

NOTICES (WITH PLANS, Etc.) OF A PICT'S HOUSE, OR UNDERGROUND CHAMBER, AT MURROES, NEAR DUNDEE; AND OF STONE CISTS FOUND AT FALLAWS, IN MONKIE. BY ANDREW JERVISE, Esq., BRECHIN, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT. (PLATE XIV.)

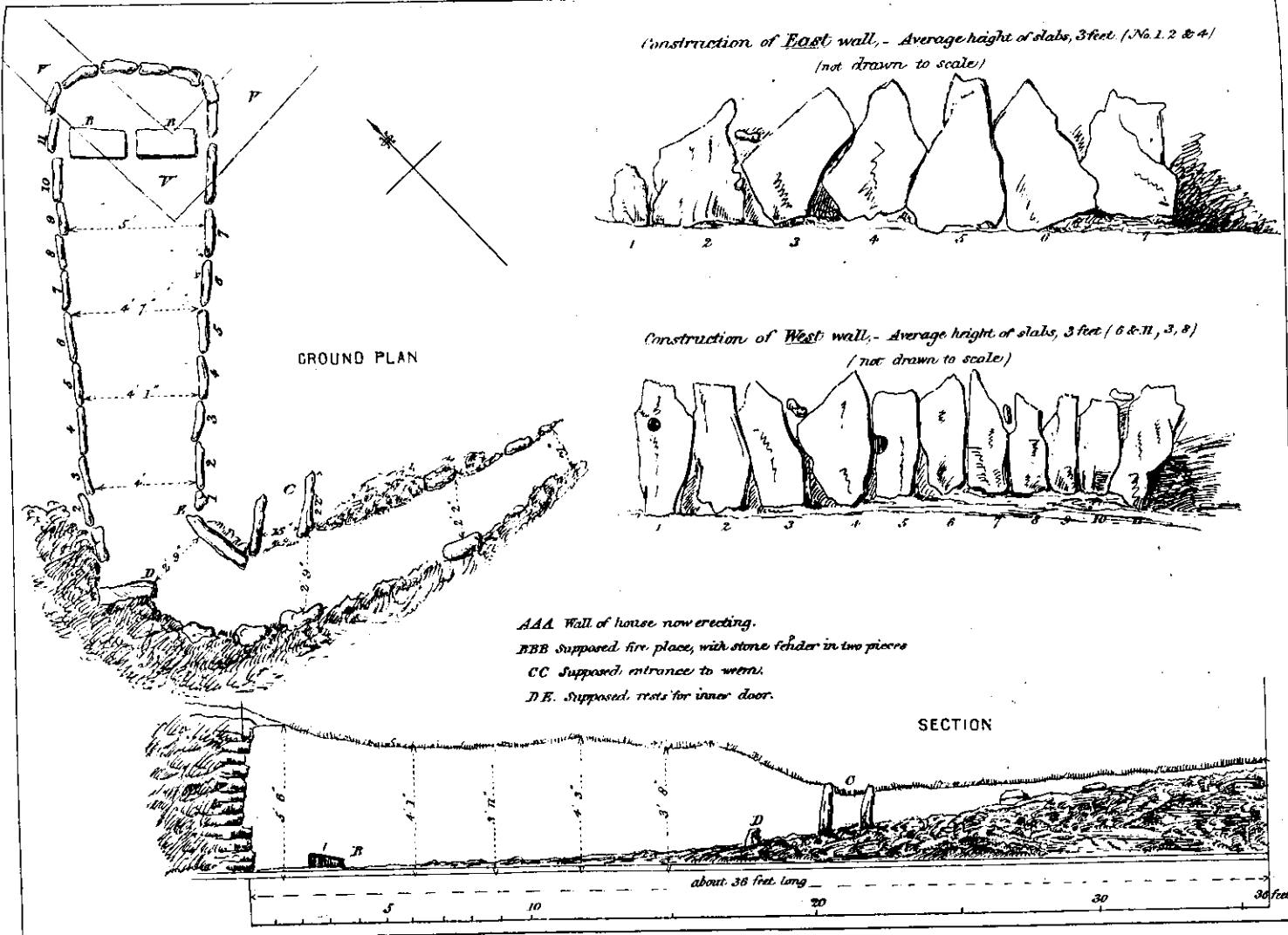
Early in April last, when Mr Sturrock, millwright at Kellas, in the parish of Murroes, near Dundee, was digging a trench for the foundation of a house which he is now building upon a rising ground on the estate of Westhall, an underground chamber or weem was accidentally discovered.

It was supposed to be the ruins of an old well, the inner or circular part having been the portion at first touched upon; but farther excavations brought to light the interesting remains, of which the plan, &c. is now sent by me to the Society. Having been made aware of my being in the neighbourhood, Mr Sturrock very kindly had the whole passage cleared out, and kept open for my inspection. Unfortunately, the inner

or round end of the weem had been destroyed, and the corner of the new house (as shown at AAA on the plan) was erected before I went, so that the peculiarities and measurements of that part (including the description of the two bevelled stones, which were about two feet from the end, and lay across the chamber, within a few inches of both sides, with some inches between them, and which, I suppose, had been used by way of a *fender* for the fireplace) are given on the authority of an intelligent son of Mr Sturrock, who has taken particular note of the construction of the work, and is himself a collector of "nick-nackets." The two stones, whether used as "a fender," or for whatever purpose, have not, so far as I am aware, been found similarly placed in any other weem.

With the exception of the six red sandstones, which are shown as lying on both sides of the south part of the weem, the rest of the stones are pavement slabs, of the same sort as found in the quarries at Gagie, in the same parish. As shown upon the plan, these stones are placed upright. They are from 4 to 6 inches thick; and the average height is about 3 feet, except as noted on sketch, from which sketch their general form and distribution may be pretty correctly ascertained. The only slab with the appearance of *intentional* markings upon it is No. 1, on the west wall, in which a small round hole has been bored, about an inch deep. Luckily, the stones which denoted the entrance at C were found in the position indicated; and the south-east part of the rest of the structure rises rapidly towards the surface of the field, and becomes so shallow, that in its original state there could only have been a few inches between the natural *till* or subsoil, and the surface of the adjacent ground.

The floor is altogether composed of earth, in which considerable quantities of charred wood have been got, but no bones or barley-pickles, &c. Possibly the stone marked D had been used as a sort of rest or lintel for a door, which may have stood against the opposite stone at E, when the chamber was occupied by its inmates; but of the supposed door no trace exists. It is probable that the weem (though the fact is unrecorded) had been opened long, long ago, when the flags which covered the top had been carried off and used for building purposes. Possibly there had been some other weems in the locality, as a great many upright flag-stones were trenched out of the ground, when preparing to build another house or the same property, some years ago.



Construction of East wall, - Average height of slabs, 3 feet (No. 1, 2 & 4) (not drawn to scale)

Construction of West wall, - Average height of slabs, 3 feet (6 & 11, 3, 8) (not drawn to scale)

GROUND PLAN

SECTION

- AAA Wall of house now erecting.*
- BBB Supposed fire place, with stone fender in two pieces*
- CC Supposed entrance to wren.*
- DE. Supposed posts for inner door.*

about 38 feet long

It is curious that there is no tradition regarding the existence of the weem, and the name of the site—*the Cots of Kerrystone*—do not afford any clue to its history. It is about half a mile west by north of the Kirk of Murroes, which has been an ecclesiastical site from earliest record. The district belonged in property to the Celtic Earls of Angus, and Earl Gilchrist gave the church to the monastery of Arbroath about 1211–14. There is an old mansion-house, which, like the kirk, has a picturesque but secluded site, near a considerable burn; and probably, since the Gaelic words *Mohr-uisg*, or *Mohr-ess*, mean a great burn, the parish may have obtained its name from the position of the church. The property of Westhall, upon which the weem was found, belonged to Beaton's in 1526, and was long in their hands.¹ The hill of Laws, with its strangely constructed stone chambers; the old royal hunting forest of Kingenny St Bride's circle; and Cairnrig, all places of high antiquity and antiquarian interest,² lie within two miles of the site of the weem now noticed.

About four and a half miles south-west from the Cots of Kerrystone, in a remote part of the parish of Monikie, at a place called FALLAWS, six stone coffins were found during the autumn of 1868, in the line of the railway now forming between Dundee and Forfar. The cists were all composed of rude red sandstone flags. The first found measured 3 feet 4 by 2 feet 3 inches, was about 18 inches deep, and about 18 inches below the surface. It lay on the south side of a hillock, and a human skeleton, which was entire, excepting a bone of the forearm, lay from east to west. A clay urn, rudely ornamented with the common zig-zag markings, stood at the feet, with the mouth uppermost. In the grave were five pieces of flint. It is worthy of particular note, that the bottom of this cist was partly composed of a piece of red sandstone, 2 feet 3 by 1 foot 8 inches, which was scooped out in the middle, in the same manner as the stones which are often found in and near Picts' houses, and which are supposed to have been used for grinding barley.

Another cist was found about thirty-five yards distant from the one above noticed, in which also were the remains of a skeleton. The cover, in this instance, was about 4 feet 7 by 4 feet 2 inches. The remaining four

¹ Reg. Ep. Brechin. ii. 180; Inq. Spec. (Forfar). v. y.

² Proceeds. of Soc. iii. 449; ii. 446; vi. 98; Sulp. Stones of Scot. i. 29; ii. 54.

graves or cists were found in various places, but between the two above referred to. Some of them contained calcined bones, in which case the ashes lay upon the natural gravel or soil; and where the bones had not undergone the process of burning, the bottoms of the graves were composed of common stone flags.

These graves were found not far from the curious old site and foundations of Hynd Castle; about two miles to the north of which is the Roman Camp of Carbuiddo, described and engraved by General Roy.¹ The locality of Fallaws is composed of a number of gravel knolls or hillocks; and the name, which is by no means uncommon, may be from the Gaelic *Fiadh-lugh* (pronounced *Faclar*), which has some such signification as the "deer hillocks." This would imply the place to have been a favourite haunt of these animals in early times. A little to the south-east, a copious spring is known as the "King's Well;" but why so termed is not preserved either by tradition or history. I may add, that I visited Fallaws along with your worthy Fellow of the Society, Mr Neish of the Laws, who had been previously there, since which time Mr Neish, through the courtesy of the Earl of Dalhousie, has forwarded the stone, which was found in the bottom of the grave above noticed, to the National Museum.