



Souterrain at Garrynoone, Co. Waterford

This monument (1) was revealed about the year 1920 when the top stones of the beehive chamber were displaced during ploughing. According to information supplied by those who saw and entered it at the time (2), the chamber was about six feet deep, and circular in shape, with two passages leading from it in opposite directions. The stones which formed the upper part of the chamber were removed at that time for the purpose of constructing drains in the nearby farmyard, and the field was then levelled by filling the souterrain with soil and small stones.

In 1967 the position of the souterrain was indicated by a slight depression in the field, and this was pointed out to the writers by the present owner of the farm, Mr Patrick O'Connell, who agreed to allow the fill to be removed in order to survey the remains of the chamber and passages. This was done with local help (3), during July 1967, and the lower portion of the chamber was exposed.

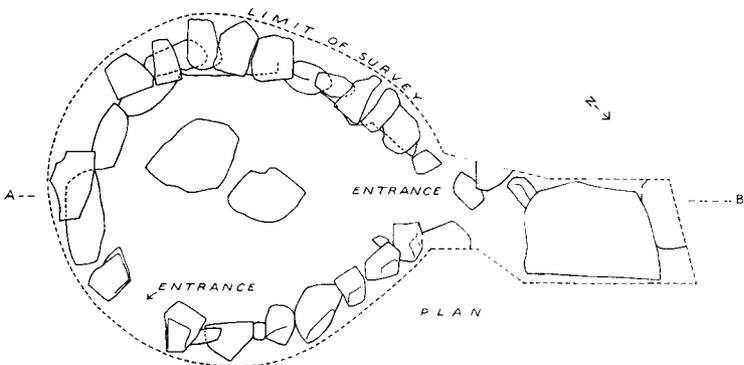
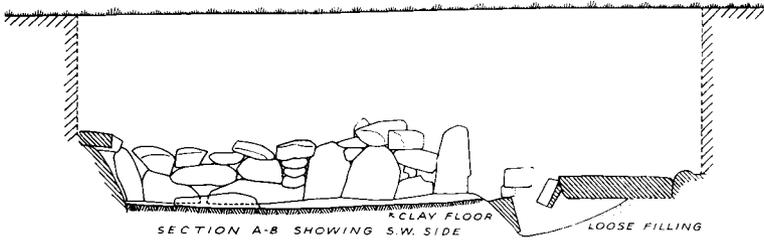
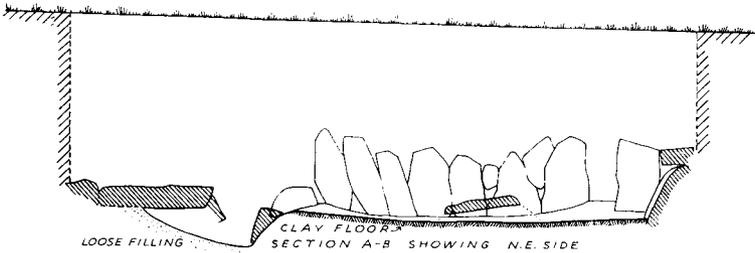
The floor of the chamber was 5' 6" below ground level; it was of hard clay which contained some organic matter, including traces of charcoal. The chamber was roughly oval in shape 8' x 7', the long axis lying N.W. — S.E. Portions of the walls remained to a height of just over two feet. These were constructed by setting the stones of the first course on end, and corbelling from there upwards. The average height of this first course was about two feet. On the N.E. side all the corbelling had been removed, but on the S.W. side several courses of corbels still remained in position.

Two large flag-stones were found on the floor. One was slightly raised on a bed of soil; the other lay directly upon the old floor level, and may have been an original feature of the chamber, where it could have served as a seat or table.

Of the two passages which were reported to have been seen in 1920, only two pairs of jamb-stones remained, one pair at the N.W. end, and one pair at the east side. In neither case was there a lintel in situ. In the case of the east portal

the soil between and beyond the jamb stones was very compact, and no trace could be found of either stone walls or lintels.

The fill in the N.W. portal was of loose soil and stones, which continued beyond the portal, inclining downwards to below the level of the chamber floor. At a distance of 2' 6", from the portal there was a large slab, 3' 6" long, 2' 6" wide, and 7" thick. This was in a horizontal position, with its



SOUTERRAIN AT GARRAVOONE CO. WATERFORD

lower face at approximately the same level as the chamber floor. The loose fill continued below this slab. It is doubtful if this was the original position of the slab, as it was not resting on proper supporting walls, on either side, but appears to have been jammed between a small erratically positioned stone in front, and a large one behind.

It would appear then, that in 1920 both passages were systematically stripped of their lintels and possibly also of side wall slabs. The loose soil and stones below the eve of the large slab in the N.W. passage would seem to imply that there was a passage or chamber at a lower level than the one surveyed, but this problem could not be solved without excavation. When the roof was in position, the maximum height in the middle of the chamber could not have been much more than four feet.

There were no indications above ground of any structures or enclosures, and nothing to suggest the presence of other chambers or passages. All the structural stones of the chamber were sandstone, which is typical of this area.

After survey the souterrain was re-filled. None of the stones were displaced with the exception of the two loose slabs on the floor.

(1) Co. Waterford O.S. 3 Barony of Upper Third Townland of Garravoone. 28.8 cms from S. 21.6 cms from E.

(2) Information concerning the condition of the monument in 1920 was obtained from Messrs Lory Kiely, Michael O'Connell and Patrick O'Connell.

(3) Our sincere thanks are due to Mrs J. Ryan, Piltown, Messrs Pascal O'Connell, Mattie Briody, Michael Coady, Tom Nealon, Liam Hogan, Noel Casey, Tony Behan and Dan Lyons for their generous assistance, and to Messrs Thomas Briody and Patrick O'Connell for the use of tools and equipment.