

A cist from Gallowayford, Stewarton, Ayrshire

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In 1850 a short cist was discovered about 125 m W of Gallowayford and 700 m NNW of Kennox in Stewarton parish, Ayrshire (NGR NS 38154559), a location now in Kilmarnock and Loudoun district of Strathclyde Region. The finding of the cist is described in a letter to the Ordnance Survey by Major C S McAlister of Kennox dated 22 September 1856, and preserved in the Name Book (Ayrshire, no 58, 1856, p 35). The cist, situated near the W bank of the Glazert Burn, was at the edge of a small mound; it measured about 0.9 m square and 0.48 m in depth and was covered by a large slab measuring 1.5 m by 1.2 m. Major McAlister further records that it 'was partly filled with fine earth in which was embedded two rudely formed earthen urns, containing a few flint arrowheads, and a quantity of beads of various shapes made of a substance known as Druid's glass . . . Sometime ago a similar grave was found near the same spot, containing what appeared to have been the stone head of a hammer.' The objects were retained by Major McAlister (Ordnance Survey Record Card no NS 34 NE 4; Smith 1895, 87). A similar account is given by Paterson (1866, 578-9). 'Recently a tumuli, or ancient place of sepulture, was discovered about a mile north-east of Kennox House. One of the graves, which was opened by direction of the proprietor, C S McAlister, Esq, contained two rudely formed urns, made of dark brown clay, a number of oddly fashioned beads, of the substance known as Druid's glass, and several arrowheads of flint. The grave itself, formed of rough flags, was small in size, being only about three feet square.' When the site was visited by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division in 1956 there was no trace of any mound and the finds could not be located. The objects were, however, photographed and sketched by Mrs C L Curle while staying with the McAlister family at Kennox in the 1920s, and she was also shown the site of the discovery; there were then two food vessels, three flint implements and a necklace of eleven beads (ten tubular beads and one triangular bead, perforated in one angle). Mrs Curle showed the photographs to the author who

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recognized the food vessels (fig 1) as those 'said to be from Loup, near Clachan, West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre' purchased by the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1949 (*Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 83, 1948-9, 274; registration nos EE 144-5). Illustrations and descriptions of the vessels were included in the report on work at Balnabraid cairn, Kintyre (Ritchie 1967, 94, pl ix) and in the list of Bronze Age vessels in the Kintyre *Inventory* (RCAMS 1971, 13), but it is



FIG 1 Gallowayford, Stewarton, Ayrshire: food vessels (scale 1:4)

now clear that the suggestion that they came from Loup was due to the fact that the McAlister family owned both the Kennox and the Loup estates. Kennox was originally a Somerville estate, which had come to the McAlister family by marriage, the proprietor at the time of the excavation being more correctly styled Charles Somerville McAlister of Kennox. The flint and the beads do not appear to have survived; Mrs Curle's photograph is too small to be sure what material the beads are made of, but it is most likely that they are of amber. Thus the interest of the site is two-fold; it is one of the very few examples where two vessels have been found in the same cist, and it also contained an unusual assemblage of associated grave-goods.

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REFERENCES

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