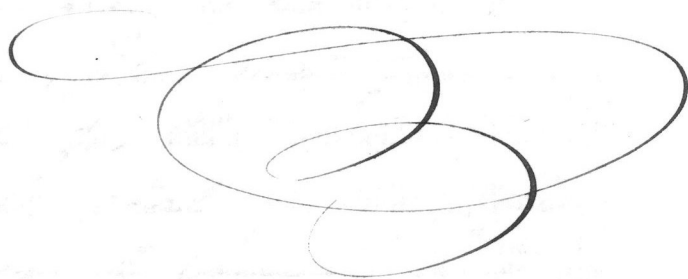


*Notice of a Short Cist
and its contents
found near Dunrobin Castle,
Mar: 24th 1880.*



*Read before Sutherland Field Club
Apr: 6th 1880.*

*Also a note of subsequent discovery in the
same Mound of an Urn with incinerated
human bones & part of a Bronze implement
or ornament. Sept: 1880.*

Notice of a Cist & its Contents,
found near Dunrobin.
Mar. 24th 1880.

Within the planted portion of Dunrobin Park are several gravelly ridges & hummocks, probably Moraines. During recent digging for gravel in one of these, close to the edge of the wood to the westward of the late Duchess's Memorial a slab of sandstone about 2 feet square was reached. It occupied a vertical position in the face of the bank & proved, on its removal, to be the end of a Cist or primitive Coffin. This was formed of single sandstone slabs for the sides and ends, roofed by a single slab of the same, above which lay 2 feet of gravel and one foot of mould the present surface. In the Cist lay a well preserved skeleton on its right side; the knees bent up to the chest. Behind the head stood an entire and symmetrical urn of the 'food vessel' type. At the breast, near the hands, occurred a 'thumb-flint' or 'scraper' and 2 flint-flakes, one of which had a keen cutting edge, the other a sharp point. Near the heels lay a heap of thin shale discs about 3 inches diam^r, 118 in all, but only 2 of them perforated. The floor



of the Cist was unpaved but covered with fine sand on which lay a number of pebbles of about 2 inches diam^r. Many of these were such as might have occurred in the glacial gravel, others seemed to have been selected from the beach & were chiefly of quartz.

THE CIST was 4 feet long, 2 ft 2 in: wide and 2 ft deep at the sides, but 4 in: deeper at the middle. This is slightly in excess of the Normal size of Cists associated with bent burials. The earliest interments were generally in long Cists, the sides and roof being formed of several small slabs enclosing the extended body. Cists of a later period than that now described were generally smaller & contained only a large urn inverted upon a slab & enclosing the ashes of the incinerated body & occasionally relics of Bronze. In some instances the Cist is absent in Bronze-burials. This Cist therefore probably belonged to the later Stone period or that which immediately preceded the earliest use of metals either for implement or ornament. This date however is only relative; its place

in the roll of years can only be determined by circumstances of which I fear the knowledge has passed beyond our ken. Caesar indeed found the Southern Britons using weapons & armour of Iron more than 50 years before the beginning of our Era, but still the natives of the North may for many years, perhaps for some centuries thereafter, have been ignorant of the use of Iron or even of that of the earlier Bronze, and still pointed their arrows with Flint, and fashioned with flint & bone of the same material their necklaces of shale or other suitable material.

THE SKELETON seems to have belonged to a female of about 20 years of age. A detailed scientific account of its various parts will probably be brought before you so that I need only say that the form of the skull, which is meso-brachycephalic, or intermediate in form between the long skulls of the Allophyllian pioneers of our race in Britain & the later Celtic skull, affords a presumption that, as we have already suggested, this cranium belongs to the Neolithic or later Stone-period.



Scale of $\frac{1}{2}$

THE URN is of the type known as food vessels in contrast with the larger forms already referred to in which the ashes of burnt bodies were interred. These smaller vessels are said to have shown chemical traces of milk or other fatty matter & along with many other suggestions founded upon the contents of the Tumuli or Burial Mounds, point to a belief in a future life in a land to be reached by a journey beginning at death, & either so tedious or long as to make refreshment a comfort if not a necessity.

THE SCRAPER or 'thumb-flint' is supposed to have been used for dressing the skins of animals slain in the chase. Such at least is the use of a similar stone implement in the present day by the aboriginal Australians & other savage tribes along the South Western seaboard of North America. Some of the Esquimaux specimens are set in bent handles, suggesting their use in the formation of bows & arrow shafts, & among their other probable uses might be mentioned that of helping in the fabrication of articles in bone or shale. Taken in

Connexion with the Cutting & boring flint found along with this specimen, and the number of fashioned shale discs lying near, such a use is at least suggested.

THE DISCS have been formed by rude tools and were probably meant for a necklace. The fact that only 2 out of the 118 are perforated might seem to contradict this, but that 2 are perforated suggests at least that the others were meant to be so. The use of such discs as money is I think not to be supposed in this case, as the abundance of the shale at Brora, only 4 miles off, would deprive it of value as a circulating medium, for the Cowrie is only coin in India at a distance from the sea. In Yorkshire, at Beavertorpe Ling, Dr Greenwell discovered a Barrow or Mound containing a contracted skeleton of a young person with a plain urn & a necklace of 122 flattened beads of Jet or shale about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch diam. At Finber in the same County Mr Llewellyn Jewitt found, with other

interments, a female skeleton in a contracted position with a similar necklace & food vase. Another necklace was found in a cist near Agher last year. Its beads, although none finished, were of the same character as those of the Dunrobin Cist & about the same in number. At Assut, also in Ross, and at Torrish & Kildonan in Sutherland, shale beads of a different type have been found associated with early burials, that at Torrish being in a short cist under a tumulus & yielding a flint arrowhead. This, with the necklace & the beads from Kildonan are in the Dunrobin Museum.

In the present case the beads were probably buried with the maiden as her own unfinished work and the flint implements with which they certainly could have been fashioned laid ready to her hand that she might again take them up & use them with at least her old skill in her new & distant home.

Have we not here, in connexion with a burial of Pagan times, most suggestive evidence of a belief in a future state of existence?

Since the foregoing notice was read another interesting discovery of early burial relics has been made in the same gravel-mound.

There consisted of fragments of a large urn inverted upon a slab and containing incinerated human bones. Among these occurred part of some Bronze implement or ornament, much burnt, and so Corroded as to be incapable of identification. This deposit lay about 6 ft. S. East from the Cist and so close to the present surface that the roots of planted firs, apparently about 30 years old, had reached it and doubtless helped to break up the urn of which the fragments were entangled among them. Further examination of the mound has been carefully made by the digging of pits at short intervals, but with the exception of a few broken sandstone slabs nothing was found. The whole mound seems to have been enclosed by a low turf wall & ditch at a distance of about 40 feet from the Cist which occupies the highest point.

The fact that it is so placed suggests that it was the earlier interment apart from the evidence furnished by the presence of flint implements & of the shale ornaments which could have been fashioned with these, while the urn on the slab contained bronze, a general proof of later date. Was there at the time of the later interment some mark still standing to show that the Centre of the Mound was already occupied, or were the burials so near each other in time that contemporary or traditional authority existed for that belief & determined the place of the more recent burial in the side instead of the top of the hummock?

Similar urn-burials without enclosing cists have been found in Sutherland at Kilt-Sain near Loch Mosa, at Crabbie and at Lieraboll in Kildonan, in the latter case associated with a bronze blade of very rare type & a highly finished bead of jet. There were ^{the} other relics are now in the Dumfriesshire Museum.

A Mound of the same character above the Dairy was explored at the time of the second discovery but without result.