

II.

A MOUND CONTAINING SHORT CISTS AT TRUMLAND, ROUSAY, ORKNEY. BY THE LATE J. HEWAT CRAW, F.S.A.Scot.

In the summer of 1932 a denuded mound on the farm of Nears, Rousay, was excavated by Mr Walter G. Grant, F.S.A.Scot. Although in a very ruinous condition, the remains of a small short cist containing fragments of two steatite urns and a few incinerated human bones were found near the centre.² After the excavation of this structure, another was discovered in the adjoining field, but on Trumland Home Farm, 10 yards east of the dry-stone dyke which separates the holdings. It was decided to leave over for another year the examination of this monument, and so it was early in the following June (1933) that Mr Grant and I carried out the excavation.

This construction, which appeared as a low, grassy mound (fig. 1), lay 120 yards east by north of the first, at about the same elevation, 75 feet above sea-level. It was composed almost wholly of earth, with here and there slabs of stone appearing through the turf. Its original height was 4 feet 6 inches. Immediately within the perimeter was found a symmetrical wall of well-built slabs, laid on the flat in three to six courses and varying from 8 inches to 12 inches in height. The space enclosed was practically circular, measuring 20 feet 8 inches in diameter from north to south and 20 feet 10 inches from east to west. On the top of the mound, beneath 2 inches of turf, and with its centre 1 foot south-east of the middle of the monument, was a cist-like construction formed by three slabs, 1 foot 5 inches in length, 8 inches in breadth, and 7 inches in depth, the longer axis pointing 25° west of north magnetic (fig. 2, B). There was neither a cover-stone on the top nor a slab at the north end, both having probably been torn out.

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxi. (1886-7), p. 104.

² *Ibid.*, vol. lxxvii. p. 24.

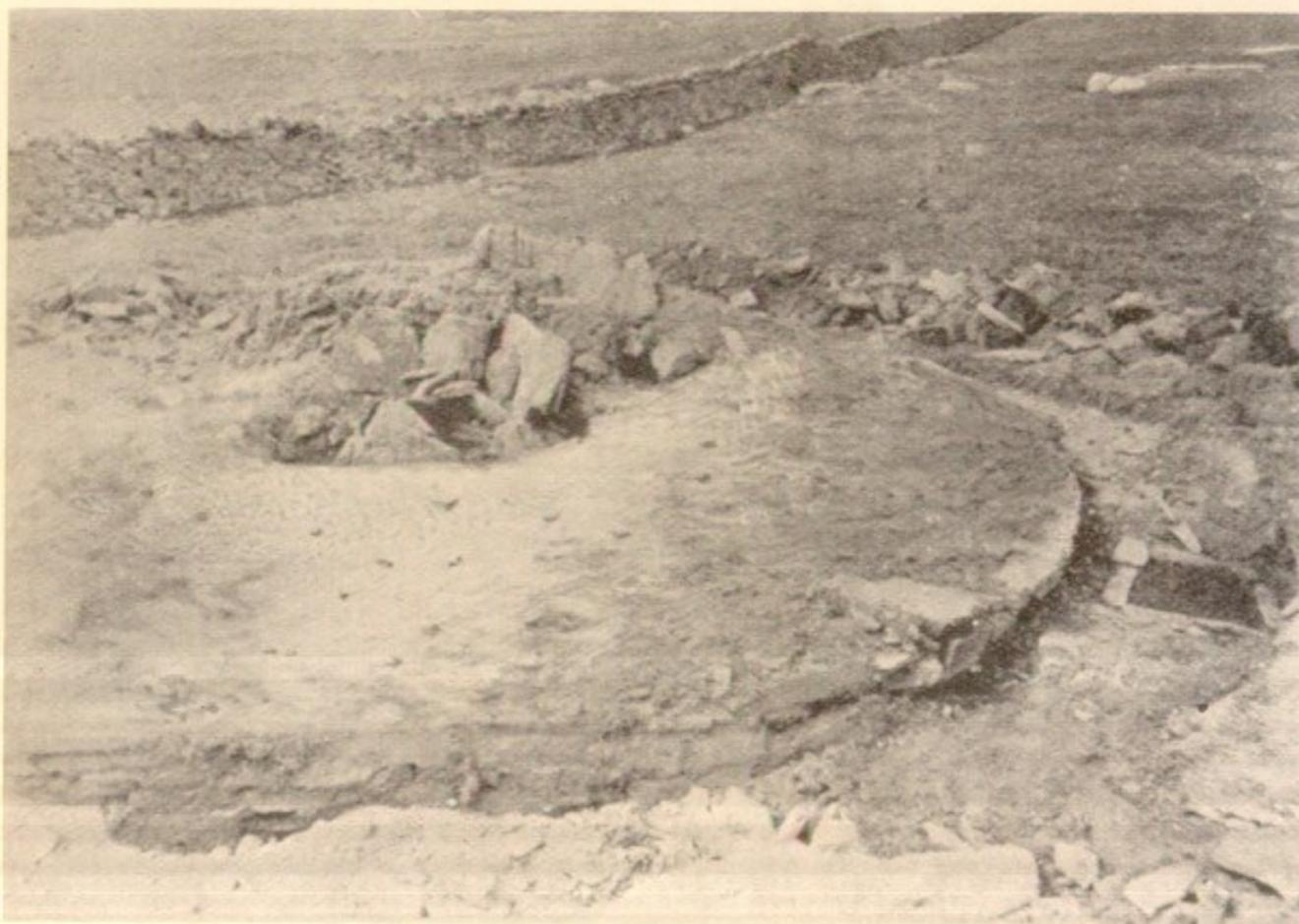


Fig. 1. Burial Mound at Trumland, Orkney.

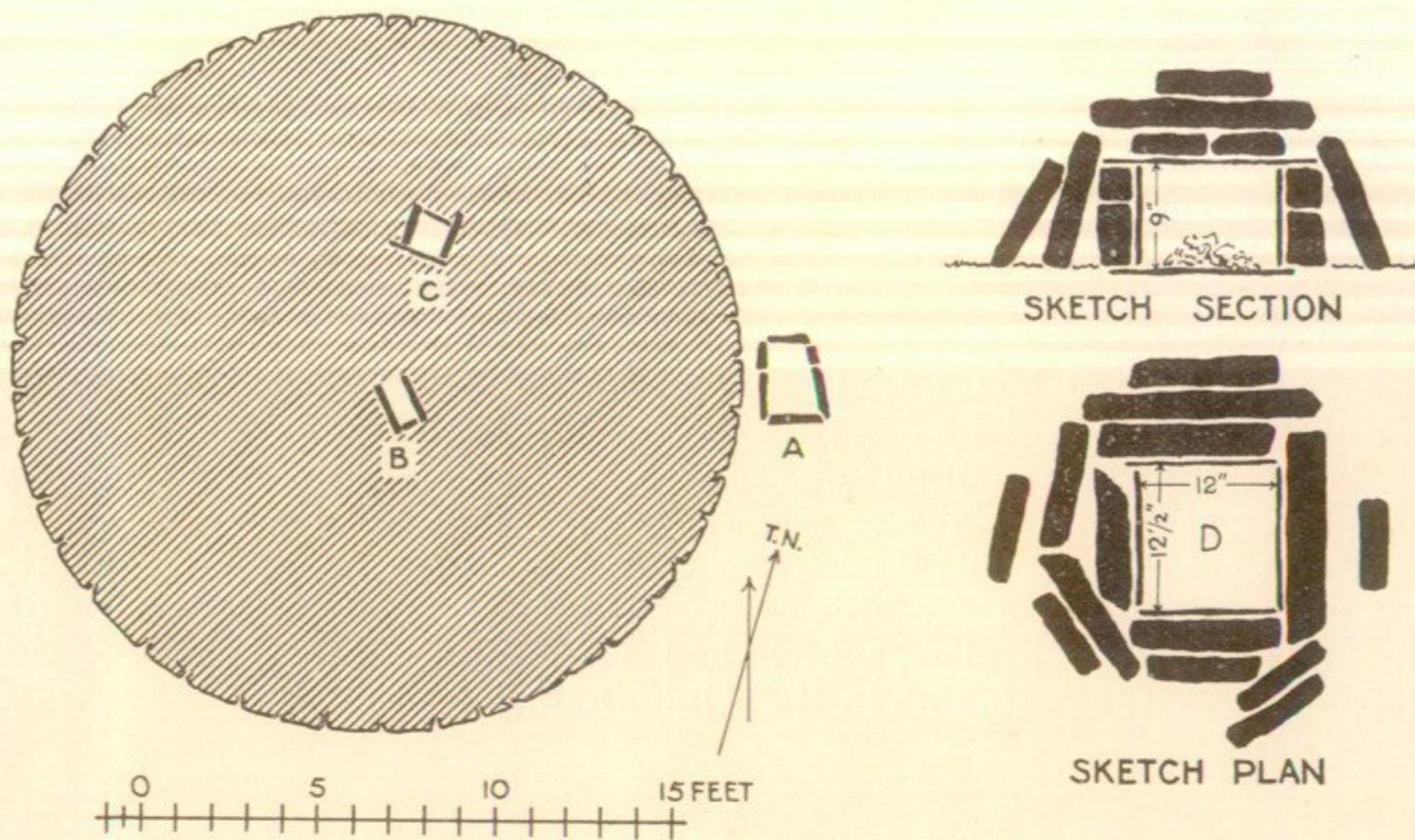


Fig. 2. Burial Mound at Trumland, Orkney : Plan ; and Plan and Section of Primary Burial, Cist D.

The cist only contained soil. To the north of it, and half-way between it and the edge of the kerb, was a square cist with its axis lying 22° east of the north magnetic; it measured 1 foot 3 inches in length and breadth and 1 foot 4 inches in depth, and had a cover and a paving slab (fig. 2, C). It contained incinerated human bones, much burnt matter, and fragments of a steatite urn. Close to the outside of the south-east corner were fragments of the same urn and more burnt matter.

At a distance of 9 inches outside the kerb to the east was a third cist with its axis pointing north and parallel to the edge of the kerb (fig. 2, A); it measured 2 feet in length and 1 foot 6 inches in breadth. Each side consisted of two stones, and there was one at either end. The cover consisted of a thin slab, but the bottom was unpaved. The cist was 8 inches deep, but the side and end stones were only 3 inches deep, below them being an unlined excavation in the soil. This cist contained no bones or relics, but was completely filled with burnt matter similar to that in the second cist. From the peculiarity of the structure, position, and contents, it may have been used not for burial but for the reception of the products of a fire.

Almost exactly in the centre of the mound, and at a lower level than the first described grave, was another cist of striking symmetry and showing unusual structural features, with its axis lying north and south magnetic (fig. 2, D). It measured $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches from north to south, 12 inches from east to west, and 9 inches in depth. The four side slabs and the cover were less than 1 inch in thickness. Against each of the four sides were placed two stones, one above the other, and around the whole were ten additional slabs laid to slope inwards towards the top. Over the cover were two stones, lying side by side, covered by a single larger stone, on the top of which was a smaller slab. It contained incinerated human bones, and one small fragment of pottery measuring about 1 inch by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

The rest of the mound was dug over, but nothing further was found except several slabs of varying size which lay about the level of the top of the central cist, seemingly without any arrangement. After the mound was examined, the soil and turf and the stones of the first and fourth cists, which had been moved, were replaced, so that the structure remains in its original state.