

8. PARTIAL COLLAPSE AND STRUCTURAL MODIFICATION

In the opinion of the first two named authors, the dates relating to the cremated human remains (012) and (017) appear to suggest that the passage tomb was in use for a relatively short time before the flagstone floor was laid. The largest flagstone (005), interpreted by Mann (1925) to be part of the original floor, sealed the crushed sandstone layer (034). The flagstone floor was rather more complex in plan than indicated in Mann's report, with smaller cobbles being located on the northern and southern side of the chamber (Illus 8). Excavation revealed that the cobbles, under which the deposit of cremated bone (012) was located, had not been disturbed or re-laid despite being located adjacent to the elongated flagstone that Mann had reported lifting (Illus 4, flagstone 'C'). On the southern side of the chamber a deposit of blocky peat loam mixed with compact brown sandy silt and cremated bone (013) sealed three small stones (014) that lay parallel to the largest flagstone (005). Stratigraphically this deposit of cremated remains must be later in date than those sealed below the flagstones (005).

Excavation of the rubble and silt (015) within the passage exposed the collapsed top of the north passage stone (Illus 9). The eastern end of this stone was wedged under the western side of the largest flagstone (005) and therefore proved that the passage had partially collapsed prior to the formation of the flagstone floor.

Within the chamber on the eastern side, a narrow upright orthostat was located against the vertical gap between two of the chamber orthostats (Illus 12). This additional orthostat sat upon the crushed sandstone surface (034) and therefore was placed in position after the creation of this 'floor' and hence was not part of the initial design of the passage tomb. Significantly this narrow upright orthostat was roughly the same length and width as the elongated flagstone.

One possible explanation is that the elongated flagstone once stood upright on the southwestern side of the chamber and, together with the in situ upright orthostat on the northeastern side, served to support one or more of the capstones; and the large flagstone could have been one part of the capstone roof that covered the chamber. The implication is



Illus 12 Detail following the removal of the chamber floor. (image: Forestry and Land Scotland)

that at least one of the capstones brought to the site was found to be too small to span the width of the chamber. Following the collapse of the capstone roof over the chamber and the partial collapse of the passage roof, it appears the decision was made to raise the floor level of the chamber using the larger flagstone (one of the collapsed capstones) and the elongated flagstone (the fallen secondary supporting orthostat). This may have been an easier solution than trying to lift the stones – the larger flagstone is estimated to be *c* 2 tons in weight, and the elongated flagstone estimated to weigh *c* 0.58 tons – out of the chamber, or break it up in situ, or manoeuvre

it down the partially collapsed, but still probably largely capped passage. As there were no other large stones found within the chamber or passage, it is presumed the remaining roof stone was removed from the monument during the remodelling phase. Cremated bone (013) may date the laying of the flagstone floor to after 2900–2690 cal BC (SUERC-122490) (Table 1), although there is the possibility that the cremated bone and soil were gathered from earlier deposits within the tomb. Entrance into the tomb appears to have continued via the passage over a stepped rubble surface (016) located just outside the entrance.