

PIECE TESTS  
AT A CAIRN-COVERED BURIAL SITE  
in Andover, Massachusetts

Frank J. Ryan  
1950s

The site is located on the brow of the hill on the 100-100' contour. Haggott's Pond's elevation is 110'. With leaves down, there is a fine prospect over the 200 acre pond and meadows to the east.

No historical mention of the site has been discovered. Residuals 1 and 2 in Feb. 1 are discussed by W. H. Woodhead in 'Certain Peculiar Earthworks near Andover, Mass.,' Rept. of Arch., Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., Bulletin V, 1918. Residuals 1, 2 and 5, same plan, are discussed by R. P. Bullon in 'Excavations in Northeastern Massachusetts,' Papers of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology, Andover, Mass., 1949.

The site was reported by W. B. Goodwin in 'Greater Ireland in New England,' Houghton Publishing Co., Boston, Mass., 1945; pages 100-103 and also the mis-labeled photograph on p. 50, actually the site's north east chamber.

His exploration detailed (1) photography, (2) a survey of the cairn by Flizzard & Carrington, (3) breaking out a concrete wall erected in the east chamber c 1900.

There are various neighbourhood legends concerning the Nineteenth Century exploitation of the cairn in connection with a 'Coney Island' at the pond. The most exasperating of these relates that a small wooden shed was erected to house 'curios' from the site, with a separate admission charged. It is thought that some of these specimens are in the elusive Follansbee Collection. The presence today of such rare plants as the heather and mayflower rather confirm the story that the site was highly developed as an arboratum, with a tea house perched atop the east end of the cairn, etc., etc. Seven surfaced fragments of an orange flower pot, and a rusted corset stay two inches deep in the north east chamber, were the only modern evidence produced by the 1951 tests.

### THE CAIRN

As Fig. 2 indicates, the cairn is a large, man-made agglomeration of stone with architectural features. The stones range in size from cobbles to three tons. Beehive vaulting to a single large capstone is employed in the north east chamber. Rectangular slabs roof the east chamber.

Stone-quarrying techniques evident are splitting and a rude dressing of protrusions. Implements comparable to those found in pre-historic steatite quarries were excavated. Sizeable crevices between larger stones were chinked with smaller ones in the chambers.

19th century activities indicated are (1) carting away of stone nearest wood-road, (2) modification of the passage and (3) the east chamber.

External features beyond the cairn are the horizontal kerb stones and the definite, though low, embankment or end of a terrace. With the permission and cooperation of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Gaunt who, with their farmer, Mr. St. Roy, witnessed much of the testing, it was decided to dig a small pit beyond the embankment, a second between the embankment and the kerbing, and to excavate the north east chamber. The rather shocking results there indicated the need for a control. A small pit, Test 5, provided this. These excavations were made in the fall of 1951.

#### TESTS

Test 1, Fig. 3, revealed a normal, undisturbed soil profile.

Test 2, revealed an abnormal profile. A buried, occupation layer that was black, greasy and compact with fired stone present, appeared beneath fully matured dark brown and grey-white horizons. Rounded cobbles, their large surface horizontal, were found below the occupation layer - whether water-laid or man-laid was not clear. The complete absence of orange pigmentation in the 3 to 6.5" layer might indicate a rather considerable antiquity for the buried occupation.

Test 3 revealed the beginnings of soil formation under a thick bed of needles and duff. This plot has been exposed to weathering for close to a century on the evidence of the pine trees. One result has been the compacting into a single layer of the separate powdered charcoal and variegated layers observable in Test 4. Here, as in 4, the ash-carbon black earth layer ran under the base of the unfired foundation stones and in immediate contact with them. Two felsite flakes, one fired, were obtained.

#### THE BURIAL PATTERN

Test 4 may be most economically described by attempting a reconstruction of events which took place at the old ground surface; approximately one foot beneath the present level, viz;

1. Eight or more medium-sized cobbles were set in the ground, forming a rough oval, long axis north and south.
2. Near the center of this oval, a body was placed, possibly slightly flexed and facing west. The position and angle at which the stone javelin was found indicate that if shafted at the time, the shaft would have rested in or near the right arm of a body facing west.
3. A thin covering of soil containing both black topsoil and yellow clay was placed over the body.
4. Upon this shallow mound flints were chipped. Five cores and 169 of the chips and flakes found were retained. More were allowed to pass into the spoil.
5. Numerous stone artifacts of ground slate, felsite, traprock and other materials were deposited. The large number of broken specimens raises the question whether there may not have been a ritualistic breaking of hastily-made grave-goods. To ascribe all the breakage to the following fire seems extreme.
6. A large fire or fires were made upon the shallow mound. The intensity of these fires is evidenced by 15 specimens with cindered surfaces. It recalls the funerals of Beowulf and the Homeric heroes.
7. No measurable time intervened before large foundation stones were moved into place to form the slightly oval base of a chamber. None of the structural stones bears a trace of smoke or fire. The variegated layer runs under the base of the foundation stones in immediate contact with them. At this point the foundation was laid directly above one of the bound stones. The bound stone is completely reddened, full of hair splits in its upper portion, and disintegrating in its lower portion. Above it the variegated layer reaches to the base of the foundation stones. A finger-sized lense of ash has been indicated with an arrow on the close-up photograph.
8. Some of the stones of the chamber received dressing in situ. To this splitting and dressing are ascribed large, coarse unfired fragments found in the burial layers. Quite probably the specimens connoting stone-quarrying were deposited at this stage rather than with the burial.

There is no evidence that the variegated layer has ever been disturbed. The powdery condition of the charcoal layer may be attributed not only to the protection provided by the cairn, but possibly to the potato-fork technique of modern surface collectors. V-shaped lye leachings to depths of 3" below the variegated layer occurred intermittently,

were noted but have not been plotted. The leathery condition of the variegated layer, making it almost impervious to the trowel, might also be mentioned. The gravel immediately beneath is close to hard-pan making the chamber very damp. At three places, small traces, believed to be perished bone, were observed in the center of the excavation. That something like a body had collapsed in the center of the variegated layer was evidenced by pockets and lenses of all four component materials, found at all angles from the vertical to the horizontal. However, nearer the outside of the oval, horizontal layering is predominant and can be seen in the cross-section photograph.

#### ARTIFACTS

All artifacts were found in the variegated layer with two exceptions. The serrated-edge, corner-removed point, Cat. 25, was found in the inch of carbon just above the variegated layer. The javelin, Cat. 33, without discoverable counterpart, was in the gravel three to five inches beneath the same layer.

Many specimens are patinated. The thick white oxidation occurring on a few is thought to be the result of contact with rich organic substances. Incrustations of iron oxides appear on many specimens, doubtless attributable to the retarded podsolization within the damp chamber.

#### PROVISIONAL CATEGORIES

##### Hunting and Fighting:

Axe with triangular point  
 Similar core with primary flakes removed  
 Miniature axe  
 Javelin  
 Half-made points, Cat. 32 and 33 with outer blank 26 found vertically nexted in that order. (For comparison #12; Pl. XVII, Bullen) as cited.  
 Corner-removed points, Cat. 25 and 30 with outer blank 39. (For comparison, #11, Pl. VII, Bullen)  
 Small triangular, taper-based points, Cat. 26 and 29. (#14, Pl. III, Bullen, offers a rough comparison. The cairn-site points are ground slate. Quartz was negative throughout the excavations.)  
 Broken octagonal ball or mace-head  
 Wide (crescentic) points with side notches. (For comparison #14, Pl. XVI, Bullen)  
 Large blanks - asymmetric triangular knife  
 sickle shaped problematical  
 spear shaft & butt

Quarrying:

Hammer  
Drills, straight and one single-shouldered  
Chisels  
Quarry axes  
Maul  
Pick points  
'Triangular tailing breaker'  
Hammerstone  
Wedges? (These unusual small objects are square or rectangular based. Some points are blunted. Perhaps used as entering wedges.)

Miscellaneous:

Serrated-edge borer  
Small pestle  
Triangular channelled celt  
Small rectangular celt  
Cutting edge fragments of polished celts and gouges  
Pear-shaped pendants  
Pear-shaped sinker  
Fragments rectangular pendants?  
Broken whetstones  
Grooved stone problematical

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Botanical, chemical and lithic analyses have not been made. Photography of artifacts is incomplete.

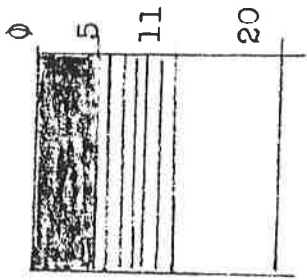
No new burial custom, with its implication of a new culture, has been discovered in New England since the Red Paint cemeteries were found in the late Nineteenth Century. In the circumstances, a larger exploration of the Andover site than an individual can mount, seems warranted. It is to be devoutly hoped.

\*\*\*\*\*

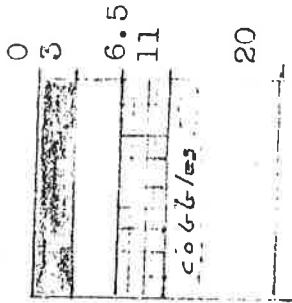
CHAMBERED CAIRN

Test Profiles

TEST 1

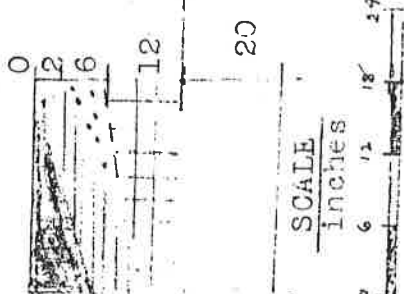


TEST 2



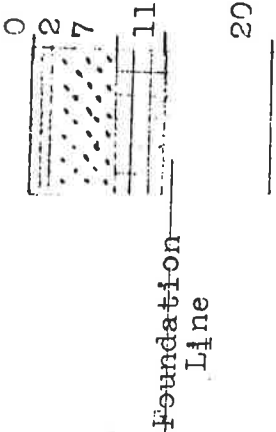
TEST 4






Profile M-N



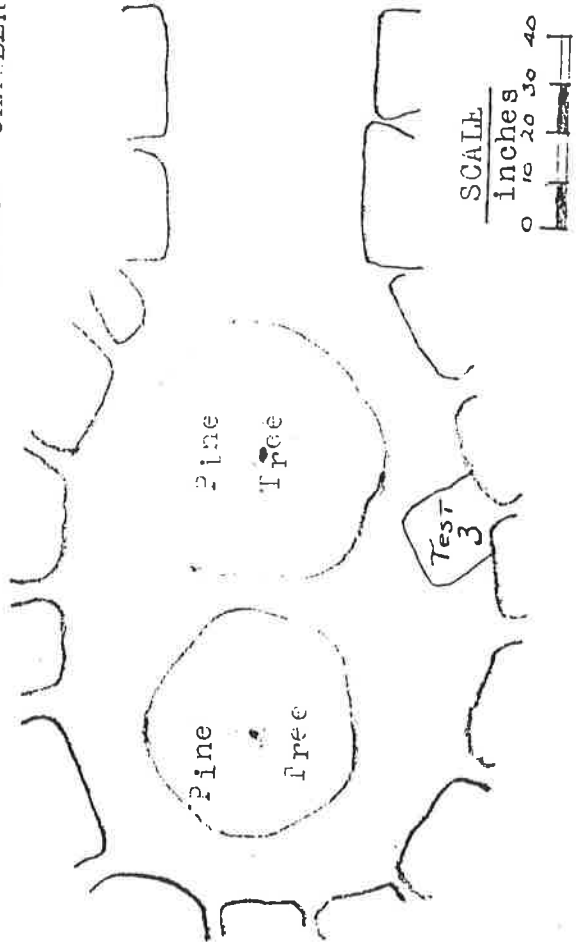
TEST 4

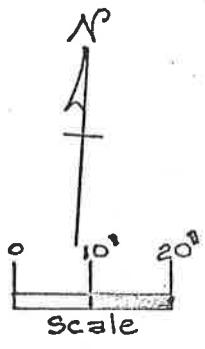
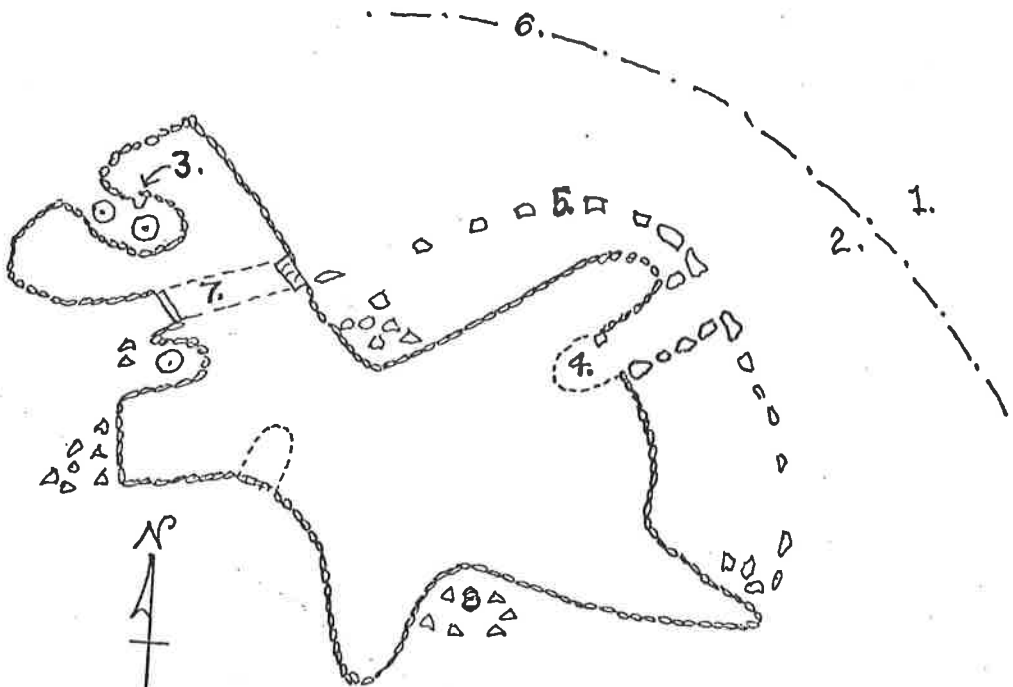
Profile P-Q

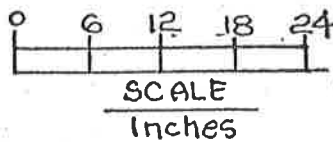
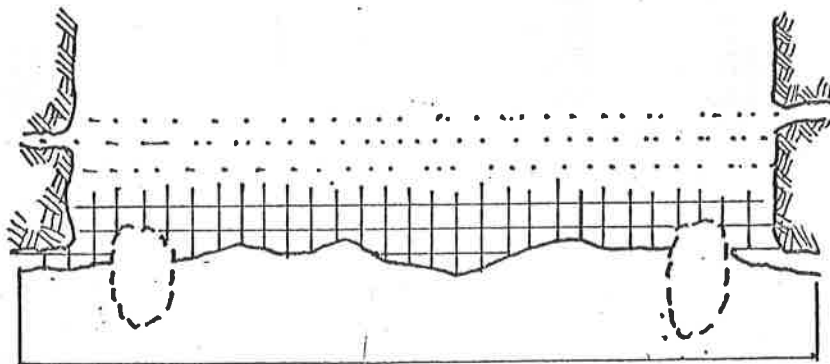
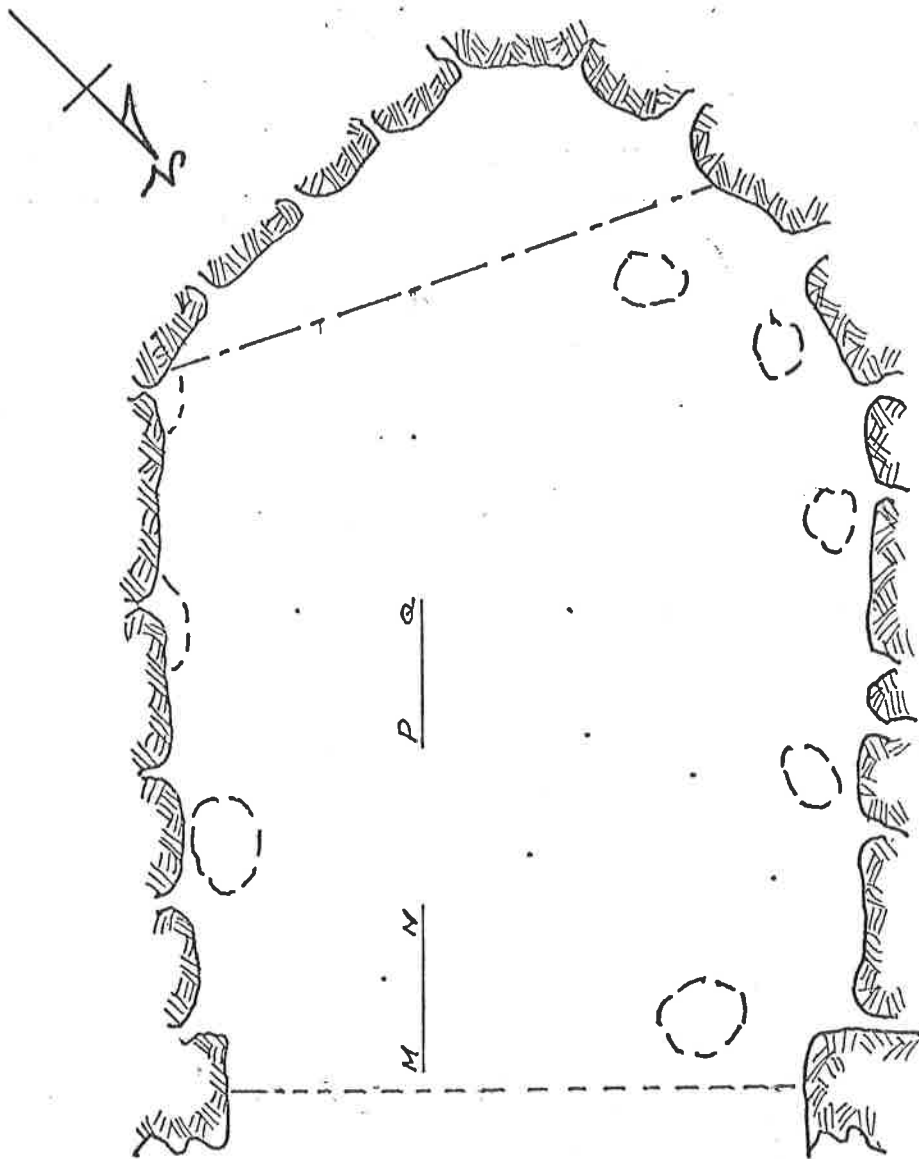


-  Dark Brown Loam
-  Yellow Loam
-  Powdered Charcoal
-  Ash-Carbon-Black Soil
-  Grey Gravelly Loam

NORTH-WEST CHAMBER







ANDOVER TURTLE  
CAIRN



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION -- In 1951, Frank Glynn -- later NEARA's chief archaeologist until his untimely death in 1968 -- carried out a systematic investigation of the great stone mound at Andover, Mass., variously known as the Turtle or Effigy Mound. So astonishing were the implications of his findings, suggesting as they did a Western European Neolithic cairn burial site, that they found no acceptance in the published archaeological literature. We are indebted to NEARA's present chief archaeologist, James P. Whittall Jr., for locating Mr. Glynn's report in the files left by him, and thus making it possible to present it here.

"THE EFFIGY MOUND"  
A COVERED CAIRN BURIAL SITE  
in Andover, Mass.

Frank Glynn

The site is located on the brow of the hill on the 160-180' contour. Haggett's Pond's elevation is 116'. With leaves down, there is a fine prospect over the 220 acre pond and meadows to the east.

The site was reported by W.B. Goodwin in "Greater Ireland in New England," Meador Publishing Co., Boston, Mass., 1945; pages 100-108 and also the mis-labeled photograph on p. 56, actually the site's northeast chamber.

His exploration entailed (1) photography, (2) a survey of the cairn by Blizzard & Carrington, (3) breaking out a concrete wall erected in the east chamber c 1900.

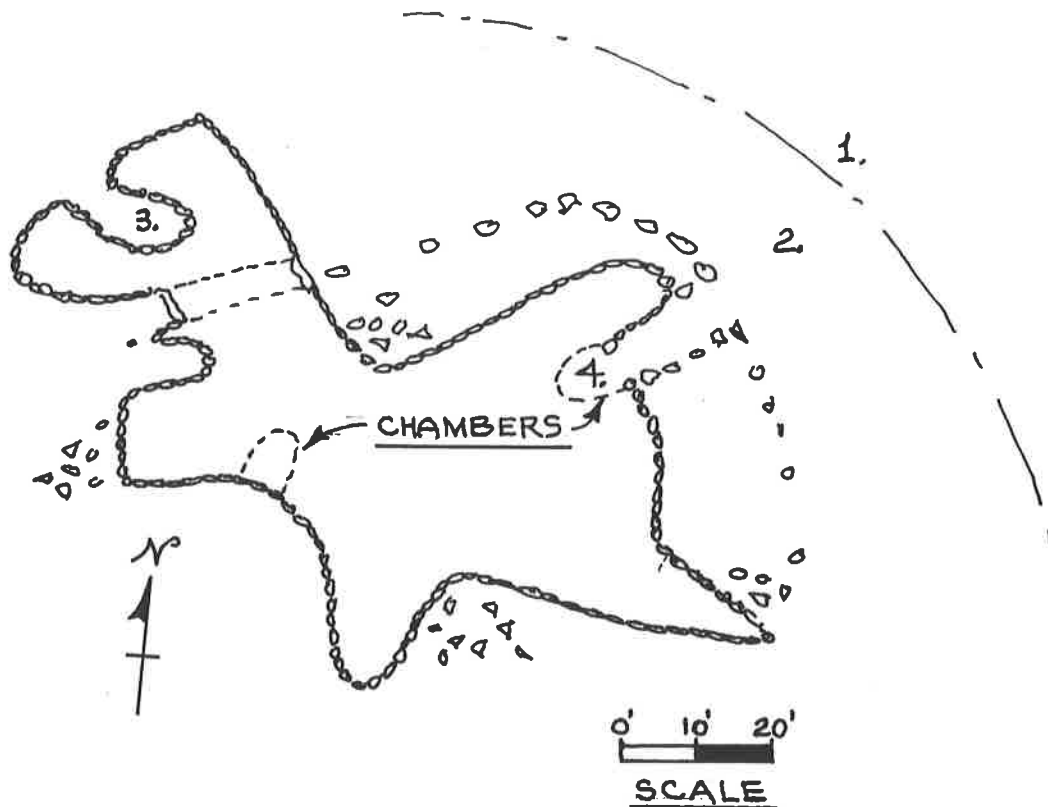
There are various neighborhood legends concerning the Nineteenth Century exploitation of the cairn in connection with a "Coney Island" at the pond. The most exasperating of these relates that a small wooden shed was erected to house "curios" from the site, with a separate admission charged. It is thought that some of these specimens are in the elusive Follansbee Collection. The presence today of such rare plants as the heather and mayflower rather confirm the story that the site was highly developed as an arboretum, with a tea house perched atop the east end of the cairn, etc., etc. Seven surfaced fragments of an orange flower pot, and a rusted corset stay two inches deep in the north east chamber, were the only modern evidence produced by the 1951 tests.

THE CAIRN

As the drawing indicates, the cairn is a large, man-made agglomeration of stone with architectural features. The stones range in size from cobbles to three tons. Beehive vaulting to a single large capstone is employed in the north east chamber. Rectangular slabs roof the east chamber.

Stone-quarrying techniques evident are splitting and a rude dressing of protrusions. Implements comparable to those found in pre-historic steatite quarries were excavated. Sizeable crevices between larger stones were chinked with smaller ones in the chambers.

19th century activities indicated are (1) carting away of stone nearest wood-road, (2) modification of the passage and (3) the east chamber.



Layout of the Cairn

External features beyond the cairn are the horizontal kerb stones and the definite, though low, embankment or end of a terrace. With the permission and cooperation of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. E.H. Gaunt who, with their farmer, Mr. Si Roy, witnessed much of the testing, it was decided to dig a small pit beyond the embankment, a second between the embankment and the kerbing, and to excavate the north east chamber. The rather shocking results there indicated the need for a control. A small pit, Test 3, provided this. These excavations were made in the fall of 1951.

#### TESTS

Test 1, revealed a normal, undisturbed soil profile.

Test 2, revealed an abnormal profile. A buried, occupation layer that was black, greasy and compact with fired stone present, appeared beneath fully matured dark brown and grey-white horizons. Rounded cobbles, their large surface horizontal, were found below the occupation layer - whether water-laid or man-laid was not clear. The complete absence of orange pigmentation in the 3 to 6.5" layer might indicate a rather considerable antiquity for the buried occupation.

Test 3, revealed the beginnings of soil formation under a thick bed of needles and duff. This plot has been exposed to weathering for close to a century on the evidence of the pine trees. One result has been the compacting into a single layer of the separate powdered charcoal and variegated layers observable in Test 4. Here, as in 4, the ash-carbon black earth layer ran under the base of the unfired foundation stones and in immediate contact with them. Two felsite flakes, one fired, were obtained.

## THE BURIAL PATTERN

Test 4 may be most economically described by attempting a reconstruction of events which took place at the old ground surface; approximately one foot beneath the present level, viz;

1. Eight or more medium-sized cobbles were set in the ground, forming a rough oval, long axis north and south.
2. Near the center of this oval, a body was placed, possibly slightly flexed and facing west. The position and angle at which the stone javelin was found indicate that if shafted at the time, the shaft would have rested in or near the right arm of a body facing west.
3. A thin covering of soil containing both black topsoil and yellow clay was placed over the body.
4. Upon this shallow mound flints were chipped. Five cores and 169 of the chips and flakes found were retained. More were allowed to pass into the spoil.
5. Numerous stone artifacts of ground slate, felsite, traprock and other materials were deposited. The large number of broken specimens raises the question whether there may not have been a ritualistic breaking of hastily-made grave-goods. To ascribe all the breakage to the following fire seems extreme.
6. A large fire or fires were made upon the shallow mound. The intensity of these fires is evidenced by 13 specimens with cindered surfaces. It recalls the funerals of Beowulf and the Homeric heroes.  
(Editor's Note: in following paragraph, "bound" should probably be "round")
7. No measurable time intervened before large foundation stones were moved into place to form the slightly oval base of a chamber. None of the structural stone bears a trace of smoke or fire. The variegated layer runs under the base of the foundation stones in immediate contact with them. At "R", Fig. 4, the foundation was laid directly above one of the bound stones. The bound stone is completely reddened, full of hair splits in its upper portion, and disintegrating in its lower portion. Above it the variegated layer reaches to the base of the foundation stones. A finger-sized lense of ash has been indicated with an arrow on the close-up photograph. (Editor's Note; the figure and photo referred to, are not available.)
8. Some of the stones of the chamber received dressing in situ. To this splitting and dressing are ascribed large, coarse unfired fragments found in the burial layers. Quite probably the specimens connoting stone-quarrying were deposited at this stage rather than with the burial.

There is no evidence that the variegated layer has ever been disturbed. The powdery condition of the charcoal layer may be attributed not only to the protection provided by the cairn, but possibly to the potato-fork technique of modern surface collectors. V-shaped lye leachings to depths of 3" below the variegated layer occurred intermitently, were noted but have not been plotted. The leathery condition of the variegated layer, making it almost impervious to the trowel, might also be mentioned. The gravel immediately beneath is close to hard-pan making the chamber very damp. In places, small traces, believed to be perished bone, were observed in the center of the excavation. That something like a body had collapsed in the center of the variegated

layer was evidenced by pockets and lenses of all four component materials, found at all angles from the vertical to the horizontal. However, nearer the outside of the oval, horizontal layering is predominant and can be seen in the cross-section photograph.

#### ARTIFACTS

All artifacts were found in the variegated layer with two exceptions. The serrated-edge, corner-removed point, Cat. 25, was found in the inch of carbon just above the variegated layer. The javelin, Cat. 38, without discoverable counterpart, was in the gravel three to five inches beneath the same layer.

Many specimens are patinated. The thick white oxidation occurring on a few is thought to be the result of contact with rich organic substances. Encrustations of iron oxides appear on many specimens, doubtless attributable to the retarded podzolization within the damp chamber.

#### PROVISIONAL CATEGORIES

##### Hunting and Fighting:

Axe with triangular point  
Similar core with primary flakes removed  
Miniature axe  
Javelin  
Half-made points, Cat. 32 and 36 with outer blank 26 found vertically nexted in that order. (For comparison #12, Pl. XVII, Bullen) as cited.  
Corner-removed points, Cat. 25 and 30 with outer blank 39. (For comparison, #11, Pl. VII, Bullen)  
Small triangular, taper-based points, Cat. 26 and 29. (#14, Pl. III, Bullen, offers a rough comparison. The cairn-site points are ground slate. Quartz was negative throughout the excavations.)  
Broken octagonal ball or mace-head  
Wide (crescentic) points with side notches. (For comparison #14, Pl. XVI, Bullen)  
Large blanks - asymmetric triangular knife  
sickle shaped problematical  
spear shaft & butt

##### Quarrying:

Hammer  
Drills, straight and one single-shouldered  
Chissels  
Quarry axes  
Maul  
Pick points  
"Triangular tailing breaker"  
Hammerstone  
Wedges? (These unusual small objects are square or rectangular based. Some points are blunted. Perhaps used as entering wedges.)