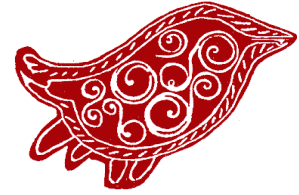


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Journal of the Cork Historical and Archæological Society.

(Thirty-sixth Year of Issue.)

Prehistorics.

By VICE ADMIRAL BOYLE SOMERVILLE, C.M.G., F.R.S.A.I., Etc.

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Being the substance of a lecture delivered at Cork, under the invitation of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, on Dec. 14, 1927.

I.



THE word "Prehistorics" is one that will cover a large number of subjects, but the particular one to be discussed in the following pages is that appertaining to the ancient monuments of great stones, planted in the ground either singly or in groups, which still are to be found in profusion in this county, and elsewhere throughout Ireland.

They should be for us a precious inheritance ; particularly because now, after many ages of respect for them by our ancestors, an epoch of disregard and, worse still, of destruction appears to be beginning. The kind fairies who have for so long aided in protecting the old grey stones seem gradually to be relinquishing their charge, and unless a human interest in them can again be awakened, we shall soon be bereft of these county heirlooms of ours, and the last chance of evolving history out of the mystery that still enwraps them will have gone for ever, broken up in road-metal.

For nothing is more certain than that they have a story to tell us of high interest and romance, if only we set ourselves to work to discover it. What was their purpose ? Who set them up ? How were such vast stones quarried and moved and erected in the difficult positions in which, often, they are found ? And when ? These questions leap to the mind at once, and many more come up to be answered during the most superficial investigation of these enigmatic structures, and before ever the excavator's spade has been put into the ground around them.

In other parts of the world prehistoric archaeology has gone ahead by leaps and bounds during the past twenty years or so. In Crete, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia chapters of forgotten history have been recovered from the ground with a fulness that is nothing short of wonderful. But here in Ireland, in Scotland, and in England, everything, or nearly everything of these same periods of man's past lies still awaiting discovery. In this county we have not even arrived at making a list, still less a classified list of the prehistoric remains around us, so as to know what we have to work on ; and this should surely be the first step of all. We have not even decided on

a settled nomenclature for the classes of monuments that are likely to be found here. In the following paper an attempt will be made to describe as shortly as possible these various types of ancient stone monuments, and the descriptions will be supplemented, when possible, by ground plans and photographs.

Before entering on a particularised description of each class of monument, however, there are some general statements concerning them that must be made; statements which, while embodying some of the facts arrived at about them as a whole, may perhaps serve to clear our minds of certain erroneous ideas which have become common.

- (1) On their structural side, all the monuments that we are to consider have this in common, namely, that they are composed of large slabs, or blocks of stone which are "planted" in the ground, or laid simply on top of other great blocks. Generally speaking there is in these monuments no trace of anything which might, from the modern standpoint be described as "building" (though in some of the later types, the crevices between the stones are filled with a rough "dry-walling.") Owing to this characteristic these structures are referred to as "Megalithic," or Great Stone Monuments.
- (2) For the most part they belong to what is known as the Neolithic Age of man's civilisation, though many are doubtless of much later origin. In Ireland, the Neolithic Age may perhaps be placed between 3000 B.C. (or, more safely, 2500 B.C.), and 1500 B.C., at which date of the Bronze Age may be considered to have dawned. By about 600 B.C. the Bronze Age had developed into the Early Iron Age; and the civilisation which accompanied this advance in the use of metals persisted up to the advent of Christianity. No sharp line of transition can be drawn between any of these various "Ages." Customs and methods merge slowly from one Age to the next, and though Megalithic monuments certainly *originated* during the Neolithic Age, the ancient designs, perhaps somewhat modified, seem to have persisted throughout the remainder of the pre-Christian period. It is only by scientific excavation, and the recovery of implements, pottery, etc., in association with any particular monument that even an approximately correct date for its erection may be discovered.
- (3) But whatever their age, one thing about them is practically certain, namely, that none of them is, as is so commonly supposed, "Druidic" in origin. The Druids appeared in this country—from Gaul, or elsewhere—not earlier than about 500 B.C., while the greater number of the monuments with which we are dealing originated from 1000 to 2000 years or more, before that date. That is to say, many of them are as far removed from the Druids, in point of age, as we are from the days of St. Patrick. Besides this, neolithic monuments of exactly similar character with those so often described in this country as "Druidic" are found in lands such as North Africa, and northern India—lands to which, certainly, Druidism never spread. The idea that megalithic monuments were built by "the Druids," and were used by them for sacrificial purposes (the usual story) is consequently entirely a mistaken one. The best that can be said for it is that it may be possible that the Druids, finding these imposing monuments, already very ancient, in existence when they came on the scene,

made use of them for purposes for which they never were intended originally, and that from this the tradition arose which has been handed down so confidently, that the Druids were actually the constructors.

- (4) For it is now considered that all of these great stone monuments were originally *graves*—the tombs of single persons, or of families, or of clans, according to size. Some of them have been found to contain inhumations (burials either of whole bodies, or of collected bones), some contain cremated ashes in urns or otherwise, and some contain both forms of disposal of the dead. There are one or two classes of monument of which there is still doubt as to their sepulchral character, but the general opinion now is that probably all were originally grave-places.
- (5) There is still another feature which appears to be general, or nearly so, in neolithic monuments, and that is “Orientation.”

The meaning of this expression is that the stones are laid out on the ground in some definite direction, namely towards the point on the horizon at which the sun rises or sets on certain definite days of the year. It seems possible (and is probable) that some may have been orientated towards the rising or setting point of some particular bright star, or stars; but this still remains unproved. Why these monuments should have been orientated at all, we do not know, any more than we know the reason for our own existing custom of orientating both churches and graves “to the east”. It is, indeed, likely that this custom of ours has descended to us from pre-Christian days, and it is even possible that the idea has been handed down from so far back as neolithic times.

I should add that this feature of orientation in neolithic monuments is still loudly disputed in the archaeological world; but it requires merely the employment of a prismatic compass at a few of these ancient sites for any doubt to be dispelled. I do not say that orientation occurs in *all* neolithic structures; that has yet to be proved; but undoubtedly it is to be found in many of them.

II.

Following these general remarks, we may now consider the various classes of megalithic monuments, and their nomenclature.

The monuments differ considerably from one another, both in general appearance and ground-plan. Possibly each type represents the characteristic monument of each separate race of the many that, from time to time, have reached this island from the continent of Europe. But if this be so, it cannot at present be said which class of monument may be considered to have been the earliest to arrive. Possibly some classes are co-temporaneous, and represent the monuments of separate races arriving from different regions, but occupying this island together during the same epoch of time. All westward migration from Europe must have come to a halt in the face of the Atlantic ocean, and perhaps that is why we have here in Ireland so large a number, and so great a variety of megalithic remains in so small a country.

The peninsula of Brittany, at the western extremity of Europe, seems to have been another, perhaps temporary halting place; for the megalithic remains of that small region exceed both in number, in size, and above all in preservation those of any area of similar extent. It was in Brittany, consequently, that the study of these antiquities began first to be put on a scientific basis, and to be classified; and when those of Britain and Ireland in their turn came to be discussed, the Breton names by which each class had been known were adopted in describing the equivalent structures of these islands.

This adoption of an already accepted nomenclature, though a foreign one, was praiseworthy in itself, for it would tend to preserve a desirable unity between investigators of different nations engaged on the same research, and would have been successful if proper information as to the actual meaning of the Breton words employed had accompanied their introduction.

But through lack of this knowledge we now find (for example) any and every class of megalithic monument named as a "Cromlech," although the proper meaning of the word, as any one at all conversant with Gaelic will recognise, is "bent," or "bending stones," and refers *only* to a Stone Circle. Then again the word "Dolmen" which means a "table-stone" has been made to cover so many classes of monument that the name has become almost meaningless as an identification. Similarly, "Menhir," the word meaning a "standing stone" has often been misused.

Overlying this confusion, there has been the strange, but universal error of conception, before alluded to, that these monuments are of Druidic origin, so that "Druid's Altar" very frequently appears as a name for any of them on Ordnance maps, and elsewhere,—a name as absurd as the title "Dermot's and Grania's Bed" so commonly given to neolithic graves in this country.

The need has therefore arisen for a new and more scientific nomenclature; one that shall more accurately describe the objects intended, and also one that can be understood by everyone at sight.

After considerable discussion, an accepted list of such names has lately been adopted for the British Ordnance Survey Maps, and it is this nomenclature that I propose to follow in the descriptions of the various classes of monument, now to be given, unless any of our well-known native Irish names appear to be more simple, and fitting.

III.

(1) STANDING STONE. (Fig. I.)

This is not only the simplest but is also the commonest form of megalithic monument, and for these reasons may be placed first on the list. It consists of a single long pillar-stone, or slab set up on end in the ground. The English name for these objects is given above, but the name for them with which we in Ireland are so familiar need not, and should not be relinquished, for it is distinctive, carries history with it, and is free from erroneous use. I refer to the word "Gallán", often slightly corrupted to "Dallán." What was the original use, or intention of these monuments? They were probably several, as follows:—



Fig. I.

GALLÁN

Near Castletownshend, County Cork, 1927.



Fig. II.

STONE ALIGNMENT

Near Castletownshend, County Cork, 1927.

- (a) A Gallán can be the gravestone of some notable person. In the earliest times there was on them, of course, no inscription; but oral tradition handed down as faithfully as a written record, the name of the person whose "stone" it was. Then, later on, Ogham lettering was invented, and was cut round the edges of the pillar; and eventually, in historic times, wording in the Gaelic script.

This custom of setting up a gravestone has, indeed, come down to modern times, though the smug, carefully polished little slab of our day, covered with dull lettering in Roman characters has not much in common with the solitary grandeur of the silent, roughly hewn pillar stone of the old days, beyond the fact that it marks a burial place.

- (b) A Gallán can also be the monument set up in heroic days to celebrate some great battle, and to mark the spot at which it was fought—thus becoming the original of all the present day War Memorials, in France and elsewhere. In most cases these Battle Stones bear no inscription, and tradition alone has carried down to us their intention.
- (c) Another use for galláns, and a common one, is that of being the boundary mark-stone of a "Kingdom," a principality, a parish, or even of a townland. Such stones are commonly of a lesser size than the others noted; and though many are set up on end in true gallán style, others are of unhewn rock and, perhaps, lying on the ground, and thus cannot properly come under the above heading; they are only mentioned here as fulfilling the purpose of a Standing Stone.
- (d) There is still another function of galláns, to which I must refer, namely the part they sometimes perform in connection with orientation. This subject (orientation) is too great and too diffuse to be entered upon here, but as galláns are often employed as outlying sighting-marks (corresponding to the method of sighting a gun or rifle) in connection with other classes of monument, in order to indicate certain lines of orientation, mention must be made of this use.

In many such cases the greater monument, to which an outlying gallán was thus tributary, has disappeared as road-metal or building stone, while the distant Standing Stone has been spared, and still stands forlorn on its hill ridge, where it was perhaps slightly more troublesome to reach, and thus was kept out of harm's way.

Note.—There are several instances known of double galláns, the existence of which we may here note, namely where two great stones are set up almost touching one another, either side by side, or face to face. Their intention may have been to mark with double emphasis some specially important spot; but this is only the merest surmise, and may eventually be found to be far from the truth.

There must be, literally, thousands of galláns of all classes in Co. Cork alone; many standing, many more, no doubt, fallen. You may see them everywhere; and in cases where they stand in the middle of a grass field, you will commonly be told that they were put there to be scratching posts

for cattle or pigs. This may indeed be the base use to which the gravestone of some hero of antiquity has been converted ; and since this use is harmless, and assists to maintain the old stone in its original position, it may be as well to keep going this legend. But I wonder if any practical farmer, even of the humanitarian present day (and still less, his ancestor of ruder times) would have so much sympathy with the flea-ticklings of his beasts as to carry a large stone, weighing many hundredweights, into an outlying field, over several fences, for this humane purpose ? If a scratching post were a necessity of modern farming, it would almost certainly be a wooden post. Moreover the smaller galláns are often not of the height of a cow's or a donkey's back, and some are rather low even for a pig. I think we may be certain that these single stones, great and small, were placed in the days of old, where they now stand, and may they long remain unharmed in these, their original positions.

(2) STONE ALIGNMENT (Fig II.)

The next monument to be enumerated (though not necessarily in the proper order of antiquity) is named as above, and consists of two or more galláns set up in a straight line.

Two-stone alignments are fairly common ; alignments of three galláns are not very uncommon, but sets of five, six, or seven are rather rare. I have never come across a four-stone alignment, but probably they exist. Stone alignments are usually, but not always composed of roughly hewn stones, apparently as quarried, and untrimmed. The distances between stones may be anything from four to five feet upwards, but always there is visibility from one end of the line to the other.

It has been stated that burials have not yet been found in connexion with Stone Alignments, but this may only be the result of want of search in the proper direction. At the same time it is possible to conceive of another purpose for these monuments, or at any rate a partial purpose ; for it is obvious that one of the reasons of the standing stones being laid out in a line, if not their only reason, is contained in the *direction* that the line indicates ; in fact, their Orientation. In some cases, at least, in my own experience, orientation is presented by the line of the stones to one of the well-known sun-rise lines, such as that of Midsummer's Day, May Day, etc.

(3) STONE ROW.

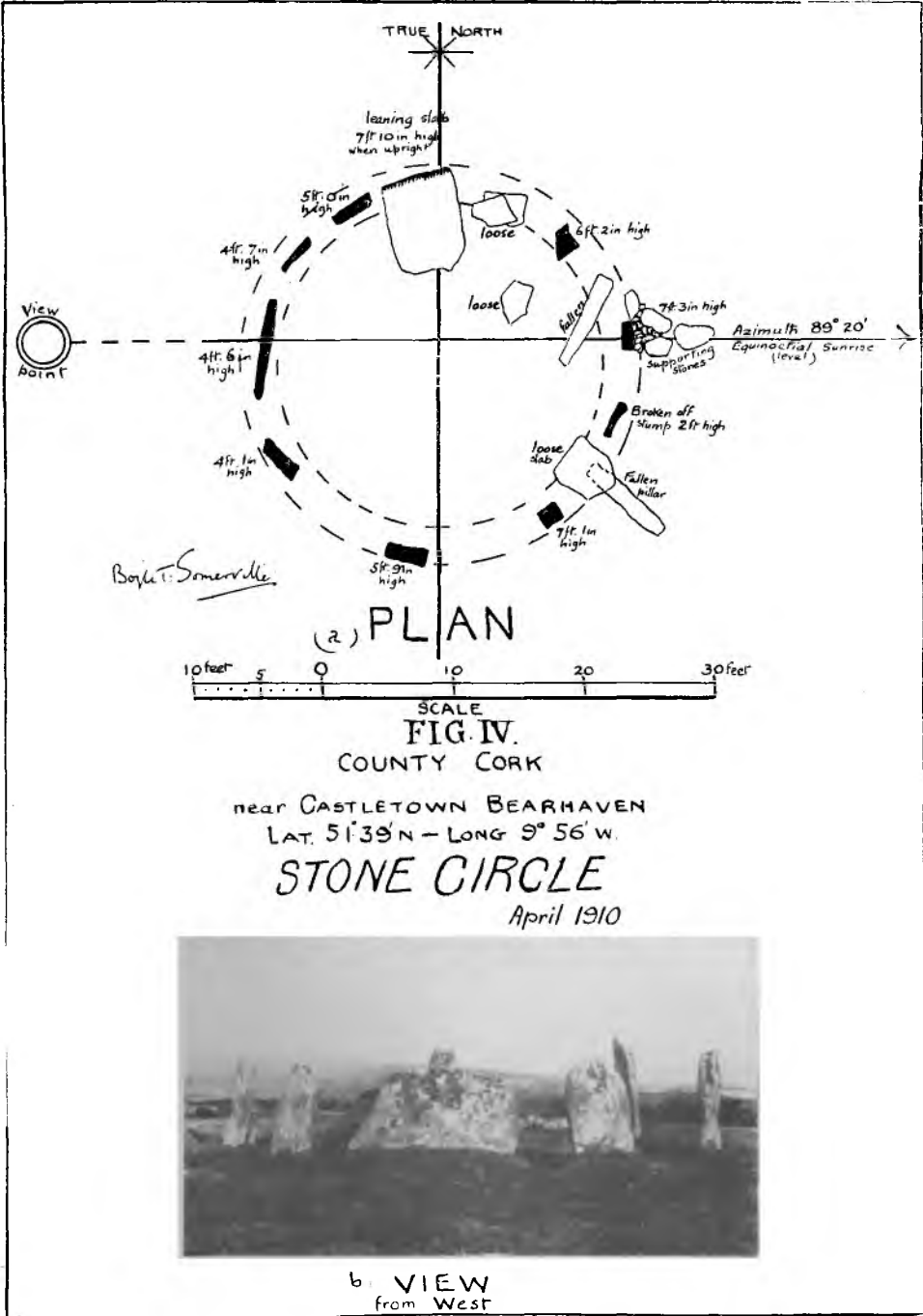
This is another form of Standing Stones set up in lines, but one in which the lines are not necessarily exactly straight, while the number of stones composing the line is not merely two, three, five, etc., but is very large. I do not know of any Stone Rows in this country, but they are common on Dartmoor, where they are of great length, bending in many directions, and appear to have been intended for the guiding of pilgrims to certain megalithic tombs, or other points to which eventually they lead through the almost incessant fogs and mists of the great moor-land.

In Brittany there are areas covered with Stone Rows, roughly parallel to one another, leaving spaces like pathways a few feet in width between.

The direction in which these pathways lead is usually towards some great megalithic monument, such as a "Dolmen" (to use the local name).



Fig. III.
STONE AVENUE
Callanish, Isle of Lewis, Hebrides,
August, 1909.



Some of these assemblies of Stone Rows near Carnac, in Brittany are several hundreds of yards in length, and comprise over 1000 immense stones, all more than 6 feet high, and many much greater still.

STONE AVENUE (Fig III.)

When Stone Alignments, or Stone Rows are merely doubled, leaving a single "road-way" between them, they are termed "Stone Avenues."

(4) STONE CIRCLE (Fig. IV.) (a) and (b).

The above form of megalithic monument is fairly common in this county and all over Ireland. It is no less common in Scotland, in Wales, and in the West of England. Stone Circles are also found in Spain, across Europe, along the North of Africa, and eastward towards India. It is a form of monument that seems to have been fashionable for many centuries, and perhaps for millenia; for it exists in every sort of style and size, from one of a few feet across composed of rude unshaped blocks, not even planted in the ground, but merely rolled together to enclose a roughly round space, to one the size of Avebury, in Wiltshire, which with its huge ring of Standing Stones surrounded by a deep ditch covers several acres, and at the present day contains a whole village; or to one of the smaller area and the almost exact circularity of Stonehenge, also in Wiltshire, with its neatly trimmed pillars, carefully "planted", each about 20 feet high, supporting stone lintels, secured in place by mortices and tenons. The average Stone Circle, however, is composed of roughly trimmed slabs from 6 to 10 feet high, enclosing an area from 30 to 50 feet in diameter.

Burials have been found in many Stone Circles, but it is not yet certain whether these burials are what is known as "intrusive," that is, made there subsequently to the erection of the Circle (the Circle itself having some other original intention), or whether the Circles were constructed purposely to enclose the grave. Stone Circles may have been erected in order to be places of worship pure and simple, or to be places of popular assembly, but opinion seems now to be tending towards the conclusion that the original and fundamental purpose of these structures was to surround a burial place. But just as a church of our own times may be a place of worship *as well as* a place of burial, and also may be a place of popular assembly for such a semi-political purpose as a coronation, so Stone Circles may in time have acquired all these uses, though erected perhaps for only one of them, to start with.

An unexpected feature in Stone Circles is that probably not one of them is truly and geometrically a circle. It would have been so easy, one would have said, to have traced out on the ground a true circle, by the simple means of a stick at the centre, with a line attached to it for a radius, by which a circular line could have been traced on the ground, and the stones to form the Circle planted along it. But so far, at least, as my experience goes, this simple method has not been followed. When the survey of a Stone Circle comes to be plotted on paper, it will be seen that the line of the stones is quite an irregular one, and is only roughly circular. In some cases, again, the enclosed space is oval, and not circular at all; so markedly oval, indeed, that there can be no doubt that the shape was intentional, whatever the purpose.

I may remark in passing that Orientation in Stone Circles is found in

lines joining two stones facing each other on opposite sides of the ring,—stones rendered conspicuous among the remainder round the Circle by their greater size, or by some peculiarity of shape, or of marking : so conspicuous that no mistake can be made of the orientation intended. The line across the Circle is, in some cases extended, and emphasised by means of a gallán planted upon it at some distance outside the Circle proper, thus providing three prominent stones to mark out an unmistakeable line of sight.

(5) CHAMBER GRAVES AND BARROWS (Fig V.) (a) and (b)

We come next to a class of monument that is undoubtedly sepulchral in intention. This is the kind of structure that is known in Brittany and France as “Dolmen,” on account of the great single stone, resembling a “table,” with which, usually, it is roofed. This feature is known in English as the “cap-stone.” There are several forms of Chamber Grave, differing considerably from one another in appearance, yet all are essentially of the same mode of construction, namely there is in each case a roofing stone supported on upright slabs, enclosing a chamber intended to receive the bones or ashes of the dead. (Both forms of interment have been found in these structures, and sometimes both forms in the same chamber.) In its simplest form there is a single, roughly rectangular chamber, formed of three upright slabs supporting a cap-stone, with a fourth closing the fourth side in the manner of a door, while other types, to be referred to later, are larger, with more than one cap-stone, and several supporters on each side.

BARROWS.

It is thought that most, if not all Chamber Graves were at one time enclosed in a tumulus of earth, or of stones, or of both ; such a tumulus being named as a Barrow. Certainly the excavation of a barrow always discloses a Chamber Grave or graves hidden in the heart of the mound. At the same time there are exposed Chamber Graves that, almost certainly, never were covered by a mound. Perhaps the covering tumulus was either a later development, or else was the custom of another race from that which erected the exposed Chamber Graves.

While speaking of Barrows it may be remarked that there are two varieties of Barrow, namely Long Barrows and Round Barrows. These names describe their actual appearance. They are found in many dimensions, great or small, and of any height between about 10 and 40 feet. A frequent original feature is a single gallán standing on the summit of the mound. Many Barrows, if not all, were surrounded at their base by a disconnected ring of standing stones, great or small, known technically as a “peristalith.”

There have been many invasions of these islands in ages past by various types of humanity. Two of these types are distinguished by the shape of their skulls as Long-headed and Round-headed man, respectively, the Long-heads being the more ancient stock. Each race constructed Chamber Graves and raised Barrows over them, and it is easy to differentiate them, for the Long-heads happen to have constructed Long Barrows, and the Round-heads Round Barrows. Long Barrows (which are said to be almost non-existent in Ireland) are undoubtedly of Neolithic age, and Round Barrows are probably all of Early Bronze age.



(b) View from *SW*

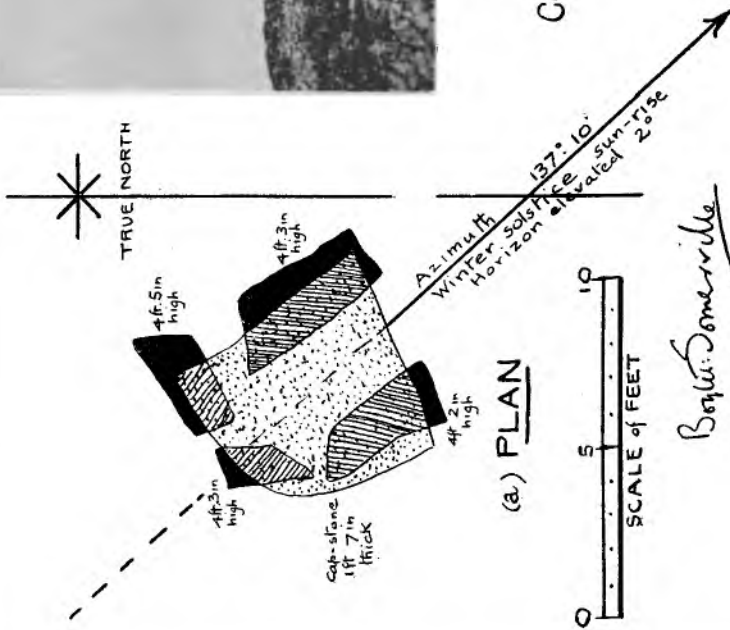
FIG: V

COUNTY ANTRIM - ISLAND MAGEE

LAT: 54° 51' N. - LONG: 5° 50' W.

CHAMBER GRAVE
 ("Druid's Altar")

May 1914



(a.) PLAN

Boyle: Somerville

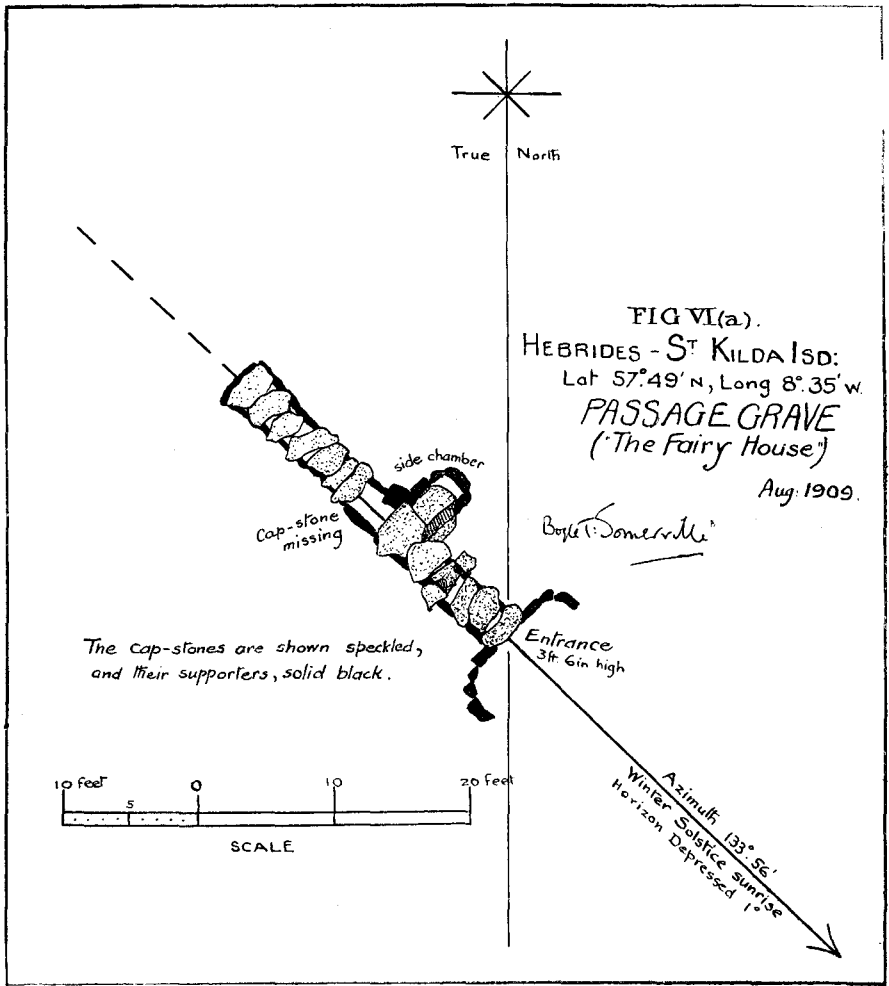




Fig. VI. (b).
PASSAGE GRAVE
St. Kilda Island, Hebrides,
August, 1909.

(a) Multiple Chamber Graves.

Probably the earlier form of Chamber Grave is the single chamber of three or four upright slabs carrying a single cap-stone, spoken of above. In the next stage in complexity the chamber is lengthened, and roofed with more than one cap-stone. In such cases there are, accordingly, several supporting slabs on either side, and the enclosed chamber, still roughly rectangular in shape, is divided into two, or (rather rarely) more "rooms" by transverse slabs dividing the interior space. Burials, either by cremation in urns, or of unburnt bones are found usually in the corners of the "rooms," as well as in the middle of each chamber, and possibly these tombs are "family vaults," as we should term them. A good many Chamber Graves have been found having a circular hole, or orifice in the slab forming the outer door, through which, it is supposed, food, or other offerings were passed to the dead. Multiple Chamber Graves such as these (especially in France) usually have a covered alley-way of approach, similar in construction to that of the tomb itself, namely with slab-stone sides and "roof." The alleyway may be 20 or 30 feet in length, but much lower in height than the burial chamber, and less in width.

There are several single and double Chamber Graves in the Lough Swilly district (Co. Donegal), where they are usually known as "Dermot's and Grania's Bed"; and I know of one ruined one in this county, which stands close to the roadside between Schull and Goleen.

It is named "Druid's Altar," being neither an altar, nor anything whatever to do with Druids; but the name has been sufficient to cause the small adjacent village, with a Protestant Church and schoolhouse, to be called "Altar," after it.

(b) Pear-Shaped Chamber Graves.

This is a type of Chamber Grave in which the enclosed chamber is not rectangular in plan, or even roughly so, but has a pear-shaped outline.

There are many of these in the Carnac district of Brittany, before referred to. The entrance is at the narrow end, and always terminates in a narrow alley-way approach, which corresponds to the "stalk" of the "pear," as seen in plan. A further peculiarity is that there are often small alcoves projecting from the "walls" of the main chamber, in which funerary urns were deposited. This form of Chamber Grave is evidently a more recent one than the rectangular, for in France and elsewhere carvings, which were, almost certainly, made with *metal* implements, are to be seen on the inner surfaces of the stones. The designs are of a character associated with the Early Iron Age, and are of a period long subsequent to the Neolithic Age. The well-known Chamber Grave of New Grange, in County Meath, belongs to this class of monument. Possibly there are other instances in this country awaiting discovery or excavation.

(c) Passage Graves (Figs VI (a) and VI (b)).

This kind of grave consists of a straight alley-way, resembling that which forms the entrance-alley to the pear-shaped Chamber Graves described above, but closed at the ends, and used for burial purposes. The covered alley, or "passage" is narrow and low, and is constructed of comparatively small slabs, both as regards the cap-stones and the side supporters. Small alcoves are built out from the side walls of the passage, at various

points, as in the last-described form of Chamber Grave, for the reception of burial urns. A feature of these Passage Graves is that the entrance "door" as seen from the outside, is placed in the centre of a concave of curving "walls," which project like two horns from the ends of the side walls of the Passage. I do not know if any grave of this description has yet been found in Ireland, but presumably they may occur, as they have been discovered in Scotland.

They appear to be a late form of structure, for "dry-walling" is often found filling spaces between the side slabs of the passage, and in the concave walls by the entrance, referred to above. The "megaliths" also are small, and "degenerate" in character.

(d) Clochtogles.

Here in Ireland we have what is either a very early, or else a later and degraded form of Chamber Grave, which, in the district around Lough Swilly is known as a "Cloghtogle." They are found elsewhere as well. The name seems to be correctly (in Northern Gaelic) "Clach togail," or "lifted stone," and if so, it well describes the character of the object. The monument consists, in fact, of a single great stone supported on three or more other stones, and so far, resembles a Chamber Grave, but here the resemblance ceases, for the "lifted" stone is not always a table-stone, but is often a rough boulder, not markedly tabular in shape, while the supporters are not flat-faced slabs on end, enclosing a rectangular chamber, but, like the cap-stone, are rough, unshaped stones (not slabs), and are "planted" in the ground with such large spaces between them that, in the larger types of this monument, one may easily walk between them. Thus, the enclosed space in no way resembles a "chamber."

In the smaller Cloghtogles (Fig VII.) the "cap-stone" is often a mere rudely cubical lump of stone—a glacial boulder, perhaps, in its natural state—raised off the ground to the height only of a foot or so on three or four rough stones gathered from the hill-side. In these smaller Cloghtogles, the space covered by the "cap-stone" is not large enough for an extended burial, and can have been intended only for the reception of cremated ashes in a low urn, or for a collection of unburnt bones. In some cases, the ground beneath is plain rock surface, never excavated, so that the monument cannot have marked an "inhumation," while often the position of the stones, on a wild rocky hill-side, precludes the possibility of there having once been a tumulus of earth, or even of stones heaped over the Cloghtogle. There is thus some difficulty in recognising these monuments as having been sepulchral in intention. On the other hand, if they are not tombs, for what purpose can they have been intended?

(e) Triple Cloghtogle. (Fig VIII.)

The type of monument to which I venture to refer under this title may be a peculiarity of the region surrounding Castletownberehaven, where I discovered two, some years ago. Probably others exist, in other parts, but I have never seen one described.

In each of the examples referred to, three Cloghtogles were arranged in the form of an equilateral triangle, with sides 16 feet long, and, it is interesting to note, the respective sides were, in each example, laid out on the same orientation.

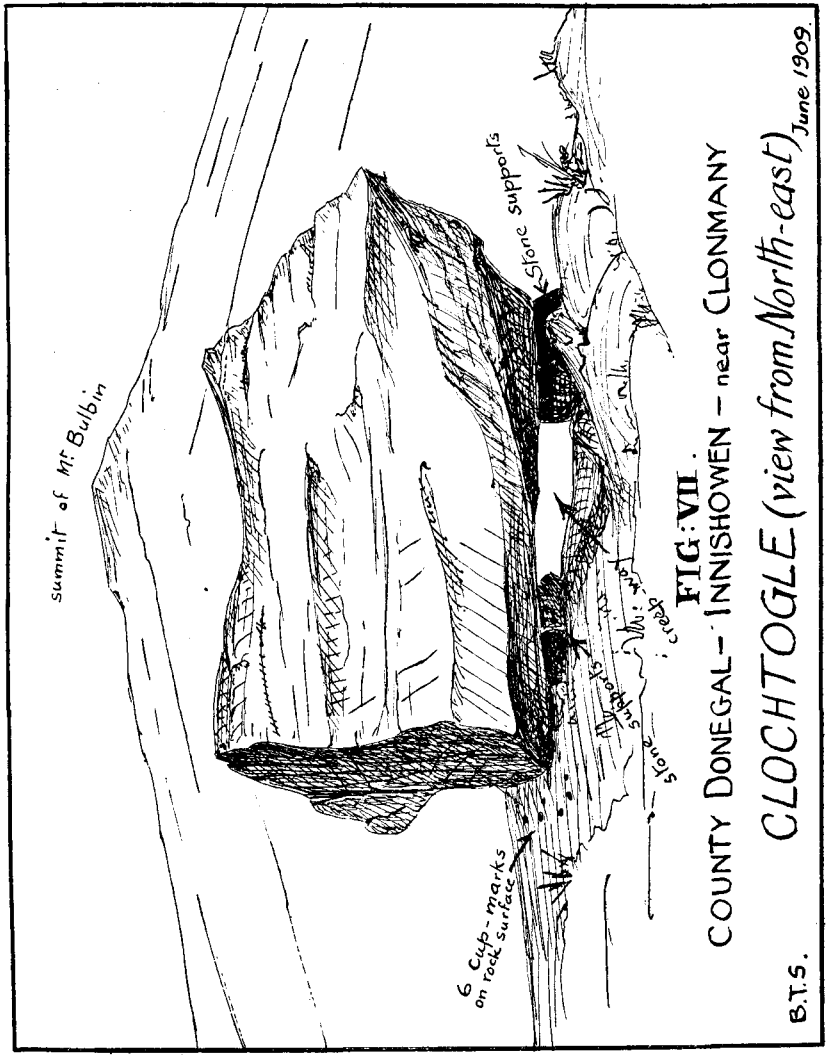


FIG: VII.
 COUNTY DONEGAL - INNISHOWEN - near CLONMANY

CLOCHTOGLE (view from North-east), June 1909.

B.T.S.



Fig. VIII.

TRIPLE CLOCHTOGLE

Near Castletown Bearhaven, County Cork,
April, 1910.



Fig. IX.

CUP-MARKED STONE

Near Castletownshend, County Cork,
November, 1913.

In one case there was an outlying Gallán associated with the Triple Cloghtogle, standing at a little distance. There was a local tradition of an underground chamber having once been found in its vicinity.

(6) CUP-MARKED STONES (Fig. IX.)

Though these cannot in themselves be described as "monuments," yet as they are so frequently associated with other neolithic remains (and also as they are so plentiful in this country), they cannot be omitted from any list of "prehistorics."

Cup-marked, or as they are also termed pit-marked stones, are usually megaliths, which appear to have been roughly trimmed to a more or less flat surface, and over this are scattered, apparently without method or pattern, numbers of artificially made cup-shaped depressions, varying in diameter from about 2 to 5 inches, and having a depth of perhaps 2 inches, though many of the cups are considerably less than this. Very little is as yet known regarding these objects, but it appears to be comparatively certain that they mostly are of neolithic age, though (in other countries) they have been found in association with Mousterian remains, namely those of the palaeolithic age, preceding neolithic times.

The following suggestions, none of them at all probable, have been made concerning them.

- (a) That they are maps of the surrounding "forts" or lisses,
- (b) That they are a Phoenician form of inscription,
- (c) That they are the result of sharpening arrow-heads, or other pointed implements,
- (d) That they are maps of the stars.

In all cases that I have examined, the cup-marks seem to be arranged quite fortuitously, and while some cups are larger than others, some surrounded by a ring grooved in the stone, some connected by a straight channel, so that the two cup-marks, thus joined, resemble a dumbbell, no reason is apparent for any of these peculiarities. The general suggestion may be offered that as these cup-marked stones are, almost invariably associated with other large stones in prehistoric monuments, they were thus marked in order to call particular attention to them amongst the surrounding stones. But, if so, the reason for so distinguishing such megaliths is still to be discovered; nor does this suggestion offer a solution for the difference in size, etc., among the cup-marks themselves on any particular stone. I know of one instance (Beltany Circle, Co. Donegal) where the cup-marked stone is definitely connected with the orientational features of the Circle. This, however, may be pure chance, and it would be impossible to base any argument upon it, without many further examples being discovered.

(7) BULLÁN STONES (Fig. X.)

I am informed that the Irish word "Bullán" means a hole in a rock or stone, and is generally applied to a hole resembling a bowl which holds rain-water. The name is also applied to a spring-well in a rock. Bullán stones

are of the same general character and appearance as cup-marked stones, but there is this difference between them, that bulláns are always much larger and deeper than cup-marks and are seldom found with more than four in one stone, and much more frequently there is only one, or occasionally two.

There is this possible difference also, namely that whereas cup-marked stones probably originally stood planted upright in the ground, it seems likely that bullán stones were all intended to lie flat, with their basins open to the sky. In many existing specimens, still, apparently, in their original positions, this is the case. The rain-water that collects in them constitutes them as a "Holy Well" (often connected with the name of some local saint of old days), and has healing properties, usually for eye-diseases, or for rheumatism. This use may possibly be an inheritance from pagan days, and like so many such inheritances, become Christianised later.

The foregoing list of the various classes of prehistoric remains to be found in this country and elsewhere is far indeed from being exhaustive; but it enumerates at least the more obvious of them. Anyone who begins to deal closely with these ancient and still enigmatic remains cannot fail to be fascinated by the subject, and to be piqued more and more into a desire to extract from them their 4000-year old secrets. There are many still awaiting official record on the Ordnance maps or elsewhere; and only to discover a megalithic monument, new to science, and to report it would of itself be a meritorious act, with a view to its preservation for future generations. To make a simple survey of the remains would be an act even more meritorious, for thus its characteristics would be preserved, even if the stones eventually became road-metal, and besides this they would be presented to the world in an accessible form for the purposes of close study. The importance of this is obvious.

The present insistent demand for good roads sends the contractor in search of material to whatever megalithic monuments lie nearest to his needs. Probably he is quite unaware of their antiquity, still less of the fact that they are graves, and that he is disregarding the very proper pishogue which lies on the remover of gravestones. Thus, gradually, they are bound to disappear, and every fact concerning them, even their very site, to be lost for ever.

If it were common knowledge, as it should be, that these grey monuments are, in many cases, the tombs of the ancient heroes of this land, and that they are now, in any case, between 2000 and 4000 years old (and none of them are less than the first named age, while some may be older than the second), it would doubtless save the old stones from the road-mender for a future at least as far distant from us as is their immemorial past. Every lover of his country and its history should assist to bring about such a result.



Fig. X.

BULLÁN STONE

Near Castletown Bearhaven, County Cork,
April, 1910.