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XVI.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF "CROMLECHS" IN THE COUNTY OF CLARE. BY THOMAS JOHNSON WESTROPP, M.A.

(PLATES VIII., IX., AND X.)

[Read MAY 24, 1897.]

THE great group of Cromlechs¹ in the county of Clare lies (with the exception of scarcely half a dozen examples) within an extensive district, 40 miles long by 10 wide, running in a south-easterly direction, from the sea coast to the eastern border. The Cromlechs are not only numerous in the hills (as might be expected), but also in the level country of Magh Adhair, probably the longest cultivated and inhabited plain in the county. Some 115 exist or are known to have recently existed.

The oldest traditions preserve no record of any territorial division corresponding to this long strip of country. When the Dalcassians burst into the present county of Clare² in the last half of the fourth century, they are said to have found the lands occupied by various *Firbolgic* tributaries of the kings of Connaught.

First, the people of Tradraighe or Tradree, who held a nearly square district in the angle formed by the Fergus and Shannon, bounded to the north and east by the "Gissagh" (Rine), which flows past the friary of Quin, and the "Owen na Cearnaigh," which washes the walls of Bunratty Castle. This, as first subdued, seems to have formed the mensal land of the princes of Thomond, down, perhaps, to Donchad Cairbrech O'Brien, after whose death in 1242 it was held at intervals by English grantees, De Musegros and the three De Clares. Its mensal character may explain the strenuous endeavours of Brian Boru to recover it from the Danes; also its grant to De Musegros

¹ I use this variant and controverted term to cover all the varieties of primitive stone structures confused under that title on our maps, and under the term *Labba Diarmada* by the peasantry.

² Not known as "Thomond" till after their conquest. The older "Thomond" was probably eastern Limerick and northern Tipperary.

by the English Government, and that by King Brian Roe O'Brien to Thomas de Clare in 1276. Its importance is farther marked by the enormous triple stone forts at Moghane and Langough.¹

Secondly, the inhabitants of Magh Adhair, once extending from the Fergus nearly to Tulla, possessing the great forts of Cahercalla and Cahershaughnessy, the mound of Inauguration, and some 30 cromlechs.

Thirdly, an ill-defined district, extending along the eastern and northern borders, including Slieve Bernagh, Slieve Aughty, the parish of Inchicronan, and the greater part of the baronies of Inchiquin and Islands; of its earlier occupants nothing certain is known, only vague legends about the Tuatha De Danaan. Most of it was held by the Dalcassians (the Hybloid, Hycaisin and Kinel Fermaic), when its history commences. On its Galway border lay Lughid (Ath na Luchaid) the farthest limit of the Dalcassian Kingdom, and doubtless the site of some disastrous battle, as suggested by the curious "prohibition" laid on the King of Connaught: "In a speckled cloak let him not go to the Heath of Luchaid in Dal Chais."² It contains some 20 cromlechs.

Fourthly, the mountainous tract of the Corcomroes, said to have been held by the Firbolgs of Irgus, Dael, and Ennach,³ but was possessed in historic times by the offshoots of Clan Rory—the O'Conors and O'Loughlins. It contains some 40 cromlechs and several hundred stone forts, including the great cahers of Ballykinvarga and Caher-commane.

Lastly, the angle formed by the sea and the Shannon, Corcovaskin, first held by the Martini (a large Firbolg tribe, who also appear round Emly in the ninth century), and then by the race of Cairbre bhascaoin, whence its later name was derived. It only possesses one cromlech, that of Kiltumper.

Most of the existing structures are small box-like cists tapering and often sloping towards the east, the cairns and mounds in which at any rate many were embedded being now nearly removed. A few long graves of several chambers occur at intervals over all the district, and a few small "demi dolmens" round Tulla. An interesting type of stone enclosure is found at Clooney and Dooneen, north of Quin.

¹ See *Journal Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 1893, p. 281; 1896, p. 146.

² "Book of Rights," p. 21.

³ *Dindseanchas* ("Revue Celtique," 1894, p. 479).

Two lists have already been published by Miss Stokes. The first in "Early Christian Architecture of Ireland" (1878), p. 146. Cragballyconnell (Burren, No. 11); Coolamore (Burren, No. 3); Knockalassa (Inchiquin, No. 19); Kiltumper (Clonderlaw, No. 1); Bally cum marga (Corcomroe, No. 3); Caher mac crusheen (Corcomroe, No. 1); Kilnaboy; Commons North (Inchiquin, No. 4); Knocknaglaise (perhaps No. 1); Teeshagh (ditto, No. 3), and Shallee. In this list the last was a cairn, and no cromlech has existed at Kilnaboy since at any rate 1839.

The second is in "Revue Archéologique," 1882, pp. 19-21. Inchiquin, Shallee, Inaghbridge, Kilfenora (Baile cinn marga), Kilnabow (Ballyganner, Burren 27, Reabacan, Giant's Grave, Coteen, Know na glaise, Leaba na glaise), Oughtmama. There are actually none at Inchiquin, Inaghbridge, Kilnaboy, and Oughtmama. Leaba na glaise is the "Teeshagh" of list No. 1. Neither list names one out of over sixty examples east of the Fergus.

I cannot hope that my own list will prove complete, for many more cromlechs doubtless exist in cairns, in lonely thickets and among almost impassable crags; but, as it is founded on local examination, undertaken in some instances for the Ordnance Survey (and thus also in return gaining much information from that body), I hope to record accurately the main lines of distribution and the principal groups. I only describe a few good examples of the leading types of these monuments.

1. BALLYGANNER (sheet 9, Ordnance Survey, 6 inches to 1 mile). These townlands contain an interesting group of remains, lying about three miles N. W. of Kilfenora on a deserted craggy plateau. Starting from the hamlet of Noughaval, which possesses a venerable church, parts of which are as old as the tenth century, we pass the fine stone fort of Cahercuttine, with an interesting gateway and stairs, commanding a glimpse of Liscannor bay and castle through a gap in the hills; close beside it lie two broken dolmens, a cairn, and one of those puzzling structures like a miniature caher, 24 feet in diameter, enclosing a small souterrain. Four other stone "forts" lie along the ridge in line. Turning eastward from Cahernaspeke,¹ we meet two more, one enclosing a slab hut, and finally reach the objects of our search.

The first consists of three compartments, but the "eastern" is nearly defaced. Its "southern" side lies N. N. E. and S. S. W.; the "western" room measures 8 feet × 6 feet, its entrance is flanked by pillars 5 feet

¹ It is also in line with the great forts of Ballykinvarga and Doon. This linear arrangement also occurs in Scotland (Proc. Soc. Ant. Scotland, 1890-91, p. 203).

high, the roof slabs have split and fallen, but when perfect the pillars overtopped them by at least a foot. The central chamber is 5 feet 6 in. long by 6 feet, and has similar pillars to its northern door; they are 6 feet high, and rose 2 feet above the roof, forming a trilithon, of which the lintel has fallen. There was an outer facing of slabs, the spaces between these and the sides having been packed with small stones and clay. (Plate X., fig. 1).

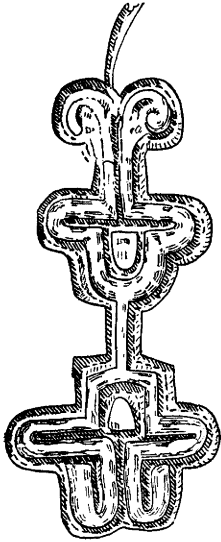
Eastward lies the fort Caheranedan with a "fosleac" or slab hut, whence a straight road, made by removing the top layers of the crags, runs south to the second, a fallen cromlech, the north and top slabs are each about 9 feet 8 by 6 feet 8. A third stands inside a nameless caher with its west end embedded in the rampart; it tapers from 7 feet at the west to 4 feet east, and consists of three side slabs, the southern 13 feet 8 inches long; the top has been broken into five fragments, probably by fire. A fourth (very perfect) stands in the wreck of a cairn. It is a small cist of four stones, the east end being open. The south side lies W. N. W. and E. S. E.; the N. and S. sides measure respectively 11 feet 5 inches and 12 feet 7 inches, while the top slab is 13 feet long and 7 feet 8 inches broad, it has two channels in its upper surface, probably waterworn. A fifth, of exceptional size, crowns the hill (above Ballyganner castle in its surrounding caher) and forms a very conspicuous landmark, its top slab has numerous little basins a few inches across, possibly like the "marmites du diable" in the dolmens of Brittany, once used for offerings of butter, &c., to the spirits residing in the cist, and the "elf mills" described by Dr. Montelius as occurring in the top slabs of Swedish cists. The south side measures 18 feet 6 inches long by 7 feet 8 inches; its north is 17 feet 4 inches long; it tapers eastward from 9 feet 7 inches to 6 feet 2 inches. The top slab when perfect must have measured 11 feet by 20 feet.

ADDOON¹ (sheet 18 in Moyree Commons).—A singular monument of five stones, apparently a chamber, 6 feet 6 inches by 5 feet, with parallel sides, lying east and west. (Plate IX., fig. 4). Within it two large blocks are set (the western askew), dividing it into two cells, the north-west triangular, the eastern of a lozenge shape, about 6 feet by 3 feet. The northern "insertion" is 9 feet 8 inches high,

¹ Addoon, Corbehagh, Tyredagh, and Caherloghan cromlechs are not marked on the six-inch Ordnance Survey. Mr. Borlase's "Dolmens of Ireland" contains a view of Knoockeen dolmen, county of Waterford (p. 61). Addoon, when perfect, must have closely resembled this monument.

the other only 3 feet; the sides are most unequal in height, being, north, 6 feet 4 inches; south, 5 feet; and east 13 inches. A large slab is so balanced on the south side that its inner end presses upwards against the north "insertion."

CORBEHAGH (sheet 19), on the hills near Dromandoora. I notice it to correct the very inaccurate sketch of a curious rock-carving near it,¹ which appeared in our *Proceedings*. This is cut on a naturally-polished surface of the native rock, and is a curious arrangement of two frets, the lower ends curved, the upper forming spirals, the outer edge cut straight into the rock, and the bands slightly rounded. A cross and "I.H.S." have been rudely cut below it in recent years. South from this, on the native rock near the brow of the hill, the outline of a foot has been incised; it points southward.



The lower cromlech is very perfect; a chamber 8 feet 2 inches wide, tapering eastward from 6 feet 5 inches to 3 feet 3 inches; the sides project 3 feet farther east, where they are 1 foot 8 inches apart. It is formed of 7 blocks of purple conglomerate (2 each in the sides and the west end, and one to the east), and a top slab, sloping eastward, 11 feet long, and from 8 feet 2 inches to 2 feet 2 inches wide. These remains will be marked on the new survey maps, as I called the attention of Captain Sloggett, R.E., to their existence.

CLOONEY (sheet 34).—Two "giant's graves" in the demesne of Mr. Hall. The eastern had two, if not three rings greatly defaced, the largest block being 12 feet 6 inches by 8 feet by 2 feet. The western consists of an oblong enclosure (30 feet N. and S., 11 feet E. and W.), its longer sides lying N.N.W. and E.S.E., and the angles cut off. It is formed by double rows of slabs, the interspace packed with field stones; it stands on a low mound near a stream. (Plate X., fig. 2.)

TYREDAGH (sheet 27).—A "long cromlech" of five compartments. Its north side lies N.N.E. and S.S.W. It tapers from 7 feet 6 inches to 6 feet 6 inches in 20 feet. It lies in a little valley bounded on the east by low cliffs. The western end overhangs a small stream; both

¹ Proc. R.I.A., vol. x., p. 441.

ends and the roof slabs have fallen. It was probably covered with earth.¹ In Tyredagh demesne a large cromlech of the usual type stands in the farmyard, a small earth ring in the garden, and a pillar stone 9 feet by 5 feet near the gate; they are preserved by the Gore family.

CAHERLOGHAN (sheet 34).—A group of three small "demi-dolmens" near Moymore Bridge. Each consists of a slab, its east end supported by another stone. The top slabs measure respectively 6 feet by 6 feet 8 inches by 12 inches, 7 feet 3 inches by 4 feet 2 inches by 18 inches, and 2 feet 3 inches by 4 feet by 12 inches.² The side of another cist is preserved in a modern wall. A fifth, consisting of a ruined cairn and cist, stands in a grove of bushes west of the large "demi dolmen"; while the top slab of a large dolmen remains in the southern fields of the townland. It has been set up on edge by the farmer who removed the other stones.

BASIN STONES.—A few examples of these interesting objects occur near prehistoric sepulchres in the county of Clare. (1) Near Cappagh-kennedy cromlech lies a small limestone slab, 18 inches by 12 inches, in which appears five little cups, about 2 inches in diameter. Three are complete, and ground smooth; two have been commenced, and picked with some pointed instrument. (2) Near the mound of Magh Adhair, one already described in our *Proceedings*.³ (Plate IX., fig. 3.) (3) A round basin, 12 inches in diameter, in a block of yellow sandstone lying in a grove in Kiltanon demesne, near the only remaining block of a large cromlech, at which unbaptized children were buried till about forty years ago. (Plate IX., fig. 2.) (4) A round basin (10 inches diameter) in the east end block of the cromlech in Newgrove demesne. (Plate IX., fig. 1.)

LIST OF "CROMLECHS" IN THE COUNTY OF CLARE.

(Arranged under baronies, and numbered as on Plate VIII.)

BURREN.—Ballycahill, 5. Ballyganner North, 23, 24, 25. Ballyganner South, 26, 27. Ballymihil, 9. Ballyvaughan, 1. Berneens,

¹ Since the date of this Paper, Mr. Borlase has published my plan of the Tyredagh dolmen ("Dolmens of Ireland," vol. i., pp. 87, 88). He has, I think, made a slight error in concluding that the sides of the west "giant's grave," at Clooney, "meet in a point" to the north (p. 82). The north, like the south end, was nearly straight and is in perfect preservation.

² In the Dindsenchas ("Revue Celtique," 1894, p. 286), mention is made of a small grave of two stones, 3' × 3½'.

³ Proc. R.I.A., Series III., vol. iv., p. 56.

6, 7, 8 (three in line: the first is possibly in the adjoining townland of Ballyallaban). Cappaghkennedy, 17 (with basin stone). Carran, 29 (cist in a cairn near the church; funerals still go round it). Cooleamore, 3, 4. Craghballyconoal, 11, 12. Deerpark of Lemeneagh, 28. Fanygalvan, 18, 19, 20 (three in line). Faunaroosca, 2. Moheramoylan, 16. Noughaval, 21, 22. Poulaphuca, 10. Poulabrone, 14, 15 (there is said to have been a second, but I am very doubtful). Rannagh East, 13. Total, 28 or 29.

CORCOMROE.—Ballykinvarga, 3. Cahermaccrusheen, 1. Cahermineane, 2 (the "Kiltennan" or "Ballykinvarga," in the *Burren* list of Mr. Borlase. Cloneen, 4 (near border of Ballyganner South). Total, 4.

INCHQUIN.—Adroon, 17 (in Moyree Commons). Ballycasheen, 14 (a "long cromlech," the "Ballykissheen" of Hely Dutton's list. Commons North, 4, 5 (the "Cotteen" of Dutton). Dromore, 18 (others are said vaguely to exist in the thickets). Gortlecka (or Ashfield), 15, 16. Knockalassa, 19 (a very regular cist on Mount Callan). Leanna, 6, 7, 8 (probably the "Reabachan" of Dutton, if he does not mean Parknabinnia). Parknabinnia, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 (three not marked on 1839 survey). Slievenaglasha, 3 (near Teeskagh, probably "Tullyglashin" of Dutton). Tullycommene, 1, 2. Total, 18 or 19.

ISLANDS.—Carnelly, 1 (a very doubtful example; it has undergone a rebuilding).

CLONDERLAW.—Killtumper, or Tumper's grave, 1.

BUNRATTY UPPER.—Ballyhickey (at Hazelwood), 9. Ballymacloon, 18. Ballymaconna (at Kilraghtis), 3. Ballyogan, 4. Caheraphuca, 1. Caherloghan, 12 to 17 (a group of four small semi-dolmens, included in Moymore in my former list, followed by Mr. Borlase, is in this townland). Clooney, 10 & 11. Dooneen, 7 (same type as No. 10). Kilvoydan, 2. Knappogue, 19. Moananoe, 8. Rylane, 5, 6 (5 is a "long cromlech"). Total, 19.

BUNRATTY LOWER.—Ballinphunta (at Croaghane Church), 5. Ballysheenbeg, 4. Brickhill, 6. Dromullan, 2 (two remain). Kilcornan, 1 (has a large incised cross on top slab). Knockalappa, 3. Total, 7.

TULLA UPPER.—Altoir Ultach, 19. Cappabaun, 23. Corbehagh or Dromandoora, 21, 22 (near rock markings). Corracloon, 20. Kiltanon, 12 (with basin stone). Maryfort, or Lismehane, 17. Miltown, or Ballymullen, 4 to 11 (five destroyed between 1840 and 1892). Moymore, 13 to 16. Newgrove or Ballyslattery, 3 (with basin stone). Roslara, 18. Tyredagh Upper, 1 (long cromlech). Tyredagh Lower, 2. Tobergrania, near Altoirultach (now a holy well). Total, 23.

TULLA LOWER.—Arndataggle, 13 (“long cromlech”). Ardskeagh, 5. Ballykelly (above Kilseily church), 10. Bealkelly Purdon, 2. Cloghoolia, 11. Cloonyconrymore, 6, 7 (6 is a “long cromlech”). Drummin, 4. Elmhill, 1. Formoylemore, 8. Killokennedy, 3. Knockshanvo (or Knockaphunta), 9. Lackareaghmore, 12. Total, 13. A large “table stone” is said to exist near the river in the fields south of O’Callaghan’s mills.

NOTE ADDED IN PRESS.

Mr. W. Borlase, in “Dolmens of Ireland,” vol. i., pp. 65–102, gives illustrations and plans of the following in the county of Clare:—

BURREN.—Berneens, Ballyganner South, Ballykinvarga (Caherminane), Deerpark Cappaghkennedy.

CORCOMROE.—Cloneen.

INCHIQUIN.—Tullycommane, Slievenaglasha, Leana (two), Commons North, Parknabinnia, Ballycasheen, Knockalassa.

BUNRATTY UPPER.—Caheraphuca, Caherloghan, Rylane (two), Knopogue.

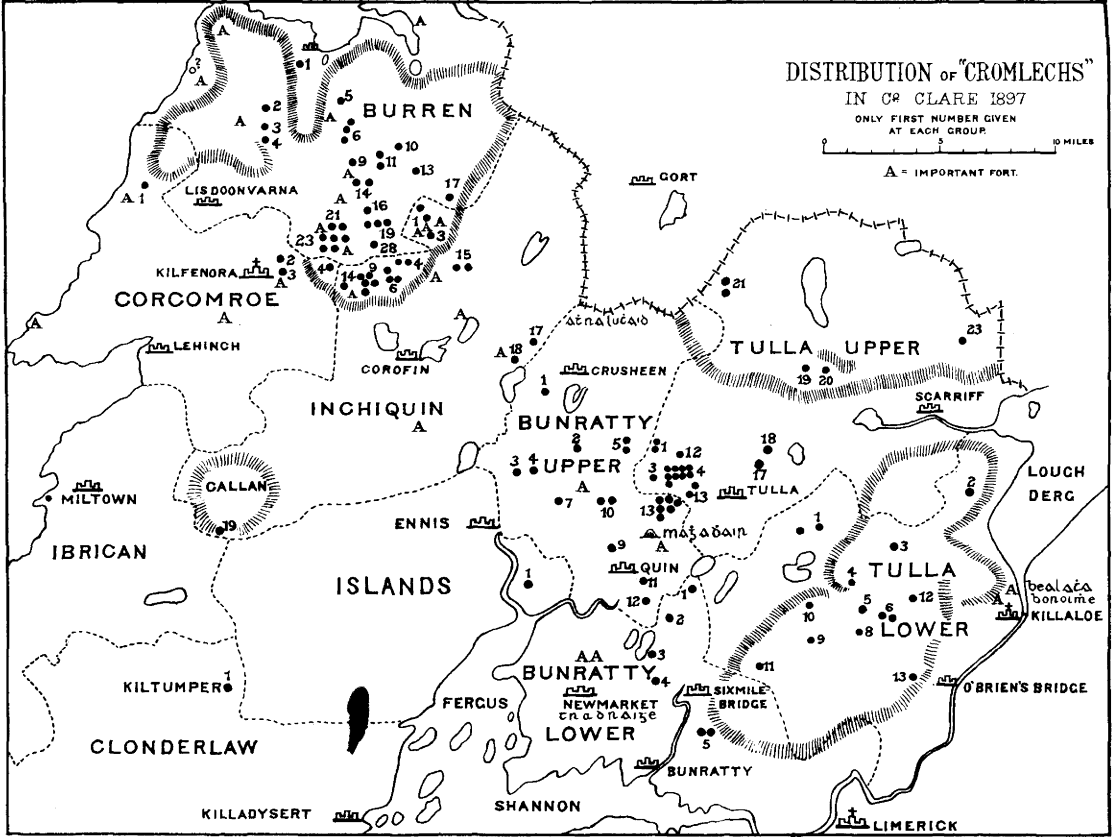
BUNRATTY LOWER.—Ballinphunta.

TULLA UPPER.—Tyredagh Upper and Lower, Newgrove, Miltown, Moymore (three *recte* Caherloghan, on whose border they lie), Rosslara, Maryfort, Dromandoora.

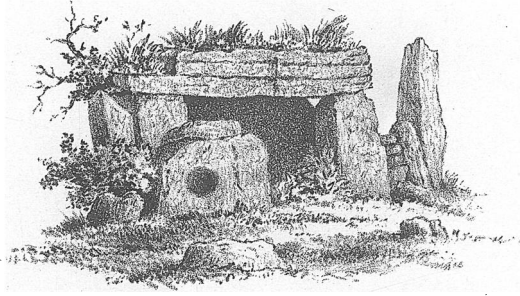
TULLA LOWER.—Ballykelly, Formoylemore, Cloonyconrymore.

Mr. Borlase, in his list of dolmens, records for—

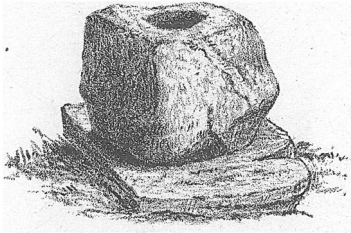
BURREN,	23	BUNRATTY LOWER	7
CORCOMROE,	2	TULLA UPPER,	21
INCHIQUIN,	7	„ LOWER,	12
BUNRATTY UPPER,	13	CLONDERLAW,	1



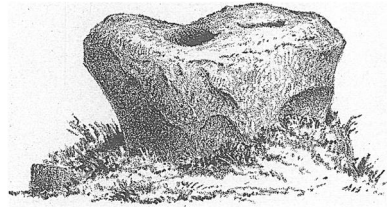
Geo. West & Sons lith. et. 1897



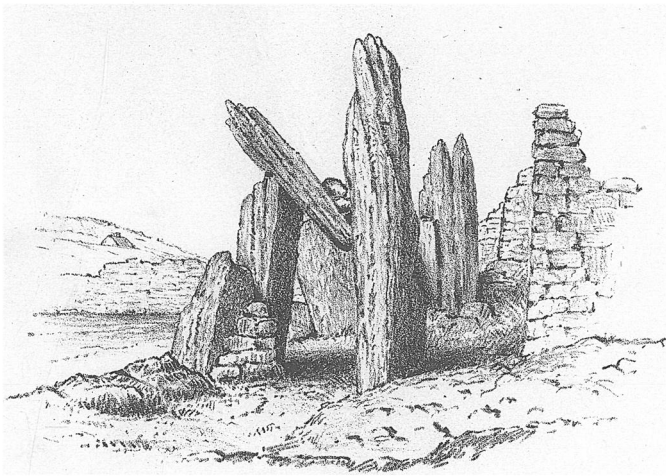
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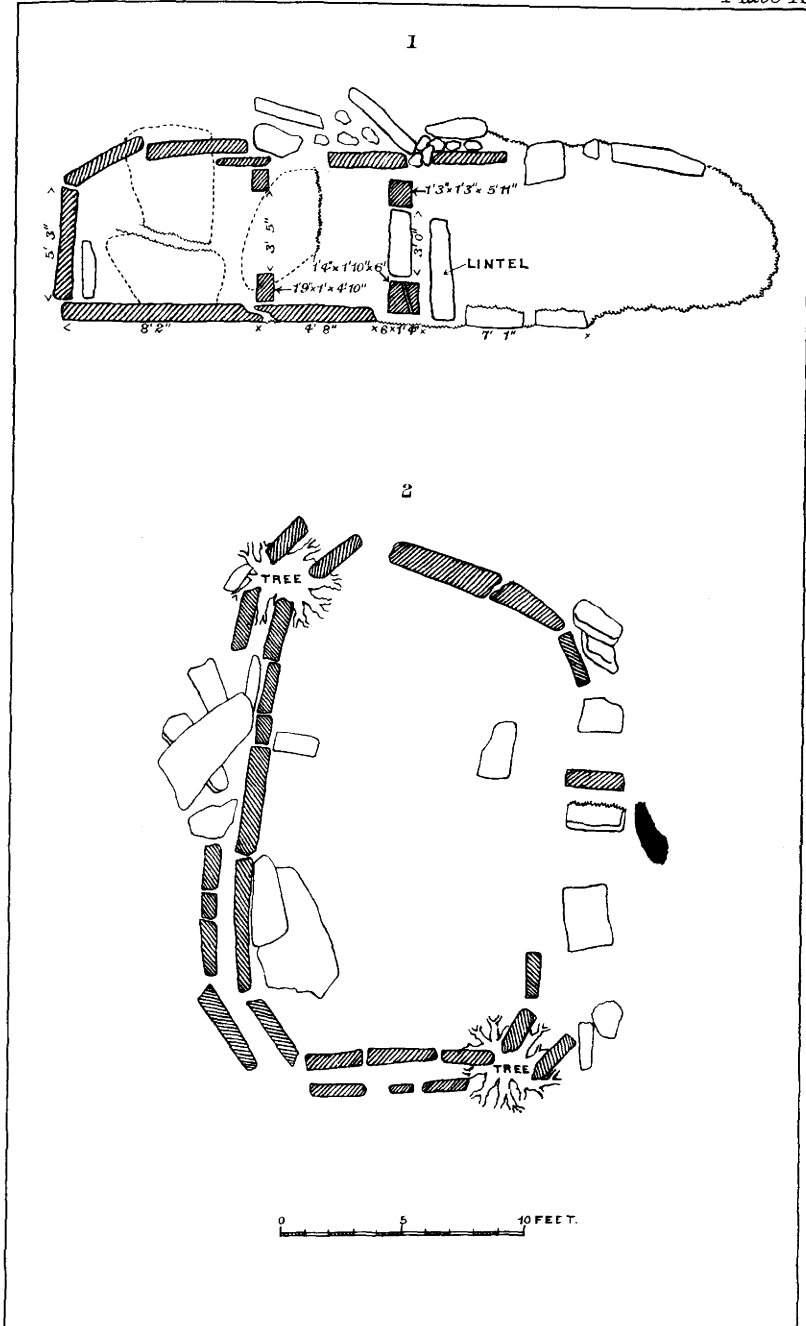


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