

XXV.—PRE-HISTORIC GRAVE FROM THE LILBURN HILL FARM, ON THE LILBURN TOWER ESTATE.

BY JAMES G. MOFFATT (LILBURN COTTAGE).

READ ON THE 30TH JULY, 1884.

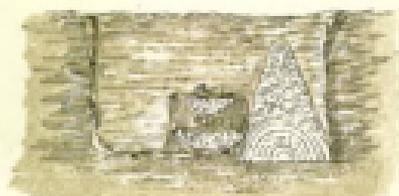
IN the last week of June, 1883, Mr. George Tait, tenant of Lilburn Hill Farm, called upon me to state that he was of opinion that he had come upon a grave of some sort, in the removing of a large stone which was much in the way of his ploughs and harrows, while preparing the Clover Bank field of his farm for turnips.

He told me that his men had broken up a large stone with peculiar carvings upon it, and that he had discovered a quantity of small bones in immediate proximity to the stone. He very readily promised that nothing more should be done until I should have time to go and inspect the place.

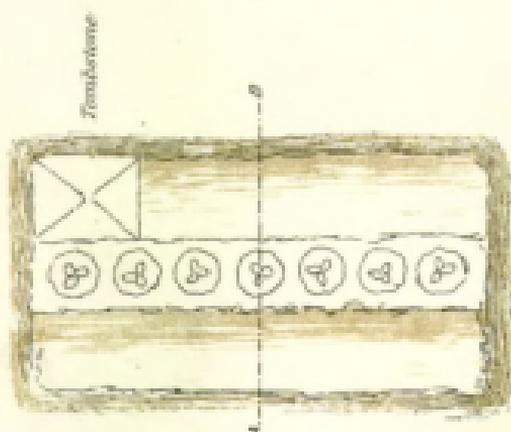


Having appointed to meet him about six o'clock p.m. the next day at the place in question, I went up somewhat before the time appointed, and was busy examining the place when he arrived. Upon inspection, I found that the stone had been broken

up, and was lying in fragments upon the surface of the field, as they had been thrown out by the workmen, and that the place of sepulture

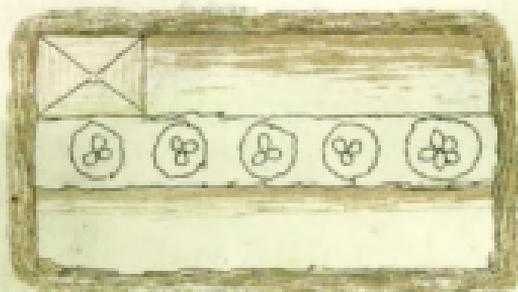


*Section on A. B. Looking South.*



*Ground Plan of Grave, showing upper Circular Pits.*

*Scale 7/8 Inch to 1 Foot.*



*Ground Plan of Grave, showing under Circular Pits.*



had been thoroughly laid open to a depth of about sixteen inches below the surface of the field, leaving about two inches of soil above the uppermost deposit of the bones. The line where the bones were deposited, extended in length about nine feet two inches, lying in direction almost due north and south. A trench about twenty inches wide had been taken out on each side of the line of bones, to the depth of about fourteen inches, leaving a solid piece of ground seventeen inches wide, and nine feet two inches long, between the two trenches, and in this piece of undisturbed soil the pits containing the bones had been excavated. The annexed lithograph shows a plan and sections of them.

After carefully removing the earth with a garden trowel to the level of the bones, we found that the upper deposits of bones were contained

(along the line of the grave) in seven small shallow circular depressions, and that three small whinstones were placed over each pit, with one and a half inch or so of earth intervening between them and the bones. The whole of the bones on this upper deposit were in very small pieces and had been more or less subjected to the action of fire, then gathered up, as the relics of



seven distinct cremations, and at last deposited in the order found. Portions of lower jaws, three or four with teeth in them, were found among the bones. The front teeth in one of them were worn quite flat at the top. From their smallness and delicate appearance, it seemed to me that they had belonged to very small women and young children. They were very brittle and fragile, and fell to pieces while being handled.

The seven circular depressions having been excavated and removed, the earth was again scraped away to the depth of about four or five inches, and another row of five circular depressions was discovered, extending along the whole length of the line of sepulture. The appearance of the five pits, was much the same as those of the upper row, though somewhat larger, four of them having three small whinstones placed upon the pits, and the largest pit of the five at the north end of the line having five small stones placed over it. The bones in these five pits of the under row were larger than those of the upper row but had the same look of having been partially subjected to the action of fire as those of the upper pits, they were thicker and more dense in the outer wall of the bone (if one may be allowed so to term it), and looked as if they had survived to a longer period of maturity than those of the upper pits. The largest piece of bone picked out from these relics, was handed over lately to Mr. Blair of South Shields, and was thought by the writer to be the "coffin bone" of the foot of a small horse or pony, but from which one of the under pits it was taken, he is unable to say, as no note of such was made at the time.

Mr. Tait informed me that the stone with the marking upon it was found at the west side of the south end of the line of pits, was a thick massive stone, shaped like the apex of a pyramid, and carved on each side except one, which had suffered partial demolition at some previous period.

No trace of flint or bone implements, bronze, iron, steel, or other kind of weapon, was found either in or about the grave.