

## A long cist at Ringleyhall, Roxburgh

by J N G Ritchie, D A Lunt and A Young

A very ruined long cist was discovered at Cairnmount, Roxburgh, in late December 1972 by Mr and Mrs J Cruickshank, in an area that had recently been ploughed in advance of forestry (NGR NT 668312); the cist was situated some 760 m NW of Roxburgh New Town and about 135 m E of Ringleyhall fort (RCAMS 1956, 263-4, no. 561) near the edge of the steep bank above the River Tweed. The spot is now in the Roxburgh district of the Borders Region. Aligned roughly E and W, the cist measured 2 m in length, 0.5 m in breadth and up to 0.23 m in depth and was constructed of a series of sandstone slabs (fig 6). Two of the N side-slabs survived *in situ*, forming a stretch at the E end of this side measuring 1.3 m in all; clearly at least one of the N side-slabs was missing. There was only one well-set stone on the S side and this too was at the E end. There was no indication of the number of capstones. The fragmentary remains of the extended inhumation were probably those of a tall young man aged about 18; the body had been laid with

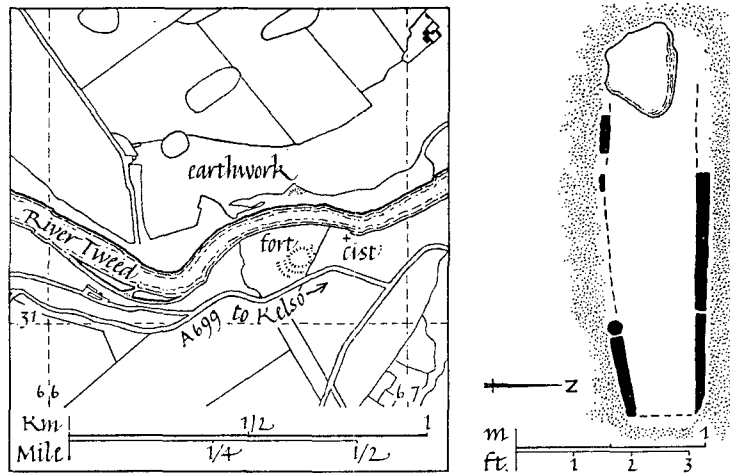


FIG 6 Location map and plan of long cist at Ringleyhall, Roxburgh

its head at the W end of the cist, the teeth being among the better preserved of the skeletal remains. The excavation was undertaken with the assistance of Mr and Mrs J Cruickshank, Mr J W Elliot, with the kind permission of Mr P F L Batchelor; the bones of the skeleton were consolidated by Mr P R Ritchie, to whom the writers are much indebted. The inhumation has been examined by Dr A Young, Department of Anatomy, University of Glasgow, and Dr D A Lunt, Department of Oral Biology, Glasgow Dental Hospital and School. The bones have been deposited in the collections of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland and the teeth in Glasgow Dental Hospital and School.

The following bones could be identified – *Skull*: fragments of vault, both temporal bones, occipital bone (base and torcula) and the hyoid bone. *Vertebrae*: several fragments including upper cervical vertebrae (C1 and C2). *Rib*: fragment. *Humerus*: right. *Radius and ulna*: five fragments. *Hand*: the shafts of two metacarpals and a fragment of another, and four proximal carpal phalanges. *Pelvis*: both ischia and possible other pelvic fragments. *Femur*: the right one and fragments of another. *Tibia*: both shafts. *Foot*: right talus. There was nothing that could be used to estimate the height of the individual but the skeletal material gave the impression that it represented a large male.

The only portion of the jawbones which had survived was a fragment of the mandible in which the three permanent mandibular molars of the left side were still *in situ*. Two mandibular molars from the right side were received still in their correct position among crumbling bone fragments. The remaining teeth were loose. Altogether 26 permanent teeth are present. No tooth is duplicated, and all the teeth show similarities in colour, size and degree of wear, which indicate that they have come from a single individual. The position of the mandibular left third molar indicates that this tooth was in process of erupting at the time of death. The eruption time of the 3rd molars is variable, occurring between 17 and 21 years. However, Johanson (1971) has shown that the developmental stages of root formation show less chronological variation. All four third molars from the inhumation from Ringleyhall have almost completely formed roots with widely open apices. This stage of development in Johanson's Caucasoid material occurred at an average age of 18 years, with a possible range of  $\pm 2$  years about this mean. The individual in the cist therefore was probably aged between 17 and 19. No assessment of the sex of the individual is possible from the remains of the dentition. The teeth are well formed and calcified, with no evidence of hypoplasia. None of the teeth shows any signs of dental caries. The amount of wear of the teeth is consistent with the age estimate of 17-19; if anything, it is very slightly less than might have been expected. The alveolar bone in the left mandibular molar region is healthy.

Extended inhumation burials set in long cists aligned east and west may be found either singly as at Ringleyhall or in cemeteries as at Parkburn (Midlothian; Henshall 1956). They are usually considered to be Early Christian and are assigned a date between the 6th and the 8th centuries AD.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The plan and sketch-map have been drawn by Mr J N Stevenson; fig 6 is Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments, Scotland.

#### REFERENCES

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