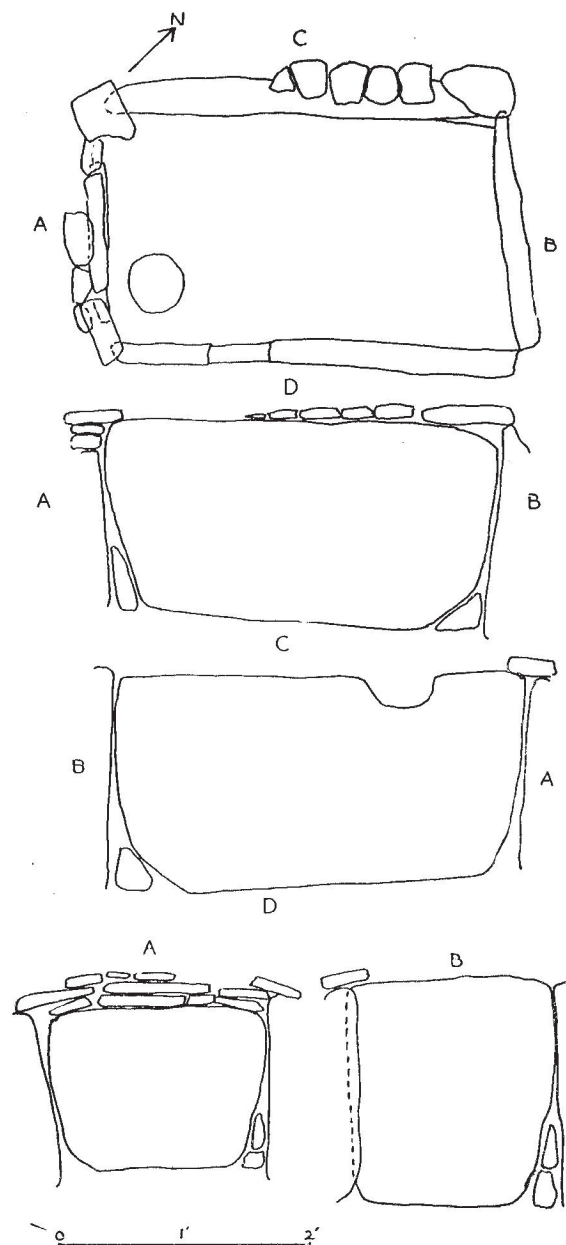


THE CROSS AT EAST ST. COLMAC

DOROTHY N. MARSHALL

This cross, which is engraved on a standing stone, stands in a field at East St. Colmac Farm. Dr. Hewison in his "Bute in the Olden Times" (Vol. I p. 116) calls it the cross of Kilmachalmaig. The chapel which once stood beside the cross was dedicated to St. Colman or Colmac who was Bishop of Dromore and, like many of the early preachers, was educated in Ireland. He lived in the 6th century. Divine worship was continued on the site till long after the Reformation. In 1591 we hear of Patrick M'Queine, pastor of Kingarth, having Killumcogarmick added to his charge. No traces of the chapel are to be seen: about 160 year ago the farmer took the remaining stones to build his steading. Nothing of the cemetery remains either, though something of it could be seen up to the end of the 18th century.

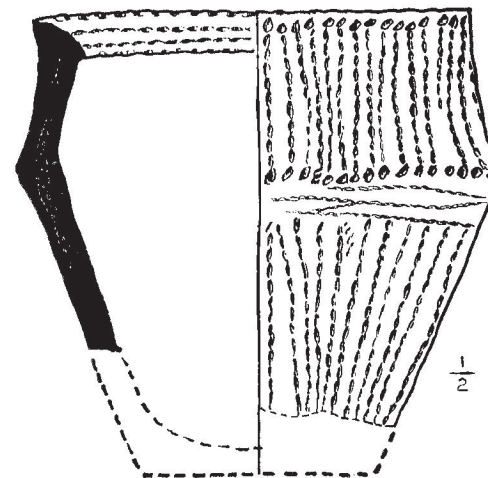
The decoration on the cross is unusual and it is not easy to ascribe it to any particular century.



Plan of Kildavanan Cist



Cist at Kildavanan



Food Vessel from Kildavanan Cist

A BRONZE AGE CIST AT KILDAVANAN

By DOROTHY N. MARSHALL, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.)

In the spring of 1952, when ploughing by tractor, Mr Lochhead of Kildavanan Farm found the top stone of a short cist, but it was not until two years later that I was shown the cist and given the opportunity of examining it. By that time the top stone had been removed.

The cist lies just above the 300' contour line below a rocky knoll, Croc-na-mhara, on the hill face above Ettrick Bay (O.S. sheet 71 027665). It is a typical Bronze Age burial similar to others found in Bute.

Each of the sides is made of a slab of schist with two courses of small stones at the S.W. end. The slab at the N.W. had also been levelled up at the north corner and stones had been placed across the corners at the S.W. end to support the cap stone. Where the slabs were not squared and touching at the bottom edges, small stones had been packed to fill the spaces. The floor was on the rock face, which seemed to have been scraped level. It sloped slightly towards the N.E. The cist is 39" long, 22" wide and 21" at the deepest; it lies N.E. and S.W.

In the south corner was a Food Vessel, placed upside down. It was in very poor condition, with grass roots growing in the cracks of the pot; the base had disintegrated. The ware is fairly coarse with grits and the pot had warped in firing. On the flat inward-sloping rim are three lines of cord-impression decoration; under the rim is a band of vertical lines of cord impression with a dot at top and bottom of each line. Under the carination is a band of horizontal lines of cord impression applied irregularly, no one line longer

than $4\frac{1}{2}$ ". Below this is another band of vertical lines of the same cord impression fairly regularly applied.

Part of two long bones and a small piece of skull were found. Dr. Archibald Young kindly examined the bones but they were in too poor a condition to yield any information as to the age or sex of the individual.

The Food Vessel has been most skilfully restored by Mrs J. G. Scott, Glasgow. By the kind permission of the Marquis of Bute it is exhibited, on loan, in the Bute Museum.

The burial belongs to the Middle Bronze Age, about 1400 B.C., at a time when two streams of Bronze Age culture were reaching Scotland, one by sea and land to the East of the Grampians and the other from Western Europe and Ireland to the west. Both sets of people had their traditional grave goods for their cist burials: those in the east placed Beakers, tall rather straight-sided vessels, with their dead while those in the west used Food Vessels as in the Kildavanan Cist. Traces of cereal, oats and wheat have been found in such Food Vessels (P.S.A.S. LXIX, pg. 358). It is not usual to find them upside down but the one found in a cist in a cairn at Scalpsie Bay was also placed rim to the ground (P.S.A.S. XXXVIII, pg. 52-57). The mountain masses of central Scotland kept the two cultures separate for some time but gradually they merged. Only one Beaker has been found so far in Bute, at Kilmichael.

Eleven of these cist burials have been examined scientifically in Bute. In two the bones were burned, in three unburnt but too fragmentary to tell anything. In four, children were buried and in the other, two women. These figures made me curious as to the proportion of male, female and child burials in Scotland in general and I looked at 182 reports of excavations of cists published in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland since 1903. That was the year when Thomas Bryce, Professor of Anatomy in Glas-

gow, became interested in Archaeology and in burials in cairns and cists in particular. As one would expect in an anatomist, he was interested in the skeletal remains as well as in the bronze and flint implements, the jet necklaces, the pots, Food Vessels and Beakers found in the graves. Before his time there were few reports on the bones.

In 127 of these 182 cist burials (the Bute figures are included in these), the bones had disappeared or were too fragmentary for a report to be made on them. Of the rest, there were 31 men, 9 buried with Beakers, 5 with Food Vessels, 3 with flint or other tools and 13 with no grave goods. Thirteen women were identified, 1 buried with a Beaker, 4 with Food Vessels, 2 with jet necklaces, 2 with flint knives and 3 with no grave goods. The three jet necklaces found in cists with no bones were probably buried with women. There were 11 children buried by themselves in cists, 4 of them with Beakers and 2 with Food Vessels. Seven children had been buried with adults. From these figures, few as they are, one might infer that the Beaker Folk reserved their Beaker burials for chieftains and perhaps sons of chieftains while the Food Vessel People buried their men and women with equal ceremony.