

II.

NOTICE OF AN EARTH-HOUSE AT ARDROSS, FIFE.

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The Largo Field Naturalists' Society were searching in the East Cairn Park, on the farm of Ardross, near Elie, Fife, when, on the 27th March 1878, Mr John Luke discovered an Earth-house, but at a point east of that indicated by local tradition. Reference was made to the discovery at the time in the local newspaper, and in the Society's *Proceedings*, vol. xii. p. 626, in a communication by Mr Charles Howie, Secretary of the Largo Field Naturalists' Society. A plan was made in the following August by Mr Boothby of Kirkcaldy.

The field was being ploughed on the 2nd March last, when one of the roof-stones of an earth-house was accidentally discovered. The building was examined on the 5th March. When compared with Mr Boothby's plan in the possession of Mr Jamieson, Mr Baird's factor, it was found that this was the same structure as that discovered in 1878.

As no plan accompanied the original notice in the Society's *Proceedings*, it may be of interest now to complete the record by the plan (fig. 1) and description here given.

The site of the structure is near the summit of the rising ground, about a quarter of a mile north of the farm of Ardross. It commands a

wide view. The entrance is on the east side. The floor of the passage is reached by a stair of ten well-constructed steps leading downwards. Unfortunately the walls and ceiling at this part have been destroyed, and it is impossible to determine the character of the entrance. The height

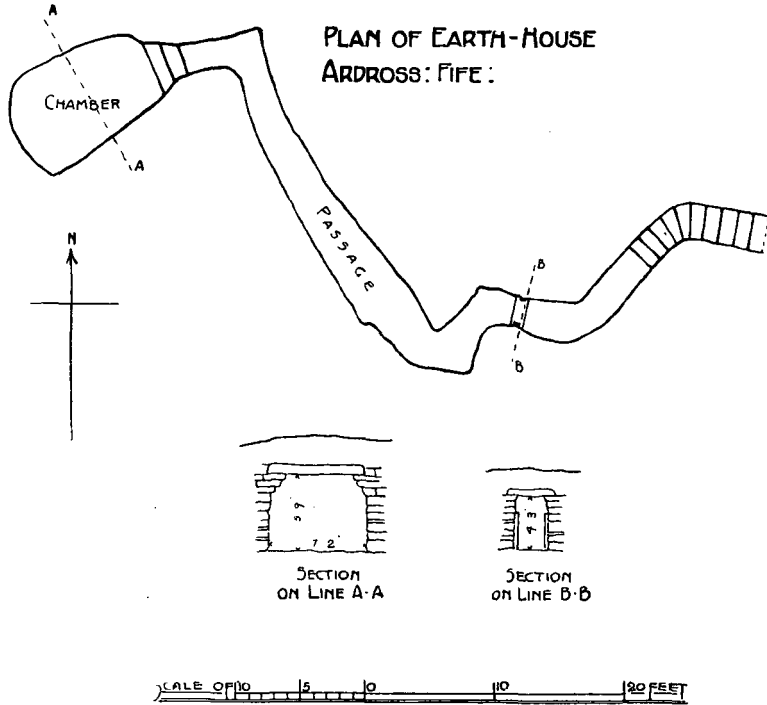


Fig. 1.

of the ceiling of the passage is 4 feet 2 inches, measuring from the top of the lowest step. The floor is of compact sand. The walls are constructed without mortar, of small undressed fragments of local sandstone, roofed over with slabs of the same material. The passage is about 2 feet 6 inches wide, and about 4 feet high. Two jambs, 3 inches

thick, project from the walls some distance from the entrance, narrowing the passage-way to 1 foot 10 inches. The stones are 2 feet 6 inches and 2 feet 9 inches high, and they rest upon a sill-stone 12 inches broad. There is a small recess or pocket in the wall, 10 inches west of the south jamb. Its edges have been worn smooth. The ceiling is reduced to 3 feet 6 inches in height, at a point 2 feet east of the jamb-stones. The total length of the passage is about 60 feet. The chamber at the west end is 12 feet 8 inches long, 7 feet 2 inches broad, and 5 feet 9 inches high. The level of the floor is three steps lower than the level of the passage. The walls lean towards each other, so that at the ceiling they are only 5 feet 6 inches apart. The roofing stones are $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick.

A carefully tooled stone was discovered in the east wall of the passage near the ceiling, and about 8 feet from the north angle before the passage turns westward to the chamber. It is 6 inches square, smooth on the surface, but marked by thin concentric lines. There is a circular hollow in the centre, 3 inches in diameter, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches deep.

A broken and irregular block of whinstone was found detached in the débris at the entrance staircase. It is 2 feet 2 inches long, $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches thick, and is now 14 inches in breadth. There is a socket-hole $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and 2 inches deep about $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the broken edge, and nearly equidistant from the other three sides. The surface is not perfectly level, but slopes downward a quarter of an inch all round from the level of the socket-hole. The surface is marked by concentric scratchings caused by some circular grinding action.

There is some reason to believe that local tradition is well founded, and that there are other early structures in this East Cairn Park to the west of the Earth-house now described. Mr Berwick, of Ardross Farm, has marked the site of a group of stones under the surface of the field, which may be investigated after harvest.