

# Excavation of the Chambered Cairn at Achnacreebeag

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## INTRODUCTION

The chambered cairn of Achnacreebeag (ARG 37; NGR NM 929363) is situated some 2.8 km NE of Connel just beyond the N edge of the extensive peat moss of Achnacree and separated from it by the valley of the Abhainn Achnacree. The cairn stands in pasture 275 m W of the farmhouse of Achnacreebeag, overlooking the left bank of the stream from a height of about 23 m OD; the larger and better-known passage-grave of Achnacree (ARG 36), about 700 m to the W, is clearly visible from the site.

Achnacreebeag is first mentioned in the *New Statistical Account* of 1845 and then by the Ordnance Survey during their initial fieldwork in the area about 1871 (*NSA*, vii (Argyll), 500; *OSNB Argyll*, no. 1, p 71). The former account is of some interest as it suggests that the site had already been robbed of much of its stone by this date. Certainly by 1869, when Angus Smith first visited the area, the site was virtually in the state in which it was found a century later (Smith 1872a, 99–100; 1885, 238–9, fig opp 239). Further descriptions of the cairn have been made by subsequent fieldworkers in Benderloch (Thomson 1927, 226–30, figs 2–4; Mitchell 1933, 323–4).

In 1966, when the cairn was examined by officers of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland during the preparation of the Lorn volume of the *Inventory of Argyll*, it was at once evident that the two burial-chambers almost certainly represented two distinct structural phases in the cairn's history. In view of the current interest in multi-period monuments of this type, it was thought appropriate that a more extensive investigation should be made and, accordingly, the excavation was undertaken by the writer extending over three seasons from 1968 to 1970.

## EXCAVATION (fig 1)

The first season's work was directed to proving the outline of the cairn itself and examining what remained of the cairn material; in the second season the capstones of the two chambers were removed and the chambers were completely cleared; during the third season further work was carried out on the S perimeter of the cairn.

In summary, the excavations confirmed that there were two periods of construction; firstly, a closed chamber covered by a round cairn, and secondly, the addition of a small passage-grave on the SE edge of the earlier cairn, the cairn itself being thereby enlarged to assume the oval shape which it still retains at the present time.

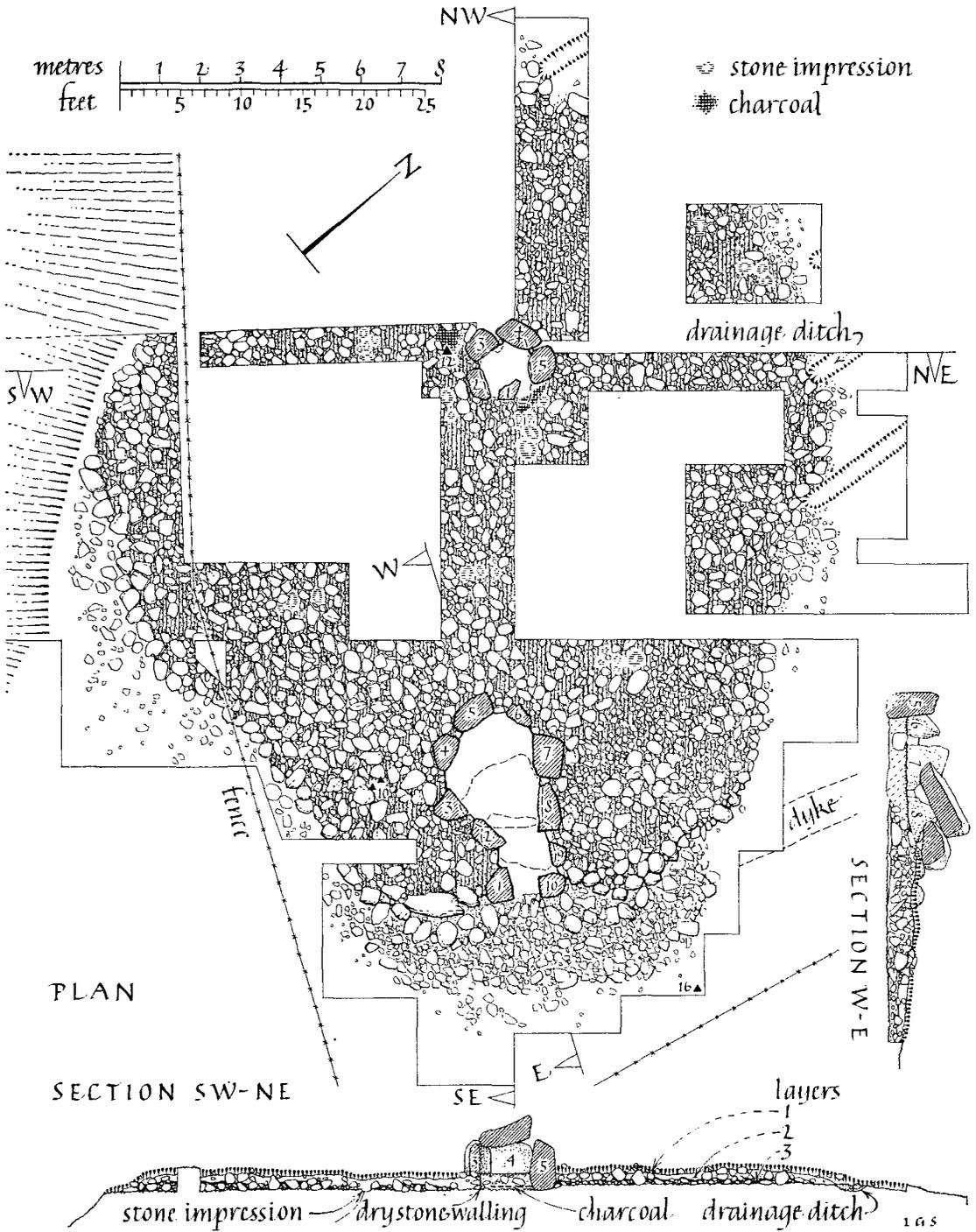
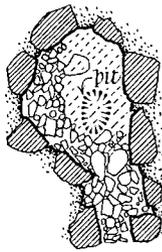
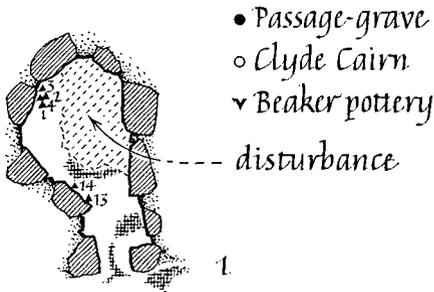
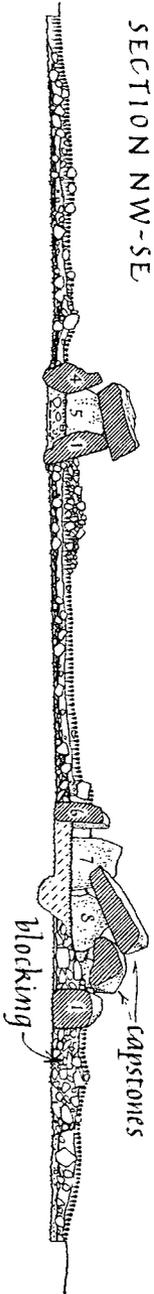


FIG 1 Achnacreebeag chambered cairn (ARG 37)



PLANS OF THE  
PASSAGE-GRAVE

- ▲ flint & pottery
- jet

*Phase I – the NW chamber*

This consisted of five upright boulders enclosing an area 1.25 m by 0.9 m; three of the uprights (nos 3–5) were granite erratics and the remaining two were rectangular blocks of andesite (pl 3, a and b). The capstone was a flat granite block measuring about 1.6 m by 1.4 m and at

most 0.65 m in thickness; it rested on or against stones 1-3 and 5. Stone no. 4 appeared to have slipped or to have been pushed slightly backwards (Section NW-SE, fig 1) and stone no. 1 had also slipped out of position. The capstone was found to be resting on or against the uprights at such an angle that its underside was 0.9 m above the floor of the chamber at the NW end and 1.2 m at the SE end. The uprights were set either in holes or shallow depressions, and their bases were supported by chocking stones and by several wedge-shaped fragments inserted between the back of the upright and the edge of the hole. At present the chamber has the appearance of being without an entrance, but as stone no. 1 is not in its original position, it is possible that the entrance was between stones 1 and 5 (pl 3, a and c). Once the cairn was built, continued access cannot have been envisaged as there is no indication of a passage in the surviving cairn-material. Only between stones 2 and 3 was there any indication of dry-stone walling between the uprights; here there were two courses of flat well-laid slabs filling the lowest level of the interstice between the orthostats (Section SW-NE, fig 1). The stones were, however, set for the most part so closely together that the only other likely places for such walling are on either side of stone 1. Unfortunately this area had been severely robbed, and beyond stones 1 and 5 the cairn was represented mainly by a series of stone impressions.

The filling of the chamber (though probably not an original filling) survived to a depth of about 0.4 m above the natural gravel and consisted of blackish-yellow gravel with stones and pebbles; towards the base of this deposit and just above the natural subsoil were patches of charcoal-blackened soil with some tiny flecks of charcoal. The charcoal is as likely to be the result of the initial clearance of the site as to be part of a burial deposit, and no inferences about burial need be drawn from it. There were no small finds from the chamber and no remains of any burial deposit. Outside the chamber were two areas of burning with small flecks of charcoal (shown on plan fig 1); one was just beyond, though not between, stones 1 and 5, but unfortunately this area of the cairn had also been extensively disturbed. The other patch was to the SW of stone 3; here the charcoal clearly lay under the basal layer of cairn material and underneath the chocking stones of stone 3. The only objects from this phase of activity were a chip of ginger-brown flint (SF 12), found in this patch of charcoal, and two other tiny chips of flint (SF 32). (The small finds are numbered, e.g. SF 12, to distinguish them from the numbering of stones, and are listed thus on pp 47-50).

There were two phases in the construction of the cairn, the first comprising a circular mound of stones surrounding the NW chamber, and the second being an addition on the SE side of this to enclose the passage-grave. It is difficult, however, to draw many conclusions about the structure of the cairn as extensive robbing of the stones has resulted in the survival of only the basal layer of cairn material. The initial cairn extended to about 6 to 10 m beyond the sides of the chamber and was approximately 18 m in overall diameter. The sections through the cairn revealed, (1) a topsoil layer, (2) a layer of dark brown soil with some quartzite grits, small, and sometimes fragmentary, stones and cairn boulders, and (3) the basal layer of cairn material with a packing of yellow sandy loam. Beneath this was a layer of iron panning with some charcoal patches which rested on top of the natural yellow gravel. Layer 2 was probably the result of the robbing of the cairn, the quartzite grits being chips which were knocked off during this operation. The basal layer of cairn material (3) consisted of medium-sized rounded boulders and, where even these had been robbed, the depressions into which stones had been pressed were clearly visible as they were filled with dark loam.

A convincing kerb was found at only two places on this cairn, a stretch on the S, on the edge of the drop to the stream, and on the NE (pl 3, d). In both places the kerb consisted of granite boulders, only a little larger than the cairn material, set with their longer axes at right

angles to the perimeter of the cairn. Between and immediately inside the kerb-stones on the NE, there was a packed filling of gravel and small stones, presumably to add to the stability of the edge. The edge of this initial cairn had been almost completely destroyed on the SE by the construction of the passage-grave. A large granite slab to the N of the passage-grave may possibly continue the line of the kerb as indicated on the E side of the initial cairn.

Beyond the cairn to the N and NE, and running up to its edge were found traces of modern field-drainage channels which were dug with their centres some 2.3 m apart.

### *Phase II – the passage grave*

In the second phase a small passage-grave was built on the SE perimeter of the existing cairn; the chamber was entered between portal stones in the centre of a flattish kerb to the cairn. The passage-grave has an orientation towards the SE quarter of the compass, which is characteristic for graves of Hebridean type. The chamber was formed by seven upright boulders with good dry-stone walling between them; the passage consisted of two stones, a larger one to the E and a small stone on the W side (pl 4, a). The portal stone on the W was a large block, triangular on plan, and it presented flattish faces in alignment not only with the kerb but also to the side of the entrance-passage. Two capstones survived to cover the passage and chamber, but only one of these was in its original position. This stone, covering the rear half of the passage and resting on stones 2, 8 and 9 was a gabled slab with its flat undersurface forming the roof of the passage, which was between 0.8 and 0.9 m in height. This capstone measured some 1.9 by 1.5 m and was at most 0.75 m in thickness. Resting on this stone, but no longer in its original position was a very large triangular slab of granite 2.1 by 1.9 m, with a thickness of between 0.4 and 0.6 m. This would not in itself be sufficient to cover the whole of the chamber, but no other suitable slabs were found on the site. The chamber must have been rather higher than the passage as stones 4 and 7 stand to a height of 1.4 and 1.5 m above the level of the floor respectively.

The passage-grave is slightly q-shaped on plan, with the NE side forming the straight side of the figure and the SW side expanding to form the chamber. The uprights rested on the natural, although in some cases their bases were set into slight hollows and they were supported from outside by chocking-stones and by the weight of cairn material. The dry-stone walling between the uprights was best preserved at the rear of the chamber and on the SW side, and appeared to have the dual function of filling the space between the uprights and also of stabilising or, in some cases, of chocking them. The walling was of two main types, horizontally laid slabs and rectangular stones between stones 2 and 3, 5 and 6, and 6 and 7. Filling the less regular spaces between stones 3 and 4, and 4 and 5, a different technique had been employed; more massive triangular stones had been inserted into the spaces, partly underpinning nos 4 and 5, and the remaining spaces were filled with stones of varying sizes and at different angles. These not only filled the chinks but also provided additional support for the orthostats.

Only half of the chamber deposits survived undisturbed (fig 1, details 1–3); severe damage had been caused to the NE half, where an intrusive pit had been dug through the original filling and into the natural subsoil to a depth of 0.7 m (pl 4, b). The filling from this half had been removed and formed a pile of debris to the N side of the chamber.

Fortunately, however, a deposit of undisturbed material remained in the SW half of the chamber, and also the complete filling of the passage, and these showed that the chamber had been used at two distinct periods. The sections through the chamber (fig 1) illustrate this clearly. The earlier phase was represented by a thin layer of yellow-grey gravelly loam with small flecks of charcoal and small stones, among which were sherds of several Neolithic vessels (SF 1–4), a plano-convex flint knife and a pressure-flaked flint fragment (SF 13, 14); although the small

sherds (SF3 and 4) have been compared with later pottery styles, from their stratigraphical position under the blocking, there is no doubt that they antedate the Beaker activity on the site; SF 4 may be a fragment of vessel no. 3. There were no traces of human bones to indicate the burial rite. The finds from the second phase, during which the chamber and passage were filled with stones and earth, comprise sherds of Beaker pottery, flints, jet disc-beads and cremated bone. It is thus likely that the associated ritual was cremation, but the scattered fragments were too small to be identified positively as human.

Apart from the pottery and flint, nothing is known of the burials of the earlier phase, nor is there any evidence that these burials were contemporary with the construction of the chamber, as earlier deposits may have been cleared out. The second phase may perhaps be envisaged as a single ritual act, for sherds of Beaker pottery, flint and jet disc-beads were found, without any apparent order, throughout the filling of the chamber. It was possible, however, to detect stages in the filling of the chamber and passage, and the blocking of the entrance; these progress from the inside to the final outer blocking of stones. Two large stones laid between nos 2 and 8 form the outer limit of the blocking of the chamber. The passage was then filled with rather larger boulders, earth and gravel in which there was a fragment of transparent crystal (SF 34); there was no dry-stone walling across the entrance but several slabs, laid on edge just outside the entrance, formed the outer blocking of the passage. Beyond the kerb of the cairn in an arc outside the entrance was a blocking of stones, presumably intended to hide the entrance, or at least to deter entry (pl 5, a). This comprised an inner line of massive boulders against the kerb and a spread of stones extending outwards from the kerb for a distance of about 2.3 m (pl 5, b). There were no finds in the blocking nor any sign of ritual features beneath it, although there were some slight patches of charcoal in the area just in front of, and running under, the kerb-stones. There were also smears of charcoal and burning on the old land-surface in the passage and chamber but, like the patches in front of the cairn, and around the NW chamber, these are, perhaps, more likely to be associated with the clearance of the site than with burial ritual. It is unfortunate that none of the charcoal smears incorporated fragments which were large enough for radiocarbon determination.

In addition to the small finds discovered inside the chamber itself, several sherds of Beaker pottery were found outside the chamber amongst the cairn material a short distance to the S (SF 10). Two flints were discovered in the excavation of this extension to the original cairn; one was a topsoil find (SF 30), but the other, a flat almost circular scraper, was found on the natural surface beyond the edge of the blocking to the E of the passage-grave (SF 16). In the pile of debris on the N side of the chamber, which was the result of the disturbance, were found a single sherd of Beaker pottery belonging to SF 6 and a flint awl (SF 31).

## DISCUSSION

### *Structure*

The chambered cairns in Argyll and Bute belong predominantly to the *Clyde* group and there are concentrations of these in Kintyre and Arran, Cowal and Bute, and in the Kilmartin area and Loch Fyneside. *Clyde Cairns* have recently been fully described by Scott, and may be characterised by rectangular burial chambers, normally set at the wider end of an elongated cairn of rectangular or trapezoidal shape, and approached directly from the perimeter of the cairn, often through the centre of a forecourt area defined by a megalithic façade (Scott J G 1969, 175-222). In Scotland simple passage-graves belong rather to the Hebridean province of cairn-

building with more specialised forms to the North and East. Passage-graves may be typified by more rounded chambers, set within round or square cairns, and approached by a passage of varying lengths from the perimeter of the cairn. North Lorn, Morvern and Ardnamurchan may thus be seen to form an intermediate area between the two main groups. In this region there are two cairns of *Clyde* type, Cladh Aindreis, Swordle (ARG 1) and Camas nan Geall (ARG 2), both in Ardnamurchan (Scott J G 1969, 310), and four which belong in general terms to a passage-grave tradition, Greadal Fhinn (ARG 39) in Ardnamurchan (Grieve 1912, 279–295), Carn Liath, Rahoy (ARG 40) in Morvern (*DES* 1962, 5) and Achnacree and Achnacreebeag (ARG 36 and 37) in Benderloch (Smith 1872b, 409–16, pls xxiii–xxiv; 1885, 218–27, figs opp pp 216, 220, 225). There is only one other possible passage-grave in Argyll, namely Clach an t'Sagairt (ARG 48) in Mid Argyll (Campbell and Sandeman 1962, 12, no. 73). Superficially these tombs may be divided into two types, namely those for which there is no evidence for a passage to the chamber and are thus closed chambers (Greadal Fhinn, NW chamber; Achnacreebeag, NW chamber; Rahoy and Clach an t'Sagairt), and those for which there is good evidence for such a passage leading from the chamber to the outside edge of the cairn (Greadal Fhinn, SE chamber; Achnacreebeag, SE chamber; Achnacree). The small chambers are rectangular, or at least polygonal on plan, rather than the rounded plan of a classic passage-grave, and enclose areas of 1.0 m by 0.8 m (ARG 39), 1.2 m by 0.8 m (ARG 37), 1.5 m by 1.0 m (ARG 40) and approximately 2.1 m by 1.2 m (ARG 48). Two are in the centre of roundish cairns measuring between 14.6 and 19.8 m in diameter and two (ARG 37 and ARG 39) belong to multi-period cairns; thus, although excavation has shown that the cairn surrounding the earlier and closed chamber at Achnacreebeag is approximately 18 m in diameter, the sequence and shape of the cairn round ARG 39 cannot be determined without excavation. Apart from the NW chamber at Achnacreebeag, the only other excavated site is Clach an t'Sagairt and, not only had it been re-used to receive a medieval burial, but the sherds found immediately beneath the medieval layer have since been lost. Even these sherds may have belonged to a secondary burial as they were separated by a sterile layer from a lower deposit of 'ashes and splinters of bone'. It is possible, particularly in view of the size of these chambers, that some were used for the deposition of cremated bones rather than for inhumations. The NW chamber at Greadal Fhinn (fig 2) has been included in this small group although it could even be suggested that it is a secondary cist inserted into the cairn material. The layout of the SE end of the chamber, in particular, seems to be comparable to those under discussion; the end-slab has been laid not on its longer side, but on end, and thus raises the capstone beyond the level of one of the side-slabs to create a narrow entrance, 0.31 m in width. On either side of this entrance there are two firmly-set stones which give the impression of low portals. The E corner of this chamber is thus very similar to that of the NW chamber at Achnacreebeag where stone no. 1 has been placed on end with a possible entrance on one side of it. It may be suggested that the closest parallels to both chambers at Achnacreebeag are to be found at Greadal Fhinn, and it is possible that excavation of the latter would show a similar structural history.

In the West of Scotland detailed excavation has been undertaken on only five passage-graves of Hebridean type. In 1871 Angus Smith, as part of his survey of the antiquities of the Loch Etive area, opened and planned the unusual chamber at Achnacree (ARG 36) (Smith 1872b, 409–16, pls xxiii–xxiv; 1885, 218–27, figs opp pp 216, 220, 225). The work of Sir Lindsay Scott forms the next stage of research with his excavations at Rudh' an Dunain (SKY 7) carried out in 1931 and 1932 (Scott W L 1932, 183–213; 1934, 194–199), and at Unival, North Uist (UST 34) in 1935 and 1939 (Scott W L 1948, 1–38). Apart from Achnacreebeag, only one west coast passage-grave has been examined in recent years, namely Balvraid (INV 51), the results of which are not yet fully published (*DES* 1965, 20). No single excavated site is precisely comparable

to Achnacreebeag either structurally or in the sequence of ritual represented. The rather irregular cairn formed by the two periods of construction at Achnacreebeag cannot usefully be compared to the two main shapes of cairn, namely rectangular (UST 34 and the final stage of INV 51) and round (ARG 36; SKY 7). It is likely, however, that like Greadal Fhinn (ARG 39) a rounded cairn was intended.

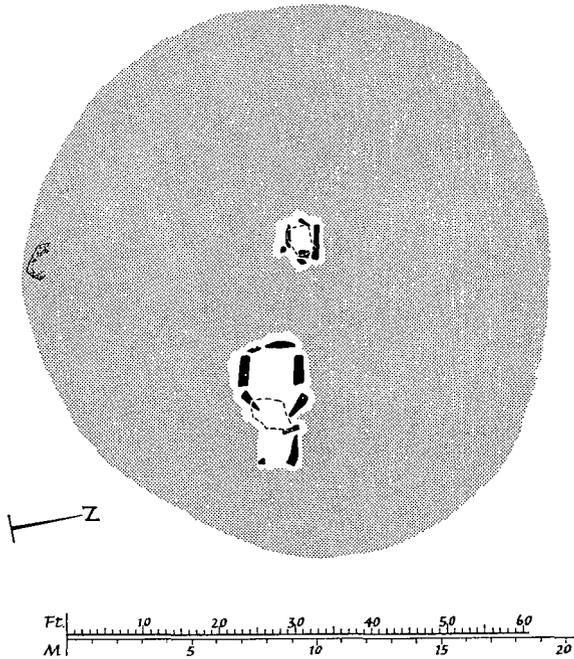


FIG 2 Greadal Fhinn chambered cairn (ARG 39)

The kerb to the passage-grave cairn at Achnacreebeag is unexceptional comprising only one really massive stone, which is laid on its side (pl 5, c); perhaps because of the rather intractable rounded glacial boulders, there was no attempt to construct a monumental façade as at SKY 8, UST 34 and possibly INV 51. The straight kerb is perhaps comparable to that at Unival. The kerb at the NE side of the entrance presented a tumbled or slipped appearance, and it is possible that on this side the boulders formed a rudimentary wall of two courses. The lack of an impressive kerb or peristalith contrasts with most other passage-graves of Hebridean type, although this feature was not found at the nearby large cairn of Achnacree (ARG 36). It may be that this difference of style was a local phenomenon caused by the absence of suitable stones.

The passage at Achnacreebeag is short and compact, being 1.5 m long and 1.1 m broad; it is thus comparable with UST 34 and INV 51 (1.7 by 1.0 m and 2.0 by 1.0 m respectively) and the passage and antechamber at Rudh' an Dunain (2.3 by 1.1 m). The passage at Achnacree itself is exceptionally long and measures about 8.5 m in length although only 0.6 m in width. The sides of the passage are of boulder construction and there seems to have been no attempt at dry-stone walling between the uprights, contrasting with the use of this technique in the passage at Rudh' an Dunain. The deliberate narrowing of the actual entrance by the positioning of the NE portal stone (no. 10) does not seem to be a normal feature of passage-grave construction,

though it occurs among *Clyde Cairns* at Dalineun, Loch Nell South (ARG 3) and possibly Ardnadam (ARG 18) (Scott J G 1969, 310, 312).

The two stones between uprights 2 and 8 have been described as part of the blocking of the tomb but the possibility that they are 'sill stones' dividing the passage from the chambers must also be considered (fig 1, detail 2). They were stratified above the earlier of the two levels in the chamber, and the plano-convex flint knife (SF 12) was found just under the more southerly stone. It is clear that this pair of stones did not form part of the original design of the tomb. The absence of any division between the chamber and the passage is an unusual feature of this cairn and contrasts with Unival and Rudh' an Dunain. The chamber is rather larger than those at either of these sites; the structural use of dry-stone walling may perhaps be compared with the 'gusset block' and dry-stone walling technique found at Unival (Scott W L 1948, 9-10, pl iii, 2).

The pottery and the plano-convex knife are discussed by Miss Henshall and Dr McInnes *infra* pp 39-43, but it should be stressed here that there is no evidence that these should be associated with the construction of the passage-grave. The Beaker pottery, jet disc-beads, flint and the tiny fragments of cremated bone belong to the partial filling and the blocking of the tomb. Evidence for the deliberate filling of burial-chamber and passage has also been found at other excavated sites notably Rudh' an Dunain and Unival. At the former the chamber and passage had been filled to a depth of about a metre with burial deposits; above this a sterile layer had accumulated, presumably as a result of the breaking and robbing of the roof of the chamber. The lowest deposit, which was about 0.3 m thick, was 'a layer of black earth of an extremely slimy character containing small stones' (Scott W L 1932, 197). This layer yielded sherds of Neolithic pottery, fragmentary bones, two flint scrapers and a number of chips of flint and quartz. Immediately above this was a deposit some 0.6 m in thickness, which Scott describes as 'brown earth mixed with fallen stones', in which were found the remains of four inhumation burials together with fragments of a single Beaker, white quartz pebbles, pieces of pumice and an unidentifiable sherd. If these inhumations are to be associated with the Beaker it is possible that, as at Achnacreebeag, the final burials and blocking of the tomb were undertaken by the makers of Beaker pottery (but see Henshall 1972, 147-8). There is also some evidence that the passages and chambers at both Unival and Achnacree were deliberately filled; the passage at the latter was 'nearly filled up with stones' (Smith 1872b, 410) but at neither site was there good evidence of when this blocking had taken place.

*Small finds: (figs 3, 4) see catalogue pp. 47-50*

The find spots of the Neolithic material are shown on fig 1, detail 1.

The following section has been contributed by Miss A S Henshall. 'The sherds of SF 1 clearly belong to the Western Neolithic or Neolithic A family of pottery on account of the ware and what remains of the form. It is almost certainly from a plain round-based bowl. Precise parallels to the rim form are not easy to find in Scotland. It could be compared with a sherd from the chamber tomb, Cairnholy I, Kirkcudbrightshire (Piggott and Powell 1949, 120, no. 6) or another from Pitnacree, Perthshire (Coles and Simpson 1965, 43, no. 6). The former (a small sherd, possibly illustrated with the rim too inturned) was recovered from a crevice at the top of a stone-hole in the chamber, and may well derive from earlier grave-goods than those on the chamber floor which included Beaker sherds (Piggott and Powell 1949, 133). The fabric of the Pitnacree sherd is less close, being almost gritless, but the site is of importance as the group of neolithic sherds have a radiocarbon date of  $2860 \pm 90$  bc (GaK-601). The Achnacreebeag sherds probably belong in the third millennium bc, but it is possible that such simple forms continued into the early second millennium.

‘The bowl (SF 2) belongs to the distinct class of Beacharra-type carinated bowls. They are known in only small numbers in Scotland, from five tombs of *Clyde* type on the western seaboard, and from the habitation site, Townhead, Rothesay, Bute (*Beacharra* and *Townhead*, Scott J G, 1964, 145-7, 156; *Brackley*, Scott J G 1956, 38; *Bicker’s Houses*, Bryce 1904, 25;

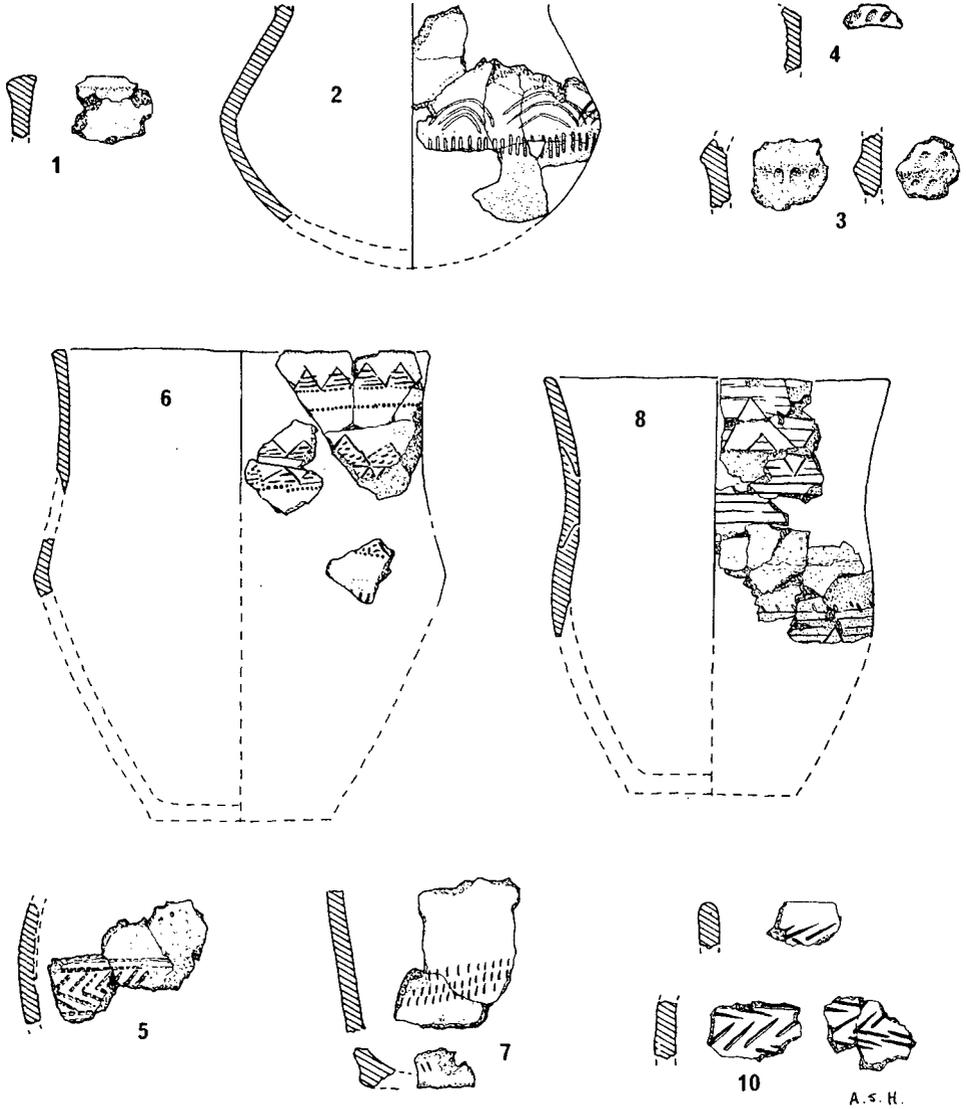


FIG 3 Achnacreebeag; Neolithic and Beaker Pottery (scale 1:3)

*Clachaig*, Bryce 1902, 89; *Clettraval*, Scott W L 1935, 505, pot 1.C.1.). A bowl from the passage-grave at *Unival* might also be included (Scott W L 1948, 16, pot 8). In Ireland the numerous vessels classified by Case (1961, 186-9) as Ballyalton bowls include closely similar vessels amongst a much wider range of decoration and form. The Scottish bowls do not have expanded rims, but the Achnacreebeag pot appears to have been somewhat thickened. Expanded rims are a quite

common feature in Ireland. The Beacharra bowls, generally of a high standard of potting, are late examples of the Neolithic A tradition which have acquired Late Neolithic decoration on the collar and below the carination, sometimes extending over the whole base. Two of the pots from the type site have multiple hoops, and one of these also has a row of lines below the carination, very similar to the Achnacreebeag pot. The writer follows McInnes (1969, 27) in regarding all six pots in the Beacharra tomb as a closed group, and considers the decoration of this group, and the likelihood of virtual contemporaneity with the jet belt slider stratified above them, to indicate a date probably in the eighteenth century BC. (The radiocarbon date for Townhead (Scott J G 1968, 296) may be treated with caution meantime, as the relationship of the timber structure to all but one of the pottery finds is unknown. One of the other sherds is rusticated and so should be contemporary with Beakers).

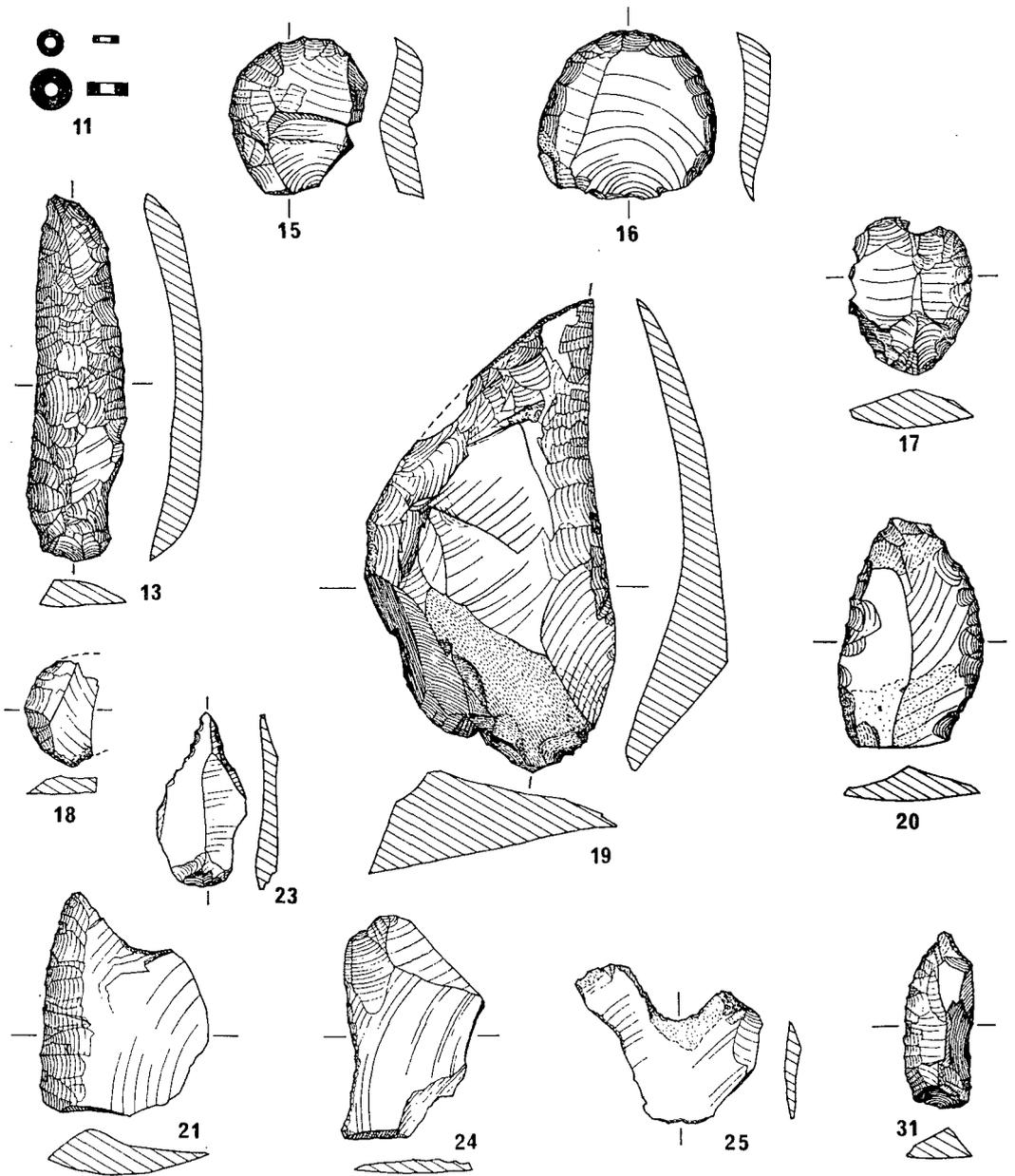
'The sherds (SF 3 and 4) are more comparable in fabric to small Food Vessels rather than to late Neolithic impressed-ware bowls of the type represented for instance at Luce Sands, Wigtownshire (McInnes 1964, 49-54). The internal bevel of the rim (which may have been as much as double the existing width with a second row of nicks slanting in the opposite direction), and the presence of one or more cordons point to a Food Vessel. The ware is neither as thick nor as loose as is normal with the impressed wares, but it is also very thin for a Food Vessel. But these pots are sometimes quite small, and the specimens from Abernethy, Perthshire, or East Lothian, could be instanced as the sort of vessel these sherds are likely to come from (Stevenson 1947, 185; Abercromby 1912, vol 1, no. 365, misleadingly illustrated at a large scale).'

The following section has been contributed by Dr I J McInnes: 'The occurrence of plano-convex flint knives in chambered tombs, particularly in south-west Scotland, led Piggott to suggest that these knives were part of his Clyde-Carlingford Culture (Piggott 1954, 175). The Clyde knives noted by Piggott are not all as sophisticated as that from Achnacreebeag and indeed those from Clachaig and Slidery (ARN 16 and 17) are perhaps best regarded as side-scrapers, as the working is confined to one edge of the flake (Bryce 1902, 91 and 95). The knife from Dunan Mor (ARN 8) is shaped and has trimming on both edges, but unlike the knife from Achnacreebeag has no top-working (Bryce 1902, 354). Such primitive plano-convex flint knives also occur in Food Vessel contexts (Simpson 1968, 198).

'The knife from Torlin (ARN 15) exhibits less top-working than that from Achnacreebeag but is not dissimilar (Bryce 1902, 84), the latter knife not being completely flaked on the upper face. The Torlin knife came from the floor of the central cist of the tomb, presumptively at an early level and possibly contemporary with the simple lugged early Neolithic pot. The two knives from the north chamber at Tormore I (ARN 4) are even closer to the Achnacreebeag knife, particularly the smaller of the two (Bryce 1902, 101). Unfortunately there is no indication at what level in the chamber these knives were found but the indication is that the chamber was not deliberately blocked (Bryce 1902, 99). The most highly specialised of the Clyde plano-convex knives is that from Giants' Graves (ARN 11), which has neat careful top-working and secondary trimming on all edges (Bryce 1903, 50). The excavator, however, pointed out that there had been some degree of disturbance in the tomb and that none of the finds could be certainly ascribed to a particular level. At Cairnholy I (KRK 2), a plano-convex flint knife very similar to that from Achnacreebeag was found on the floor of the antechamber, at which level also were found sherds of Beaker and Peterborough pottery (Piggott and Powell 1949, 121, fig 9, 5). The plano-convex flint knife from Cairnholy II (KRK 3) is again of the less developed form, the cortex of the pebble from which it was made still remaining on much of the back of the knife (Piggott and Powell 1949, 128, fig 13, 2). All the tombs so far mentioned from which have come knives comparable to that from Achnacreebeag would fall into the *Clyde* group (Scott J G 1969). The only other example

of a plano-convex flint knife in a passage-grave in Scotland is that from Blackhammer, Rousay (ORK 3) (Henshall 1963, 185). This is again very similar to that from Achnacreebeag and was from the floor of the chamber along with the shallow Unstan-like pot.

'Further afield plano-convex flint knives do occasionally turn up in sound Neolithic contexts. At Lligwy (ANG 14), the burial-chamber contained sherds of early Neolithic pottery, Rinyo



A. S. H.

FIG 4 Achnacreebeag; flint and jet (scale 1:1.5)

Clacton pottery and cardium-impressed sherds, as well as a plano-convex flint knife. The skewer pin from the same site was not found in the chamber although its contemporaneity seems more than likely (Lynch 1969, 159). This knife is somewhat less sophisticated than the Achnacreebeag example. The same is true also of the knife from Dorchester II which was found with one of the cremations (Atkinson, Piggott and Sandars 1951, 115, fig 31, 144).

'At Seamer Moor in Yorkshire the primary burial in the barrow was accompanied by a plano-convex flint knife, five lozenge arrowheads, a polished flint knife, boar's tusks and an antler macehead (Londesborough 1848, 101; Elgee 1932, fig 6). This curious site consisted of a circular cairn, covering the burial, enclosed by a long barrow. Wood charcoal from the long barrow phase has given a radiocarbon date of  $3080 \pm 90$  bc (NPL 73).

'Collins, in his report on the finds from Audleystown cairn, distinguished between the double-edged plano-convex flint knife, the upper surface of which was not wholly flaked, occurring in Neolithic as well as later contexts, and the variety with flaking all over the upper surface which is typically associated with Food Vessels (Collins 1954, 28). The knives from Torlin, Cairnholy II, Lligwy and Dorchester II clearly belong to the double-edged form, whereas those from Giants' Graves and Blackhammer belong to the latter flaked form. The other examples cited, including the knife from Achnacreebeag, while lacking the detailed top-working of the finest of the Food Vessel examples, do exhibit a considerable degree of working on the upper face. The Achnacreebeag plano-convex flint knife, coming from an explicitly Neolithic context, furthers the argument that the so-called Food Vessel form of plano-convex flint knife has its origin in the third millennium BC.'

The six Beakers represented at Achnacreebeag (SF 5-10; fig 3) extend the range of decoration known on Beaker ware from the northern part of Argyll (list p 50-3). The sites fall into three main groups: sand-dune areas such as Kentra Bay and Sanna Bay in Ardnamurchan, chambered tombs such as Achnacreebeag and Dalineun, and individual burial-deposits in cists as at Gallanachbeg and Corran Ferry (Inverness-shire). The material from Ardnamurchan comprises All-over-Cord decorated Beaker, a few sherds decorated with horizontal shell-impressions and at least one sherd decorated with horizontal comb-impressions. All-over-Cord decorated Beaker is also represented in the cist at Salen on Mull, associated with two flint implements and two fragments of bronze. Examination of the metal in the laboratories of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland has shown that the fragments are arsenical copper with a high reading of antimony, and little or no trace of tin or lead.

Five small fragments of an AOC Beaker were recovered during the excavation of the *Clyde* cairn of Cragabus (ILY 2); the ware is rather thicker than is usual for vessels of this type (10-11 mm), but the smudged lines of cord-impressions are clearly visible (Bryce 1902, 110-11; Callander 1929, 31, 53, 88; NMA EO 255). A large number of unworked flint flakes were also recovered from the compartments, but the stratigraphical position of the finds was not recorded. Only two other chambered tombs from Argyll have produced Beaker ware, Nether Largie South (ARG 23), where AOC, North British/Middle Rhine and comb-impressed vessels were recovered (Henshall 1972, 105, 339), and Dalineun (ARG 3); the latter site has produced sherds of one AOC and two late Northern Beakers. The AOC sherds (fig 5, a) are thinner and finer than those from Cragabus and may be compared to those from Cairnholy II (KRK 3; Piggott and Powell 1949, 127-8).

Nether Largie South was originally excavated by Canon Greenwell in three days during October 1864, and, while the position and association of some of the finds is uncertain, the stratigraphy is, in general, clearly comparable with that at Achnacreebeag. It is possible that the 'stones and rubbish', recorded by Greenwell, which partly filled the chamber were the result

of a deliberate blocking of the tomb, rather than the result of infiltration through the holes in the roof either deliberately or accidentally. Two distinct layers of burials were distinguishable; the earlier was represented in the inner two compartments by 'a layer of dark earthy matter, thickly interspersed with burnt bones' (Greenwell 1866, 343). In this layer were found a round-based Neolithic vessel, quantities of broken quartz pebbles, a bovine tooth, flint knives and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads. In the innermost compartment, this layer was covered by a pavement of pebbles, on which a small cist had been constructed. Although this was found to be empty, a number of Beaker vessels and the remains of inhumation burials were found on the paving, in this, and in adjacent, compartments. The pottery from Nether Largie South includes an almost complete vessel of Clarke's North/Middle Rhine type (1970, no. 1551), a sherd of a Beaker with an everted lip and cordon, decorated with horizontal comb-impressions, and wall sherds of a large vessel of reddish-buff, well-fired ware with medium grits, decorated with horizontal lines of impressions with a square-toothed comb outlining bands of criss-cross decoration (but see Henshall 1972, 81-2).

The complete Beaker from Nether Largie belongs to the same general group as the fragments of Beaker (SF 10) from Achnacreebeag about which Miss Henshall has contributed the following paragraph. 'The sherds suggest a large vessel of Beaker type, having a plain rim, and either wide zones of herringbone, or the lower part of the vessel undecorated. The decoration could be compared with the relatively small Beaker from Gryndon, Northumberland, or with Beakers with narrower zones of herringbone such as that from Buckieburn, Stirling (Clarke 1970, no. 694, 1781) both of which Clarke would include in his N/MR group. Beakers of this type are admittedly rare in Britain, but on the other hand there seems to have been a widespread penetration. They appear as one element in the late Neolithic cultures of Shetland, at the domestic site at Ness of Gruting (Calder 1956, 384; NMA HD 930, 933) and in the west at the domestic site of Knockadoon, Loch Gur, Co. Limerick (Ó Ríordáin 1954, 394-9, fig 38).'

Beaker no. 6 from Achnacreebeag is a rather uneven vessel decorated with two zones of incised triangles infilled with incisions or slanting jabs; its zoned elevation might be compared with a vessel of Clarke's European Bell Beaker group from Stanton Harcourt (Oxfordshire) which also has rows of circular impressions at the bases of the triangles (1970, no. 768, fig 109). The rather erratic decoration suggests that the Achnacreebeag Beaker need not be an early example of this type. Perhaps another comparable late Beaker is the squat vessel from Kilmory Knap (Mid Argyll) which has incised decoration which includes triangles infilled with horizontal lines (Cregeen 1957, 227-8, fig 5; Clarke 1970, no. 1544, fig 701). A very fragmentary vessel from Beoch (Ayrshire) is decorated with small circular impressions and some of the zones may have been triangles or chevrons (McLeod 1938, 237-8; Ritchie 1970, 139).

The decoration of Beaker fragments SF 5 from Achnacreebeag may be compared to that from Gallanachbeg (fig 6) discovered in a cist, and belonging to the N2 style (e.g. Kirkbuddo, Angus; Clarke 1970, no. 485). A similar Beaker, now lost, seems to have been discovered last century during the building of the Argyllshire Gathering Halls in Oban.

There are three Beakers in the northern part of Argyll which are decorated by incised motifs rather than by comb-impression; they are from Callachally, Slaterich and Dalineun (ARG 3). The Slaterich vessel belongs to Clarke's Final Southern style (S4) with incised triangles and lozenges forming the main decorative patterns, and an impressed 'false-relief' zig-zag line on the inside of the rim which Clarke ascribes to Food Vessel influence (1970, 234-5, no. 1545). This type has a predominantly eastern distribution and the vessel from Stoneykirk (Wigtownshire) is the only other example on the western seaboard that has any claims to belong to this series (Ritchie 1970, 134, 146). The Callachally Beaker, in the earlier (S3) style, may be compared

with Beaker fragments SF 8 from Achnacreebeag; the notion of the incised pendant triangle filled with horizontal lines is perhaps similar, and on the former a series of interlocking triangles form a zig-zag effect similar to that on the Achnacreebeag sherds. Incised decoration based on triangles, though not interlocking, may be seen on the S3 Beaker from Kilmarie, Skye (Clarke 1970, no. 1672). A comb decorated Beaker of N3 style from Callachally, Mull, was associated with the vessel already mentioned from this site; it illustrates a similar scheme of opposing triangles, infilled with tiny comb chevrons. Two other Beakers, from Dalineun (fig 5, b and c), one decorated

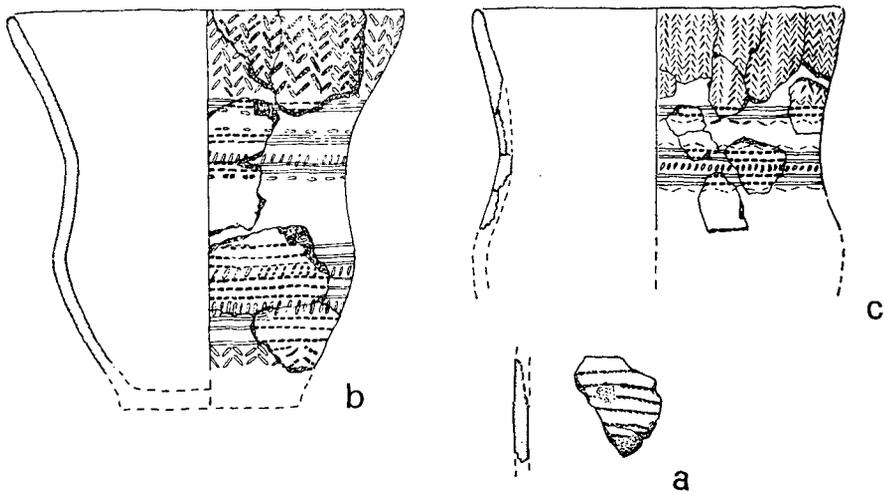


FIG 5 Beakers from Dalineun (ARG 3) (scale 1:3)

with impressed and the other incised motifs, belong to Clarke's Late Northern British Group (N3), which are comparatively well-represented in northern and Mid Argyll (though not in the same quantity as in eastern Scotland) (Clarke 1970, 176-90). The broad neck decoration of stacked chevrons or herringbone-impressions (Clarke's Motif 20; 1970, 20, 165, 426) may be compared to that from Kraiknish, Skye (which also has bands of horizontal impressions), Freefield, Aberdeenshire (now lost), and that on the belly of the vessel from Victoria Park, Whiteinch, Glasgow (Clarke 1970, nos 1674, 1453, 1703). Herringbone and chevron decoration also occurs on Beakers from two chambered cairns in North Uist, Clettraval (UST 12) and Geiriscllett (UST 18), but in both cases the vessels are fragmentary (Henshall 1972, 106, 511, no. 30 and 516-17, nos 3-4). The only other Beaker from this area is that from a cist behind the Nether Lochaber Hotel, Corran Ferry, and it too belongs to the N3 style (fig 6).

This examination of the Beaker pottery from Achnacreebeag and comparative material from the northern half of Argyll suggests that the blocking of the passage-grave had, in this case, taken place at a time when Beaker activity was already well advanced. Comparable vessels from cist burials in the area show that the ritual of individual burial was being practised at the same time. Although the range of styles represented might appear unusual, it might be paralleled by the range of pottery types from the blocking at West Kennet, Wiltshire (Piggott 1962, 68-78); at Achnacreebeag, however, there is no reason to suggest that the styles could not be broadly contemporary.

The deposition of Beaker pottery in chambered tombs seems to have occurred during three stages of the tomb ritual: as part of the collective burial tradition (as at Cairnholy I), in the act

of filling and blocking the chamber (as at Achnacreebeag), and finally as secondary deposits at a date subsequent to the blocking. Local factors were likely to have influenced how long a tomb continued in use, and how strongly and at what time Beaker influence was felt in the burial traditions of any given area. There is no real correlation between these three stages and the

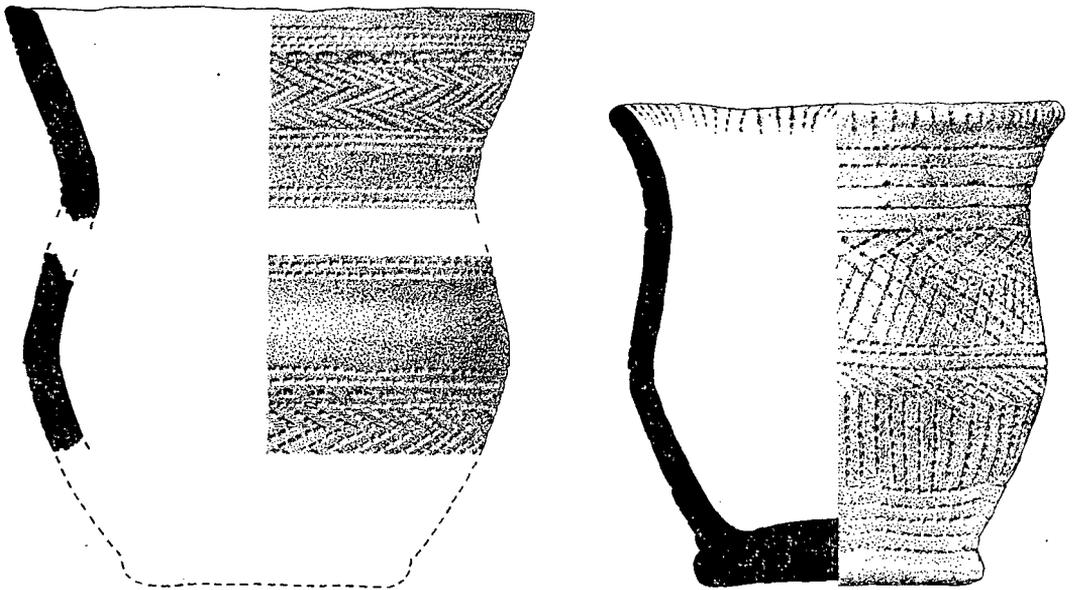


FIG 6 Beakers from Gallanachbeg (Argyll) and Corran Ferry (Inverness-shire) (scale 1:2)

sequence of Beaker pottery outlined by Clarke. The approximate date of the *floruit* of the latest example of Beaker style represented in the blocking of a chamber tomb may, however, provide a date for the local abandonment of the collective burial ritual. There is an interesting variant in the situation at Brackley in Kintyre (ARG 28), where the tomb does not seem to have been finally sealed until after the insertion of a Food Vessel cremation burial on a secondary layer of paving (Scott J G 1956, 32-6). There is no reason to assume, however, that the collective burial ritual, involving the clearing out of the chamber, continued at Brackley until sometime before the middle of the second millennium BC.

The jet disc-beads belong to a simple type found frequently with Beakers and Food Vessels. In the west of Scotland, examples with Beaker associations have been found at Balnabraid, Argyll (Ritchie 1967, 90, fig 6) and Stoneycirk, Wigtownshire (Ritchie 1970, 134, 146) and with a Food Vessel at Brownhead, Arran (Bryce 1902, 120-2, fig 43). Such beads are of little chronological value as they seem to belong to the basic range of artefacts associated with Beaker pottery (Clarke 1970, 448).

The flint from the blocking can be divided into three general groups, awls and piercers (SF 21, 23, 31), round scrapers (SF 15, 16, 17, 18) and three with rather longer cutting edges, which may be scrapers or knives (SF 19, 20, 22). The retouched edge of a piece of flint of unusual size for Argyll (53 by 98 mm; SF 19) provides a particularly long working edge. The most representative of the round scrapers are SF 16 and the fragmentary SF 18; the other two are rather more roughly worked. The round scrapers can be compared with those from Belle Tout (Sussex) (Bradley 1970, 352), Plantation Farm (Cambridgeshire) (Clark 1933, 272, fig 3) and Windmill

Hill, Beaker levels (Wiltshire) (Smith 1965, 108–9, fig 50). A similar round scraper was discovered at Tippermallo, Methven (Perthshire), in a cist accompanying an N3 Beaker (Clarke 1970, no. 1744; *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, xxxiii (1898–9), 145–6, fig 5).

The awl SF 31 has a finely retouched edge on one side and has only primary working on the other; the point is, however, finely spurred from both sides. The back of the flint is unworked. SF 21 may be an unfinished flint of this type; one edge and the point are carefully worked but the other side has an irregular unworked tongue. It is possible that this was left in position to facilitate working, and would then be knocked off to leave an irregular, but parallel, edge as on SF 31.

The maker held the flint by the tongue and was able to work the other sides of the artefact with greater ease. A small steep-sided knife from Twiglees, Eskdalemuir (Dumfriesshire) is a close parallel (Stevenson 1957, 221, fig 3). The awls or borers (SF 23 and 31) might be compared with two illustrated by Anderson (1886, 373, figs 401 and 402 respectively).

## CONCLUSION

The excavation had been undertaken in order to examine the structural sequence represented by the two chambers, and to attempt to find dating evidence for the two phases. In the west of Scotland much work has been done, particularly by Scott, Corcoran and Henshall on the multi-period nature of *Clyde* cairns, with the earliest type represented by simple box-like chambers (Scott J G 1969, 175–222; Corcoran 1969, 73–7; Henshall 1972, 15–110). The more complex cairns of this group are thought to be the result partly of local innovation and partly of external architectural influences. It is more difficult to support a similar interpretation for cairns of passage-grave type. The passage-grave at Achnacreebeag belongs to such a widespread tradition that it is not possible to suggest any linear development from the type of structure represented by the NW chamber of Achnacreebeag to the later passage-grave. On present evidence it is perhaps safer to suggest that the passage-grave element belongs to an intrusive and thus different tradition than the simple closed chambers outlined above (p 37). That is not to say that the latter are not allied in some way to the early chambers of the *Clyde* group; but there is no conclusive evidence to support this hypothesis.

It is particularly unfortunate that there was no dating evidence for the NW chamber; nor does the pottery within the passage-grave give any indication of when this was actually built, as earlier deposits may well have been cleared out. It is interesting, however, that of the Neolithic ware, SF 1 and 2 belong to groups found also in *Clyde* tombs (pp 39–41); this may indicate that there was less cultural distinction between the *users* of the tombs at least than might at first appear.

## SMALL FINDS (figs 3, 4)

*Neolithic* (1–4 and 10 by Miss A S Henshall)

1. Numerous small sherds, including one from the rim, of a rather friable undecorated pot. The sherds tend to split parallel to the surface due to the laminated structure of the ware. The fabric is dark grey-brown, with tempering of small pale crystalline grits and brown mica. A smooth slip covers the outer surface. The rim sherd is too small for the angle to be certain, but the wall was probably vertical. The rim is slightly expanded with an external bevel. (EO 1016)

2. Sherds comprising part of the wall of a decorated carinated bowl. The ware is hard, dull brown, with small grit tempering. Though much worn, there are traces of burnishing on the

outside. Only vestiges of the smooth inner surface remain. The rim edge is missing, but the wall immediately below appears to be somewhat thickened as if the rim were expanded. The collar of the bowl is decorated just above the carination by a row of incised triple hoops, and there are faint and uncertain indications of an upper row of wider hoops. Below the carination is a rather irregular row of incised vertical lines. (EO 1015)

3. Numerous small sherds of a vessel with one (or more) horizontal cordon and impressed decoration. The ware is 8 mm thick, dark brown, with a worn brown outer surface, heavily tempered with dark grits. The sherds are all very worn and the impressions are indistinct, but where best seen they are elongated ovals with slight irregularities suggesting small whipped-cord 'maggots'. (EO 1017)

4. Rim sherd, possibly from the same pot as 3, but the ware seems grittier and the inner surface is pale. The outer surface is missing, but the rim bevel has a row of small slightly curved impressions. (EO 1017)

#### *Beaker*

5. Three fragments of brown gritty ware with a dark grey core 7 mm in thickness, two of the sherds with zones of comb-impressed decoration, the other plain; the zones are bounded by pairs of horizontal lines of impression and contain closely packed herringbone between. Some of the surfaces are slightly eroded. (EO 1018)

6. At least five fragments including a portion of the rim of brownish-buff ware, finely textured, and only about 5 mm in thickness; the rim diameter may have been as much as 155 mm, but the layout of the decoration suggests that the pot may have been irregular. The rim is flat and slightly everted (7 mm thick). The techniques of decoration are incision and impression; below the rim is a row of incised upright triangles, infilled with horizontal lines, and with a line of rounded impressions, possibly made by a round-toothed comb, forming their bases. A second line of small impressions completes the first zone. The second band consists of incised triangles infilled with short slanting jabs. The remaining decoration and the shape of the vessel must be inferred from two fragments, one showing a zone with two lines of incised triangles infilled with incisions. The second is a distinctly carinated sherd decorated with the beginning of another triangle and two short strokes. (EO 1019)

7. Four fragments of a reddish-buff ware with medium grits; the wall sherds are about 6 mm thick. The base, which has been about 80 mm in diameter, is 9 mm thick; it is slightly concave and has a low rib at the basal angle. Decoration is by incision and, from the surviving fragments, appears to consist of a line of short slanting strokes round the base of the vessel and a band of three horizontal lines of short strokes on the body. (EO 1020)

8. About ten small fragments of buff ware with quartz grits; the wall-sherds are about 7 mm thick and the rim, which has a slight inward bevel, is about 5 mm thick. The Beaker has been decorated by incision and the pattern consists of interlocking triangles, infilled with horizontal incised lines and a plain zig-zag between the triangles. There is a band of short slanting incisions at the bottom of this zone of decoration and the beginning of a plain band beneath. (EO 1021)

9.\* Sherd from the angle of base and wall; gritty dark grey ware, buff outer surface and rather eroded inner surface, approx. 8 mm in thickness. (EO 1022)

10. Four small sherds, and some fragments, of a pot with a plain rounded rim. The ware is 7-9 mm thick, fairly hard, heavily tempered with dark angular grits, buff coloured, with a fine slip on the outside. The incised decoration comprises bold horizontal herringbone; part of a plain zone survives. (EO 1021a)

*Jet disc-beads* (pl 6)

11. Seventeen small perforated discs of jet were discovered throughout the blocking and in the disturbed portion of the chamber; they range in size from 5 mm in diam., 2 mm thick with a central perforation of 2 mm, to 9 mm in diam., 3 mm thick and a central perforation of 3 mm. The ridges formed during the drilling of the central perforation are clearly visible on several examples. (EO 1023)

## FLINT

*Neolithic*

12. Chip of ginger-brown flint, 18 by 27 mm. From the primary cairn, 0.45 m SW of the outer tip of stone 3. (EO 1042)

13. Plano-convex knife of pale-grey flint, 76 mm long and 19 mm broad; there is careful secondary working over almost the entire back of the knife. (EO 1024)

14. Fragment of an implement of pale-grey flint, with both faces pressure flaked, 21 by 28 mm. (EO 1036)

*Beaker*

15.\* Scraper of mottled-grey flint, with semi-circular trimmed edge, 28 by 33 mm. (EO 1025)

16. Almost circular flat scraper of pale-grey cherty flint, two thirds of the edge has been trimmed, small area of cortex on one side. (EO 1026)

17.\* Side scraper of pale-grey flint, 27 by 32 mm. (EO 1027)

18.\* Fragment of a flat scraper of grey-pink flint with part of a semi-circular trimmed edge. (EO 1028)

19. Large triangular flake of pale-grey flint, 53 by 98 mm; one side neatly trimmed to a knife edge, the remaining faces and edges roughly flaked. (EO 1029)

20. Leaf-shaped ridged blade of pale-grey cherty flint, the tip broken, one side carefully trimmed to a knife edge, the other side roughly trimmed, 30 by 47 mm. (EO 1030)

21. Irregular flake of pale-grey cherty flint, straight and thicker side neatly trimmed to a knife edge, and the adjacent concave edge probably used as a tongue to facilitate the working of the trimmed side, unfinished, 29 by 46 mm. (EO 1031)

22. Irregular thick flake, similar flint with some brown staining, 38 by 54 mm, the ridged back roughly flaked, some of the cortex remaining, the edges trimmed and utilised in places. (EO 1032)

23.\* Flake of pale-grey cherty flint, 19 by 36 mm, steeply trimmed along one side to form a narrow point, the other edge chipped by use. (EO 1033)

24. Irregular flake of pale-grey flint, 28 by 46 mm, one long slightly concave edge with fine steep trimming. (EO 1034)

25.\* Irregular flake of speckled-grey flint, 30 by 38 mm, one almost straight edge and adjacent irregular edge very finely trimmed, deeply concave edge probably utilised as hollow scraper. (EO 1035)

26.\* Fragment of burnt flint, 10 by 14 mm. (EO 1037)

27. Roughly rectangular flake of mottled pale-grey flint, 28 by 56 mm, one edge utilised. (EO 1038)

28.\* Pale-grey flint chip, 15 by 20 mm, with some very shallow trimming along one edge. (EO 1039)

29.\* Yellowish-grey flint chip, 22 by 23 mm, roughly trimmed along the thick side and subsequently worn smooth. (EO 1040)

30.\* Chip of speckled dark-grey flint with steep trimming on a short convex edge; topsoil find. (EO 1041)

31.\* Flake of pale buff-grey flint, 29 mm long, trimmed down one side. (EO 1045a)

32. Nine small chips of pale-grey flint, and one ginger-brown chip; two from the primary cairn; not planned on fig 1. (EO 1043)

33. Four chips of pitchstone. (EO 1044)

34. Fragment of transparent crystal, 11 by 13 by 16 mm. (EO 1045)

35.\* Flake of grey flint, 26 by 49 mm, with straight sides, one end broken, the other probably utilised as a scraper. (Achnacreebeag Farm)

36.\* Small flake of grey flint, 15 by 17 mm, broken at one end, some trimming at the other. (Achnacreebeag Farm)

Those flints marked with an asterisk indicate finds from the disturbed portion of the passage-grave, or from the pile of debris thrown out during the disturbance; they are described here as Beaker period as most came from the upper levels of the fill, but it is possible that some may have belonged to the earlier deposit. A small proportion of sherds forming vessels no. 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 (and also the single sherd of no. 9) were found in the disturbed half of the chamber, but there is no doubt about the stratigraphical position of the remaining sherds of these vessels. Of the seventeen jet disc-beads only three were discovered in removing the disturbed part of the chamber fill. One jet disc-bead and two flints, nos 35 and 36, have been deposited at Achnacreebeag Farm. The number following the description, e.g., (EO 1016), is the registration number of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, in which all the other finds have been deposited.

## CATALOGUE OF BEAKER POTTERY IN LORN, MULL AND NORTH ARGYLL

Details are given only when they supplement those in Clarke, 1970.

### 1. *Achnacreebeag* (ARG 37)

2. *Dalineun, Loch Nell South* (ARG 3). NM 879267. Sherds of three Beakers (fig 5) were discovered within this Clyde chambered tomb; two (a and c) were found lying within an undisturbed layer in the innermost compartment and fragments of b were found both in this layer and amongst the final blocking of stones within the tomb. Accompanying the Beaker sherds in the blocking were a number of fragments of unburnt bone.

a. Six body sherds and a number of tiny fragments of an All-over-Cord ornamented Beaker; fine sandy ware, 6 mm thick, with the impressed decoration rather smudged. NMA EO 1054.

b. A dozen sherds of a Beaker decorated with impressions, about 160 mm in height with a wide everted rim about 160 mm in external diameter; reddish-buff ware with large grits for its 8 mm thickness. The neck decoration comprises vertical bands of stacked chevron ornament made by comb-impression, and two horizontal lines of short impressions at the bottom of this zone. Round the waist are pairs of horizontal lines with traces of upright strokes between the pairs. At the belly are two further areas of this group of motifs and at the bottom of this zone there appears to have been a further band of stacked chevrons, although this is only traceable on one sherd. NMA EO 1055.

c. Fragmentary remains of a vessel with similar ornament; the stacked chevrons of the

neck (approx. diam. 144 mm) and the lower band of ornament, comprising pairs of horizontal lines with short jabs between, have been executed with a finer comb than b. NMA EO 1056. *DES 1970*, 63; *DES 1971*, 58.

*Gallanachbeg*. c NM 836276. In 1897, during building operations at the farm of Gallanachbeg, a Beaker was discovered in a cist; no remains of the burial-deposit were found. Two large portions survive, including about half of the rim and a third of the belly diameter (fig 6). The ware is brownish-buff, with medium grits, and is well-fired; the rim is flat, 8 mm in thickness, and undecorated. The comb decoration is in bands with plain zones between, one band below the rim comprising closely packed zig-zags bounded by horizontal lines. There was presumably another decorated band before the belly of the vessel and immediately above this there is a plain zone and below it there is a further line of zig-zags or chevrons bounded, above at least, by horizontal lines of comb-impressions; 136 mm rim diam : Gallanach. *The Scotsman*, 21st April 1897, reprinted in Faichney 1902, 18–19; *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, xxxi (1896–7), 238 (notice of exhibition); Clarke 1970, 514, no. 1542.

4. *Oban, Argyllshire Gathering Halls, Breadalbane Street*. c NM 858304. At the time of the discovery of the Beaker from Gallanachbeg a comparison was made between this vessel and a photograph of one found some years before during the digging of the foundations of the Argyllshire Gathering Halls. Faichney records that a Mr MacIsaac was 'struck with the close resemblance of the style in both cases – indeed, so great is the similarity as to suggest a connection of some kind in their manufacture. On both there are several parallel lines, some of these perfectly straight and others regularly zig-zag, so as to produce a diamond-shaped figure within a larger diamond'. The Beaker can no longer be traced. *The Scotsman*, 21st April 1897, reprinted in Faichney 1902, 19.

5. *Slaterich, Kerrera*. NM 820295. NMA L 1931. 1. Callander 1932, 406–7, fig 5; Clarke 1970, 234–5, 514, no. 1545, fig 980.

6. *Callachally, Glenforsa, Mull*. The circumstances of the discovery of two Beakers, a bronze blade and a greenstone bracer cannot be unravelled with certainty, but they were presented to the National Museum at the same time: NMA EQ 135 and 137 (Beakers), 136 (bronze), 134 (bracer). The notice of accession (*Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, ix (1870–2), 537–8) states that all were found on the farm of Callachally, makes no mention of a cist or cairn, but records that the two bronze fragments were found with the Beakers, thus confirming their association.

Anderson, however, states that the two Beakers were found 'in clearing away a cairn' (1886, 14). The cist was first recorded in the initial Ordnance Survey reconnaissance of the area in 1878 (OSNB *Argyll*, No. 46, p 10), but there was no local knowledge of anything having been found in it. It is situated on the top of a natural esker some 190 m E of Callachally (NM 593422), and it remains a possibility that it may have been associated with these finds. Clarke 1970, 185–6, 232, 513, nos 1531–2, figs 676–7.

7. *Salen, Mull*. NM 572430. Fragments of base and body of AOC Beaker found in a cist circa 1883 and associated with two flint flakes and two small fragments of arsenical copper. The sherds are of rather crumbly buff ware with medium-sized grits (wall sherds 5 mm thick, base 6 mm thick); decorated with horizontal cord-impressions over the complete outer surface. Two small fragments of copper, possibly parts of a blade (25 mm broad and 1 mm thick), a round flake of grey flint and a flint knife with two retouched sides at right angles making a rectangular implement: NMA EQ 269 (Beaker), 270 (copper), 271 (round flint flake), 272 (flint knife); Duns 1883, 84–5; Clarke 1970, 63, 514, no. 1553.

8. *Cul na Croise, Kentra Bay, Ardnamurchan*. There are three sherds from Cul na Croise in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge; (i) a fragment of an

AOC Beaker, very worn and smudged; (ii) and (iii), not Beaker ware; one a rim sherd, everted, of fine well-fired grey ware with granite gritting over the outer surface, the other a buff, well-fired ware with medium grits; the rim with a slight inner thickening is flat with an inward bevel: CMAE no. 51. 1047. Leaf-shaped and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads and other flint objects were also recovered; Lacaille 1951, 129-30.

9. *Sanna Bay, Ardnamurchan*. Several Beaker fragments were found in August 1926 in midden deposits in the sand-dunes at the NE side of the bay below the present village. The midden included quantities of limpet shells, minute fragments of bone, flint and basalt flakes, Beaker sherds and two stone axes; the flint work comprises a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead, two flint knives or scrapers.

(i) AOC Beaker partly restored on a wooden block; sandy-buff exterior, black gritty interior, well-fired fine-textured ware. Rim diameter (as restored) *c* 150 mm: CMAE no. 26. 502; Lethbridge 1927, 173-4, fig 2, 8.

(ii) About 25 body sherds of AOC ware, some very small, some with shell grit; and one rim sherd with three lines of cord-impression on the inside of the rim but the outer surface has weathered away completely; some may belong to the same vessel as (i): CMAE no. 26. 502.

(iii) A number of AOC sherds including three rims, one a slightly everted rounded rim (with the first 10 mm of the outer surface free of decoration); the other a slightly everted flat rim with a rather pitted interior; the third a small flattish rim with traces of two lines of cord-impression inside the rim, insufficient of the outer surface survives to show decoration; about a dozen body sherds and one base fragment of AOC ware: CMAE no. 51. 1044.

(iv) Five sherds of Beaker with horizontal shell-impressions: CMAE no. 26. 502 B.

(v) Five fragments of shell-impressed Beaker, reddish brown ware, reddish grey interior: CMAE no. 51. 1044.

(vi) One sherd of comb-decorated Beaker, showing three lines of horizontal impression with a square-toothed comb: CMAE no. 51. 1044. Lethbridge 1927, 173-4, fig 2; Lacaille 1951, 128-9, fig 11; 1954, 289-90, fig 129; Clarke 1970, 513, nos 1527-9, figs 8 and 83.

10. *Nether Lochaber Hotel, Corran Ferry, Inverness-shire*. NN 020633. During gravel digging operations in 1889, a cist was discovered just S of the Nether Lochaber Hotel (Campbell 1890, 436-8). Two cists are at present visible just above the shore on the edge of the gravel and at

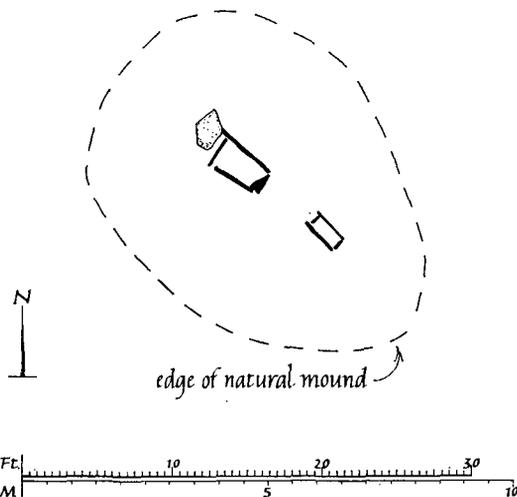


FIG 7 Cists, Nether Lochaber Hotel, Corran Ferry (Inverness-shire)

about 9 m OD (fig 7); the cists have been inserted into a low natural mound and there is no indication that they were ever covered by a cairn or barrow. The bottom of one of the cists was about 1.4 m from the surface of the mound. Both cists are aligned approximately NW-SE; the larger, discovered in 1889, lies to the NW of the smaller cist and is also closer to the centre of the mound. The larger cist measured 0.1 by 0.53 m and is 0.46 m in depth. It is recorded that the cover consisted of two slabs 'placed over the cist, like the inclined timber or rafters on the roof of the house' (Campbell 1890, 437). The cist was found to be two-thirds full of moss, and contained a Beaker lying partly on its side; a 'chip of flint or strike-light', found on a subsequent occasion, was thought to have accompanied the burial. No trace of the burial deposit was discovered, although some ashes are said to have been found.

A second cist, some 1.07 m SE of the former, was noted when the site was planned in March 1970; it was composed of four smaller slabs and measured internally 0.61 m by 0.30 m and some 0.23 m in depth. Nothing further is known about the cist; it is not mentioned in the published account, although it is recorded there that 'an attempt was subsequently made to ascertain by means of iron sounding-rods whether other cists existed on the spot'.

*Restoration of the Beaker.* At the time of the discovery it was feared that the Beaker would crumble upon exposure to air; as a preventive measure it was immersed in water, whereupon it began to fall to pieces. It was then stuck together with fish glue and filled with plaster of paris in order to consolidate it. After eighty years in this state the surface had begun to crumble and the vessel was again in a perilous condition. The work of restoration has been undertaken in the laboratories of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. The fish glue was dissolved and the plaster core extracted; the Beaker was then strengthened and stuck together again.

*The Beaker* (fig 6) is of a roughish-brown ware with mica and quartzite grits; it has a sinuous-S profile with a distinct and protruding foot, but has been rather flattened on one side as if it had been knocked out of shape before firing. The vessel is decorated with rather irregular lines of comb-impression with horizontal bands below the rim, round the belly and above the foot. Below the upper bands, there are short lines of slanting impressions and, in the major zones of ornament thus formed, are areas of criss-cross impressions and vertical lines respectively. The rim is decorated, both inside and out, with short lines of comb-impression. 128 mm in height, 119-123 mm rim diam., 72 mm base diam.: Ardgour House.

The flint object was presented to the National Museum of Antiquities by Christison in 1889; it is a struck flake of buff-speckled flint with the complete cortex still remaining on the outer surface, the straight sides are unworked and the narrower end (23 mm broad) has been worked up to a point by flaking on the cortex side only: NMA EQ 259. Campbell 1890, 436-8; Clarke 1970, 517, no. 1665.

#### *Abbreviations for Museums*

CMAE: University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge.

NMA: National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.

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a from SE



b from N

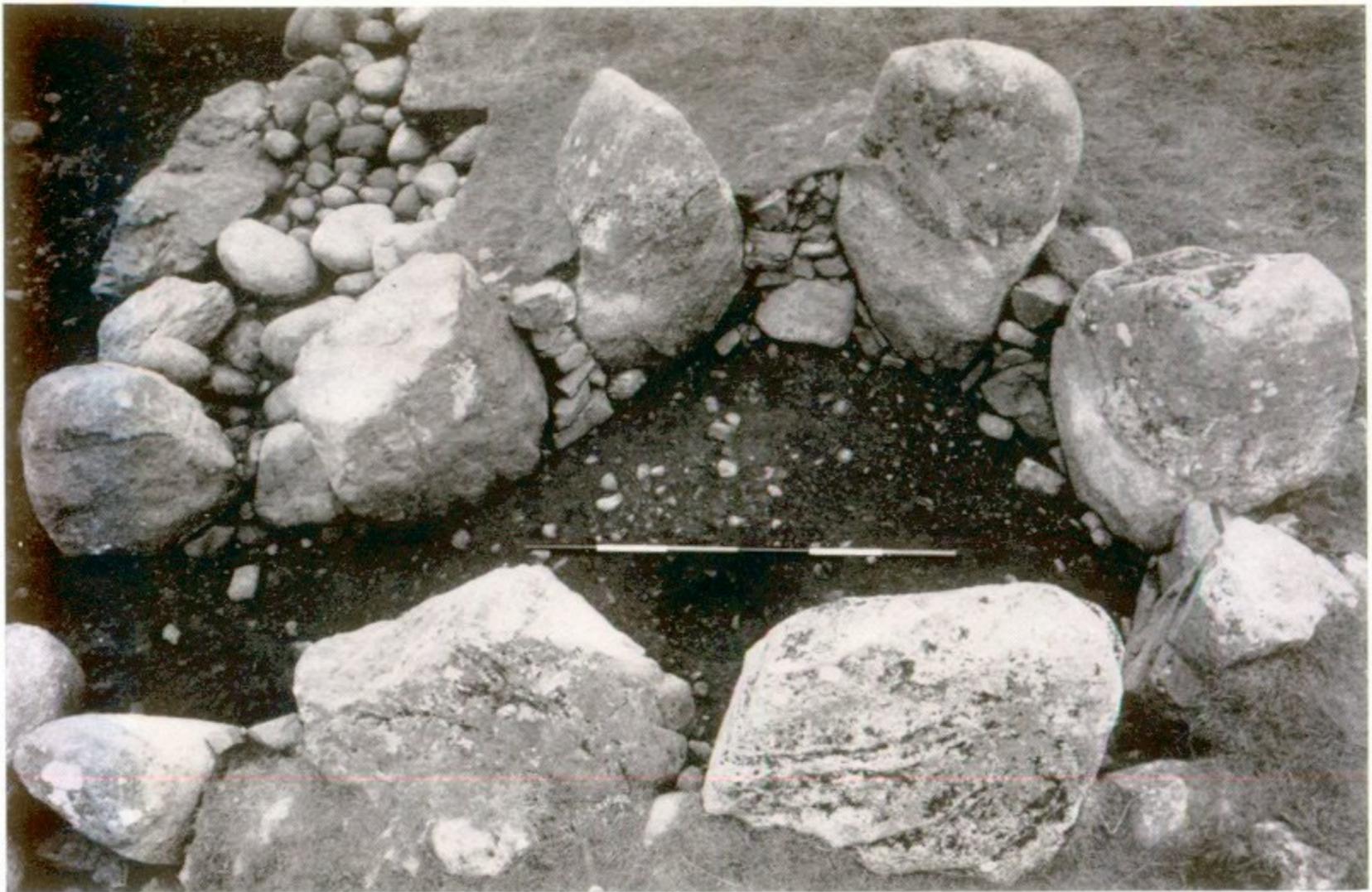


c from E with capstone removed

NW chamber (scales in ft)



d edge of original cairn on NE (scale in ft)



a from NE completely excavated (scale in ft)

Passage-grave



b from NW showing disturbance and undisturbed blocking (scale in ft)



a Passage-grave, blocking in front of chamber (scale in ft)



b Passage-grave, boulders of primary blocking (scale in ft)



c Passage-grave, kerb with all blocking removed (scale in ft)



Jet disc beads