

Communal Burial Chamber.

Passage Grave.

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Description of monument from Mont de la Ville, Jersey, now at Park Place, Henley, Berks.

FOREWORD.

IT was feared that the breaking up of the estate and sale by auction of Park Place, in the parish of Remenham, Berkshire, would endanger the safety of the prehistoric monument at present sited on a lawn to the West of "Temple Coombe," a mansion on the Park Place estate, and in the parish of Wargrave.

The late owners were the Noble family and an auction was scheduled by Messrs. Nicholas of Reading to take place on 11th April, 1946. "Temple Coombe" and the monument were withdrawn and not sold.

At the request of the Committee of the Council for British Archaeology, I have gathered together the following notes, with the active assistance of Mr. C. Scott and Mr. A. E. P. Collins, B.A. (Reading Museum), and an artist colleague Mr. R. Brant, for profile drawings. For the geological check, I am indebted to Miss P. S. Walder, B.Sc., Reading University, and for facilities for access thanks are due to Messrs. Nicholas of Reading.

History.—The fullest account of the history of this monument is in "The Archaeology of the Channel Islands," Vol. II, by Jacquetta Hawkes, from which I have freely drawn. Readers are referred to the bibliography appended for further accounts.

Briefly stated, this megalithic tomb, which is quite imposing, was originally situated on Mont de la Ville, an eminence of 181 ft. above sea level on the East side of St. Helier, Jersey, by Fort Regent. It was uncovered in 1785 by the military. The Governor of Jersey, Marshal Conway, was a highly esteemed person, for in 1787 the people of Jersey offered the entire monument to him—to take back to England. He accepted the gift and it was transported in a barge in 1788 up the Thames to Park Place, Henley, where it was re-erected. Although no doubt much care was taken in this work the various accounts and plans vary in orientation and detail; e.g. compare compass points of 1946 plan with Conway's plan.

Description.—April 1946. The stones are sited on a flattened lawn on the otherwise gently sloping ground on the West side of "Temple Coombe" house. (*Plate No. 1 and Figs. 1, 2 and 3*). It overlooks the Thames just to the North of Wargrave and South

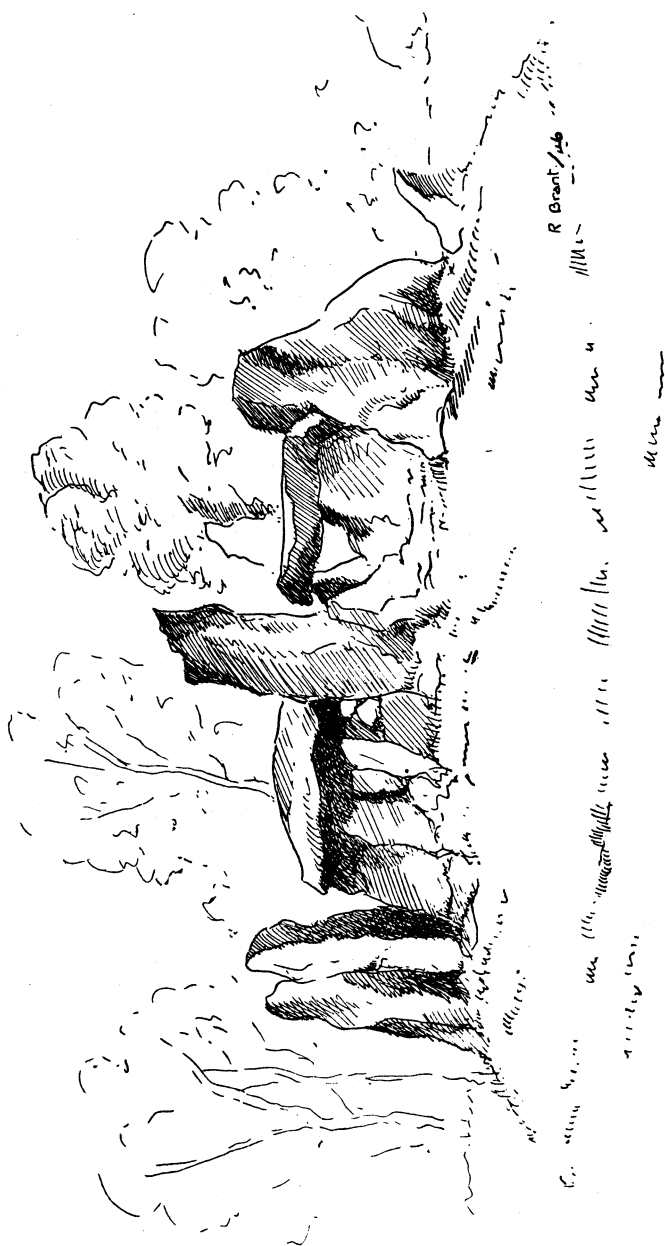


FIG. 1. View of the chamber from the South-west. The slight mound on which the monument was erected shows clearly.



FIG. 2. View from the North-east, looking through the passage entrance into the chamber.



FIG. 3. The small "cell" with capstone supported on five uprights situated in the South-eastern side of the main circular chamber.

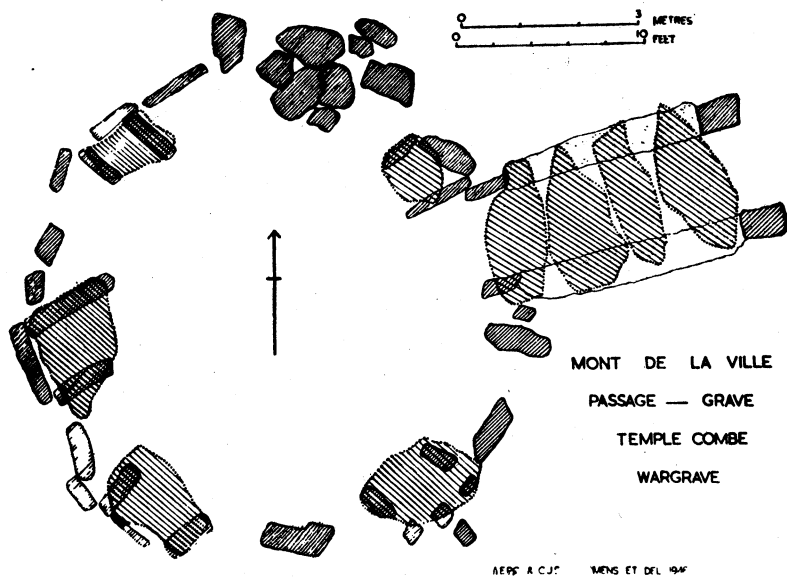


FIG. 4. Plan of the monument. Upright stones are shown with a continuous outline; capstones have dotted outlines; the dry stone walling of the entrance passage is shown in outline only.

of Henley. The view from the spot must have been magnificent originally but is now mellowed and masked by the rich growth of beeches and conifers which are a feature running parallel with the Wargrave-Henley Road and the Thames. The site is turfed and clean, with the stones standing, in most cases where they had been originally placed. On the North-East side, within and just outside the circle are several small partly buried stones which appear out of place. The passage entrance is in good order and on the South side of the dry walling is a marble plaque (*Plate No. II*) with inscription (in French) which although weathered is still readable.

It should be noted that in the plan (*Fig. 4*) only the basal areas of the individual stones are given. Each one is irregular and often of a larger diameter several feet from the ground. The condition of the stones is good and they are spattered with grey lichen.

From the North side of "Temple Coombe" the nearest point of the passage to the tomb is 329 ft. 6 ins.

Petrology.—Dr. A. E. Mourant of Jersey, gave a note on the character of the stones which he describes as Fine Granite, Porphyritic Granite and Diorite. He also reports that there are one or two of the uprights and some of the small stones in the dry walling which are not known in Jersey. Among the smaller stones of the passage are several *sarsens*, including two with contained flint pebbles. Also one "Pudding Stone" conglomerate. These were all originally from the Reading beds, and are probably local. There are two pieces of oolitic limestone and the plaque is of Purbeck limestone.

Plaque.—In Noble's account of Park Place (see Bibliography) he says: "The following inscription was originally cut on one of the slabs of stone,¹ but has now quite disappeared." (*Plate No. II*).

Cet ancien Temple des Druides
decouvert le 12me Août 1785
sur le montagne de St. Helier
dans l'Isle de Jersey ;
a été présenté par les habitans
a son excellence le General Conway,
Leur Gouverneur.

Pour des siècles caché, aux regards des mortels,
Cet ancien monument, ces pierres, ces autels,
Où le sang des humains offert en sacrifice
Ruissela, pour des Dieux qu'enfantiot le caprice ;
Ce monument, sans prix par son antiquité,
Temoignera pour nous à la postérité,
Que dans tous les dangers Cesarée eut un père,
Attentif, et vaillant, generoux, et prospere :

¹ Purbeck Limestone Plaque.

Et redira, Conway, aux siècles avenir,
 Qu'en vertu du respect dû à ce souvenir
 Elle te fit ce don, acquis à ta vaillance,
 Comme un juste tribut de sa reconnaissance.

Has this plaque been made since Noble's account or is it earlier? It is recorded that Conway presented a scale model, a plan and three drawings to the Society of Antiquaries. There is a model in the Museum of the Société Jersaise.

One can scarcely let this opportunity pass without registering warning against repeating such a misfortune as the removal of this tomb from its original site in Jersey. The donors and the recipients acted in good faith; but what a pity it happened! Even if a return journey could be made, it is doubtful whether confidence could be placed in the data which has come down to us.

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