IX.—A PREHISTORIC GRAVE AT WEST LILBURN.

I. GENERAL ACCOUNT.

BY E. F. COLLINGWOOD.

The grave was discovered on 2 May 1946 by Mr. G. P. Hall, the tenant of Lilburn South Steads, in removing a large stone which had obstructed ploughing for a number of years. When the stone was pulled away the four stone slabs forming the sides of the cist were seen, and bones were found on the removal of one or two spadefuls of the earth filling the cavity. Thereupon Mr. Hall stopped work and reported his discovery. The clearance of the grave could not be carried out until May 6th, but at a preliminary inspection on May 4th a fragment of earthenware from the rim of a vessel having an incised herringbone decoration was found with the soil removed at the time of discovery; and the following day Mr. Hall found the jet button, further described below, just visible in the surface of the soil still in the cist, and close to the centre of the west wall.

Position of the burial.

The cist (plate VIII) is in field no. 175 (Ordnance Survey 25″ sheet, no. N.XXI, 7) to the west of West Lilburn School and at the highest point of a north and south ridge running along the middle of this field. The position can be accurately fixed, since it chances to lie on the line of the north wall of the school playground 200 feet S. 78° W. from its N.W. corner. From this point there is a clear view all round, but particularly to east and west. The line of the axis of the cist was approximately N. 80° E., the wider end being to the west.

The field has been under cultivation for a very long time (it is shown with its present boundaries in a plan dated 1798), and there is nothing now to suggest the presence of a cairn or mound.

The clearance.

At the clearance on May 6th the cist was found to be filled with a mixture of soil and gravel together with some large water-rounded stones, some of which appeared to be too large to have entered the cist without having been deliberately placed there. The cover stone was intact and, though not a perfect seal, would have prevented the chance entry of the larger stones.

The cist was emptied from the west end, the soil being passed through a ¼ inch riddle. The skull was found at a low level lying with the crown uppermost and the frontal bone against the north wall and 9 inches from the west wall. The left humerus (ref. no. 1)[1] was near the top in the S.W. quadrant. Nos. 2 and 3 were at a middle level in the N.E. quadrant; no. 4 (right femur with head) was in the S.E. quadrant, about 6 inches above floor level, roughly parallel with the south wall and about 6 inches from it, the head being opposite the centre of this wall. No. 5 (left femur) was at floor level along the south wall with the knee end in the S.E. corner. Bone fragments were widely distributed, but were densest in the middle of the cist and in the N.E. and S.W. corners. The skull and the fragments from it were found together.

Numerous *fragments of an earthenware vessel* were found within a few inches of the skull. But one of the larger fragments (apparently of the same vessel) was in the S.E. corner at a distance from the rest and, as noted above, another had been lifted out with the first few spadefuls at the time of discovery and had therefore been at a higher level than the rest.

[1] The long bones were numbered in their order of removal from the cist. These numbers are used in Professor Bernard Shaw's report below.

A *small bronze blade* was found near the floor of the cist in the S.E. corner close up against the south wall after the removal of the left femur.

A *fragment of worked flint* was found on riddling the soil that had been taken out at the time of discovery. This had evidently been lying near the surface, as had the jet button and the sherd already referred to.

There were traces of charcoal distributed throughout the soil, but there was no marked local concentration.

The appearances are suggestive of an earlier interference with this cist. It will be noted that two of the long bones were split longitudinally (see Professor Bernard Shaw's report below). The positions in which the bones were found do not seem consistent with a possible position at the time of burial; but perhaps the strongest indication is the anomalous position of one fragment of the vessel in the S.E. corner. The cover stone was very near the surface and has, no doubt, been so for many generations.

Description of the cist (plate VIII).

The dimensions were: length, 3 ft. 2 ins.; width at the west end, 2 ft. 10 ins.; width at the east end, 2 ft.; depth, 2 ft. The sides were formed of four large flat slabs of local red sandstone, the sides being about 1 ft. thick and the ends about 5 ins. thick. The inner surfaces were smooth and had the appearance of having been split off the rock. The floor was of clay. The sides were a fairly good fit and there was no making up of the joins at the edges.

The cover stone was a foot thick, of irregular outline, large enough to cover the cist completely, but not flat enough to seal it against the entry of soil from above. The only marks on any of the stones were plough marks on the top side of the cover stone. The cover stone was of different material from the sides of the cist.

II. THE GRAVE GOODS.

BY J. D. COWEN.

The fragments of earthenware recovered shows that the vessel placed with the body was a *beaker*. The remains are much broken and number twenty-six pieces, of which the largest measures only $3\frac{1}{4}$ by 2 inches. Though not sufficient

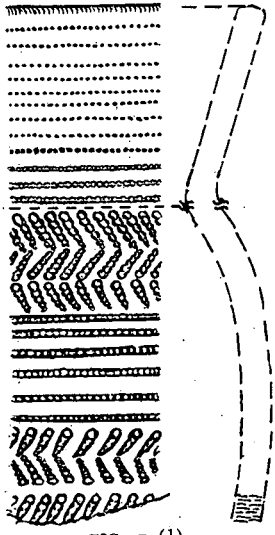

FIG. 1 ($\frac{1}{2}$).

to allow of complete reconstruction, the fragments do give a very fair idea of the size, form and decoration of the original vessel (fig. 1).

Fragments of the rim show that it was some 6 inches in diameter. This would indicate a pretty large beaker, but there is insufficient material to give any useful evidence of height. The base in particular is entirely wanting.

A complete profile seems irrecoverable, but we can say that the neck was short (2 inches deep), and slightly but

distinctly convex. Curvature of the body is not marked, which accords with a fairly large size, and indicates further that the body was not particularly globose.

The ornament is carried out entirely in the toothed comb technique, and seems to have been continued unbroken from the rim downwards over a considerable portion of the body. Beginning at the rim there are twelve lines of decoration, horizontal and close-set, covering the whole neck down to the constriction. Below the constriction, over which the decoration continues uninterrupted, there are not less than three more similar lines. At this point our reconstruction is interrupted, and when we pick up the pattern again it is in the form of three bands of diagonal lines arranged to form a simple herringbone. Then follow six more horizontal lines, as on the neck, and finally three more bands of diagonals arranged as before. Below this point further reconstruction is impossible. The minimum depth of this pattern is 6 inches, but owing to the break in the evidence it may easily have been more.

The fabric, though capable of yielding a smooth surface, is coarse and full of grit. The firing is very uneven, the fragments varying in colour between bright brick-red to a dull grey on the outside. The inner surface is uniformly grey, and the interior of the ware black. The material is finest and the firing most successful towards the rim; owing to the gritty nature of the paste nearly all the surviving fragments are in an extremely friable condition.

Consideration of all the above points makes it clear that we have here a beaker of AC or C character, which is the commonest variety in Northumberland. Furthermore, the firmness of the handling of both form and decoration shows no sign of degeneration.

The small *bronze blade* (fig. 2), though much worn down and in poor condition, is an example of the early bronze knife, the first type of bronze implement to be used in this part of the country. It is now $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long by $1\frac{1}{16}$ inches broad, quite flat and about $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch thick.

It is roughly lozenge-shaped, without a trace of any rivet-holes, and though these may have been broken away, it is difficult to see where there could have been room for them except towards the top of the tang, particularly as the shoulders of the tang are symmetrical and look as if they may be the original edges. At the top the tang is broken, leaving only a small triangle for insertion into the haft; whether it once had a further projection running up inside the haft it is impossible now to say, but I incline to think it never had.

Across the widest part, where blade meets tang, the mark left by the edge of the haft is still plainly to be seen on both

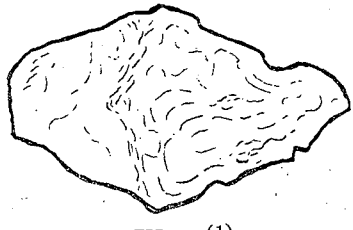

FIG. 2 (½).

sides. The blade runs to a sharp point, and once had keen edges, but is of diminutive size. This is probably due to much re-sharpening, but when new it cannot have been of any great size, certainly not large enough to rank as a weapon. It was designed, and could only have been used, as a tool.

The *jet button* (fig. 3) is a magnificent example of its kind. Circular in outline, it is flat underneath, and on top rises in the centre to a low swelling after the manner of some kinds of toadstool. It is not, strictly speaking, *conical* at all. On the upper surface the edge is marked by a clearly defined beading; underneath the usual V-shaped boring (for the attachment to the dress) has been duplicated, so that in this case we may be said to have a double-V boring. The whole surface, above and below, has been brought to

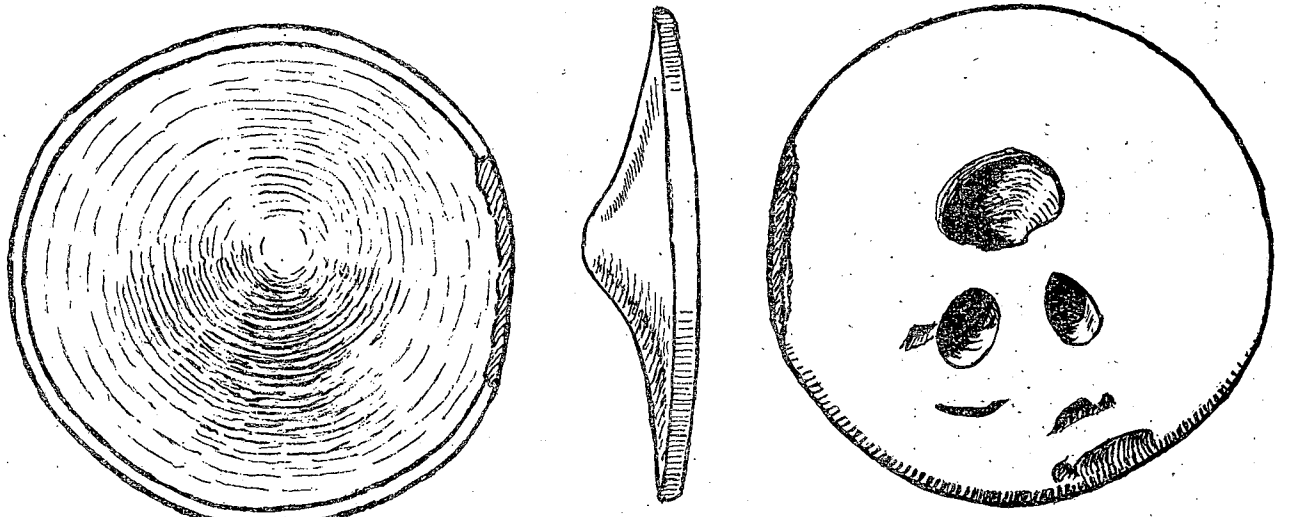

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FIG. 3 ($\frac{1}{1}$).

a very high state of polish, which is still as good as the day it was finished.[1]

The diameter is $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches, and only one larger has yet been discovered in the British Isles. This was a plain button of shale, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, found with two beakers and other objects in a burial at Winterbourne Monkton, Wiltshire, in 1856.[2]

The beading at the edge is another uncommon feature, which seems to have occurred only once previously. In a barrow on Net Lowe Hill, Alsop Moor, Derbyshire, two

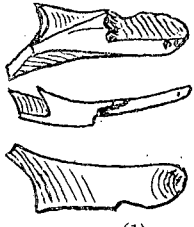

FIG. 4 ($\frac{1}{1}$).

large buttons of this type ($2\frac{1}{2}$ and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter), again described as of shale, were found in 1845. These very closely resemble the Lilburn one both in profile and in having a beading round the edge.[3] These, too, accompanied a bronze dagger in an unburnt burial.

The double-V perforation is a third most uncommon feature, but is seen in a plain jet button of smaller size from Butterwick, Yorkshire,[4] though there the arrangement of the holes differs slightly.

The fragment of *flint* (fig. 4) is a narrow blade, 1 inch long, curling sharply over towards the lower end, and shows slight retouching, but can hardly claim to be a finished tool.

[1] It has been pointed out to me that there are grounds for describing the material not as a true jet, but a variety of shale. This may well be, but the dividing line is a narrow one, and to the untutored eye the button, it must be confessed, looks to be the purest jet.

[2] *Cat. Devizes Museum*, pt. II, 2nd ed. (1934), p. 26 and pl. VIa.

[3] *Cat. Bateman Collection in Sheffield Museum* (1899), pp. 79-80, fig.

[4] Evans, *Stone Implements*, edn. 2, p. 453, fig. 370.

Finally a small unshaped *piece of chalk* (fig. 5), ¾ inch long, has been preserved with the other objects from the grave, though whereabouts in the cist it was found is not recorded. As chalk is not native to the district this piece must have been imported and have been placed in the grave purposely.

Apart from the magnificence of the jet button, the interest of the find lies in the association of beaker, knife and button, an association which, though well established elsewhere as characteristic of the A-C beaker complex,[5] has not been recorded in Northumberland before. Indeed both knife and button are sufficiently uncommon in the county to have an intrinsic interest of their own.

FIG. 5 (½).

Simple bronze knives have been found on five previous occasions in Northumberland, in each case with an unburnt burial (see appendix *a*). But only once (at Amble) has any further association been recorded; on that occasion with a food vessel.

Conical buttons with V-perforations have previously been found three times in the county (see appendix *b*), again in each case from a cist with unburnt burial. Two found in adjacent burials at Great Tosson, near Rothbury, were each with a food vessel, and one of the burials contained also an antler pick.

Hitherto the regular recurrence of these classical types of the beaker culture in a food vessel setting (and their absence from local beaker finds) has led to the conclusion that our beaker period here was "culturally poor" and "a

[5] *Antiquity* v (1931), 415.

APPENDIX

(*a*) *Bronze Knives found in Northumberland.*

1. Cheswick, pre-1835	$6\frac{5}{8}''$	With skeleton in cist.	Midrib; one rivet left; butt damaged.	Raine, *North Durham*, 235.	B.M.
2. N. Charlton, 1824	$5''$	In cist with unburnt body under a cairn.	Flat; no rivets left; decayed at point and butt.	N.C.H. II, 290.	B.M.
3. Humbleton, Wooler, 1931.	$3\frac{1}{2}''$	In cist with inhumation.	Plain, flat knife; 3 rivet holes; badly corroded.	B.N.C. XXVII, 385-90; N.C.H. XIV, 60.	Private.
4. W. Lilburn, 1946	$1\frac{3}{4}''$	In cist with beaker, jet button and unburnt burial.	Plain, flat; no rivet holes; much worn.	Present paper.	B.G.
5. Amble, 1883	$1\frac{3}{8}''$	In cist with food vessel and unburnt burial.	Plain, flat; three rivets; point missing.	N.C.H. V, 269, fig.	B.M.
6. Low Moralee, Haydon Bridge, 1921	$3\frac{1}{4}''$	Apparently with burial by inhumation.	Plain, flat; three rivet holes; much worn.	P. 3, X, 29, (plate).	B.G.

(*b*) *Conical Jet Buttons with V-Perforation found in Northumberland.*

1. Wooler, 1872	$2''$	In cist with unburnt body.	B.N.C. 1869-72, 415-19; N.C.H. XIV, 59.	B.M.
2. W. Lilburn, 1946	$2\frac{5}{8}''$	In cist with beaker, bronze knife and unburnt burial.	Present paper.	B.G.
3. Great Tosson, 1858	$1\frac{1}{2}''$	In cist with unburnt body and a food vessel.	N.C.H. XV, 53, and plate I, 5.	B.M.
4. Great Tosson, 1858	$2''$	In cist with unburnt body, food vessel and antler pick.	N.C.H. XV, 53, and plate I, 7.	B.M.

backwater."[6] The present find is a welcome pointer in the other direction. It establishes the arrival of the bronze knife and the conical button firmly in the local beaker period, while the earlier discoveries show that both types continued to flourish into at least the earlier part of the middle bronze age.[7]

III. HUMAN REMAINS.

BY PROFESSOR A. F. BERNARD SHAW.

The remains consist of the following (plate VIII):—

Skull. Consists of left half which includes frontal bone (no suture) and small portion of left supra-orbital ridge; left parietal showing clear sutures in the frontal; fragments of right parietal, temporal, occipital; left temporal but squamous portion missing. Clear sutures between left temporal, left parietal and occipital. Only posterior third of zygomatic process present. Mastoid process has been removed through weathering.

Left articular fossa well developed; no osteo-arthritis. Left half of tabular part of occipital bone with very marked lambdoid suture. Left superior nuchal line well marked and a portion of the occipital protuberance present is well developed. Left petrous portion of temporal bone with internal auditory foramen. All the basal parts of the skull are missing. There is no torus and the arch of the forehead is well developed. The thickness of the vault of the skull is about the same as in modern man.

Mandible. The only part present is a portion of the ramus without the condyle or coronoid process and a portion of the mandible bearing right second and third molar teeth. The angle of the mandible is not everted and the

[6] N.C.H. XIV, 25, and XV, 21.

[7] The whole of the find (less the skeletal material) has generously been presented by the owner of the land, Mr. E. F. Collingwood, to the Society, for the Black Gate Museum.

attachment for the masseter muscle is not prominent. The ramus forms on obtuse angle with the body. The third and second molars have the same antero-posterior diameter. There is well marked attrition but no caries and no evidence of periodontitis.

Mess of bones consisting of small portions of rib and bones of the hand, also lower end of right humerus and epiphyses of tibia and portion of both acetabula. The acetabular and articular surfaces of right humerus show no osteo-arthritis.

Ref. No. 4. Right femur with head. Greater and lesser trochanter missing. Lower condyles; no osteo-arthritis. Tubulation normal.

Ref. No. 5. Left femur. This is split longitudinally from just below the head down to the lower condyles (? due to human agency). No osteo-arthritis. Tubulation normal. Length 18 inches.

Ref. No. 1. Left humerus. The head and upper metaphysis are missing. Shows no abnormality.

Ref. No. 3. ? *Right tibia.* Lower epiphyses missing, greater part of upper epiphyses missing. No abnormality.

Ref. No. 2. Tibia, diaphysis. Upper and lower epiphyses missing. This is also split longitudinally. No abnormality.

In none of the limb bones are origins and insertions of muscles well marked, and the bones generally are slender. The portion of mandible, together with the appearances of the other bones, indicate that the remains are those of an adult female.

No pathological changes are observed, and radiograph of the lower end of right femur shows no lines of arrested growth due to malnutrition and/or infections in childhood.

Report on portion of mandible by Professor R. V. Bradlaw.

The specimens consist of a fragment of the mandible with third molar in situ, a second mandibular molar, a maxillary incisor and a small fragment of alveolar bone.

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The larger fragment is from the ascending ramus and body of the right mandible and contains the mandibular canal. Areas of muscle attachment suggest that the musculature was not especially developed. The angle is more obtuse than is commonly seen in modern adult mandibles. The third and second molars are both from the right side and are fully erupted and calcified. The coronal enamel shows severe attrition due to a coarse diet, and some of it has been lost by desiccation. The maxillary central incisor is from the left side, and in addition to severe attrition shows tissue loss on the anterior aspect of the root at the cervical margin which may be due to dental caries. Radiographs show the pulp chambers of all three teeth to be much reduced in size as a result of secondary dentine formation in response to attrition. The small fragment is from the jaw, probably the maxilla, and shows part of the sockets of two teeth.

The form and structure of the larger fragment suggest that it is from a female, and the dental findings that she was probably in late middle life.