

Two cists at South Gyle, Edinburgh

N M McQ Holmes*

In November 1978 the discovery of two stone cists, disturbed during ground clearance for the construction of a factory car-park at South Gyle, on the W side of Edinburgh, was reported to Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh, and the site was immediately excavated.

Cist 1 (NGR NT 19067182) had been almost totally destroyed, leaving only the paved floor and the lower part of an upright flagstone on the S side (fig 1). The floor, as it survived, consisted of eight flat sandstone slabs of widely varying sizes, covering an area of 0.85 m by 0.45 m and aligned approximately E-W. None of the contents remained *in situ*, but fragments of bone were located amongst the material dragged back from the vicinity of the cist by the mechanical digger; the bone is discussed in the Appendix.

Cist 2 (NGR NT 19027183). The capstone had been pulled off by the machine, but apart from this the cist had suffered only minimal damage (fig 1); it was built of pink sandstone, with a single vertical slab forming each end. The NE side comprised one upright slab with smaller stones on top, and the SW side was formed of two large boulders, also with smaller stones on top. There were no flagstones on the floor, which was of natural clay. The cist was aligned approximately NNW-SSE and measured 1.2 m by 1.0 m over all; internal dimensions were 1.03 m by 0.66 m and about 0.6 m deep, but the last measurement may be misleading, as the interior had clearly been dug out before it could be properly excavated. As a result, no skeletal or other remains were recovered.

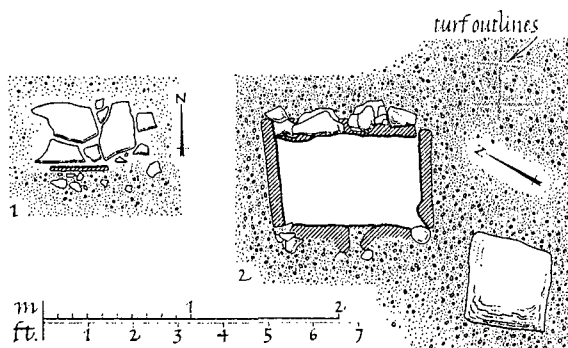


FIG 1 South Gyle, Edinburgh: cists found in 1978

* Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh

At a distance of 0.25 m from the S corner of the cist was a flat stone slab, roughly rectangular and measuring 0.6 m by 0.55 m, which lay flat on the surface of the natural clay and may have formed part of an area of paving. A little to the E were a number of faint marks indicating the remains of laid turfs and it is possible that the cist was originally covered by a turf-built mound.

Two other finds in the vicinity of the Gogar Burn are evidence of the presence of Bronze Age people in this part of Edinburgh. In 1929 a small cist was discovered at North Gyle at a point about 1.7 km to the WNW of those found in 1978; measuring 0.78 m by up to 0.4 m and 0.5 m in depth, it contained a food vessel, which had presumably accompanied an inhumation burial (Callander 1929, 368–9). A bronze sword and chape, and a gold 'lock-ring' of late Bronze Age date were found at Gogarburn House, a little further to the W, during the working of a gravel pit in 1811 (Coles 1960, 91, 118).

APPENDIX

Skeletal remains from South Gyle, Edinburgh

Mary Harman

The small quantity of bone retrieved from the vicinity of Cist 1 consists of brittle fragments, the condition being fair. The remains include parts of a petrous temporal bone, the acetabula, and the proximal ends of one or both femora and possibly a humerus, and diaphyseal fragments of a radius, femur, tibia and possibly other bones. There is no evidence that more than one individual is represented. The bones are those of an adult of unknown sex. They are preserved in Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh.

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REFERENCES

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