

## NOTES

### I. THE LANG CAIRN, DUMBARTON MUIR

THE remarkably fine and well-preserved example of a horned long cairn of the Clyde-Solway group which stands on Dumbarton Muir, a few miles south of Loch Lomond (Nat. Grid. Ref. NS 45788154), has so far appeared in archaeological literature only as a dot on a distribution map<sup>1</sup>; J. Guthrie Smith mentions it briefly.<sup>2</sup> Since there are, at the moment, some difficulties in the way of undertaking a full investigation of this monument, and also because it has suffered severely from unpractised digging in recent years, this would seem an appropriate moment to record its present condition and as much of its history as can be reliably ascertained.

#### *The Cairn*

This measures some 185 feet in overall length and stands on the summit of a low rise overlooking a broad expanse of moorland to the north and with a shallow ravine immediately on its southern side. There are two streams within 300 yards of the cairn. The mound rises to a maximum height of 6 ft. 6 in. a few feet behind the forecourt façade and thereafter descends gradually to ground level. The plan of the cairn is clearly trapeze-shaped and a little of what may be dry-stone circumferential revetment is preserved on the northern side (fig. 1).

#### *The Forecourt*

This was cleared out two or three years ago by the present owner of the land, Mr Iain C. Christie,<sup>3</sup> who was under the impression that the debris therein had all fallen down from the cairn; it seems more likely however that some of this was deliberate Neolithic blocking such as was found in the Cairnholy tombs.<sup>4</sup> There is possibly a little of the blocking left in front of stone F-7 and the small prone monolith lying in the entrance, between stones F-6 and F-7, may also be part of this.

The large upright monolith, above the X on the plan, was raised into its present position by Mr Christie who states that he found it lying flat on top of the debris in the forecourt with its base where it is now. It may be a capstone from the chamber.

The floor of the forecourt is paved with flat flagstones immediately in front of the façade, the uprights of which form a segment of a circle about 40 feet in diameter. Dry-stone walling can be seen between stones F-4, F-5 and F-6. The position of F-8 is curious in that it stands well forward of the circular line of the façade and appears not to be embedded in the ground. On the other hand the prostrate F-9 seems to be embedded below the level of the adjacent paving stones. Only excavation will clarify these problems. The parts of the entrance exposed seem to indicate that it is a double one, consisting of the two central uprights of the façade and, behind these, two portal stones, P-1 and P-2.

#### *The Chamber*

Only one rectangular cist has so far been exposed immediately behind the forecourt and this is presumably the rear segment of the main gallery. Mr Christie states that he

<sup>1</sup> Childe, V. G., *The Prehistory of Scotland* (1935), Map 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Strathendrick and its Inhabitants from Early Times* (1896), 276 ff.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Mr Christie for information about the cairn and for providing facilities for the survey.

<sup>4</sup> Piggott, S. and Powell, T. G. E., 'The Excavation of Three Neolithic Chambered Tombs in Galloway, 1949', *P.S.A.S.*, LXIII (1948-9), fig. 6, p. 114; fig. 12, p. 126.

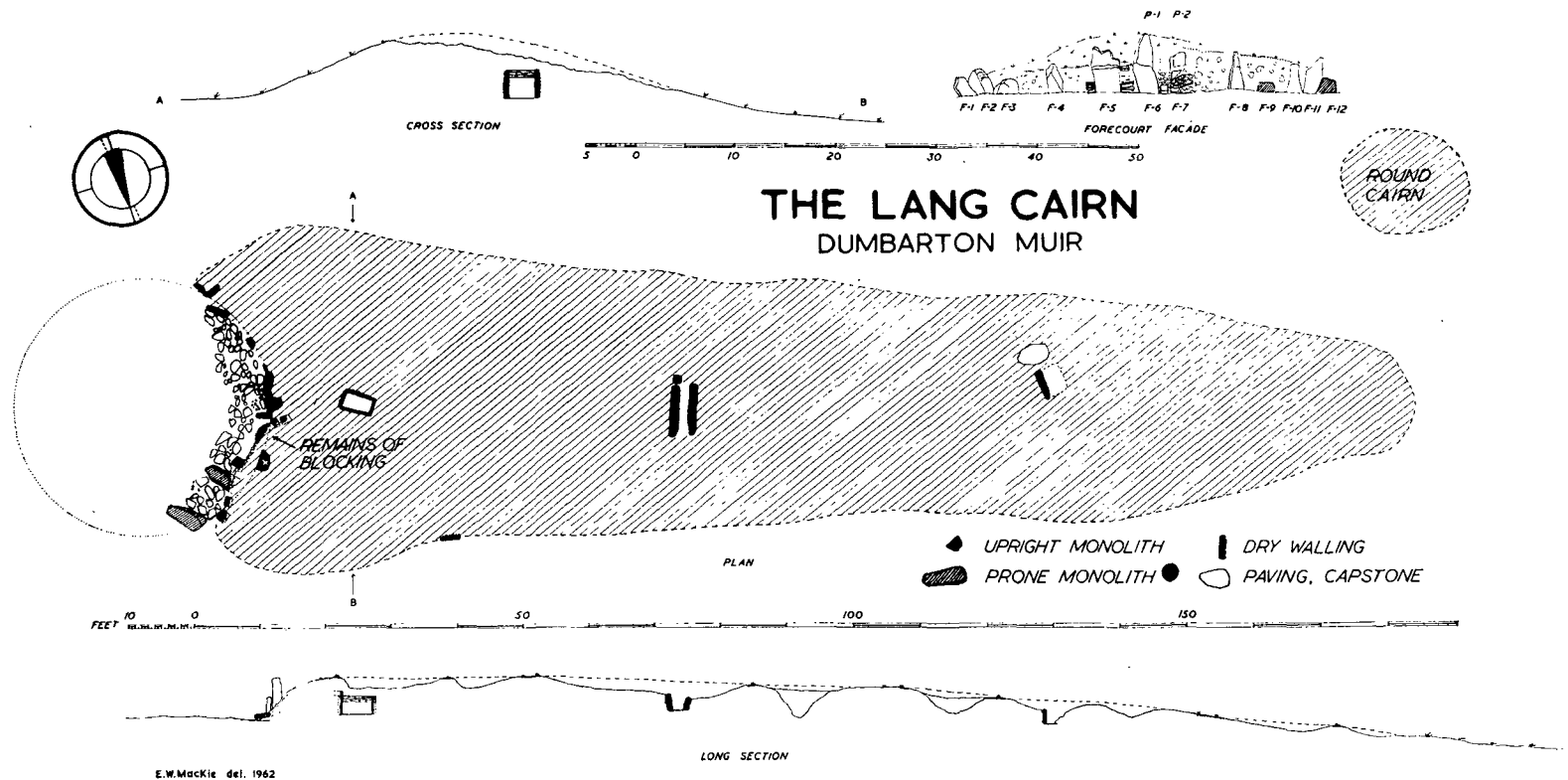


FIG. 1. The Lang Cairn: Plan and Sections

found it open and empty with nothing to the west of it. He did not, however, investigate on its eastern side so there are presumably two intact segments of the main gallery between the exposed cist and the forecourt. If this is so the gallery would appear to be angled in some way because the axis of the open cist points somewhat to the south of the entrance (it could only be measured approximately at the time and is now buried).

The cist itself measures 4 ft. 8 in. by 2 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. 9 in. high and is excellently built of flat, rectangular slabs, closely fitted together, which are surmounted on three sides by dry-stone walling of extremely high quality to make up the full height. The east side of the cist is formed of a single slab and sitting on top of this and flush with its edge is the regular edge of what is presumably the massive capstone of the next segment of the chamber, 5 in. thick. If this interpretation be correct then this tomb has a septal slab standing to the full height of the burial chamber, a feature found also at Cairnholy.<sup>1</sup>

Two more cists can be seen farther back in the cairn. They have obviously been open and empty for many years.

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