

Long Cists at Addinston, Berwickshire

by J. C. Wallace

During winter ploughing on the farm of Addinston, near Carfraemill, several stone slabs were brought to the surface. As long cist burials had been discovered in this field in 1870,¹ the landowner, Mr M. McKerrow, reported the matter to the National Museum of Antiquities. On 19th and 26th February 1967 part of the area was excavated by Miss Bulmer, Mr Latto, Mr Marriott and Mr Spence, all of an Edinburgh W.E.A. class, with the assistance of the writer.

The site is the field known as the Farm Park, on the farm of Addinston in the parish of Lauder. In this field is a slight knoll near which the slabs had been found, and here an area measuring 28 ft. E./W. by 12 ft. N./S. was explored (N.G.R. NT 51905237; 6 in. O.S. sheet NT 55 SW). Two long cists with skeletal remains were found, both skeletons lying with the head to the W. and the feet to the E.

THE EXCAVATION

Cist A (fig. 1) was poorly constructed and much disturbed, the cover slabs being missing and some of the side slabs displaced or broken. It was formed of two end-stones, one measuring 1 ft. 3 in. by 5 in. by 2½ in., the other 9 in. by 5 in. by 1½ in.: four slabs on the S. side varying from 1 ft. 4 in. to 9 in. long by 1 ft. 1 in. to 7 in. deep by about 2 in. thick: four slabs on the N. side varying from 1 ft. 7 in. to 8 in. long by 10 in. to 3 in. deep by 1½ in. to 3 in. thick: and irregular floor-slabs, broken and disturbed, the largest being about 11 in. square. Inside measurements of the cist were 5 ft. 4 in. in length by 1 ft. 3 in. wide at the shoulders by 10 in. wide at feet; the original depth was probably about 11 in., judging from the only side-stone which appeared to be intact. The cist had been constructed in a pit slightly larger than itself, with packing stones to keep the side slabs upright. What little remained of the skeleton was in fairly good condition, but of the skull only part of the jaw and some teeth survived. There were also some ribs, part of an arm bone and the pelvis on the S. side, and parts of the leg bones near the foot of the cist. Two small pieces of carbonised wood were found in the cist. The skeleton would appear to be that of a female, in the late teens or early twenties, with no sign of disease or of congenital deformity (see skeletal report, p. 121). The poor condition of the cist suggests that the larger bones had been removed by the plough throughout the years, but one must consider the possibility of the cist having been previously excavated in 1870.

Cist B (fig. 1) was well-constructed and appeared to be undisturbed, as part of a cover-stone was still *in situ*. The cist, which was filled with natural sand and gravel, was found to comprise two end-stones, one measuring 1 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft. by 3 in., split vertically on its face, the other 10 in. by 8 in. by 1½ in.: three stones on the S. side 2 ft. 1 in., 1 ft. 9 in. and 1 ft. 5 in. long by 1 ft. 2 in. to 8 in. deep by about 4 in. thick: three stones on the N. side 1 ft. 6 in., 1 ft. 9 in. and 1 ft. 11 in. long by 1 ft. 2 in. to 10 in. deep by 3 in. to 4 in. thick: four flooring-slabs

¹ PSAS, IX (1870-2), 223-7.

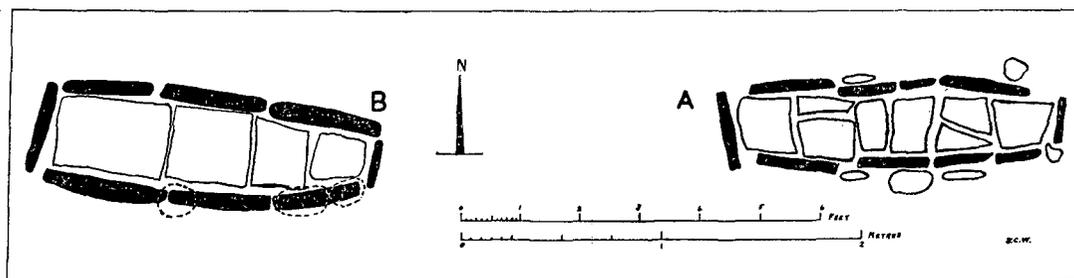


FIG. 1. Plan of cists A and B

varying from 1 ft. 11 in. by 1 ft. 2 in. to 10 in. by 9 in.; and three eke stones to make up the height of the side slabs to give a level support for the capstones. Inside measurements were 5 ft. 6 in. long by 1 ft. 3 in. wide at head and 9 in. wide at foot by about 1 ft. 2 in. deep. The cist was in a pit only slightly larger than itself with packing stones to keep the side stones in position.

The skeleton was in good condition generally but the skull had fallen on its right side, the left side being broken and showing signs of erosion and the skull filled with natural soil. Originally the body seems to have been lying on its back, head to the W. and feet to the E., as the bones of both arms were found lying close to their respective side-slabs and the lower jaw was found in a central position near the head of the cist. It may have been that, as the bones became disarticulated, the head, minus the lower jaw, rolled over on its right side; on the other hand, the skull may have been broken by outside interference, as a shepherd remembers having poked with his stick into a cist somewhere in the area in which this cist was found.

The appended anatomical report suggests that the skeleton is of a female, about 4 ft. 11 in. tall, aged between 25 and 30 and showing no signs of disease or of congenital deformity.

Near where the right shoulder would have been there was found a piece of carbonised wood, about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. square and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, probably alder.

DISCUSSION

Despite some ambiguities in the 1871 report,¹ there is little doubt that the present finds are part of the cemetery excavated in 1870 by Lord Rosehill, later the 9th Earl of Northesk. The Farm Park is locally remembered as the place where the cists were found, the Longcroft Burn mentioned in the report is another name for the Cleekhimin Burn, and the 'eastern slope' must refer to the tongue of land between the Leader and the Longcroft Burn.

The report states that about twenty cists were opened, besides several which had been partly broken up by the plough. The cists were closely packed with gravel and earth, and contained signs of burning, in some cases a layer of charcoal on the bottom flag under the body. Some cists were of the short type with bodies 'in the usual contracted position', and 'two or three undoubted cases of incineration, in which the bodies had been consumed by fire, and heaps of stones piled over the remains into a cairn'. From the excavator's ground plan it would seem that the present finds would be towards the NW. extremity of the site, but only a larger scale excavation could confirm this. The present cists seem to agree in structural details with the earlier discoveries, but there were no traces of burning, apart from the small pieces of charcoal found in cists A and B.

¹ *ibid.*

A local legend of the site having been that of a leper colony is not borne out by the anatomical report, no evidence of disease having been found in either skeleton.

A full discussion of long cist cemeteries is contained in the report on the excavations at Parkburn Sand Pit.¹ It is interesting to note that, since the report, further burials discovered on the same site included a short cist with a Food Vessel.²

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Mr M. McKerrow for reporting the discoveries and for permission to excavate. To Dr Donald Robertson of the Department of Anatomy, University of Edinburgh, and to Dr R. G. Inkster, formerly of that department, I express my gratitude for the report on the skeletal remains.

APPENDIX

Report on Bones from Addinston Long Cists

by *Dr R. G. Inkster*

Cist A

These bones are human and include fragments which come from all parts of the body but are very incomplete. The more significant parts include the following:

1 A piece of lateral condyle of a femur which shows incomplete fusion of the epiphysis to the diaphysis, suggesting an age of about 19 years.

2 A piece of innominate bone which shows part of a wide sciatic notch, suggesting female sex.

3 A metacarpal bone (4th left) with its epiphysis fused completely so as to indicate an age over the 17-19 year stage.

4 Eight teeth (4 premolars, 2 1st lower molars and 2 canines) which indicate much the same age. There is no evidence of wear except in the case of the 2 molars. In these the tops of the cusps have been worn down through the enamel, presumably the result of grinding the rough food of the period.

The conclusion is that these are the remains of a person in late teen-age or, possibly, early twenties, and probably female.

Cist B

These bones are parts of a single human skeleton and include the right side and base of the skull, upper and lower limb bones and fragments of the remainder of the skeleton.

Two pieces (right and left) of innominate bone, each with ischial and iliac parts, have very wide and complete sciatic notches of a very definite female form.

The long bones of the lower limb include 2 femora and 2 tibiae sufficiently intact to allow measurements of length. These indicate a height of about 4 ft. 11 in. in the living person as calculated from Manouvrier's Tables.³ A right fibula and a right humerus each gave a similar result - a calculated height of just under 5 ft.

All these bones are slender in proportion to their length and have their epiphyses fused to the diaphyses, including the acromion processes of the scapulae. The age of the individual would thus be appreciably over 21 years.

The femoral heads have been damaged but are small enough to indicate female sex, the diameter being well under 45 mm.

The skull is represented by the right half of the cranium including the right upper jaw and orbit but is too damaged and warped to permit reliable measurements. It is lightly built and from its general appearance is distinctly female in type.

Fusion of the sagittal suture has barely commenced in the interior of the skull. The coronal suture is

¹ *PSAS*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 252 ff.

² *PSAS*, XCVIII (1964-6), 204 ff.

³ For the reasons for using Manouvrier's Tables, see *PSAS*, XCVIII (1964-6), 213.

open along most of its length but is beginning to fuse at its lower end. The lambdoidal suture is fused in its middle third.

Taken together these findings would indicate an age of between 25 and 30 years.

A right upper 1st molar and 2 premolars which are *in situ* in the skull show considerably more wear than do the teeth from Cist A.

In neither of the sets of bones or teeth is there any evidence of disease such as rheumatism etc. or of caries or congenital deformity.