

II.

LONG CAIRNS AND OTHER PREHISTORIC MONUMENTS IN ABERDEENSHIRE AND BANFFSHIRE, AND A SHORT CIST AT BRUCETON, ALYTH, PERTHSHIRE. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, F.S.A.SCOT., DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES.

Last session, in describing the long cairn near Gourdon, Kincardineshire,¹ the first example of this particular class of monument in the north-east of Scotland to be recorded before the Society, I suggested that a thorough search of this part of the country would probably result in the discovery of others. Recently I have seen two more, one in Aberdeenshire and one in Banffshire. Another, also in Aberdeenshire, has been brought to my notice.

A few months ago, Mr James Cruickshank, F.S.A.Scot., having informed me that he knew of a long cairn a few miles from Aberdeen, I was able, in the end of September last (1924), to visit the cairn and several other prehistoric monuments within easy reach of the city, under the guidance of Mr Cruickshank and Mr A. W. Brown, Bankhead, who very kindly motored us to the various sites, Dr W. Douglas Simpson also being present.

LONG CAIRN ON THE FARM OF LONGCAIRN, PARISH OF NEWHILLS.

The remains of this cairn lie alongside the bottom of a field on the farm of Longcairn, about 5½ miles west of Aberdeen Townhouse, and some 350 yards south-south-east of the farm-steading. Though the name of the farm correctly indicates the character of the monument, and though it is marked "Long Cairn" on the Ordnance Survey Map, the structure does not seem to have been brought to the notice of the Society or of the leading Scottish archæologists who have dealt specially with the earlier prehistoric monuments of the country. This is the more remarkable as this cairn seems to be the one referred to in the old *Statistical Account*, vol. vi. p. 34, where, in the description of the parish of Newhills, it is stated that "In the parish is a cairn 108 feet long by 38 feet broad."

The monument is erected on a slight ridge on the south-western slope of Cloghill, at an elevation of 500 feet above sea-level. To the

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lviii. p. 23.

west it overlooks a wide stretch of country up Deeside, with the Grampians in the background, but to the east the view is blocked by Brimmond Hill, and to the north by rising ground. However, a glimpse of the tip of the Mither Tap of Benachie is to be seen towards the north-west.

The cairn is in a terribly dilapidated condition, as most of the stones have been removed from the ends and from a cut through the centre to build dykes round the fields. It now appears as two high, shapeless heaps of clean stones, rising about 9 feet above the base. In its mutilated state it is difficult to determine the original length of the structure, but the stones extend to at least 170 feet in length and 38 feet in breadth. We have seen, however, that the length given in the *Statistical Account* was 108 feet; possibly its length may have been added to as stones were gathered off the fields. The main axis lies 127° east of north magnetic, about east-south-east and west-north-west.

As it now appears, one almost hesitates to express an opinion as to the character or period of the mound. The amount of stones, many of large size, which have been collected in the reclamation of the land in this district is enormous, so much so, that to dispose of them, at two places they have been heaped up in solid masses many feet wide and of great length, which are known in the locality as "Consumption Dykes." But it may be taken as practically certain that the remains under discussion are those of a long cairn. The monument is not a despoiled consumption dyke, as the record in the *Statistical Account* was written long before these dykes were made. Neither is it a mere heap of land-gathered stones formed when the ground was being cleared for cultivation, as it was not the custom to pile up such material to a height of over 9 feet.

Along the northern margin of the cairn are a number of large boulders, but it is impossible to say whether they occupy their original positions. No traces of a burial chamber, nor of horn-like projections at either end, were observed.

Mr Cruickshank informs me that many years ago a cist was found in the cairn, and that the slabs of which it was formed were utilised to make a watering-place for animals at the roadside near by. Though Mr Cruickshank had seen the rude trough we were unable to find it, and it seems to have been removed. No information regarding the size of the cist, or the nature of any relics which may have been found in it, was obtainable.

STANDING STONE, WOODSIDE OF MEIKLE CLINTERTY, NEWHILLS.

Some 15 feet from the north side of a field on the farm of Woodside of Meikle Clinterty, about 200 yards north of the steading, and about 100 yards from the side of the road leading up to it, is a single standing stone. It is placed on the western slope of the Hill of Elrick, at an elevation of 500 feet above sea-level, and the view to the west and north-west is extensive. The stone, which is a slab of quadrangular section, with its pointed top towards the southern edge, faces the west, and measures 4 feet 10 inches in height, 2 feet in breadth and 1 foot 3 inches in thickness at the base. It has quite the appearance of being the solitary survivor of a circle of standing stones.

ROUND CAIRN AND SMALL CAIRNS ON THE HILL OF MARCUS,
PARISH OF DYCE.

In the wood that covers the top of the Slacks, Hill of Marcus, about 500 yards south-east of the farm-steading of Bendauch, and $\frac{7}{8}$ mile south-east of Kinaldie railway station, at an elevation of about 540 feet above sea-level, are the remains of a fine, large, round cairn. It consists entirely of stones, devoid of any covering of soil or vegetation, but its surface has been much disturbed, many cavities having been made on its sides and top. Although some of these hollows are large and deep, it is quite possible that the place of burial, or remains of it, may have survived. The cairn measures some 74 feet in diameter and about 12 feet in height.

In the immediate vicinity, amongst the trees, are numbers of small stone cairns, about 12 feet in diameter and 1 foot in height. Small cairns of this class are quite numerous in the locality, as they are to be found on the tops and higher parts of the low hills round about.

The large cairn is marked on the Ordnance Survey Map.

HUT-CIRCLES AND SMALL CAIRNS, SKENE'S WOOD, PARISH OF
FINTRAY.

In Skene's Wood, now a heathery bit of moorland which was recently covered with trees, some 3 miles north-east of Kintore, is a group of clearly marked hut-circles and small cairns, which were discovered by Mr Brown. Time did not permit of a complete traverse of the moor being made, but in the northern part of the eastern side eight hut-circles, as well as many small cairns, were seen and measured. I was assured that there were, at least, twenty hut-circles on the

ground, and, of course, the cairns were much more numerous. The slope of the moor is gentle, and its elevation above sea-level very little more than 300 feet at the highest point.

The hut-circles which were examined were of fairly large size. In some of them the wall consisted for the greater part of earth, but in others it seemed to be composed largely of stones. Although in many cases spread over a width of 10 and 12 feet, the circular bank often showed a height of more than 2 feet above the surrounding surface. The entrance was invariably within a few degrees of the most southerly point of the circle. The largest of the hut-circles examined had an internal diameter of 35 feet, with a wall 3 feet in height spread over a width of 10 feet; but the general internal diameter was from 25 feet to 30 feet. None of them showed any divisions or structures in the inside.

The cairns consisted of stones partly covered with soil and vegetation. They varied from 12 feet to 19 feet in diameter, and from 18 inches to 2 feet 9 inches in height. One example, 12 feet in diameter and 1 foot 9 inches in height, lay within 3 feet of a hut-circle. While the cairns were usually round, one of oval shape, measuring 18 feet by 12 feet in diameter and 2 feet 6 inches in height, was noted.

An interesting point about this group of hut-circles and small cairns is the low elevation above sea-level at which they occur, as some of them lie below the 300-foot contour line. Mr A. O. Curle in surveying, for the Ancient Monuments Commission, the prehistoric monuments of our most northerly and most southerly counties, found very few groups of hut-circles and cairns below the 600-foot level, the most of them occurring between that and the 900-foot contour line.

LONG CAIRN ON LONGMAN HILL, PARISH OF GAMRIE, BANFFSHIRE.

This very fine cairn, known as the "Longman Cairn," which is a prominent mark on the landscape, occupies the summit of a slight elevation, the Longman Hill, about 500 yards south of the fourth milestone on the Banff and Peterhead main road, and some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles east-south-east of the town of Macduff, at an elevation of about 450 feet above sea-level. Except to the north and north-east, where there is a slight rise in the land, it commands a prospect over cultivated ground greater in extent than from any of the numerous cairns which I have seen in many parts of the country. To the south there is an uninterrupted view as far as the Benachie range, 25 miles away, with the

Grampians in the far distance. On the western arc the eye sweeps round by the Foudland Hills, the Buck of the Cabrach, and Ben Rinnes to the Bin Hill near Cullen and the Moray Firth.

It is strange that the true character of this monument, such a conspicuous feature in the countryside, lying within a quarter of a mile of a main road, should not have been recognised and recorded in our *Proceedings* before this.

The cairn, which has a total length of about 220 feet, looks like a long cairn, 150 feet in length, about 9 feet in height, and varying from 40 feet in breadth at the north end to 25 feet at the south end,

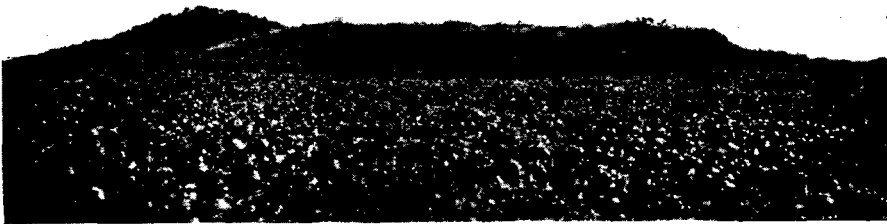


Fig. 1. Long Cairn at Longman Hill, near Macduff.

with a circular cairn, 70 feet in diameter and 14 feet in height, erected on its northern extremity (fig. 1). At the junction of the two parts is a trench-like hollow, 5 feet deep, the bottom of which is about 4 feet above the base of the cairn. The main axis lies 30° east of north, about north by east and south by west. The monument has a thick coating of grass with some whins, which makes it difficult to determine whether there are many stones in its composition. But at one or two places where the surface is broken it seems to consist chiefly of earth, with a few stones. The complete absence of stone dykes round the fields in this part of the country would seem to indicate that there had been a scarcity of surface stones of any size, which would explain the greater use of earth than stones in building the cairn.

The mound seems fairly complete, although a hollow has been dug in the west side of the long part of the cairn, and a smaller one on the opposite side; also a quarry for road metal has encroached on the north-east margin of the round part. At the moment the quarry is being driven past the end of the cairn, and it is to be hoped that no further encroachment will be made on the site.

No indications of horns or of a burial chamber are to be seen. But in the *Transactions of the Banffshire Field Club*, 1897-8, p. 38, it is stated that "On the 18th September 1886 there was found at the west [? south] end of the long barrow a very fine urn about 12 inches high, and filled with calcined bones. After removal it was by some mischance broken and only the merest fragments remain. On 5th February 1888 another urn was found on the circular barrow; it was filled with black mould, about 8 inches high. Its mouth rested in a saucer: it was ornamented with zigzag markings, and which (sic) was surrounded with a ridge of bosses every few inches apart. . . . In both cases they had not been placed near the base [of the cairn]; the frost and rain had washed away the covering, and they were both got near the surface." Evidently these had been secondary burials, the first urn being probably of the cinerary variety, as was possibly the second also.

The cairn, from its peculiar shape, a round head and an attenuating tail stretching away from it, was termed the "lang man" by the people in the locality, and from this the hill got its name.

Mr Alexander Keiller of Morven, one of our Fellows, informs me that there is a long cairn at Balnagowan, near Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, and that its measurements are:—"length, 185 feet; breadth of west end, including spread, 34 feet; breadth of east end, very much spread, 81 feet; height at east end, 7 feet 10 inches; and orientation, 117° magnetic," that is about east by south and west by north.

SHORT CIST AT BRUCETON, ALYTH.

Last spring the Rev. James Meikle, F.S.A.Scot., parish minister of Alyth, notified me of the discovery of a grave on the farm of Bruceton, about 3 miles east-north-east of the village of Alyth, and intimated that Mr M'Crossan, the proprietor, would be very willing to let the grave remain undisturbed until I could go and examine it. I was able to do this, with the assistance of these gentlemen, towards the end of June, Mr M'Crossan very kindly having arranged to have one of his men present to help in the work of excavation.

The farm of Bruceton lies on a rather steeply-rising braeface, on

the right bank of the River Isla, and the grave lay on a slight knowe, at an elevation of about 240 feet above sea-level, some 650 yards south-south-west of the steading, and about half that distance north-north-east of the Mill of Cumno. The spot is in a field called Crossfold, of which the lower part, where the grave is situated, was called at one time the Cumno Heads.¹ About 280 yards to the east-north-east is a sculptured stone bearing the arch or horse-shoe and so-called elephant symbols;² and on the brow of the hill, about 700 yards to the north-west, is a standing stone—the last of five—near a peculiar hollow, called Holy Howe or Hell Hole, which contains a spring, and beyond which were underground dwellings.

The grave was discovered through the plough coming in contact with the cover-stone, which had gradually been denuded of its covering of soil by the action of agricultural implements, so that only about 6 inches remained above it. The raising of the cover-stone, an irregularly shaped slab of sandstone, measuring 4 feet in length, 2 feet 10 inches in breadth at its widest part, and from 5 inches to 7 inches in thickness, revealed a short cist formed of slabs, also of sandstone, set on edge, which had all the characteristics of a Bronze Age burial. It was full of sandy soil, which had found its way into the chamber through the interstices between the slabs, and in the south-west corner were the remains of a rabbit's nest. The cist measured 3 feet 1 inch and 3 feet 2 inches internally along the north and south sides, 2 feet and 2 feet 3 inches across the east and west ends, and 1 foot 6 inches in depth; its main axis lay 85° east of north magnetic, that is about east-north-east and west-south-west. The ends and north side each consisted of a single slab, about 4 inches thick, that on the north being forced inwards at the top by external pressure, but on the south side there were two slabs, the one at the west end overlapping the inside of the one at the east by about 16 inches. None of the slabs showed any signs of tooling, but the top of the stone at the west end being about 5 inches lower than the others, the vacant space was made up by flat stones.

On removing the sandy soil with which the grave was filled, a few unburnt fragments of a human skeleton, including a piece of the skull, were recovered, but no other relics were found. The skull lay near the western end of the grave, but whether it had been lying on its right or left side could not be determined, as the bones had been displaced by the burrowing of rabbits.

Professor Thomas H. Bryce, to whom the bones were submitted for

¹ In an old estate map belonging to the Earl of Airlie, drawn in 1772-3, the name is given as the Cumday Heads; and in another, of date 1800, Cumnay Heads.

² *Early Christian Monuments*, p. 282, fig. 300.

examination, reports that "the skeleton from this grave is very fragmentary. The individual was an adult of somewhat slender physique, but it is not possible to state positively whether the bones belonged to a man or a woman.

"The skull is represented by the greater part of the frontal bone and a portion of the parietal bone of one side. The frontal bone shows a well-marked glabella and prominent superciliary ridges and a distinct supra-glabella fossa. The frontal eminences are low, and the bone arches up to the bregma in a flattish curve. These features suggest that the skull is that of a male.

"The long bones are much decayed and broken. Fragments of the shafts of one ulna, of the femora, and of the tibiæ are present, but they are too imperfect to yield data as to the stature of the individual. The tibiæ show the distinct lateral flattening of the upper part of the shaft known as platycnemia. An astragalus and a navicular bone are also present, but present no characters which call for comment."

In the near vicinity of this grave several other discoveries of pre-historic remains have been noted. About 100 yards to the south-east of the symbol stone already mentioned, the Ordnance Survey Map records "stone cists found," and about 500 yards to the south-south-west of the cist described, the site of a standing stone is marked. In addition to these, I was informed by Mr Meikle that in 1908 Mr G. Kidd, farmer in Auchterlyth, unearthed a cist on a gravelly knowe in a field known as the Ringiegaw, where another had previously been found, and where he is convinced there are still others. These, although on the adjoining farm, lie scarcely more than 100 yards due east of Bruceton steading.