stones overlapping end stones and the

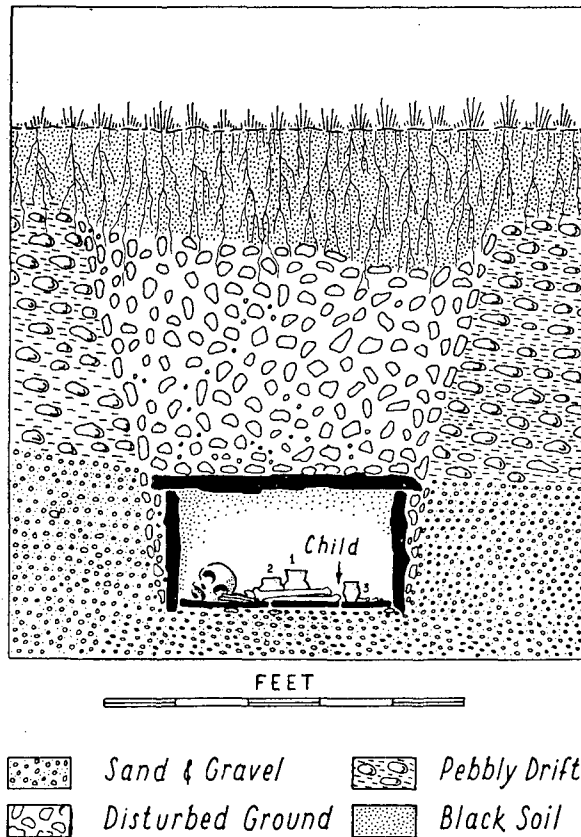


Fig. 1. Nether Criggie, Dunnottar: Section.

entire structure packed around with rubble. The inner space so contained measured 3 ft. by 1 ft. 6 ins. by 1 ft. 6 ins., was paved with small thin slabs of stone and its long axis orientated NE.-SW. Within lay an adult skeleton with its head towards the west, and the relative positions of the bones indicated that the body had been placed on its back with knees drawn up over the trunk and resting against the southern side wall (see Pl. I, 1). On its left, two beakers stood close together against the northern wall, and a few inches to the east a smaller beaker was placed between the adult skeleton and

the fragments of a child's skeleton lying in the north-east corner of the cist. Two worked flint flakes (fig. 2) were found on the surface of the gravel scree immediately outside the south-west corner of the cist where the floor had been disturbed during the unseating of the southern side stone and can almost certainly be ascribed to the burial also.

The adult remains recovered are indicated in fig. 3 (A), as the black areas and have the following characteristics. The surface of the skull (Pl. I, 2) is rough and pitted, but the muscular attachments are poorly defined. The supraorbital ridges, mastoid processes, superior nuchal (occipital) crests and more general features are typically feminine. The basilar suture is still distinct, and there is no sign of closure in any of the sutures of the vault, either inside or outside. A metopic suture runs from the nasion to the

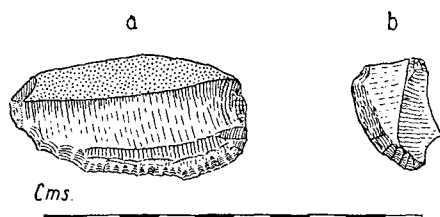


Fig. 2. Nether Criggie, Dunnottar: Flints.

coronal suture, the two halves of which meet at an angle of 160° . Considerable erosion of the facial bones has occurred around the nasal aperture, lower orbital margins and maxillæ, but there is no evidence in the upper dental arch of any teeth having been lost during life; the occlusal surface of the third molar projects backwards as well as downwards. Similarly in the mandible all teeth were present at death, and the vertical axis of the last molar is tilted forwards. There are, indeed, no signs of wear in any of the teeth. The remaining bones of the skeleton are slender and finely marked. Epiphyses on the long bone are all firmly united, although some epiphyseal lines are still recognisable. The few vertebræ also show distinct epiphyseal rings, although some are incomplete, and the only region where an epiphysis shows evidence of detachment is the iliac crest, much of which, however, has crumbled away. In the small part of the hip bone the greater sciatic notch does not show definite sex characters, but the gentle sweep of the pelvic brim is certainly female. The nitrogen content of the bones is assessed at 1.38 per cent (Weiler and Strauss, Oxford), in comparison to that of 4.15 per cent for fresh bone.¹ Measurements of the skull and long bones are given in Table I.

¹ ". . . in bones preserved under broadly the same conditions the nitrogen content of their protein (osseine) is lost at a relatively slow, and on an average uniformly declining rate." See Weiner, J. S., Oakley, K. P., and Le Gros Clark, W. E., "The Solution of the Piltdown Problem", *Bull. Brit. Mus. (Nat. Hist.)*, *Geology* 2, 141, 1953.

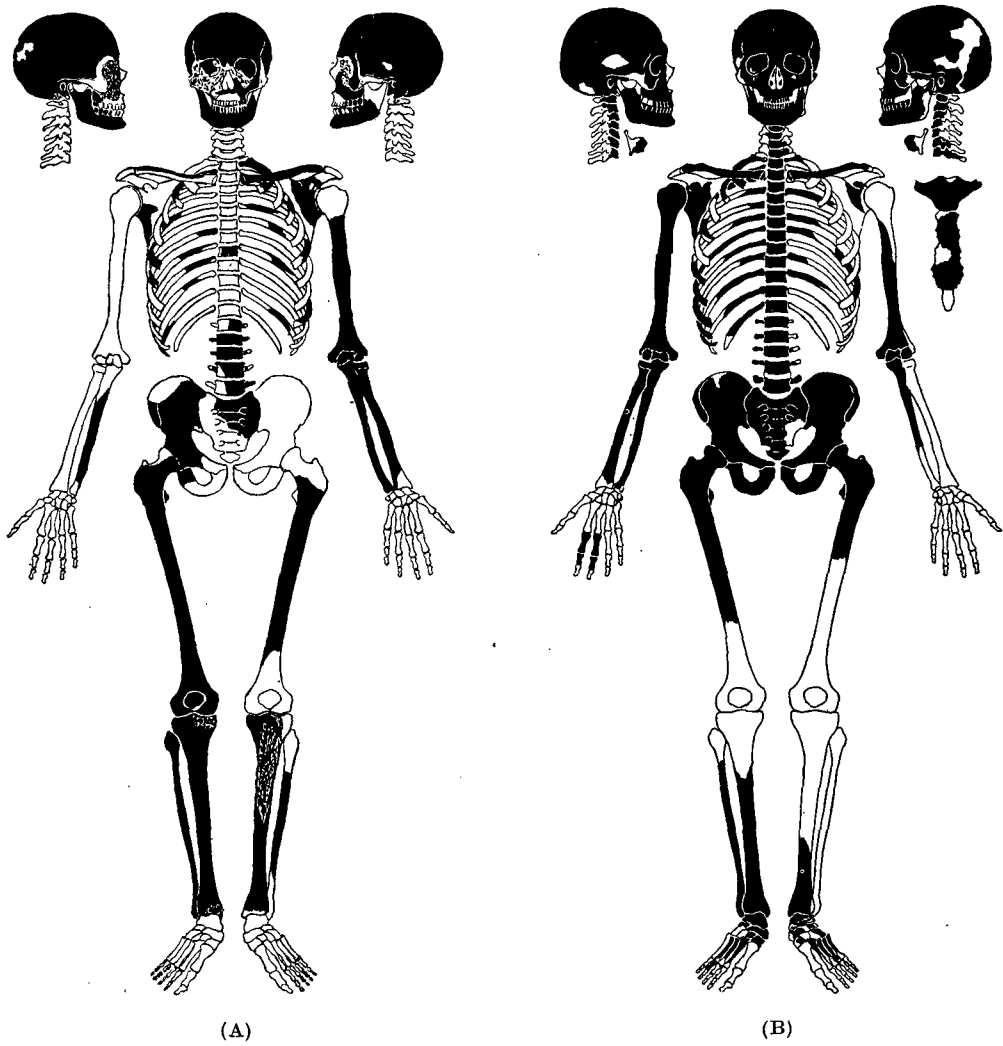


Fig. 3. Skeletal remains: (A) Nether Criggie, Dunnottar; (B) Bught Park, Inverness.
Bones recovered shown in black.

TABLE I (measurements in mm.).

Skull:

Maximum head length	163	Endobasion-bregmatic height	123
Maximum head breadth	122	Auricular height	98
Breadth-length index	74.8	Bigonial breadth	100
		Minimum frontal diameter	102

Long bones:

Right femur, length	435 approx.	Right tibia, middle of shaft:	
Angle of neck	126°	transverse diameter	23
Angle of torsion	30°	ant.-post. diameter	29
Upper shaft:		Platycnemic index	79.3
transverse diameter	29	Right fibula, length	357
ant.-post. diameter	22	Left ulna, length	271
Platymetric index	75.8	Stature as calculated from	
		length of femur	1595 approx.

The bones of the infant are shown in Pl. II. They include the body of the mandible, part of the left temporal bone, the left ilium, the shaft of both femora, and fragments of the humeri, ribs and vertebræ. Comparison with modern full-time foetal bones suggests that the child died about the time of birth—indeed its birth may well have been the cause of death of the 20- to 25-year-old female with whom it was buried.

The pottery recovered from the cist was completely intact and is shown in fig. 4. *Beaker No. 1* is a well-constructed vessel of C_A form with a smooth russet surface and coarse, grey-black core. It is 5.3 ins. high, with a rim diameter of 4.7 ins., base of the neck diameter of 4.0 ins., maximum body diameter of 4.5 ins. and base diameter of 3.0 ins. The ratio of neck height to body height is 2 : 3. Its ornamentation is precisely and deeply inscribed, giving the vessel a sharp, finished appearance. The entire surface of the neck from constriction to lip is decorated by narrow bands of alternately oblique impressions bounded by horizontal grooves which accentuate interposed plain ridges. An additional lower ridge and groove emphasise the constriction at the junction of body and neck, while the interior rim bevel is ornamented with cross-hatching. Immediately below the constriction there occurs a broad plain band in a manner characteristic of numerous northern beakers of this type, while the globular body has two zones of decoration, namely, an upper narrow zone comprising a band of crosses contained within horizontal lines, and a lower, broader zone consisting of horizontal lines and alternating bands of vertical impressions, crosses and oblique impressions. The basal zone is left undecorated. In comparison, *Beaker No. 2* has rather a squat profile, being 4.8 ins. high, with a rim diameter of 4.6 ins., maximum body diameter of 4.8 ins. and base diameter of 3.6 ins. The neck is set at an angle closer to the vertical, is less funnel-like, and has flat rims, but maintains the approximate ratio of 2 : 3 with the height of the body. The latter is less globular, with a tendency for the curve between the base and greatest diameter to flatten, while the

foot recurves, but in spite of these modifications the discrimination between neck and body by a slight constriction and by the mode of ornamentation suggests that it belongs to the same class of A derivatives as Beaker No. 1. The decoration of the neck consists of a row of chevrons at the lip with thirteen horizontal lines below; that of the body of three groups of triple horizontal lines bordered by either vertical or oblique impressions. In both the case of Beaker 1 and Beaker 2, in addition to a sharp-edged implement

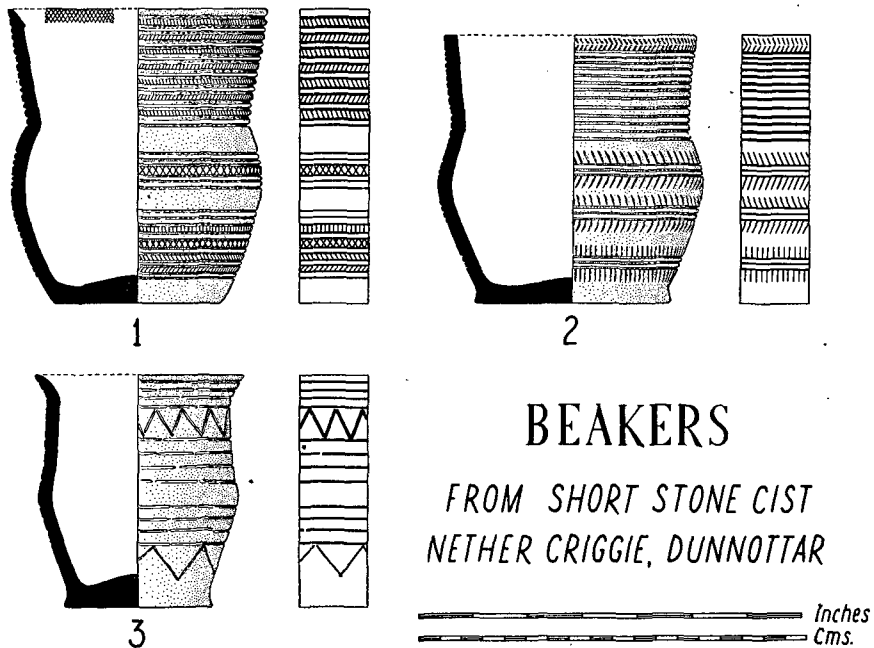


Fig. 4.

being used for the detailed work, a serrated edge was employed to produce the horizontal grooves, leaving small, rectangular impressions at the base of each groove. As the pitch of the impressions show, the decorating of these pots involved the use of both right and left hands. *Beaker No. 3*, however, is not only smaller but more crudely decorated than the other two. It is 4.2 ins. high, with a rim diameter of 3.8 ins., maximum body diameter of 3.6 ins. and base diameter of 2.2 ins., being light buff in colour, and decorated by a series of broad, shallow, and poorly executed horizontal grooves with two bands of hanging triangles. Its profile shows the characteristic S-shape of a C_B-type beaker modified by a carination in the centre, flattened body lines and everted rim and base. It is probably to be associated with the burial of the child.

2. *Bught Park, Inverness.*

Bught Park is situated on the southern outskirts of Inverness, where the Caledonian Canal forks westward away from the course of the River Ness, some 2 miles from the Moray Firth. At a point 150 yds. SE. of the bridge whereby the A 82 road crosses the canal, workmen engaged in levelling the surface of the park for the construction of playing fields uprooted a tree and revealed a stone cist containing skeletal remains and a bronze dagger. Unfortunately, both skeleton and dagger had been removed from the cist prior to our examination, as had the coverstones, with the result that much surface material had found its way into the cist cavity.

At this locality the River Ness makes a broad sweep eastwards, leaving behind a broad gravel terrace at an elevation of 30 ft. above sea-level, which may be related to the *Littorina* depositional phase. During this period the lower valley of the Ness appears to have formed a broad estuary with the heights of Tomnahurich, Torvaine, and Craig Phadrig rising abruptly from it. By the Bronze Age, however, the sea had withdrawn and the River Ness, working to a lower base level, had already entrenched itself into its earlier deposits—and it was in such terrace deposits of gravel and water-worn pebbles that the cist under examination was constructed. A pit was sunk to a depth of some 6 ft. below the terrace surface and then built up with massive slabs of local stone set on edge or arranged in courses to within 2 ft. 6 ins. of the surface, giving internal dimensions of 4 ft. 4 ins. by 2 ft. 3 ins. by 3 ft. 4 ins. (deep). The long axis was orientated ENE.—WSW., and the surroundings packed firm with rubble (see Pl. II, 2). It then appears that the entire inner surface of the cist cavity, including the floor, was sealed by clay obtainable in the immediate vicinity and, as far as could be ascertained by questioning the local sexton who had exhumed the skeletal remains, the body placed in the cist in a sitting position facing SW. The bronze dagger was found on the right of the skeleton near the north-west corner of the cist. Two large, overlapping coverstones closed the grave and the initial surface restored by compacted gravel. During the period which had elapsed since the burial a thin soil had formed, and the roots of the tree which grew immediately above the grave had enveloped the cist, sending fine hair-like rootlets into the grave wherever openings allowed.

In spite of careful examination of the rubble in the floor of the cist no potsherds were recovered, but the other relics are of considerable interest. The skeletal remains are shown in black in fig. 3 (B) and their measurements given in Table II.

The skull (Pl. III, 1) is heavy with its muscular attachments well marked, and the supraorbital ridges, mastoid processes, and the superior nuchal (occipital) crests well developed. Inside the skull there is no evidence of the coronal, sagittal or lambdoid sutures, but externally, apart from the

TABLE II (measurements in mm.).

Skull:

Maximum head length	185	Nasal height	56
Maximum head breadth	148	Nasal breadth	25
Minimum frontal breadth	105	Interorbital breadth	27
Maximum bizygomatic breadth	150	Orbital breadth (left)	43.5
Basibregmatic height	136	Orbital height (left)	35
Auricular height	114	Endobasion-nasion diameter	114
Nasialveolar height	79	Endobasion-prealveolar diameter	96
Menton-nasion height	123	Endobasion-subnasion diameter	89

Indices:

Breadth-length	80.0	Orbital (left)	80.4
Upper facial	52.6	Nasal	44.6
Total facial	82.0	Gnathic	84.2

Long bones:

		Rt.	Lt.
Length of right humerus	354	Femur, upper shaft:	
Length of right ulna	296	transverse diameter	38 38
Corresponding length of radius		ant.-post. diameter	27 26.5
(Manouvrier)	273	platymetric index	71.5 69.7
Humerus, angle of torsion	33°	angle of neck	122° 123°
Humero-radial index	79.9	Tibia, middle of shaft:	
Carrying angle	14°	transverse diameter	23.5 ..
Sacrum, length	137	ant.-post. diameter	33 ..
breadth	129	platycnemic index	71.2 ..
index	94.1	Stature as calculated from	
Angle of union of thyroid cartilages	70°	length of humerus	
		(Manouvrier)	1754

basilar suture which is completely fused, the only signs of closure are in the coronal suture below the temporal lines where even the pterion cannot be identified. The hypophyseal fossa is normal. Those teeth which are present show no caries but are markedly worn, revealing large areas of dentine in all except the third left lower molar. Those missing are second and third upper molars on the right side (post-mortem loss), and all three upper molars on the left side where the alveolar margin is completely absorbed. The palate is rough and pitted, with deep grooves for the vessels and nerves. The lingual surface of the mandible is lined with many irregular exostoses just below the alveolar margin. The malleus and incus were recovered from the right middle ear. Also the two thyroid cartilages are present, completely fused and ossified, but the posterior borders and the area corresponding to the attachment of the vocalis and thyro-arytenoid muscles on each side are missing.

The long bones and even the fragments of them suggest a male of considerable stature and strength. The vertebral column is complete, although not all the vertebræ are intact; osteoarthritic changes are pronounced, with much "lipping," especially in the lumbar region where the column must have been practically rigid during life. There is a slight collapse of the sixth cervical vertebra with fusion of its body to that of the seventh, while the projecting upper and lower lips of the fourth, fifth and sixth

thoracic vertebræ show aortic impressions. The hip bones are heavy and strong with obvious male characteristics, and it will be noted that the sacral index is less than 100—a primitive feature accentuated by the shallow curvature of the bone. Other features distinguishing the individual from the modern European are the simian-like humero-radial index and the large angle of torsion of the humerus. The nitrogen content of the bone is estimated at 1·6 per cent (Weiler and Strauss, Oxford), *i.e.* 0·22 per cent greater than that of the skeleton from Criggie Croft. It thus appears that we are dealing with the burial of a man aged about 50 years, rather taller (5 ft. 9 ins., as calculated from the length of the humerus) than the average found in such graves, powerfully built, with skull indices indicating the characteristic features of brachycephaly, orthognathism, and a fairly broad face.

The bronze dagger (Pl. II, 2) was submitted for examination to Mr R. J. C. Atkinson of the Department of Prehistoric Archæology, University of Edinburgh, who has kindly provided the following report:

“The dagger is of bronze, with a maximum length of 4·15 in. and a maximum width of 1·7 in. In outline it is subtriangular, or kite-shaped, with a rounded heel. In section the blade is flat, with a uniform thickness of 0·06 in., bevelled only at the extreme edges. The hilt was attached by three bronze rivets, 0·3 in. long and 0·2 in. in diameter, of which only one lateral example survives. The central rivet, unlike the lateral ones, did not pass through the blade, but was located in a semicircular notch in the rounded heel of the blade.

The material of the hilt is unknown, as it has left no identifiable impression on the corroded surface where it was in contact with the blade, but it is likely to have been of wood or horn. Minute traces of a black bituminous substance adhering to the surviving rivet suggest the possible use of resin as a glue.

The blade belongs to a class of small, flat riveted knives which is widely distributed in Britain, and belongs to the earliest phase of the Bronze Age (c. 1700–1500 B.C.). These knives may be divided into two main classes, on the basis of the shape of the lower edge of the hilt, which is frequently preserved, as here, by differential corrosion of the blade. In the more numerous class this outline is Ω -shaped, the lateral portions being horizontal, with a central notch that may be lunate, semicircular or penannular, a form clearly to be derived from prototypes with cast-bronze hilts in the Early Bronze Age of Central Europe. The smaller class, to which the present specimen belongs, has the outline of the hilt in the form of a splayed letter **W**, in which the lateral lines are shorter and lower than the pair forming the central notch.

This appears to be a specifically northern and western British type, whose distribution is confined to Scotland and Ireland.¹ Examples in the National Museum of Antiquities are known from a cist at Drumlanrick, Callander, Perthshire;² from Dunragit Station, Glenluce, Wigtownshire; and from a cairn at Carlochán, Crossmichael, Kirkeudbright. Two specimens of a variant

¹ Hybrid versions incorporating features of both the Ω and w types have been recorded from Yorkshire (Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), fig. 280) and Staffordshire (*Archæologia*, XLIII (1871), pl. xxxiii, fig. 5).

² Anderson, J., *Scotland in Pagan Times: Bronze Age* (1886), fi

type with four instead of three rivets, from cairns in Arran and at Sketraw, near Dunbar,¹ have pommel-bindings of gold foil, which links them with similarly decorated daggers of the Wessex Early Bronze Age (1550-1400 B.C.).

The absence of any prototypes for the **W** form of hilt in the Early Bronze Age of Central Europe suggests that the proximal origin of this and the other Scottish examples should be sought in Ireland. The alternative hypothesis, that the type is an indigenous Scottish invention, afterwards copied by Irish bronze-smiths, is much less probable, but cannot be excluded."²

3. *Memsie*.

During the final stages in the northward withdrawal of the Moray ice-sheet in late glacial times several lines of gravel mounds were deposited in the zone between Mormond Hill and Fraserburgh. Those to the north of the valley of the Water of Tyrie, which at the time of deposition appears to have been occupied by an ice lobe, strike NW.-SE. and are associated with outwash gravels and sands. At Memsie, in the parish of Rathen, such deposits are found forming a low interfluvium (110 ft. O.D.) between the Water of Tyrie and Doolie Burn south of the prominent gravel ridge known as the Sinclair Hills.³ In an otherwise poorly drained area this interfluvium offered a relatively dry site for local prehistoric communities, and appears to have been used as a burial ground over a considerable period. The *Old Statistical Account* of the parish of Rathen describes three cairns at Memsie which "were very large till of late when great quantities of stones have been taken away from two of them. The remains of human bones were lately found in one of them." Only one large cairn, a 20-foot mound of loose angular stones, now remains to the north of the schoolhouse, but the local field boundary walls bear testimony to the quantity of stones originally contained in the other two cairns which once stood 200 yds. to the NW. on the farm of The Cairns of Memsie. In clearing one of them, a small glazed urn, externally rough and unornamented save for six parallel grooves and with projecting lugs for the fitting of a lid, was found, along with a one-edged sword of iron sheathed in a wooden scabbard. The urn was donated to the Society of Antiquaries in 1827, and Wilson⁴ compares it to a smaller but almost identical vessel found with a skeleton in a stone cist at Abbey Farm, North Berwick. Wilson also records the discovery "under a tumulus at Memsie" of a beaker burial with a bronze leaf-shaped sword.

The short stone cist with beaker discovered in November 1954 lay some 200 yards WNW. of the cairns already referred to, on the west side of the cart-track leading from the Memsie-Rathen road to the farmstead of Upper Cairn. There was no surface indication of it ever having been covered by a mound, but cultivation has undoubtedly evened out the surface in this

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, xxvii (1893), 1, fig. 1.

² For an early account of Scottish bronze daggers see *P.S.A.S.*, xii, 454-6.

³ The place-name Memsie (1408 Mamsy. 1726 Mamsy. 1732 Memsie) implies "rounded hillocks."

⁴ *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland* (1863); i, 426; ii, 120.

locality. The cist was 4 ft. below the field surface, bedded in sand and fine gravel, and covered by coarse gravel, water-worn pebbles, and 18 ins. of black, peaty top soil. It would appear that a shallow pit had been excavated in the original surface to receive the stones of the cist, which were of sandstone, and enclosed a space 2 ft. long by 1 ft. 4 ins. broad by 1 ft. 6 ins. deep. The long axis was oriented almost due E.-W. No capstone was discovered during our excavation of the cist, but pockets of carbonised wood in the irregularities of the top surfaces of the side stones and in parallel bands immediately outside the area of the cist and level with the top of the side stones, suggest that some form of timber lid or cover had been used. This had collapsed, allowing fine sand and gravel to completely fill the inner cavity. In such circumstances it would have been surprising if any skeletal

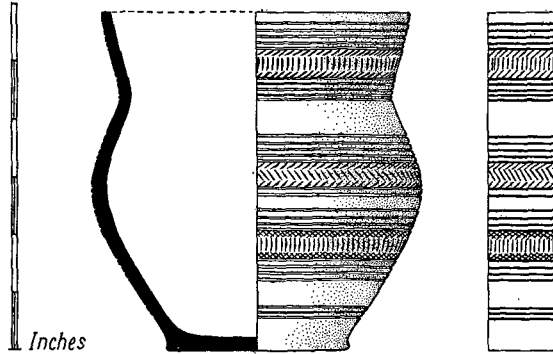


Fig. 5. Memsie: Beaker.

remains had survived; and indeed none were found, but in the north-west corner of the cist beaker-sherds were discovered. Sufficient of these remained to make a fairly accurate reconstruction of the original vessel (fig. 5).

The beaker stands 5·8 ins. high and has the following diameters: base 3·1 ins., maximum body 5·7 ins., neck constriction 4·7 ins., mouth 5·3 ins. The ratio of neck height to body height is approximately 1 : 3, and wall thickness 0·2 ins. It is composed of a coarse paste with quartz and mica grits, and is grey to black at the core with a smooth russet-brown surface. The decoration on the neck consists of a zone of vertical impressions bordered by oblique lines, and bounded both above and below by five continuous horizontal lines. As is usually the case, the innermost pair of horizontal lines contains the patterned zone closely. A plain band 16 mm. broad occurs immediately below the slight neck constriction, and the main decoration of the body consists of two horizontal zones separated by a relatively narrow plain band disposed about its maximum diameter. The upper zone consists of a band of three contraposed rows of oblique impressions, giving a double-chevron effect, and is contained by five horizontal lines above and

two below. The lower zone is more symmetrical, with four horizontal lines above and four below a band consisting of vertical impressions bordered by cross-hatching. The lower part of the vessel is plain except for three horizontal lines 0.5 in. above the everted base.

DISCUSSION.

A number of features illustrated by the burials described above merit brief comments. In the first place all three graves are sited in gravel deposits, and in this are typical of a great number of contemporary internments. Beaker pottery has been recovered from a wide variety of physical locations in Scotland and in various temporal contexts ranging from chambered tombs to henge monuments, but in the large number of instances where it occurs in short cists its distribution shows a close correlation with sand and gravel deposits, whether glacial, fluvial or marine. Of course this, as in the majority of prehistoric find-distributions, may merely reflect the incidence of discovery, in that sand and gravel pits have been among the most common commercial forms of surface excavation in recent times; but such deposits nevertheless do appear to have attracted beaker-making communities. An obvious attraction for burial parties was the tumulus-like shape acquired by various glacial deposits, such as eskers, terminal moraines or kames, under the influence of sub-aerial denudation, as at Criggie Croft, while the easier passage afforded by routes leading along gravel zones in contrast to heavier clay country appears to find expression in the number of cist-burials strung out along ancient tracks, such as that leading westwards through Memsie towards Tyrie;¹ but probably most significant is the recognition by Early Bronze Age folk of the freely drained character of the majority of such deposits. Even in a period not notable for particularly high rainfall, the presence of ground water and fluctuations of the water table appear to have figured prominently in the behavioural environment of such groups, as indeed one would expect in the case of folk who drew a substantial part of their traditions from the Low Countries; and this is reflected in the nicety of choice often displayed in the location of graves as well as settlements. In some instances, as at Bught Park, further protection was afforded by sealing the interior with clay (*cf.* Broomend, Inverurie;² Stoneywood;³ and Glasterberry, Peterculter,⁴ in Aberdeenshire).

Secondly, the special provision made by Bronze Age communities for the burial of children, and the social implications of this, as suggested by Marshall and Bryce⁵ in relation to a group of three cists in Bute, is further evidenced

¹ *Cf.* the remarkable group of cists at Upper Boyndlie, Tyrie (*P.S.A.S.*, XLIII, 79 ff.; LXVII, 176 ff.), some 4 miles west of Memsie.

² *P.S.A.S.*, XVII, 455.

³ Reid, *Illustrated Catalogue of Specimens from Prehistoric Internments found in the Northeast of Scotland*, Marischal College, Aberdeen (1924), No. 9.

⁴ *P.S.A.S.*, XXXVI, 627.

⁵ *Ibid.*, LXVIII, 423-8.

by the burial at Criggie Croft, and may be compared with other examples in NE. Scotland, such as at Inverurie, Upper Mains of Muiresk near Turriff,¹ and Burnside of Whitefield, Aberchirder.² At Inverurie, for instance, the cist contained an adult female and infant, two flint flakes, and a C_A and C_B beaker. At Criggie, from the positioning of the vessels, the two C_A beakers appear to be related to the adult and the smaller C_B beaker to the child, suggesting that different, but contemporary, beaker ceramics, usually analysed in terms of technical evolution, may in fact have social implications. It will be recalled that Abercromby, faced with this problem, concluded that "when two or more beakers of rather different shape have been found with the same internment the difference between them can always be explained by supposing they were made by women of different ages or who came from different parts of the province."³ In the case of Criggie, where the evidence for the contemporaneity of the burial of mother and child is so unequivocal and the craft and form of the grave pottery so divergent, an explanation could be sought along these lines. The forms of the C_A beakers find many parallels within the Aberdeen province, and the custom of placing two beakers with an adult burial is more firmly established there than in any other part of Scotland. Parallels to Beaker No. 3 are rarer but not unknown in this province, and R. B. K. Stevenson⁴ has described a very similar beaker from the Black Isle. Thus the various necessary traditions were present in that beaker province, of which NE. Kincardine constituted a southern limb, to account for the combination of types discovered at Criggie, and yet such an explanation is not entirely satisfactory. One still is left with substantial differences in the material, texture, skill and finish exhibited by these beakers. If one assumes that they were made close to the site, especially for the burial, then Abercromby's solution implies that at least two if not three women closely associated with the buried woman and child, living within a small community, not only mixed their own clay and did their own firing, but quite independently of one another built such distinctive pots and decorated them so differently. That the pot associated with the child was made particularly for the burial appears unquestionable, but that the C_A beakers were so constructed is less certain. If they were, then it is possible that the distinctions were consciously made for some social or ritual motive; alternatively, it is possible that in a period of pastoral nomadism and vigorous coastwise navigation such durable pottery had been made some time previously and had been carried over considerable distances—perhaps among the private possessions of a young wife.

At only two other sites in Northern Britain have three beakers been found in a single cist burial. Both are coastal sites and both involve the

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, xx, 98.

² *Ibid.*, xl, 306-10.

³ Abercromby, J., *A Study of the Bronze Age Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1912), 20.

⁴ *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxiii, 235.

burial of a young female. That at Keir, Belhelvie,¹ north of Aberdeen, contained the remains of a 22-year-old woman and three C_A beakers, of which one is notably smaller and less ornately decorated than the others. The second, discovered in 1862 near the Blue Bell Inn, North Sunderland,² contained the skeleton of a girl, whose age was originally estimated at "not more than 9 years" but whose cerebral development and other bone dimensions would indicate a somewhat older person, probably in the middle 'teens, along with three beakers of which one was a smaller, relatively crude vessel of C_B form with central carination. The decoration of the latter vessel closely resembles that on the body of Beaker No. 2 at Criggie, while the small fringing-triangles motif on the tallest of the North Sunderland beakers recalls the use of triangles on Beaker No. 3. Decoration by hanging triangles, particularly towards the base of the pot, is characteristic of a wide range of beaker ceramic in Eastern Britain and Western Europe, and its significance in the Scottish distribution has been pointed out by Mitchell.³ Although this Kincardineshire find helps to close a distributional gap she found between Aberdeenshire and SE. Scotland, it does not vitiate her thesis of coastal contact between these two areas. The link with Northumbria and even further south is evidenced by the morphological similarity of Beaker No. 3 to certain southern examples,⁴ while the raised cordon effect achieved by the alternation of grooves, plain ridges and decorated ridges on the neck of Beaker No. 1 may be compared with the A-type vessel from Cairnpapple Hill, W. Lothian, described by S. Piggott,⁵ and more southerly examples illustrated by Abercromby.⁶

If the Criggie pottery finds its context amid the goings and comings along the Eastern Lowlands of Britain, part of the cultural region of the North Sea coastlands, contacts across Scotland to the cultural region based on the Irish Sea appear to be evidenced by the Bught Park and Memsie sites. The bronze dagger from the former was found at the eastern mouth of the Great Glen, a transpeninsular route along which Irish halberds and flat axes were transported to the North Sea markets in Early Bronze Age times,⁷ while the beaker from the latter displays an ornamental motif of cross-hatch and vertical lines which is paralleled in the immediate vicinity and is found throughout a zone extending from the north-eastern coastlands to the valley of the Clyde.⁸ They serve to confirm a belief that the majority of Bronze Age "mass-plot" maps should be regarded as *mobility traces* rather than distribution maps in the usual sense of the term.

¹ Reid, *Catalogue*. Marischal College, No. 5. ² Simpson, F. R., *P. Berw. N. C.* (1856-62), 428-30.

³ Crichton Mitchell, Margaret E., "A New Analysis of the Early Bronze Age Beaker Pottery of Scotland," *P.S.A.S.*, LXVIII (1933-4), 132-89.

⁴ See, e.g., Abercromby, *loc. cit.*, Nos. 166, 144, 142, 74, 73, 72. ⁵ *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXII, 105.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*, Nos. 161, 167, 177, 206. ⁷ Cf. Piggott, S., *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (1954), 261.

⁸ Although Mitchell (*loc. cit.*, p. 144) argues that this ornamental motif originates with the beaker (No. 225) from Mossplat, near Carlisle, the increasing evidence of its use in NE. Scotland must surely denote westward rather than eastward diffusion.



1. Interior of cist at Nether Criggie, Dunnottar.



2. Nether Criggie, Dunnottar: skull of adult female.

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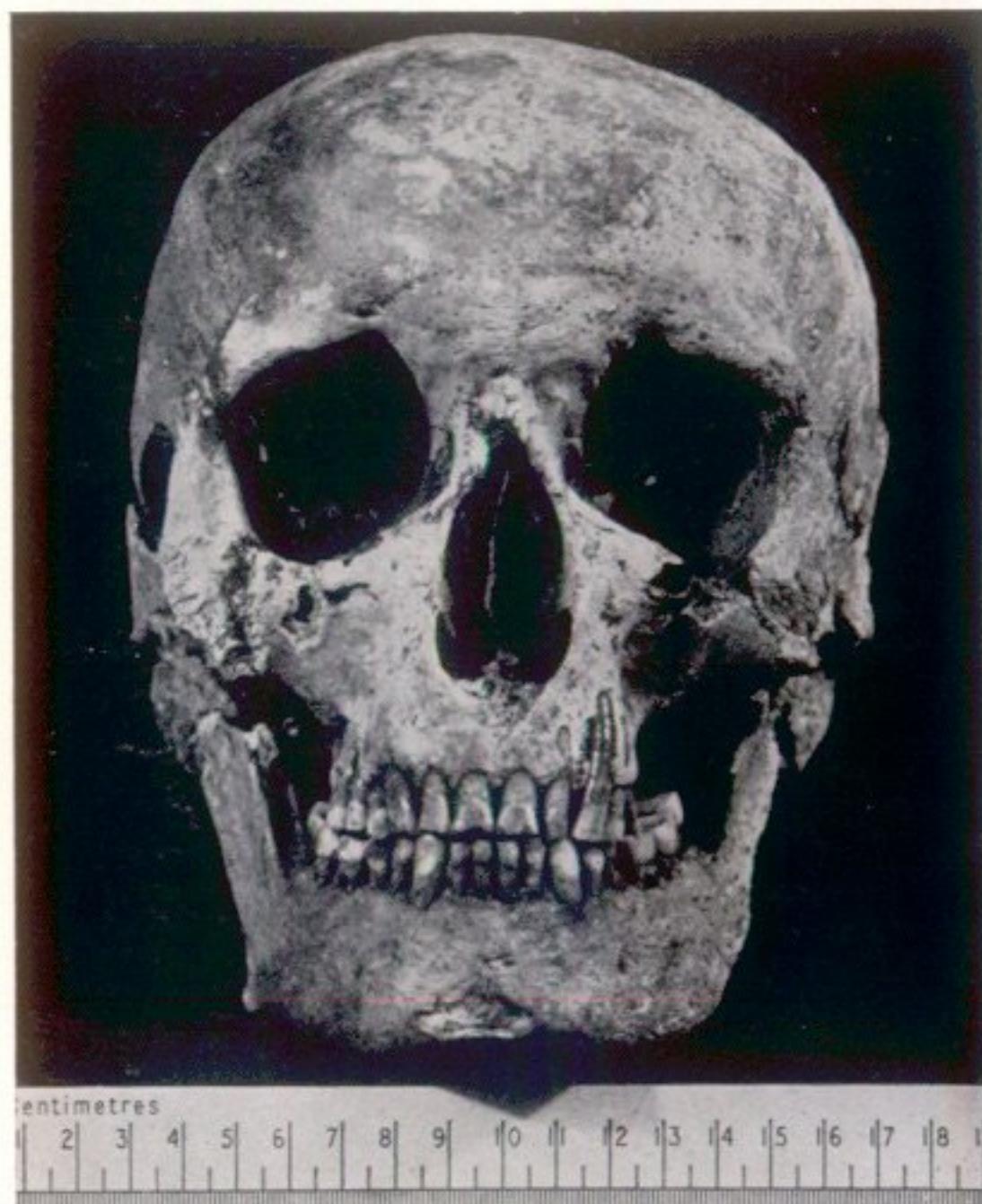


1. Nether Criggie, Dunnottar: bones of infant.

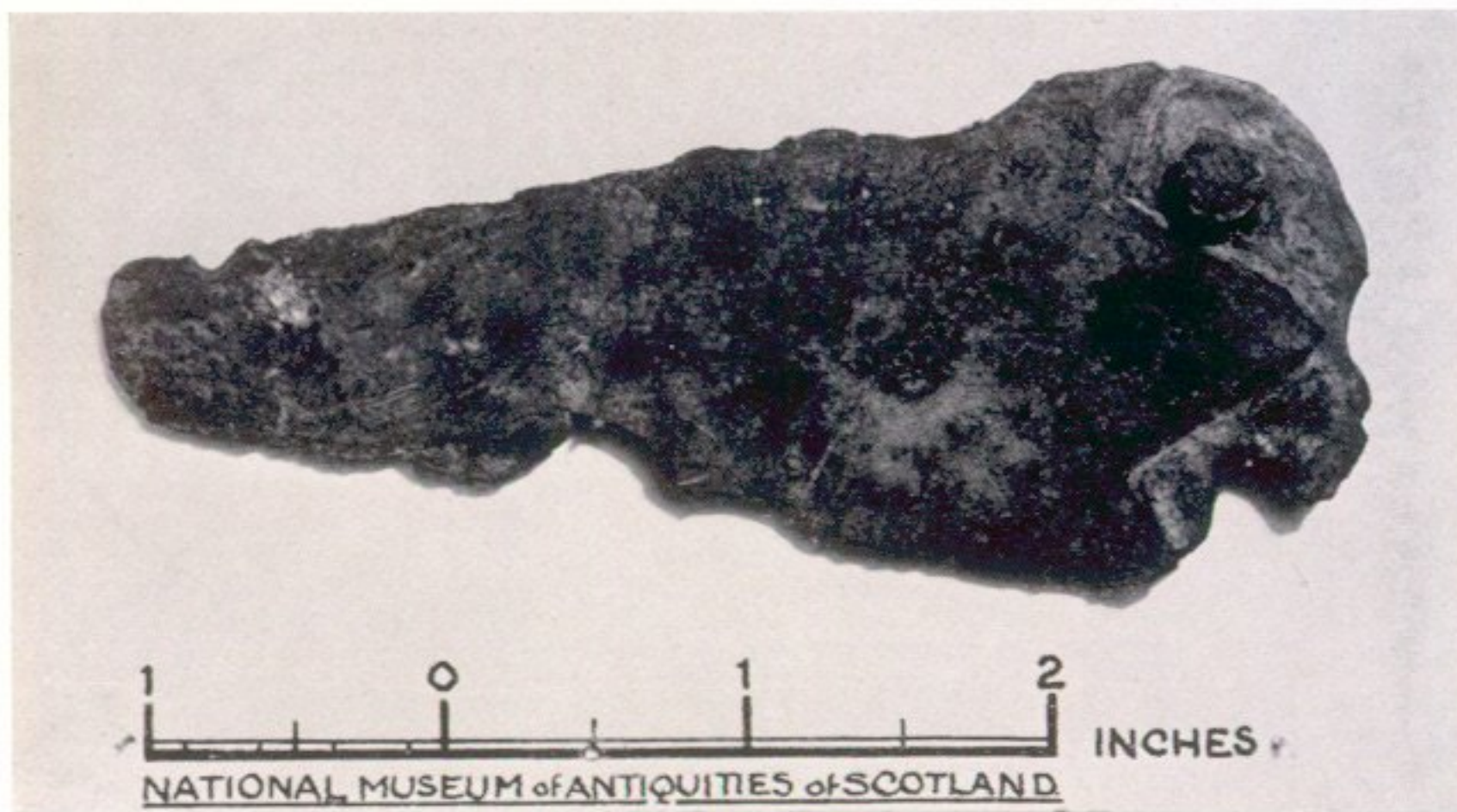


2. Cist at Bught Park, Inverness.

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1. Bught Park, Inverness: skull of adult male.



2. Bught Park, Inverness: bronze dagger.

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