

II.

NOTICE OF A CAIRN AT KILCHOAN, ARGYLESIRE, AND ITS CONTENTS. BY THE REV. R. J. MAPLETON, M.A. COMMUNICATED BY J. STUART, ESQ., SEC. S.A. SCOT.

About a quarter of a mile N.E. of the vitrified fort referred to in the paper of Mr Greenwell, up a small glade, are the remains of a megalithic cist, in many respects similar to the one on Largie farm—though not quite so large—which I examined December 28, 29, 30, 1864.² The

¹ Mr Mapleton found the skeleton of a female in a partially destroyed cairn at Tyness, near Kilmartin. The female skull is never so typical as the male, and has generally a tendency to dolicho-cephalism, and therefore this skull cannot be considered as of the same value as if it had been that of a male. It falls, however, as we should expect, into the type of the brachy-cephalic skulls of the round barrows of the bronze period, having a parietal breadth of very nearly $\cdot 77$ to a length of 1.00.

² Kilchoan is about a quarter of a mile west of a set of rock-markings, of which

place is called "Kilchoan,"—the *cil* or burying-place of St John. The legend is that there was a burying-place there a few years ago; but I cannot find any remains of the chapel, nor can I hear of them from men who have been employed in numerous alterations.

The only sign of interment that I have been able to discover was a long loose stone grave—for I cannot call it a cist—about 100 yards west of the cist. It was just below the level of the present road, and its dimensions were 6 feet 6 inches long, 2 feet 4 inches wide, and 1 foot 6 inches deep. It was composed of two very thin slabs of schist, on one side—very loosely and carelessly put together—on the other side only one slab remained. The two end stones were in their place; the cover was gone.

The great cist has evidently at some time been covered with a cairn of the usual construction, viz., rounded stones and occasionally blocks of schist. I can trace these for 36 feet on the south side, but all have been removed on the north and east to make way for a very old road. The ground on the south side is still two or three feet higher than on the north, from the remains of the cairn.

The cist is placed E.N.E. by W.S.W., and consists of a chamber 14 feet 8 inches in length, 8 feet 3 inches in height at the highest part, and varying from 4 feet 8 inches to 2 feet 8 inches in width. It is formed by six heavy massive slabs of chlorite schist—three on each side—one of which is 7 feet long, 3 feet 2 inches deep, and about 5 inches thick; another is 6 feet long and 13 inches thick. The first pair (*i. e.*, at the east end) are not parallel, but converge towards the east; so that the western edges are 4 feet 8 inches, and the eastern only 3 feet apart. The next, or middle pair, are placed just inside the others, so that their *outer* surface just touches the *inner* surface of the others, like the slides of a telescope. The third, or western pair, are placed in the same manner as the eastern, so that the western end is narrower than the middle. These form the cist *proper*, and are sunk into the ground, so that the interments were below the surface.

all have been destroyed but one or two markings. It is also one mile south of another set—*i. e.*, a flat crown of rock—with ten or eleven markings in it. Both sets are in the same glade.

The roof was formed by large heavy slabs of chlorite schist, supported on pillars—of which four are still standing, and two of the cover slabs still rest upon them, though displaced. One (towards the east) is 8 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 1 foot 3 inches thick at one end, but only 3 or 4 inches at the other. Another, which covered the west end, is 6 feet long, 4 feet 10 inches wide, and 10 inches thick. There is another slab at the east end, which a man told me was resting on two pillars four years ago—and I also remember it well; it is 5 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet 6 inches in width. This I believe to have been the cover of the entrance to the cist.

There are only four of these pillars remaining, unless the stone at the west end of the building was one, but there is every appearance that others have been removed. The four that remain are placed thus—One pillar on each side of the cist, at the east end; and one pillar on each side, where the middle and west side slabs meet.

Those at the east end converge towards the east, following the direction of the side slabs. One of them is 5 feet 2 inches in height, 3 feet 9 inches wide, and about 10 or 11 inches thick. The other is 4 feet 10 inches high, and 2 feet 9 inches wide. The two project a little beyond the end of the chamber. Those in the middle are about 3 feet 4 inches high, and 2 feet wide; but to compensate for this want of height, a cross bar of stone, 6 feet 10 inches long, and 1 foot 8 inches thick, rests upon these pillars; and the cover upon the bar, and the thickest part of the cover is at this end. These pillars are placed close to the side slabs, so as to add strength as well as to support the cover. In this respect this cist differs from the Largie cist, viz., that whereas in the Largie cist the cover rests upon the walls themselves, in this cist it rests upon pillars placed outside the slabs forming the central cist.

The chamber was evidently higher at the east or entrance end than at the other; and the remarkable convergence, both of the side slabs and also of the pillars, at the east end, seems intended for an entrance.

The chamber is divided into three compartments by two thick strong slabs placed across the cist, just where the three pairs of side slabs join.

They are not so high as the side slabs by several inches, and were evidently intended for *strength*, as well as for divisions. They are about

2 feet 2 inches deep. Several blocks and small slabs of stone are lying about, and some in the cist, which may have been used to fill up the spaces between the pillars. At the west end of this chamber, and 8 feet from it, is another cist, of the ordinary construction—of four slabs and a cover with a cross bar or tie, at the east end, near the top. The cist is four feet by 2 feet 8 inches, and 2 feet deep. The cover is 7 feet 4 inches by 4 feet 2 inches, and about 7 inches thick.

The first compartment (*i.e.*, that at the east end, nearest to the entrance) is 3 feet 4 inches in length. Its width is 3 feet at the east end, and 4 feet 8 inches at the west end; depth, 3 feet.

On removing the stones and rubbish which had filled it up, I found a kind of white concrete, full of charcoal, extending over the whole surface. On this concrete were deposits of burnt bone, but chiefly at the sides and in the corners. One very fine well-made flint implement of a long form was found about the centre. Under the concrete were about 3 or 4 inches of imported yellow sand. In this we found two manufactured oblong flint implements, not unlike an elongated gun flint; half of a tapering knife or scraper, apparently of a coarse carnelian, round at the end; several unfinished implements, and chips of flint. These were found *under* the concrete and deposit of bone. The concrete appeared as if it had never been disturbed.

The second compartment is 5 feet 2 inches long by 3 feet 5 inches wide, and 3 feet 5 inches deep.

A cross bar of stone had formerly been placed near the top at the west end; and it was found lying at the bottom with burnt bones *upon* it, *behind* it, and *under* it.

The bone was coarsely burnt. Rather large flat stones were placed in various parts of this compartment, forming recesses, in which were burnt bone. There have evidently been several deposits. Among the sand at the bottom was a round stone, even, but not polished, about 3 inches in diameter.

A flake of flint, leaf-shaped, but not otherwise manufactured, was found adhering to the wall in one corner. Half of a rough knife and two or three chips and small flakes of flint were found in the sand.

The third compartment is composed of two side slabs, one of which is 7 feet in extreme length, and 3 feet deep; an end slab, 6 feet high,

13 inches thick; and the dividing slab at the east end. This compartment is 4 feet 8 inches long, 2 feet 8 inches wide, and 2 feet 8 inches deep.

Among the rubbish and soil thrown out was a portion of a very fine urn,¹ thick and very well baked, and two pieces of old *unburnt* bone. A pavement of stones, not very carefully made, covered the surface under the rubbish, and under this was a great quantity of imperfectly burnt bone, chiefly at the sides and in the corners. Two small cow's teeth unburnt were found in the sand, and seven well-finished flint implements of various shapes—long, oval, triangular, &c.—with several flakes and chips of flint. On digging through the sand to the rock beneath it, we found charcoal, almost on the rock itself. Some pieces were very large (*i.e.* in diameter as large as a shilling), and in one spot especially the sand was *run*, *hardened*, and *reddened* by fire. The whole surface of sand gave me the impression of being baked, even, in compartments one and two; but there could be no possible mistake with respect to number three, as the sand was *reddened* by fire, and in some places *run*.

I wish to draw attention to this, as it seems to me to prove that the primary interment in this cist was by "cremation;" and as we dug to the rock in all three compartments, we could not find the least appearance of unctuous matter or discoloured soil. The exact position of the unburnt bone I cannot give, only it was above the pavement.

The other cist at the end did not produce a fragment of bone or flint, and only one or two pieces of charcoal among the sand. The place had long been a play-place for children, and was filled with shells and broken crockery.

I must add, in reference to a note of Mr Greenwell's, that broken quartz pebbles were found in all the three compartments—some even among the sand under the concrete and pavement, where they could hardly have come by accident.

¹ The fragment consists of a portion from the rim to the middle. Inner lip, *plain*; outer lip, two rows of large rough impressions; a raised rib, and large deep flutings, vertical; another raised rib. The substance is very well baked, *red*, fine material, 1 inch thick where broken off in the middle.