

VI.

NOTE OF AN UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE ON THE FARM OF ARDROSS, NEAR ELIE, FIFE, WITH GROUND PLAN OF THE STRUCTURE. BY CHARLES HOWIE, Esq., SECRETARY TO THE LARGO FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY.

I am instructed by the Largo Field Naturalists' Society to forward to the Society of Antiquaries a short description of an underground chamber found by one of our members in the East Cairn Park at Ardross, near Elie, which, together with the clearing out of the ruins at the Chapel Green of Earl's Ferry, may induce some of you in Edinburgh to visit Elie before this chamber is covered up again, as it is located in a cultivated field. The chamber is 13 feet in length, 8 feet in breadth, and 6 feet in height, walls rudely built of unmortared stones, some of which are buttressed inside to meet the requirements of the flat stone covers.

The whole building is entire, including covers. The stair of ten steps, being of undressed stones, varies in depth from 3 inches to 7, with a turn of wheel steps, none of which appear to be worn by continued use. There were three steps from out below the covers, presenting an entrance of 2 feet 6 inches in width and 2 feet 4 inches in height.

The sandstone of which the house is built is from the sea-shore; no mark of a tool is on any of the stones.

This is not the house we were in search of, which several persons in Elie had been in, but another one, by them unknown until the end of last week.

In using a boring-rod over this land, we find numbers of flat stones buried underground, evidently stones also from the sea-shore.

The authorities at Earl's Ferry are clearing out the ruins at Earl's Ferry Chapel Green. There is a small oblong building attached to a gable without windows, showing a door-way towards the north. Near the west end about two feet of this foundation is standing,—a limed building built on a foundation of round boulders. There is a stone coffin parallel with the north wall; the bones were entirely decayed; length of the coffin 5 feet 9 inches; sides of three undressed thin sandstones, head 1 foot 10 inches; the bottom paved; the covers thin sandstones, apparently from

the sea coast. There appear to be more foundations of unlimed round boulders, but nothing apparently of interest to encourage research, except on the part of the local authority to improve their ground.

The Rev. W. Wood, Elie, remarked that the field in which the underground structure was discovered was called the Cairn Field. Several finds appear to have been made from time to time in the neighbourhood, but as the precise localities have not been recorded, it is not easy to distinguish them from one another. In 1787 the plan of an underground structure discovered on the lands of Elie was sent to the Society of Antiquaries. The place where this structure was found is well known. It has been opened several times since, and is precisely on the highest point of the field, where the cairn must have stood, and in the closest proximity to the sight of the present discovery. It is understood that some of those persons who were engaged in this discovery declare that this structure is not the same one that has been opened on previous occasions, and which they have themselves had the opportunity of examining. It very closely corresponds, however, with the verbal description given of that former one; and this much is certain, that this one has been opened before, for the figures 1200 have been carved on one of the stones in modern characters. If there are *two* subterranean structures in the same place, it might be worth while to search for more.

As these subterranean structures have never been found associated with burials, we are led to suppose that other finds in the neighbourhood which have been recorded have been different from either of the two now spoken of. The old statistical account mentions that a tumulus was opened on the Elie estate "some years ago, in which were found some bones of a remarkably large size, which were sent to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries." This might possibly be the discovery of 1787, in which the bones were probably those of animals. Another discovery was made in 1740, the particulars of which do not seem to have been recorded. A very old residenter in the place, now dead, spoke of an underground cave having been come upon in cutting down and uprooting some trees, in which were a number of stone coffins ranged in the shape of a horse shoe, and piled one above another. Such burial-places have been discovered, both at Aithernie and near Crail on the east coast of Fife.