

## A CHAMBERED TOMB ON LUNDY: NOTES ON ITS LOCATION AND DISCOVERY

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### ABSTRACT

Scheduled monument No 27625, "Chambered tomb NE of Rocket Pole Pond" (NGR 1362 4372, Schofield, 1998, p 57), is in accordance with the site marked on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1905 and 1967. Examination of the 1886 OS map, which is supported by documentary evidences, shows that subsequent OS misreading of the placement of the text on the 1886 map has led to misidentification of the site, which lies at NGR 1354 4373 (centred). The following data have been submitted to English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme for consideration.

Keywords: *Lundy, Site, Kistvaen.*

Philip Gosse, the naturalist, spent a week on Lundy in 1852 and wrote as follows: " ... we made a slight deviation on our way, to see a hole which had just been discovered, and which was the present wonder of the little island's population. One of the men had noticed, in a particular part of the moor, that the earth returned a hollow sound. On digging, a block of granite was found a little below the surface. It was about eighteen inches thick, and was estimated to weigh five tons; its ends rested on two upright slabs, between which was a cavity, some six feet deep and as many wide. It was evident that the excavation had been made, and the stones placed, by human labour; and the latter operation must have been one of no small difficulty, from the great weight of the slabs; but for what purpose it could have been made, whether as a place for temporary retirement, for some one who feared an enemy whom he dared not resist, or for the secretion of valuable property in some of the troublesome times, of which the island has seen many, there was no clue to inform us. No subterranean passage was observed, though the earth at one side was so loose as to suggest the notion that such a communication might once have existed; a fragment of pottery was the only object found. I was myself struck with a rank odour in the cavity, very different from that of newly-turned soil; the earth, too, at one end, was black, and of an unctuous appearance, somewhat like that of a grave; but no trace of bone or other organised matter could be found. The appearance of this rude structure somewhat resembled that of the monument known as Wayland Smith's Cave, near Ashdown, in Berkshire. This consisted of a broad slab laid horizontally on several upright ones ... It is possible that the construction, the opening of which we saw at Lundy, may have an antiquity as great as its counterpart in Berkshire, or perhaps even greater, seeing that the huge upper slab was here quite covered with the common mould; and, in default of any evidence to the contrary, we may conjecturally assign to it a similar commemorative purpose" (Figure 1).

Dyer (1973) describes Wayland's Smithy as being of Neolithic origin, 3700-3400 BC; the accompanying diagram shows an overall site length of 273 ft (Figure 2). This compares with a site length of c 242 ft. for the Kistvaen (Figure 3). When the OS survey was carried out in 1884 the site was presumably, from its detailed depiction, largely undisturbed, and members of the Heaven family who were present in 1852 were still living on the island in 1884, who could have provided the surveyors with information. However, the capstone had been split into two and used as gate posts for the gates at the bottom of the path up to the Villa, now Millcombe House (Heaven archives letter). The stone must have been moved before 1868 as the letter states that "Grandfather [William Hudson Heaven, d.1883] put them there to preserve them - I think a tenant had split them and designed using them as field posts." There were no tenants between 1868 and 1885.

In 1887, before the next OS survey was made in 1903, the Kistvaen site had been 'filled in' by the lessee, Thomas Wright, because the rainfall had been exceptionally heavy and a bullock had drowned there. The Kistvaen site is still variously dry, marshy, or a pond, according to the amount of rainfall. *The Victoria County History* of 1906 lists the Kistvaen site as 'large'. Rough measurements of the site made in 1999 correspond to those indicated by the OS map of 1886, and the small square section at the north-west corner is still clearly visible. The 1905 OS 1:25,000 prints "Kistvaen (site of)" much nearer to the cist to the east (NGR 1362 4372); and this is repeated in the 1967 OS, where 'cist' is marked in the same position, which has given rise to the misidentification.

Three smaller cist sites are shown on the 1886 map near to the Kistvaen. It may be possible, if the large Kistvaen was erected to a person of particular importance, that these could represent satellite burials.

The substance of this paper has been extracted from the author's unpublished PhD thesis, 1999: 'Lundy: an analysis and comparative study of factors effecting the development of the island, 1577-1969, with a gazetteer of sites and monuments.'

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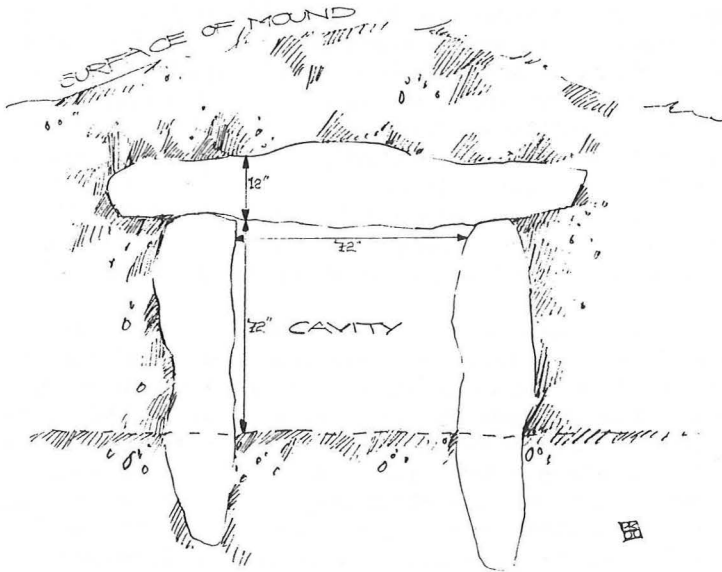


Figure 1: Reconstruction of the Kistavaen based on Gosse's description.  
Peter Rothwell.

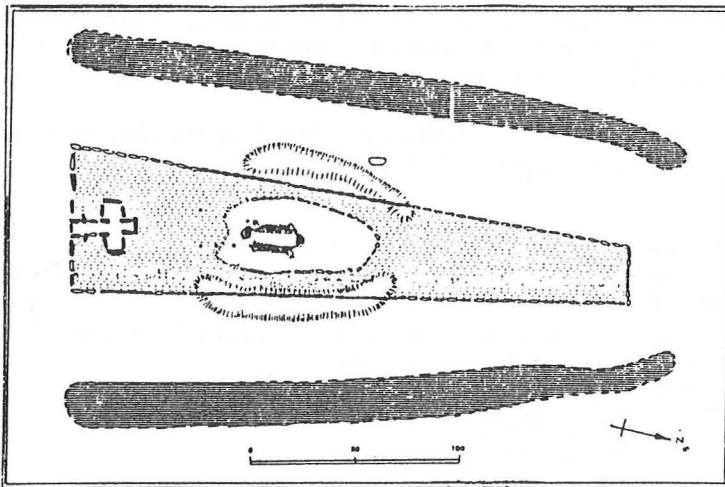


Figure 2: Plan of Wayland's Smithy.  
Source: Dyer, J, 1973, p19.

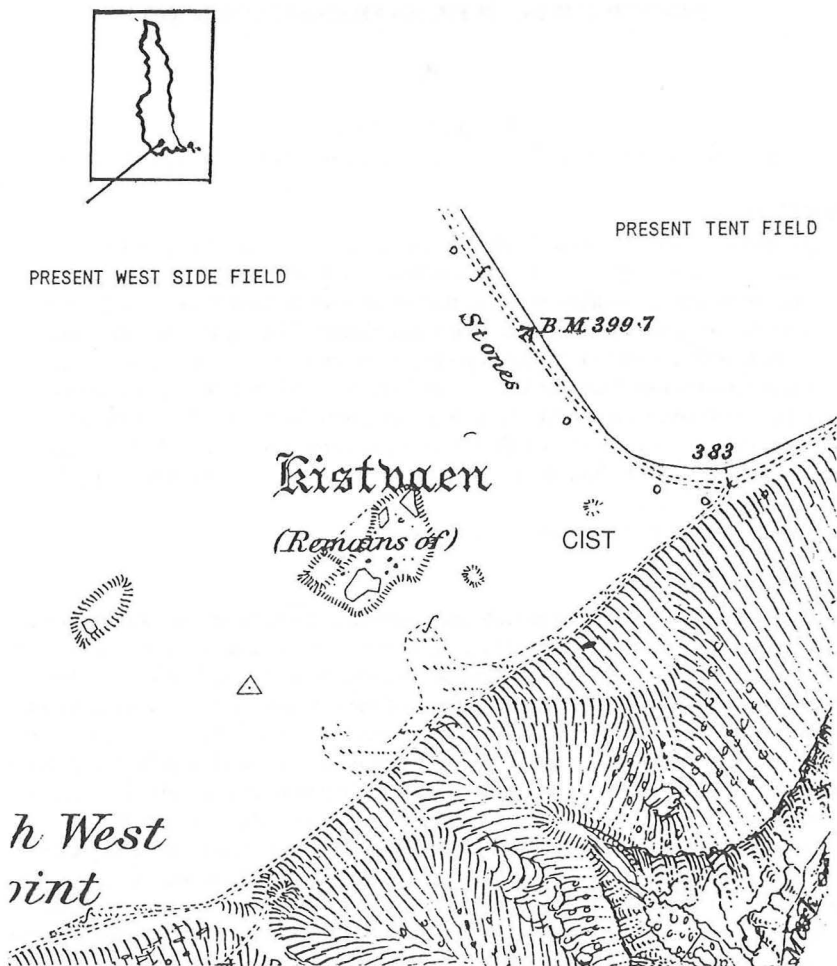


Figure 3: The Kistvaen, surveyed 1884, Ordnance Survey map 1:25,000, 1886 (reduced)

The cist at NGR 1362 4372 is shown 2cm to E of the Kistvaen on this map. The 'stones' were Trinity House markers to the lighthouse, and were presumably removed after 1897.