

Notes and News

LEAC CON MIC RUIS, co. SLIGO

This notable megalithic monument is in the Deer Park, four miles to the east of the town of Sligo, on the summit of an isolated limestone ridge and between 400 and 500 feet above sea level.

Six miles away to the southwest is the wonderful Carrowmore assemblage of dolmens enclosed by circles, consisting even now of 85 such monuments in an oval area of less than a mile and a quarter by half a mile, while many more are known to have disappeared. This group and indeed the whole district is dominated by the great cairn on the summit of Knocknarea, 600 feet in circumference and over 30 feet high.

Leac Con Mic Ruis lies approximately east and west and consists of an oval central area contained by upright stones averaging 4 feet in height and approached by a passage way on the south. At the west end is a 'trilithon' portal leading to an antechamber and chamber; at the opposite end is a pair of chambers approached in the same way through separate portals and antechambers. Surrounding the monument is a mound, now remaining as a fairly level platform extending about 10 feet beyond the main uprights, and then sloping down to the original ground level.

Excavation has produced unburnt human and animal bones and shells and it may safely be assumed that the monument is sepulchral.

A plan of a monument at Ballyglass, co. Mayo, is published by W. C. Borlase in his *Dolmens of Ireland* resembling, but apparently smaller than, Leac Con Mic Ruis. Here is another oval, apparently approached by a passage and having a chamber and antechamber at either end, and a third opposite the passage.

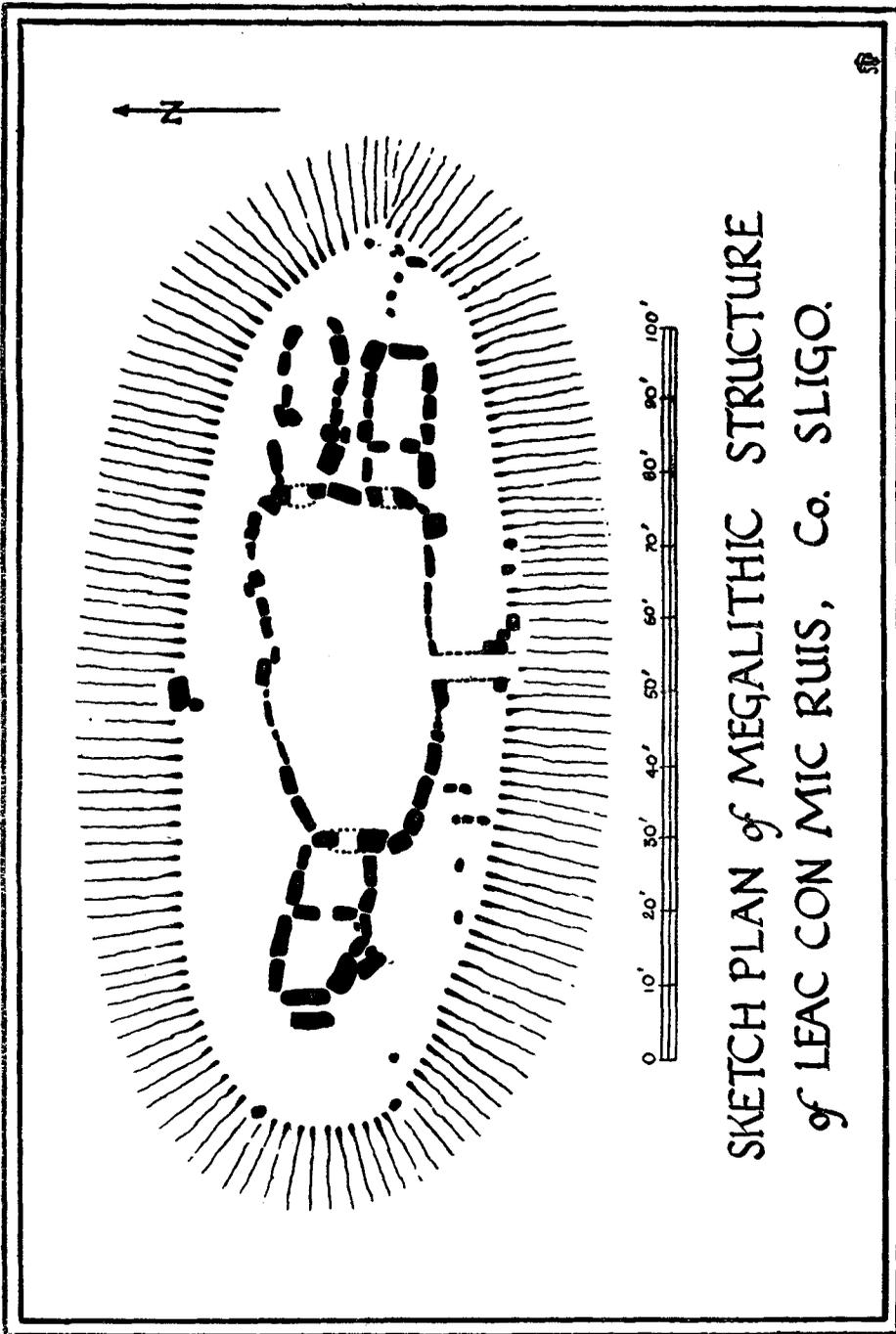
Leac Con Mic Ruis has been the subject of much speculation. A plan, description and references are given by Borlase, and the excuse for publishing a fresh plan is that the encircling mound has not previously been satisfactorily recorded. It has been made by Mr Stuart Piggott from the one already published, supplemented from notes by the writer. The dotted lines suggest the former outlines of the entrance

PLATE I



LEAC CON MIC RUIS, FROM THE SOUTH
Ph. W. J. Hemp

facing p. 99

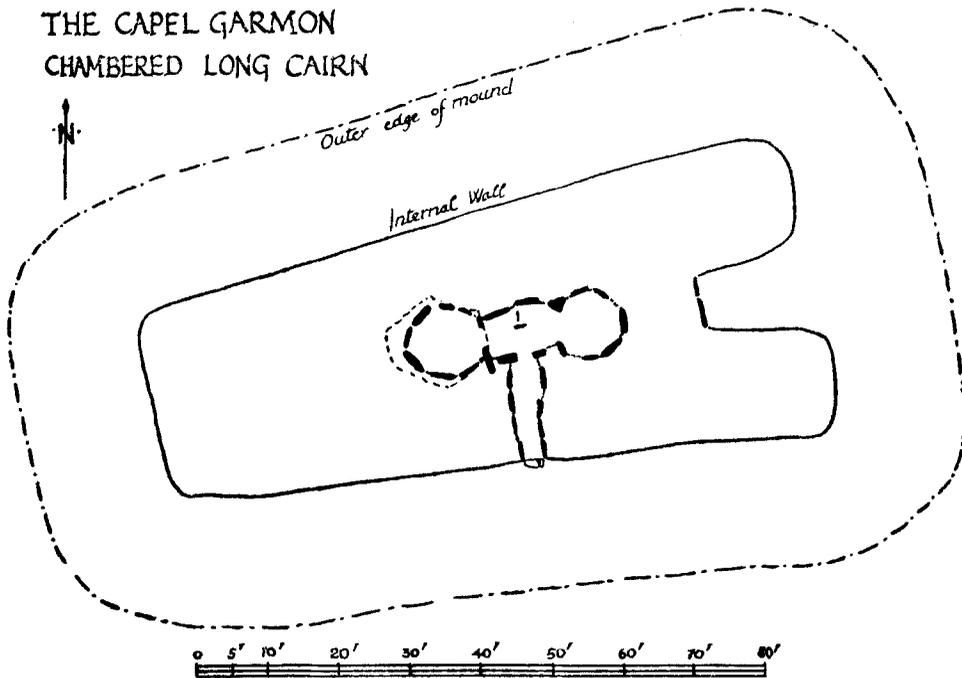


SKETCH PLAN of MEGALITHIC STRUCTURE
of LEAC CON MIC RUIS, Co. SLIGO.

ANTIQUITY

passage and the few upright stones which still stand along the crest of the mound probably represent an encircling wall. The existence of the passage is almost a certainty; of the wall it can only be said that while it is extremely probable that it did exist, the question can only be settled by excavation.

Other structural features present greater difficulties. To what extent was the monument covered by its mound? The internal area is very large, and, although the chambers at either end and the



entrance could easily have been spanned by corbelling or roofed by slabs—one cover stone still remains—the great central space 50 feet long could scarcely have been so treated.

The monument stands on the bare moorland and although there are a few stone walls and old banks in its neighbourhood, there is nothing to suggest the removal of the vast cairn which would normally have covered such a megalithic monument. The surrounding mound is evenly disposed and in no way resembles a spoil heap. It seems likely then that the central area was merely filled with stones or, less

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probably, was left open, and the chambers and passage roofed and covered by the encircling mound. The same problem is presented by the monument on Mull Hill in the Isle of Man, where there is a curious arrangement of pairs of cists ranged in a circle round a central area, each pair having a passage. Here also the cists were presumably hidden in an encircling mound which still exists in part.

Were not speculation such a dangerous luxury in dealing with these complicated problems of megalithic plans it would be tempting to suggest that the Ballyglass monument might represent a transition from the Deer Park type to that of Mull Hill. Despite the danger, however, one purpose of these notes is to put forth the suggestion that Leac Con Mic Ruis represents a 'degenerate' long barrow, a step farther removed from the primitive form than the Denbighshire cairn at Capel Garmon. The same elements occur in both monuments; chambers opening from a central area which is approached by a passage and the whole surrounded by a ceremonial wall, which at Capel Garmon was buried in the cairn which completely covered the monument. There however the wall is interrupted by a false entrance, which is not now represented in the Irish monument—unless it be buried in the mound.

Another abnormal long barrow was examined by Professor Macalister and others on Carrowkeel mountain, also in Sligo. There the design bore little resemblance to that of Leac Con Mic Ruis, but its existence proves that the knowledge of the long barrow type of grave was to be found among the inhabitants of Sligo in the second millennium B.C.

W. J. HEMP.

THE GOODWIN SANDS

About four miles southeast of Ramsgate in the Isle of Thanet, the Straits of Dover are occupied by an area of shifting sand. At low water these sands are exposed to a height of between four and seven feet. They are then, at any rate in places, firm and hard, and it is possible to land and walk about on them. Since 1590, and probably before then, they have been called the Goodwin Sands, and two legends have been related of them.

The first legend is recorded by John Twine,¹ whose Latin may

¹ Joannis Twini Bolingdunensis, *Angli, de rebus Albionis, Britannicis atque Anglicis, commentariorum libri duo* . . . Londini, 1590, page 27. [Bodleian shelf-mark, 8vo. T. 52, Art].