SURVEY
OF THE
MEGALITHIC TOMBS
OF IRELAND

Ruaidhrí de Valera
and
Seán Ó Nualláin

VOLUME III

COUNTIES

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LONGFORD - WESTMEATH - LAOIGHIS
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The townlands of Burren and Legalough contain six megalithic tombs situated on the limestone uplands which occupy the greater part of the townlands. These uplands are roughly two-thirds of a mile square, deeply indented by a valley at the north. The general level of the land is 800 ft, but two hills rise above this to 882 ft. and 870 ft. The higher hill occupies the ridge at the north-west of the valley while the other is situated at the butt of the ridge on the opposite side. A third lower hill stands at the south-western side of a narrow chasm in the north-eastern ridge known as the "Giant's Leap." Cliff-faces occur along the eastern side of the uplands, towards Fermanagh, while to the south the ground falls sharply at first and then more gradually to the basin of Garvagh Lough (515 ft.) about ¾ mile distant. To the west, where the fall is more gentle, is a hollow containing the small rush-grown lake of Tullygobban. The uplands are a type of karstland very similar to the fissured limestone cragland of north County Clare. The two higher hills and parts of the lower ground are covered in a thin blanket of peat. Though bare patches of crag do exist, the rest of the area bears a light cover of soil which provides good pasture. The region is now the site of a huge plantation of coniferous trees.

5. Burren. O.S. 4: 2: i (27½ cm., 55½ cm.). "Giant's Grave." O.D. 800-900. H 080 351. Fig. 54. Plate 35.

Wedge-tomb

This fine monument is prominently situated on top of a hill within a few yards, and to the southwest, of the chasm known as the "Giant's Leap." The site commands an extensive view to the north-west across Lough Macnean Upper to Lough Melvin and beyond. To the south the Cuiçagh mountains and the mountains east of Lough Allen form the skyline.

The monument is well preserved. It consists of a gallery, about 7:50 m. long, divided by a high septal stone into a long portico and a main chamber. The gallery is covered by five roofstones, two above the portico and three covering the main chamber. The floor of the gallery is littered with small stones, probably cairn debris. An outer-wall surrounds the tomb but many of the orthostats of this have fallen.

The entrance to the gallery consists of two well-matched stones set transversely to the long axis of the gallery. The stone at the north is 1·10 m. high while the other, which is tilted somewhat towards the north-west, is 0·90 m. high. The gap at the base is 0·60 m. These entry stones belong to a flat façade which probably continued to articulate with the ends of the outer-wall.

The portico is 2·50 m. long and about 1·10 m. wide. The southern side is formed of two stones, 1·30 m. and 0·95 m. high, respectively. One stone is in position on the opposite side of the portico. It is 1·10 m. high. In the gap between this stone and the entrance is a small loose stone, 0·85 m. high, which does not seem to be an original feature. A stone, 0·90 m. high, standing in a diagonal position within the portico, is of uncertain function and may not be in situ.

The septal stone, which is 1·75 m. long, 0·25 m. thick and 1·10 m. high, is inset in the gallery walls. Though it blocks access to the main chamber its base is not set in the ground. Its southern end rests on the end of a flat slab measuring 1·30 m. by 0·55 m. and 0·30 m. thick. The northern end is keyed between two short stones in the gallery wall. These are 0·80 m. and 0·95 m. high, respectively. The base of the septal, at this end, rests on a partly concealed block (not on plan) measuring 0·50 m. in maximum dimension and 0·15 m. thick. A gap in the middle of the base of the septal stone is 0·55 m. long and 0·15 m. high. Its edges are flaked but it is not clear whether this is a contrived feature or a fortuitous break along the edge of the stone.

The more westerly roofstone above the portico seems to have slipped somewhat from its original position, in a north-westerly direction. It now rests on both entrance stones, on the more westerly stone of the south side and on the sidestone at the north. It measures 1·70 m. by 1 m. and 0·40 m. thick. The second roofstone here rests on the portico sides and on the septal stone. Its dimensions are: 2 m. by 1·35 m. and 0·30 m. thick.
The main chamber is 4·50 m. long. It narrows from 1·30 m. wide near the septal stone to 1·00 m. wide at the east. The walls are built of irregularly-placed boulders which decrease in size proceeding eastwards from the septal stone. The southern side is of three stones and the heights of these, from west to east, respectively, are: 95 m., 85 m. and 80 m. Set outside the junction of the more westerly stone and the stone next to it is a block 75 m. high. The northern side of the gallery is of five stones, one of which is a key-stone, at the septal described above. The heights of the others, from west to east, respectively, are: 95 m., 95 m., 85 m. and 65 m. The stone closing the eastern end of the gallery is set outside the ends of the walls. It is 80 m. high. Beyond its northern end, and continuing the line of the gallery wall to the east, is a well-set stone, 55 m. high. Its function is not certain. It could perhaps be the sidestone of a rear chamber but may be merely a buttress between the gallery and the back of the outer-wall. (The stones east of the backstone at Legalough (Śv. 8) seem to be analogous.) Resting against the eastern end of this is a slab, 1·60 m. in maximum dimension, which may be a displaced outer-wall stone.

The more westerly roofstone covering the main chamber measures 2 m. by 1·45 m. and 2·25 m. thick. It rests directly on the first sidestone at the south and at the north on a pad-stone, 20 m. in maximum dimension, lying on top of the more westerly sidestone. Its western edge bears against the septal stone. The roofstone next to this is 1·70 m. by 2·00 m. and 2·20 m. thick. It rests directly on the orthostats at either side. The third roofstone rests, at the south, on a pad-stone, 30 m. in maximum dimension lying above the more easterly sidestone and at the north on two little pad-stones, 0·6 m. thick, on top of the more easterly sidestone.

The outer-walling beyond the northern side of the gallery is represented by a line of five set stones, the more westerly being broken into two pieces. Two prostrate stones lying along the line probably also belonged. All the set stones lean outwards to some degree and indeed two are almost prone. They vary from 85 m. to 1 m. in length and are from 10 m. to 30 m. thick. Their heights, when erect, would be between 50 m. and 1 m. A third prostrate stone, 90 m. by 70 m. by 40 m., which lies outside the set stone at the western end of the row, may perhaps be a displaced outer-wall stone.

The outer-wall at the south is represented by two set stones both of which lean very heavily outwards, and a number of prostrate stones. The more westerly orthostat would be 1·10 m. high, when erect, and the other about 1·30 m. Between these is a prostrate slab now broken into two pieces. When erect it would have been about 70 m. high. Immediately beyond the more westerly orthostat just described is a fallen stone 1·85 m. in maximum dimension, which may also be an outer-wall stone. At the southern end of this is another prostrate stone, 55 m. in maximum dimension. Its original function is doubtful. A prostrate stone, 85 m. in maximum dimension, lies between the orthostat and the gallery wall. Beyond the leaning orthostat at the east is another fallen outer-wall stone, 1·20 m. in maximum dimension. Almost 2 m. east of this, and about 1 m. south-east from the back of the gallery, is a fallen slab which may have formed part of the eastern end of the outer-wall. This stone is 1·60 m. in maximum dimension.

Borlase: *The Dolmens of Ireland*, 203-206, Tullyhaw, No. 3 (Pl., Drgs.).
Milligan: *J.R.S.A.I.*, XXI (1890-91), 580.
Lowry-Corry and Richardson: *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXVII (1937), 170-171, No. XV (Pl., Phs.).
*J.R.S.A.I.*, XXV (1893), 337 (Photographic Collection) ("Blackburne Cromlec").
Clifford and Daniel: *F.P.S.*, VI (1940), 154 ff.
1. Burren (Cv. 5), Entrance to gallery, from West.

2. Burren (Cv. 5), from South.