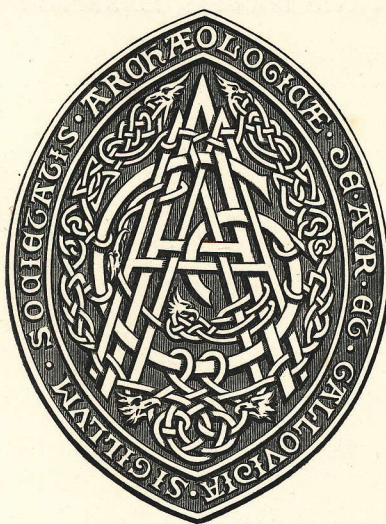


ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
AND  
HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS  
RELATING TO  
AYRSHIRE & GALLOWAY

VOL. V.



EDINBURGH  
PRINTED FOR THE AYRSHIRE AND GALLOWAY ARCHÆOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

MDCCCLXXXV

1885



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## II.

### NOTICE OF ANCIENT GRAVES AT DOUNAN, NEAR BALLANTRAE, AYRSHIRE.

THE site of the graves is an old upraised beach, some 40 or 50 feet above the sea, composed of shingle, with 3 or 4 feet of sand at the surface, with a slope inwards to the land. The graves are in the highest part of the ridge; and though the depth of the bodies when found was only 3 or 4 feet below the surface, it is certain that it must have been more considerable when they were laid there; for no addition could have been made to the surface, while rains and storms from the N.W. and S.W., to which it was exposed, must have tended to lower it. The space occupied by the bodies was about 20 feet square. The sand had been excavated down to the shingle, on which the bodies were laid. Immediately above the bodies there were two or three feet of sand; then, a layer of flat pebbles, and upon the pebbles a layer of sea shells (*Purpura lapillus*) about 9 inches thick, and over them the sand had been replaced. The bodies were 7 in number, all laid east and west, with their heads to the west. They were laid carefully, with the legs close together, and the hands crossed over the stomach. Under one of the skeletons was the skeleton of a child, perhaps 10 or 12 years old. The bones of it were soft and much decayed, and its skull fell in pieces in our hands. The toes of all the skeletons were standing upright in the sand; though, of course, as the sand was removed, the bones of the feet fell down. The teeth were all in the sockets, and were generally very perfect. One skull had lost two of the molars, and the two corresponding on the lower jaw were remarkably ground down, while the incisors were all quite sound and unworn. One skeleton had the humerus of the left arm broken. Another skull had the jaw bone apparently broken and greatly



displaced. I should state that several of the bodies had been discovered and partly exhumed before I and my son visited the ground. But it had been done entirely under the supervision of Mr. Wright, the tenant, by a very intelligent artizan, Mr. Walker. All that Walker told me of the condition of the bodies which he first exposed was confirmed by what I witnessed in exhuming the last. The skull with the dislocated jaw is preserved, to be laid before some good authority; also another, which seemed remarkable for the very low forehead and great depth of the posterior part. Although we made most careful search, and examined every pebble in the sand, we could not detect any implement of flint, stone, or bone; in a word, nothing but the skeletons. The burial must have required some time and trouble, for the quantity of shells necessary to cover such an area to such a depth is considerable; and Walker assured me that the nearest place on the shore whence they could have been procured is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant.

Mr. Wright writes to inform me, that after we left the ground another skeleton, in a very decayed state, was discovered immediately under the skeleton which was in such perfect preservation, and of which the jaw bone seemed dislocated. The graves were examined in September 1879.

JOHN CARRICK MOORE.



NOTE ON THE HUMAN REMAINS FOUND IN ANCIENT GRAVES  
AT DOUNAN, NEAR BALLANTRAE, AYRSHIRE.

By JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., Sec. F.S.A. Scot.

According to Mr. Carrick Moore's desire, 3 human skulls, and several bones of the arm and leg, and part of a pelvis, were forwarded for exhibition to the Society, through the politeness of Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., of Monreith, F.S.A. Scot., with a request that they should be carefully examined and reported on. Accordingly, with the kind assistance of Professor Turner, our well-known anatomist, a careful examination was made of these human bones, referred to in Mr. Carrick Moore's paper, and the annexed Note gives the conclusions come to by us:—

*The Skull* No. 1 was very much broken, the face being entirely detached from the calvaria, and the calvaria was so much broken that neither the height, breadth, nor length could be definitely ascertained.

The skull was, however, longer in relation to the breadth than the Skull No. 2. It was probably that of a young adult female, as the bones of the skeleton sent for examination were small, and their muscular ridges were but feebly developed. The arm bone or humerus had sustained a *post-mortem* fracture.

*The Skull* No. 2.—The greatest breadth was 5·1 inches, the greatest length 6·8 inches, and the greatest height from the anterior edge of the foramen magnum to the junction of the sagittal and coronal sutures on the top of the skull (the *basibregmatic height*) was 5 inches. The cephalic index was therefore 75. The skull is accordingly *mesaticephalic*, and was probably that of a female. The calvaria had the face broken off, but the lower jaw was preserved.

*The Skull* No. 3 was very much broken. It had a persistent frontal suture (*metopic*). Its character was female in configuration of forehead, but the lower jaw was stronger and more muscular than in the other specimens, the chin being especially projected forwards. Evidently it was the skull of an older person, as the teeth were worn so that the dentine was



exposed. The apparently dislocated lower jaw of one of these skulls was probably due to *post-mortem* decay.

The presence of a distinct layer of edible shells and another of pebbles covering the bodies, was, probably owing to the absence of pavement-like stone slabs in the neighbourhood, to cover and protect the dead, and served in all probability the purpose of preventing the bodies being subsequently exposed or dug up by dogs, etc., from the soft sand of the raised sea beach. With regard to the age of this small cemetery, in the absence of anything of a distinctive character being found with the skeletons, it is not easy to determine its exact antiquity. It corresponds, generally, in the arrangement of the bodies and also the covering of small stones (which apparently have been used in some cases when stone slabs could not be easily obtained) with other interments found round our coasts. I am not, however, familiar with the presence of a bed of shells covering the rounded stones; these were probably abundant in the neighbourhood, and may have been used as food, and the empty shells then placed as an additional covering and protection to the bodies laid below.

These interments are probably not of a very great antiquity.