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Annacloghmullion

Author(s): Charles Hurson

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COUNTY LOUTH ARCHÆOLOGICAL JOURNAL.

Ballykeel (Bailé na Síle) Cromlech, near Mullabane.

Leasáit-Boirice "Giant's Grave," near Mullabane.

Pillar Stone.

Pillar Stone.

Sole remains of Annacloghmullion Chambered Cairn.

LOCAL EXCURSION TO MULLABANE AND ANNACLOGHMULLION.

Annacloghmullion.

IN a recent occasion a very representative group of local antiquaries visited Annacloghmullion* under the guidance of the hospitable pastor of Mullaban. Very few, if any, of the remains of the once great cairn were discoverable, hence these few notes might not be unnecessary to maintain an interest in what was once undoubtedly a place of widespread importance.

In this townland of Annacloghmullion, parish of Lower Killeavy, Co. Armagh, about three and a half miles to the north of Forkhill in a field adjoining the road close to Davitt's Cross Roads, there existed long ago an old sepulchral monument or cairn. All trace of it has disappeared, so that not even can fancy's eye restore what time and men have laboured to deface. Upwards of thirty years ago the present owner of the land removed the last remnants of the structure and levelled the place to make arable land of it. Happily, however, a description of the cairn was given in the *Newry Magazine* (August 11th, 1815) by Mr. John Bell, who had previously visited the place, and had drawn an outline map and plan of the then existing structure.

Borlase, in his work on the "Dolmens of Ireland," has given a very succinct account of this monument, but as he culled his information from Mr. Bell's article in the *Newry Magazine*, I think I cannot do better than quote the original article as it appeared from the pen of the author :—

"The sepulchral monument, of which I present you with a drawing, was first explored by Sir Walter Synnot on September 8th, 1791. The exterior is composed of a cairn of stones of great magnitude without any circle of large stones at the verge. It is that species of monument so well known to the Irish peasantry by the name *leacá*. The persons whom Sir Walter Synnot employed to open the entrance into the monument began by removing parts of the cairn at the

* Annacloghmullion = *eanac-cloic-muilinn* = the marsh or fen of the millstone. The millstone, and the mill, and the plenty which they connote, must have been amongst the vanished glories of Annacloghmullion while yet the people of Mullaban could voice their sarcasm in the ancient tongue, as witness :—

eanac-cloic-muilinn
San muilinn san áran !

"The townland of the-fen-and-the-mill, and it has neither mill nor meal !"

D

FIG 276 ANNACLOCHMULLIN. ETCHED FROM AN ILLUSTRATION IN.
"ETRURIA CELTICA"

FIG 277 URN FROM ANNACLOCHMULLIN. FROM ROUGH SKETCH.
IN "ETRURIA CELTICA"

FIG 278 ANNACLOCHMULLIN. PLAN ENLARGED FROM.
"ETRURIA CELTICA"

tops of the two pillars represented in the drawing, each of which measures about thirteen feet in height. At that time those tops rose nearly eight inches above the level of the small stones. The men continued at work until the regularly designed front, represented in prefixed plate, presented itself to view. Then they discovered four apartments, thirty-seven feet in length.

The Leac (leac)† is an elliptical form, covered at the top, and measures in length forty-four yards, and in breadth over the summit twenty-four yards. It contains two rows of large slabs of stones, each measuring about nine feet in length, and seven feet in height. These extend nineteen yards into the rude heap, and support incumbent slabs of prodigious size.

The apartments measure nine feet in length by eight feet in breadth, and communicate with each other by parallelogrammatical apertures of about four feet in height. The sides consist of rude pillars resting upon stone sills. The top is formed of large stones upon which a great number of stones of same size is placed until they come into contact with the roof.

From the sides and ends of these apartments springing from the top of the vertical wall-stones large flags which form the roof project over the other, until they nearly meet at the top, the stones at the end converging as well as those of the sides. An immense and ponderous flag is placed horizontally upon the two uppermost of these, which respective stones form the highest part of the several apartments. The stones that converge or contract as they ascend to this top stone appear like inverted steps. Although these immense stones project over one another and hang suspended without any apparent support, they are, however, kept from falling by the incumbent weight of the small stones which rest on their other extremities. Thus from the form of the roof being neither flat nor arched, it will appear plain to your readers, that the cairn of small stones is almost indispensable in forming the interior structure. The height from the floor to the highest part of the ceiling of each apartment is about seven feet six inches.

In the second apartment an ornamented fragment of an ancient earthen vessel was found. I never have had the opportunity to search for human bones in this place. That human remains have been deposited here there can be no doubt. I have now so often found skeletons with urns similar to the fragment that was discovered in this tumulus as to render it perfectly indisputable that this kind of monument is sepulchral.

Although this is one of the finest leac I have ever seen, there are no engravings on the stones. Concentric circles, a variety of undulating and carved lines, and other decorations not altogether devoid of beauty are frequently found upon stones which form the interior of the leac. Carved ornaments or characters never fail to excite the curiosity of the learned. It must be lamented, however, that they know no more of the purpose for which they have been intended than the vulgar.

You will be surprised when you are informed that Sir Charles Coote has not taken any notice of this spacious and almost perfect monument of Irish antiquity, nor has any notice been taken of it by any preceding writer. A similar leac containing three chambers was opened sometime since in the townland of Ballymacdermott, Co. Louth. in which a small urn was found."

There is now no trace of any of the large stones or slabs referred to in the above description, with the exception of the two upright stones shown in the accompanying photograph. They now, as will be seen, form part of a stone fence, but are, as far as one can judge in their original position. I learnt that about one hundred tons of the stones of this cairn were carted to Markethill to build Gosford Castle, and that also a large quantity were buried in the place. Thus there is practically nothing left to catch the eye of the casual visitor, though on close examination of the place one may decry in dim outline where the cairn once stood.

In the May of 1909 Mr. Thomas Ashby, Director of the British School at Rome, addressed a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* in connection with the press notices of Dr. Cochrane's presidential address to the Royal Society of Antiquaries for that year. The following extracts will make a fitting conclusion to this article :

"The close analogy between the cromlech at Annacloghmullen, County Armagh, and the 'Tombs of the Giants' in Sardinia had not escaped the notice of Borlase (*Dolmens of Ireland*,

† leac means a grave, or pile of stones, or mound, to mark a grave, as leac-mhaighdeanna means "Mahon's grave" on the mountain of Necessity, near Macroom.—(*O'Brien's Dictionary*).

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vol. i., 303 *sqq.*, 706). The correspondence in the existence of the semicircle at the front, in the method of roofing by projecting stones, covered by a large flagstone over all, in the construction of the lower part of the sides of the chamber with large slabs, and in the plan of the whole, is obvious; while the construction of the frontal semicircle in coursed masonry, visible in the drawing given by Borlase (fig. 276), finds a parallel in the giants' tombs at San Prigionas and Muraguada, discovered by Dr. Duncan Mackenzie in the autumn of 1908 (see *Builder*, and *Athenæum*, March 27th, 1909). This monument appeared to me, therefore, when I visited Ireland in September, 1908, to be of especial importance; and as I had not time to go to the place itself, Mr. E. C. R. Armstrong kindly interested himself in the matter, with a view to obtaining full details and plans for me. Unfortunately, Mr. Munce, to whom he wrote for information, could only reply that the monument had been levelled down over thirty years ago, and all traces of it had disappeared. Another monument of a different kind, also cited by Borlase (*op. cit.*, vol. i., 291, 707), the chambered cavern near Newbliss, which also presents the peculiarity of a frontal semicircle, seems to have been destroyed also, from what Borlase says. The loss of these monuments is, needless to say, irreparable; were plans and photographs of them corresponding to the demands of modern scholars preserved, one might be to some extent reconciled; but even this is not the case. And inasmuch as one of the great points of the scheme for research in the western Mediterranean area, which the British school has taken up, which it is already pushing on both in Sardinia and in Malta, and which, if funds permit, it hopes to continue and extend, is to ascertain what connections can be traced and what parallels drawn between the prehistoric monuments and civilization of Western Europe and of the British Isles, the destruction of pieces of evidence such as these, which would have been of the highest importance for comparative study, cannot be too deeply deplored. It is most earnestly to be hoped that such cases may not occur in the future, and that the apathy on the part of the local bodies, the landowners, and the general public, to which Dr. Cochrane alludes in his Presidential Address, may be dissipated. It is to prove how wide-reaching is the importance of such monuments that I write these lines."—THOMAS ASHEY, *Director of the British School at Rome*.

FOLK LORE OF ANNACLOGHMULLION.

I got the following folk story about Annacloghmullion cairn (or castle) from an old Irish speaker, who told me he heard it read from an old Irish manuscript:—

"A long time ago a man named William Roan was passing by the place on his way to the market to sell a load of oats. He met a man who bought the oats from him; but no sooner had the man bought the oats than he disappeared. Roan became confounded, and lost all knowledge of the road and his whereabouts. He went on the road until he came to a great house. A man came out of it and said "Welcome, William Roan," and he took one sack of the oats from him; then another man came out, and bade him likewise welcome and took another sack of oats. and so on, till the cart was unloaded. He was paid for his oats and then invited in to dinner. No sooner had William Roan sat down at the table than he fell asleep under it, and another man in the appearance of William Roan was sent home with the horse and cart. This man took ill and died that night, and was duly buried as William Roan in the graveyard close to Annacloghmullion. Soon after, the servant man began to make love to William Roan's widow, and she, to the great horror of all her friends, consented to marry him. Her friends upbraided her, and said she should allow her dead husband to grow cold in the grave before she thought of marrying again; but she replied that he was cold when she buried him. Then they said that she should think of her dead husband and respect his memory for some time at least, but she only replied that a live dog was better than a dead king; and so the friends did not succeed in dissuading her from marrying the servant man. On the night of the wedding, the fairies allowed the real William Roan to return home, and when he got home he found the wedding feast in full swing. He wondered what had happened,

for he thought that it was only that morning he had set out for the market. His wife (now a bride) came and told the surprised ghost of William Roan to go away, and not be disturbing a poor widow's house. He replied that it was not a widow's house, since she got married that day. He was then put out, and he remained outside till morning. Then again he came in, and demanded his breakfast, which was given to him through fear. When they saw him eat they knew that he was no ghost, but a real man.

Roan then left the house, and went to Annacloghmullion Castle to pay the landlord his tax or rent. When the landlord saw Roan, whom he thought to be dead and buried in the graveyard near to the Castle, he, through fear, ran away. This was the first occasion a landlord was known to run away from a tenant coming to pay the rent.

Coming home again to his wife, William Roan wished to know from her where they buried the supposed Wm. Roan. He accordingly went to the grave and opened it and broke in the coffin. A large black dog leaped out of it, and ran towards Belleek. The neighbours pursued him to Carrickanany in the parish of Loughgilly, when he suddenly jumped into a hole in the rock there, and the place is known to this day as *Poll na m'wadee* (poll na wadee). William Roan said that was the hole he came out of when he got paid for his oats." William, unlike Enoch Arden, came home again.

CHARLES HURSON, C.C.