III.

AN UNRECOGNIZED GROUP OF CHAMBERED CAIRNS.

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In the northern parts of the Scottish mainland two groups of chambered cairns, both of the "passage grave" variety, have long been recognized in archaeological literature. But they have been presented in the textbooks and maps as isolated from one another by a considerable blank area where no such monuments had been recorded or at least correctly diagnosed. On the one hand what I called the "Pentland group," characterized by partitioned oval chambers in long or round cairns, had been defined eighty years ago by Dr Anderson in Caithness and traced to the northern shores of the Dornoch Firth and the Shin by Dr A. O. Curle. On the other hand a homogeneous group of passage graves distinguished by an almost circular chamber covered by a round cairn that was defined by a peristalith of rounded boulders, as was the chamber, and was surrounded by a ring of free-standing uprights, had been described in the Nairn valley in 1884 and was later recognized on the Spey. (For this group I rather perversely suggested the name "Beauly group" in 1940, but now admit that the classic site of Clava in Strath Nairn provides a better designation.) Between the two areas intervened a blank belt from the Dornoch Firth to the Cromarty Firth where no chambered cairns at all had been recognized, while a few ruined monuments in the southern half of the Black Isle had been assigned vaguely to the Beauly (Clava) group.

An emergency survey of most of this area undertaken by the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments (Scotland) and a re-examination of its monuments has completely filled the gap between the two groups. As this will entail a revision of any generalizations based on the distribution of such monuments, the Commissioners have kindly agreed to a summary publication of the evidence here pending the issue of the relevant inventories in a comparatively distant future.

In the first place the survey has revealed a real extension of the "Pentland" group south of the Dornoch Firth to the Conon and the Black Isle and indeed across the Beauly Firth itself into the Clava province of the Nairn-Ness watershed. The list attached will exhibit a regular chain of fourteen long or chambered cairns beginning just west of Edderton and

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1 E.g. Fox, Personality of Britain (1938), fig. 1.
2 R.C., Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Sutherland.
extending along the foothills of Easter Ross overlooking the Cromarty Firth almost to the mouth of the Conon, together with eight comparable monuments east of that firth on the Black Isle. Of these twenty-two monuments only three have been described in our Proceedings or other scientific journal. While a few of these burial places, notably that on Edderton Hill (No. 3),
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...seem to be intact, most have been horribly mutilated; in some cases indeed the covering cairn has been totally removed so that only large orthostats survive. Of the measurable cairns six (Nos. 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, and 24) are certainly long; one at Kinrive (No. 6), measuring 207 feet in length, can compare in size with the classic examples from Caithness, the remainder range from 124 feet at Essich to 86 feet at Wester Brae. All are higher and broader at one end, generally the east, as in Caithness. No horns are superficially visible, but a low heather-clad bank projects obliquely from the wider end of the long cairn at Kinrive in a suspicious manner.

All the exposed chambers in which any plan is recognizable can be classed as passage graves in so far as the construction comprises one section lower and narrower than the other. But in no case is the chamber circular as in the Clava type. On the contrary, in the majority (Nos. 10 and 13 in Easter Ross, and 15, 18, and 21 in Black Isle, and 24 on Essich Moor) the side slabs of the chamber are almost parallel so that they define a sort of long cist. At Balnaguie (No. 21) this cist is only 9 feet 4 inches long by 7 feet wide, and separated from the passage (perhaps 14 feet in length) by a pair of low portal stones projecting transversely from the side walls. But at Mid Brae, judging from the one side that is visible, the chamber must have been some 20 feet in length and divided into two compartments by low partition slabs projecting from the side walls. Whether they serve to subdivide the chamber, as apparently in Nos. 15 and 18, or to separate chamber and passage, as probably in Nos. 10, 13, and 21, these transverse slabs are conspicuously lower than the lateral slabs and headstone of the chamber.

These cist-like chambers seem at first sight a far cry from the classical “Pentland” plan as established in Caithness. Yet in the admittedly “Pentland” group just north of the Dornoch Firth the same sort of plan is seen at Torboll and Achany. Moreover, in the last-named cairn and at The Ord the transverse (partition) slabs are lower than the lateral slabs in contrast to the tall slabs used in Caithness and Strath Naver. Conversely even in the long Ross-shire cists the lateral slabs supported courses of drystone walling as a fragment of corbelling, luckily preserved at Woodhead (No. 18), demonstrates.

An undivided polygonal chamber can legitimately be deduced from the positions of the surviving orthostats at Ardvanie (No. 1) and Ballachnecore (No. 12). In both cases the portal stones are the lowest in the chamber. The same sort of plan is illustrated at Achaidh, north of the Dornoch Firth, and more frequently in the west. Finally in the upper cairn at Lechanich (No. 2) there seems to be a bipartite oval chamber, 20 feet long and 7 feet wide, defined by built walls of flat slabs oversailing inwards combined with

1 R.C., Sutherland, Nos. 447, 134.
2 Ibid., No. 444.
slabs on edge quite in the manner normal farther north. Moreover, in all cases the builders have used split angular slabs and not the complete rounded boulders that figure so prominently in the construction of Clava cairns and chambers.

Since the newly described monuments in Easter Ross and the Black Isle belong so clearly to the "Pentland" group, both geographically and typologically, there can be no a priori objection to treating four monuments south of the Beauly Firth as a further extension of the same group. For, though situated well within the "Beauly" province, they lack all the distinctive features of the Clava type and do exhibit some features in plan and construction appropriate to the Pentland series. The ruin on Leachkin Hill, west of Inverness, is indeed too dilapidated for reconstruction without excavation at least, but is certainly built of angular blocks rather than rounded boulders. The monuments on Essich Moor, south of Inverness, though also much disturbed, justify more positive conclusions. The three cairns in line now appear as a single ridge of boulders running north and south for 380 feet, but divided by two lower, narrower, and more scrub-clad tracts into three segments. The northernmost segment at least is 120 feet long by 50 feet wide and surrounds an opened cist-like chamber of split slabs, while the southernmost, though more nearly round (124 feet N.-S. by 94 feet E.—W.), covered a chamber partly walled with neatly coursed flat slabs (Pl. II, 1).

At Essich the northern "Pentland" type intrudes into the "Beauly" province, since even in 1884 Fraser had identified five "stone circles" of the Clava type between the Nairn and the Ness. On the other hand the Clava type overflows northward into the newly defined extension of the Pentland province. For it is now possible to list six typical Clava cairns west of the Ness—the first of which at least, Carn Urnam in the Black Isle, lies well within the area where we have traced a preponderance of Pentland cairns. (The cairn near Alcaig Manse may also belong to this group, but dense brambles effectively hid all diagnostic details when I visited it.) All these six western cairns exhibit the distinctive Clava features of close-set rounded boulders, defining cairn and generally chamber too, and of a ring of free-standing uprights outside the cairn, while in addition cup-marked stones can be seen in the peristalith or in the outer circle at Nos. III, IV, and V. The chambers were certainly entered through a passage in Nos. I and VI (as in Clava 1 and 3), but at II and III probably and at IV certainly were closed as in Clava 2. The great cairn at Corrimony is, we hope, intact so that the nature of the chamber is undefined.

The new monuments listed below make the derivation of the family of Clava cairns in the Beauly, Ness, Nairn, and Spey valleys from the northern Pentland series geographically possible. On the other hand the contrast

in plan and structure between the two types, now emphasized by Carn Urn and the Essich cairns, is hardly compatible with such a theory. The new discoveries do not in fact illustrate the Pentland type turning into a Clava type.

**INVENTORY OF CAIRNS AND CHAMBERS: EASTER ROSS.**

1. **Ardvanie (Edderton Par., Ross., xxvii),** in a small wood on a rolling plateau just below the 100-foot contour between the main road and the railway; denuded cairn about 70 feet in diameter; near centre polygonal chamber opening to E. and 11 feet long by 6 feet wide, defined by a headstone, four side slabs and a low portal stone.

2. **Lower Lechanich (Edderton Par., Ross., xxvii),** on a small knoll on a spur projecting S.E. from Suie Hill towards the farm rather below the 300-foot contour; denuded round cairn some 50 feet in diameter. Within is exposed the rim of a chamber orientated nearly E.–W. defined by a tall headstone, the upper edge of a slab in the south side joined to the headstone by a curved segment of drystone wall corbelled inwards at the top, and a smaller fraction of a side slab in the north wall; 10 feet E. of the headstone a low slab projects at least a foot from the line of the south wall. Beyond it that line is continued by a strip of built wall 6 feet long terminating on the east in the southernmost of a pair of jamb stones, 2 feet 3 inches apart along the edge and still carrying a lintel. Five feet farther E. another pair of jambs, 1 foot 9 inches apart, is exposed 10 or 12 feet from the apparent edge of the cairn.

3. **Lower Lechanich (ibid.).** About 100 yards S.E. of No. 2 and about 50 feet lower down is another round cairn, much denuded but probably 60 feet in diameter, curiously situated on the slope from a knoll towards the arable land of Lechanich. Three stones forming one side of a passage or cist are exposed on the eastern margin of the cairn; 6 or 7 feet outside the periphery of the cairn are four angular uprights and three similar slabs lying prostrate.

4. **Red Burn (Edderton Par., Ross., xli).** On a terrace of arable land about 450 feet above O.D. on the north flank of Edderton Hill, a round cairn 70 to 80 feet in diameter and 11 to 13 feet high. On the east side 25 feet from the edge of the cairn and some 5 feet above it is exposed a lintel measuring 5 feet 3 inches by 1 foot 2 inches by 1 foot 9 inches.

5. **Wester Lamington (Logie Easter Par., Ross., xli),** a cairn 96 feet long, N.W.–S.E., 62 feet wide at S.E. end and 48 at the other, situated on the highest point of a broad moor sloping gently to the S.E. from the 450-foot contour.

6. **Kinrive (Kilmuir-Easter Par., Ross., liv).** On the S.E. slope of Kinrive
above the crofts and about 500 feet above O.D. a long cairn of naked broken stones and boulders measuring 207 feet N.E.–S.W., 61 feet wide at the N.E. end and 42 at the S.W. From the N.E. end a turf and stone dyke runs N.W. for 72 feet (Pl. III, 1).

(7) Kinrieve (ibid.). About 50 yards N.E. of No. 6 and on the same level a denuded long cairn orientated as No. 6, but only 45 feet long by 25 feet wide. Trans. Invern. Sci. Soc., v. (1899), p. 363.

(8) Kinrieve (ibid.). The cairn marked about ¼ m. S. of No. 6 and lower down is stated to have been totally removed within the last thirty years, exposing a chamber some uprights of which survive. We failed to find these in the dense wood. The cairn is said to have been 66 feet in diameter.

(9) Milleraig (Rosskeen Par., Ross., lxxv). On the arable land sloping down from the farm towards Alness, about the 200-foot contour, a cairn was removed about 1854. The surviving remains suggest a round cairn 110 feet in diameter with a megalithic chamber in the centre, of which one slab from the N. side, 9½ feet long and over 6 feet high, and a low transverse slab at its E. end survive.

Between Nos. 9 and 10 outside the areas included in the Commission's emergency schedule the 6-inch O.S. maps mark several cairns that may comprise long or chambered examples.

(10) Strath Skiach, Balnacrae (Dingwall Par., Ross., lxxvi). On the southern slope from Cnoc nan Each to the River Skiach just above the 800-foot contour stand the ruins of a megalithic chamber orientated N.E.–S.W.—let us say for convenience E.–W. however—within a cairn the outlines of which have been completely obscured by subsequent work that has also deformed the chamber. The latter is represented by two irregular lines of enormous uprights, 25 feet in length, the northern of which consists of four slabs now leaning at various angles and the southern of three, of which two are prostrate (one being 9 feet long and 5½ feet wide), and a pair of lower jamb stones with an axial aperture of 1 ½ feet between them. Beyond the jambs are traces of a lower and narrower passage extending eastward for a further 19 feet. No headstone survives between the two rows at the W. end of the "chamber," but a slab standing over 6 feet high and 4 feet 10 inches wide projects northward from the N. row of uprights (fig. 2).

(11) Heights of Brae (Fodderty Par., Ross., lxxvi). On the broad ridge of moorland between Strath Skiach and Strathpeffer and in sight of No. 10 are remains of a terribly denuded cairn and eleven uprights, as well as some prostrate slabs. The construction has suffered too much disturbance to be interpreted with confidence.

(12) Ballachnecore (Urray Par., Ross., lxxxviii). Near the west end of a
spur of Cnoc Mor four orthostats seem to define a polygonal chamber 14 feet long and perhaps 9 feet wide, while E. of a pair of low jamb stones three low side slabs and a pair of portals should mark a passage

![Fig. 2. Ruined chamber near Balnacrae, Strath Skiach.](image1)

3½ to 4½ feet wide and 12½ feet long, of which one lintel is more or less in position. The covering cairn has been almost entirely cleared away. The function of two stones outside the construction cannot be determined.

(13) Contin Mains (Urray Par., Ross., lxxxvii). On a knoll about 140 feet above O.D. and sloping down on the S. to Black Water, the preparation of a private burial-ground has destroyed a cairn, possibly

2. Essich. Chamber in south cairn.

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UNRECOGNIZED CHAMBERED CAIRNS.

[To face p. 32.]
1. View along Long Cairn, Kinrive (No. 6), from N.E. end.

2. Capstone supported by corbelling at Woodhead, from west.

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UNRECOGNIZED CHAMBERED CAIRNS.
1. Contin Mains, looking north-east.

2. Chamber at Balnaguie, looking west.
surrounded by a stone circle, and exposed some remains of a bipartite cist or chamber and passage orientated E.—W. and opening to E. These consist of two side slabs, 8 feet apart and measuring respectively 3 feet 4 inches by 7 feet 8 inches by 1 foot 7 inches and 2 feet 3 inches by 6 feet 2 inches by 1 foot 6 inches; a pair of partition slabs less than 3 feet high and 2½ feet apart; the north side slab of a passage or ante-chamber 2 feet 10 inches by 5 feet 8 inches by 1 foot 3 inches, with three very large cup-marks on its upper edge; and two portal stones 3 and 3½ feet high respectively and 2¾ feet apart, with a very low sill stone set between them. North of the chamber is a prostrate slab over 7 feet long that may have stood on a circle in or outside the peristalith, while 30 feet W. of the chamber are exposed two thin slabs possibly belonging to a short cist (fig. 4 and Pl. IV, 1).

(14) Ussie (Urray Par., Ross., lxxxviii). On the crest, but not the summit, of the ridge between the Contin and Ussie Burn stand a confused cluster of megalithic uprights within a disturbed and much denuded cairn.

**BLACK ISLE.**

(15) Mid Brae (Resolis Par., Ross., lxxvii). A spur of Mt. Eagle, running N. towards Newhall Pt., forms a long and very broad ridge that slopes very gently downwards along its axis and almost more gently towards the Alt Dubhach on the east, but quite steeply towards the Cromarty Firth on the (N.)W. Overlooking the Firth on the brow of the hill just below the 450-foot contour and the crest of the ridge
among the ruins of deserted crofts are the remains of a grievously
denuded cairn and the headstone and four lateral slabs of a cist,
extending 13 feet in a line 21 S. of W. from the headstone. Two
transverse slabs on edge, 14 and 20 feet respectively from the head-
stone and lower than the adjacent lateral slabs, project respectively
1\frac{1}{2} and 2\frac{3}{4} feet into the supposed chamber or cist.

(16) Wester Brae (Resolis Par., Ross., lxxvii). Nearly \frac{3}{4} m. S.S.W. of
No. 15, but on the opposite side of the ridge and so hidden from it,
stands a somewhat mutilated cairn 85 feet long E.N.E.–W.S.W.,
48 feet wide and 5 feet high near the E. end, and 38 feet wide near the
W. end, about 550 feet above O.D.

(17) Woodhead (ibid.). Some 1100 yards S.S.W. of No. 16 at the bottom
of a very shallow depression in the plateau, but about 600 feet above
O.D., is another long cairn orientated E.–W. It measures 110 feet
in length, 45 feet in width near the E. end, and 39 feet near the W. end.
Both Nos. 16 and 17 stand in fields of small cairns, the latter extending
almost to No. 18.

(18) Woodhead (ibid.). On the brow of the slope down towards the Firth,
close to the 600-foot contour and about 400 yards N.W. of No. 17,
is a large but hopelessly disturbed cairn overgrown with dense
bracken amongst which numerous large slabs can be seen. Amongst
these two pairs of nearly parallel uprights seem to form the walls
of a passage or cist section, 12\frac{3}{4} feet long N.E.–S.W., 34 feet wide
at its S.W. end and 5\frac{1}{2} at its N.E. Farther N.E. a pair of transverse
slabs reduce the passage way to 4 feet. The northernmost upright
in the S.E. wall still supports two corbels which, though slipped,
still help to support an enormous lintel that attains a length of 4 feet
along the axis of the chamber, a maximum width of 8 feet, and an
extreme thickness of 3\frac{1}{2} feet (fig. 5 and Pl. III, 2).

(19) Alcaig Manse (Urquhart and Logie Wester, Ross., lxxxviii). On the
crest of a low ridge some 220 feet above O.D., overlooking Cromarty
Firth, the O.S. map marks a “Stone Circle.” Inspection shows that
this was a round cairn covering some sort of a chamber, but the
brambles are too dense to allow of its character being determined or
even to exclude attribution to the Clava type.

(20) Belmaduthy (Knockbain Par., Ross., lxxxix). In a cornfield on the
crest of a very low ridge about 430 feet above O.D. stands a cluster
of ten upright or fallen slabs amidst the deformed remains of a
cairn. The plan of neither cairn nor chamber can be determined

(21) Balnaguie (Knockbain Par., Ross., lxxxix). Near the tip of a projecting
tongue of high ground approximately defined by the 250-foot contour
are the denuded remains of a large and probably circular cairn
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containing an exposed chamber, orientated E.—W. and divided into two sections by transverse slabs. The innermost section, 9\(\frac{1}{4}\) feet long by 7 feet wide, is defined by a headstone on the W. over 7 feet high and 5\(\frac{3}{4}\) feet wide (now leaning westward); two slabs in the N. wall and one in the S.; and two projecting partition slabs with a gap of 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) feet between them, the N. transverse slab is 2 feet lower than the adjacent lateral slab at its N. end and 6 inches lower still at its inner extremity. The outer section or entrance passage is defined by a pair of lateral slabs 6\(\frac{1}{4}\) to 6\(\frac{3}{4}\) feet apart and 5 to 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) feet long. Beyond come two portal stones now 6 feet apart (but the southern one is probably displaced), and 21 feet from the headstone (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., xvi, 488–9).

(22) The Temple, near Allangrange Station (Killearnan Par., Ross., lxxxix). Completely wrecked remnants of a megalithic chamber in a denuded

Fig. 5. Woodhead, No. 18, plan and section through covered section (capstone dotted).

**INVERNESS-SHIRE.**

(23) Leachkin (Inverness and Bona Par., Inverness, xi). In a wood on the spine of the ridge between the Ness valley and the Beauly Firth stand the mutilated remains of a megalithic chamber consisting of a pillar stone 6½ feet high and a number of upright and fallen angular slabs. While no reliable reconstruction of the original plan is practicable, the remains cannot be fitted into a "stone circle" of the Clava type.

(24) Essich Moor (Inverness and Bona Par., Inverness, xx). At the northern end of the easternmost of several parallel ridges that run N.–S. across the marshy plateau that separates the Altt Mor from the Ness valley, about 700 feet above O.D., are three cairns of naked broken stone in line that now look like a single huge cairn 380 feet long (Pl. II, 1). The northernmost, 120 feet N.–S. by 57 feet across the
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chamber by 6 feet high, contains near its N. end part of a cist 6 feet N.–S. by \(4\frac{3}{4}\) feet wide framed by a pair of slabs on edge, preceded by a passage \(9\frac{2}{3}\) feet long, of which only two slabs of the W. side wall, not quite in line with the corresponding wall of the cist, are exposed. The wall terminates in a pillar, presumably a portal stone.

(25) Essich Moor (ibid.). Separated from No. 24 only by a tract 30 feet across N.–S. that is rather lower, narrower, and less stony, is a second mass of broken stones some 76 feet N.–S. by 47 feet E.–W. No central structure is exposed, but at the S.E. corner are the headstone and one side stone of a megalithic cist that must have been at least \(4\frac{3}{4}\) feet wide and \(3\frac{1}{4}\) feet deep.

(26) Essich Moor (ibid.). Due S. of the last-mentioned cairn, and separated from it by a similar lower and less stony belt, is a third accumulation of naked stones 124 feet N.–S. by 94 feet E.–W. by perhaps 8 feet high (but the natural surface of the ridge is also higher at this end). On the main axis of the cairn but rather S. of the centre are exposed a headstone (5 feet wide by \(1\frac{1}{2}\) thick by over \(5\frac{1}{2}\) high) and the east side of a cist or chamber. The side wall is represented by two slabs on edge together with a neatly built wall of oversailing slabs behind and above the northernmost upright (Pl. II, 2); the total length exposed is about 6 feet, but there are superficial indications of a collapsed passage running on southward.

The general character of the foregoing monument or monuments was correctly recognized by the late James D. McCulloch in his small pamphlet Essich and its Traditions (Munro, Aberdeen); cf. also Trans. Invern. Sci. Soc., v. (1897), p. 178.

CLAVA CAIRNS WEST OF THE NESS.

BLACK ISLE.

I. Carn Urnan (Inenan) (Killearnan Par., Ross., xcix). Chamber 14 feet in diameter entered through passage to the south; peristalith circle
38 feet in diameter; free standing circle of seven uprights 66 feet in diameter (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., xvi. 478–9).

**Beauly Valley.**

II. Belladrum (Kiltarlity Par., Inverness, x). In a wood on a gravel terrace about 100 feet above O.D., incomplete remains of a typical boulder peristalith 43 feet E.–W. by perhaps 40 feet N.–S. enclosing denuded cairn. No chamber nor passage is exposed and no outer circle remains.

III. Bruiach (Auldfearn) (Kiltarlity Par., Inverness, x). In a wood between two burns about 150 feet above O.D., free-standing circle of 14 uprights some 70 feet across, and an apparently continuous peristalith of upright boulders 45 feet in diameter; on the tops of two of the boulders are groups of 5 and 6 cup-marks respectively. The enclosed cairn and chamber have been totally removed to make a pond (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., xvi, 326).

IV. Culburnie (*ibid.*). On a wooded plateau about 200 feet above O.D., in front, and partly in the garden, of croft No. 19 stand a ring of 8 free-standing uprights (graded in height from 5 feet on S.S.W. to 3 feet on N.E.) of diameters 70 by 65 feet; a continuous peristalith of boulders on edge supporting two or three courses of boulder walling built with a marked batter, having diameters of 44 by 42 feet, and enclosing a cairn of small boulders; within this a closed chamber, 17 by 16 feet in diameter, framed with boulders on end supporting courses of slabs and flat boulders. There are cup-marks on the tallest upright in the outer ring and on three of the peristalith boulders (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., xvi. 316).

**Glen Urquhart.**

V. Corrimony (Glenurquhart and Glenmoriston Par., Inverness, xxviii). On dead level meadow land an irregular circle of eleven orthostats of diameters 82 feet N.–S. by 76 feet E.–W. surrounds a cairn spreading over at least 58 by 55 feet and over 8 to 10 feet high from within the skirts of which protrude six large boulders, doubtless members of a typical Clava peristalith with a diameter of some 51 feet. On one stone in the outer ring and on another, now lying on the surface of the cairn but probably taken from the ring, are cup-marks (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., x. 643; xvi. 312).

VI. Cairn Daley, Balnagrantach (Glenurquhart and Glenmoriston Par., Inverness, xxix). In a cultivated field on the brow of a hill, some 750 feet above O.D., are the remains of this cairn excavated by the Inverness Field Club and Scientific Society.