

## III.

NOTICE OF REMARKABLE CISTS IN A GRAVEL BANK NEAR KILMARTIN, AND OF INCISED SCULPTURINGS OF AXE-HEADS AND OTHER MARKINGS ON THE STONES OF THE CISTS. BY THE REV. R. J. MAPLETON, M.A., DUNTRON.

I wish to communicate to you some particulars of a very interesting cist that I examined on the 23d of March.

There is a small plantation on the edge of the moss, about one mile below Kilmartin. Some forty years ago it was a gravel bank, entirely surrounded by moss; at that time, when the bank was trenched, three cists were found. Houses also were built on the bank, close to the cists. It is difficult now to trace the outline of the cairn, but there certainly was one. Of these three cists, one was partially destroyed in making a lime-kiln; the cover is gone; two side slabs and one end slab remain; and all that we saw worth noticing was, that the side slabs were nicely grooved to admit the end slabs. This cist is only 4 or 5 feet to the N. of one that I shall describe presently. About 21 feet to the N. of this is another cist, lying N.E. and S.W. It is a beautifully formed cist; in fact, more artistically made than any I have seen before. The cover lay just below the surface of the soil; total length of cover 10 feet; width, 4 feet. The inside measurement of cist was 4 feet 4 inches long, by 2 feet 2 inches broad, and 2 feet 3 inches deep. The side slabs were about 5 feet 6 inches long.

It was formed of four slabs, except that at one end the slab was not sufficiently high, and was supplemented by a smaller one. The side slabs were grooved, as in the other cist. One peculiarity in this cist is, that instead of a pavement of boulders or fragments of stone, there is a neat and thin slab, at 1 foot 9 inches from the top—same length as the cist, but not so wide—it is 4 feet 4 inches by 1 foot 9 inches; the space at the side is filled up very neatly with a border of small boulders. On this slab we found burnt bone; but as the cist had been peeped into forty years ago, and the cover partially rolled off, there might have been an urn, or some implement. The inside slab had not been disturbed. About 27 feet from this, and only 5 feet from the other, but on the S. side of

both, is another cist, which seems to have occupied the centre of the cairn ; it also is just below the surface of the soil. The cist stands E.N.E.

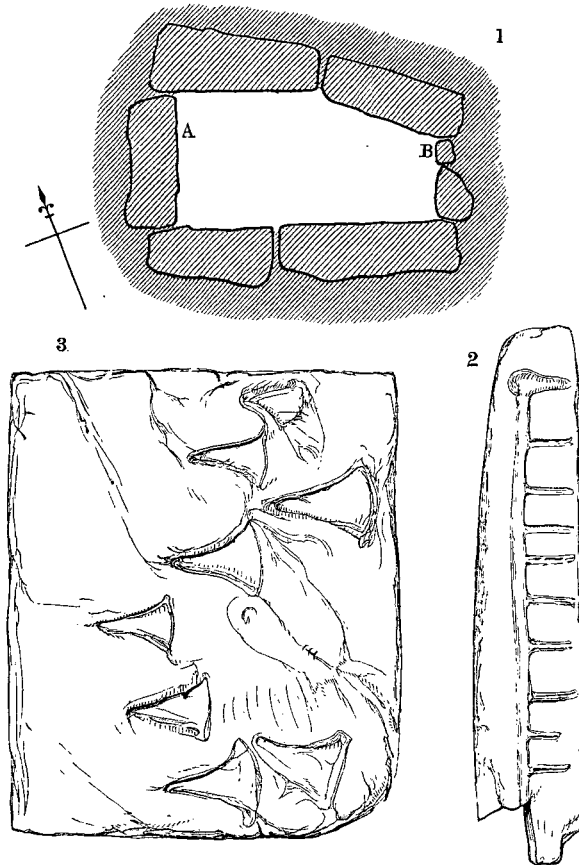


Fig. 1. Ground Plan of Cist (6 feet long inside). Fig. 2. Incised Face of Upright Stone B. Fig. 3. Front View of Stone A, showing Sculpturings of Axe-heads.

by W.S.W. Its form and construction are unusual in this locality ; it seems a transition between the chambered and the ordinary cists. I send

you a plan of it—accurately drawn to scale—which will give a better idea than any description. (See woodcut, fig. 1.) Upon rolling off the cover, my attention was at once drawn to the small standing stone B, at the E.N.E. end, which helped to form that end of the cist. We afterwards found that it was more deeply fixed in the soil than the side slabs; its extreme length, 3 feet 4 inches; width, from 7 inches to 8 inches; and the thickness,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches at top, and 5 inches at bottom.

This stone was marked with sculptures that give me the impression of their being large Ogham letters. (See woodcut, fig. 2.)

At the other end, *i.e.*, W.N.W. end, on the large slab A, are some sculptures (see woodcut, fig. 3), of which I send you a rubbing. The dark lines are the *edges* of the figures. The figures are not mere outlines; the whole of the inside part is chiselled out, though they are very *shallow*. They are nicely executed, and some of them not so much worn away as the others. They show most manifest signs of tools, and apparently bronze tools; the tooling is too coarse and blunt for iron, but, I think, too regular for stone or flint.

It is needless for me to offer a suggestion; but I should be glad to hear from some of the F.S.A.'s of Edinburgh whether they consider them as portraits of bronze weapons, placed there instead of the real weapons, and whether such things have been found elsewhere.

Or, secondly, whether they may be some form or modification of cuneiform letters. Their combination seems to point to symbols, or hieroglyphics, rather than to mere portraits.

On another stone, that formed part of the side, and was next to the stone with the axe-head markings, are about 9 or 10, or 11 small "pits," or hollows, as large as a fourpenny piece, most clearly artificial; I could trace no other sculptures but these. The cist had a rough pavement as usual. There was not the slightest sign of burnt bone, charcoal, flint, or implement. But the clay was very dark, and very unctuous, and, when first opened, the men complained of a very close unpleasant smell. There can be no doubt that the body was unburnt, and I should suspect it was extended, and not in a sitting posture. I obtained one minute portion of what I believe to be bone, not larger than a pea, which was among the most unctuous part of the clay, and which almost melted in my fingers.

[Casts of both these stones have since been presented to the Society's museum. See Donation List, p. 389. In the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. viii. p. 398, a series of similar sculpturings, from a chambered tumulus at Locmariaker, in Brittany, are figured and described.]