

I.

EXTERNAL FEATURES OF RUDH' AN DUNAIN CHAMBERED CAIRN.

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The excavations described in a previous paper¹ were continued in September 1932 with a view to completing the investigation of the forecourt and to tracing the peristalith. As was anticipated from the denudation of the southern side of the cairn, the southern half of the forecourt was almost completely wrecked, and in the neighbourhood of the stone dyke which cuts through the skirts of the cairn the peristalith had disappeared. On the northern and western sides, on the other hand, the peristalith was not seriously damaged except where orthostats had been stolen.



Fig. 1. Southern part of Forecourt Façade, looking south-east.

THE FORECOURT.

Structure.—The axis of the forecourt was found to lie east by south, and one point to the north of that of the chamber, antechamber, and vestibule, which lies east-south-east (Pl. II.). Accordingly the forecourt is much narrower and more enclosed than the plan of the northern half given in Pl. VI.

of my former paper suggested. The partially fallen orthostat Q.1 lying immediately to the south-east of the portal was not fully excavated in 1931, and its original position was not correctly shown in the 1931 plan.

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxvi. pp. 182-213. The latitude and longitude of the cairn are not quite precisely stated on p. 186 of that paper. The correct position is: lat. 57° 9' 51" N., long. 6° 18' 43" W.

Q.1 had not reached the ground along the whole length of its foot, but had been supported upon a block of stone at its southern end. Beyond Q.1 was a length of walling standing to two courses (A in fig. 1). Beyond that an orthostat had completely disappeared; the hole in which it had stood (B in fig. 1) was traceable in the 6 inches of peaty soil which cover the solid rock and is shown dotted in the plan. The next panel of walling (C in figs. 1 and 2) stood to only one course. The succeeding orthostat (D in figs. 1 and 2) lay fallen forward over a large building block, on which its base now rests. Of the next following panel



Fig. 2. South Horn, looking north-west.

of walling only a single block (E in fig. 2) remained, and there was no trace of the orthostat which should have stood immediately to the south-west of it. After this gap a panel of walling was found three courses in height; the block forming the second course was split across, and, as shown in Pl. II., one end had been twisted round carrying the block forming the third course with it. In fig. 2 these blocks are shown at F restored to their original position. This panel of walling is unusual in that behind the lowest course is a parallel block which serves no evident purpose.

The most interesting discovery in the forecourt was that, lying outside and against the prostrate block which faces the portal, was a second slightly smaller one (fig. 3). Its flat upper surface was approximately level with that of the inner block, which, it may be recollected, was wedged up so as to present a horizontal upper face.

A careful investigation was made to ascertain whether the position of these blocks was original; the smaller block was removed and replaced, and the floor around both blocks was examined. It was ascertained that there was a hole, 6 inches by 5 inches by 4 inches deep, in the original



Fig. 3. Prostrate Slabs in front of Portal with partially fallen Orthostat Q.1 behind.

peaty floor in the position shown by a dotted curve in Pl. II., and that of the two wedges mentioned in my former paper as supporting the larger block only one (that shown on the right in fig. 3) was actually taking any weight. We know from Professor Childe's excavation of the Old Keig stone circle in Aberdeenshire¹ that orthostats could be held in position by remarkably small stone wedges, and that it was not necessary to bury their bases in any depth of soil. I do not think, however, that it is conceivable that the smaller block once stood vertical in the small hole in the peaty covering of the rock floor, and there was no evidence at all that the larger block had ever been upright. Their present position must, I think, be accepted as their original one.

The finding at Pant y Saer chambered tomb, Anglesey,² of a wall surrounding the forecourt suggested the desirability of confirming that the forecourt at Rudh' an Dunain was unenclosed. No evidence of an enclosing wall was found in excavating the wrecked south horn, and a larger area was examined without result round the virtually undamaged north horn. I think, therefore, that the forecourt may be regarded as an open one.

Artifacts.—In my former paper I recorded the finding of the following

¹ V. G. Childe, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxvii, p. 37 ff.

² *Arch. Camb.* (December 1933), p. 185 ff. Two Sardinian Giants' Tombs (D. Mackenzie, *Memnon*, vol. ii, p. 180 ff.) seem to have had a convex line of walling joining the points of the horns.

artifacts in the area of the forecourt between the portal and the prostrate blocks:—In the peaty covering of the rock floor, two fragments of pottery with incised parallel lines, which were probably neolithic; above the peat, three pieces of pumice and a natural stone showing signs of human use. In the present excavations a small fragment of pottery was found on the surface of the peat 2 feet east of the prostrate blocks. The ware was fine, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, black internally and buff on the surfaces; it probably belonged to the beaker period. The only other artifact found was a roughly shaped piece of flint of poor quality cracked by fire. This was lying 1 foot above the peat-level and 3 feet south-east of Q. 1.

Evidence of Burning.—Apart from a minute trace of charcoal on the peat floor recorded in my former paper the only possible evidence of burning in the forecourt was a few red particles in the peat close to the point of the north horn. The ash of modern peat in the peninsula is brick red; peat may also be stained red by stagnant water containing iron, though the presence of standing water is unlikely here. The evidence of burning in the forecourt is virtually negligible, and it is clear that no substantial fires were made on the floor of the forecourt either opposite the portal or in the neighbourhood of the façade.

Evidence of Wrecking.—The degree to which the cairn material on the south side of the forecourt had been removed was shown by the remains of a large fire 6 inches below the modern surface and 1 foot 9 inches above the peat floor in an area between 2 feet and 4 feet east of Q. 1. The red ash of this fire contained a large iron bolt from a ship's timber, the fuel having been obtained from the driftwood which comes up in Camas a'Mhurain. This fire was presumably the work of the people who built the stone dyke which skirts the cairn on the south-west.

THE PERISTALITH.

As will be seen from Pl. II., the peristalith was explored for a distance westwards from the point of the north horn, and sections were cut at intervals round the cairn. The orthostat at the point of the horn was missing, but the section beyond that was only slightly damaged. The broad orthostat on the left in fig. 4 had had its upper part broken away with a pick, and the pillar-shaped orthostat on the right had had its head broken off. The head was found on the surface of the cairn and is replaced in the photograph. The intervening wall was tilted outward by the pressure of the cairn, but was undamaged except for a chip hacked off one corner by a pick.

A fact of considerable interest is that, as will be seen from fig. 4, a number of blocks of building stone are lying outside the peristalith. These could not, from their number and their position, have been fallen

blocks from the wall, and there can be no doubt that they represent surplus building material left on the site as a contribution to the covering cairn of stones. The same phenomenon was seen in other sections of the peristalith. There is, of course, nothing surprising in this, since the ritual efficacy of the peristalith as the wall of a sacred enclosure would not be affected, but the practice does not seem to have been noted elsewhere. It is a confusing one to the excavator, and it may be worth bearing in mind that not every building stone found on the site of a chambered tomb need be interpreted as part of the original structure.




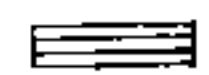

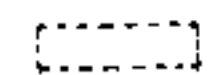
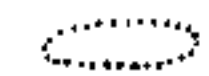
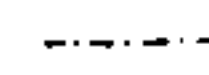
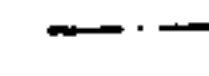
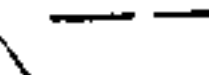
Fig. 4. Section of Peristalith immediately west of North Horn.

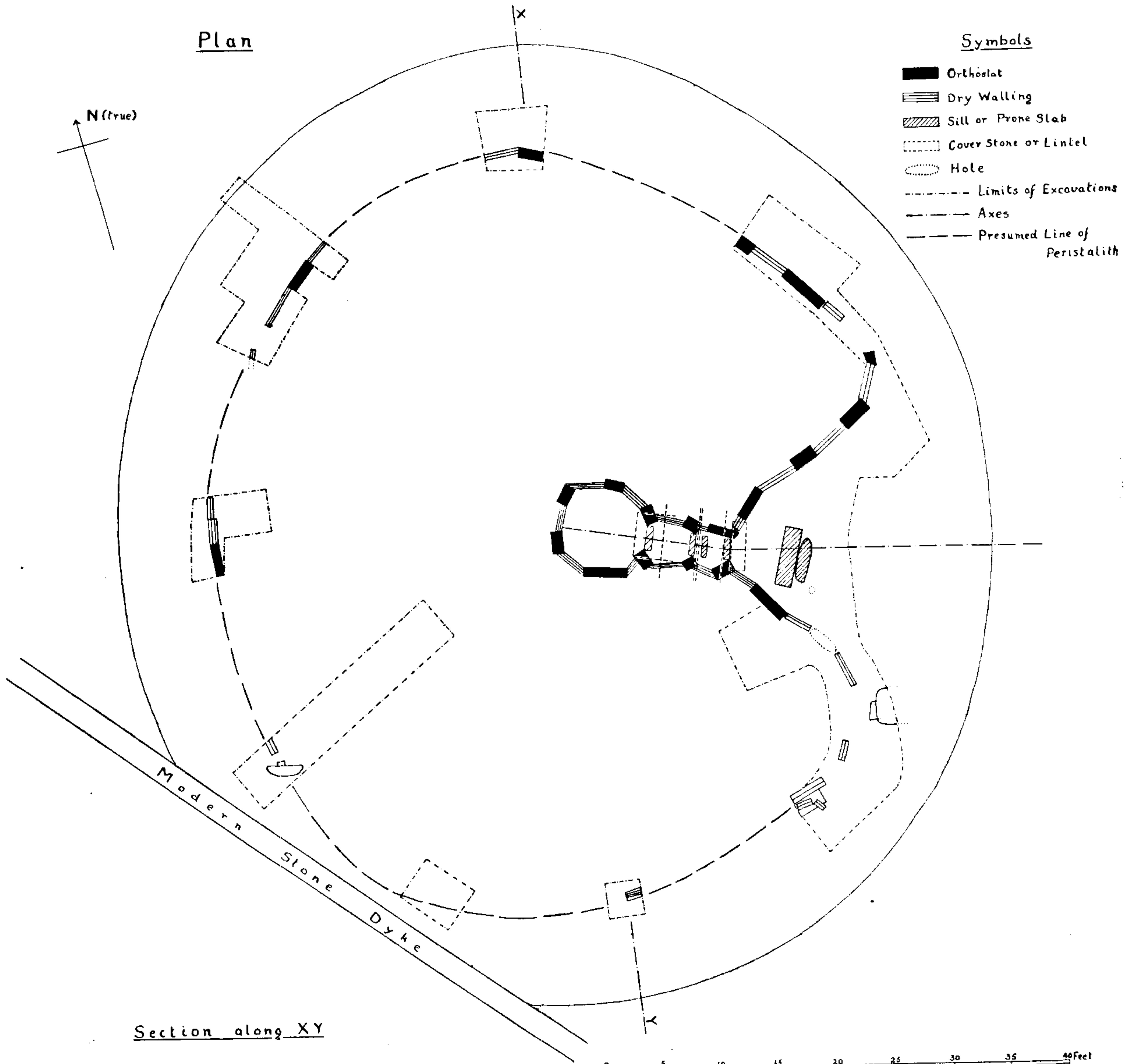
It is hardly necessary to describe the other sections of the peristalith as the structural features are sufficiently indicated in Pl. II. The sections on the north and west sides showed the wall to be not seriously damaged, though one orthostat was found to have been stolen. On the south-west side of the cairn in the neighbourhood of the stone dyke the peristalith had been largely destroyed. The long trench produced only the lowest course of walling and a block which had probably been split from an orthostat; the next section, immediately against the dyke, produced nothing; and the pit between that and the point of the south horn produced a panel of walling standing to its full height, but not the orthostat which should have been its neighbour.

It can safely be assumed that the peristalith was regularly formed by alternate orthostats and panels, the panels rising to a height considerably less than the orthostats. These panels were formed either of

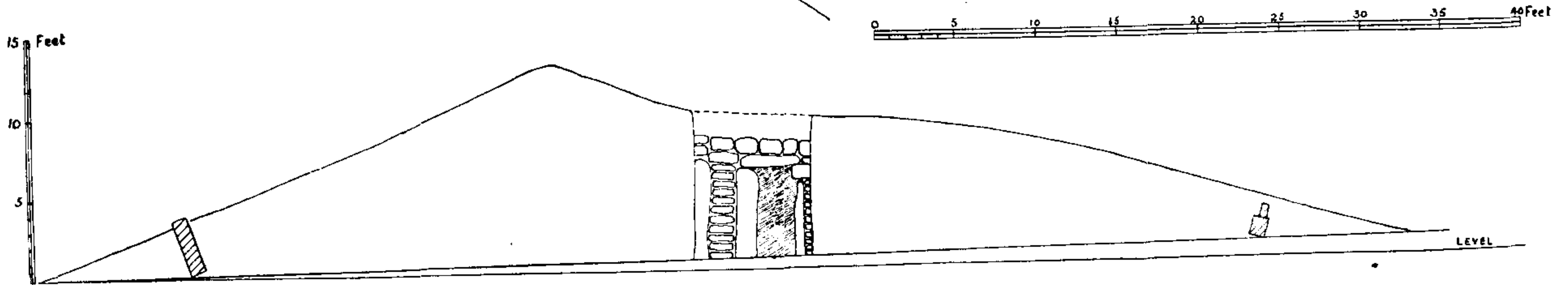
Plan

Symbols

-  Orthostat
-  Dry Walling
-  Sill or Prone Slab
-  Cover Stone or Lintel
-  Hole
-  Limits of Excavations
-  Axes
-  Presumed Line of Peristalith



Section along XY



Plan and Section of Cairn at Rudh' an Dunain.

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PLATE II.

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large rectangular blocks set in courses or of thin, roughly rectangular slabs set on edge; both blocks and slabs were of the fine-grained basalt used for the roofing of the chamber of the tomb, which splits remarkably accurately along planes at right angles to one another.

Use of Water-worn Pebbles.—Large numbers of water-worn pebbles of anything between 2 and 5 inches in greatest diameter were found against the peristalith, both inside and outside it. These were no doubt brought from the neighbouring beach of Camas a'Mhurain. I doubt their utilitarian purpose, since rounded stones form very poor packing material, and much more suitable packing was available in the building blocks left strewn unused on the site. The frequent use of water-worn pebbles in connection with burials in this and the immediately succeeding period shows that they were regarded as of ritual significance, and I think it probable that this was their purpose at Rudh' an Dunain.

Use of Quartz.—As in the forecourt, quartz pebbles were found at the foot of the peristalith and also above it, but they were rare. No sea-shells, animal teeth or bones, and no artifacts were found in the excavation of the peristalith.

STRUCTURE OF THE MOUND.

A long trench, shown in Pl. II., was carried from the south-west skirt of the cairn nearly into its centre. At its inner end its walls stood 8 feet above the floor, and to continue it further with the means at my disposal would have been unduly dangerous. The material of the cairn was found to consist of large stones, the great majority of which were rounded and no doubt brought from the neighbouring beach. Many of these, particularly in the lower levels, were of great size, weighing two or three hundredweight. No evidence of structure was discovered inside the peristalith; only one isolated building slab was met with, at a distance of 7 feet inward from the peristalith, and this, though set on edge, did not reach the floor.

A small area was also cleared behind the southern façade of the forecourt. This disclosed two building stones which had probably served to pack the base of the partially fallen orthostat Q.1.

These limited excavations in the interior of the mound cannot, of course, prove that there is no structure, such as a second wall or a ring of standing stones, inside the peristalith. I think, however, that they make it rather unlikely.

In my judgment the mound has not suffered denudation on its northern and eastern sides, and it follows that the heads of the orthostats of the forecourt façade and the peristalith were originally exposed.