

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABODES AND MEMORIALS OF THE DEAD.



WHEN man's thoughtfulness reached the stage of his being able to realise, by the power of reflection and experience, that physical death is the fate of all living things, nothing seems more natural than that he should come to regard the mysterious manifestations of his material surroundings as the work of the shadowy agents of an unseen world, the reality of which was so forcibly and frequently brought before him in dreams and other psychological phenomena. In the supernatural system thus conjured up, the momentous termination of his own earthly career became the central pivot of a religious cult which presaged the continuation of his spiritual existence—his *alter Ego* or ghost—in the world of spirits. The idea that death was a severance, for ever, of all social ties and friendships formed on earth would be, probably, more repugnant to Neolithic man than to some of the philosophical minds of the present day. To him, death seems to have been nothing more than the mere portal which conducted into the community of departed heroes and friends, and to which he looked forward, across the span

of human life, with hopeful anticipations of a more perfect state of existence. When, and by what means, this higher phase of humanity, which led him on to the rails of religiosity, assumed the mastery over the mere animal propensities which he inherited from the organic world, are questions which it would be out of place here to discuss. But, whatever these influences and moulding agencies may have been, we have strong presumptive evidence for believing that when prehistoric man first appeared within the geographical limits of what is now called Scotland, he was in the true sense of the word a religious being. Already his belief in the supernatural and in his own future destinies had powerfully moulded his conduct in life. When a great man died we have reason to believe that his favourite wives, slaves, and pet animals were sacrificed on his grave so as to accompany him in his journey to the future world. His weapons, ornaments, and other cherished objects, as well as suitable viands for the journey, were laid in his tomb—all of which facts are incompatible with any other theory than that it was then the current opinion that life in the world beyond the grave varied little from that on earth. Consequently, in actual life the abodes of the dead came to be of far more importance than those of the living. In support of this we have the singular fact that whilst hundreds of the former are found scattered over Europe, there are but the faintest indications of the latter. The houses, generally built of such perishable materials as wood, turf, or clay, soon crumbled into dust. On the other hand, the tomb was constructed of the most durable materials, and placed on an eminence, so as to be seen from afar, and to be a lasting memorial among succeeding generations. Thus we see prehistoric man inspired with hopes and convictions which carried his mental vision beyond the affairs of this life. The grave was, therefore, to a large extent, a reflex of current

civilisation, and, as a tribute of respect to the departed, there were occasionally deposited in it the choicest art products of the age. The most natural method of protecting the remains of the dead, and of commemorating their deeds while in life, was by rearing a mound of stones or earth over the grave. To this custom we owe some of the most striking and lasting monuments in the world's history—the pyramids of Egypt, the topes and dagobas of India, the mighty mounds of Silbury and New Grange, the megalithic circles of Stonehenge, Avebury, and other hoary monuments which are so abundantly found scattered on the outskirts of Western Europe from Scandinavia to Africa.

Sepulchral memorials are found under such varying conditions, as to structure and composition, that it is difficult to appropriate their physical characters as a basis of description. Another element which adds to the difficulty is the custom of cremation, which appears to have spread over the British Isles towards the close of its Stone Age, and to have initiated considerable changes in the manner of disposing of the dead. The body, reduced to a few handfuls of ashes and burnt bones, was sufficiently preserved in a clay urn, there being no longer any necessity for constructing great chambers. Hence sprung up a tendency to diminish the size of the abodes of the dead, even by those who still adhered to the earlier method of burial by inhumation. Some of the problems thus raised will be subsequently discussed. All I wish at present to emphasise is, that we have indisputable archæological evidence to show that, during the whole of the Bronze Age, both methods of disposing of the dead were practised within the British Isles apparently at the same time.

Burials may, therefore, be classified in various ways, as, for example, according to whether the body had, or had not, been cremated. The unburnt body was deposited, either within a

chamber constructed of stones and covered by a cairn or mound, leaving a permanent passage for future access to the chamber; or in a stone cist, without an accessory passage, generally formed of slabs set on end, but only of dimensions sufficiently large to admit of the body in a doubled-up position, and then covered over with a mound of stones or earth; or in a wooden coffin formed out of the trunk of a tree, similar to a dug-out canoe; or simply in the bare earth, without any protecting envelope between it and the materials of the mound; or, indeed, without a mound at all or any other external indications to mark the site.

On the other hand, when the body was cremated the remains were usually placed in an urn, and deposited sometimes in a chamber, sometimes in a cist, and sometimes in the bare earth. When no urn was used the incinerated remains were generally laid in a little heap, either in a chamber or on the floor of the tumulus.

The external form of the mound or barrow has also given rise to a number of qualifying epithets, such as long, round, oval, or bell-shaped barrow, &c.

Burial mounds, it may be noted, are called cairns when their material consists of small stones, and barrows when it consists of earth; but not unfrequently both materials were used in combination—a small cairn being often inside the earthen mound. Sometimes the mound was surrounded by a ditch, or a stone circle, or both; and instances are on record in which one or both of these features were found within the area covered by the mound. Also an interment, whether by inhumation or cremation, may be found beneath the natural surface without any superincumbent mound, or any surface indications whatever. At other times, when the mound or cairn is absent, a standing stone, or a circle of stones, or a ditch, may indicate the site of a burial.

The theory that long and round barrows contain respectively the remains of a long-headed and a round-headed race, which somehow has taken a singular hold on the minds of archaeologists since Dr Thurnam's time, seems to me too fanciful to have much significance attached to it. The idea appears to be based on an observation which has been fairly well established as a fact—viz., that the skulls found in long barrows in England are those of a long-headed, or dolichocephalic, race (*i.e.*, when the antero-posterior diameter stands to the transverse diameter in the proportion of about 100 to 75 or less), which preceded a brachycephalic race (*i.e.*, when these diameters are as 100 to 76 or more). But this is a mere coincidence arising from the structural characteristics of the grave, which, being generally a compound chamber, necessarily assumed an elongated form. These mega-lithic chambers could only be made of a certain breadth, not exceeding the length of stones available for covering them, and hence extension of the sepulchral chamber was most conveniently attained by adding to its length. The shape of the chamber generally determined the form of the barrow; but whatever that might be, the skulls were usually those of the long-headed race. In chambers with cremated burials there are, of course, no means of determining the cranio-logical characters of the race. At any rate, the idea cannot for a moment be entertained that, in the construction of their sepulchral abodes, these people were in any way influenced by the shape of their heads, for in that case there would be no round barrows at all, as there is not, and never was, a human race with actually round heads. Nor is it a fact, as we shall afterwards see, that dolichocephalic and brachycephalic skulls are confined to long and round barrows respectively. The probability is that the constructors of dolmens and other chambered cairns, being the first on

the field, continued their sepulchral methods after they were joined by other races practising different methods, such as cremation, and that consequently a certain amount of intermingling of the various systems took place.

As a rule the size of the mound, as well as the value of the grave-goods, was in proportion to the distinction of the individual. This deference to social position accounts for the occasional isolation of sepulchral memorials, some of which may be seen here and there on conspicuous eminences commanding extensive views of the surrounding neighbourhood. But, more frequently, cairns and mounds are found grouped together in the form of cemeteries, among which those representing persons of distinction may be recognised by their greater dimensions.

Thus, the concomitant circumstances through which we have to investigate the abodes of the dead are various, making it extremely difficult to trace any chronological sequence in their structural characteristics, independent of the character of the grave-goods. And this difficulty is increased by the overlapping of different customs of burial due to the persistence of old methods in some out-of-the-way localities. Before, therefore, proceeding further with the general discussion on sepulchral remains, it will be necessary to give a few descriptive details of the characteristic methods of burial found within the Scottish area.

In 1871 Dr Angus Smith¹ explored a large chambered cairn on the farm of Achnacree, in the vicinity of Loch Etive. The cairn appeared to have been interfered with at some former time, when some of its stones had been removed and possibly an entrance to the chamber effected; but, as it then stood, it was nearly circular in form, and measured 75 feet in diameter and 15 feet in height. A hole was dug from the

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. ix. p. 396.

top until a large stone was reached, which proved to be one of the roofing stones, and thus an entrance was effected. The interior consisted of a passage, 28 feet long, 2 feet wide, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, extending in a southward direction. Continuous and in line with this passage were three compartments, separated by walling, but connected by low doors. The first measured 6 feet in length, 4 feet in breadth, and 7 feet in height. Its lower part was constructed of massive slabs set on edge, and above this was dry-stone walling converging, on the beehive principle, till the diminished space (3 feet 4 inches by 1 foot 10 inches) was closed in by one large coverstone. The other two compartments were smaller, and

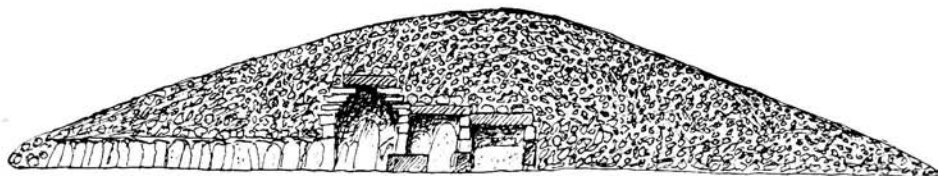


Fig. 183.—Section of the cairn of *Achnacree* (75 feet in diameter).

covered over by lintels, as shown in the accompanying section (fig. 183). On the floor some fragments of urns and several groups of white pebbles were found.¹ One urn was nearly entire, and measured 7 inches in diameter and 4 inches in depth. Its substance was hard, well baked, and of a darkish colour, and presented the peculiarity of having a wide mouth and a round bottom. Faint traces of perpendicular fluting were to be seen on its surface, but otherwise it had no ornamentation. These vertical scorings were more decided on some of the other fragments, all of which appear to be portions of vessels having round bottoms. One standing-stone close by suggested that the cairn had originally been

¹ On the occurrence of white pebbles in graves see a paper by Sir Arthur Mitchell (*Proc. Soc. A. Scot.*, vol. xviii. p. 286).

surrounded by a stone circle, and about 30 feet beyond there were traces of an encircling ditch.

A circumscribed district of Argyllshire, situated on the border of the Crinan Canal and including the parishes of Kilmartin and Kilmichael, is one of the richest in Scotland in prehistoric remains. Here are to be found several groups of standing stones, some bearing cup-marks and concentric circles; various rock-surfaces sculptured with similar symbols; numerous sepulchral cairns, stone circles, and cists with and without external mounds; a vitrified fort, &c. In 1864 Canon Greenwell, the distinguished author of 'British Barrows,' explored several of the more prominent antiquities of this district,¹ among them being a large and very remarkable cairn on Largie farm, situated about 300 yards north-east of one of the series of standing stones. Originally this cairn was very large, having a diameter of 134 feet; but the greater part of the stones had been removed for making drains and walls many years ago, during which three cists were partially laid bare. These cists had been constructed in the usual way, by slabs set on edge with a large stone cover, and placed at considerable distances from the centre. In one of them there was found a globular urn, highly ornamented over the whole of its surface, except the bottom, and measuring $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches high, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at the mouth, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the middle; but there were no remains of the body, "which had, no doubt, been an unburnt one."

The chief interest of the investigation lay in a chamber, divided into four compartments, which occupied the centre of the cairn; but whether or not it had an accessory passage was not ascertained, owing probably to its then dilapidated condition. It measured 19 feet in length, $3\frac{3}{4}$ feet in breadth, and $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, and had its long axis directed nearly north

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. vi. p. 336.

and south. Its sides were made of large slabs of chlorite schist, with portions of walling of smaller stones, roofed over with long slabs. The south end was entirely closed with one large slab, but the north end had two upright stones placed transversely to the walls of the chamber, forming "a rude kind of portal." The two compartments next the supposed passage had been previously disturbed, as well as the third, which included among its contents some fragments of ornamental urns, "of the so-called 'drinking-cup' pattern," and several bones of unburnt bodies. The remaining compartment (6 feet 8 inches by 3 feet 9 inches) and its contents are thus described: "This compartment, like all the rest, was filled to a certain extent with a considerable quantity of stones and rubbish, which had fallen or been thrown in through holes in the roof since the mass of the cairn had been removed. On clearing this out we found a small cist placed in the south-east corner. This, which was $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and 2 feet wide, was made of four stones, resting upon another flat one, and had once possessed a cover, which had been taken off, and which was lying by the side of the cist. We found nothing in it, the persons who first rifled the chamber having lifted the cover and thrown out the contents; but I think we may refer some unburnt bones and fragments of pottery, which were afterwards met with, to the burial in the small cist. . . . To the north of the cist, and lying close to the side of the chamber, was an urn sadly broken and decayed, but of a very novel and peculiar type, both as regards its material and ornamentation (fig. 184). It has a round bottom, from the centre of which run shallow and narrow flutings, reaching to the lip, which is broad and thick, and turns over with a convex surface, that also being fluted like the side. The ware is dark-coloured, almost black, like some of the Anglo-Saxon pottery, well worked and thin, with no

surrounded by a stone circle, and about 30 feet beyond there were traces of an encircling ditch.

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broken stone amongst the clay, but apparently with a good deal of sand worked into it. It is $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, $12\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide at the mouth, the rim being $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide. From the way in which this urn was deposited amongst the undisturbed layer of dark earthy matter and burnt bones, I cannot hesitate to attribute it to the primary interment, novel as its type is, and though it partakes much more of a late than of an early character. The introduction of the secondary interment and of the small cist had probably



Fig. 184.—Urn from a chambered cairn at Largie, Kilmartin, Argyllshire ($6\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height).

caused it to be broken, but it had certainly been deposited as a whole vessel at the time when the layer of dark matter was placed in the chamber.”¹

In commenting on the archæological facts disclosed by the Largie cairn, Canon Greenwell thus expresses himself: “We learn from it that, in this part of Scotland, at all events, the earliest interments in the large megalithic chambers are of burnt bodies. The original and undisturbed layer, with burnt bones in it, at the bottom of the two most southern compartments—the only ones which contained any primary

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. vi. p. 342.

burials—proves this most distinctly. The examination of the similarly constructed chamber in a cairn at Kilchoan, by my friend the Rev. R. J. Mapleton, of which a detailed account is appended, has produced very strong corroborative evidence of this. The remains of unburnt bodies which were found in this chamber in the cairn at Largie farm, and also in that at Kilchoan, belong most unquestionably to a later, it may be to a considerably later, period than the deposits of burnt bones in the same chambers. These unburnt bodies belong most probably to the same period as that during which the corpse was frequently placed in a cist sunk below the surface of the ground, and where apparently no mound was ever raised over it. With these interments were buried beautifully made urns, and in some cases bronze daggers, and of such cists numerous examples have been found in the district.”

Another cairn, explored by Canon Greenwell, on the glebe land of Kilmartin, measures 110 feet in diameter and $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height. It was made entirely of rolled stones, with occasional slabs of the schist of the neighbourhood, and contained within its area two concentric circles of standing-stones, the inner 27 feet, and the outer 37 feet in diameter—the latter being about 16 feet from the centre of the cairn. Within the central area there was a short cist composed of four slabs set on edge and a fifth lying over them as a cover. The interior of the cist was nearly filled with gravel, and in it were found a highly ornamented globular urn with four pierced ears, and a necklace of jet beads which lay above the urn; but all traces of the body had disappeared. This, however, was not the primary interment, but another cist formed in a hollow sunk in the ground in the centre of the cairn and lined with rounded boulders, and having a large slab of schist (9 feet by 4 feet 7 inches) for its cover. This cist, which was $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, 3 feet wide, and 3 feet

deep, was filled to within a foot of the cover with gravel. "At the south-west end was a flat stone laid across the cist about a foot from the bottom, and upon this was a quantity of black unctuous matter and charcoal. About a foot from this stone, on the south-east side, and 9 inches higher than it, was an urn, much broken and in part decayed, placed amongst the gravel. At the north-east end of the cist was a flat stone, similar to that at the opposite end. Upon it was a small, and below it a large, quantity of dark unctuous



Figs. 185, 186.—Urn found in cists at Ballymenach and Kilmartin, Argyllshire ($\frac{2}{3}$).

matter. No trace of bone was found in the cist; the body, or bodies—for it is probable, from the separate masses of unctuous matter, that more than one were interred—had gone entirely to decay, leaving no further trace than the dark substance which was found upon and under the flat stones. The urn (fig. 186) is one of a type similar to many of the Irish urns, and is very characteristic of those which have been found with unburnt bodies, and sometimes with bronze daggers, in this part of Scotland.”¹

Another interesting exploration, conducted under the supervision of the same investigator, was that of the sepulchral

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. vi. p. 340.

circle at Ballymenach. This circle consists of an earthen mound with stones placed on it at intervals, and having a ditch within it. It measures 66 feet in diameter inside the ditch, and 95 feet to the outside of the mound, and has two entrances on opposite sides. Two cists were found within the circle, one south-east of the centre and the other nearer the centre. The former was a short cist formed of four side stones and a cover (previously removed), and contained some mixed sand and gravel, above which were the broken remains of an urn of the "drinking cup" type (fig. 185). The other cist was much larger, the side stones being 9 feet long. A portion of the cover had been broken off at some former period when the cist was probably rifled, as nothing was found in it.

Canon Greenwell suggests that facts disclosed by these investigations indicate that there was an early relationship between the people of Argyllshire and the neighbouring coast of Ireland. "The urns," he writes, "which occurred in the cairns and burial circles are, in shape, material, and style of ornament, very similar to those which have been found on the opposite coast of Ireland, and from this it may be inferred that the two countries were, in prehistoric times, occupied by the same race. That a constant intercourse was kept up between the two shores is evidenced by the Argyllshire implements, which are made from a chertose flint coming from Ireland. The identity of the people who inhabited the west of Scotland and the north-east of Ireland, in historic times, is certain, and that can scarcely have altogether arisen from the later Scotie occupation from Ireland, which was indeed only the migration of tribes to places already occupied by others related to them. This earlier and prehistoric relationship is quite borne out by the evidence which the burial mounds afford."

We now pass on to another remarkable series of sepulchral cairns, whose special peculiarities were first clearly brought to light by Dr Joseph Anderson.¹ An excellent *résumé* of these investigations is given in 'Scotland in Pagan Times,' pp. 229-268. The situation and general appearance of two of these cairns are thus described: "On the crest of a considerable eminence overlooking the south end of the loch of Yarhouse, on the estate of Thrumster, in Caithness, are two cairns of great magnitude within a short distance of each other. They are not circular, but elongated in form; they lie across the crest of the hill from east to west; they diminish in breadth and height from east to west; and they have at both ends curved horn-like projections of their structure, falling gradually to the level of the ground."

The larger of the two cairns was 240 feet in length, and 12 feet in height at its east end, with a base configuration as outlined in the accompanying plan (fig. 187). The chamber, which was reached at the end of a short passage, was found to be small in proportion to the gigantic size of the cairn, being only 12 feet long by 6 feet wide. The roof had fallen in, but the side walls, to the height of 7 feet, still remained, and showed signs of convergence indicating a beehive structure. The ground-plan of the chamber was roughly quadrangular, and divided into three compartments by two pairs of divisional stones projecting from the side walls, and leaving a passage of about 2 feet between their edges. These divisional stones did not reach the roof. The most novel feature of the investigation was the discovery that the cairn had originally been constructed with a well-built double walling of dry stones along its entire perimeter. In some places the foundation stones only were

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. vi. p. 442, and vol. vii. p. 480; Memoirs of Anthropol. Soc. Lond., vol. ii. p. 226.

in situ, but in others as much as 4 feet remained. No relics were found in the chamber, but its floor was a compact mass, about 5 inches thick, of "earthy clay, plentifully intermixed with ashes and charcoal of wood, and calcined bones, in a condition of extreme comminution. Although the amount of

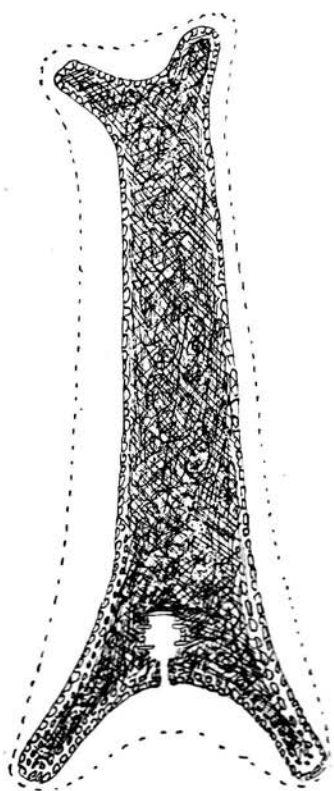


Fig. 187.—Ground-plan of cairn at Yarhouse (240 feet in length).

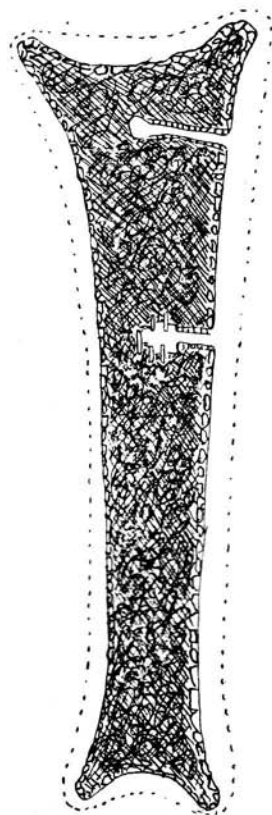


Fig. 188.—Ground-plan of cairn at Camster (195 feet in length).

bone-ash which entered into its composition was very large, no single fragment of bone was discovered exceeding an inch in length. The fragments that afforded definite indications, such as portions of teeth, jawbones, and phalanges, were unmistakably human in character. About a dozen chips of flint—mere chips, and mostly small—and two fragments of

pottery, of a well-made, hard-baked, thin, and black paste, were all the manufactured relics that were obtained."

The second "horned cairn" was 190 feet in length, and its structural details closely resembled those of the former. The chamber was divided, in its lower part, into three compartments, and covered over by one beehive roof, which, however, had collapsed. On the floor of the first compartment, to the left of the entrance, there was a cist, 4 feet 4 inches long, 20 inches wide, and 9 inches deep to the level of the floor. "At this level in the dark earthy clay which filled the interior of the cist there was a whitish layer of softened bones in a condition of extreme decay. In the east end of the cist were the fragments of an urn, ornamented with the parallel bands of impressions of a twisted cord, showing the fibrous texture of the strands. A necklace of small beads of lignite had been deposited with the urn, and by washing the clay removed from the cist seventy of these were recovered."

The floor in all the compartments consisted of clay, ashes, and charcoal with burnt bones, human and animal, forming a compact layer some 6 inches in depth, and on its surface there were some greatly decayed fragments of unburnt human bones and teeth. But no relics except the urn and the beads already mentioned were found.

Dr Anderson describes a third cairn, of the same character as the two at Yarhouse, on a ridge on the Moor of Camster, some three miles distant. It differed, however, from them in having two chambers with entrance passages on the south side as shown on fig. 188. One of the passages terminated in a small beehive cell, the lower part of its walls being composed of five slabs set on edge. The floor consisted of two rough flagstones lying on the undisturbed subsoil, and neither above nor underneath them was there any trace of sepulchral deposits. The other chamber was 50 feet from the former.

The entrance to it (some 4 feet high) was partly covered over by lintels and partly arched by the overlapping of the stones. The roof of the chamber had fallen in, but its construction appeared to be similar to those already described. The floor was also the same as at Yarhouse—a compact mass of clay, ashes, and burnt bones—human and animal. Among the loose layers on its surface were a few fragments of skulls and of other human bones, mingled with splintered bones of the horse, ox, deer, and swine.

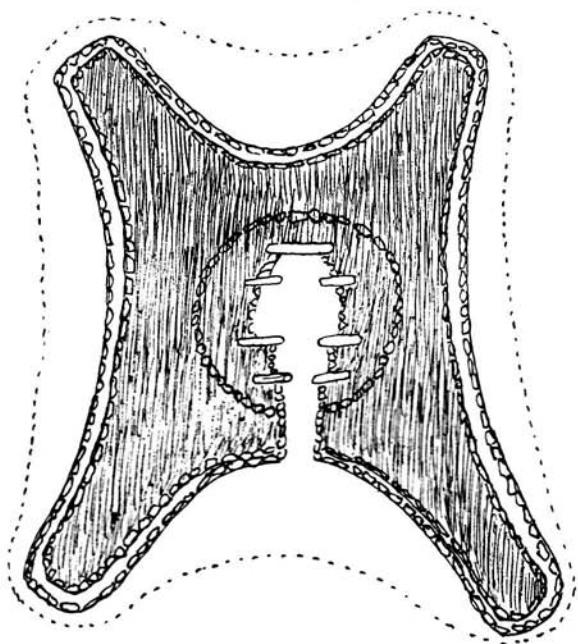


Fig. 189.—*Ground-plan of cairn at Ormiegill (66 feet in length).*

Another variety of the “horned” cairn presents the same characteristics in external form and internal structure as those at Yarhouse and Camster, with the exception that the body of the cairn is greatly shortened, as shown in fig. 189, which represents the ground-plan of a chambered cairn at Ormiegill, near Ulbster. The contents of the chamber in this cairn are thus described: “On the floor of the chamber a quantity of unburnt bones of human beings and animals lay, mingled with

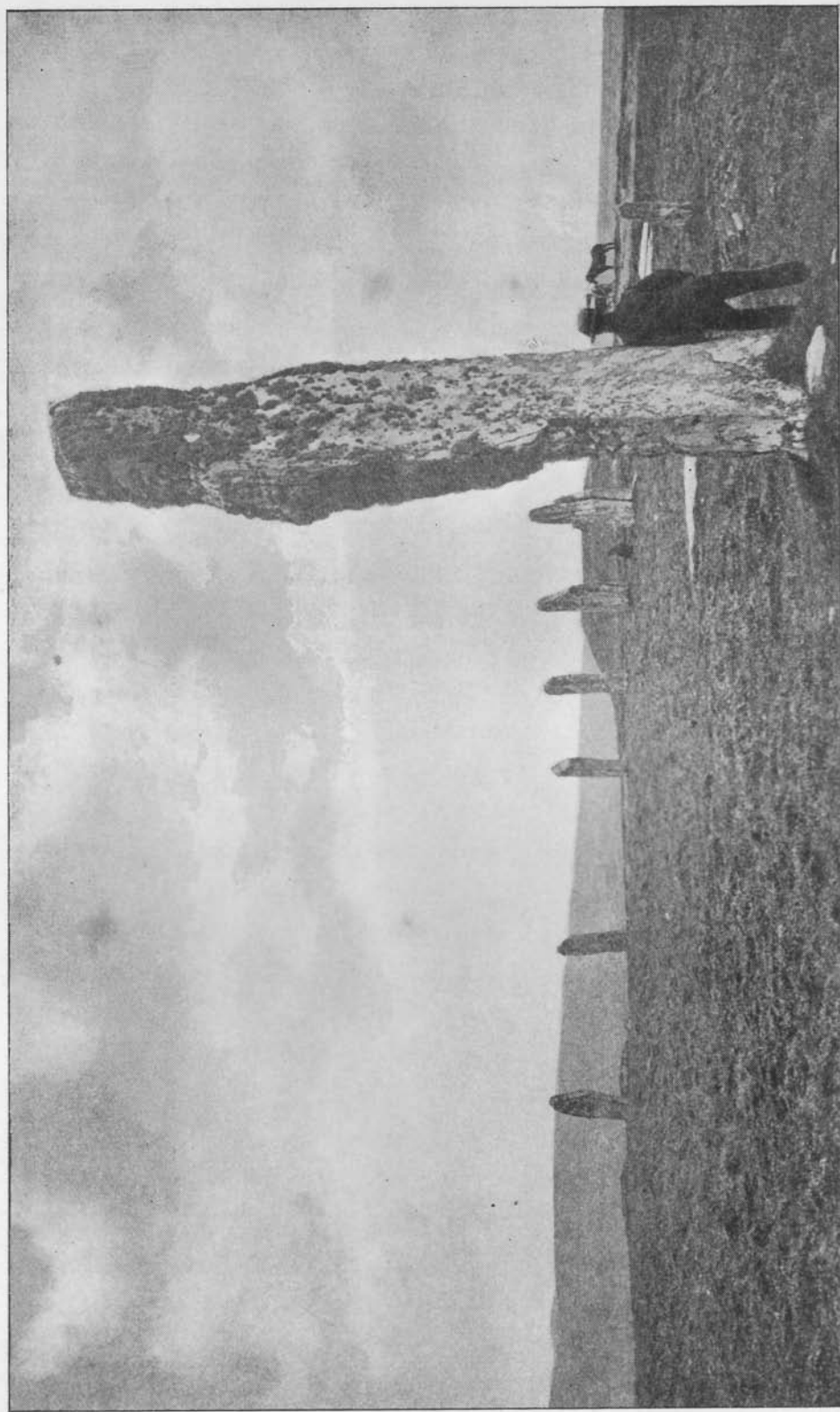
the *débris* of the upper part of the cairn, with which the chamber was filled. The floor itself consisted of a layer of ashes fully a foot thick. A pavement of slabs had been laid in some parts of the chamber, and this layer of ashes extended both over and under the pavement. The natural subsoil beneath was in some places deeply pitted, the pits being filled with the same compacted layer of ashes and bones. The quantity of burnt bones in the ash-bed was very great. We recognised about thirty fragments of skulls, which, from their varying size and thickness, we judged to have been those of different individuals. The bones were very irregularly burned, some being merely charred in part of their length, and others completely calcined. Besides the human bones, there were a very large number of bones of animals, among which were those of the horse, the ox, the deer, the dog, the swine, and some leg and wing bones of fowls. Fragments of pottery, many of them indicating that they had been portions of round-bottomed vessels, made of a thin dark-coloured paste, hard and smooth, and without ornament, and a great quantity of chips and flakes of flint, were intermixed with the ash-bed throughout. In the central compartment of the chamber, embedded among the compacted ashes of the floor, there were found a finely polished hammer of grey granite, 4 inches in length, pierced with a hole for the handle; the point end of a finely finished flint knife, with a ground edge; an arrow-head of flint, triangular in form, but lop-sided, and hollowed at the base; an oval and pointed knife of flint formed from a flake trimmed to an edge all round; several flakes, serrated on one side, which seemed to have been used as saws; and a number of well-made scrapers of flint of the usual form. In the first compartment of the chamber another arrow-head of the same triangular form was found.”¹

¹ Scotland in Pagan Times, p. 244.

The cairn of Get, near Bruan, which in form resembles that at Ormiegill, has only two chambers, but Dr Anderson draws attention to the curious and suggestive fact that "the divisional stones, which would have formed the partitions between the second and third compartments, are in their places; but, instead of being set across the floor as divisional stones, their faces are set flush with the walls, so that the second and third compartments are thrown into one." On the surface of the floor of the outer compartment, and on the right of the entrance, were four unburnt human skeletons, with the skulls lying close to the wall. The floor of the chamber was a mass of compacted ashes and bones fully 18 inches thick, both man and beast being represented—the latter comprising "horse, ox, dog, deer, swine, and probably the sheep or goat." Flint flakes and chips were found in abundance throughout the mass, as well as fragments of "pottery of a blackish colour, some of which retained indications of their having been portions of round-bottomed vessels, thin, hard-baked, well made, and mostly unornamented." Three small but finely worked leaf-shaped arrows were the only other articles found in the chamber.

A third variety of the chambered cairn differs from the two former varieties by not having the horned projections (fig. 190), but the structure of the internal chamber remained much the same as already described. One of these cairns—viz., that at Bruan—disclosed a slight deviation which, as we shall afterwards see, became a highly specialised feature in another group. This was a small side-chamber, opening from the second or innermost compartment of the bipartite chamber, which was enclosed in this cairn (fig. 191).

The district between Stromness and Kirkwall is particularly rich in the remains of primitive times, especially those of an imposing character, such as brochs, Picts' houses, chambered



From a Photo by G. W. Wilson, Aberdeen.

PLATE VII.—THE RING OF BROGAR, ORKNEY. (340 feet in diameter.)

cairns, tumuli, stone circles, &c., some of which may still be said to defy all efforts to fathom the secret of their origin and meaning. A few years ago

I visited the locality, and in driving from the Picts' house of Skail to Maeshowe, traversed lengthways the peninsula which separates the Lochs of Stennis and Harray. My first halt was at the Ring of Brogar (Pl. VII.), situated on a bleak moor about a quarter of a mile from the bridge which crosses the narrow strait connecting the two lochs. Of the great circle

—for there are a few smaller ones and six or seven tumuli scattered over the district—only fourteen stones were standing and fifteen lying in the heather, out of the sixty which originally completed it. Some of the stones might be about 15 feet high, but others do not rise above the surface more than 6 or 7 feet. Outside the line of the stones there is a ditch from 20 to 30 feet wide, and 6 feet deep. The area enclosed by the ditch measures 110 paces in diameter, and access to it is got by two unexcavated portions of the ditch, like roads entering it on opposite sides. On the way to the bridge we pass a few

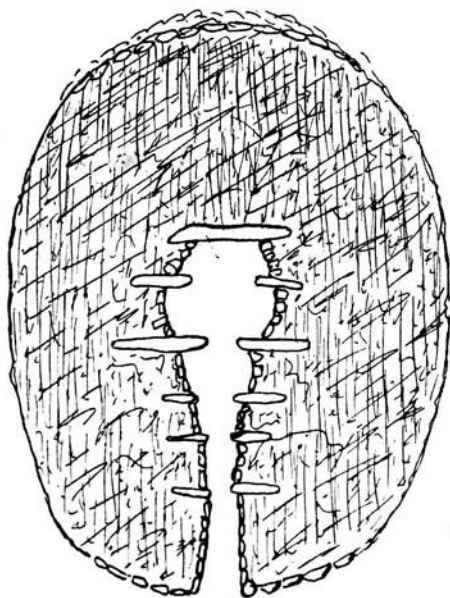


Fig. 190.—Ground-plan of chambered cairn at Yarhouse (about 55 feet in length).

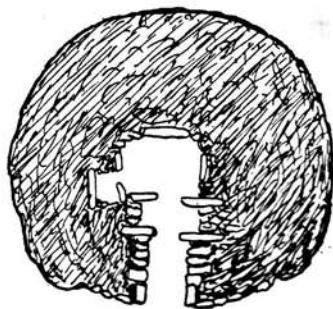
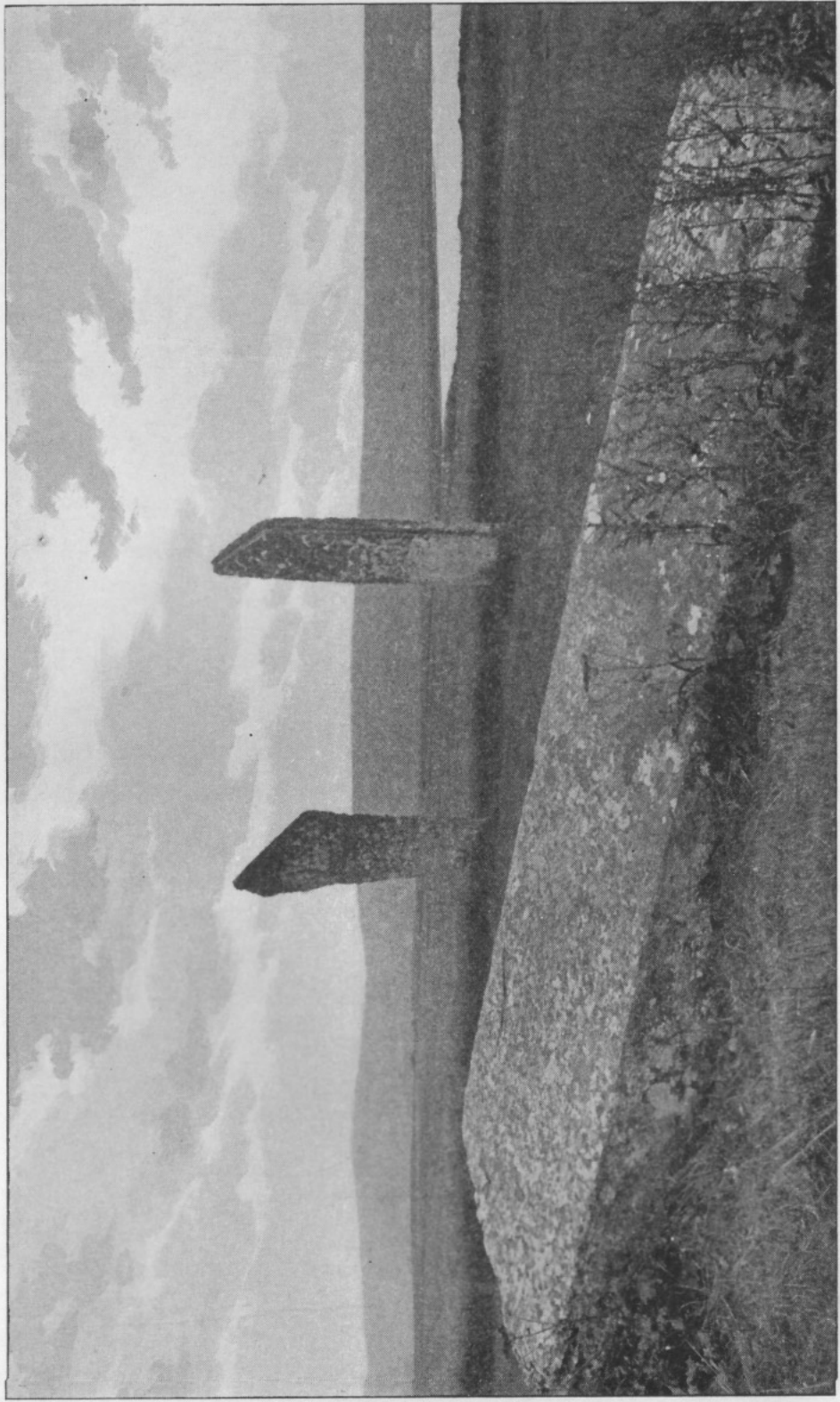


Fig. 191.—Ground-plan of chambered cairn at Bruan (about 40 feet diameter).

standing stones and mounds, and immediately after crossing it there stands on the roadside a splendid monolith some 17 feet high. About 150 yards farther on are three great monoliths—two standing and one fallen—near the ruins of a dilapidated dolmen, which appears to have been enclosed by the stone circle when in its original condition (Pl. VIII.) In a field, about a mile to the east of this ruined circle, at the base of low hills, rises the green grassy tumulus of Maeshowe (Pl. IX.)

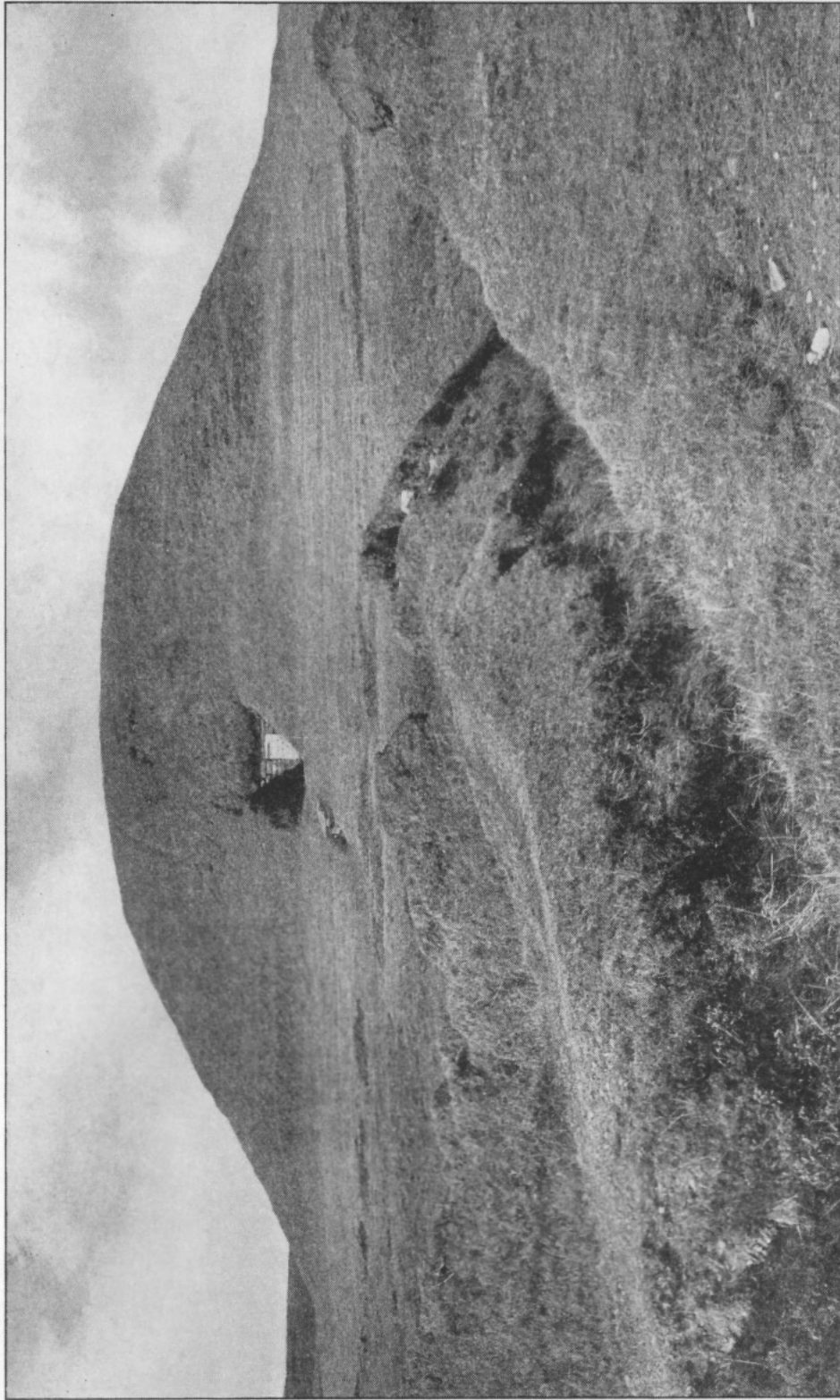
From the account of the excavations conducted by Mr Farrer and other antiquaries in 1861,¹ and from my own note-book, I have compiled the following short account of this remarkable monument. The mound, 92 feet in diameter and 36 feet in height, is surrounded by a trench 40 feet wide and 4 to 8 feet deep. During Mr Farrer's investigations, entrance to the interior was effected by driving a shaft from the top, till the chamber was reached through its previously fallen roof (fig. 193). When, or in what circumstances, the collapse of the roof had taken place it was impossible to say. When cleared, the chamber was found to be 15 ft. square and 13 feet high to the top of the remaining walls. Behind three window-like openings, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet square and 3 feet above the floor, one in each of the north, south, and east sides, are three small vaults or cells; the fourth side contained a symmetrical opening, but larger—viz., the inner end of the entrance passage. These cells vary a little in size, but they are all of the same height (3 feet), and have their back walls and roofs made of single slabs. The walls and roof of the chamber are made of large stones from the hard claystone of the neighbourhood, which, readily splintering into rectangular masses, present clean cut surfaces well adapted for building purposes. The roof was formed by the overlapping of each successive layer, and only

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. v. p. 247.



From a Photo by J. Valentine, Dundee.

PLATE VIII.—THE CIRCLE OF STENNIS, ORKNEY. (Only two stones standing.)



From a Photo by G. W. Wilson, Aberdeen.

PLATE IX.—THE TUMULUS OF MAESHOWE, ORKNEY.

differed from the beehive structures by having this convergence on two opposite sides—viz., north and south—the other two being continued perpendicularly, like the gables of a house. The four corners of the chamber were buttressed by tall slabs and some dry-stone walling, covering about 3 feet

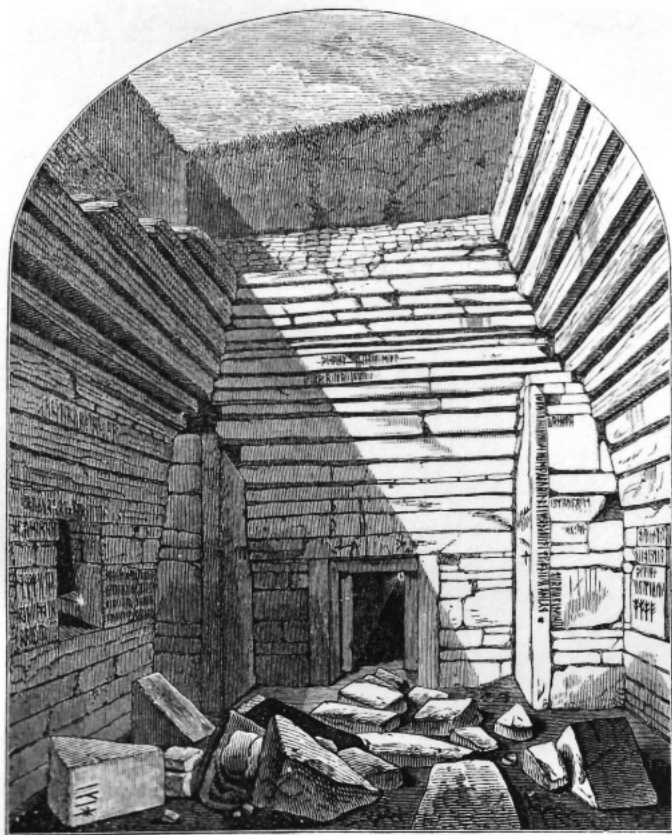


Fig. 192.—View of the central chamber in Maeshowe looking towards the entrance passage.

square at the base, and reaching to the commencement of the overlapping stones of the roof—peculiarities which are well seen in the accompanying illustration (fig. 192).

The entrance passage was 54 feet in length, and at its inner end measures 4 feet 8 inches in height and 3 feet 4 inches in width; but the space gradually diminishes till at

the outer end it would probably be not more than 2 feet 4 inches square (the cover-stones in the outer half had fallen in). The sides of the passage are formed of huge flagstones with smooth even surfaces, one of them measuring over 18 feet in length. See plan and section (fig. 193).

No sepulchral or industrial relics were found in the interior of Maeshowe, but there are indications in favour of the

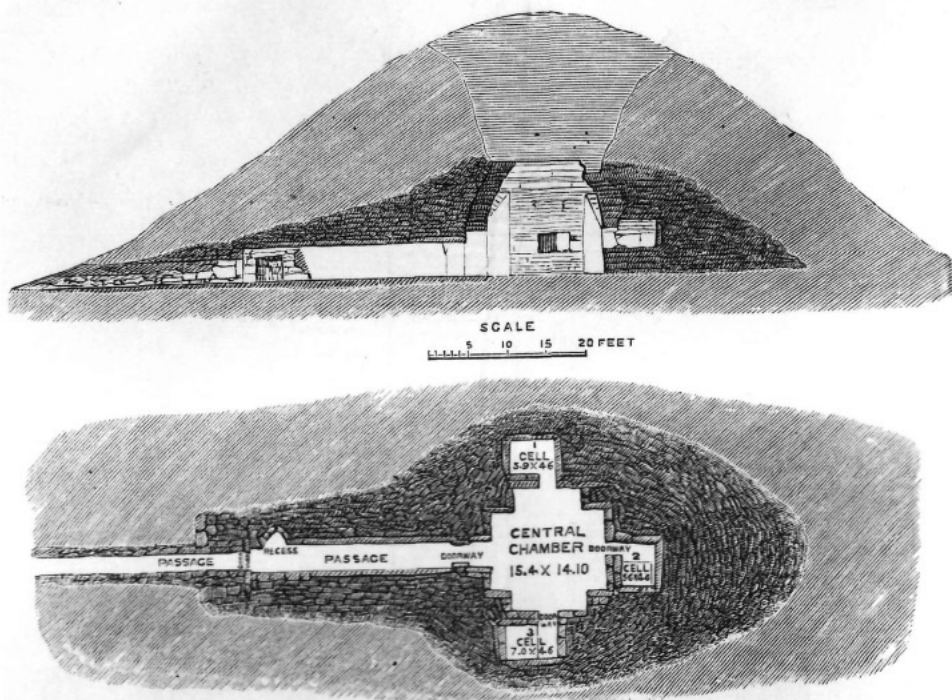
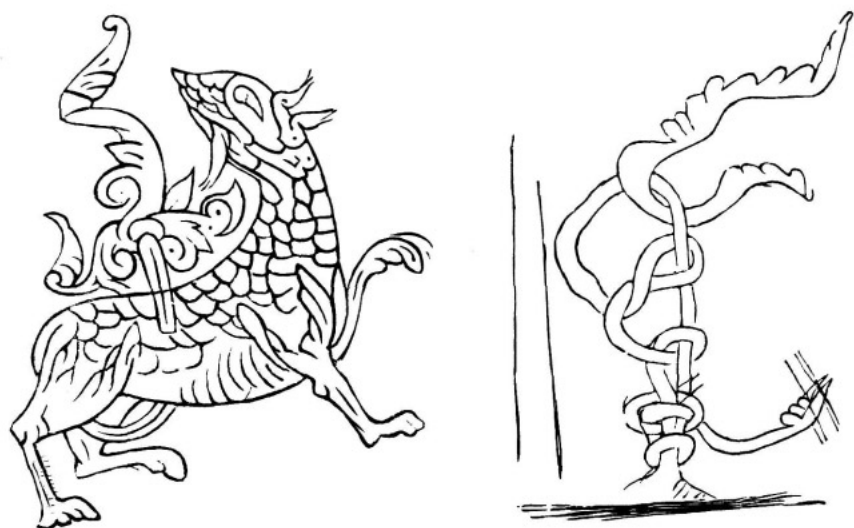


Fig. 193.—Ground-plan and section of Maeshowe.

common opinion that it had been previously rifled of its contents. One of the arguments in support of this is that on the walls there are some runic inscriptions dating back to the middle of the twelfth century. These inscriptions consist of names and short sentences, such as might be scribbled by a party of visitors. One inscription is of importance, as it specifically states that the "Orkahaug" was broken open by a party of Christian pilgrims on their way

to Jerusalem, with the expectation of finding treasure; but that none was found, as it had been previously carried away. From this Professor Munch infers that the intruders were part of the expedition organised by Earl Rognvald when he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1152 A.D. But this episode has no bearing on the date of its construction. On one of the buttresses there is an engraving of a dragon and a serpent-knot of Scandinavian character (figs. 194 and 195), which Dr Fergusson¹ thinks were original decora-



Figs. 194, 195.—Dragon and "Wurm-knot" engraved on a pillar in Maeshowe.

tions of the tomb, and hence he argues that Maeshowe is the work of Scandinavians who conquered the Orkney islands in the ninth century. If so, these northern invaders must have learned the art and plan of building it from the native inhabitants, as there never existed at any time in Scandinavian lands a structure of the peculiar character of Maeshowe. On the other hand, analogous structures are found within the British Isles—especially among the tumuli (fig. 196) of the great cemeteries on the banks of the Boyne, and at Lough-

¹ Rude Stone Monuments, p. 245.

crew, in Ireland. But without entering into the controversy as to the origin and purpose of Maeshowe, it can be readily shown that it differs only in some minor details from numerous other chambered cairns in the Orkneys. In its vicinity there are several examples which illustrate the developmental features and phases through which these chambers passed prior to the construction of Maeshowe.

The "knowe of Unstan," situated on a piece of land jutting out into the Loch of Stennis, a few hundred yards

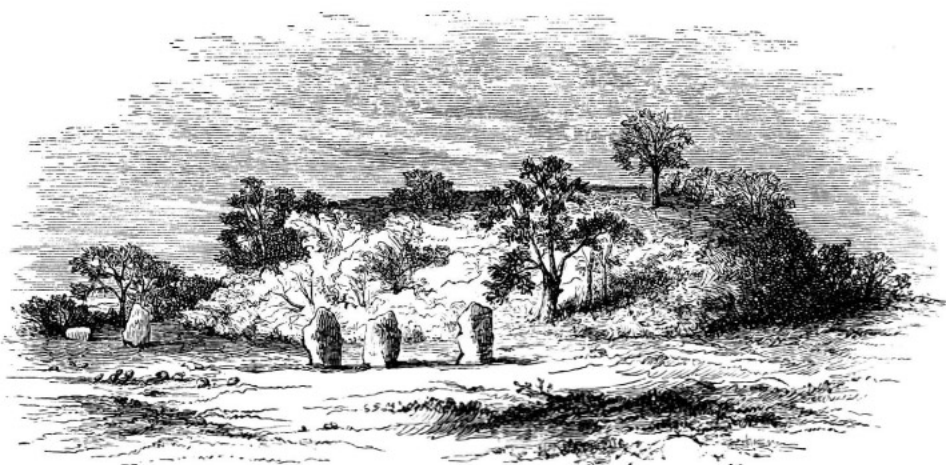


Fig. 196.—View of the great cairn at New Grange, Ireland.

to the north-east of the Bridge of Waithe, was excavated by Mr R. S. Clouston in the year 1884, and yielded a most interesting collection of relics, besides disclosing structural features of importance. "The knowe," writes Mr Clouston,¹ "prior to excavation, presented the same appearance as the usual Orkney tumulus, having an unbroken slope to the ground. This, however, is due to the slipping down of the stones of which the cairn is composed, as there is an external wall surrounding the whole structure, which, in the parts where we found it tolerably entire, was some

¹ Proc. Soc. A. Scot., vol. xix. p. 341.