

I.

THE MUTINY STONES, BERWICKSHIRE. By JAMES HEWAT
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The only long cairn in the south-east of Scotland is that known as the Mutiny Stones in the parish of Longformacus, Berwickshire. In Dumfriesshire, almost fifty miles off, is the long cairn on Windy Edge, figured and described in the *Inventory*¹ of that county. To the north we do not find another cairn of this type till we come to that near Gourdon, Kincardineshire, described last year by Mr Graham Callander;² in the present volume, pp. 21-26, three more in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire have been recorded by Mr Callander. In the recently delivered Rhind Lectures Professor Bryce pointed out that only five are known in the east of Scotland, south of the county of Nairn.

The earliest mention of this monument is the occurrence of the name "Mitten full of Stones" on Armstrong's *Map of the County of Berwick*, 1771. The name Mutiny Stones, employed in the *New Statistical Account*, 1841, and since then generally used in reference to the monument, is probably a corruption of the older form "Mitten" of which the origin remains unexplained.³ Lady John Scott employed the name

¹ No. 47.

² *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lviii. p. 23.

³ A local legend tells how the devil was carrying stones in his mitten from Dunbar to build a dam across the Tweed at Kelso, when the mitten burst and the stones fell on the moor. There is also a tale of gold wrapped in the hide of an ox and buried beneath the cairn. In other parts of Scotland a similar origin is attributed to isolated boulders. The name "Auld wife's apron fu' o' stanes" occurs near Kirknewton in the Cheviots.

“Deil’s Mitten,”¹ and Mr Browne,² while using “Mutiny Stones,” mentions that to the old people in the district the monument was the “Mittenfu’ Stanes.” It is easy to see how “Mittenfu’” or “Mitten o’” was corrupted into “Mutiny,” and also how the latter in MS. became mistaken for “Meeting.”³

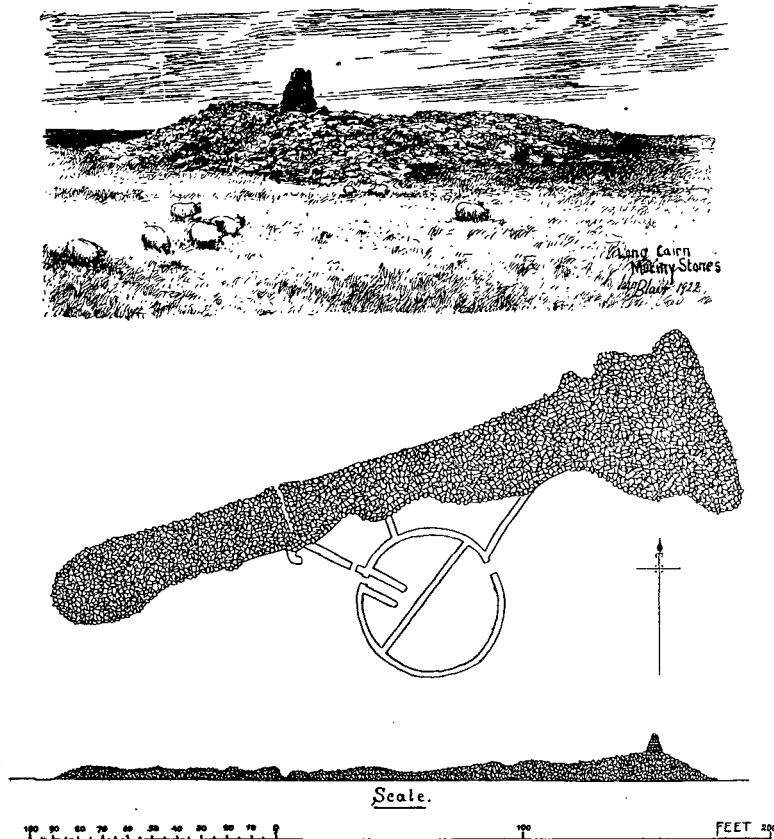


Fig. 1. Long Cairn—“The Mutiny Stones”: View from north-east, with Plan.
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The cairn (fig. 1) is situated on the side of a moorland ridge, the ground sloping gently to the south-east. It is some 1200 yards north-north-west of the shooting-lodge at Byreclough, and within 700 yards of the East Lothian boundary; the Byre Burn, 160 yards to the east,

¹ *Hist. Ber. Nat. Club*, vol. vi. p. 11, 1869. The derivation “Deil’s Midden” (refuse-heap) suggests itself.

² *Glimpses into the Past in Lammermuir*, p. 76, 1892.

³ “Meeting Stones” in Sharp, Greenwood, and Fowler’s *Map of the County of Berwick*, 1826.

descends to join the Dye Water at Byreclough. The elevation is 1250 feet above sea-level, and the axis points approximately east by north.

The length of the cairn is 278 feet. Near the east end the breadth is 76 feet and the height $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet; these measurements diminish westwards to 26 and 3 feet. The height given in the first *Statistical Account* (1792) and repeated in the *New Statistical Account* (1841)¹ is 18 feet: this probably included the later conical cairn erected on the highest point. The cairn at present contains probably some 1300 cart-loads of stones, and several hundreds of loads have been removed along its south side, doubtless for walls and buildings near Byreclough; modern sheep-folds also have been built close to the cairn at its south side. The stones of which the cairn is composed are surface-gathered slabs and boulders of greenstone found in the vicinity: few require the strength of more than one man to lift.

The general appearance of the monument suggests an affinity with the long cairns of the north of Scotland; but though there are slight lateral projections at the east end, there are no definite forward extensions as in the horned cairns of the north. An excavation by Lady John Scott in 1871 failed to reveal anything of interest.

With a view to obtaining information for his approaching Rhind Lectures on "The Anthropological History of the Scottish People," Dr Bryce applied to His Grace the Duke of Roxburghe for permission to examine the cairn. This was readily granted. Having obtained the sanction of the Ancient Monuments Board for the investigation, Dr Bryce asked me to superintend and carry out the excavation of the cairn. We visited the spot together and discussed the methods of work, and I then made arrangements to begin operations. Several members of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club willingly gave their services.

On 1st July 1924 a party of seven workers² began operations by carrying a trench (fig. 2) 12 feet in width along the axis of the cairn from the east end. The stones were carried back beyond the boundary of the cairn. In this trench were found three stones set upright in the ground, in a line parallel to, and some 4 feet to the south of, the axis; the stones projected from the ground from 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet. At 22 feet from the east end a wall was uncovered running at right angles to the axis for a distance of 14 feet. This wall (fig. 3) consisted of ten slabs set upright in the ground, from which they projected some 18 inches; smaller slabs were set to fill the interspaces and to steady the larger

¹ See also *Berwickshire Inventory*, No. 249; *Hist. Ber. Nat. Club*, vol. xxiv. p. 155 (plate xiv. A), 1920; *Lauder and Lauderdale* (Thompson), p. 14, 1904.

² Present: Colonel Molesworth, Messrs Minchin, C. W. Calder, N. Sanderson, J. H. Craw, and two chauffeurs. The work involved a motor journey of twelve miles from Duns to Kilpallet over a very hilly road, and a farther walk of two miles across the moor.

stones. The ten slabs measured from 11 to 23 inches in breadth and from 4 to 6 inches in thickness. Above these slabs rude masonry had been carried up a farther height of 2 feet. Close to the east of this wall it was noticed that the stones had been more carefully placed than elsewhere in the cairn.

On 7th July work was resumed, Dr Bryce and Mr J. Cospatrick

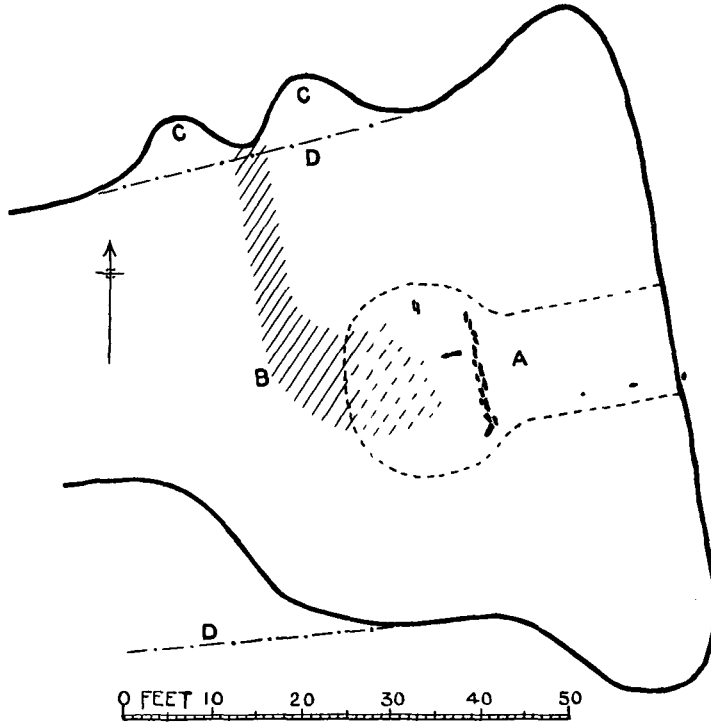


Fig. 2. Plan of east end of Long Cairn—"The Mutiny Stones," Berwickshire.

A, 1924 excavation; B, 1871 excavation (probable extent); C, stones removed from B;
D, original outline.

Scott, chamberlain to the Duke of Roxburghe, being present.¹ A further area was laid bare extending 14 feet to the east of the wall and beyond its north and south extremities. The cairn over most of this area had the appearance of having been disturbed. At a distance of 5 feet 5 inches to the west of the north end of the wall two upright slabs had been inserted in the ground face to face, with their axes parallel to the line of the wall. Five feet south of the north end of the wall

¹ Together with Colonel Molesworth, Messrs Minchin, N. Sanderson, J. T. Craw, J. H. Craw, Captain and Mrs M'Dougal, Miss Darling, and two chauffeurs.

two slabs projected from the ground at right angles to the wall and 13 inches from it. In the area to the south of these two slabs, as far as the south end of the wall, were several large slabs placed indiscriminately, as if disturbed from their original setting; similar slabs occurred in the upper portions of the cairn near this part; these had probably been removed upwards in the course of an earlier excavation.

The ground beneath the cairn was turned over in this area until the reddish-yellow subsoil was reached, but no trace of charcoal, bones, flint, pottery, or other relics was found.



Fig. 3. Long Cairn—"The Mutiny Stones": Part of Wall running across the Cairn.

On 14th July I returned to the ground with eight unemployed labourers. Farther excavation at either end of the wall, and at points along the periphery of the cairn, failed to reveal any signs of construction. The cairn was then restored to its original state; it was not thought desirable to replace the modern pile of stones at the east end, as this was no part of the original monument.

Since the excavation I am indebted to Miss Margaret Warrender for an extract from the diary of her mother, Lady Warrender, the sister of Lady John Scott. This description of the excavation of 1871 shows that the work was carefully superintended, and that the same conclusion as to earlier disturbance was reached. A trench seems at this time to have

been cut across the cairn at the lowest part near the middle, and another carried in to the axis from the north near the highest part; the latter excavation being carried east along the axis and joining with the area excavated as described above. There were present Lady John Scott, Sir George and Lady Warrender, Lady Rosehill, her sister Miss Elliot, Dr John Stuart, and Rev. J. M. Joass, Golspie; the number of workmen is not stated.

“*Monday, July 10, 1871.*—In spite of the weather, we went to Byre-cleugh. It was a perfect downpour, so we sat in the carriage, while the men moved the stones according to Dr Stuart’s directions. After luncheon it cleared, and we took a walk to see some other stones, of which Dr Stuart did not think much; and then returned to the Mitten, where by this time they had got down a considerable distance under the cairn, without however coming to anything. Dr Stuart thinks that the cairn has been disturbed before; and that from the marks that may be traced in the heather, it has been very much larger than it now is; and that a great portion of the stones have been used to build the folds and *stells* of which there are a good many near. In this manner, whatever may have been there originally, has long since been removed or destroyed.”

The results obtained from the recent excavation were disappointingly meagre, and would have been quite barren save for the discovery of the structural feature described. What this walling signifies is not quite obvious. As Dr Bryce pointed out, the feature revealed differentiates the cairn from the type of megalithic tomb with which he is specially familiar in the south-west of Scotland. The wall cannot have been part of a segmented chamber of the Arran type. Nor can it be considered as representing any part of a chamber or of an approach passage placed in the long axis of the cairn, such as exists in the typical chambered cairns of the north or in the cairn at Achnacree in Argyllshire. The most probable interpretation of the arrangement is that it represents the remains of a chamber placed transversely to the axis and opening by a passage from the side of the cairn. A small chamber, with a low and narrow approach passage, so disposed and in much the same position as in the Berwickshire Cairn, was disclosed in a long-horned cairn at Camster, Caithness, by Dr Joseph Anderson¹ (No. 563, *Caithness Inventory*). Another example is the cairn at Heathercro, Bower parish, Caithness (No. 5, *Caithness Inventory*), excavated by Sir Francis Tress Barry. “A five-sided undivided chamber formed of flags set on end was found in the mound at the north-east end” of the cairn, into which a passage led from the south-east side. If this comparison be admitted, it would seem that the Mutiny Stones has closer affinities with the chambered cairns of the north than with those in the south-west corner

¹ *Scotland in Pagan Times, Bronze and Stone Ages*, p. 241.

of Scotland. But in any event, the walling disclosed in the excavation proves that it must be included in the category of the long cairns, which enclosed chambers of one sort or another, and which have as yet yielded only relics of the stone phase of culture.

In conclusion I have to record our thanks to His Grace the Duke of Roxburghe for permission to examine the cairn, and to all those who shared in the arduous work of excavation.