

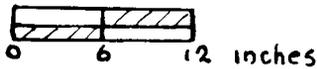
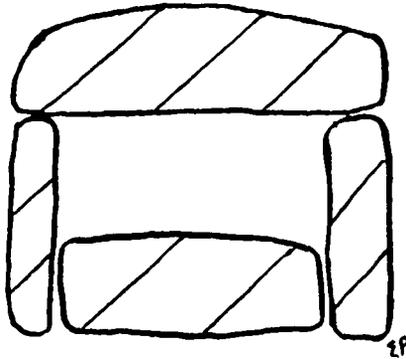
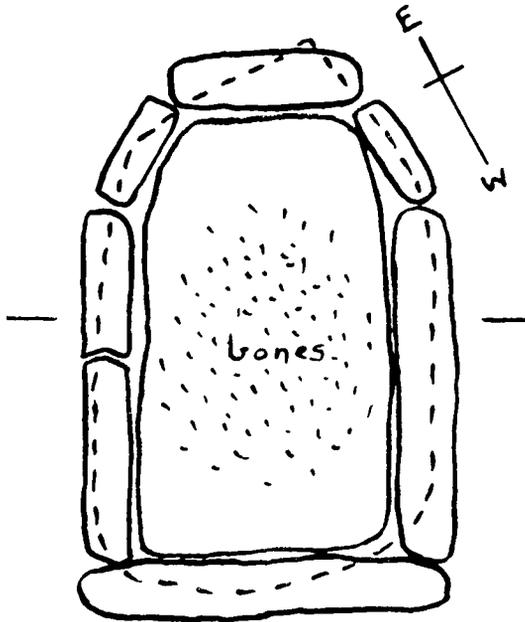
# Prehistoric Burial Site at Slieverue Co. Kilkenny

By ELLEN PRENDERGAST

**I**N June, 1959, a newly-acquired Gaelic Athletic Association pitch near the National School in the village of Slieverue was being levelled by bulldozer when a small stone grave was discovered. (The location of the site is in the townland of Kilmurry on the Ordnance Survey 6" Sheet 43, 7.8 cm. West and 12.2 cm. East). The covering slab had been wrenched off, but the structure underneath was only slightly disturbed and with the aid of the observations of the workers on the site it is possible to be reasonably certain that the reconstruction illustrated here is essentially accurate. It is based on measured sketches made immediately after the discovery by Mr. John Ryan, N.T., Listerlin, whose archæological experience was most valuable here, and on similar but independent measurements and photographs made by Mr. Daniel Dowling of Glenmore, at the time; these were confirmed by my own observations when, later, I visited the site on behalf of the National Museum of Ireland. All concerned, including the G.A.A. workers and Mr. William Walsh of Slieverue, are to be praised for their care of the damaged grave.

A single slab had formed a cover on the stone-lined cavity and its upper surface was about 8 inches below ground level. Six upright slabs formed a rectangular compartment whose angles at the East end were reduced by two stones being set obliquely; a well-shaped slab fitted neatly on the floor. The maximum internal measurements of the compartment were about 30 x 15 inches and 16" deep; the capstone was 3 x 2 feet x 7". All the stones were of local conglomerate. One of the long sidestones (on the North) had split at the centre while in position in ancient times. When opened, there was a thin layer (about one inch deep) of earth covering the bottom slab and there was a small pile of cremated bones resting on it, centrally. An examination of the bones (for which we are indebted to

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Professor E. Keenan, University College, Dublin), proved them to be the thoroughly burned remains of one individual though it was not possible to establish the age or sex.

Among the bones was found a curious, small, tracked stone, kindly identified by Dr. J. Jackson of the National Museum as a Slickensides. It is a flat, rectangular piece of quartz (3.50 x 3.30 cm. and 9 mm. thick) with parallel grooving on both faces. The grooving is the result of great rock movements and, though a natural formation, this stone may have had some symbolic significance and was, perhaps, a personal possession—otherwise it would scarcely have been deposited, as it was, with the remains of the dead.

This structure at Kilmurry is an example of a cist grave, the usual form of individual burial predominant in the Bronze Age in Ireland, a practice which prevailed for a thousand years or more after the earlier centuries of the second millennium B.C. The native population at the time frequently deposited their distinctive clay vessels, known as Foodvessels, in such small cists, together with the dead; even when the Foodvessel is absent the type of grave is sufficient to indicate that its constructors were of the Foodvessel society.