

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

FIELD MONUMENTS



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE	H	N	D	3	4	S	W	0	0	2	A
2 NGR	N	D	3	3	2	2	4	2	9	4	C E
3 QUAL											

4 DISTRICT CAITHNESS		5 PARISH WICK		6 SITE NAME ORMIELL	
7 AREA STATUS	8 SITE STATUS SCHEDULED *		9 REGIONAL STATUS		10 GENERIC TYPE BURIAL CAIRN, SHORT, HORNED, CHAMBERED (OCH).
11 CONCORDANCE osND 34 SW 2	12 FORM STANDING STRUCTURE		13 DIMENSIONS 23.0m x 18.0m		14 PERIOD/DATE NE
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		17 CONDITION INCOMPLETE		18 SHAPE SUB-RECTANGULAR	
20 LAND USE HEATH		21 GEOLOGY		19 THREAT AND DATE	
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION		27 ALTITUDE 70=80m OD	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF MODERATE HILLSLOPE		26 ASPECT NE	

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY) 1. ANDERSON J. & SHEARER R.I.: 1865: SCIENTIFIC.	
29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL) 1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1976: 1:10,000 MAP. 2. HENSHALL A.S.: 1963: CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND: EUP: VOL I: pp284-85 No42. 3. FEACHEM R.W.: 1963: PREHISTORIC SCOTLAND: :p44. 4. HENSHALL A.S.: 1972: CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND: EUP: VOL II: p204. 5. MERCER R.J.: 1985: FIELD SURVEY IN N. SCOTLAND: EUP: VOL 3: No 217. 6. HMB(S.D.D.): 1985: LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS. 7. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: pp176-78 No 556. (over).	
30 GROUND PLAN NO.	31 GROUND PHOTO NO.
32 SLIDES NO.	33 HR. AP. NO.
34 NMR. AP. NO.	35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE
36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION	
37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY	38 SAMPLES
39 PALYNOLOGY	40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.
41 SMALL FINDS	42 MUSEUM/LOCATION
43 OTHER	

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER	45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER
46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT	47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT
48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS	

49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE HAR: 8.10.1985.	50 RECORDER: DATE 45:29.10.1985	51 CHECK: DATE
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52 TEXT
 "(ND 3322 4294) Chambered Cairn." (1)
 "An Orkney-Cromarty short, horned cairn with a Cumster-type chamber, excavated by J.Anderson and R.I. Shearer in 1865. It is now greatly dilapidated and what remains of the interior structure is partly masked by modern building inside the chamber. (See plan on illus.card)." (2).
 "The finds, listed in detail by Miss Henshall, are either in the NMS (RMS QUEENS ST.) or lost, and include flint implements, a grey stone mace-head (EO 131) and pottery, classified by Feachem as Western Neolithic." (3).
 "As described by the previous authorities."
 (OSFI:RL:25.4.1967).
 "This short horned cairn seems to have originated as a round chambered cairn about 25' in diameter." (4).

(over).

556. *Chambered Cairn, Ormeigill, Hill of Ulster.*—To the N. of the Hill of Ulster, a little over $\frac{1}{2}$ m. N. by W. of Ulster Mains, and close beside the road leading from Borrowston thereto, is the horned chambered cairn of Ormeigill (fig. 48). It was excavated by Dr Joseph Anderson in 1865, and from his description the following particulars are derived:—

The cairn measured 66' in length, with an extreme width of nearly the same extent. From the E. end horns expanded till they were nearly 50' apart and 30' in length, and from the W. till they were 37' apart and also 30' in length; those at the E. being 8' broad at the tips, and those at the W. 9' broad. A double wall of construction, faced only to the outside, defined the whole exterior outline of the structure, and a circular wall 80' in circumference surrounded the chamber. The passage opened from the middle of the concavity between the horns at the E. end. It was 10' long and 2' wide, and seemed to have been lintelled over. The chamber was tripartite. The first compartment measured $3' \times 4' 10''$, the second $8' \times 6\frac{1}{2}'$, and the third about $5' \times 2' 3''$. A quantity of bones of human beings and animals lay mingled on the floor, among which were

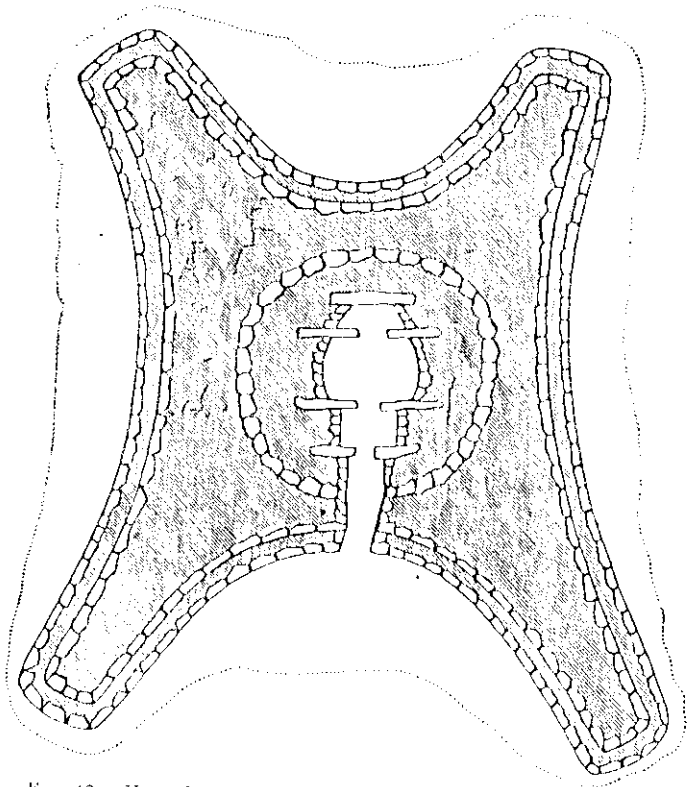


FIG. 48. Horned, round Cairn, Ormeigill (No. 556); Ground plan.

recognised about thirty fragments of skulls, believed to be those of different individuals. The bones were irregularly burned, some being merely charred. The relics found consisted of fragments of pottery—portions of round-bottomed vessels of thin, dark coloured, hard, smooth paste, without ornament,—a great quantity of chips and flakes of flint, a finely polished hammer of grey granite 4" in length, pierced with a hole for a handle, a flint arrow-head of triangular form, a flint knife, several flakes of flint serrated on one side, and a number of scrapers.

These relics are preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.

The cairn is now in an almost complete state of dilapidation. The partition stones between the chambers still remain erect, and on the S. side of the central compartment a small portion of the original walling is visible.

217. Short horned chambered cairn. 'Ormiegill'. Dimensions: 23m x 18m. (5)
 Grass- and heather-covered short horned cairn with stones over the interior. Central chamber contains three pairs of divisional slabs dividing into compartments. A large slab at the NW end set at an angle is probably a back-slab. Other large stones are visible. There is a modern disturbance beyond the back-slab in the NW. The chamber is lined with facing-stones between the divisional uprights in the two inner compartments, and on the SW face of the outer compartment.
 - Orientation: NW-SE. The entrance through the passage on the SW is indistinct. Elevation: 70m OD.
 ND 332429.

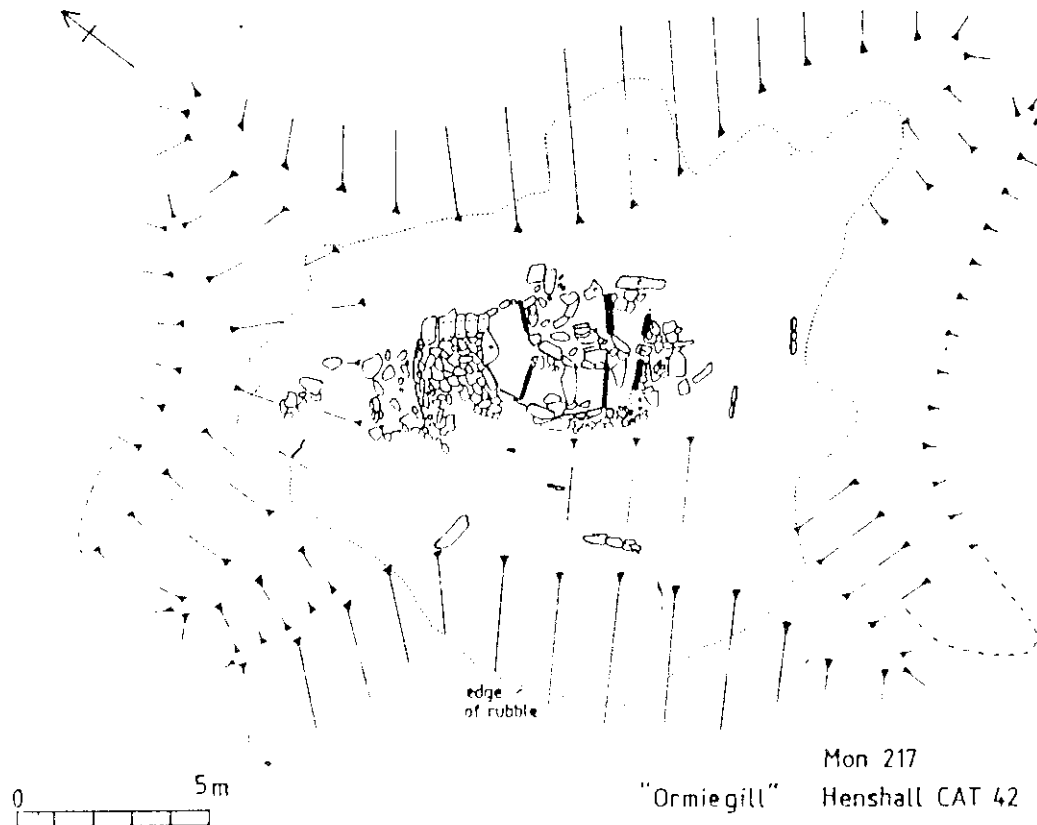
O.S. Card ND 34 SW 2.

Anderson, J. (1868) 'On the Chambered Cairns of Caithness, with results of recent explorations', PSAS, VI (1864-66) 447-9.

Anderson, J. (1870) 'On the Horned Cairns of Caithness:...', PSAS, VII (1866-68), 498-500. Anderson, J. (1886) Scotland in Pagan Times

Bronze and Stone Ages, 244-8. Batey, C. (1981) Caithness Coastal Survey, No. 197. Feachem, R.W. (1963) Guide to Prehistoric Scotland, 44. Henshall, A.S. (1963) The Chambered Tombs of Scotland, vol. 1, 284-5, No. 42. Henshall, A.S. (1972) The Chambered Tombs of Scotland, vol. 2, 204. RCAHMS (1911) Caithness, 176-8, No. 556.

(Figs. 13, 91)



HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



ARTEFACTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE	H	N	D	3	4	S	W	0	0	2	B
2 NGR	N	D	3	3	2	2	4	2	9	4	C
3 QUAL											

4 DISTRICT CAITHNESS	5 PARISH WICK	6 SITE NAME ORMIEGILL	7 GENERIC TYPE FLINT OBJECTS (SCRAPERS + ARROWHEADS)+MACEHEAD, STONE.
8 CONCORDANCE OSND 34 SW 2	9 MUSEUM/LOCATION OF FIND(S) RMS (QUEENS ST.)	10 ACCESSION NO. EO 124-131	11 PERIOD/DATE NE
13 FIND CIRCUMSTANCES EXCAVATED IN NE BURIAL CAIRN.	14 CONDITION	15 EXCAVATOR AND DATE	12 DATING METHOD TYP
17 LAND USE HEATH	18 GEOLOGY	23 ASPECT NE	24 ALTITUDE 70=80m OD
19 SOILS	20 VEGETATION	22 RELIEF MODERATE HILLSLOPE	21 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE

25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION/DIMENSIONS

26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR:DATE:TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. HENSHALL A.S.:1963:CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND:EUP:VOL1:pp284-85 No 42.
2. HENSHALL A.S.:1972:CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND:EUP:VOL2:p204.
3. ANDERSON J.:1886:SCOTLAND IN PAGAN TIMES:VOL I:BRONZE & STONE AGES:pp 244-48.
4. CLARKE D.V.GOWIE, T.G.&FOXON A.:1985:SYMBOLS OF POWER:HMSO:p62,236.
5. (ROE F.E.S. IN)COLES J.M.& SIMPSON J.M.(EDS):1968:STUDIES IN ANCIENT EUROPE:LUP:p154, 150.(FIG.32.24).

27 GROUND PLAN NO.	28 GROUND PHOTO NO.
29 SLIDES NO.	30 HR. AP. NO.
31 NMR. AP. NO.	32 OTHER AP. NO. : SOURCE
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44 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE	45 RECORDER: DATE HAR: 8.10.1985.
	46 CHECK: DATE GS: 29.10.1985

47 TEXT
"See over for text."

1. 'Fragments of pottery of various make, but all without ornamentation, were extremely numerous',³ 'many of them indicating that they had been portions of round-bottomed vessels, made of a thin dark-coloured paste, hard and smooth',² from the 'ash layer' in the chamber.

2. Macehead of mottled coarse-grain grey rock, straight perforation (EO 131).

3. Triangular arrowhead of dark brown flint, the edges worked on both faces (EO 124).

4. Triangular arrowhead of dark brown flint, one edge and concave base trimmed on both faces (EO 128).

5. Lopsided arrowhead, dark brown flint, the long edges trimmed on both faces (EO 125).

6. Leaf-shaped arrowhead, reddish-brown flint (EO 126), (entered by Anderson in the catalogue of the N.M.A. with the Ormiegill finds, but published as from Garrywhin).

7. End of a rectangular knife with one ground edge, light brown flint (EO 127).

8. Scraper of brown flint (EO 129).

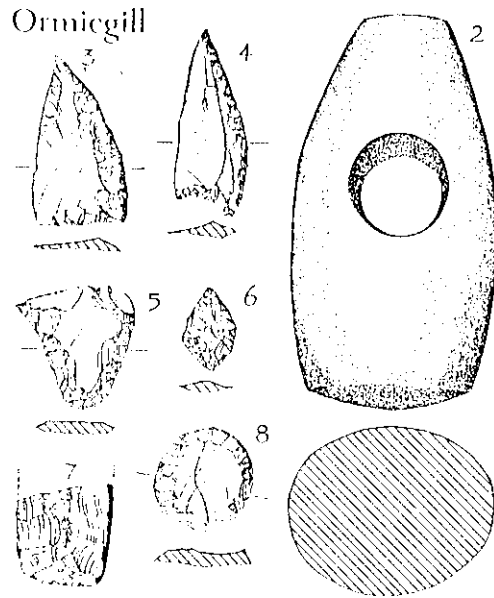
9. Utilised flake of grey-buff flint (EO 130).

10. Many flint chips, a few of them burnt.

All the finds were in the 'ash layer'; 1 throughout it; 2, 7 in central compartment; 3-5 in central and outer compartments. 1, 9 and 10 not illustrated.

Skeletal. Lost. A quantity of fragmentary unburnt bones on the 'ash layer'; a great quantity of burnt and partially burnt bones in the 'ash layer' including about thirty pieces of skull thought to be from different individuals (fragments from two children in the central compartment). 'Some human phalanges, quite calcined, were turned up along with unburnt bones of animals.' A few traces of human bones about halfway between the tip of the E horn and the entrance, close to the wall-face.¹

Animal remains. Lost. A quantity of broken and split unburnt bones on the 'ash layer' of the chamber; burnt and unburnt bones in the 'ash layer'. Animals represented: horse, ox, deer, dog, swine and a small fowl; a layer of a great number of bones of a very small animal in one part of the floor.



SCOTLAND IN PAGAN TIMES.

CHAMBERED CAIRNS OF CAITHNESS.

In the central compartment of the chamber, imbedded among the compacted ashes of the floor, there were found a finely polished hammer of grey granite (Fig. 243), 4 inches in length, pierced with a hole for the handle; the point end of a finely finished flint knife with a ground edge (Fig. 244); an arrow-head of flint, triangular in form, but lop-sided, and hollowed at the base (Fig. 245); an oval and pointed knife of flint formed from a flake trimmed to an edge all round (Fig. 246); several flakes, serrated on one side, which seemed to have been used as saws, and a number of well-made scrapers of flint of the usual form. In the first compartment of the chamber another arrow-head of the same triangular form was found.

"Associations: Anderson's various accounts are contradictory regarding the location of the finds and it is consequently impossible to be certain of associations.

7.1 Flint arrowhead, leaf-shaped quite thick L 21mm. EO126. May come from the cairn at Garrywhin and not from Ormiegill.

7.2 Flint arrowhead triangular L42mm EO 124. May be a transverse arrowhead or even a small knife.

7.3 Flint arrowhead transverse L32mm EO 125.

7.4 Flint arrowhead triangular with hollow base. L26mm EO 128. May be a barb for a composite projectile point.

7.5 Flint scraper, circular, steep retouch. L27mm EO129.

7.6 Stone macehead. Polished surfaces. The head and butt have slightly curving facets. The sides are rounded. L103mm Roe's Ovoid C type. EO 131. " (4).

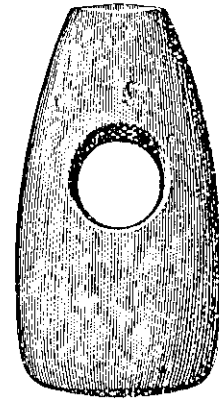
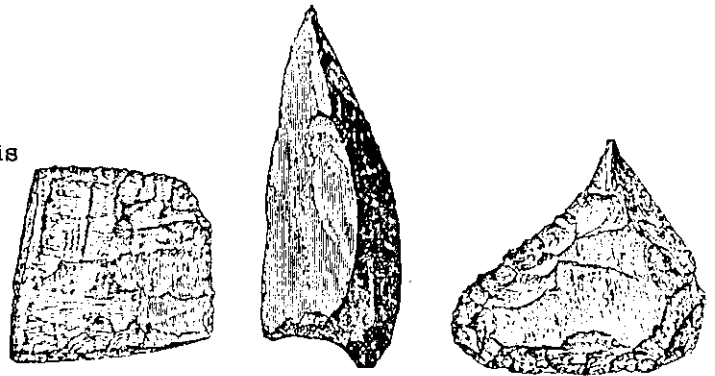


FIG. G.--Polished Hammer of Grey Granite (4 inches in length) from the Ormiegill Cairn (No. 556).



Figs. 244, 245, 246.—Portion of Flint Knife, Arrow-head, and oval Knife of Flint, from Chambered Cairn, Ormiegill (actual size).

42. ORMIEGILL, 1
(O.-C., Camster-type, short,
horned)
In the parish of
WICK
Location near the SE coast
5 m. SSW of
WICK
Map reference
ND/332429
Sheet XXIX NE; ND 34 SW
Inventory number 556
References
M. A. S. L. II (1865-66)
241-45¹; ANDERSON, J.
(1886) 244-48²;
R. C. A. M. *Inv.* 176-78;
P. S. A. S. VI (1864-66) 417-49;
ibid. VII (1866-68) 487;
468-500³
Plan after ANDERSON²,³
(fig. 47)
Excavation ANDERSON and
SHEARER 1865¹,²
Visited 22.6.52

Description. The cairn is situated at 200 ft. OD on a hillock in rough grazing at the foot of the Hill of Ulbster, only $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the shore. It is now greatly dilapidated, and what remains of the interior structure is partly masked by modern building inside the chamber.

The cairn measured 66 ft. over all from front to back, and nearly the same in width. The horns at the front were 50 ft. 6 in. apart and at the back 37 ft. apart. They varied slightly in size; their ends were convex, those at the front were 8 ft. wide and those at the back 9 ft. wide. The outer edge of the cairn was defined by two wall-faces 2 ft. 6 in. apart, standing at the time of excavation to a height of 2 ft., and inclining inwards. A wall-face also surrounded the chamber but it was not exactly circular being slightly flattened along the sides. It was built of heavier squarer blocks, and also battered, standing to a height of 4 ft. All three wall-faces can still be traced in places.

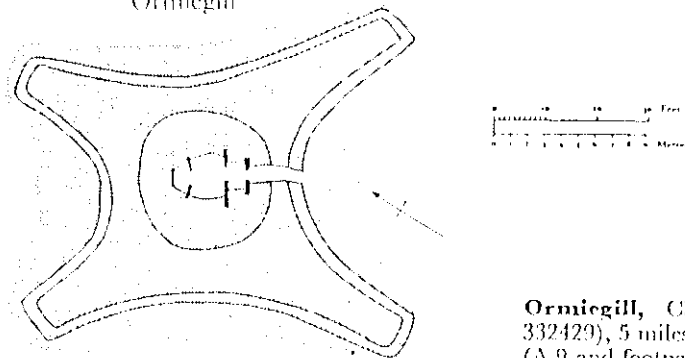
The entrance was from between the horns on the SSE. The passage was 10 ft. long and 2 ft. wide, and had presumably been lintelled. At the inner end were two transversely set portal stones, 1 ft. 1 in. apart and 3 ft. 4 in. high. The chamber is divided into three compartments by two more pairs of transverse stones. The outer compartment is 2 ft. 8 in. to 3 ft. long and 4 ft. 10 in. wide; the dry-built walls (no longer to be seen) began to converge at about 3 ft. 6 in. above the floor. The stones separating it from the central compartment are set 2 ft. apart and are 4 ft. 6 in. and 4 ft. 8 in. high. The walls of the central compartment are slightly curved in plan; on the W side they still stand 4 ft. high and are well built of thin slabs. The compartment measured 8 ft. 10 in. wide at the outer end narrowing to 7 ft. 5 in., and the length was 6 ft. 6 in. to 6 ft. 9 in. The inner divisional stones are 1 ft. 6 in. and 1 ft. 8 in. high and 2 ft. 2 in. apart, set slightly askew with their inner edges towards the entrance. They are slighter than the other upright stones, only $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick. The inner compartment was 5 ft. 2 in. wide by 2 ft. 2 in. long. The back is formed of a slab 2 ft. 6 in. wide and at least 3 ft. high, leaning outwards. The roofing of the passage and chamber had already collapsed or been removed before the site was excavated.

There was found a large quantity of unburnt bones, human and animal, lying on the floor of the chamber—the human bones fragmentary, and the animal bones broken and split. The floor consisted of a layer of ashes, scarcely intermixed with clay in many parts, but compacted, and bearing that trodden appearance so characteristic of all the floors of these cairns. This layer of ashes was in some parts fully a foot thick. A pavement of slabs had at one period been laid in the chamber, and subsequently disturbed, as in some places there were portions of it wanting. The bed of ashes and bones, of which the compacted floor was composed, extended both over and under this pavement; and the natural clay beneath was pitted in some places, and the hollows filled with ashes. The quantity of burnt bones imbedded in this compacted ash-bed was very great.³ The pavement was most entire around the sides of the chamber; while in the centre the occurrence of bones, etc., beneath the slabs was more frequent.¹

Finds

Artifacts. In N.M.A. except 1 and 10, which are lost (*ill.* p. 254).

Ormiegill



Ormiegill, Chambered Cairn, (ND 332429), 5 miles SSW. of Wick, Sheet 16 (A.9 and footpath). *Caitliness.*

The short horned cairn on the Hill of Ulbster has been famous since Joseph Anderson described it 100 years ago. It now appears as a dilapidated pile of stones among which slabs forming parts of the tripartite Camster chamber can be distinguished. It was found to measure 75 ft. by 70 ft. between the tips of the four horns. The façade out of which the passage opens is in the S. It is a little larger than that formed between the two horns at the N. end of the cairn. In this as in other such monuments the outline of the cairn was originally secured by duplicating the wall faces, while an innermost face held the stones packed round the slabs forming the chamber and the passage. The excavators found charred bones, western neolithic pottery, objects of flint and a mace-head comparable to one from Favarsoc Tuack cairn, on the way, Clakney.

Orniegill, near Ullister. It presents the same characteristics of external form and internal structure, but is as remarkable for its shortness, in proportion to its width, as the previous examples were for their length. Its extreme length is only 66 feet, and its extreme width nearly the same. The horns expand in front till they are 50 feet apart, those at the other end being 37 feet apart. The horns in front are 8 feet broad at the tips, which are convex, and those behind are 9 feet broad. A double wall of construction, faced only to the outside, defines the whole exterior outline of the structure; and a circular wall, 80 feet in circumference, surrounds the chamber. The passage opens from the middle of the concavity between the horns in the wider end of the cairn. It is 10 feet long, and 2 feet wide, and seems to have been lintelled over. The chamber is tripartite on the ground-plan. The first compartment measures on the floor only 3 feet by 4 feet 10 inches, and there are signs of convergence of the side walls at a height of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the floor. The second compartment measures about 8 feet by $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the third about 5 feet by 2 feet 3 inches on the floor, but the outward inclination of the great slab, forming the back wall of the chamber, made the cross measurement greater when taken higher up. On the floor of the chamber a quantity of unburnt bones of human beings and animals lay, mingled with the débris of the upper part of the cairn, with which the chamber was filled. The floor itself consisted of a layer of ashes fully a foot thick. A pavement of slabs had been laid in some parts of the chamber, and this layer of ashes extended both over and under the pavement. The natural subsoil beneath was in some places deeply pitted, the pits being filled with the same compacted layer of ashes and bones. The quantity of burnt bones in the ash-bed was very great. We recognised about thirty fragments of skulls, which, from their varying size and thickness, we judged to have been those of different individuals. The bones were very irregularly burned, some being merely

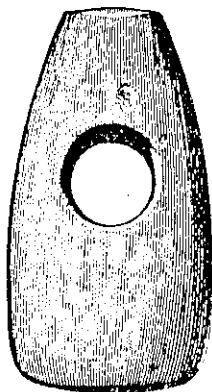


Fig. 213. — Polished Hammer of Grey Granite from Chambered Cairn, Orniegill (4 inches in length).

charred in part of their length, and others completely calcined. Besides the human bones, there were a very large number of bones of animals, among which were those of the horse, the ox, the deer, the dog, the swine, and some leg and wing bones of fowls. Fragments of pottery, many of them indicating that they had been portions of round-bottomed vessels, made of a thin dark-coloured paste, hard

and smooth, and without ornament, and a great quantity of chips and flakes of flint, were intermixed with the ash-bed throughout.

8. * Known as 'Mains of Ulbster, 900m NNW of. (6).

29. 8. ANDERSON J.:1868:PROC SOC ANT SCOT.:VOL 6:pp447-49.

9. ANDERSON J.:1870: " " " :VOL 7:pp 498-500.

10. ANDERSON J.:1886:SCOTLAND IN PAGAN TIMES:VOLI:BRONZE & STONE AGES:pp244-48.

11. BATEY C.:1981:CAITHNESS COASTAL SURVEY:DUP:No 197.

52. "Diam. 20-12m, Front horns 15.4m apart, back horns 1/3m apart. in ruinous condition with some modern rebuilding inside the central chamber." (II).

"See cont. cards for rest of text."