

A Short Cist Burial At Hatton Mill Farm, Friockheim, Angus

by L. M. Maclagan Wedderburn

A short cist was discovered in December 1970 during ploughing on Hatton Mill Farm and was reported to Dundee Museum by the farmer Mr D Arnott, to whom grateful thanks are due for his prompt reporting of the find and his valuable assistance throughout. Thanks are also due to Dundee Museum and Dundee University Geography Department.

The site lies at 30 m OD near the edge of a terrace above a small tributary of the Lunan Water (NO 496618). The irregular capstone, slightly dislodged during ploughing, was of yellowish-grey sandstone and measured 1.47 m × 1.61 m × 0.245 m. Its surface must have lain a mere 10 cm below the surface, a fact borne out by the deep scores produced by years of ploughing.

The cist had been constructed of thirteen sandstone slabs (pl 8). The four main slabs were as little as 1.5 cm thick and in only one place formed a tight join. They had therefore been supplemented with others not only to fill gaps but to act as pinning material, there being no pinning boulders in the gravel fill of the pit. The base of the cist was of pebbles and was some 22 cm above the base of the main slabs. Sectioning (fig 1) revealed that the cist had been filled to this level after the main slabs had been placed. The cist interior measured 1 m long by about 58 cm wide at the base, the width at the top being 5 cm less owing to the inclination of the south-western side-slab. The inability of the thin side-slabs to support such a large capstone led to the cist being paved around the sides with large sandstone slabs, creating a carefully levelled surface 5.7 cm above the top of the side-slabs and in some places covering them. It was upon this surface that the capstone had been laid. This platform of laid slabs overlapped the edges of the pit, indicating that either they and the capstone were above the original ground surface or the upper portion of the pit had been enlarged, a fact not discernible owing to ploughing disturbance.

The irregularly shaped excavation pit, measuring 1.32 m by 1.32 m at the level of the capstone and about 1.04 m in depth, was filled with tightly packed coarse gravel from the fluvio-glacial material of the terrace itself. At the E corner there appeared to be a second, much smaller pit 0.44 m in diameter and 0.75 m deep, cutting through and therefore later than the main pit, and filled with pebbles. There was no indication as to its function.

The interior of the cist was almost entirely free from soil, a fine accumulation in the corners being the total percolation prior to the invasion of plough soil. When this soil had been cleared an inhumation was found undisturbed, except for the small bones of the hands and feet, though in a dry, friable condition. Parts of the upper leg and pelvic bones were covered with a dry, fibrous material which proved, on examination by the Dept of Botany, University of Dundee, to be the root complex of an unidentifiable plant. Between the skeleton and the south-east side stood a complete beaker in a somewhat friable condition, and on the floor of the cist in the E corner lay a small flint scraper.

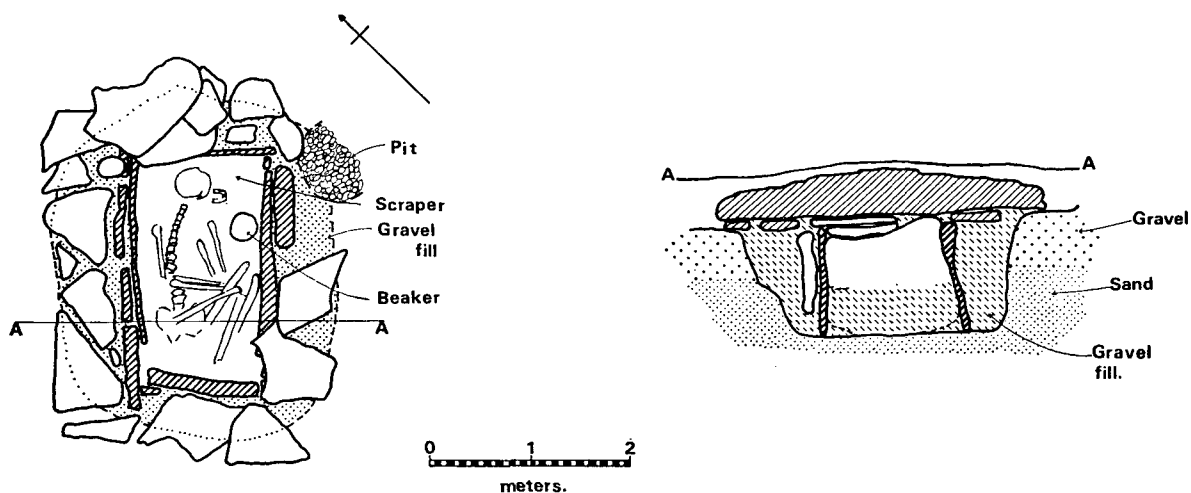


FIG 1 Plan and section of cist at Hatton Mill Farm

THE VESSEL

When found this was intact, upright and empty. It is of a finely textured almost black ware, fired on both outside and inside surfaces to a uniform reddish brown. The surface on the inside has a tendency to flake, particularly along the building layers which at one point have sprung apart completely. The fracturing was particularly evident on the side of the vessel which lay close to the side of the cist and has given rise to the crumbling away of an area about 1.5 cm × 2.5 cm of the outside surface. A similar crumbling process has affected the base of the vessel to the extent that its surface does not survive.

The vessel is symmetrical, squat and rather barrel-shaped, with an extremely short (1 cm) everted neck and a gentle uninterrupted curve to the foot which is apparently plain (fig 2).

Its maximum height is 13.4 cm, outside rim diameter 13.2 cm, outside belly diameter 14.4 cm and base diameter approximately 12 cm.

The decoration is in nine horizontal bands here tabulated from rim to base:

1. Two lines of whipped-cord impressions inside the rim.
2. From the rim a 3.5 cm wide band of horizontal twisted-cord impressions of approximately 2 mm diameter, smudged in places as if handled when soft.
3. 1.2–1.7 cm wide band of vertical bars of whipped-cord impressions approximately 0.5 cm apart. The maximum length of whipping is 1.2 cm, consisting of 7 'turns'.
4. 1.7 cm wide band of horizontal twisted-cord impressions.
5. A further 1.5 cm wide band of vertical whipped-cord impressions of the same size as formerly.
6. A single horizontal line of twisted-cord impressions.
7. A band about 1.5 cm wide consisting of two rows of 0.25 cm deep, 0.3 cm diameter indentations on average about 0.7 cm apart. Each vertically aligned pair joined with an incised groove about 12 mm thick. These indentations, with their variation in depth, diameter and general smoothness, indicate the use of a smooth, tapered, round-ended object such as a bone or metal pin which has been pressed upwards and at an angle into

the soft clay. The joining vertical lines were, however, made with a different object, their surface being rough, with scored lines suggesting perhaps a broken stick.

8. A further band of whipped cord of the same type as 3.
9. The basal band consisting of, once again, the double row of indentations. This is incomplete owing to the crumbling of the base.

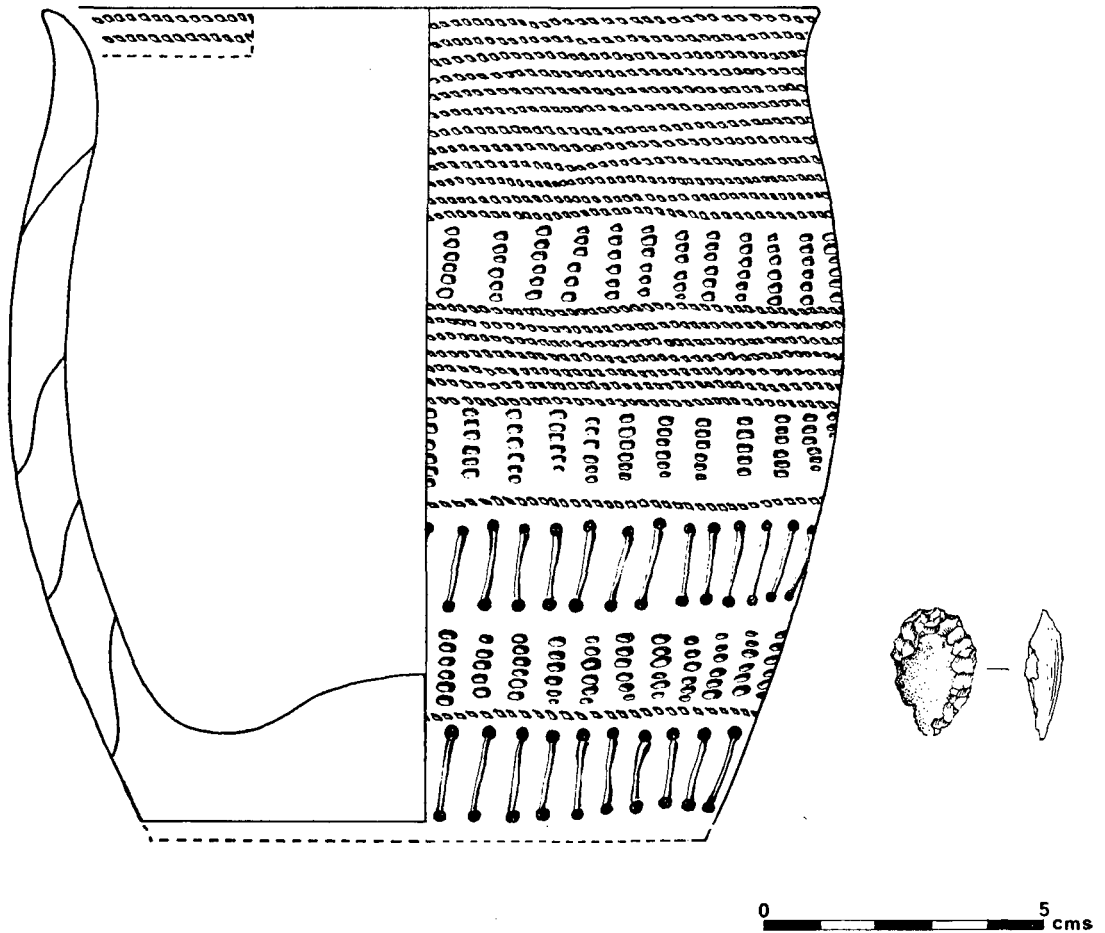


FIG 2 Beaker and flint scraper

THE SCRAPER

This lay on the base of the cist between the vessel and the skull. It is of yellowish flint, 2.2 cm long, 1.3 cm wide and 0.5 cm thick. One side is the flake-face, the other retains its original surface over nearly half its area and has worked faces round one side and the base.

APPENDIX

1. The Hatton Mill Farm Vessel

by Dr D L Clarke, Peterhouse, Cambridge

The Hatton Mill Farm vessel is clearly a 'narrow-mouth' or barrel-shaped beaker from within the All-Over-Cord beaker assemblage (Clarke 1970, 52). The vessel shape, the fabric, the cord decoration and especially the turns within the rim would support this identification. Although there is some evidence that there was an overall trend towards increasingly barrel-shaped vessels within the All-Over-Cord assemblage as time passed, nevertheless there is every indication that vessels of this shape were always a basic part of the range of All-Over-Cord beaker domestic vessels both in Britain and on the Continent (see Clarke 1970, corpus figs 22-7).

However, the Hatton Mill beaker is rather unusual in combining cord decoration with bands of impressions and incisions. These supplementary decorative techniques were extensively used on contemporary domestic vessels from the All-Over-Cord assemblages but were only rarely combined with cord decoration, which is itself known in this zoned style only on a sherd from Coll (Clarke 1970, corpus figs 17.51c).

The Hatton Mill Beaker joins the small group of All-Over-Cord beaker finds running inland from the east coast around the Forth and Tay (Clarke 1970, 557 Map 1). Primary and Developed Northern British beakers of Dutch origin occupy the same area by c 1600-1700 BC radiocarbon and therefore one might guess that the Hatton Mill beaker shortly antedates that phase, perhaps dating c 1700 ± 100 BC radiocarbon. It is therefore of particular interest that this and related beaker types (Northern British/North Rhine forms) from Angus and Fife so closely resemble, and perhaps develop into, the characteristic regional food vessels from the same area; developing the barrel-shape further, with a thickened profile, rim decoration and predominantly impressed motifs (Clarke 1970, 127, 270). Even the characteristic beaker flint flake knife with the Hatton Mill vessel can be seen as the prototype for the late, fine pressure-flaked knives found with the same class of food vessels.

2. Skeletal Remains from Hatton Mill, Friockheim, Angus

by Dr I H M Smart, Dundee University, Anatomy Department

The remains consisted of a skull, a complete set of thoracic and lumbar vertebrae and most of the limb bones. The bones were all very friable and many were incomplete. They appeared to come from one individual.

The vault and base of the skull were intact, but the facial skeleton was missing. The skull form was brachycephalic (cranial index 80). The metopic suture between the two halves of the frontal bone was unfused and a sutural bone was present at the anterior end of the sagittal suture. The mandible, although damaged, bore a complete adult dentition with no evidence of caries. Except for the premolars, all teeth were worn through to the dentine. In the sacrum, the neural arch was deficient in the first, second and third pieces, predominantly on the left side, where the articular process for the fifth lumbar vertebra was missing. The inferior articular process of the fifth lumbar on the left side was also correspondingly absent. These bony deficiencies are consistent with the congenital abnormality of *spina bifida*, a condition that need not incapacitate an individual greatly. The right ulna had a healed fracture at the junction of the middle and distal thirds. It was well-healed with good alignment. The left radius and ulna were markedly lighter and more slender than on the right. Although the left humerus was shorter than the right, it was not noticeably less robust. This relative difference in robustness between the two sets of forearm bones was much greater than is usually produced by right- or left-handedness and may indicate a local muscular deficiency of the forearm muscles, for example, from disuse atrophy due to injury, to nerve(s) or to the muscles themselves.

The sex of the skeleton was indeterminate. The size of the bones indicated a male, but the usual sexual characteristics were so intermediate that the bones could have belonged to a muscular female. The height, as calculated from the length of the femur using Trotter and Gleser's equation for white males, was 171.8 cm (5ft 8 in).

The age was over 25 as indicated by fusion of the basisphenoid synchondrosis and the medial

epiphyses of the clavicles. The extent of fusion of the skull sutures indicated an age between 30 and 40. This was consistent with the amount of tooth wear and the occurrence of modern osteo-arthritic lipping in the second and fourth lumbar vertebrae.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr G Lange for the production of fig 2, which was previously published in *Tayside Before History* by Herbert Coutts to whom grateful thanks for permission to reproduce it.

REFERENCE

Clarke, D L 1970 *Beaker Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge.



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