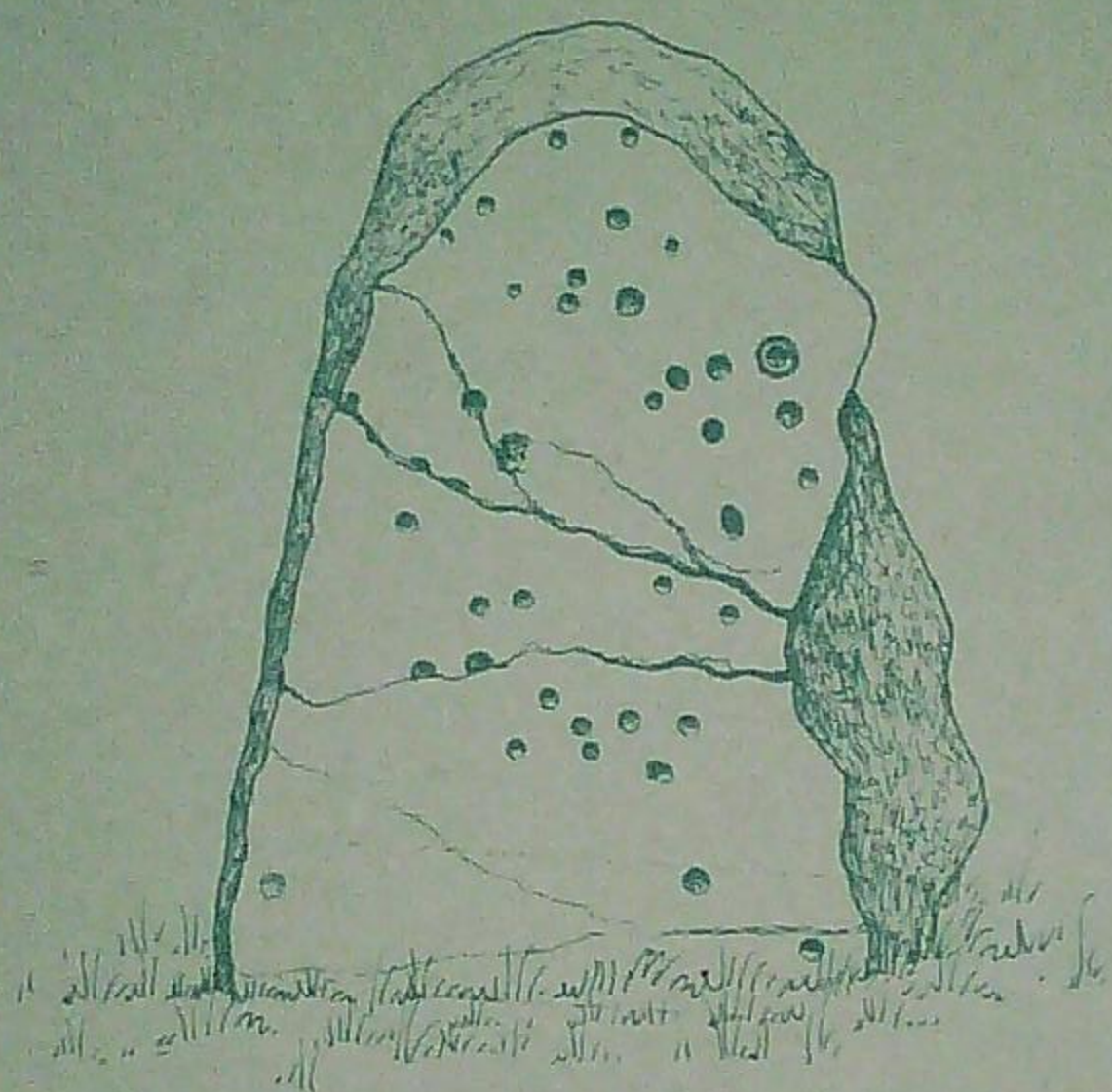
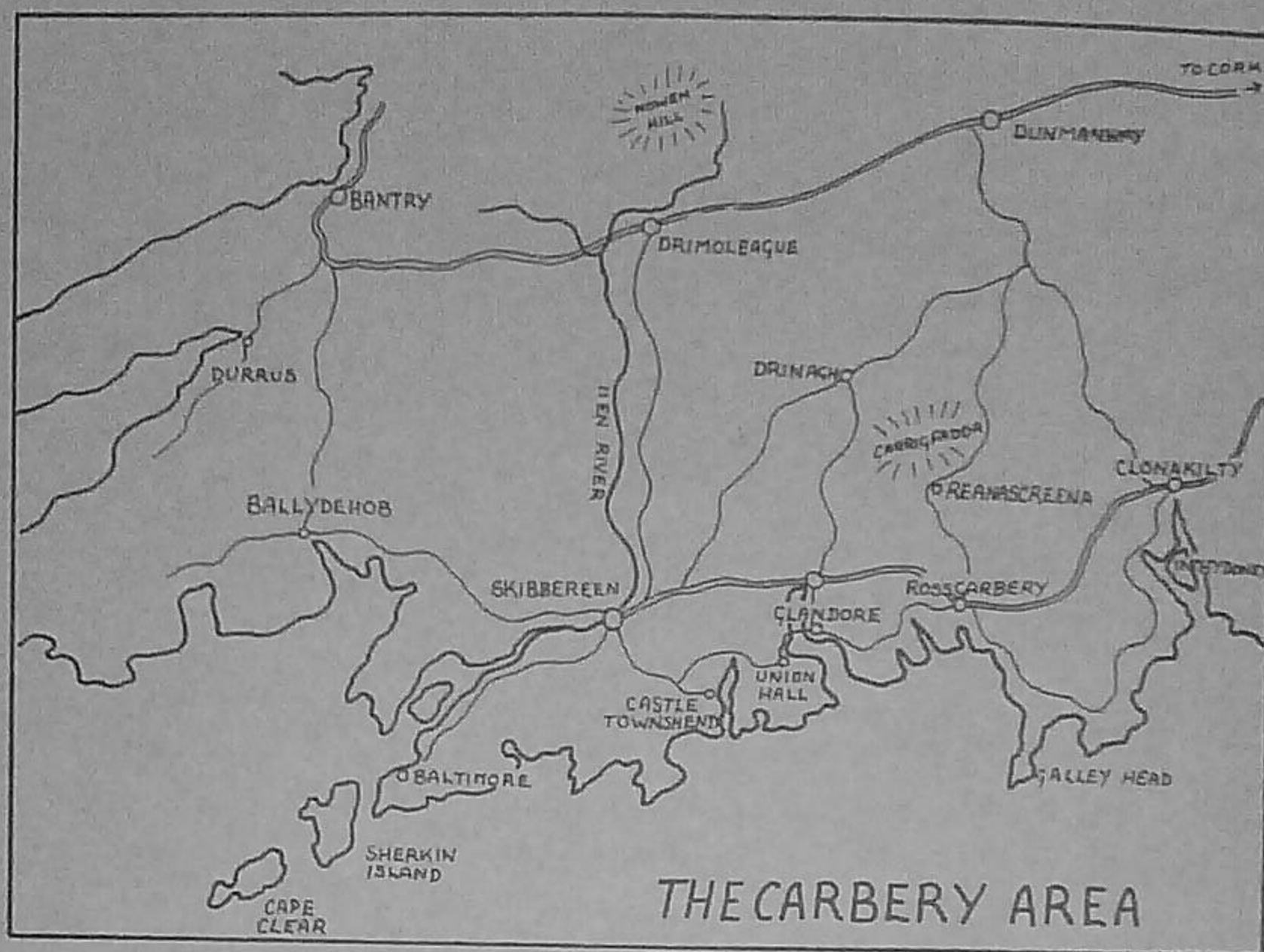


# Sketches of Ancient Carbery



The Megaliths of  
West Cork  
By Jack Roberts





*For Martin – who gave light.*

*This book is dedicated to the people of the land.*

*Thanks to Chris and others who gave invaluable help during the final stages and particularly to John – who's enthusiasm knows no bounds.*

*Thanks to the people who allowed me free access to their lands.*



£3.50

KEY BOOKS  
SKIBBEREEN.



# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

This book is about the ancient monuments that can be found within the Carbery area. There are necessary limitations to any work of this kind, and as it is essentially one man's view of West Cork it concentrates on the central and southern areas, from Clonakilty to the Cape and north to Drimoleague, leaving out the peninsular areas.

The well known monuments are described and this book will suffice as a general guide to the prehistoric remains in the area, but what it is really about are the many monuments that are as yet unknown or have been forgotten. The sites mentioned here can only represent a small proportion of the monuments that must once have adorned the countryside, many sites have been lost now entirely, others are in a sad and decaying state, forgotten and neglected. All it takes is a careless nudge by a tractor to throw away our heritage that can never be replaced and in this highly mechanised age it can take less than an hour to destroy what took our ancestors many years to achieve.

For many generations our ancestors toiled to build structures of stone that are nowadays recognised to have been the achievements of a long and enduring age. This technology of stone lasted right up and into the ages that preceed our own, the Bronze and iron ages and indeed the ancient skills of moving large stones about could be said to have lived right into the present day in the art of building walls and ditches that still occupies many people of the land.

Yet the age that saw the erection of the monuments remains shrouded in mystery, the knowledge of their real use had died perhaps as early as the coming of the Bronze Age and all we have been left with since that time are the many legends that account for the existence of megaliths dotted around the landscape being left there by the mythical giants of a former age, and of course the fairies are often brought in to account for whatever else could be explained.

In the Carbery area many monuments remain unrecorded and their existence remains to be accounted for by those who try to reconstruct the past. Only three stone age monuments have been properly examined in the area, the recumbent stone circles of Droumbeag, Bohonagh and Reanascreena. These are now restored and preserved as national monuments but the date of their construction remains unknown and their original use is not less obscure. Virtually nothing is known about the many other classes of monument in the area, the cromlechs or dolmens, chambered cairns, stone alignments and all the variants that fall between these classifications. The artwork that adorns many rocks and stones in the area remains as enigmatic as ever and quite beyond translation into terms we can understand. This last type of monument, the nearest thing there is to a written message from that long lost age, must surely be among our most valued items from the past, yet all around the area in the hedgerows and fields they lay awaiting our recognition of their existence before any answers can be forthcoming to the questions that they pose.



## STANDING STONE, GALLAN

These names refer to a single upright stone embedded in the ground. They were, once very numerous, but becoming less so, many having been removed to make way for the improvements of our age. Often they form markers of townland boundaries though this would not account for their original uses. They are often found as outlying markers for some larger construction and may have been originally intended as 'orientational' markers. Many monuments such as the stone circles may have once been accompanied by outlying standing stones that have since been removed. They also occur regularly at or near road junctions particularly very old routes through the country. There are many examples that adorn high ridges or hills and these can often be seen from a long way off.

## STONE ALIGNMENTS

Two or more standing stones set into a line are called an alignment in this part of the country. Two stones together is quite a common occurrence but there are lines of up to five in the area. In both classifications of standing stones the often held theory that they were erected to mark the burial of some ancient warrior or King has no foundation in factual evidence. Burials do not occur in connection with these monuments and their original purpose remains obscure. That most alignments are set in a southwesterly line is perhaps the fundamental fact that one can attribute them, and in some instances there could be astronomical significance in their arrangements.

## STONE CIRCLES

In this area all the stone circles are called 'recumbent stone circles', a name that refers to the stone found in the westerly portion of the circle resembling a reclining or fallen upright stone.

It may be that the recumbent stone is the most vital part of the circles and that which may give the fundamental clues to the actual use of the structures by those who constructed them. The shape of the recumbent has often taken a considerable amount of work to achieve and the stone we now see is the result of much consideration on the part of the builders. Usually it has been laid directly onto a prepared surface and not embedded into a socket like the other stones.

On the eastern side of the circle are the Pillars or Portals, so called as they appear to form an entrance or avenue to the circle. These are often the largest stones of the circle and in all the examples so far discovered the eastern half of the circle contains generally the tallest stone.

The portals or pillars being directly opposite to the recumbent created the assumption that these features formed an alignment through the circle and the 'orientation' of the circle is presumed to be the alignment from the recumbent through the circle and between the portals.



## DOLMENS OR CROMLECHS

This category could also be said to include some monuments that are classed as 'chambered tombs' or 'boulder burial'. Often they have been called beds or seats in relation to some mythical hero or ancient chief. The definition is of a single stone or boulder, often of quite considerable size, that has been lifted off the ground and erected upon an arrangement of smaller supporting stones.

The cavity or chamber beneath the capping stone might be very small and seemingly insignificant, or in some examples large enough to crawl into. These have been found to contain burial or dedicatory deposits, which may not be contemporary to the site. There is often a discernable entrance to the cavity which may also be sealed off by a blocking stone.

The capping stone or boulder may be set at an angle but unfortunately many of the finest examples in the area are not in their original state, having slipped due to collapse of the supporting stones. Some capping stones have been found to have cup marks inscribed on them and so far these are always found on the top.

So far virtually nothing is known about these monuments. The reason why these often massive stones were hauled to their present sites is completely unknown, even the people of the bronze age who buried their dead here may have known no more than we do about their primary function.

## CHAMBERED MONUMENTS

In this category the confusion really begins. A long list of names can be attributed to the many variations of this type of monument. Generally it describes a structure that may be a mound or a cairn (the former being built of earth or similar materials and a cairn of stones or boulders) containing a central interior passageway and/or a chamber. The examples that are most well known in Ireland are circular and have kerbstones around the perimeter, this type is known as a 'Passage Grave'. Similar constructions are found in the south of the country including County Cork that are like 'Passage Graves' but instead of completely being circular they have a straight side as if a section is cut off. Those are called 'Court Cairns', 'Gallery Graves' or 'Wedge Cairns'.

Although there is evidence that this type of monument has been severely denuded over the years in this area, there are still examples of both types of monument to be found though none in a completely intact state.

The classification of these types of monuments has not yet been completely settled or agreed as the variations are enormous from structures not unlike a cromlech or dolmen, with which they can be confused, but having more than a single capstone or several and with or without a covering mound or cairn; to enormous multi-layered mounds with multiple entrances and complex internal structures, as in the now famous 'Boyne Valley' mounds, in County Meath.

In all the variants the passageways have been constructed from rows of uprights and these are capped with covering slabs or boulders. So far none of the chambered monuments in this area have been discovered with the capping stones still intact.



## INSCRIBED STONES / MEGALITHIC ARTWORK

Originally there were many more inscribed stones in the area than are found today, many of the finest examples having been removed by a short sighted and privileged class of the last century who considered the plunder of such relics as fair game. We may never know what valuable parts of our heritage have disappeared into private souvenir collections or what was wontinly destroyed during the popular grave robbing expeditions of the time.

However a variety of examples did survive from the last century, and although the best are unfortunately not in their original sites they are at least preserved to give us an idea of what once existed in the area.

Of the stones that can be found in situ the so called 'cup marked stones' are the most abundant. Several unrecorded specimens came to light during this work, which shows that they could have once been extremely common. The general characteristics of this type of inscription is of a series of rounded holes or indentations, sometimes quite deep and large. Mostly these cup marks are found on slabs lying around the area, but can be seen on uprights or standing stones and often adorn the top of a dolmen or cromlech. More complex designs can be seen in some stones that are often called cup marked stones, encircling rings around deep cup marks that are called 'cup and ring' inscriptions but even this classification does not do justice to the complexity of some designs.

Only one work has so far dealt with the subject of stone age artwork from a basis of the observable functions but even this can only be considered as a beginning of the research.

MARTIN BRENNAN, "The Stars and The Stones" Thomas & Hudson

## LIOSES AND FORTS

This work does not deal in the same way with this type of monument as it does with artifacts of stone. Yet examples are often mentioned when they occur near to or in relation to stone age remains. These are basically circular constructions of varying sizes with banks or walls made of earth or stone. An earthen banked structure would generally be called a Lios or Liss and those with stone built walls a Fort. Other interchangeable names for these monuments are Rath, Dun, Caiseal, Cathair. Although it is undeniable that these sites were occupied over succeeding periods, it could also be that they are based on developments of much earlier designs. It is perhaps impossible to know whether a lios was originally a henge construction.

Most Lioses have been found to contain a system of subterranean tunnels, known as soutterains. These are quite baffling constructions for which no one has yet forwarded a teneable use. The general design is usually of a series of chambers connected by small 'creep holes', sometimes only barely accessible and always quite constricting. Legends tell of soutterains that run for long distances underground, usually without foundation it is evident however that some systems have been discovered that do indeed continue for considerable distances.

J. C. H. A. S. XXXV, SOMERVILLE



## CAPE CLEAR/SHERKIN/BALTIMORE



JRBS

CARVED STONE  
FROM GLAN, CLEAR ISLAND.

According to some traditions the colonisation of Ireland began on Cape Clear. The island people certainly show more than traces of their Milesian origins and up to recent times the connections with their ancestral past in Northern Spain remained very strong. Loyalty to tradition also kept the native tongue alive to the extent that the island is now considered one of the finest Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) areas in the whole of the country. Many visitors come each year to hear the native language spoken naturally by a people who still use it as an everyday language.

Being steeped in their traditions has not unfortunately prevented the loss or destruction of many of the islands' oldest and most valuable relics. Many items including quite large decorated stones were removed during the last century by antiquarians whose main objective seems to have been the quest for whatever spoils they could gather for their personal collections. It is fortunate that there is now a realisation of the sad depreciation of the islands heritage and determination to keep what is still there intact upon the island.



Most poignant of these losses was the structure that the unique carved stone found in the townland of Glan was once part of. This stone has an intricately carved face that directly relates it to the most important monuments in the whole country. Known as "Boyne Valley Art" this is the finest example of their high standard of workmanship to have been found in the area.

The stone must once have been incorporated in a structure similar to those found in the Boyne Valley but all trace of the monument has long gone. Professor R. O'Kelly tried to trace the monument in 1948 but came to the conclusion that land clearance in the area long before the stone was discovered had obliterated all traces. However some local knowledge relates to a cairn of some description having once stood in the area. It seems very likely that there were other carved stones found in the area and knowing the predilections of antiquarians of the last century they were probably removed to private collections.

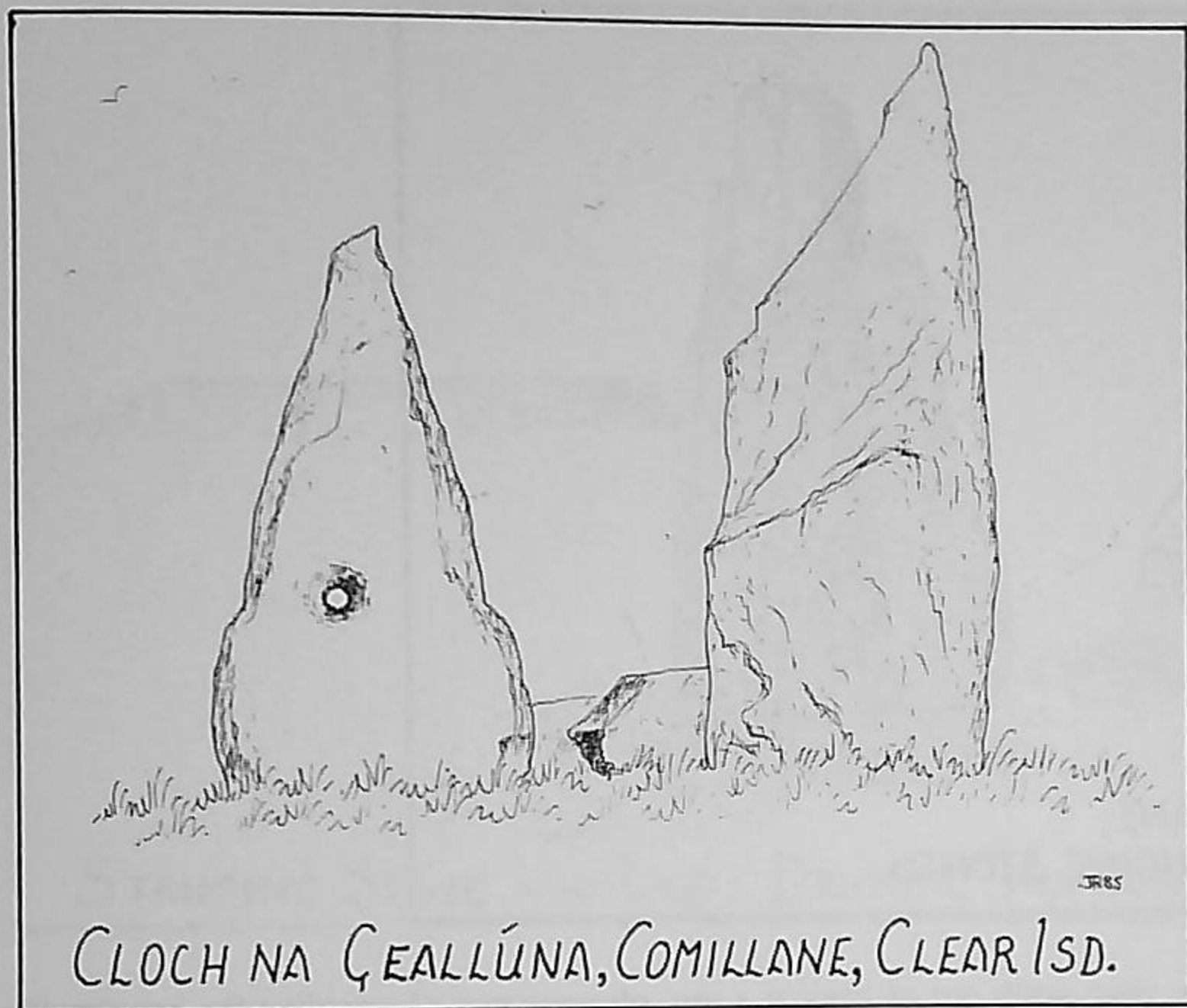
The stone was originally discovered by the Rev. John O'Leary who had his residence on neighbouring Sherkin Island, to where the stone was removed. After his departure from that island it was lost again for about three quarters of a century until its re-discovery by the Rev. E. Lambe in 1945, who realising its importance reported it to the University of Cork who in turn gave it over to the Public Museum in Fitzgerald Park, where it has puzzled historians ever since.

There are fortunately still several fine standing stones to be seen on the island and other remains of interest to the present day antiquarian. Several underground tunnels or souterrains have been discovered and stories of the island refer to the existence of many more around the island. One stone that will easily be found by any visitor to the island is St. Kierans stone situated not many feet from its original situation near the well and shrine dedicated to the islands patron saint. The stone has been inscribed with three crosses, two vertical ones carved into the stone on each side and another relief of the top. Whether St. Kieran actually carved the stone is not precisely known but being a native of the island it seems likely he would have honoured the new religion in his traditional fashion and erected a stone to the new God.

The most curious stones to be found at the present time are found at the eastern end of the island in the townland of St. Comillane. Originally four stones stood upright here but one has completely fallen and another rests against the largest of the presently upright stones. One of these is called Cloch na Gealluna, the Trysting Stone, because of the hole bored through it which was anciently used to seal the vow of betrothal.



## CAPE CLEAR/SHERKIN/BALTIMORE



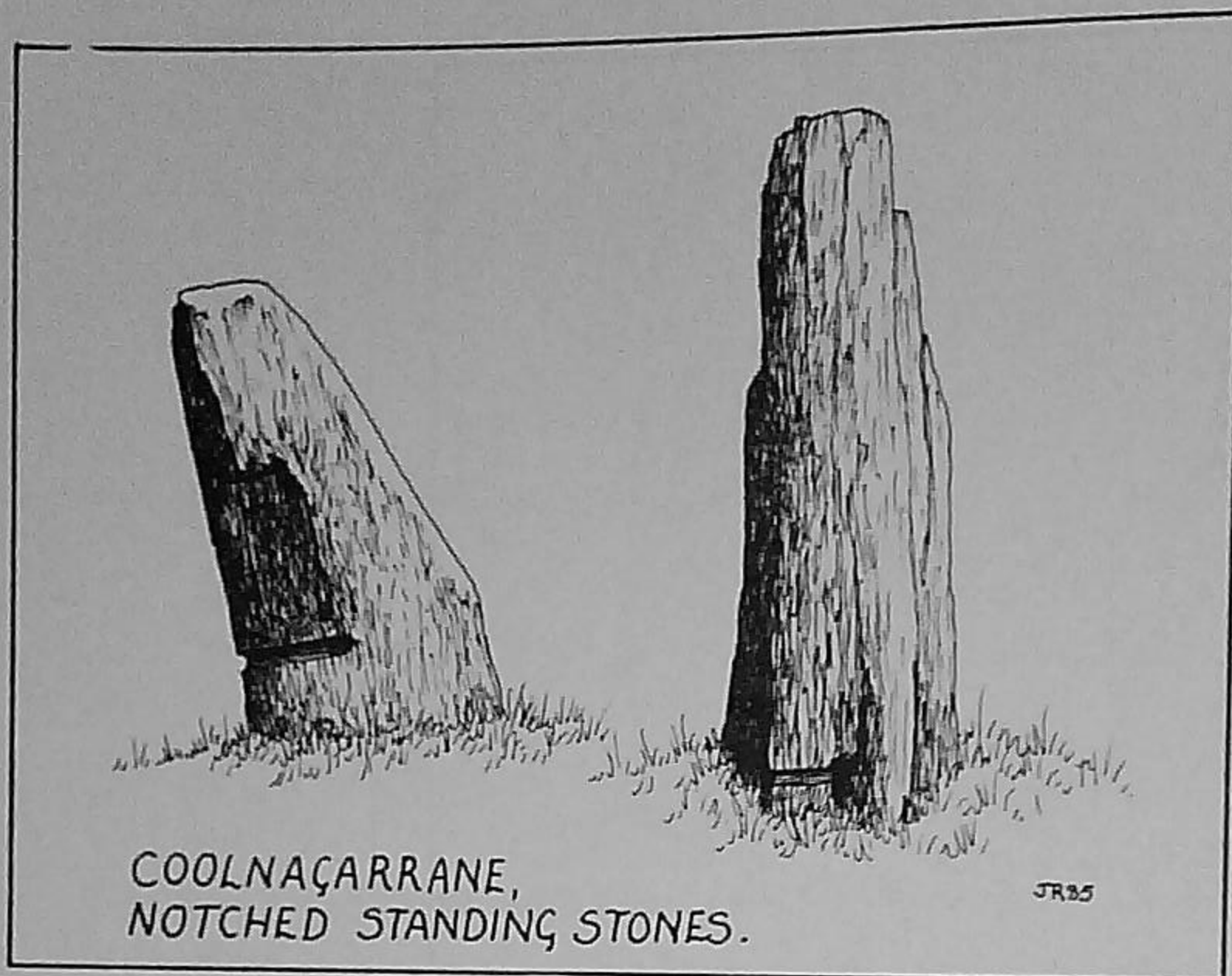
Sherkin island has probably suffered the same fate as its neighbour during the last century. Only one monument still survives, the cromlech on the east slopes of Slievemore, the hill of the western portion of the island. The mighty capstone has slipped from its original position and the once imposing structure seems rather decrepit in its present state. However in ancient times there was much activity on the island especially in the construction of the underground tunnels or soutterains. Several of these have been discovered and one noted by \*O'Donovan near the north harbour contained human remains so ancient that they fell apart when an attempt was made to remove them.

"Baltimore" said O'Donovan, "was anciently called Dunashad (the fortress of the jewels)", which probably refers to gems of quite a different sort to those we might imagine today. Later on the town became known as Baille an Tir Mor, which means something like the town of the great house. Each of these names refers to a revered structure in the neighbourhood remembered even into O'Donovans day as an important place of ancient worship. The structure from which the town takes its name is a very large Cromlech or Dolmen situated near the town. So impressive was this monument to O'Donovan that he says during a discourse on this type of antiquity that it is the most important in the whole of Carbery. He also mentions a stone circle in the area.

\* "Sketches in Carbery" Daniel O'Donovan 1876 (Tower Books, Cork)



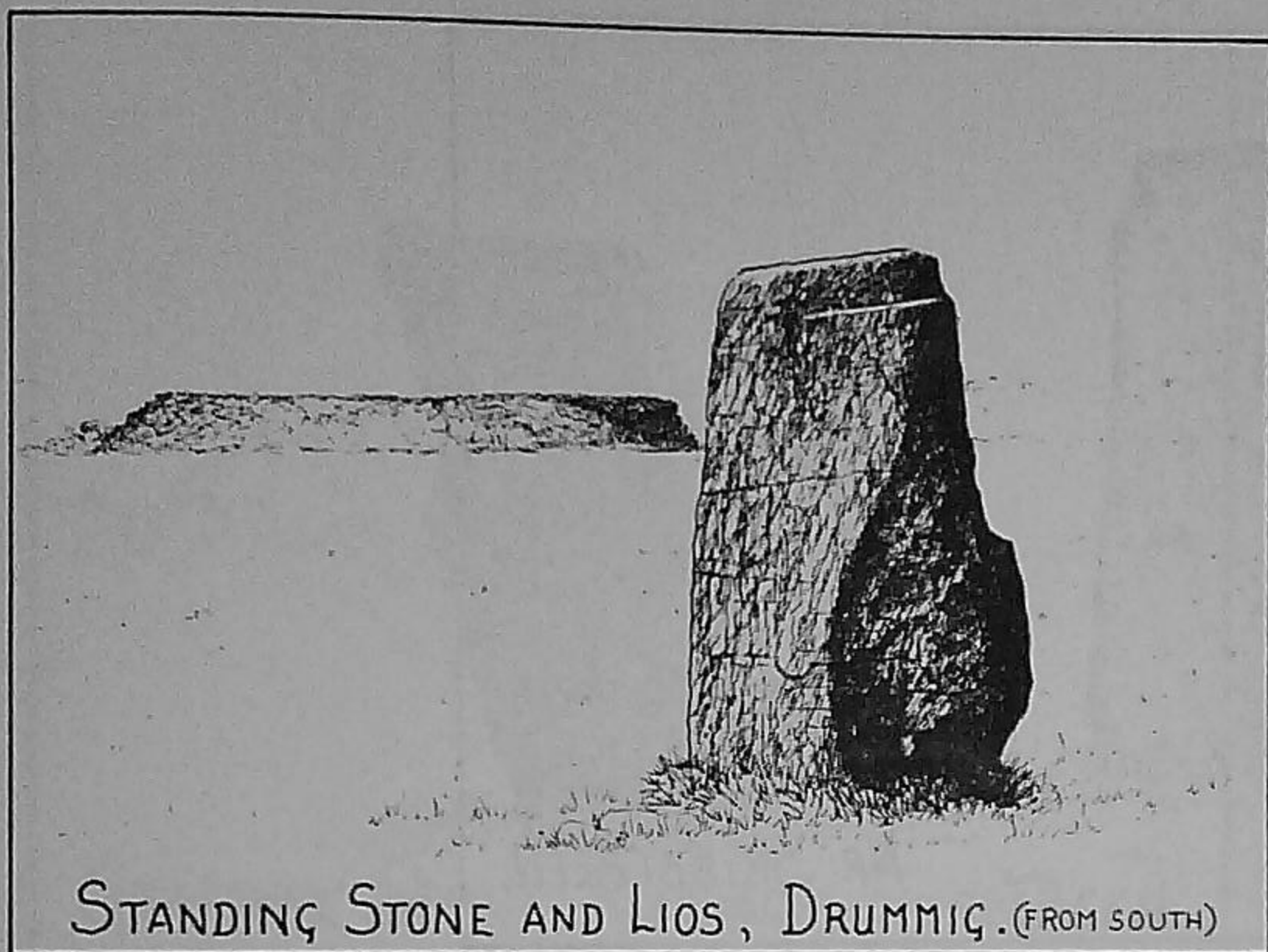
## SKIBBEREEN



Following the river north out of town is a very pleasant way of sampling the countryside around Skibbereen as the river passes through rich pastureland and mature woodland changing dramatically all the while from quiet reaches to tumbling rapids. Not much more than a mile out of Skibbereen, just past the hospital, the town boundary ends and here the river runs through the townland of Coolnagarrane. In this townland on the east side of the river are two extraordinary standing stones. One stands quite close to the river in a corner of the field that adjoins the river and the road. The other stands on a rise to the north east about a quarter of a mile on the east side of the road. The other stands on a rise to the north east about a quarter of a mile on the east side of the road. These stones each have a curious notch not unlike a drill hole in cross section near their bases. Some local lore still survives that says these two stones were of the same original block and drilled apart by some giant of the past, though there is little similarity between the stones themselves.



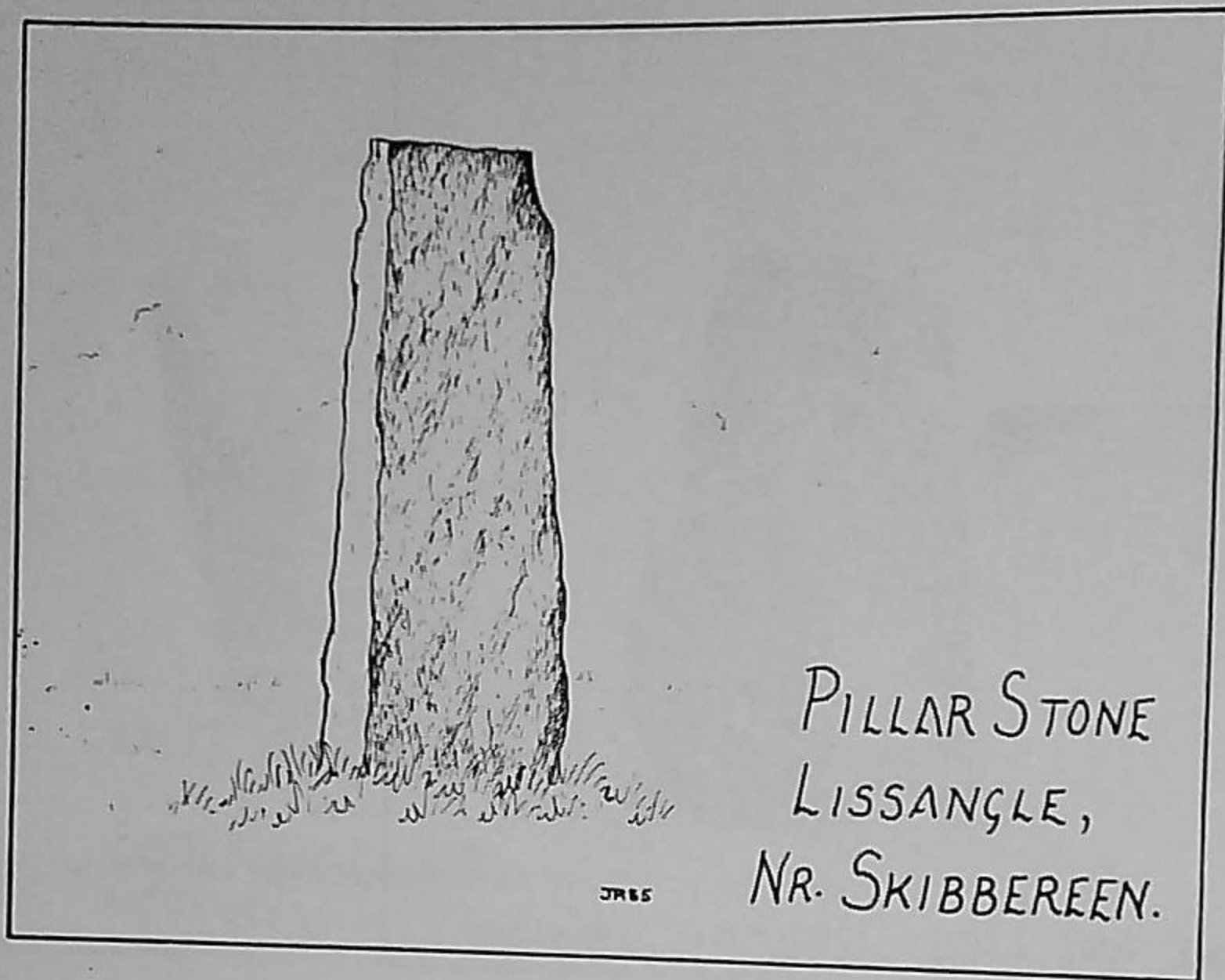
## SKIBBEREEN



Further along the river about 2½ miles from the town another stone can be seen standing in a commanding position on the hillside to the west of the river. This stone in the townland of Drummig, is particularly significant as it is situated next to a very fine Liss with high walls around half its circumference and other features that show it was very painstakingly built by our ancestors. The centre has been filled so that it is much higher within the Liss than the surrounding level of the land and the east side having lower walls also opens out to give a fine view accross the undulating countryside directly towards Carrigfadda Hill, the mountain of length. The stone also has an east-west axis with its broadest widths facing north-south.



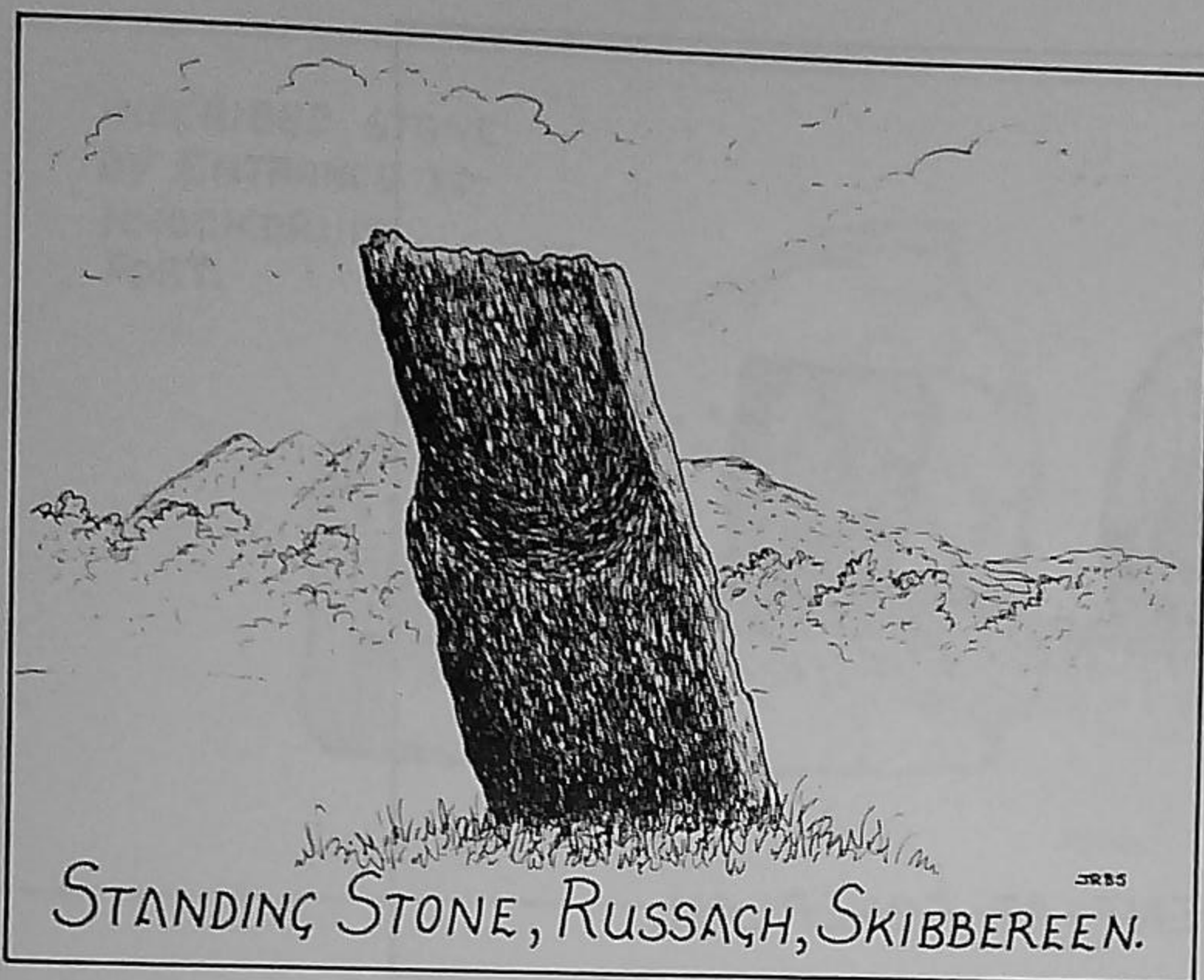
## SKIBBEREEN



About 4½ miles from the town the river runs through the townlands of Madore and Lissangle. The latter, being on the west side, was formerly well known for the antiquities it contained. O'Donovan considered it worth a visit and described a large Cromlech with a capstone of 'globular form'. Nearby stood a tall pillar stone and local lore in his time described these relics as being used by Foinn Mac Cumhaill as a hurly stick, the 'globular' capstone being the ball. Unfortunately the stick is all that remains of the giants sporting equipment and all that remains is this fine standing stone, just tall enough to peep over the hedge at the river running close by. The curious ribbed/corrugated nature of the rock from which this stone was hewn can be seen used elsewhere by the megalithic sculptors and seems to have been suited to whatever purpose they had in mind.



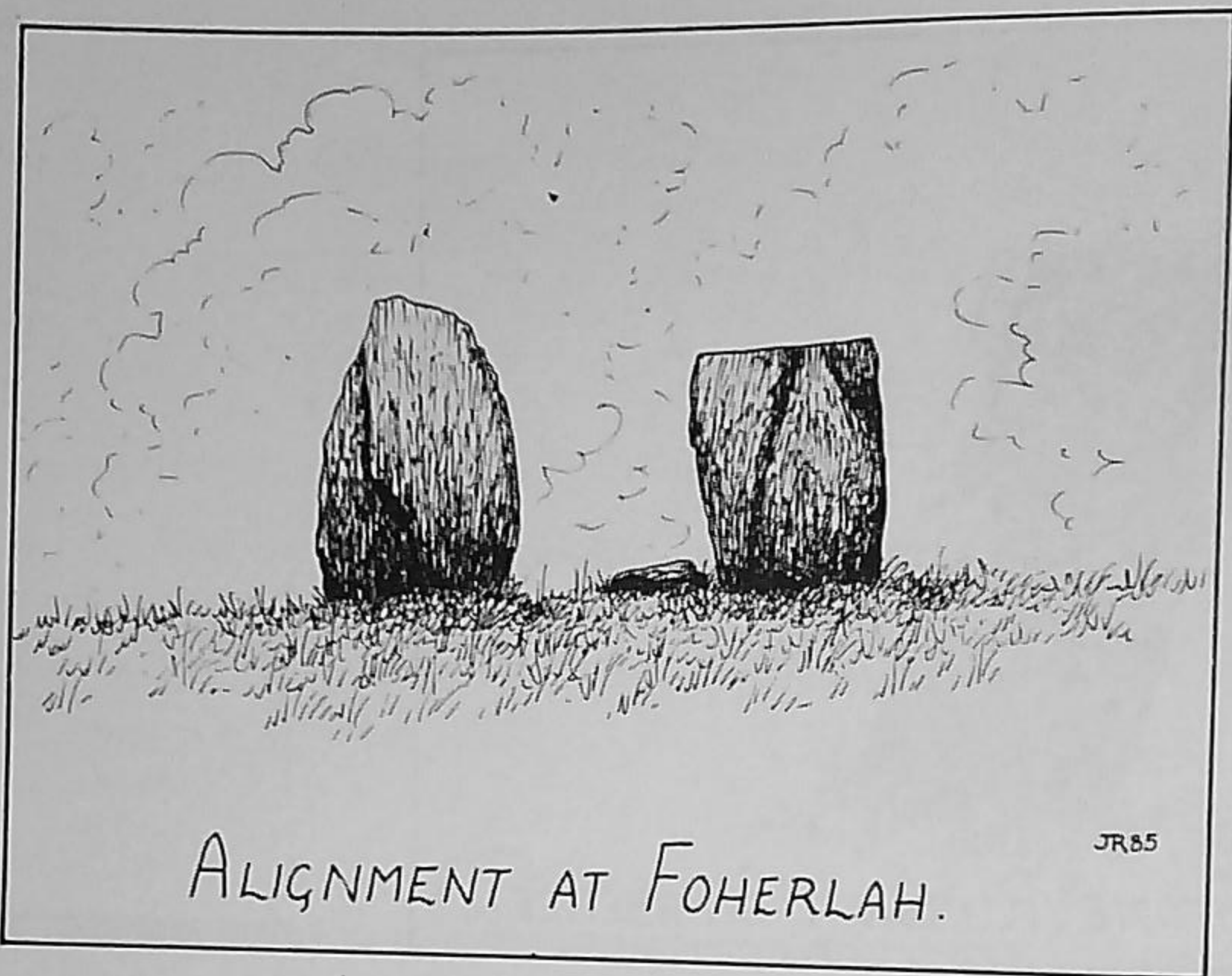
## SKIBBEREEN



About a mile to the south of Skibbereen is an interesting area called Lissard (the hill of the Liss) in the townland of Russagh. There are two Liss's in this area and an outlying standing stone nearby. One of the Liss's is situated right next to Lissard house, now an hotel, on the top of the hill and this was discovered to contain a series of underground passages during the restoration work at the hotel. A hole was excavated for use as a sewage disposal inside the Liss, which is not easily recognised as such, the bank being very low and within an area of trees and undergrowth, and work had to be abandoned when the excavators shovel penetrated the ceiling of one of the chambers exposing the network of tunnels below. For anyone wishing to explore a typical souterrain system this is a well preserved and easily accessible example. Unlike many that are uncovered the hole was not refilled, instead the hotel owners built a fence around the entrance leaving probably the most conveniently situated example in the area. However it must be born in mind for anyone considering this excursion into the underworld that a good light is necessary and also clothing that will take being soiled. Also permission should be sought from the hotel before embarking below as it is on private property and also one should never enter these places entirely alone. This system is not very long considering other examples from around the area but if excavation were carried out we would probably find further networks leading off from those so far opened.



## SKIBBEREEN

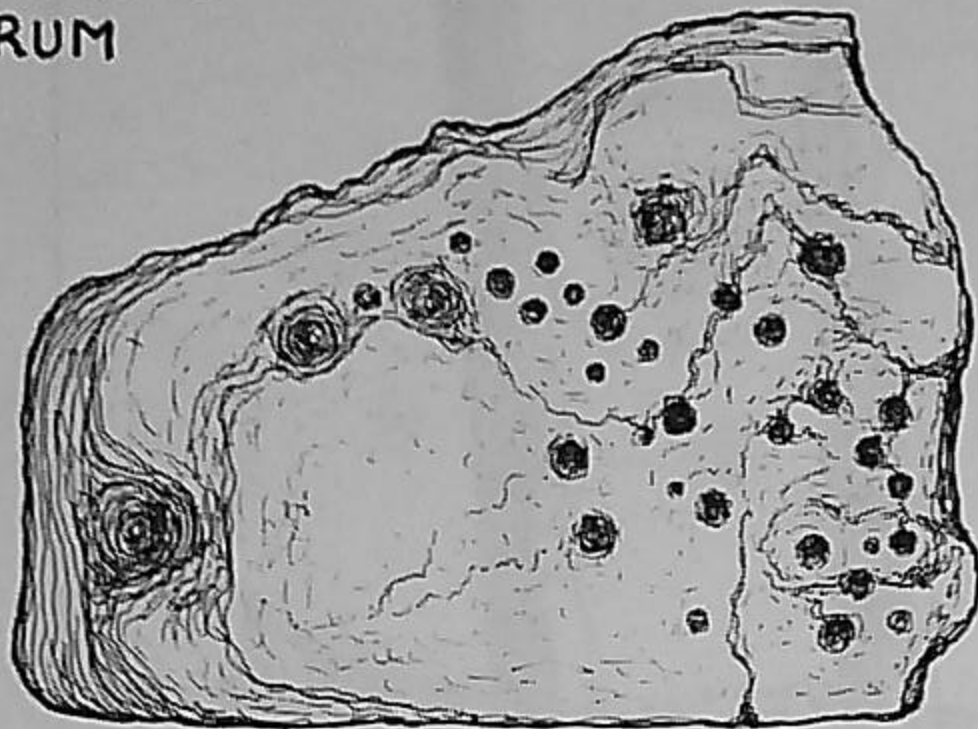


Foherlagh is quite a commanding hill to the west of Skibbereen about 4 miles from the town. On this hill overlooking the Ilen estuary and commanding a fine view of Roaringwater bay are a pair of large standing stones. These are a good example of the kind of untouched and lonely megaliths that are worth visiting to savour the quiet solitude of the past. Not much is known about such sites, their age or reason for existence, and like sentinels of the past they await the passing of the ages as yet unrecognised for whatever they truly are.



## CASTLETOWNSHEND

INSCRIBED STONE  
BY ENTRANCE TO  
KNOCKDRUM  
FORT.



JR1984

Castletownshend is noted for having some very fine prehistoric monuments in its area. The most well known of these is the stone fort of Knockdrum hill to which many visitors are attracted by the signpost from the main road. The fort is a reconstruction of the early christian period and represents a very fine example of the type of fortifications constructed during that turbulent age. Like many similar sites throughout the country this fort was built on an already very ancient site. There is a pillar inside the enclosure which is considered christian in origin having a cross inscribed on one face. However outside the entrance lays a very much older stone which has been carved with a complex pattern of cup marks, some of which were deeply etched into the rock. Inside the enclosure can be seen the entrance to a series of tunnels that it is said by some locals is the longest souterrain system in the whole area. Unfortunately we can no longer explore this part of the monument as the entrance has been blocked by a very stout iron gate. Through the bars one can see the interior of the first chamber, beyond which access is also cut off by a stone wall. Inside the first chamber is another very old carved stone and it seems unfortunate that access has been prohibited from even this section of the monument since it seems quite sound.



## CASTLETOWNSHEND



Not far from the fort, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile to the north in the townland of Gurrane are the rather less well known 'Fingers Stones', an alignment of three massive pillars set at very enigmatic angles into the side of the hill. Also called the 'Three Ladies' and the 'Five Fingers', the latter name refers to the fact that originally there stood more than three remaining stones. One of the original five lays fallen at the site and another is entirely missing having, it is said, been removed by an eccentric member of the village, who it must be presumed had a strong team of men and horses at her disposal to shift the massive rock from its place. It is unfortunate that this site is less often visited than the fort since it is an impressive monument and one that is well worth visiting especially at close quarters where one cannot help but be awed by the effort it must have taken to haul such large stones into their positions.



## CASTLETOWNSHEND

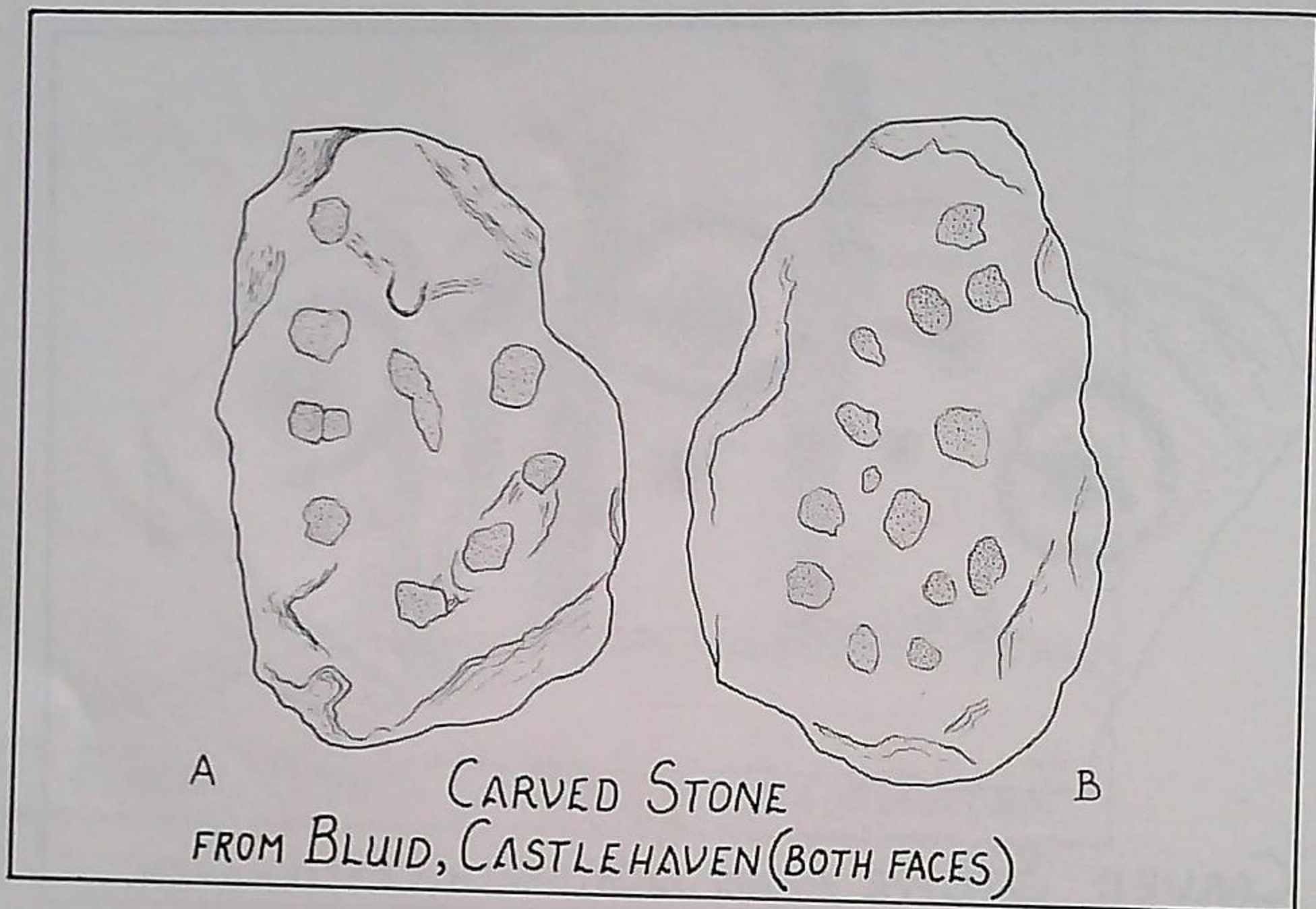


CARVED STONE FROM GORTBRACK, CASTLEHAVEN.

It is to Somerville that we are grateful for the preservation of two more carved stones with their origins in the Castletownshend area. The stone found by him in Bluid townland, about a mile to the west of the village, is unusual for its being carved on both faces with cup mark type depressions. This stone was donated by him to the University in Cork and is now on display in the public museum. Another stone he donated to U. C. C. was discovered in the townland of Gortbrack, the neighbouring land to Bluid. This is perhaps the most remarkable stone to have been found in this area. The deeply carved cup marks are part of the central theme of an overall intricate pattern of rings and lines. The design is related to the Boyne Valley artists work than to any other stones yet found in the area, it was a very important discovery. The stone was noticed during land clearance and brought to Somervilles attention. No one could attest to its original location within Gortbrack or if there may have been some other monument built in the area.



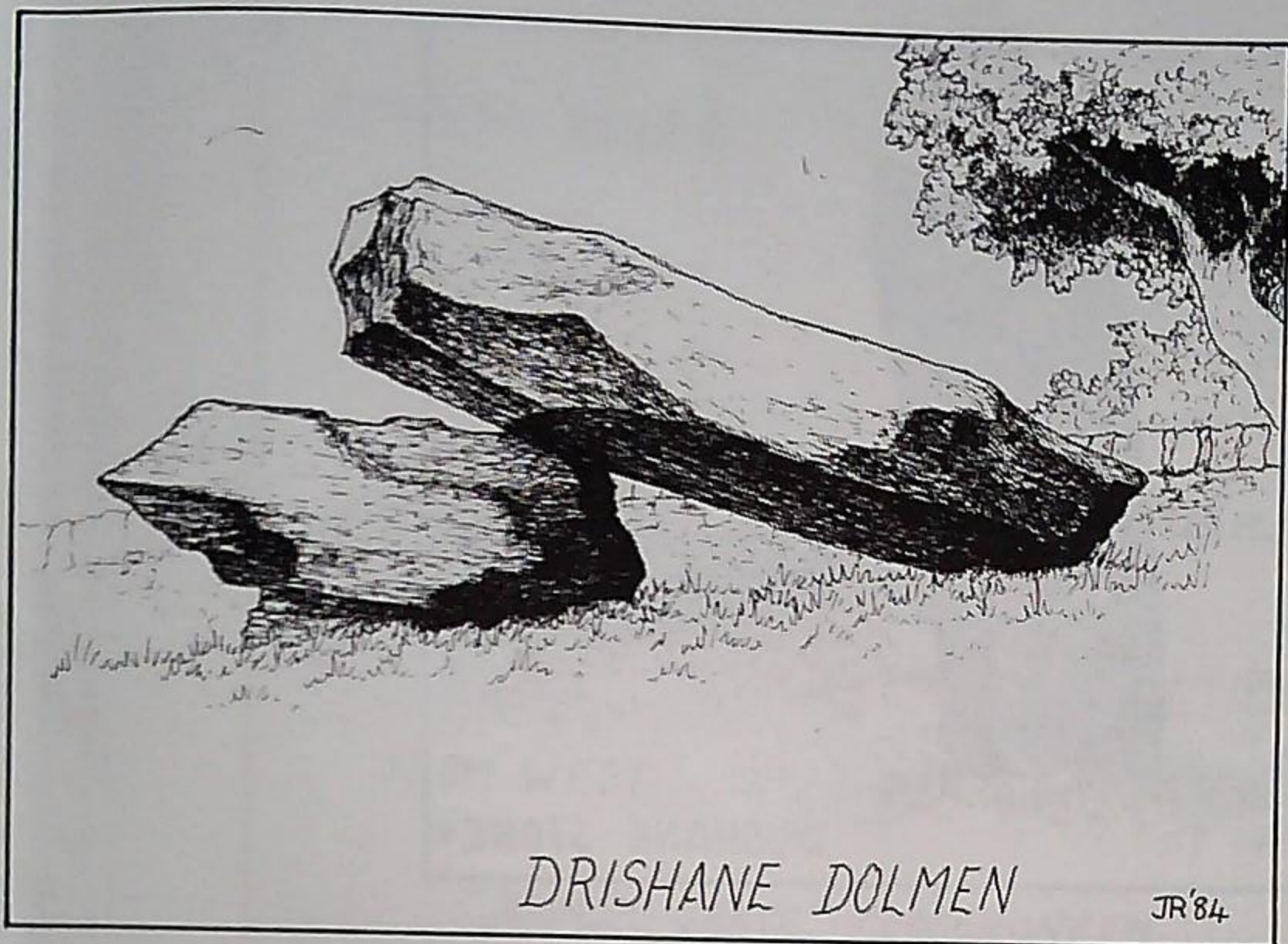
## CASTLETOWNSHEND



The reconstruction of Knockdrum fort was carried out earlier this century by the people of Castletownshend, many of whom were, and indeed still are, ardent enthusiasts for relics of the past. One very vital member of the community in the early part of the century was the well known Boyle T. Somerville, brother to the popular writer Edith of Somerville and Rosamund. Boyle spent a great deal of his time engaged in painstaking surveys of ancient sites both here in his native area and throughout the British Isles. As a highly qualified member of the British navy, he very quickly rose to become an admiral, his navigational skills enabled him to carry out very precise and detailed surveys of the places he visited and it is no doubt that the knowledge he possessed also helped him discover the far reaching and inspired convictions he held about the megalithic sites. It is for the theory of 'orientation' that he is best remembered, this being the belief that stone circles and other ancient structures were built to a specific design with astronomical alignments being the fundamental basis of their plan.



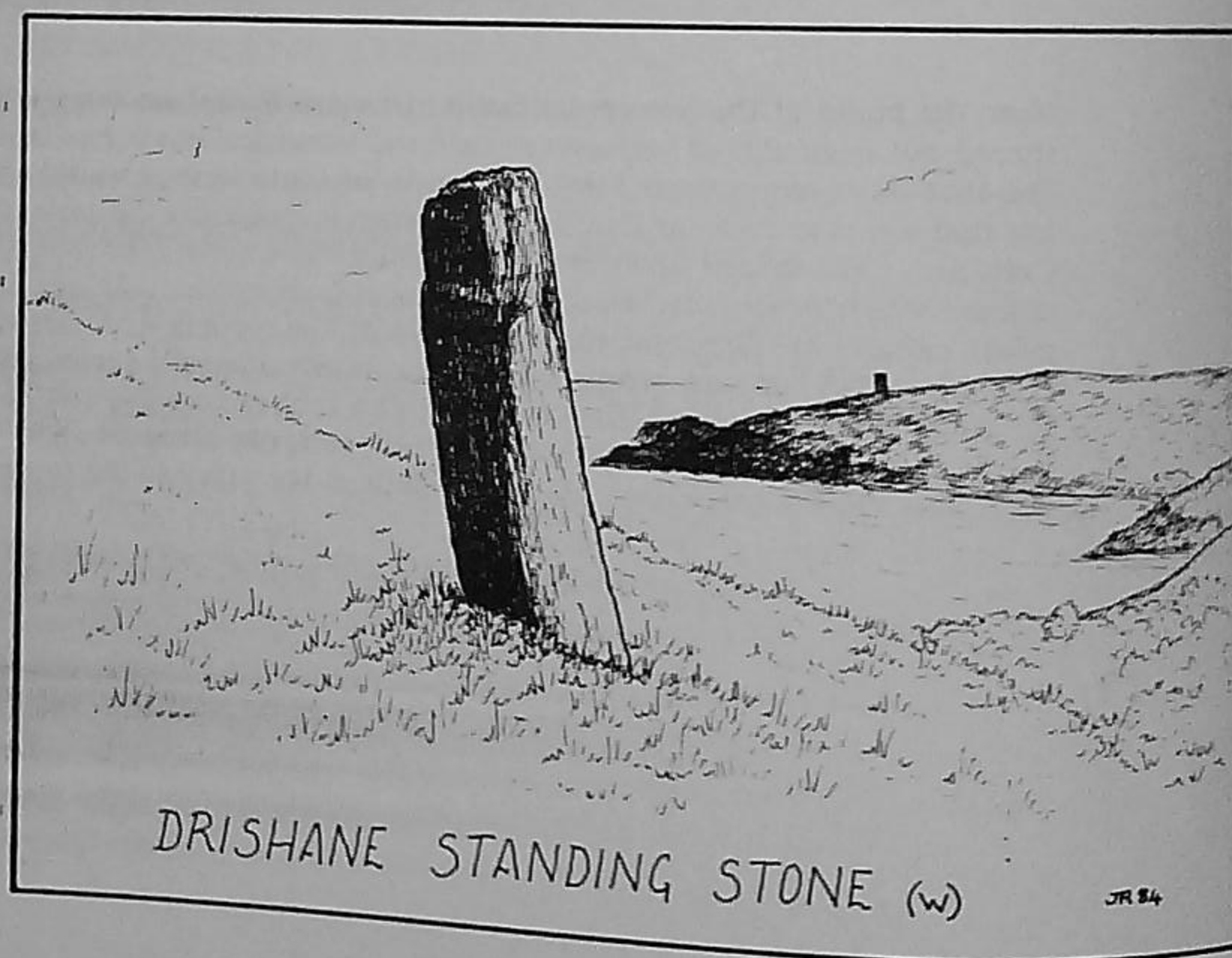
## CASTLETOWNSHEND



Near the home of the Somerville family, Drishane house, are three interesting monuments spaced out in an almost perfectly straight and symmetrical line across Drishane townland. The line that these monuments form is towards the south west or winter solice sun set, a direction that seems to re-occur time and again when investigating the ancient remains of the West Cork area. The largest and central of the three is a quite impressive Cromlech or Boulder dolmen which is actually two stones set one upon the other. The gap or space beneath them might indicate an alignment to the south-west. The capping stone has several cup marks still visible but they are very worn with age and others originally carved into the stone may not be discernable any more. The remaining two monuments are two standing stones set as 'outliers' to the Cromlech about equidistant apart, one being set above the Cromlech to the north east and the other downhill on the slope of the valley to the south west.



# CASTLETOWNSHEND

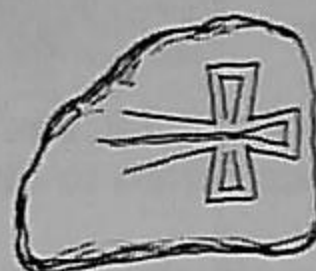




# UNION HALL



FROM WEST



FROM ABOVE

"BISHOPS GRAVE" COOSCRONEEN.



"KINGS' GRAVE"  
ARDRAGH

ONE OF THE MANY  
CARVED STONES IN  
ARDRAGH





## UNION HALL

Between Castletownshend and Union Hall one is very likely to notice a sign for the Ceim hill museum. This is the personal collection of Ms. Teresa O'Mahony, who decided after years of gathering various items and a rich store of knowledge on the history of the area decided to open up her home to the public. There is a fine collection of stone age artifacts that were found near to the house, showing that at a very early period the area was used as a sacred ritual site.

Near to the coast are the townlands of Ardragh and Cooscrooneen which contain many remains that attest to the importance of this area to ancient man.

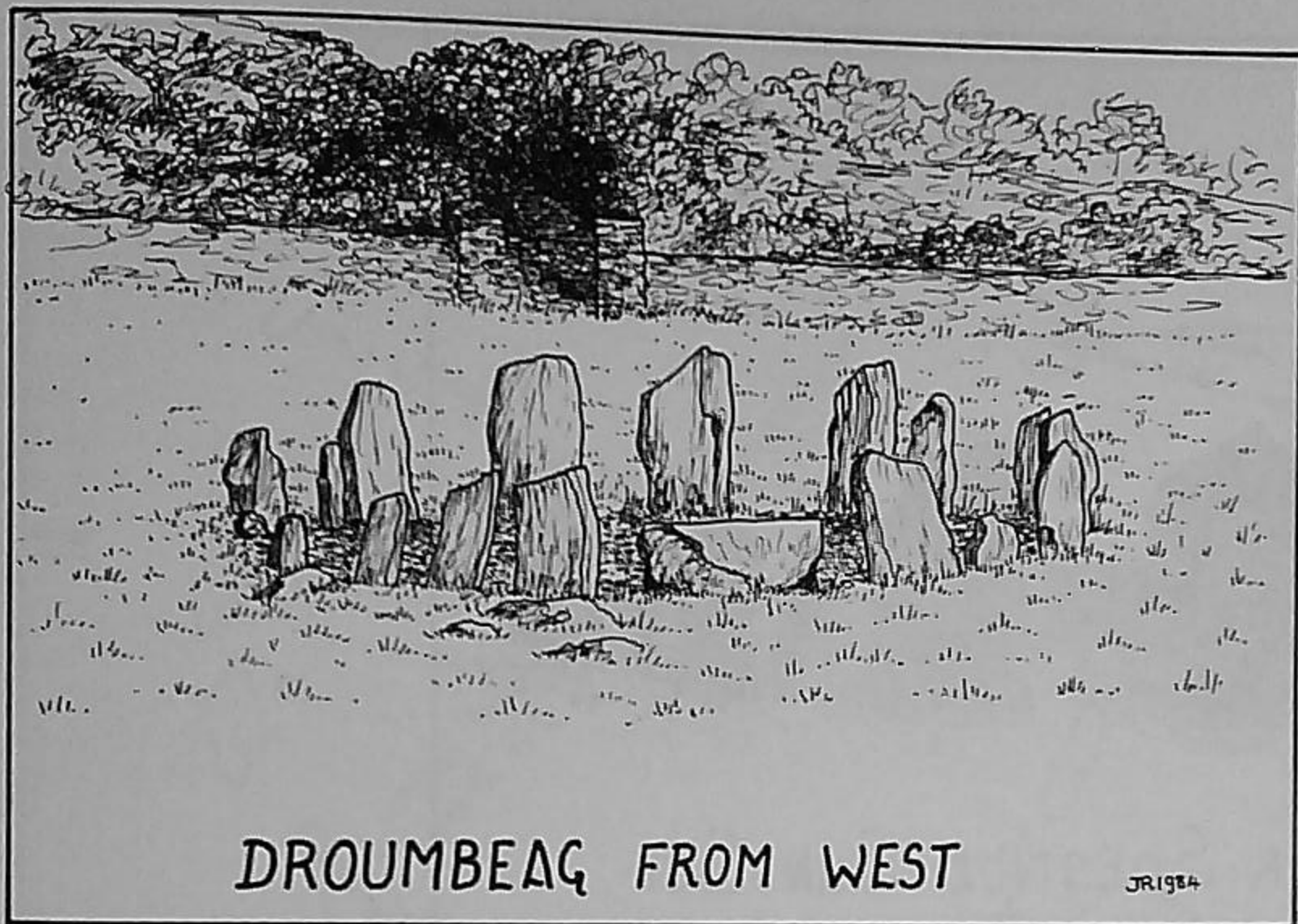
On the southerly high point of Ardra is the monument known locally as the 'Kings Grave'. The site is actually two standing stones set slightly apart forming what may appear as a kind of 'entranceway', and seeming to denote the north east - south west line noted elsewhere. Nearby lays a forgotten reminder of the importance of this land. A deeply inscribed cup marked stone lays forgotten among the gorse and directly south west of this can be found another cup marked stone of similar proportions abandoned in a field on the west side of Ardra. The next high point of land north of the 'Kings Grave' contains at least two cup marked stones, much larger than here but with less distinct markings. The high land is strewn with enormous quantities of stones and boulders which could even denote the former existence of a quite considerable monument in this place.

Cooscrooneen contains the best preserved Liss in the immediate area as well as the remains of other raths or forts that may once have adorned this land. A most interesting monument to be found in this townland is the site known locally as the 'Bishops Grave' though like the monument in Ardra there is no record of any internment here. The 'grave' here is a single standing stone of quite small proportions but carved with deeply etched symbols that many would interpret as being christian in origin. However the symbol here could be from a much older period as the 'crosses' on this stone are quite unlike anything from the early christian art. The stone has been heaped about with a small cairn of quartz boulders, which may be also a clue to its original age.

\* J.C.H.A.S. LXXII, CLEARY



## DRUMBEAG



DROUMBEAG FROM WEST

JR 1984

Droumbeag recumbent stone circle is in an excellent state of preservation and a fine example of this type of monument, for which the area is renowned. It is situated about 1½ miles east of Glandore and is quite easy to locate with the route to it being well signposted as far away as Leap. The site deservedly attracts many visitors each year and has been the most well known monument in the area since it was excavated in the 50's by a Cork archeological team. \*(2) Apart from restoring the circle the team also discovered many interesting features including the pleasant arrangement of hut sites and pathways built around a natural spring to the west of the circle.

It was known locally as the 'Druids Altar', though there is no known connection with this religion in the area, and the name Droumbeag is the townland area in which it is situated. Droumbeag means the small hill or ridge which may refer to the small, rounded hills to the east. It was also remembered locally that the circle had some connection with the winter solstice but until it was investigated around the turn of the century the nature of the connection was unknown. It is from these early investigations that the name 'recumbent stone circle' is derived. Boyle T. Somerville is credited with the terminology, for it was he who saw this and other circles as being 'oriented' towards a particular position and considered the orientation to be from between the portal or pillar stones, through the circle and across the recumbent stone.

(1) \* J.C.H.A.S. LXVI & LXVII E.M. FAHY



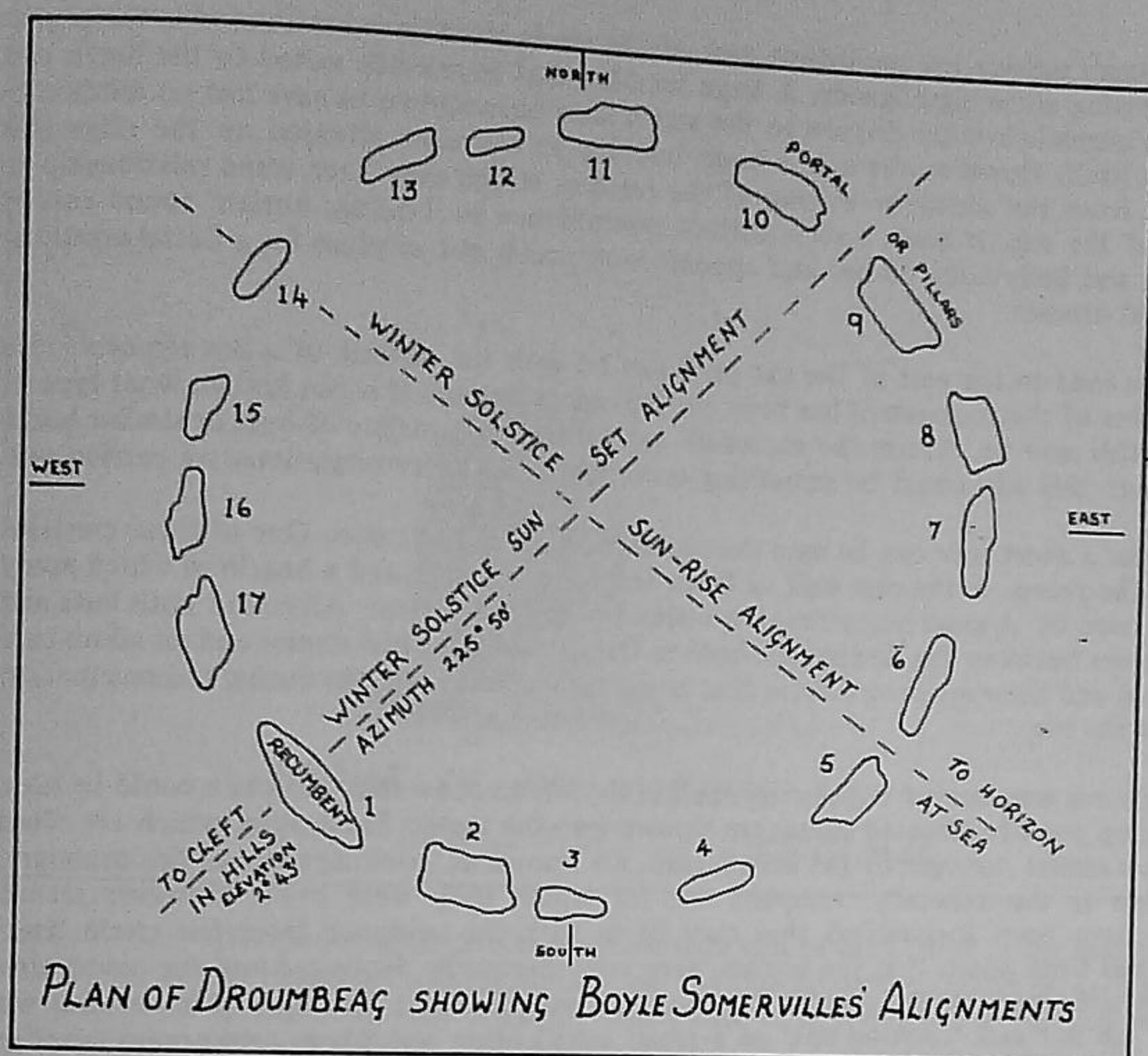


Arriving at the site by the fenced in pathway one arrives at the circle from a position which it is possible to observe the relevant feature of the site. The nearest stones, on the east side, are the pillar stones and looking across the circle the low flat topped stone is the recumbent. Beyond the site can be seen the hills to the west and directly in line with the recumbent a cleft can be seen where two ridges of the hills meet. It is in the cleft that Somerville considered the winter solstice sun to set.

The stones of the circle are hewn from a locally found sandstone, though from where they originally came is not known. The smooth inner faces of most stones probably took a great deal of effort to achieve and it is clear that the arrangement of stones is in random collection. Stone no 13 for instance, is a magnificent lozenge shaped rock with a flat inner face and bulbous rear, which is set into a cleverly designed socket in a quite topsy turvey way with only a small pointed section actually embeded in the ground. The packing that has prevented this stone from falling in all these years is ingenious and shows the remarkable skills that the builders of the monument were capable of. But perhaps the most remarkable stone is the Recumbent. This is also the fundamental stone of the circle being the most laboriously worked of all and the one which it appears has the primary role in the largely unknown astronomical functions of the circle. The top of the recumbent has been carved to achieve its present almost entirely horizontal and inward sloping dimensions. On this surface can be seen the inscription of three cup and ring marks.



# DRUMBEAG

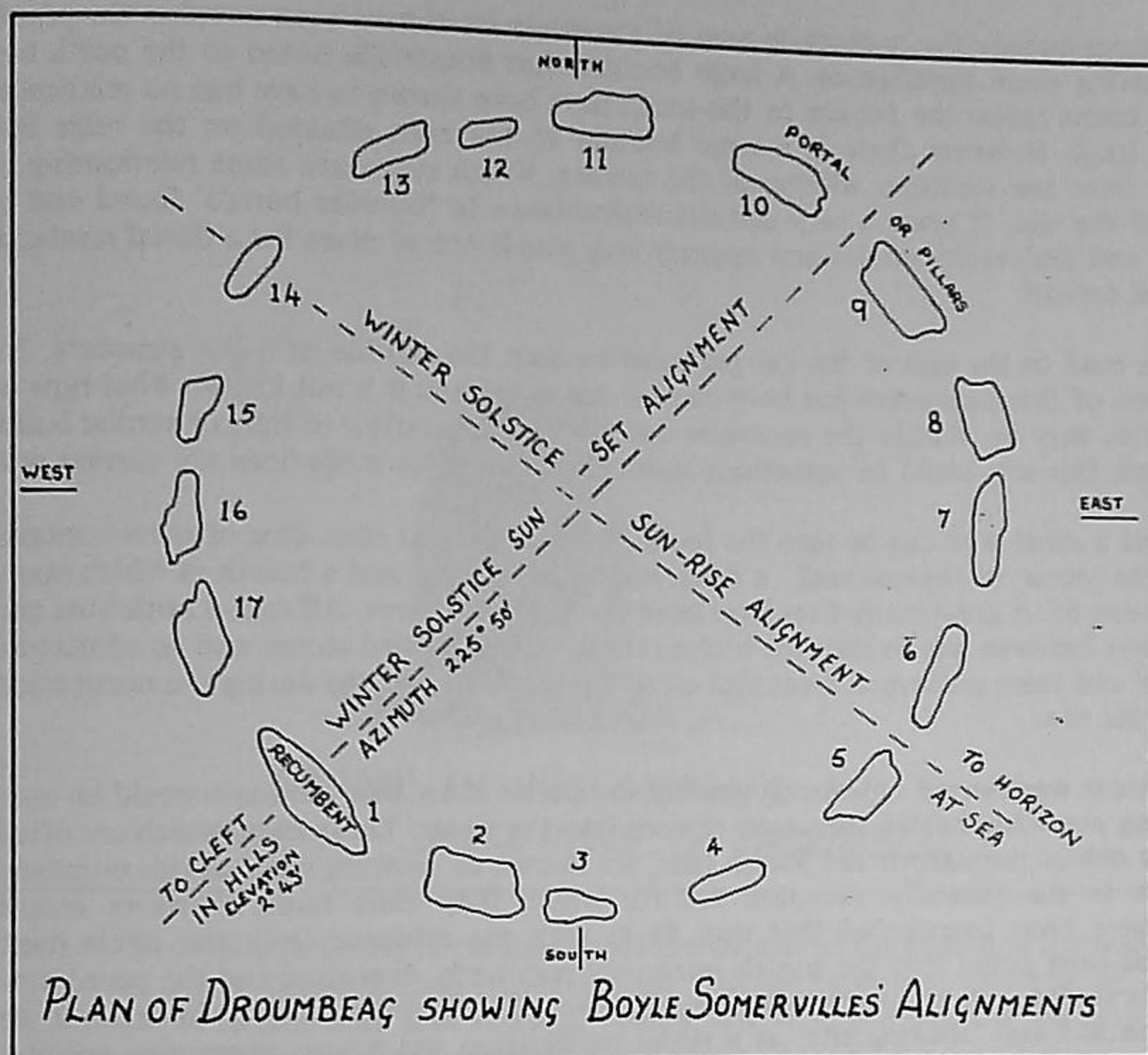


When Somerville saw the site in the first decade of this century he saw only 14 upright stones, stone no 7 had fallen and 3 and 4 were missing. The stones seen in place of 3 and 4 are just marker stones placed into the original sockets. An even earlier visitor to the site recorded a central stone about 3ft high and rounded. Possibly it covered the central burial site for no socket has been found for it and when Somerville recorded the site in 1908 he made no mention of it.

The site on which the circle stands is a gradually sloping terrace or plateau with a sharp drop to the south and the hillside rising on the north. It is not known if this terrace was purposely built or if the southern retaining wall dates from that period, but the interior of the circle has been levelled and a pavement of small stones and pebbles was laid across the area. This is a rare feature and one of the factors that make Droumbeag an important and well known monument. Several pits were dug into the bed rock below the paved floor, the central one contained cremated remains and broken pottery and the remaining ones were filled with broken up stone. No ideas have been forwarded to account for purposely burying broken stone, as yet, and the burials may not be contemporary with the circle. Radio carbon dates have been derived from the cremated remains that give a date of about 500 - 150 B. C.



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## ***DRUMBEAG***

Some features outside the immediate area of the circle itself have been noted in the past as perhaps having some significance. A large boulder that Somerville noted to the north east and some cairns below the terrace to the south have been shown to have had no relation to the circle itself. However there is a large boulder to the east, situated on the ridge that continues from the southern walling of the terrace, which may have some relationship to the rest of the site. It bears a very distinct resemblance to 'boulder burials' found east of Bohanagh and Ballyvackey circles and appears very much out of place for a flacial erratic or any natural deposit.

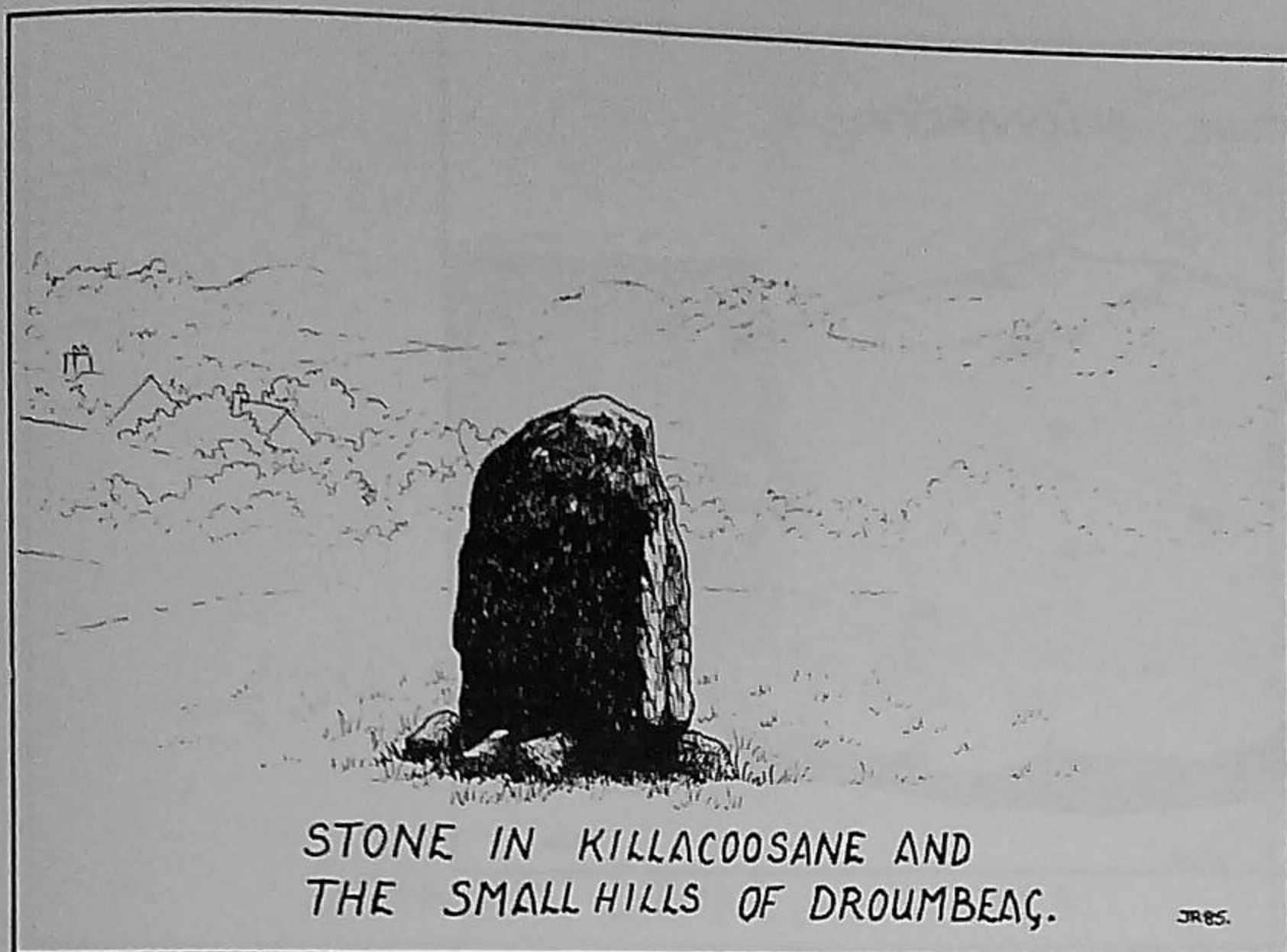
Across the road to the east of the car park can be seen the outline of a lios structure. No investigation of this monument has been carried out as yet and it is not known what type of structure this may be. Within the enclosure can be seen the outline of huts or similar buildings, though this site could be something quite surprising if investigations are carried out.

To the west a short way can be seen the foundations of the hut sites. One of these contains a well in the recess of the east wall, a basin fed by the spring and a hearth in which many fires had been lit. A great many fires have been burned in this area. All round both huts and the pathways between can be seen the broken fragments of burned stones and an admixture of charcoal and there are several areas that could have acted as hearths during the occupation periods of the site.

An experiment was carried out during work at the site to show that the basin could be used as a cooking pot when heated stones are thrown into the water. These sites, which are often found near circles throughout the British Isles, are known as 'cooking sites' as this mundane explanation is the generally accepted use for which they were built. However recent thoughts have been forwarded that may fit in with the evidence from the circle itself where it has been noted that the burials were very reverently deposited and the paved area kept clear and clean, almost sacrosanct one might say. It might therefore fit in better if we consider the hut and 'cooking site' as a ritual purification site where ceremonies (similar to those practised by indigenous peoples of America and elsewhere) were carried out, using the 'cooking pit' to create the steamy atmosphere of the sauna that is essential to these rites.



## DRUMBEAG



North of the circle site, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile east of the church in the townland of Killacoosane can be found a small standing stone. This has never been noted before and so far it is not known if this is all that originally stood here or if perhaps it is the only remaining stone of some other structure.

North of the Droumbeag townland the steep hill divides the areas and becomes on the northern side the townland of Kilbeag. There are three circular chambered monuments in the area and several lioses. By taking the hill road from the church directly north the first site can be found by taking the first left after descending about two thirds down the north side of the hill, and the first monuments may be found in the third field on the right/north side of the lane.

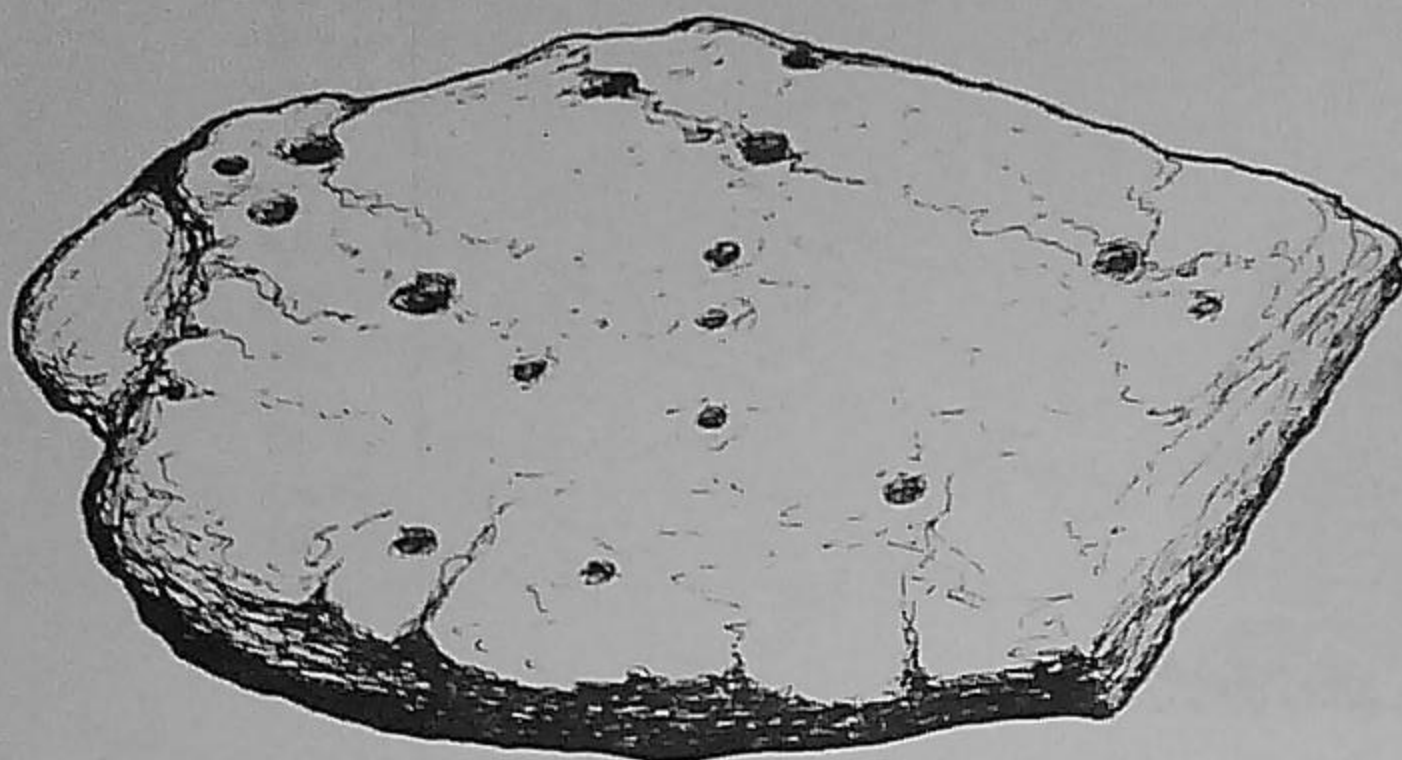
The structure consists of a circular cairn with kerbstones round the perimeter and the uprights of the interior passage. Most of the uprights appear to be in position but the monument has been severely denuded of the capping stones and covering cairn. To the east is a second circular cairn with similar characteristics but with upright stones radiating out around the inner perimeter. These unrecorded sites are similar to the 'Passage Grave' found in the north east of the country and may be very important monuments from which valuable evidence could be derived to assist our knowledge of the peoples of the past.

A smaller monument of similar type stands in a field about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the south.



## DRUMBEAG

INSCRIBED STONE , BALLYVIREEN



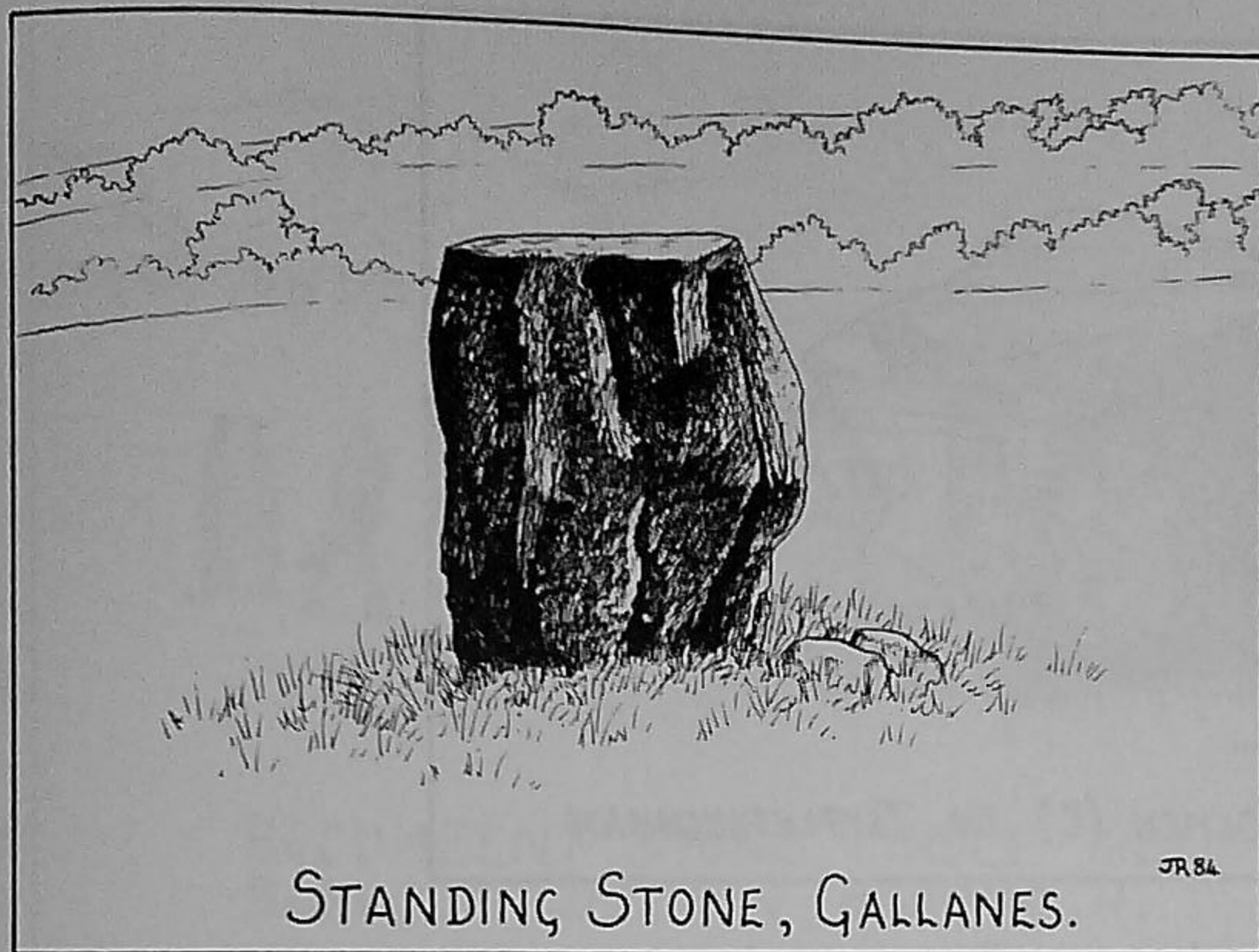
JR84

East of Droumbeag in the townland of Ballyviree is a quite large stone slab with many deeply inscribed cup marks. This was discovered during the compilation of this work and is unrecorded as it formerly laid half buried. The stone can be found by taking the Glandore to Rosscarbery road to the first right hand lane after the turn off for Droumbeag. It lays in a field to the east of the lane on the highest part of the land.

The site where this stone is situated overlooks the Rowry river valley and from this pleasant situation the river and its estuary can be seen all the way to the sea. There are also the remains of lioses in the area and almost due east of the cup marked stone on the opposite side of the valley are the remains of a considerable fort like structure built from very large boulders and stones.



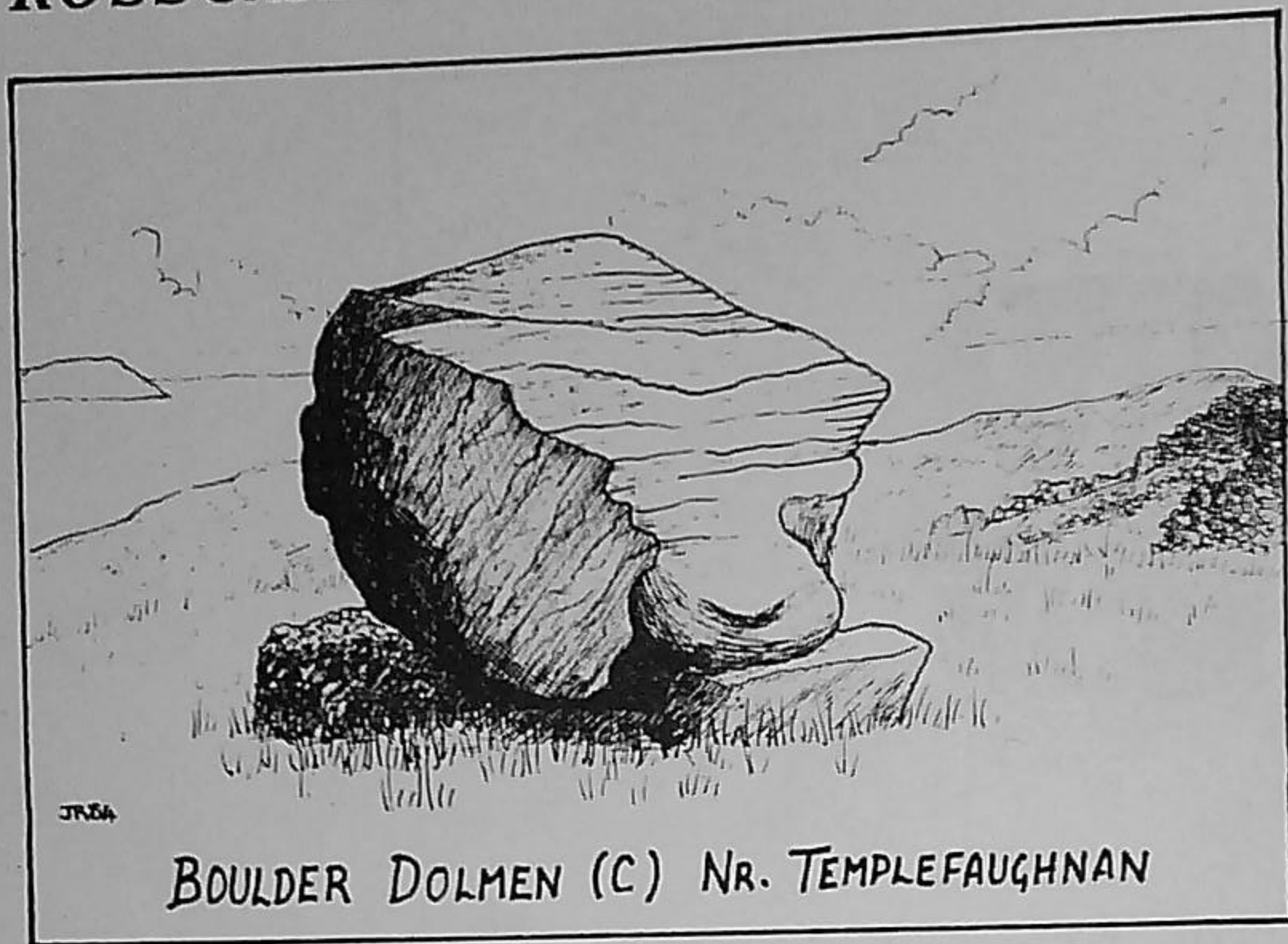
## DRUMBEAG



In the townland of Gallunes, which derives its name from the formerly well known standing stones found in the area, can be seen at least one surviving upright. The one illustrated here overlooks the estuary of Rosscarbery and from it can be seen the hillside of Burgatia townland that contains some of the most important monuments in the area.



## ROSSCARBERY

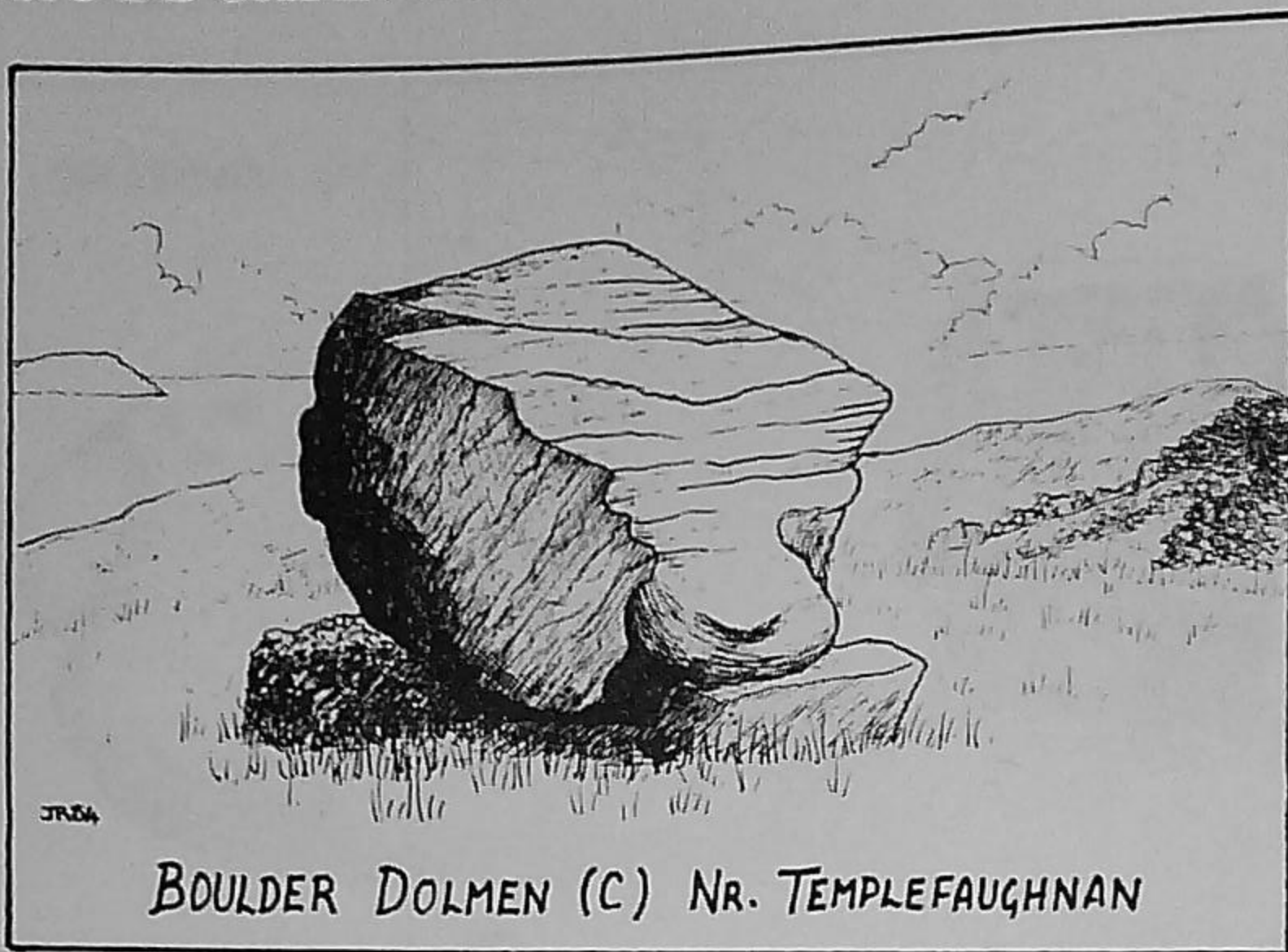


The present day town of Rosscarbery is situated about a mile west of the original pre-Christian centre known as Allithir, (the house of the rock?). It had been an important place long before the learned missionary St. Fachtna arrived here in the 6th century, and not without good reason the early monks set up their religious centre a little to the west for no doubt they had to contend with confusion of loyalties to both new and old gods. However when the missionaries had become established they built a small church amid the structures of the old religion and today the remains of the tiny church can still be seen on the hill about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile east of the town. There is not much left of the church but being the only identifiable structure from the period it is an important site where a shrine has also been set up in dedication to the Saint.

To the south of the shrine only a few yards away is a small lios, one of the many that can still be identified in the area. Across the lane and just a short distance to the south west is one of the three boulder dolmens (c) that are in a line from here to the east. On the summit of the hill to the north is an impressive moated fort with high banks and much of the outer bank and ditch still intact especially on the west and north sides. For a viewing point of the surrounding area one could not choose a better vantage than this fort on Burgatia hill. The area to the east, the slopes and hills of the valley below, has been inhabited since very ancient times and many important monuments are visible from here. About a half mile away can be seen the stone circle of Bohonagh, the centre piece of this pre-historic landscape.



## ROSSCARBERY

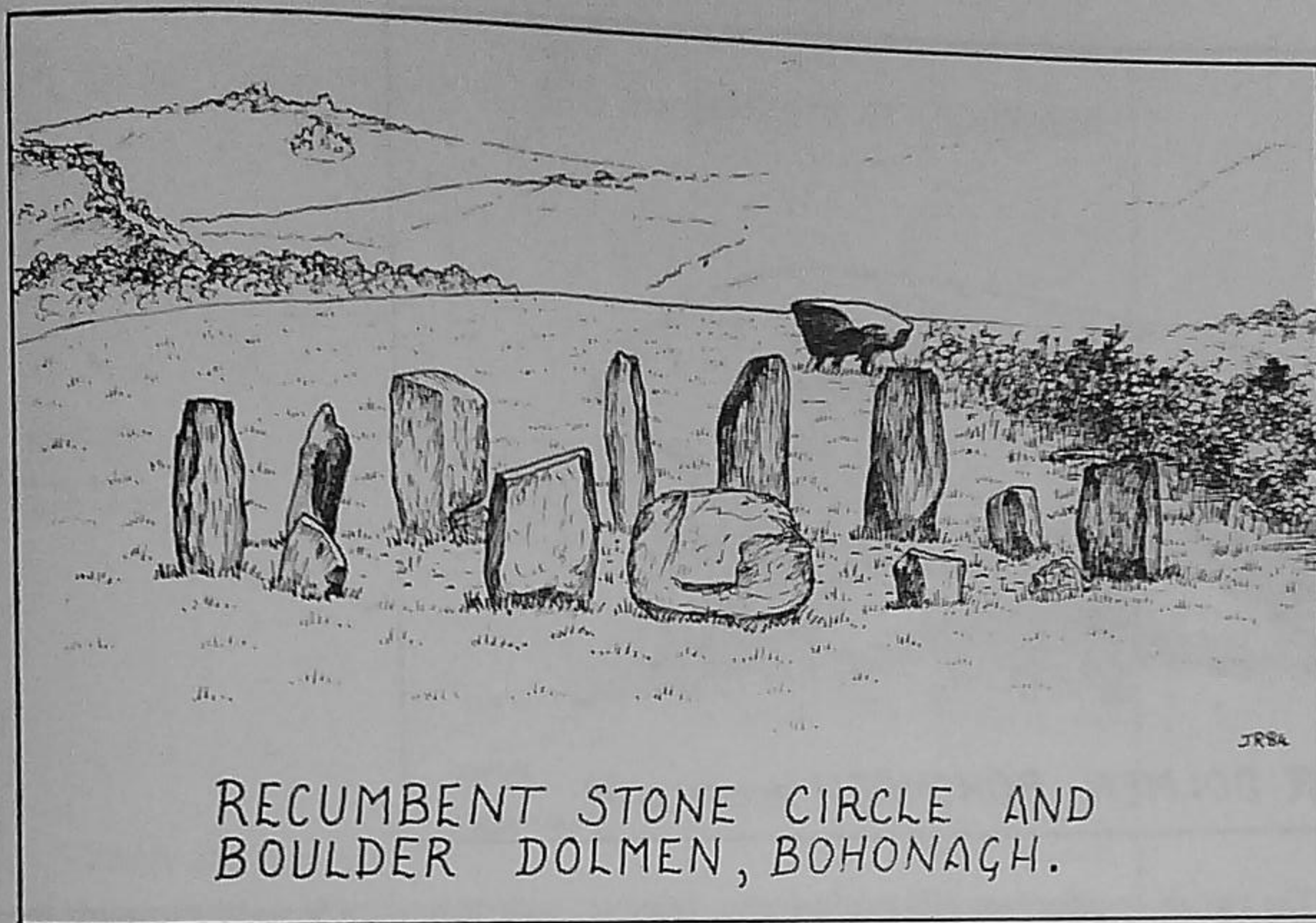


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## ROSSCARBERY



RECUMBENT STONE CIRCLE AND  
BOULDER DOLMEN, BOHONAGH.

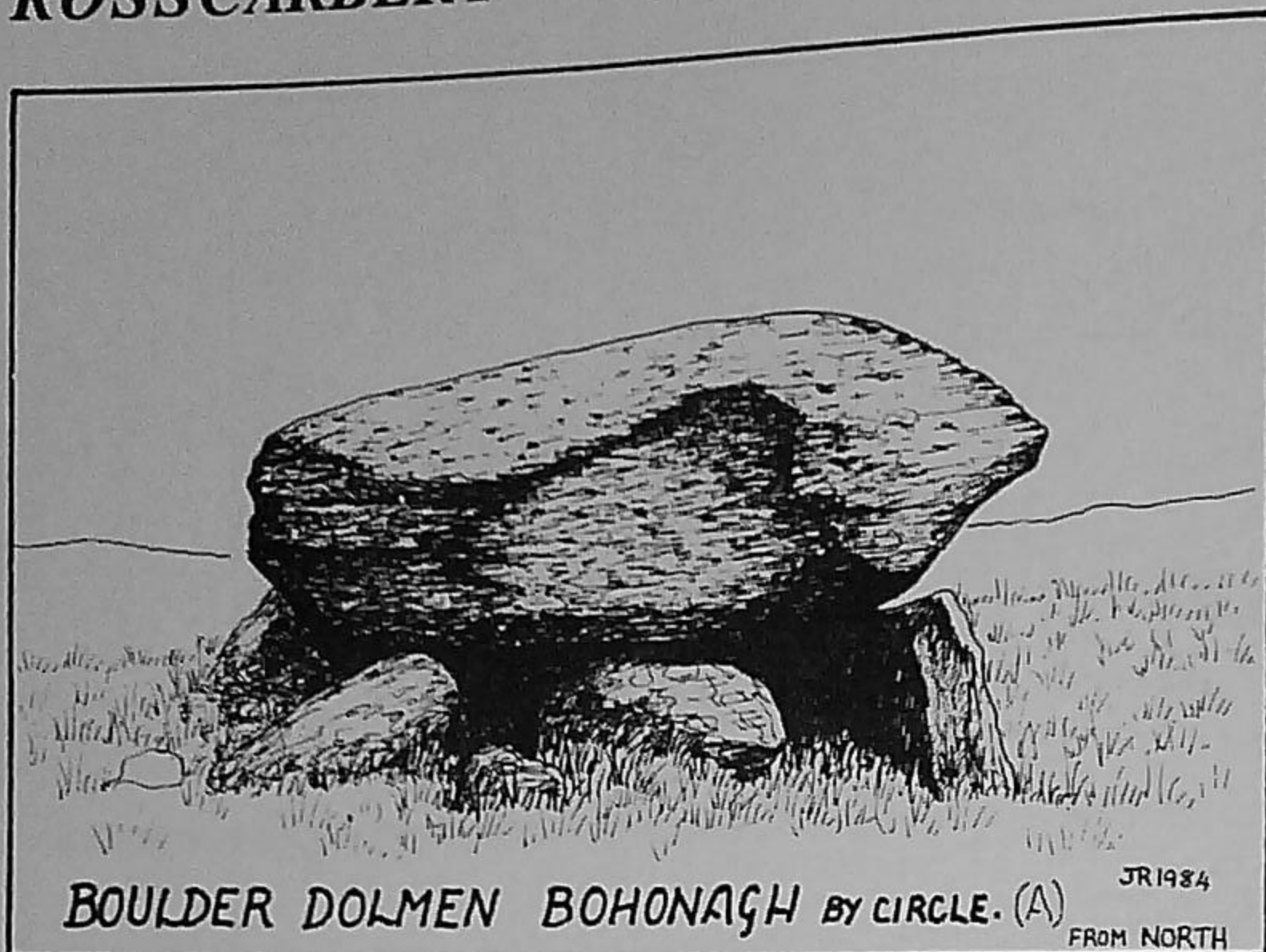
Bohonagh probably means the place abounding in cattle, however the name is long debased by foreign tongue and could mean the marsh near the sea. It bears no reference to the antiquities contained in this townland.

When Somerville visited the circle in the 30's it was in a poor condition, overgrown and lacking in more than half of its original number of upright stones. However this did not prevent him from making his usual meticulous survey and his calculation of the original number of uprights was later to be proved correct by an archaeological team who restored the site in the 60's. They discovered that the original number was 13 and re-erected three that had fallen. Four had gone completely missing though and they had to content themselves with placing marker stones in the sockets. The map shows the missing stones in dotted outline and stones 10, 11, and 4 were fallen. However the circle as it is seen today is quite impressive being constructed from large stones mainly on the east side of the circle, as at Droumbeag, and it is these bigger uprights that were found in position. The recumbent stone is quite different in shape to most of the recumbents of the area being rounded on top as opposed to the flat and perfectly horizontal one at Droumbeag. The top has been worked however to achieve an inward slope that points towards the interior of the circle. Like most other recumbent stones it is not set into a socket but is laid onto the rock surface and kept in place with stone padding that has kept the bulbous outer side from pulling it down.

\*J.C.H.A.S. LXVI E. M. FAHEY



## ROSSCARBERY

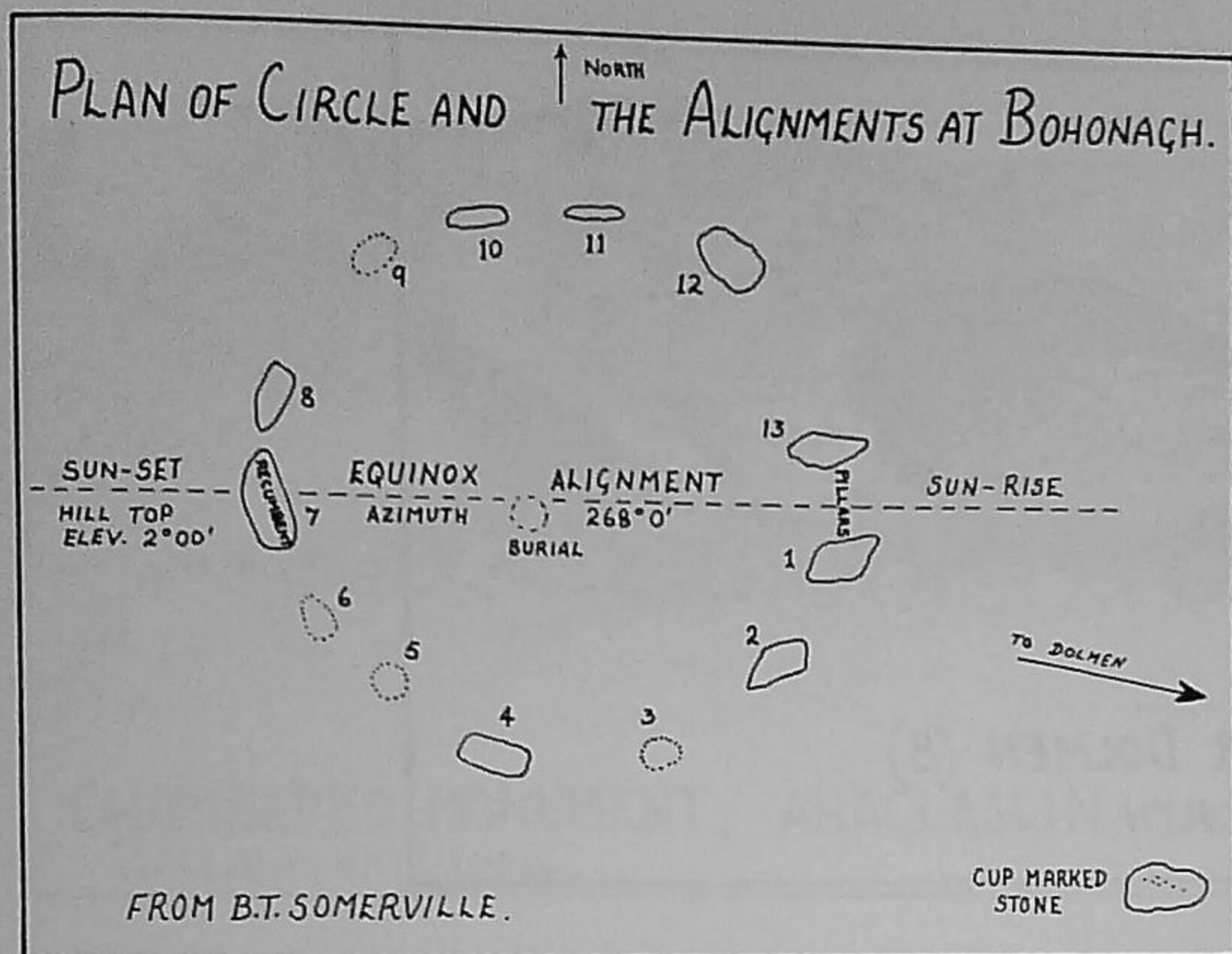


The portals or pillars are different here also, being set with their narrow widths towards the centre and appearing more deserving of those terms 'pillar' or 'Portal' as they seem to evoke more of the character of an avenue or entrance than at other circles. One of the uprights is set with a quartz block holding it in place, this is another of the original intact uprights. The centre of the circle was cleared of topsoil, but it is not known if there was paving as at Droumbeag. A single cremated burial was found almost at the centre but very little else was uncovered during excavations that might aid an interpretation of the use or age of the circle.

An arrangement of post holes was found to the south of the circle amid the remains of a structure of some kind that once stood here. Rectangular in shape it was probably not related to the period of erection of the stones but little was discovered from which could be derived a date. To the east, near to the circle lays a rather worn cup marked slab showing little of the original complexity of design. Also on this side of the circle is the impressive boulder dolmen (a) for which this site is noted, its curious pointed 'nose' facing towards the circle. The boulder has several cup marks still visible and some cremated remains were discovered in the cavity underneath.



# ROSSCARBERY

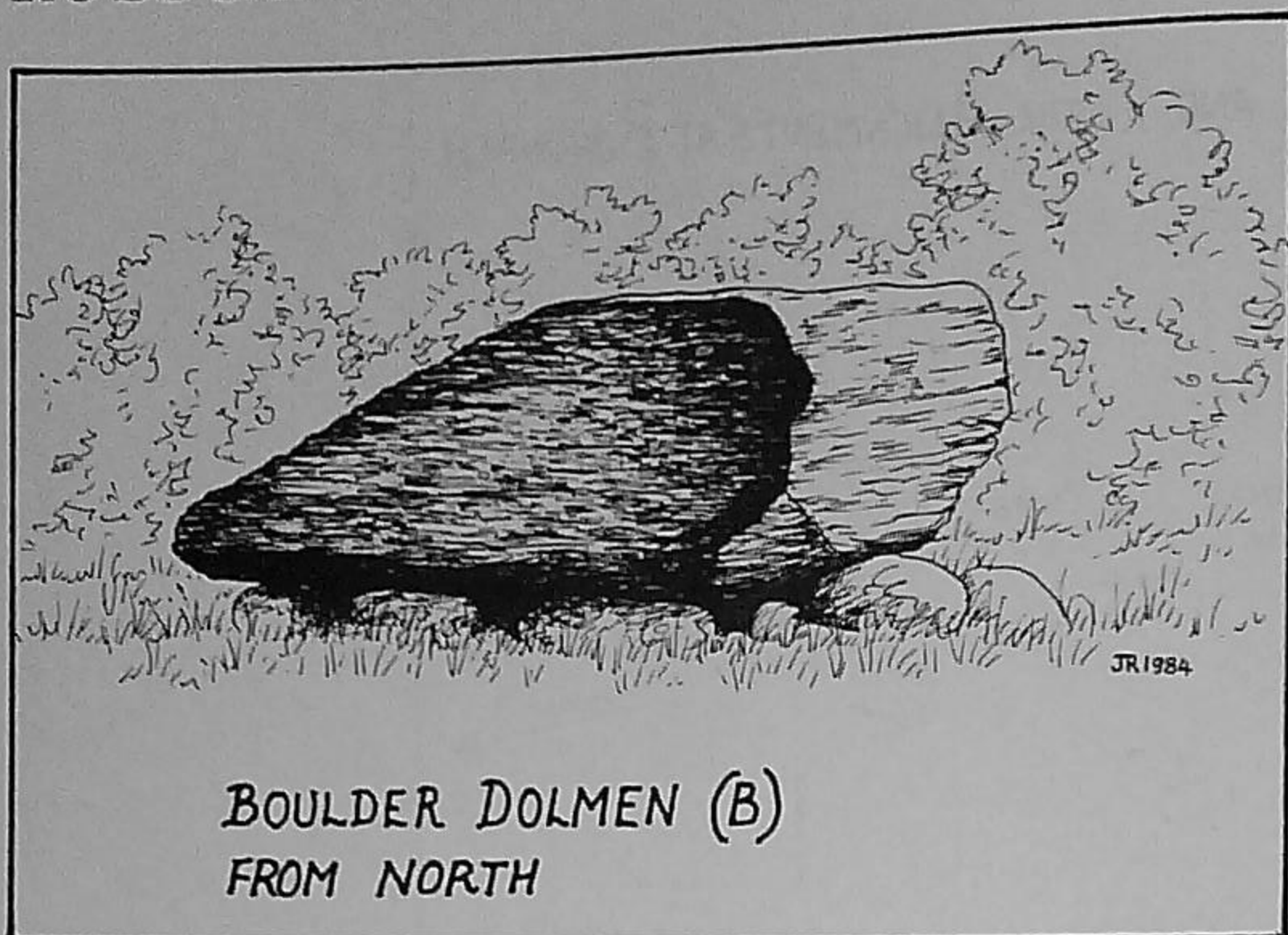


Somerville saw that the alignment here was on an east-west axis, towards the Equinox sunset 21st March and 21st September. This may account for the fact that the recumbent is rounded rather than flat as at Droumbeag. Here it would be used for marking the sun at the time of year when it is descending almost straight down to the horizon, where as at Droumbeag it is marking the sun in its low winter altitude when it skims to the setting position at an angle, therefore requiring a wide flat top to record its horizontal as well as vertical movement. During his survey, Somerville also searched for topographical features, like the cleft at

Droumbeag, on the western horizon. He claimed there was nothing that could relate in this way but in fact the fort on the summit of Burgatia is directly in this line and the Equinox sun-set lands actually in the cleft formed by the moat on the north side of the fort that is coincidentally deeper here than elsewhere around the fort.



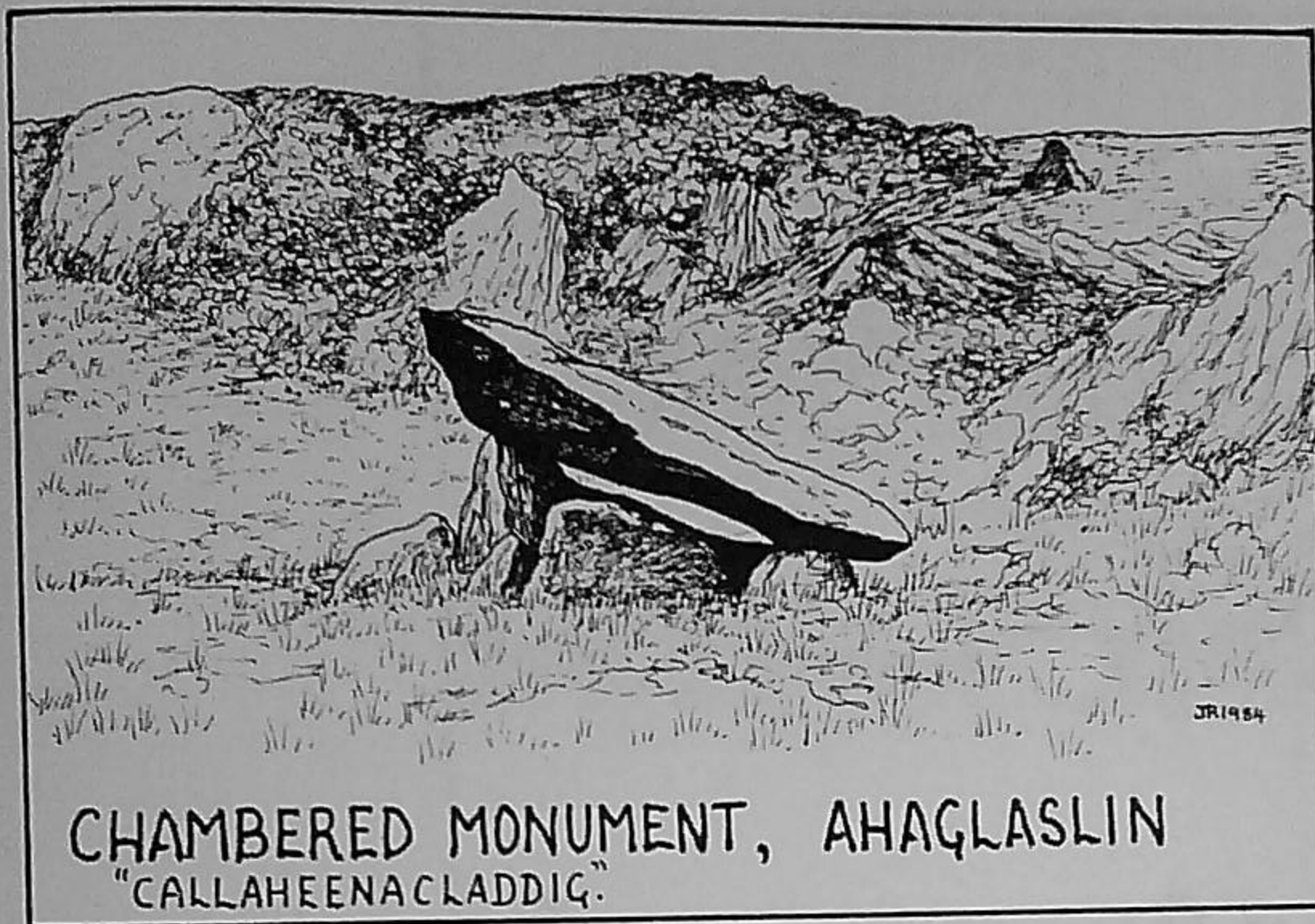
## ROSSCARBERRY



The boulder dolmen near the circle is the central one of three that are set in an almost straight line from west to east. The easterly monument stone (b) is in Knocknageehy townland and can be found to the south of the main Clonakilty road about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile away. It has several cup marks on top of its curiously shaped capping stone and so far has not been investigated to see what remains it might contain.



## ROSSCARBERRY

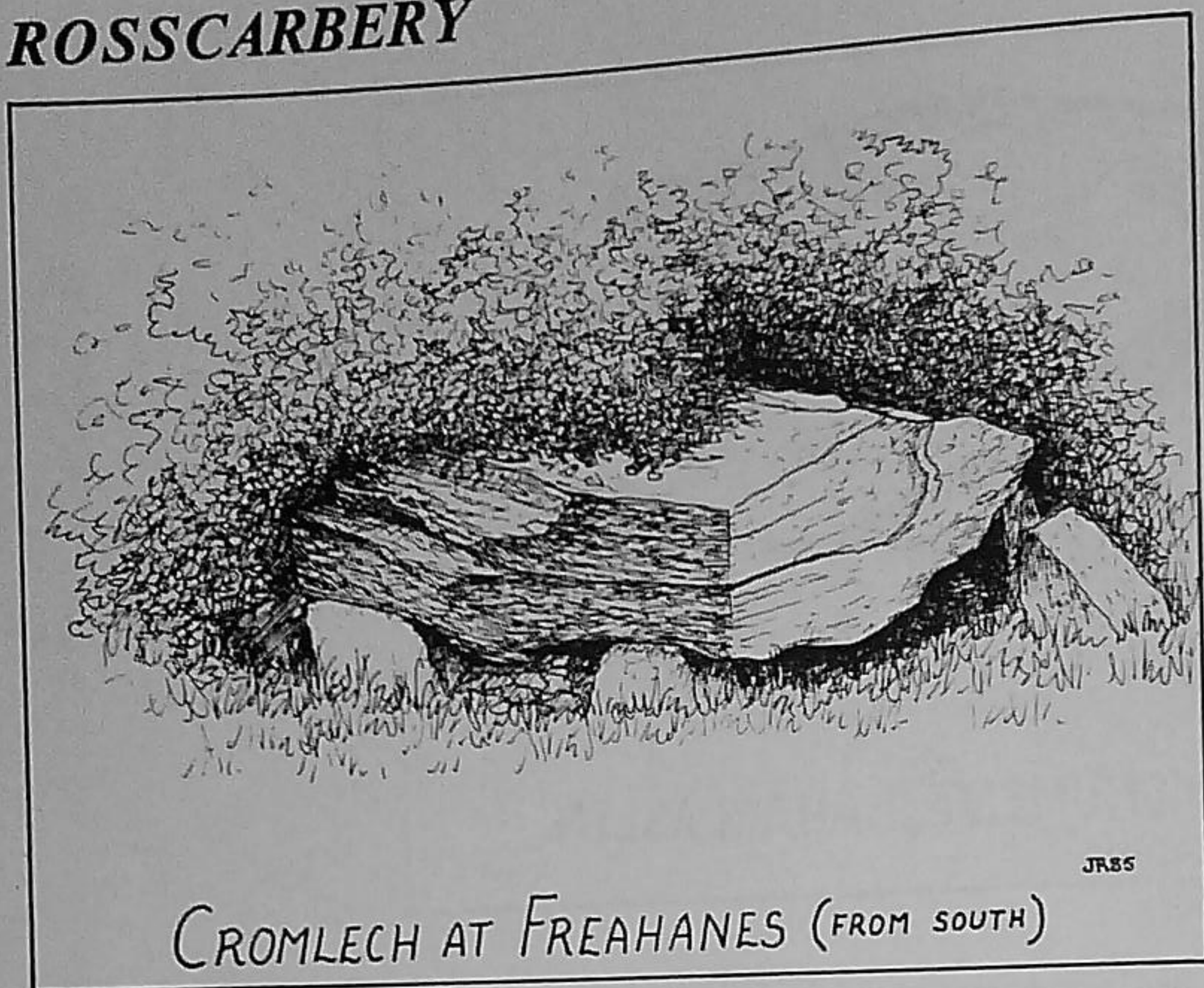


There are two monuments at either end of the valley that can perhaps be described as dolmens or cromlechs but for some reason the southern one on the slopes of the hill in Ahaglaslin has been described as a 'chambered tomb' and as such has been called the finest of its type in the whole of Cork. However it is an impressive monument being a massive slab set at a westerly descending angle on several cleverly erected uprights. The chamber or cavity underneath contained burial remains and flints but being well known in the area it was raided very early for its contents and the archaeological evidence from here is very inconclusive. The local name for the monument is Callaheenacaddig, the old woman, or witch, of the sea shore.

Few people actually take the short walk to this site preferring to view the monument from the roadside below, it being visible from the Clonakilty road just east of the junction to Ownahincha. The effort to get up near to this impressive construction is highly recommended however and well worth the small walk required. Just take the first lane off the main road, going south and stop at the first farm on right and enquire the way from where it is a short trek to the site.



## ROSSCARBERY



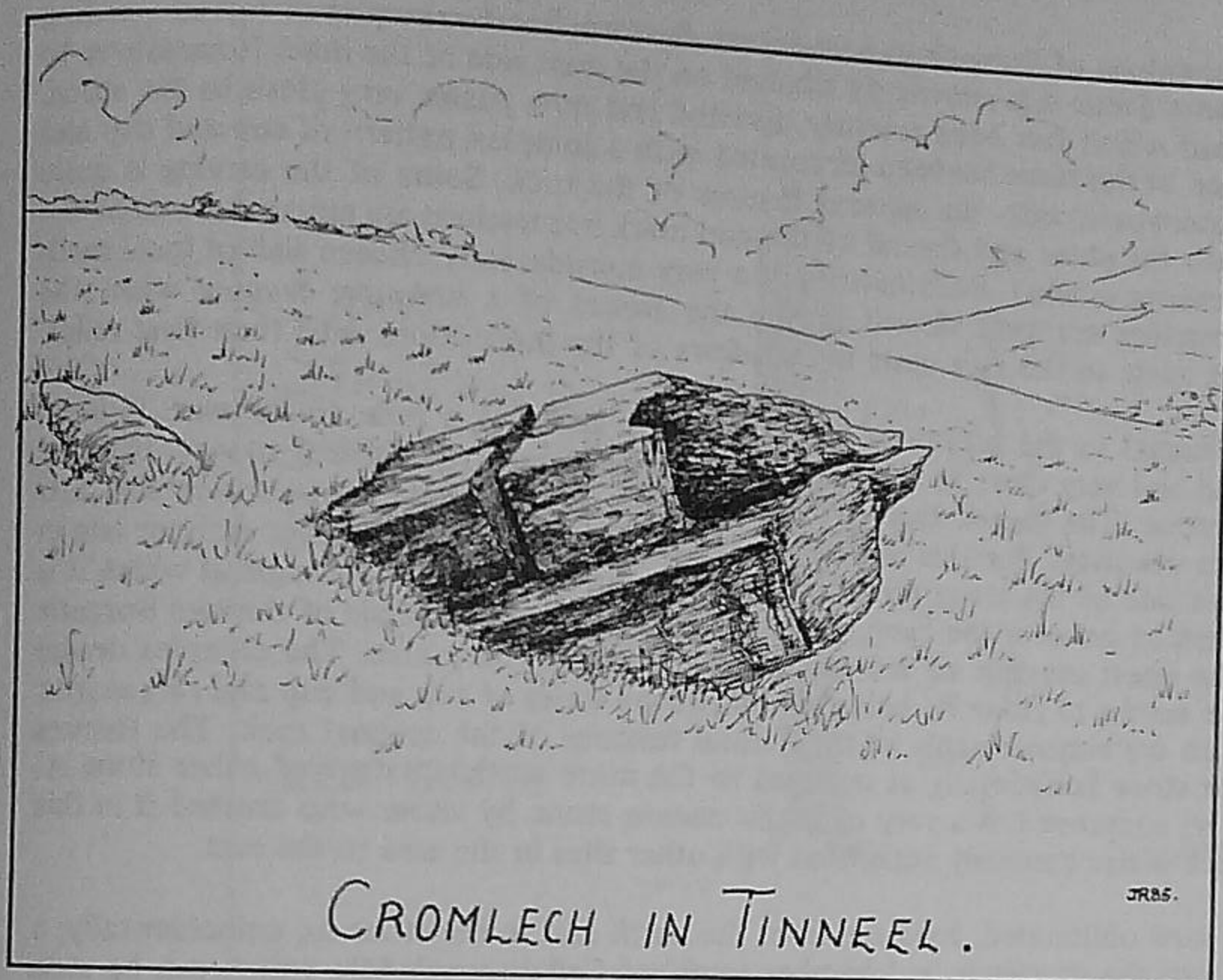
At the northern end of the valley, in the townland of Freahanes, is a very fine cromlech, of lesser size than Callaheenacladdig but comparable in many other ways. It can be found just north of Freahanes bridge from where the outlying stones near the main monument can be seen. The cromlech abuts an overgrown hedge that is obscuring the monument so that only the end protrudes, and this is not recognisable until one is quite close. However a closer examination of what lays beneath the thorn and ivy reveals that it is a very important monument, probably the best preserved cromlech, or dolmen in the whole area.

This is a very fine monument that, were it revealed from beneath its covering hedge, could be seen to be a very intact and therefore valuable relic. Proper examination of the site might also reveal something of its nature, but so far it appears not to have been examined or even recorded and lays waiting beneath its concealment for us to remember it is even there.

To the east are several large slabs of stone half buried in the ground. The ground all around here is uneven and several curious shapes show through the grass, it is apparant that there was originally once an alignment or something next to the cromlech but all that remains now is one intact upright and three stones appearing as if heaped up nearby.



## ROSSCARBERY



A similar monument can be found about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the west near the crossroads known as the Quakers cross in the townland Tinneel. Here there can be found a cromlech which is also accompanied by outlying stones, two of which are still standing.

This very much resembles the cromlech in Drishane, Castletownshend as both consist of two large boulders one set at an angle upon the other. They are also alike in having double protrusions on their outward facing ends which are very similarly copied on both the upper and lower stones. Everything doubled in fact. The cromlech of Tinneel is a very curious structure as not only is its general shape of a very wierd design but the upper stone is also split right through in a dead straight line. Of course we have no idea what was going on in the heads of our ancestors when they erected such stones as this which shows a deliberate use of a particular shape of stone that may have also been considerably carved to achieve the desired final design. It is time now only to remember that they did and so it is pleasing to find that this cromlech and its accompanying standing stones are much as Webster saw them in 1930, the only difference being that one of the outlying stones now constitutes part of a recent erected wall.



## ROSSCARBERY

Within the townland of Burgatia can be found the two finest examples of carved standing stones in the area. Stone A is conveniently situated on the west side of the main Rosscarbery to Clonakilty road which has been recently diverted and now passes very close to the stone. The north face of this stone has been decorated with a complex pattern of cup and cup and ring marks interwoven with the natural fissures of the rock. Some of the carving is quite deeply cut into the stone and several of the cup mark impressions are enhancements of the original depressions in what must have been a very considerably chosen slab of local sandstone. The carvings are best viewed during the sunset of a summers evening when the sunlight at an angle to the face casts the shadows of the inscriptions into their best relief.

Stone B is situated in the garden of Burgatia house about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile to the east. It is on private ground and very close to the house so permission must be acquired to view this rare and ancient stone. The carved face is on the north east side of the stone which also tilts slightly in this direction. For this reason the carvings have to be seen either early or late in the day as this side of the stone rarely receives any direct sunlight. The angle at which it is set has also helped preserve the carvings so this the least worn example of the two Burgatia stones and the finest example of ancient artwork in the Carbery area. The complex design is of a similar nature to stone A, being an interwoven series of cup and cup and ring marks, some of which are enhancements of the natural features of the original rock. The fissures cut across the stone horizontally as opposed to the more verticle nature of other stone A. It must also be considered as a very carefully chosen stone by those who erected it in this situation which is also curiously connected with other sites in the area to the east.

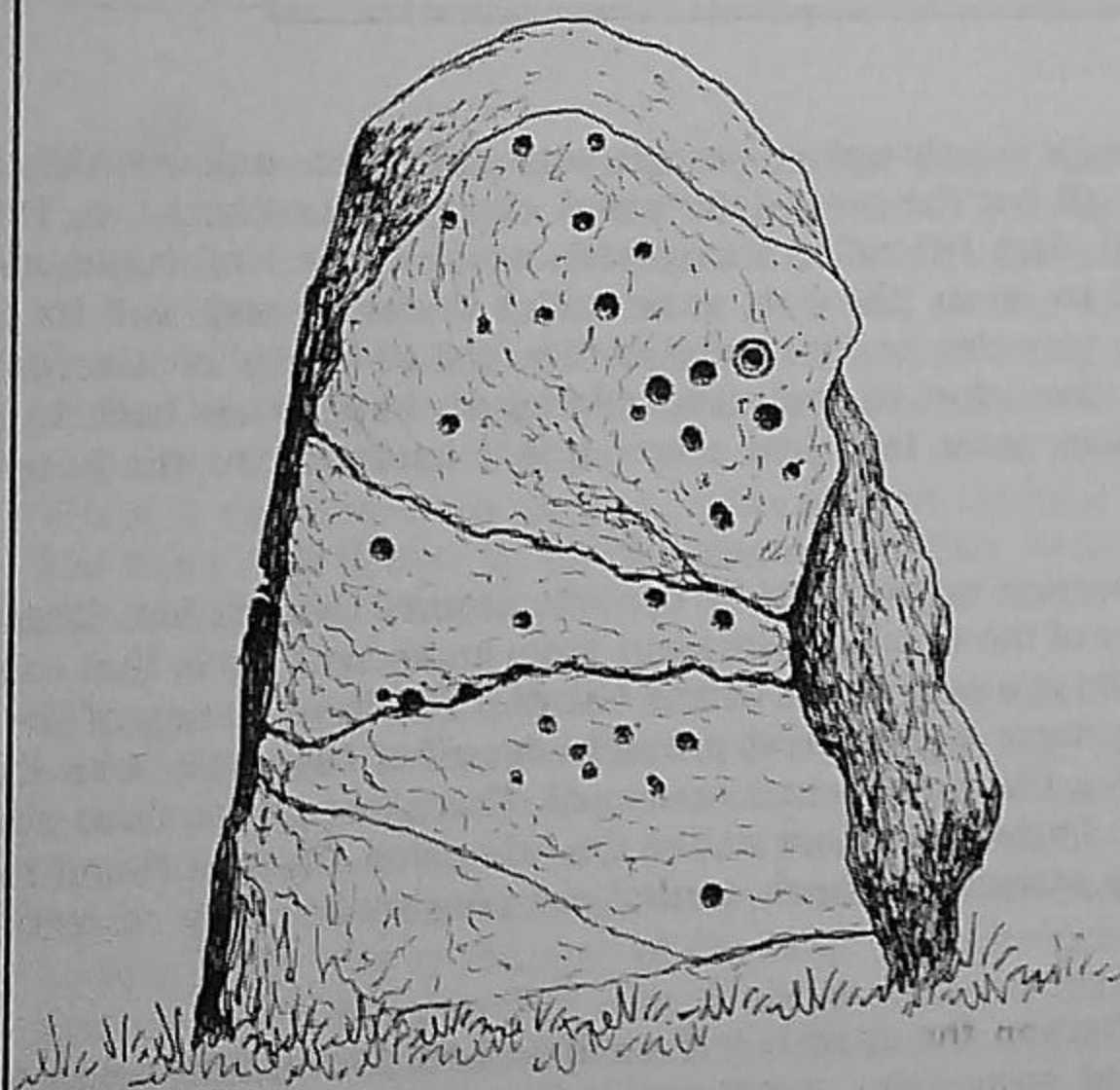
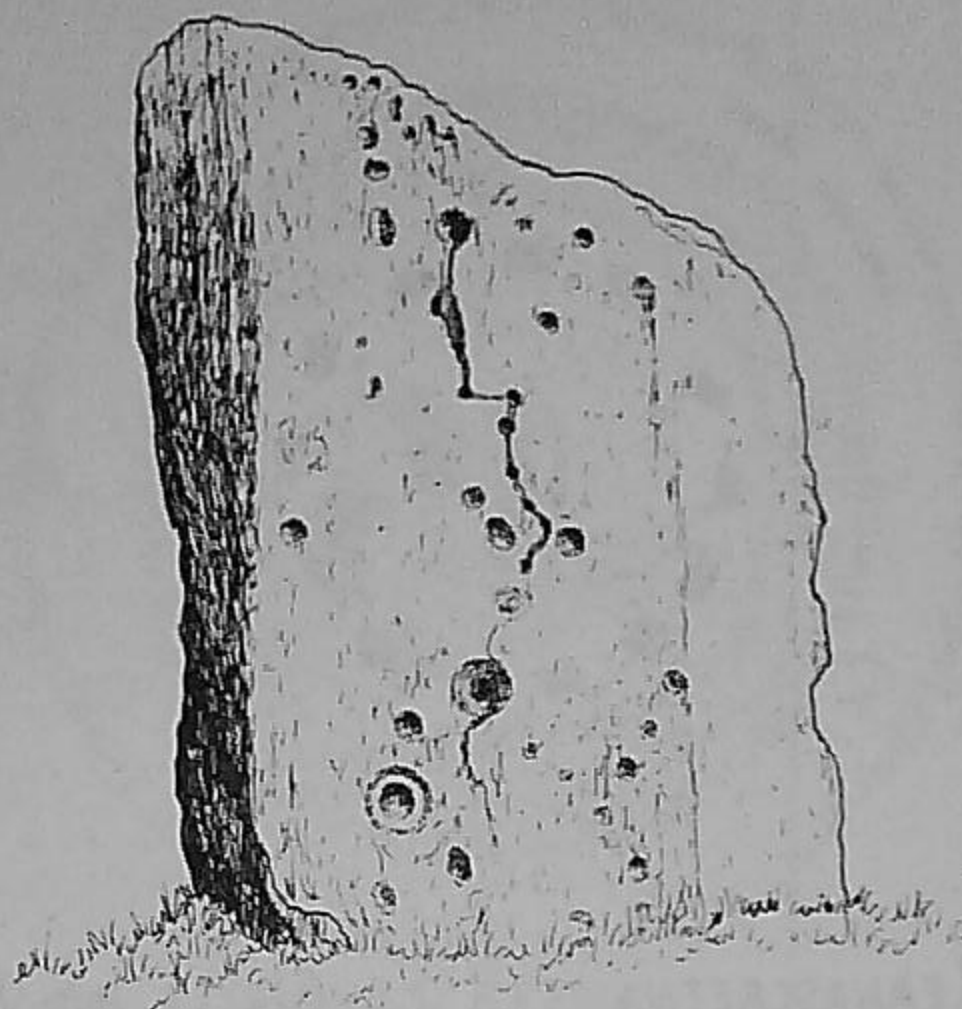
Originally a, now obliterated, road ran from the north east to the stone in, coincidentally, a direct line from the cromlech or 'chamber tomb' of Callaheenacladdig which can be seen from this site. The alignment between the two monuments and the old road between them is a direct line towards the summer solstice sun-rise, which incidentally is the only time that, for a brief dawn period, the sun shines directly on the carved face of the rock.



# ROSSCARBERY

CARVED  
STANDING  
STONES,  
BURÇATIA.

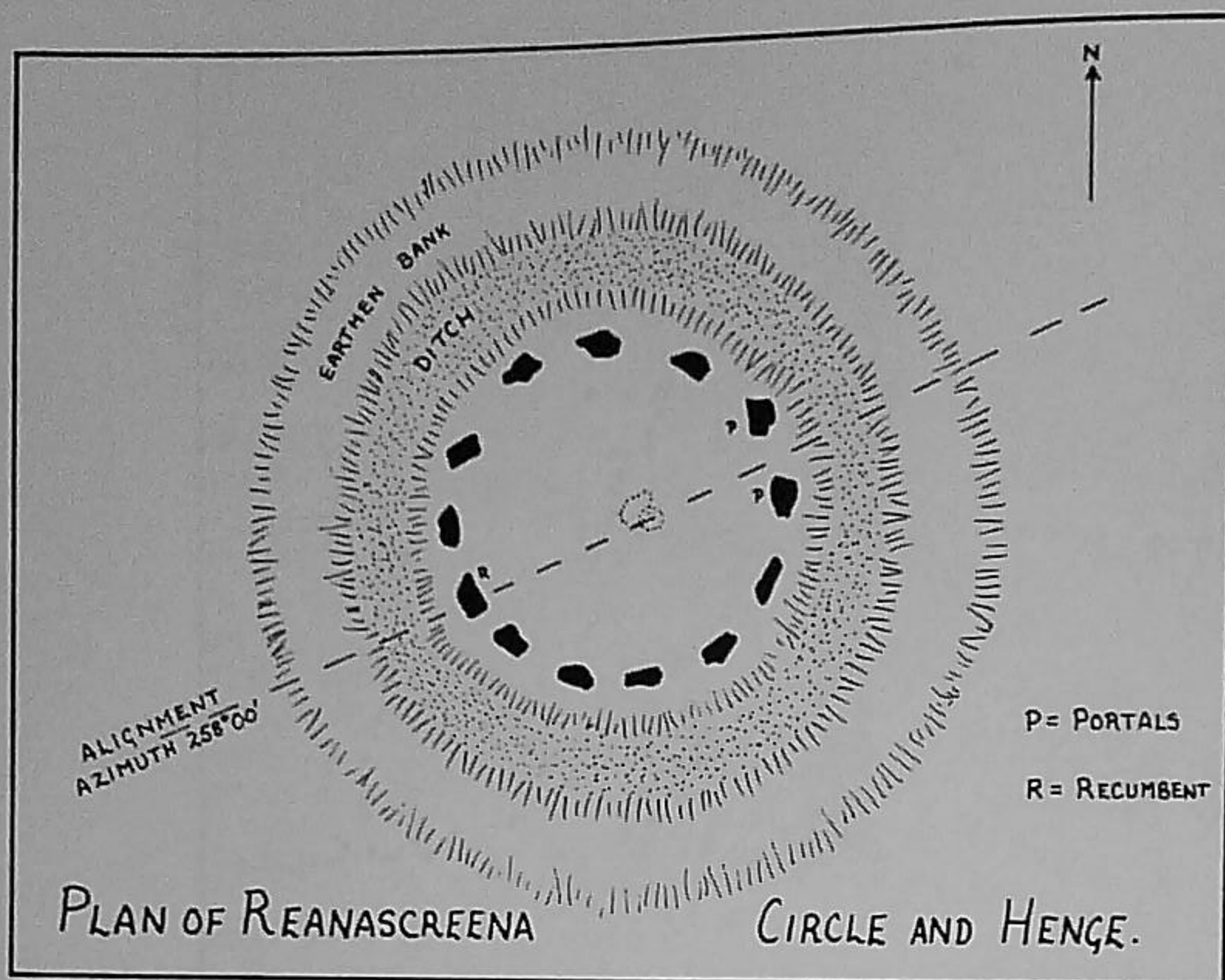
WEST STONE



EAST STONE



# REANASCREENA



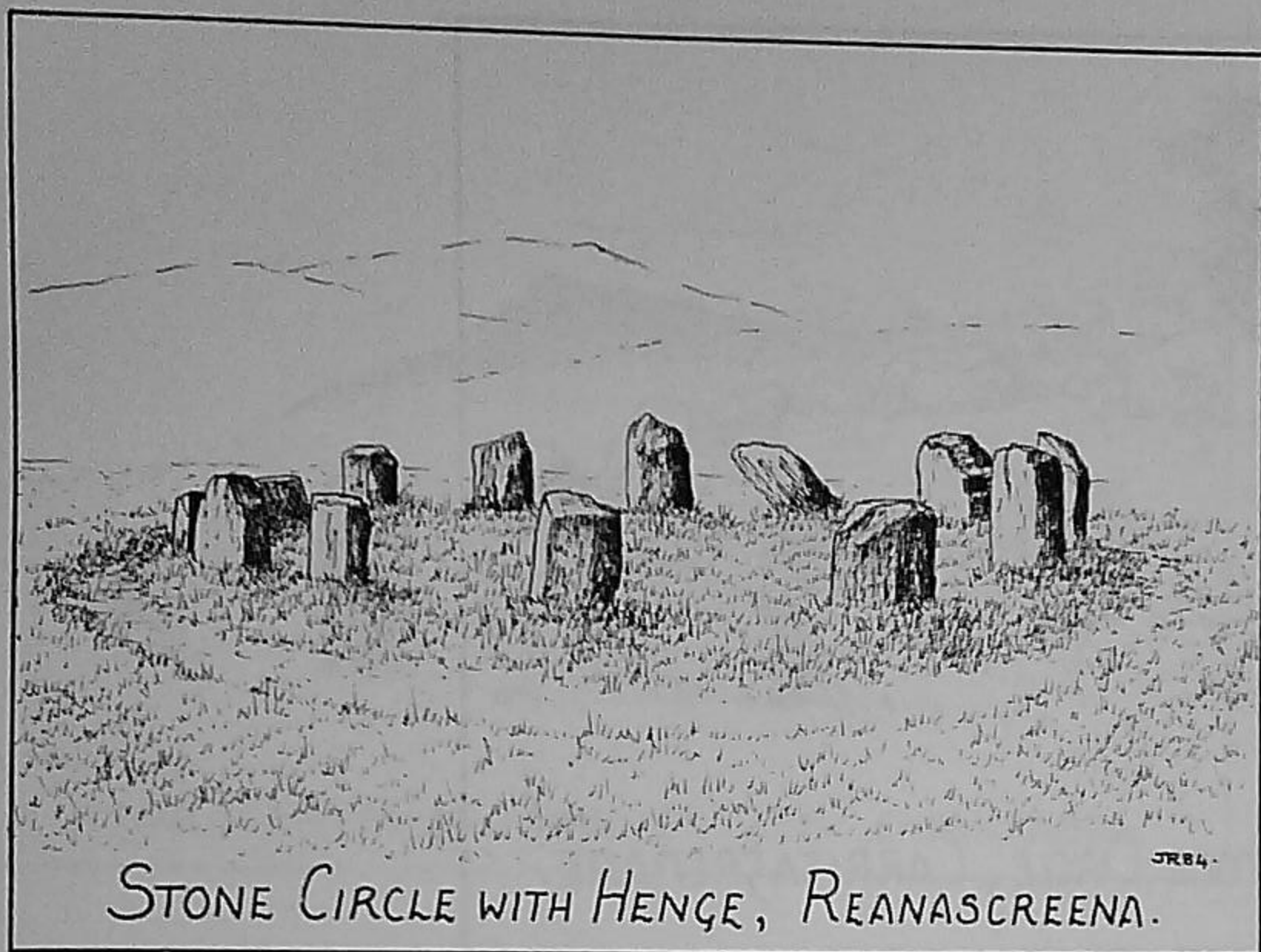
The Reanascreena area is mostly upland pasture with parts quite mountainous and stretches of bogland that defy all but the most determined attempts at reclamation. Dominating the whole area is the tall, dark hill called Carrigfadda which is the vital landmark of the area. Generally considered to mean 'the long rock' which describes very well its general shape, the word Carrigfadda may also be considered as 'the rock of length' or 'the rock of measure' which adds another dimension to the name relating its importance back to ancient times when it may have been more than just a convenient landmark to the people of ancient times.

There are several important monuments in the area around Carrigfadda. Reanascreena, the most important village of the area, takes its name from an ancient circle that can be found on the flat topped hill about a mile south of the village. 'The loop or ring of the shrine' is the basic meaning of the name and it most properly describes the circle with its surrounding bank or henge for which the monument is renowned. This is one of the three circles that have been excavated in the Carbery area but unlike the other sites this was found to in an almost perfect order and the restoration work carried out consisted mainly of restoration of the henge.

In its quiet upland situation the circle is seldom disturbed, the ancient peace that surrounds this perfectly preserved monument seems peculiarly pure and as a part of the west Cork heritage it is both valuable and rare.



## REANASCREENA

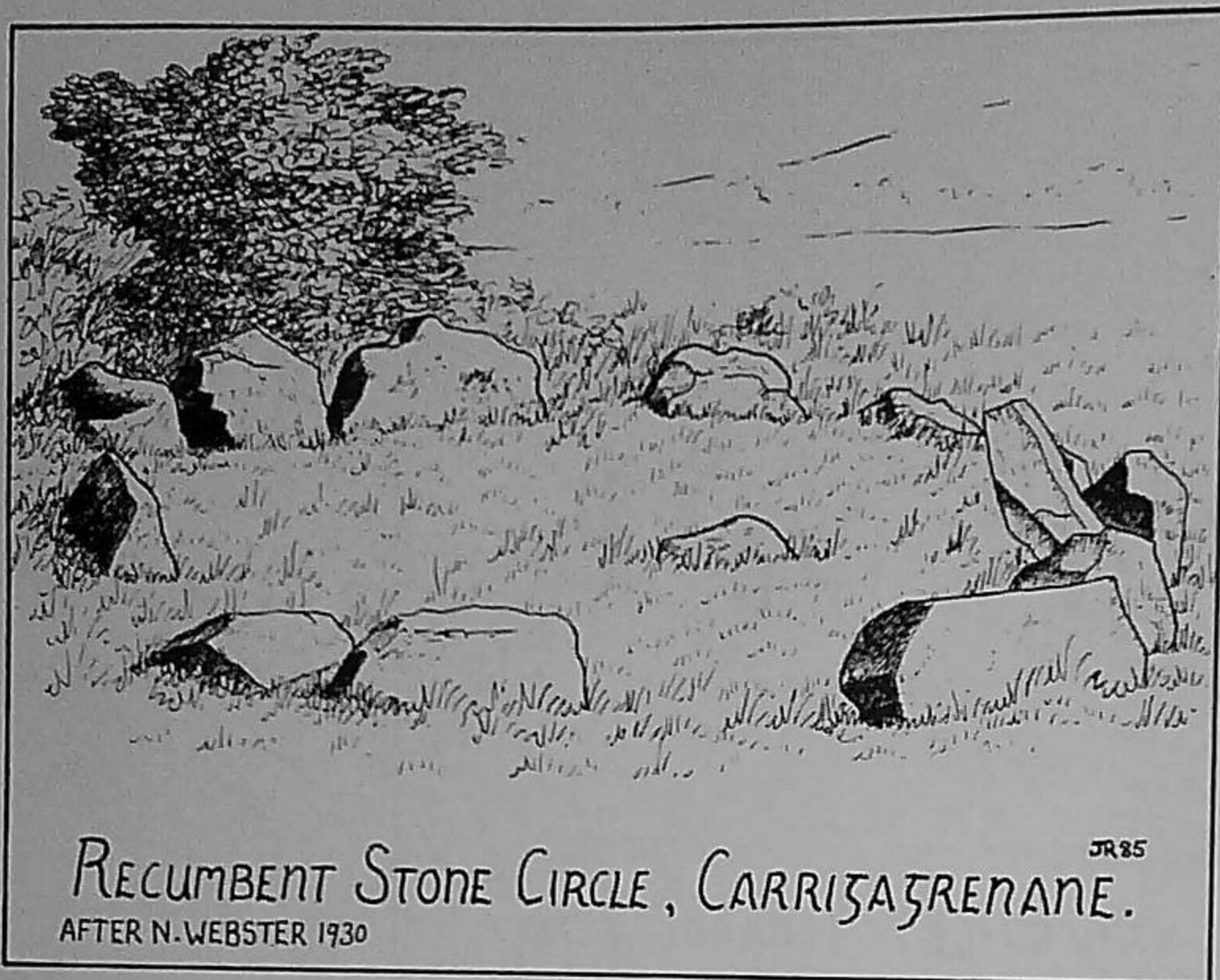


The circle is not at all imposing, the largest stones, the pillars on the east side, are less than five feet tall and the rest of the uprights are of varying lesser height down to 2 ft. tall. The recumbent is set into a socket, unlike the other excavated circles of the area, its top is rounded but almost straight and horizontal, a sort of mid-way design between the recumbents of Droumbeag and Bohonagh. Somerville surveyed the site and discovered that the alignment of the circle was somewhere in between the solstice and the equinox and defined the 'line of entrance'  $258^{\circ} 00'$  which is a sun set position for about 2nd March or the 13th October. There is no known significance in the ancient calendar for these dates though it must have had some significance in former times as another circle in this area is oriented in the same direction, the rather sadly ruined circle of Maulatanvally south.

In the centre of the circle a burial was found to consist of only earth, the human remains were discovered in a pit to the north about ten feet away and this deposit provided much the same type of cremated remains as have been found at other circles so far investigated. Burials of broken rock were found here also outside the circle on the north side of the henge. Around the southeastern side of the circle was found a scattering of boulders and broken stone and in the area of the pillar stones evidence of much activity as if this was the part of the circle that any rites or ceremonies performed here were centered around. The interior area was also levelled as at the other sites but no sign of any paving came to light.



## REANASCREENA

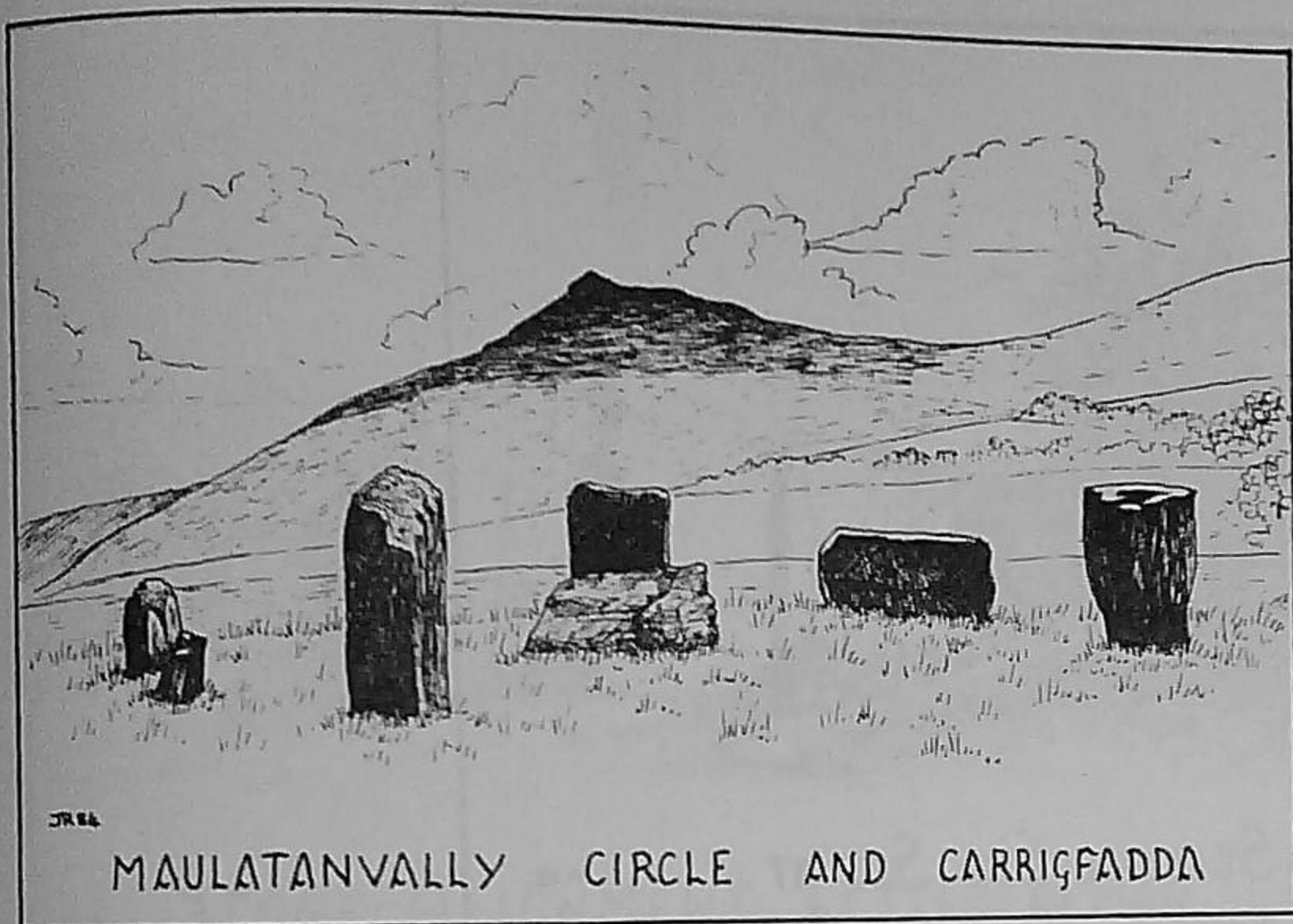


On the southern slopes of Carrigfadda, in the townland of Carrigagrenane stands another unimposing circle comprised of even smaller stones. The circle has not been visited much since the early part of the century and in recent years has been hidden beneath the ferns and brambles which now conceal the site. Were it not for Somervilles' survey of the circle published in 1930 and Websters' drawing of about the same time it would probably not be known at all to us now. The townland name may refer to the circle as it means the sunny house of the rock but this may only be a topographical reference denoting the southern sunny side of the hill. There are at present only 15 upright stones and a freestanding boulder situated just inside the circle behind the recumbent. Somerville reckoned there to have been an original number of about 21 or 22 but since it has attracted no archaeological attention so far it remains to be verified how correct his assumptions are. He surveyed the site with the usual precise detail and decided that the line of entrance was too low to signify a sun-set alignment at an azimuth of  $207^{\circ} 00'$ .

J.C. H.A.S. XXXV REV. N. WEBSTER



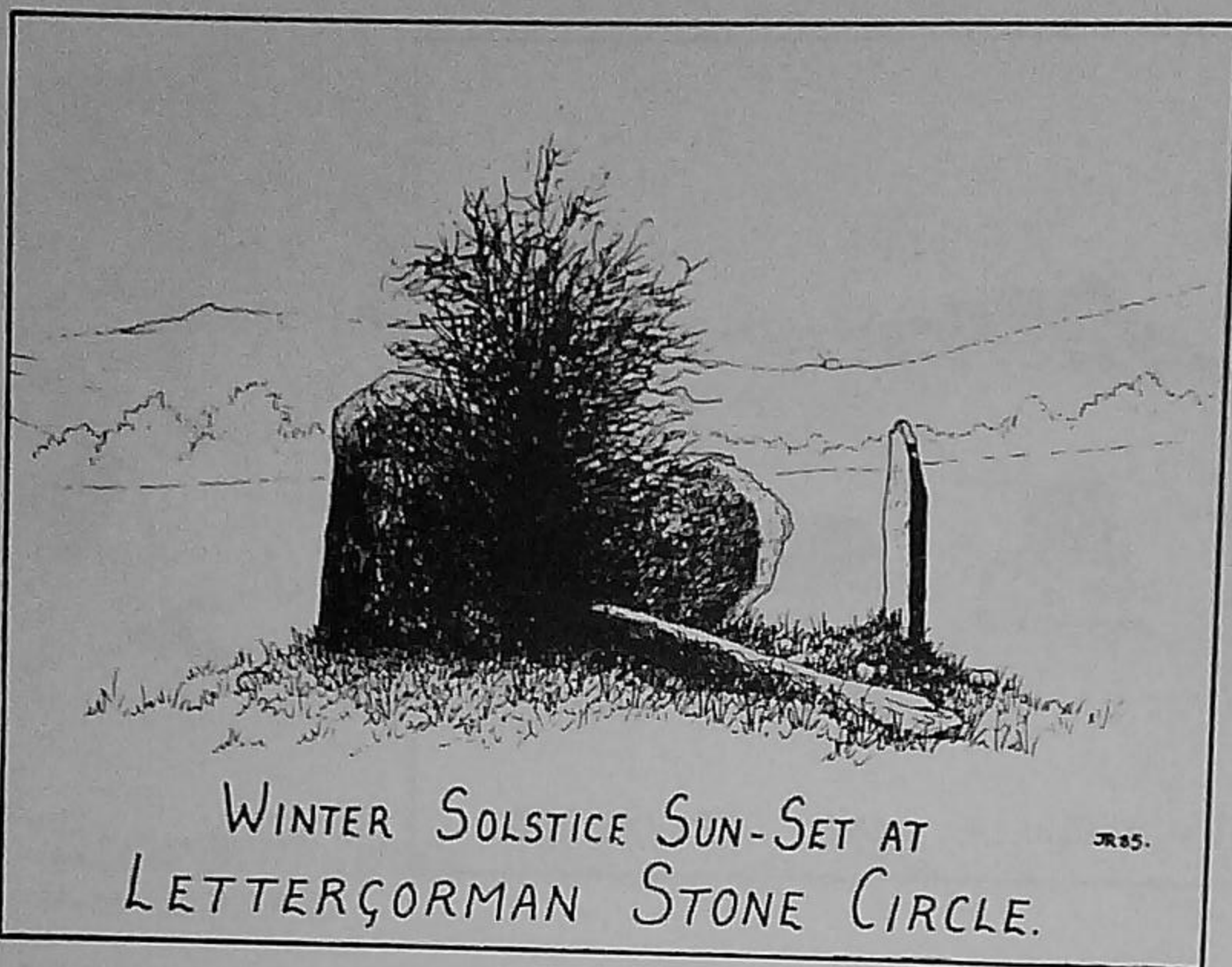
## REANASCREENA



In the townland of Maulatanvally to the east of Carrigfadda is another circle that was visited by Boyle Somerville at around the same time. It is a noteworthy site despite its being in a rather sadly depleted state, for the major stones are still intact and within the circle is a quite large block of quartz. Only 7 upright stones are present, and Somerville put the original estimate at around 11 so even in a complete state it was quite an open circle with well spaced out stones. Particularly prominent is the peak of Carrigfadda which dominates to the west, but it is not yet clear what significance this may have had for the circle itself which has the same orientation as the Reanascreena circle, azimuth  $258^{\circ} 00'$ , 2nd March and 13th October. This sun set is in the hills north of the Carrigfadda peak which provide no specific cleft or marker but do in fact create a similar horizon to that of Droumbeag and here it is a similar situation in that the sun will set before the actual full descent of the setting sun. This could vary the dates that Somerville estimated by several days.



## REANASCREENA



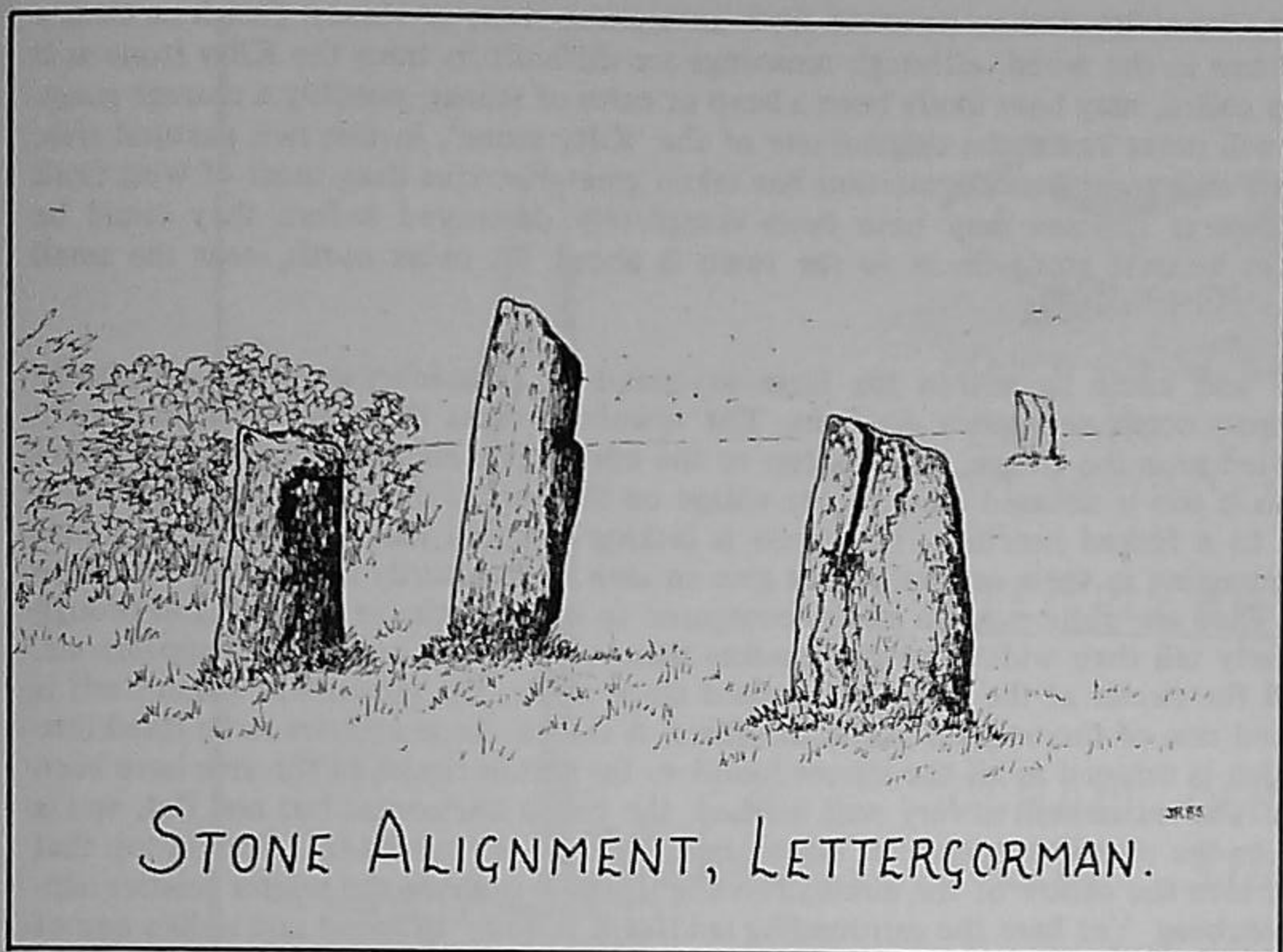
In the townland of Lettergorman can be found one of the smallest circles ever discovered. A recumbent stone circle like all the others in the area, this site is particularly interesting as it has been filled with a central cairn of small stones, now unfortunately rather denuded.

There are five stones in the circle, four of which are still standing in their original positions and a fallen stone, one of the pillars. A quite large quartz boulder abuts the circle on its southern side, though it is not known if this is in its original place as it could perhaps have been dumped from an outlying position. The area within the circle is filled with small boulders and stones which could have been even more substantial in former times. The overall diameter of the circle is less than 8ft which is quite diminutive in comparison to all the other circles in the area, the only other site that it can be compared with is the circle in Pookeen, Drimoleague.

To the west of the site the horizon is dominated by the outline of Carrigfadda in the south and Coomatallin in the north. In between these two hills is a cleft or pass which lays on a direct south west line from the circle. The actual winter solstice sun-set lands in the cleft or hollow of a rock outcrop that is situated just on the north side of the road that runs through the pass towards Coomatallin townland. An additional note of interest in this alignment is that from this position, where the sun sets, can be seen a further continuation of this sun-set alignment in the hills beyond where the sun sinks at winter solstice directly behind a very pronounced peak in the next townland of Kilnacally.



## REANASCREENA



The monument to the north of Lettergorman townland is a very fine standing stone alignment. It can be a difficult site to locate as the main stones in the alignment are hidden from the road by a hedge and only the outlier standing about 50 yards away, a not particularly noticeable stone, can be seen from the road which passes through the townland. The three main stones stand in a corner of the field to the south of the outlier. Comprising of three quite substantial uprights it is one of the more impressive alignments in the area. They are not set in a direct line with one another being spaced tangentially along a south west line. The site has not been examined yet and so far little is known of its age or use.



## CLONAKILTY

The town of Clonakilty derives its name from an ancient stone or stones. Cloich na Coillte means the stone in the wood, although meanings are difficult to trace the Kilty stone as it is sometimes called, may have likely been a heap or cairn of stones, possibly a passage grave. Perhaps we will never know the original site of the 'Kilty stone', in this rich pastoral area, land clearance and general modernisation has taken greater strides than most of West Cork and many ancient remains may have been completely destroyed before they could be recorded. The nearest stone circle to the town is about 1½ miles north, near the small village of Shannonvale.

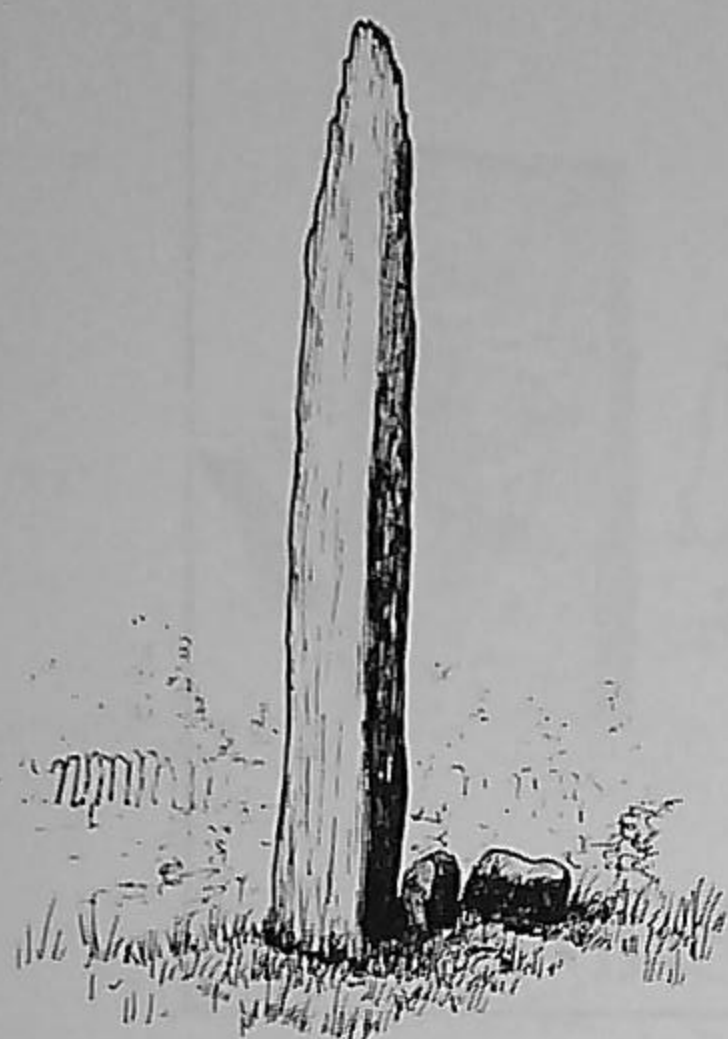
Both village and circle lie within the large townland of Templebryan which is actually divided up into north and south divisions. The townland takes its name from the early church situated near the village, on a hilltop to the north. The ancient circle can be found very easily as it too is situated close to the village on the north side of the road from Clonakilty near to a forked junction. The circle is lacking in about half of its original stones but those remaining in their original places give an idea of the sturdy monument that once stood here. They are quite massive stones compared to other circles in the area and though not particularly tall their width and girth makes them very square and solid in appearance. It is, like all the circles of the area a recumbent stone circle, the recumbent stone itself is still intact and one of the original portal or pillars. A central stone appears to be fixed into a socket which is unusual as all the stones found so far within circles of the area have been freestanding. The recumbent is very well worked, the top is horizontal but not flat, and is very similar to the recumbent stone at Droumbeag having been carved to a sloping top that points down into the centre of the circle. The alignment is towards the winter solstice sunset like Droumbeag. Yet here the surrounding landscape is quite different and unlike any of the circles described elsewhere in this book, to the west the land quickly rises to an horizon that is formed of the very field in which the monument stands. The angle at which the sun will set here at winter solstice will be many minutes before actual, final sun set and even earlier than at Droumbeag.

Looking north from the circle can be seen a tall pillar stone on the horizon. This stone stands within the yard of the early christian church of Templebryan, now sadly ruined and decayed. The pillar has been carved with some Ogham script but this is very faint now and is hardly noticeable at all in the present day. It is a very fine stone, tall and slender that must have been an important marker in days gone by. To the original architects of the stone circle this stone in its almost perfectly north alignment from the circle could have been used to as an outlier to mark the northern position both day and night.

Also to be found within the churchyard is a very fine example of the type of very ancient artifact that was in early christian times reverently used as a baptismal font. Called a Ballan stone, they sometimes date from extremely ancient times. No one knows what their original use was, though there are similarities to the basins found inside some 'passage graves' and the name is also used to denote particularly large cup marks found in some stones or rocks.



# CLONAKILTY



BALLÁN STONE  
IN CHURCH YARD

TEMPLE BRYAN

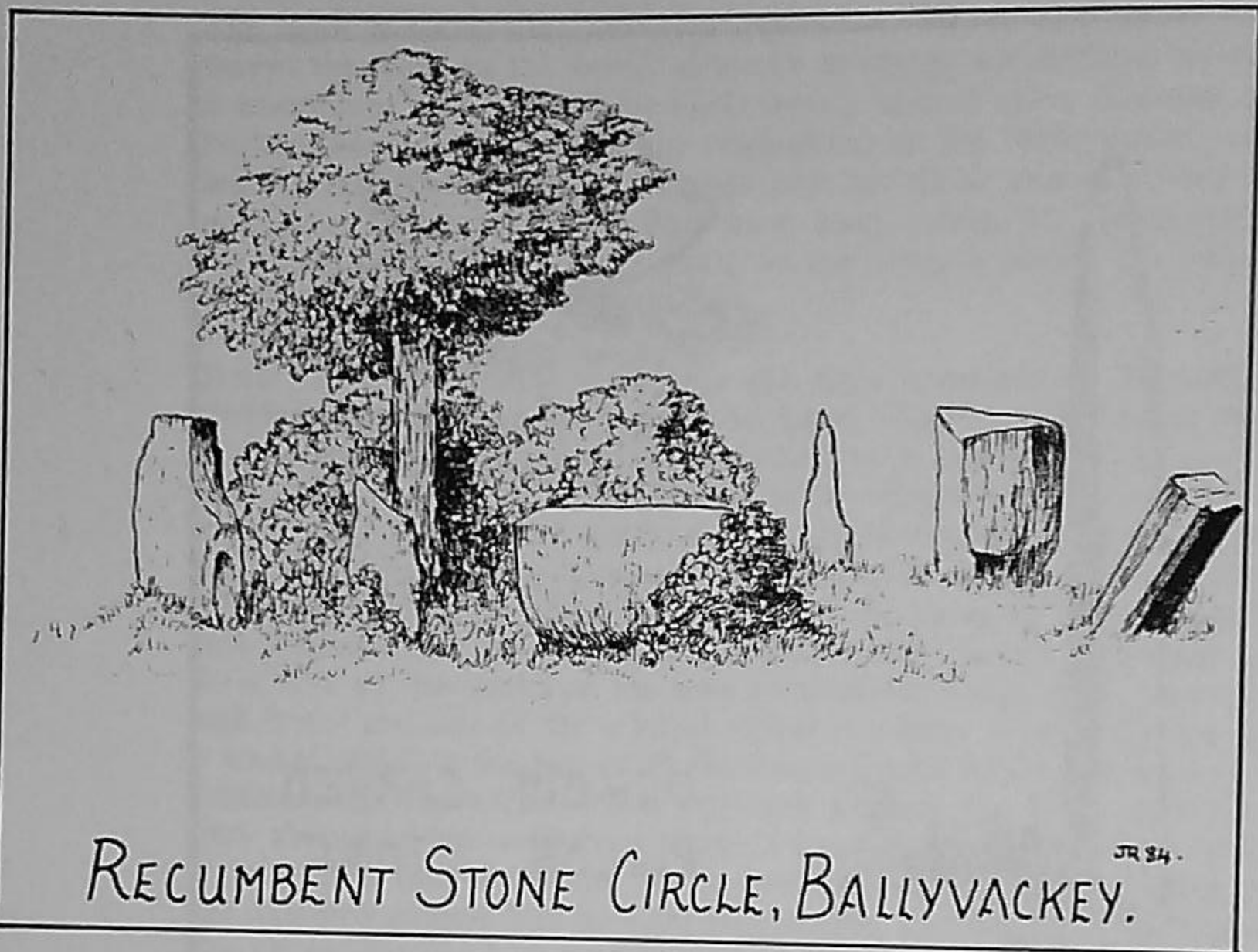
OGHAM CARVED  
PILLAR STONE.



REMAINS OF CIRCLE.



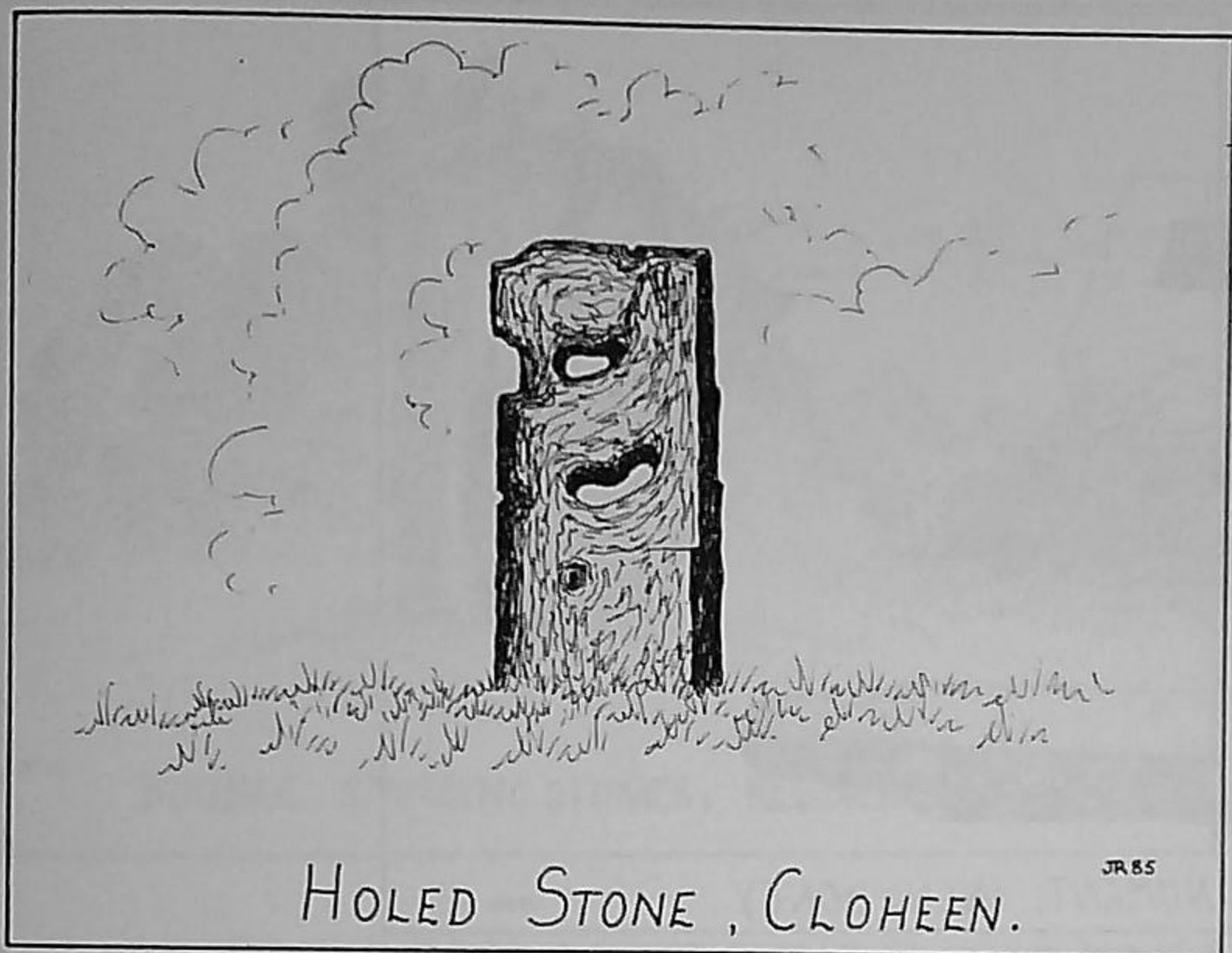
## CLONAKILTY



Another stone circle can be found not far from Clonakilty in the townland of Ballyvackey about 2 miles west of the town. This monument is also incomplete but has more than half of its original uprights in position and although it is rather overgrown it is perhaps the best preserved circle in this area. The recumbent stone is large and rounded though its top is almost horizontal but not flat. The pillars are half hidden under brambles and growth but at least one of the originals can be defined. The alignment is towards the southwest but sun set positions are hidden by the surrounding trees and the horizon that from this low valley would be quite elevated is also difficult to assess. However it is good to find this circle fairly undisturbed in an area that has no great number of its monuments left so this could be considered quite rare. To the east of the circle is a large boulder also fortunately undisturbed. Although it has not been investigated, this stone corresponds to the boulder dolmen found in the same position near Bohonagh and is notable as another example of the type of outlying stone that can be found elsewhere.



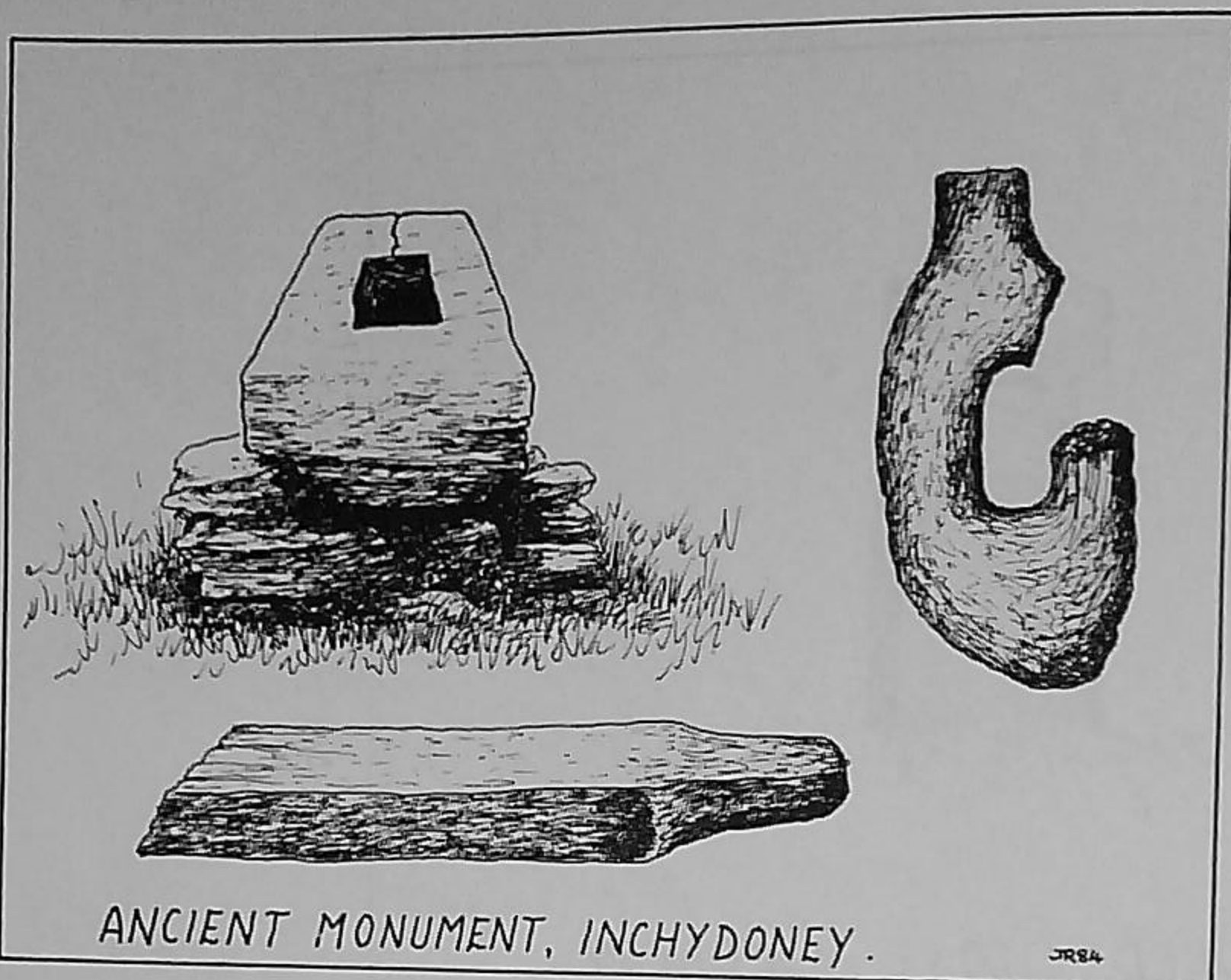
## CLONAKILTY



To the south of Clonakilty, overlooking the causeway to Inchydoney island in the townland of Cloheen can be seen a very unusual stone. From afar it looks like a stump of knarled tree or anything other than a stone. This appearance is due to the quite large holes that are bored right through it and although it can be called a holed stone it is actually another variation of the familiar cup marked stone found throughout the area. The stone is not very tall and made of a slatey rock which may have taken some weathering through the years, which would possibly have slightly enlarged the holes. Apart from the holes there are also some more conventional type of cup marks rather less deeply inscribed and it can be seen that the whole design is repeated on each side with only minor variations that could be uneven wearing of time and differences in the textures of each side of the stones.



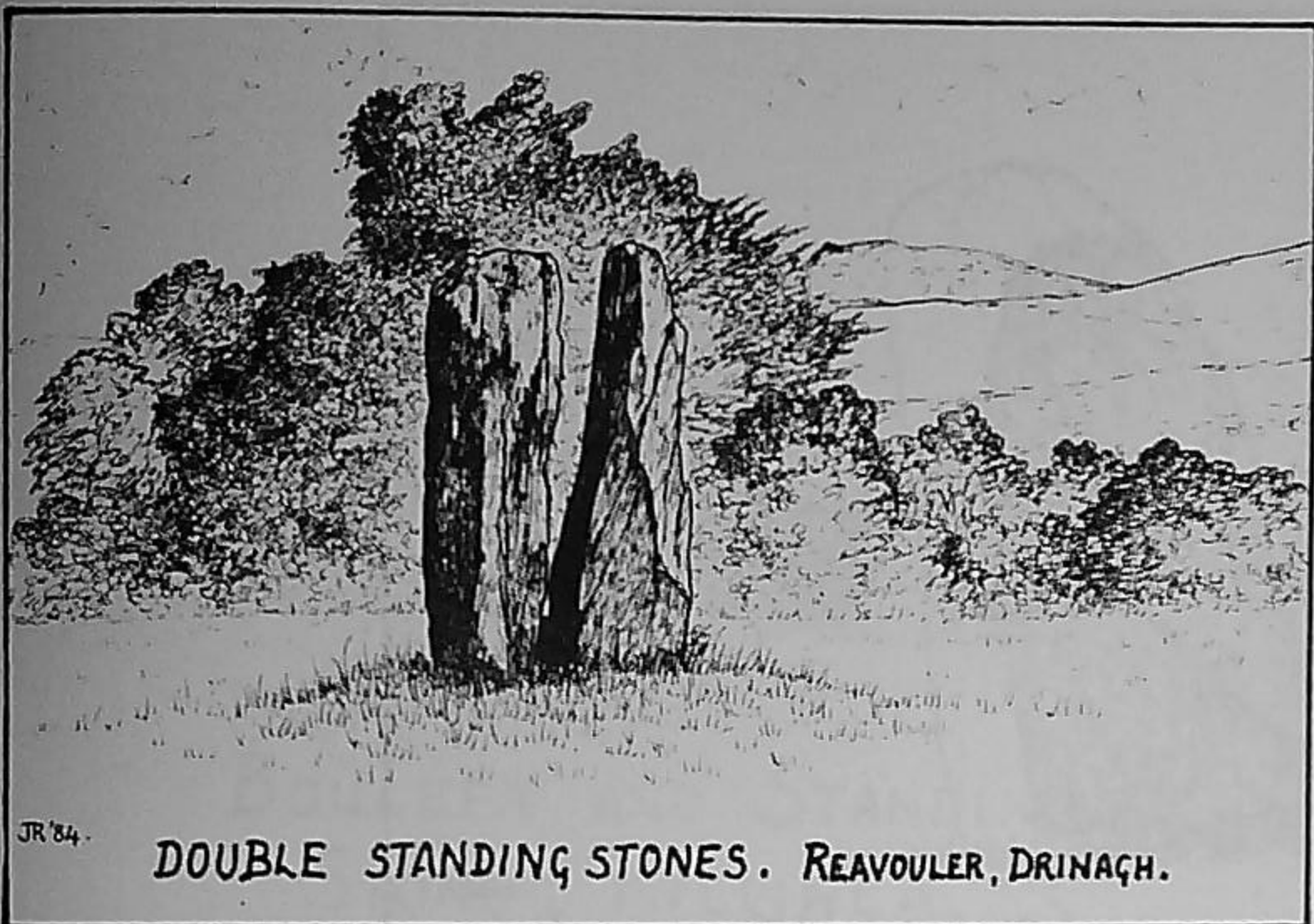
## CLONAKILTY



Due south, on the top of the hill in the centre of Inchydoney island is a very curious composition of stones. The main part of the monument is a 'basin' not unlike a large ballan but with a deeply carved rectangular notch in the top, set upon a small cairn of boulders and stones. Lying near to the monument are the other pieces of this ancient 'jig-saw puzzle' which judging by the shape and measurements of the various parts, could very well fit together to form one structure of extraordinary and unique type. The stones are just lying quite forgotten at this time and no one has yet put forward a teneable reason or use for the odd collection of stones. As a reconstructed monument it could be one of the rarest relics in the whole of Ireland and one of which the town of Clonakilty could be proud. Yet being forgotten, or ignored, there has not even been an investigation of the site, so we are unable to assess its age and thereby its possible use. Even if it is discovered to be Christian it would be considered a very unusual piece of stone sculpture but if it turns out to be from a very ancient time then it would be extremely rare and of considerable value both to the area and to our knowledge of ancient times.



## DRINAGH

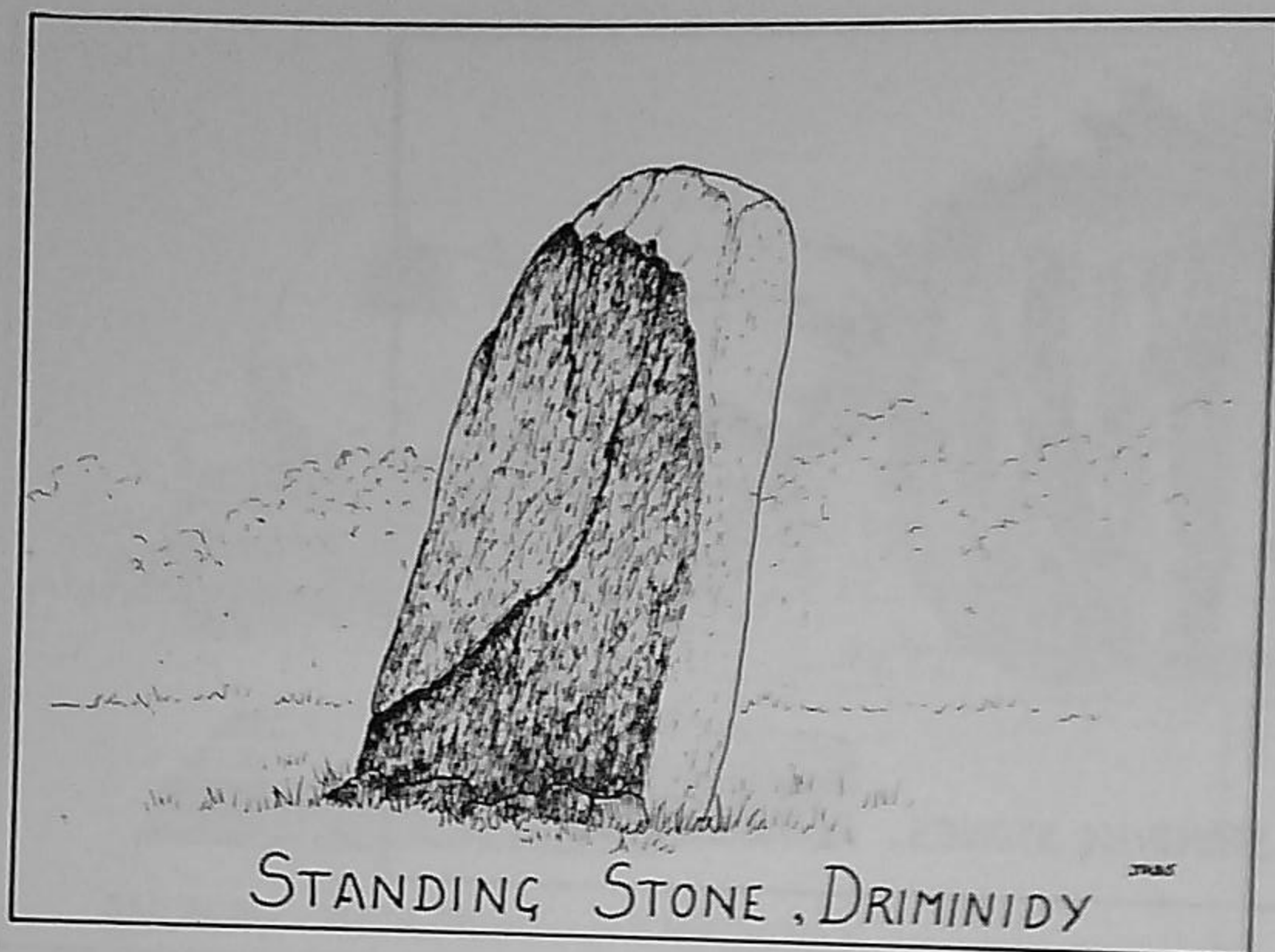


Drinagh is notable in modern times for the location here of the largest creamery in the whole Carbery area. For this reason the village is a focal point for a large area. It is not uncommon for people as far as the outskirts of Leap, Dunmanway or Skibbereen to denote this seemingly insignificant village as being their area. The creamery itself is situated just west of the village near an important junction where the routes from the south meet the east-west route upon which both village and creamery are built. It may be that Drinagh was a notable place in ancient times, for at this junction, which was formerly a cross roads, can be seen is the remains of a very large earthworks or lios that once stood there. All that remains now is a short section of the inner bank to remind us of its former dimensions. In this situation, which is very much an open landscape with wide vistas across the area to the south the earthwork would have been visible for a long way around. Near it stood a large standing stone, somewhere near where the creamery office now stands, but this was removed during construction of the creamery and along with it we might wonder what other valuable remains.

Other lioses stood in the area, but nothing that stood in the immediate vicinity of the creamery can now be found. Perhaps the only monument still untouched is the 'double' standing stone near the first junction to the south in the townland of Revouler. This monument comprises of two separate stones standing very close to each other with only a narrow cleft between them, giving them the appearance of being a single split stone, but on closer inspection they differ quite considerably and are two separate stones, or an alignment. The illustration shows the stones from the west. This is one of several monuments that were situated very close to important road junctions in the area.



## DRINAGH

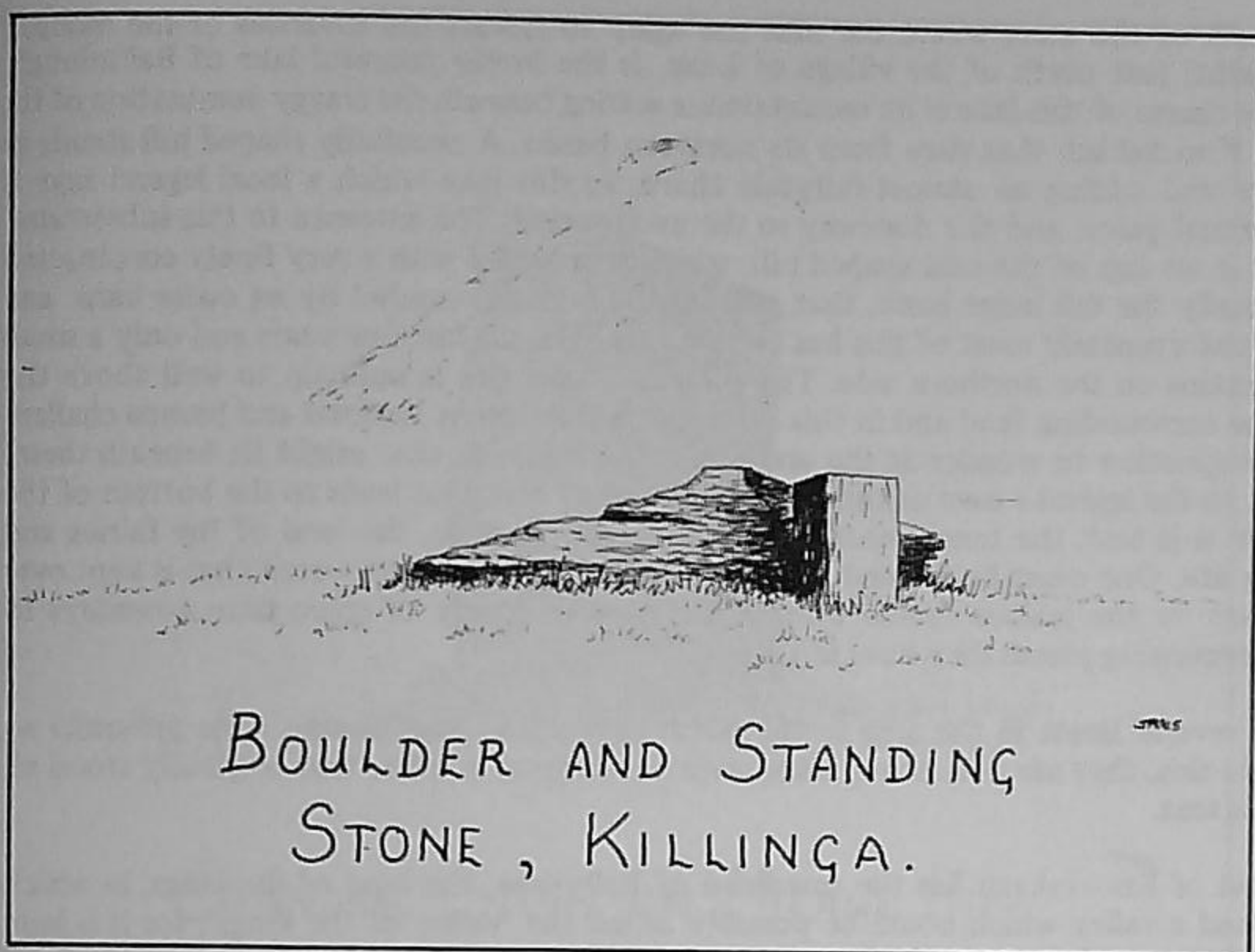


There is an important road junction west of Drinagh called Bredagh cross. Several routes converge here and the spot was anciently marked by at least one standing stone. The one illustrated above can still be seen in the centre of the townland of Driminidy. At the next junction to the south called Maulatrahane at least one stone was still standing in comparatively recent times, but this has unfortunately been removed along with several lioses or forts that once stood in the area.

The theme of loss and destruction unfortunately pervades the description of monuments in the Dringah area. In the eastern part of the parish once stood a recumbent stone circle on the townland of Currahally and in Coomatallin there was recorded in the middle of the last century a cromlech of apparently sizeable proportions. Although it is not absolutely certain that these monuments do no longer exist, the search so far has proved dissappointing and it seems most probable that the land clearance proceeding at an hitherto unbelievable rate in the area has claimed yet more victims on the route to a more prosperous and colourless life.



## DRINAGH



BOULDER AND STANDING  
STONE, KILLINGA.

There is a route through this area going north-south that crosses the high land, the eastern slopes of Knockskagh north east of Ballinlough and passes through the townland of Killinga. There are no churches in this townland, which is mostly upland pasture with very few structures of any kind, but there is, in a situation that might denote a dividing line between the very different landscapes of the south and north, a small but recognisable monument of an ancient kind. At present the structure that can be found here is not very imposing at all. It is almost insignificant in fact and only recognisable as an ancient monument because of the quite low, neatly quarried upright that is noticeable as a purposefully placed stone. Next to this little gallune is a large boulder or slab that but for its neighbouring upright would pass unnoticed. The site is also significant for being on a direct line between two distinctive peaks that are also the tallest hills of the area, Knockskagh to the west and to the east Carrigfadda. A south west-north/east line is formed between these three features creating another very pronounced instance of the southwesterly flow through the west Cork landscape.



## DRINAGH

In the south of the area, where the hills rise again to thwart the advances of the modern agriculturalist, just north of the village of Leap, is the lovely peaceful lake of Ballinlough. Part of the charm of this lake is its mountainous setting beneath the craggy domination of the hill called Knockskagh that rises from its northern banks. A peculiarly shaped hill stands at the eastern end adding an almost fairytale charm to this lake which a local legend says is truly a magical place, and the doorway to the underworld. The entrance to this subterranean world is on top of the odd shaped hill, which is crowned with a very finely constructed lios. Originally the tall inner bank, that still stands, was surrounded by an outer bank and ditch but unfortunately most of this has been removed in the last few years and only a small section remains on the northern side. The interior of the lios is built up to well above the level of the surrounding land and in this enclosure a great many hollows and bumps challenge ones imagination to wonder at the archaeological evidence that might lie beneath them. According to the legend a cave or tunnel can be entered here that leads to the bottom of the lake where, it is said, the tunnel enters the land of Tir-na-noge, the land of the fairies and everlasting life. One must be warned however of the day and night watch that is kept over the entrance by the jealous fairies who probably have plenty of spare time nowadays to guard the remaining places they have left.

There are several lioses in the area to the north of the lake and though none are quite so romantic as this, they are at least representative of the great number that originally stood all around this area.

To the west of Knockskagh lies the townland of Ballyrree, the land of the kings, in which can be found a valley which could be possibly called the 'valley of the kings', for it is here at the western end of the valley, that a monument was discovered, during the compilation of this book, from which the townland has derived its name. It is a chambered cairn construction with a straight edge on the east side which may label it a court cairn or wedge shaped gallery grave. The basic structure is complete, all or at least most, of the uprights of the interior are intact and the surrounding kerb with a good deal of the covering cairn. Unfortunately there was in living memory some capping stone still intact but these have now been used to construct a bridge and other land improvements nearby. At the time of visiting this site during fieldwork for this book the owner of the land declared that he had no idea of the significance of the site, believing it to be a convenient dump of stones of no particular note. The passageway in this monument faces directly towards the peak of Knockskagh which dominates the north east horizon.



## DRIMOLEAGUE

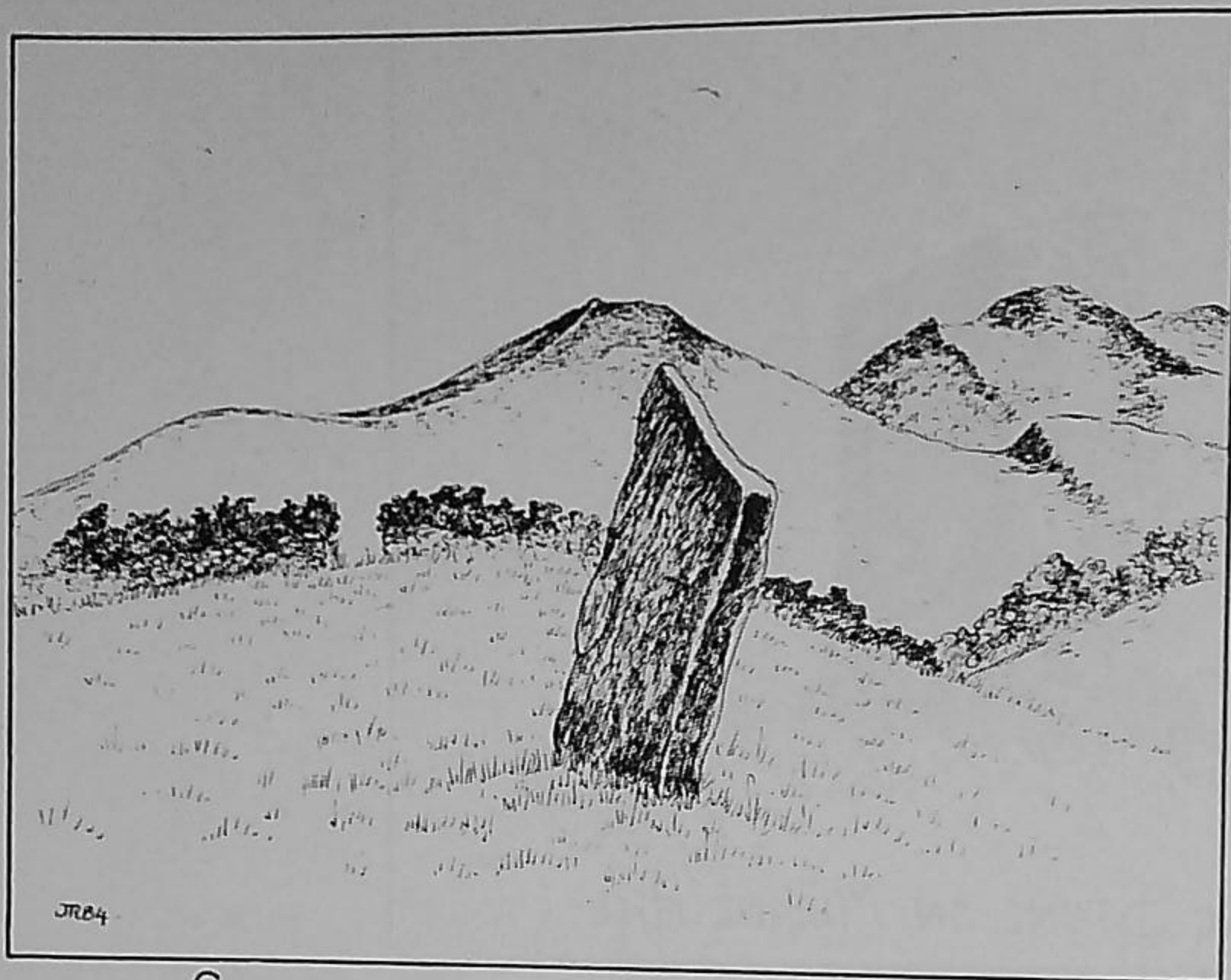


Drimoleague in Irish is Drom de Liag, the hill of the two stones. Unfortunately there appear to be no stones upon the hill that rises sharply above the town and no one has any memory of the stones existence or of where they might have originally stood. The rock, as this series of ridges running along the northern boundary of the town are called, is currently adorned with a large cross on the highest summit which continues the traditional use of the hill as a landmark of importance since early times. Fairs were held until quite recent times near a pass that crosses the hill and this was a very important meeting place for people from the upland and lowland areas that was probably used as such since very ancient times.

Other peaks in the area are still adorned with standing stones, there is one on Milane Hill that can be seen for a long way around belying its actual size and another high up on Nowen Hill.



## DRIMOLEAGUE



### SHRONACARTAN, DRIMOLEAGUE.

There are many standing stones to be found in lowland situations and one very fine example (that has uncharacteristically been vested with a Fotra sign showing it to be claimed as a national monument) can be located not far from the main Drimoleague to Dumanway road near the cross roads about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from town called Shronacartan. The stone is actually in Clodagh townland and can be found on the west side of the lane about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of the cross roads.

This stone is the tallest in the area and is of an unusual pale stone not found among other monuments of the area. It stands at the eastern end of the rock or ridge that runs along the northern side of the village from here, and it could have possibly been within sight of any stones that stood originally on top of the rock.



## DRIMOLEAGUE



CIRCLE WITH CAIRN AND ALIGNMENT, POOKEEN. JRS

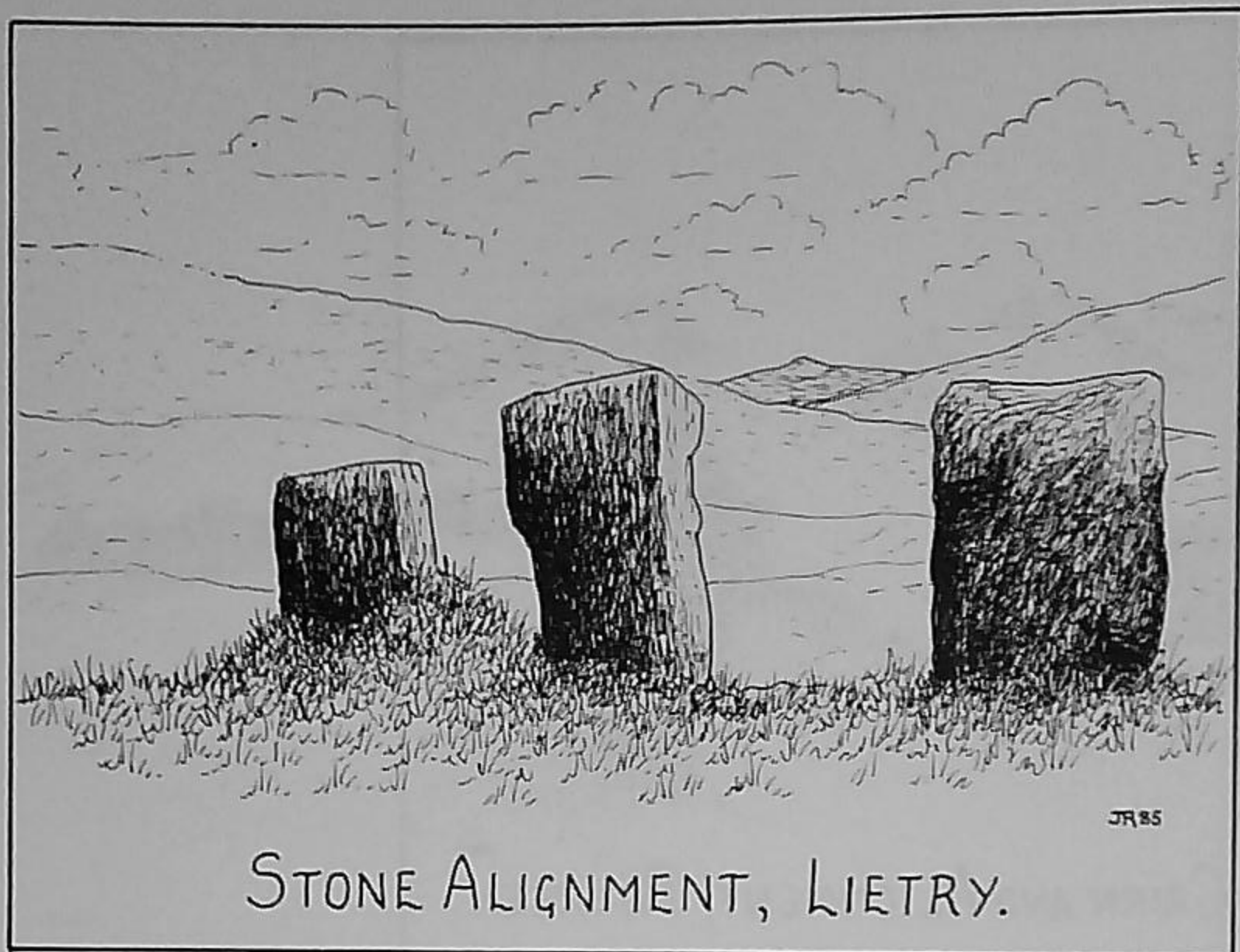
Carrying on north through Clodagh the lane meets with the high route going east-west from Dunmanway to Bantry about two miles from the lower main road. At this junction are an alignment of two standing stones on the west side of the road, and a very important recumbent stone circle about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to the south east on the lower slopes of Milane Hill. This area is called Pookeen which is a common townland name all through Ireland meaning the place of the fairies or witch or even in relation to some myth about monsters, which are after all only fairies in another guise.

However the circle is real enough and a very well preserved, barely touched monument with several features that are both rare and quite important. It is very small, not more than ten feet in diameter, and the stones are set very close together, almost interlocking in part of the circle. There are two outlying stones leading off to the south west and these are set very close to the circle so that there is no doubt that they are part of the main structure and not so likely to be of a later period. But perhaps the most important feature is the cairn of stones and boulders with which the interior of the circle has been filled, or rather built up, for this filling of stone has been laid in such a way that although the heap is almost as high as the top of the upright stones and completely fills the enclosure, examination might tell us a lot about other circles of the area, particularly those that may have been similarly filled.

The alignment at this circle is towards the south-west, which is accentuated by the outlying stones. This is probably a winter solstice alignment but so far the sun set position has not yet been checked. Also there is a very overgrown hedge to the south west which cures the view from the circle.



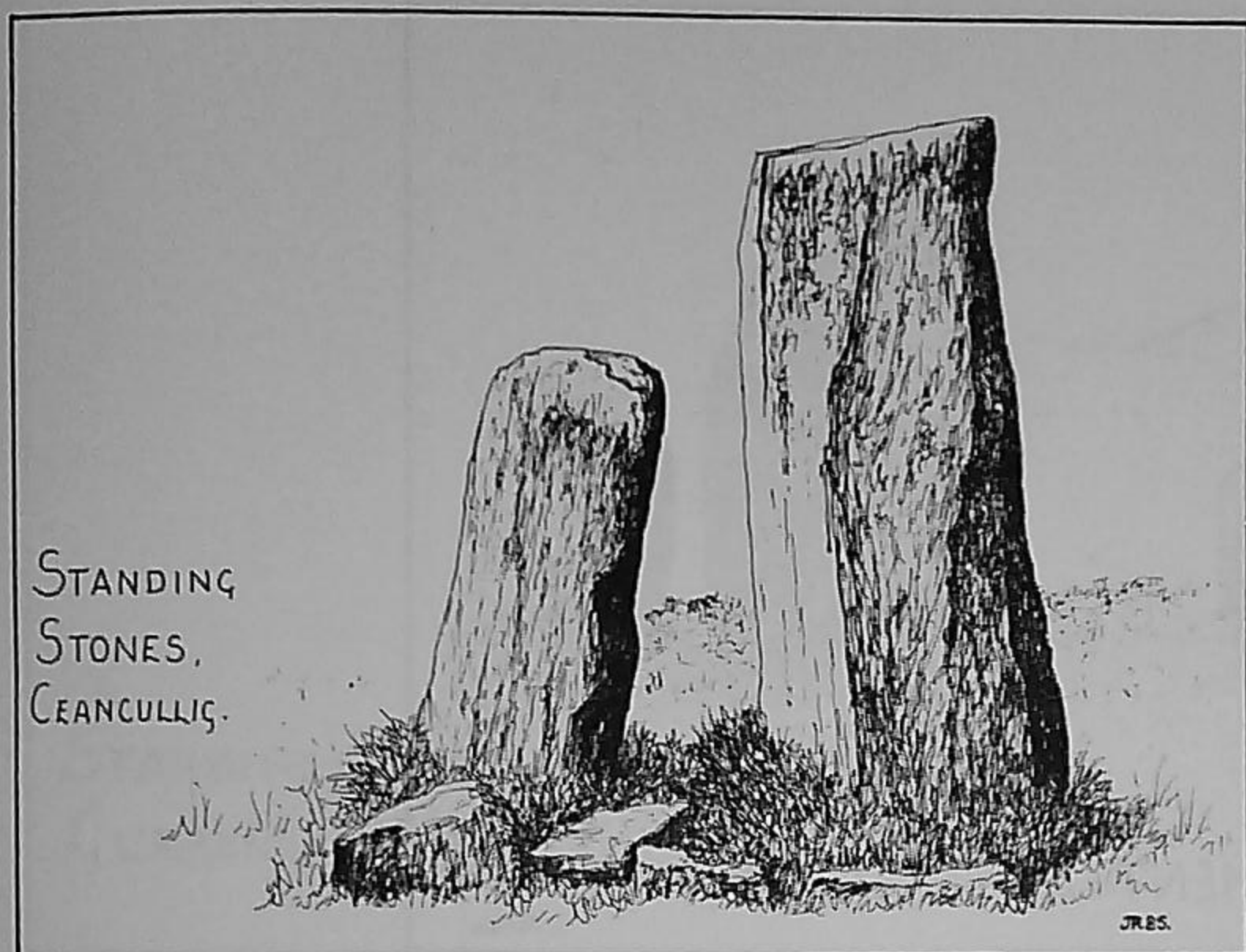
## DRIMOLEAGUE



Looking from the slopes of Millane hill, which is itself adorned with a standing stone on top, the Clodagh valley below and the undulating hills rising gradually towards the townlands of Lietry and Gurrane are all dominated by the brooding presence of Nowen hill to the north which also is adorned with a standing stone, though it is situated west of the summit itself. In all this area many stones can be found set on hillocks in both high and low ground. In Lietry the townland west of Pookeen that covers the lower slopes of Nowen hill a fine alignment can be found that has three stones set in a south west line. From here the view of a hill is very curiously framed by the closer hills of Lahanaght and Killaveenoge in a way that must surely have been of consideration to the stone builders who erected the site.



## DRIMOLEAGUE



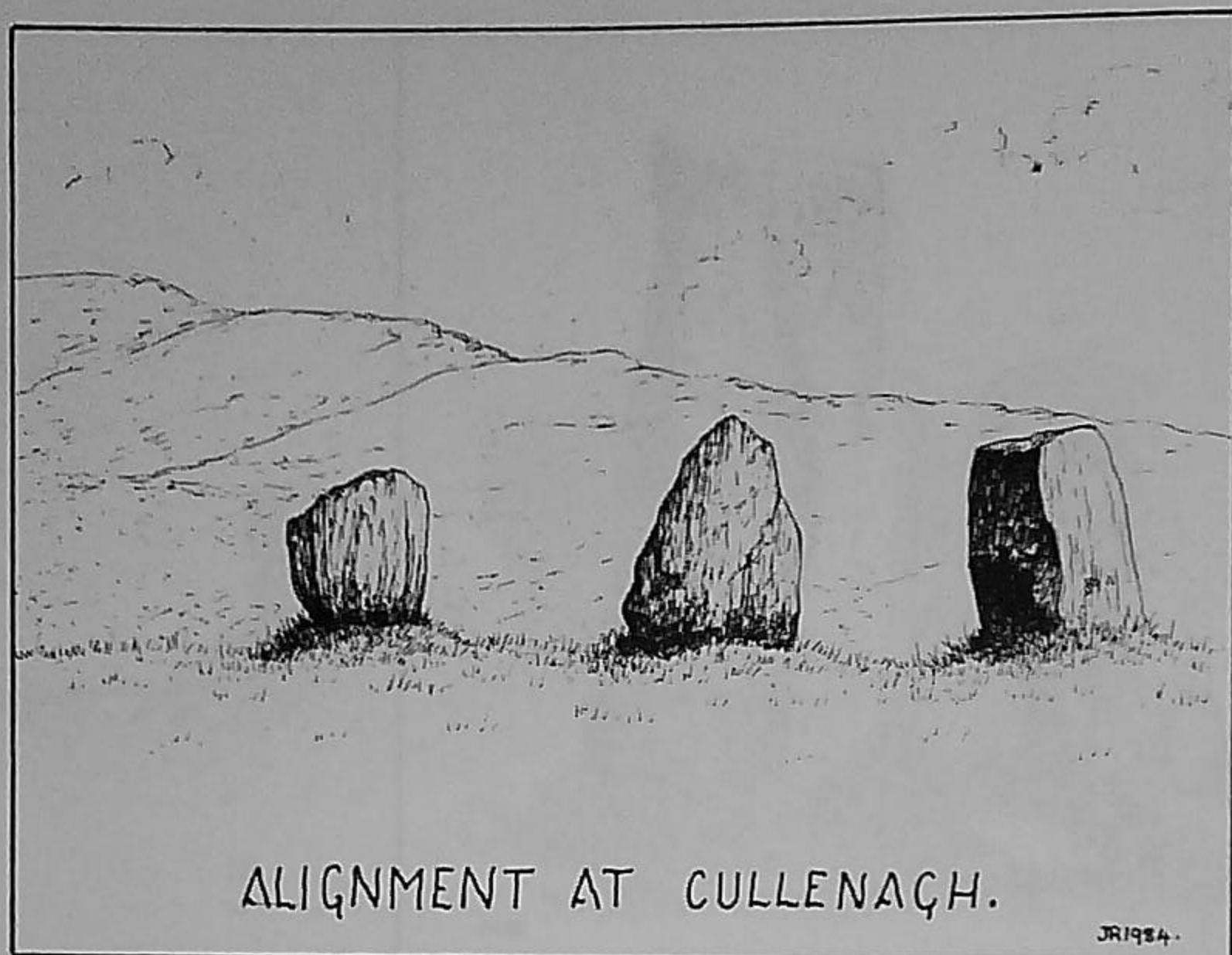
STANDING  
STONES,  
CEANCULLIG.

Further west is the townland of Gurrane, a derivation of the word Gallun which has at least one standing stone in its area. To the south, the western side of the Clodagh valley, is the townland of Ceancullig, the head of the wood. There are at least three standing stones in this townland one of which is a small alignment of only two stones that are illustrated here as they used to be up to the last two years as the smaller of the stones has fallen now, victim of soil erosion that has eaten away its foundation stones.

High up on Nowen hill is a large cromlech called locally Diarmuid and Grania's bed. It is particularly difficult to find this monument as it stands on the high, steep slopes of the east side of the mountain in an area that is a confusion of rocky outcrops and scrub that would undoubtedly have been a good hiding place for the Fianna lovers. For those who would like to search for this lonely megalith all that can be said is that it is about two thirds the way up the mountain and overlooking Cullenagh lake which lays in a bowl of the hills to the east.



## DRIMOLEAGUE



There is a very fine alignment in Cullenagh townland itself, situated to the east of the lane that goes north through the area on the slopes of the hill on that side of the valley. It too is not easy to find, but considerably easier than the remote Cromlech. Perhaps the best way to locate the alignment is to look to the east going along the lane to the north, and about a mile and a half from the beginning of the lane (at the Dunmanway to Bantry road to the south) look out for a very curious rock on the hillside not far from the lane. This stone is a supporting stone for a large cromlech that has unfortunately slipped and is no longer a very impressive monument. The stone can be recognised easily as it is a large upright flag set into a wall and carved with a 'doorway' or large notch. This has been utilised as a convenient gateway to the adjoining fields for many years and this monument is hardly recognised as being very ancient by the people thereabouts. Beyond this curious monument can be seen the alignment itself on the hillside to the north. This is perhaps the largest alignment in the area being comprised of three uprights of quite considerable weight and size in line towards the south west. These three mighty stones mark the pass between the north and south, and could be seen as a marker of the northern boundary of the Carbery area. It is here that our area ends, but perhaps the story only begins, for beyond here lies a land rich in ancient remains for the most part as yet unknown. This book is a beginning of the quest for the lost ages of our past in which both our wealth and our future lies.



## DRIMOLEAGUE



STANDING STONE  
GURRANES NORTH.

385

Here on the northern boundary of the ancient territory of Corca Laidthe this book must come to an end, yet it is surely a story that has only just begun.

Ireland is a land that contains an immense wealth of ancient remains, many of which have yet to be recorded.

It is hoped that this book will have added to what is already known of our past, and the megalithic landscape that is slowly coming into the light of the present day.