

IX.—NOTE ON A CIST AT SUMMERHILL, BLAYDON.

BY WILLIAM BULMER.

[Read on 29th September 1937.]

This cist was accidentally discovered on August 5th, 1937, when opening up new ground in the Summerhill sand quarry at Blaydon, co. Durham. The workmen reported their find to Mr. J. E. Armstrong, the owner of the quarry, who stopped further digging and reported the find by telephone to the Hancock Museum. As it could not be excavated that day, he had it re-covered and arranged for its protection overnight. The following day Mr. G. Temperley, hon. secretary of the Natural History Society, and Miss Scott and Mr. Phillipson of the Hancock Museum, visited the site and the cist was excavated. Mr. Temperley kindly informed me by telephone of the discovery, and so I was able to assist in the excavation and to record the particulars for our society.

The cist was situated above the west face of the sand quarry, 50 yards south of a point on the Blaydon-Greenside road 800 yards from its junction with the Blaydon-Hexham road, at the west end of the new road bridge. It is 280 yards WSW. of the site of the cist discovered on Summerhill in May 1930 and now reconstructed and preserved at the Hancock Museum.

It was about 18 inches below the present surface, in sand, and consisted of four rectangular slabs of local sandstone about 3 inches thick, forming a chamber roughly 3 feet long, 2 feet 3 inches wide and 1 foot 9 inches deep;

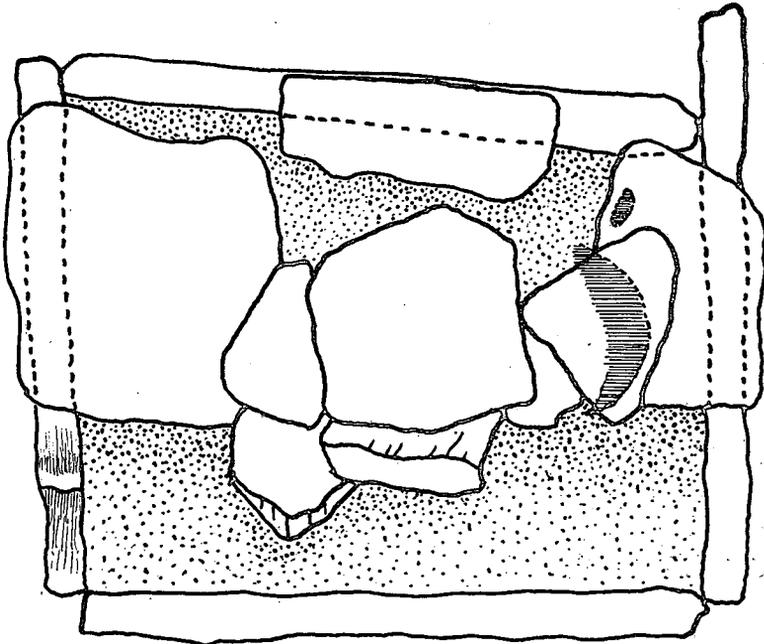
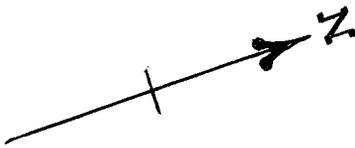
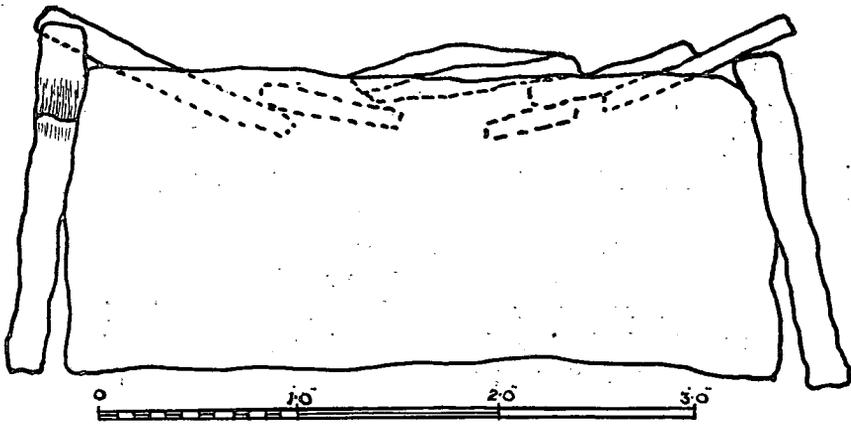


FIG. I.

The shading shows the position of the skull and flint knife.

with its longer axis lying N. 20° E., or almost exactly NNE.

The dimensions of the cist correspond closely to those of three cists excavated by Canon Greenwell at Broomhouses, Ovingham, some six miles west of Blaydon.¹

The cover stone, or stones, were much broken and the pieces were among, or supported by, the sand which had accumulated inside the cist. In clearing this sand nothing was found except a few very small pieces of charcoal

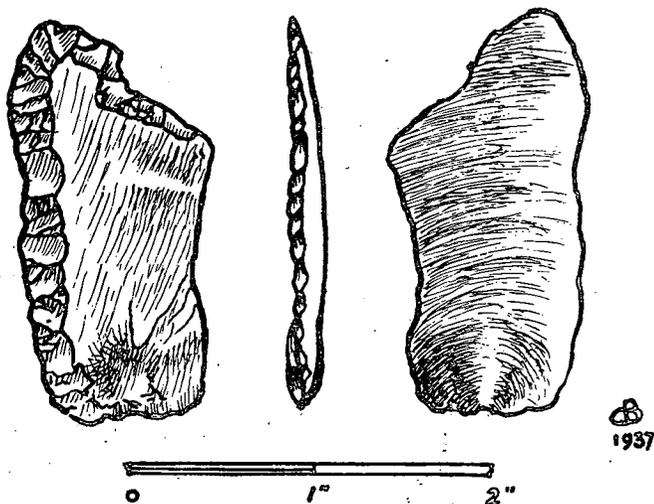


FIG. 2. FLINT KNIFE.

scattered at random amongst it, but upon the floor, consisting of clean undisturbed sand, were the remains of an adult skeleton in a contracted position with the head at the northern end. The body seems to have been lying on its left side, i.e. with the face to the east, but only about one-third of the base of the skull and the ends of the larger bones remained. All the bones were in very fragile condition. There was no trace of any urn or other vessel.

Behind the skull was a flint knife of rather unusual

¹ *British Barrows*, pp. 437-8; *North. Co. Hist.* xii, p. 9.

form, made from a thin flake of dark blue-grey flint some 2 inches long by 1 inch wide. It is finely worked at the edge and point on one face only; on this face at the unpointed end is a clearly marked bulbar cavity and rings of percussion. On the unworked face the bulb of percussion and the rings or waves are beautifully shown. On the unworked edge a portion of the original core surface remains, and this enables the instrument to be used comfortably without any haft or protection for the hand.

It is a somewhat unusual implement, but it has some features in common with the type of flint implement known as the "slug knife," which Mr. J. G. D. Clark has shown to belong to the early and middle Bronze Age.² It is also in some respects analogous to a flint knife found by Canon Greenwell in an inverted cinerary urn, found some nine feet away from one of the cists at Broomhouses referred to above,³ and illustrated in the twelfth volume of the *Northumberland County History*.⁴ Canon Greenwell describes this knife as: "an unburnt flint knife, $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, finely chipped along the edge" (of the face) "opposite to that where the bulb shows the blow had been applied to detach the flake, out of which it is made, from the core." This description applies exactly to the Blaydon knife and the dimensions do not differ to any great extent, but the two knives are very different in appearance.

It is fortunate that this discovery was so promptly reported as the cist had to be removed soon after, and great credit is due to the finders, Ward and Jones, who informed Mr. Armstrong, the owner of the quarry, and to that gentleman for so promptly reporting the find, for protecting the cist until it could be excavated, and for the assistance he gave so liberally during the excavation.

² Kendrick and Hawkes, *Archæology in England, 1914-1931*, p. 103 and fig. 44.

³ *British Barrows*, fig. 57.

⁴ Vol. xii, fig. 4.