

## Shorter notes

### Two cists from Boatbridge Quarry, Thankerton, Lanarkshire

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with contributions by Margaret F Bruce, G F Hamilton, N W Kerr and Dorothy A Lunt

Two short cists, discovered in the course of gravel-quarrying in November 1970, were reported to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland; they had been inserted into the crest of a ridge rising to a height of 226 m OD above the flood plain of the River Clyde at Boatbridge Quarry, Thankerton, Lanarkshire, now in Clydesdale District of Strathclyde Region, and some 950 m SE of Thankerton village (NGR NS 981 376). The cists were 14 m apart and were both aligned NE and SW along the axis of the ridge. The same construction technique had been used in both cases; the two side-slabs overlapped the two end-slabs, and the north end-slab was not set as deeply as the other three, although its bottom was at the floor level. In neither case was it possible to trace with certainty the pit into which the cist had been inserted, since it had been cut into loose gravel and then packed with the same material.

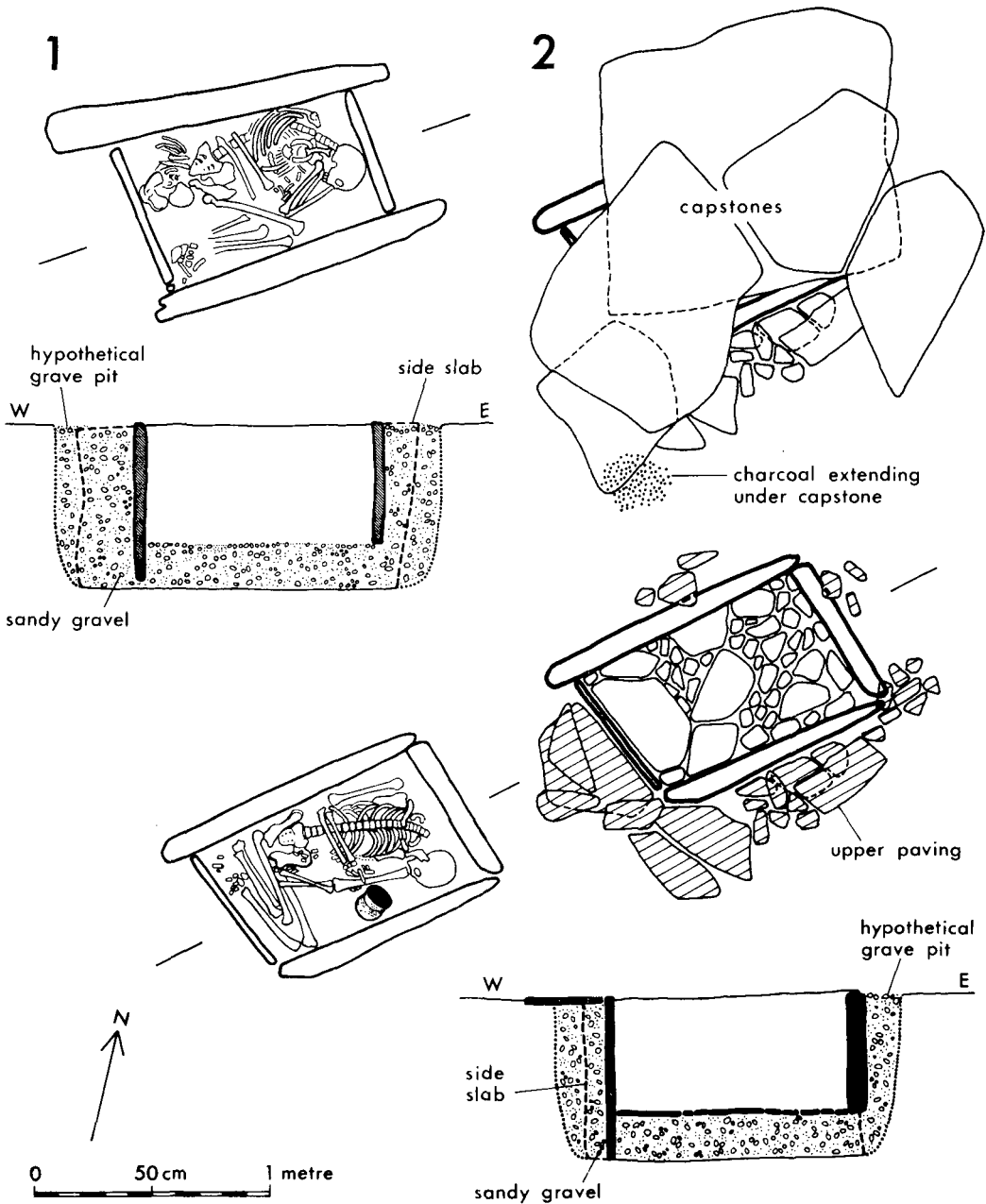
Cist 1, the more northerly of the two, had been partially disturbed prior to excavation. The capstone, dislodged by a bulldozer, was 1.8 m by 1.25 m and a maximum of 0.25 m thick; three other large slabs found nearby may either have been additional capstones from Cist 1 or the remains of another cist. Cist 1 measured 1 m in length by between 0.45 m and 0.6 m in breadth internally, with a gravel floor at a depth of 0.55 m (illus 1). It contained two unaccompanied inhumation burials: the skeleton of an adult male lay in a crouched position on its left side, with the head at the north-east end of the cist. Examination of the bones revealed that the adult had suffered from an unusual form of osteoarthritis and that the vertebral column must have been virtually rigid, with mobility restricted to the cervical and the upper part of the thoracic regions. The adult was between about 44 and 48 years of age. Partially beneath the pelvis were the legs of a child skeleton, which was lying in a crouched position on its right side, with the head towards the S (report on fiche 4: G5).

Cist 2 was covered by two layers of slabs measuring between 30 mm and 130 mm in thickness (illus 1). These capstones were supported not only by the side-slabs and end-slabs, but also by smaller horizontal slabs laid at the mouth of the cist on the south-west and south-east sides. A scatter of charcoal extended under the capstone at the south corner of the cist. Internally the cist measured 1 m in length by up to 0.65 m in breadth and 0.5 m in depth. The floor consisted of well-laid but irregular stone paving. On this paving lay a crouched inhumation of an unusually tall adolescent on its left side with the head at the north-east end of the cist (report on fiche 4: G5). A beaker lay on its side in front of the skeleton, against the south-east side-slab. A radiocarbon date of  $1780 \pm 60$  bc (GU-1122) was obtained from analysis of the left femur, both scapulae and the sacrum of the skeleton.

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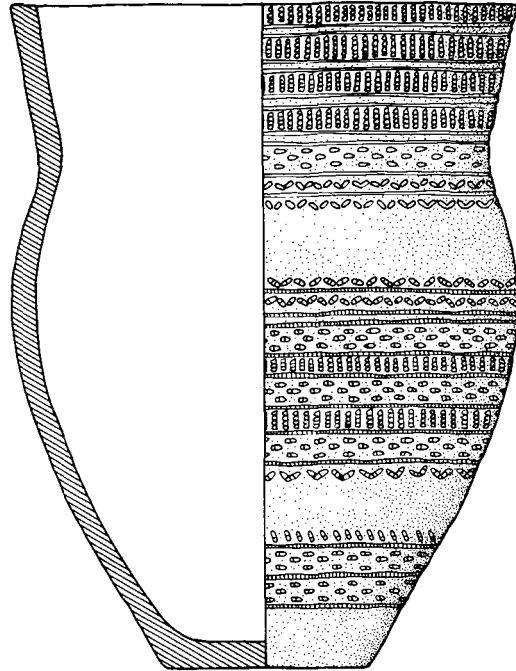
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ILLUS 1 Plans and sections of cists 1 and 2

The beaker (illus 2) is of well-fired ware, with some large grits; it is now rather crumbly, and parts of the surface have flaked off. The outer surface is red-brown, the core dark grey and the inner surface light-brown. About one third of the beaker survives in two large pieces, which overlap to restore the complete profile; there are also a few small flakes. The beaker measures 175 mm in height, 135 mm in rim diameter and 54 mm in base diameter. It is decorated with horizontal bands filled or



ILLUS 2 Beaker from cist 2 (scale 1:2)

bordered with either short vertical comb-impressed lines, or a stamped 'dash' used generally horizontally, sometimes vertically or obliquely. The impression of this stamp is approximately lenticular in shape with an off-centre dividing line, best seen in the clearer impressions on the lower part of the pot. The various bands are edged by horizontal lines which are grooved on the neck and comb-impressed on the body. The decoration is divided into three zones, the plain band between the upper two serving to emphasize the neck. The beaker is now in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (EG 106).

An attempt to place the beaker pottery from south-west Scotland into a similar framework to that outlined by Lanting and Van der Waals in 1972 for other areas of Britain suggested that the beaker from Boatbridge might be placed in Step 4. Such beakers are characterized by a definite neck 'either by a sharp bend or contrasting decoration or by both, but the neck has not yet grown much in proportion to the rest' of the vessel—a characteristic of later stages of development (Lanting & Van der Waals 1972, 36; Ritchie & Shepherd 1973, 22). The Boatbridge beaker may thus be one of the earliest of the Lanarkshire vessels, as most belong to Steps 5 and later, or are too fragmentary to be classifiable. A further indication of the date of the burial may be provided by the radiocarbon determination of  $1670 \pm 50$  bc (GaK-800) from charcoal from stakeholes associated with a Step 4 beaker from Chatton Sandyford, Northumberland (Jobey 1968, 30).

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