

### **3 The distribution of Manx long cist graves**

*Peter Davey*

*Page design Philippa Tomlinson.*

*December 2021*

The distribution of Manx long cist graves

Fifteen long cist graves have been identified at Rushen Abbey, all of them in area S. Of these, six have been carbon- dated with an overall range from AD 390 to 1160:

PJD 14	600-660
PJD 124	1020-1160
PJD 126	680-890
PJD 130	600-660
PJD 167	390-540
PJD 169	530-650

These burials and their associated finds have been described and discussed in detail in the online report 'the archaeological evidence for human burial at Rushen Abbey'. Their wider implications both for the island and further afield have been reviewed in section 7 of the monograph within the essay 'the origins and development of Christianity on the Isle of Man'.

Since at least the first volumes of the Manx Archaeological Survey early in the twentieth century these stone confined burials have been known as lintel graves. Elsewhere they go under different designations; for example, in Ireland they are often described as lintel burials. But the term now employed by archaeologists is the 'long cist'. This is more linguistically correct than using the word lintel which only applies to one element of the type. The long cist is a box made of stone in the same shape and form as a wooden coffin. The term distinguishes it from the short cist which is typical of Bronze Age burials.

Lintel graves are common finds on the Isle of Man but have not previously been mapped. The map showing their Manx distribution (fig 1) was produced to illustrate the discussion of early Christianity in the Rushen Abbey monograph (fig 7.1). This brief note is designed to explain how the sites and classification on the map were arrived at. It is based on information contained in the Excel table appended to this note.

The main table has ten columns:

Column A This provides a location within one of the 17 medieval parishes of the island

Columns B and C This gives Ordnance Survey eastings (E) and northings (N) grid references for the site. The number of figures used, ranging from six to 12, directly reflects the degree of accuracy of knowledge of the exact position of its location. The location of the site in Cooldarragh in Kirk Michael is given to six figures as it is described rather vaguely as 'near the summit of the slope on the south side of the stream' (Manx

Archaeological Survey, 3, 1911, 4). In contrast the lintel graves at Speke Keeill are given to 12 figures as their exact position is known from the Time Team excavation of 2005 (Thompson and Hall 2007).

Column D This gives the published source for the information about the existence of a lintel grave or graves. It is mostly derived from one of the six volumes of the Manx Archaeological Survey (MAS) that concentrated on the recording of: 'Ancient Keeills or Chapels, and Rhullics or Christian Burial Grounds' (MAS, 1, 3). A number of sites have been discovered or investigated since the survey's work: Bruce and Cubbon 1931 (Cronk yn Howe), Garrad 1978a (Glentraugh), Freke 2002 (Peel Castle), Fox 2010 (Ronaldsway airport), Hemer 2012 (Cronk Keeillane).

Column E The common name of the site, often a keeill. The number in brackets is the unique number given to each site described in each parish in the sheading of Rushen, that is in Malew, Arbory and Rushen (Bruce 1968).

Column F Y = the lintel grave is associated with a keeill N = there is no evidence for a keeill in the vicinity of the lintel grave Y? = there is slight evidence for a keeill close to the site

Column G Y = there is a well close to the site O = there is no known well close to the site O? = there is some evidence for a local well

Column H Y = there were quartz pebbles associated with the lintel grave O = there were no quartz pebbles reported in the vicinity

Column I This provides the relevant text describing the discovery of the lintel grave, set in single inverted commas

Column J Notes made by P R Tomlinson during her production of the map.

The second table lists those sites for which graves, skeletons, skulls or burials are recorded but with no mention of lintel graves. The information is provided in the same columns as the first table.

It seems likely that a much more assiduous search of historical records would reveal other sites. Even so, the sheer numbers of Manx long cist grave records, and especially the high density of discrete sites, 60 in all, places the island amongst the most significant early medieval burial localities in the British Isles.

References Bruce J R and Cubbon W 1931, 'Cronk yn How, an early Christian and Viking site, at Lezayre', Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, III, (1928-30), 282-297.

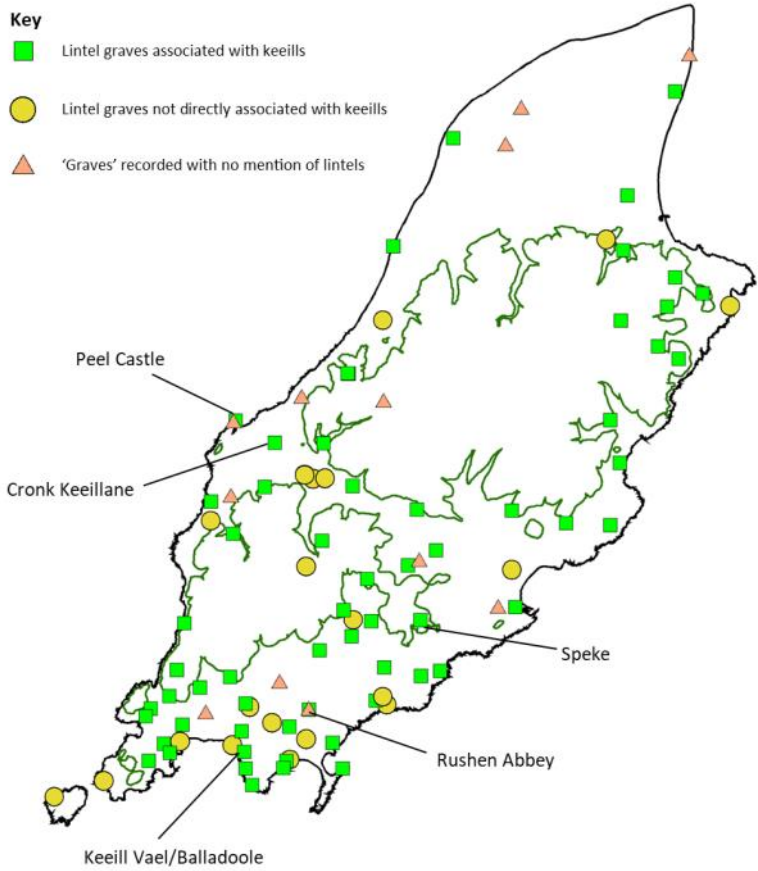
Fox A 2010, 'Small things discovered: recent archaeological finds from the Isle of Man', Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, XII: 2, 283-93.

Freke D 2002, Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Garrad L S 1978a, 'Excavation of a 'lintel grave' cemetery at Glentraugh, Santan, Isle of Man' in P J Davey (ed) Man and environment in the Isle of Man, Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, British Series 54, 245-9.

Hemer K A 2012, Bioarchaeological study of human remains from Cronk Keeillane', Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, XI, No. 3 (2009-2011), 469-486.

Thompson S and Hall N 2007, Speke Keeill, Mount Murray Hotel, Isle of Man: archaeological evaluation and assessment of results, Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology.



Map to show the position of known long cists (lintel grave) sites on the Isle of Man. Radio-carbon dated sites are named

Lintel Graves

Parish	GRCO E	GRCO N	Source	Name	Keeill	Well	Quartz	Text/evidence	PRT notes
Arbory	22395	47187	MAS 6, 1966, 36-7	Ballagawne (4)	Y	0	0	Stone coffins found	
Arbory	2249	4704	MAS 6, 1966, 38-40	The Friary (6)	N	0	0	Lintel graves some 40-50 yards west of the church	
Arbory	22452	46919	MAS 6, 1966, 40	Ballanorris (7)	Y	0	0	Stone lined graves containing human remains	
Arbory	22463	46817	MAS 6, 1966, 41-5	Keeill Vael (8)	Y	0	Y	At least 19 lintel graves discovered during the Bersu 1945 excavation of the Viking ship burial [Bersu and Wilson 1966, 10-13, Fig. 5]	
Arbory	22472	47054	MAS 6, 1966, 45-6	Arbory Parish church (9)	Y	0	Y	Lintel graves have been found from time to time, when digging modern graves	
Arbory	22405	46850	MAS 6, 1966, 46-7, Pl X	The Crofts'	N	Y	0	Lintel graves; site only no chapel	
Braddan	233350	474660	MAS 5, 1918, 18	Speke	Y	0	Y	Lintel graves had at different times been turned up by the plough, and in 1909, Mr R Lace examined fourteen of these'; Time Team 2005 (Johnson 2005; Thompson and Hall 2007); at least 21 lintel graves in all.	
Bride	245944	500778	MAS 3, 1911, 32	Ballavarkish	Y	Y	Y	lintel graves a few feet to the west of the keeill	
Conchan	240550	479470	MAS 5, 1918, 10	Keeill Mertin	Y	0	0	Lintel graves have been met with in the field across the road'	
Conchan	237860	477180	MAS 5, 1918, 10	Ballaquayle	N	0	0	Several lintel graves' 333 yards south-west of St Ninian's church cf Fig. 7, Plate V	
Conchan	238044	475310	MAS 5, 1918, 11	The Douglas Chapel	Y	0	0	20 years ago lintel graves were found close to the cattle market	
Conchan	237880	480090	MAS 5, 1918, 9	Upper Sulby	Y	0	Y	Single lintel grave	
German	224220	484532	Freke 2002, 77,	Peel Castle	Y	0	Y	45 identifiable lintel graves; details in grave data <i>ibid</i> , 120-31; C14 dates: 8 out of 11 human bone; 4 from burials; 1 from a lintel grave ( <i>ibid</i> , 265-6).	
German	229780	486840	MAS 2, 1910, 11	Keeill Pherick a Dromma	Y	0	Y	three lintel graves beneath the floor of the keeill	
German	229801	486857	MAS 2, 1910, 11	Keeill Pherick a Dromma	Y	0	0	lintel grave found ploughing 30 yards north-east of the keeill	
German	229764	486848	MAS 2, 1910, 12	Keeill Pherick a Dromma	Y	0	Y	lintel grave 9 yards west of the keeill	
German	226160	483430	MAS 2, 1910, 18 (Hemer 2012)	Keeill Moirrey (Cronk Keeillane)	Y	0	0	lintel graves on south of highroad and similar one in ploughing 100 yards west-south-west of it. Excavation in the 1980s.	
German	229990	481290	MAS 2, 1910, 22	Greeba Mills	Y	0	0	five lintel graves on site of a keeill	
German	227615	481867	MAS 2, 1910, 7	Tynwald Hill	0	0	0	Lintel graves found in ploughing 193 yards west-south-west of the mound	
German	228050	481680	MAS 2, 1910, 7	Ballahowin	0	0	0	a single lintel grave at 'about 160 yards to the west-north-west on the eastern brink of the same plateau' (Tynwald Hill)	
German	228626	481698	MAS 2, 1910, 7	Ballacraine	0	0	0	lintel graves have been found 'on the highroad Peel to Douglas, close to the junction with the Foxdale road'.	
German	228570	483410	MAS 2, 1910. 17	Beary	Y	0	0	lintel graves found in ploughing 250 yards north-west of the farmhouse	
German	227612	481844	Megaw 1938	Balladoyne	N	0	Y	32 lintel graves; 383 yards SE of Tywald Hill	
Jurby	234960	498480	MAS 3, 1911, 20	St Patrick's Chapel	Y	Y	Y	lintel grave outside the east window; graves beneath east gable	
Lezayre	243590	495640	Bruce and Cubbon 1931	Cronk yn How	Y	0	Y	Several excavated; two in published plans; 'rounded white pebbles .....,were especially conspicuous on this site' (p290)	
Lezayre	242530	493500	MAS 3, 1911, 36	Skye Hill	0	0	0	Lintel graves are said to have been found here' on the southern slopes of the hill	
Lezayre	243390	492950	MAS 4, 1915, 7	The Cabbal, Ballameanagh	Y	0	Y	graves found east of the keeill incuding at least one lintel grave	
Lonan	242730	484540	MAS 4, 1915, 38	Keeill Vian, Ballamillgen	Y	Y	0	Many lintel graves hav been met with north and west of the building'	
Lonan	243200	482450	MAS 4, 1915, 40	Kilkillane	Y	0	0	Many lintel graves have been found here'	
Lonan	242730	479370	MAS 4, 1915, 40	Lonan Old Church	Y	Y	Y	Many lintel graves were found around the walls of the church'; 'hundreds of white pebbles from the size of a walnut to that of an egg'.	
Malew	227680	468809	Fox 2010, 286	Airport A5 reconstruction	N	0	0	Single lintel grave	
Malew	22785	47024	MAS 6, 1966, 16	Rushen Abbey (10)	Y	Y	Y	1926 and 1934 finds of lintel graves 120 yards south of the church; 1998 (Higgins 1999b); 2000 and following in this volume	
Malew	2260	4696	MAS 6, 1966, 17	Billown (11)	N	0	0	...an extensive cemetery of the dead, arranged in stone graves' was found (Oswald 1860)	
Malew	22672	46771	MAS 6, 1966, 19	Lorn House (13)	Y	0	0	many lintel graves exposed over a wide area	
Malew	22657	46736	MAS 6, 1966, 20	St Mary's Chapel, Castletown (14)	Y	0	0	lintel graves reported south-east of the church	
Malew	22951	46734	MAS 6, 1966, 22	St Michael's Chapel, Derbyhaven (15)	Y	0	0	lintel graves have been found'	
Malew	22470	46735	MAS 6, 1966, 27	Keeill Oran, Poyllvaais (16)	Y	0	0	.....many stone-lined graves around'	
Malew	22503	46652	MAS 6, 1966, 28	Scarlett (18)	Y	Y	0	lintel graves were found in roadside, 1947' [NB Reilly 1984-87]	
Malew	2290	4686	MAS 6, 1966, 29-30	Ronaldsway (19)	Y?	0	0	numerous stone-lined graves (OS 1866)', lintel graves 1935	
Malew	22686	46941	MAS 6, 1966, 30	Malew parish church (20)	Y?	0	0	lintel graves found in digging recent graves; in 1948 digging the roadway south-east of the church 'revealed lintel graves'	
Malew	23003	47468	MAS 6, 1966, 31	Ballavarvane	N	0	0	Lintel graves at B'varvane Ho., found 1914' (Kermode)	
Malew	2269	4678	MAS 6, 1966, 31	Castletown, Bowling Green Road	N	0	0	Lintel grave found in May 1930	
Malew	22768	47732	MAS 6, 1966, 3-4	Rhullick y Doonee (1)	N	0	0	Three lintel graves	
Malew	22956	47517	MAS 6, 1966, 5	The Lhergy (3)	Y	0	0	c1907 'lintel graves were exposed at the site'	
Malew	22996	47386	MAS 6, 1966, 7	Cronk Rhennie (5)	Y	0	0	Lintel graves found by "sappers and miners"	
Malew	22835	47317	MAS 6, 1966, 9-10	Ballakilley (6)	Y	0	0	1878 a lintel grave opened; one ploughed up more recently prior to 1963	
Marown	234120	478110	MAS 1, 1909, 11	Cabbal Druiaght	Y	0	Y	A few years ago lintel graves were found in the Avenue, about 15 yards from the N.W. inner corner of the Keeill'; 230 quartz pebbles in all.	
Marown	232740	477370	MAS 1, 1909, 14-5	Keeill Lingen	Y	0	Y	stone graves that had been crushed and fallen in; 6 small quartz pebbles. Possibly partly Bronze Age.	
Marown	230720	476710	MAS 1, 1909, 16	Ballachrink	Y	0	Y	...as lintel graves had been met with in the adjoining field about 60 ft. to the S.E.'	
Marown	233170	480140	MAS 1, 1909, 8	Keeill Vreeshey	Y	0	Y	....we were told that lintel graves had been discovered when ploughing immediately outside on the N.E.'	
Maughold	2493	4917	MAS 4, 1915, 10-27	Parish Church and yard	Y	Y	Y	Various at different locations	
Maughold	245950	491610	MAS 4, 1915, 28	Ballagilley	Y	0	0	Lintel graves	
Maughold	247300	490800	MAS 4, 1915, 28	Keeill Maloney	Y	0	0	Lintel grave; near the possible site of a keeill	
Maughold	245550	490150	MAS 4, 1915, 28	Cardle Veg	Y	0	0	Many lintel graves h ave been found in the enclosure the bounds of which cannot now be traced'	
Maughold	248650	490220	MAS 4, 1915, 28-9	Keeill Cronk y Noe	0	0	0	Lintel graves turned up by the plough	
Maughold	243270	489460	MAS 4, 1915, 32-3	Keeill Woirrey	Y	0	Y	many graves...of large unhewn stones	
Maughold	245100	488200	MAS 4, 1915, 34	Ballacorteen	Y	0	0	Many lintel graves have been found	
Maughold	246110	487570	MAS 4, 1915, 34-6	Keeill Vail, Barony	Y	0?	Y	two lintel grves side by side; Loughan Keeill Vael is 200 yards to the north	
Michael	232000	493140	MAS 3, 1911, 3	Keeill Pharlane	Y	0	0	lintel grave found in 1855 'protruding from the cliff.'	
Michael	231	489	MAS 3, 1911, 4	Coolldarragh	0	0	0	several graves 'typical lintel graves of the Christian period' 'near the summit of the slope on the south side of the stream' c250 feet OS.	is this Cooldharry? SC3189 but it runs north/south!
Patrick	225650	481250	MAS 1, 1909, 18	Ballaquayle	Y	0	0	At least 14 lintel graves excavated by Sheila Cregeen from Site B (Cubbon 1996, 266-70)	
Patrick	223010	480530	MAS 1, 1909, 18	Raby	Y	0	0	The late Mr. Quirk found nine lintel graves in the cemetery	
Patrick	222970	479590	MAS 1, 1909, 18	Crosh Pharlane	0	0	0	..even in recent times lintel graves turned up by the plough, just inside the gate at the S.W. corner of the field leading to the farmhouse'	
Patrick	224100	478930	MAS 1, 1909, 18	Keeillwoirrey	Y	0	Y	Lintel graves were exposed some years ago when the road to the house was lowered at the gate'	
Patrick	228480	478580	MAS 1, 1909, 19	Ballameanagh	Y	0	0	....there was a perfect skeleton found in a stone coffin, about 40 years ago (i.e. 1820). Manx Soc., Vol. V. p. 79.'	
Patrick	22168	47453	MAS 1, 1909, 23	Lag-ny-Keeilley	Y	Y	Y	There were lintel graves along the N. wall of the Keeill, on the outside, and at the E. end.'	
Patrick	224100	478930	MAS 2, 1910, 4	Keeill Woirrey	Y	0	0	...seven lintel graves side by side..' in the chapel explored by the MAS/ Mr Lace and 17 graves in all on the site.	
Rushen	22066	46855	JMM 42, 12 and MAS 6, 1966, 55	Ballaqueeney (8)	Y	0	0	2 lintel graves 'few hundred yards north of the Port St Mary railway station and 150 yards east of Ballaqueeney farmhouse'; 2 oghams in 1870 'a few yards north'.	
Rushen	22246	47135	MAS 6, 1966, 48-9	Keeill Pharick (1)	Y	0	0	Slab-lined graves found over a wide area	
Rushen	22094	47092	MAS 6, 1966, 49-50	Surby (2)	Y	Y	0	Many stone graves	
Rushen	22001	47030	MAS 6, 1966, 50-1	Ballaglonney (3)	Y	Y	0	Stone graves found to the north and west of the keeill	
Rushen	21977	46992	MAS 6, 1966, 51-2	Gamma (4)	Y?	0	0	Lintel graves have been met with when ploughing'	
Rushen	2213	4722	MAS 6, 1966, 52	Kirkill (5)	Y?	0	0	Graves have been turned up', 'flat stones on edge' have hindered ploughing	
Rushen	22158	46950	MAS 6, 1966, 52-4	Ballagawne (6)	Y	0	0	Many graves in mid-19th century; more recently a lintel grave	
Rushen	22066	46855	MAS 6, 1966, 55-60	Ballaqueeney (8)	Y	0	0	Numerous lintel graves; at least 8, but many more suggested; hair survived on a skull; 13 more in 1914/15; 2 more in 1935	
Rushen	22096	46810	MAS 6, 1966, 60-2	Keeill Moirrey (9)	Y	Y	0	Lintel graves discovered c 1910 and more graves c 1930	
Rushen	22145	46868	MAS 6, 1966, 62-4, Fig. 15	The Smelt (10)	N	0	Y	Lintel graves in 1918, 1926 and three more in 1963	
Rushen	21992	46772	MAS 6, 1966, 64-5	Glenchass (11)	Y	Y	0	1885 'stone graves ploughed up many years ago' 2 lintel graves in 1940	
Rushen	21768	46674	MAS 6, 1966, 65-6	The Sound (12)	N	0	0	Lintel graves 'all over the place'	
Rushen	21524	46594	MAS 6, 1966, 66-9	Calf of Man (13)	N	0	0	Four lintel graves found between 1888 and 1890	
Santan	230910	474620	MAS 5, 1918, 22	Sulbrick	Y	Y	Y	Inside and just outside of the keeill, thirteen lintel graves were met with, five of which passed under the walls'; Fig. 35, Plate XXIII.	
Santan	231560	472340	MAS 5, 1918, 23	Ballavale	Y	0	0	..when excavating for the foundations of the present dwelling house lintel graves were met with'	
Santan	234320	472160	MAS 5, 1918, 23	Balla Gregg	Y	0	Y	one or two lintel graves were found'	
Santan	2317	4705	MAS 5, 1918, 24	Rogaine-beg	0	0	0	...some lintel graves in a field close to Cronk ny Marroo'	
Santan	233370	471910	MAS 5, 1918, 24	Ballnahow	Y	0	0	Numbers of stone-lined graves containing human bones have been turned up' OS	
Santan	231140	470690	MAS 5, 1918, 24	Ballafurt	Y	0	0	Numbers of stone-lined graves containing human bones have been turned up by the plough' OS	
Santon	2315	4709	Garrad 1978a, 245-9	Glentraugh	N	0	0	18 lintel graves excavated; 15 skeletons removed for study but reburied	??SC315709 Glentraugh Farm

## Graves or burials

Parish	GRCO E	GRCO N	Source	Name	Keeill	Well	Quartz	Text/evidence
Marown	233300	477680	MAS 1, 1909, 13	Ballaquinney	Y	0	Y	traces of burial but no lintel stones; 150 quartz pebbles
Patrick	224000	480850	MAS 1, 1909, 18	The Gordon Keeill	Y	0	0	in the burial ground adjoining are to be seen a few graves
German	227480	485730	MAS 2, 1910, 12	Knocksharry	0	0	0	graves met with in ploughing the field the other side of the highway
German	231550	485530	MAS 2, 1910, 16	Ballahimmin	Y	0	Y	graves met with in ploughing the fields north and south of the keeill
German	224123	484521	MAS 2, 1910, 24	St Patrick's Chapel	Y	0	0	a number of skeletons found below the floor; no stone grave or coffin
Jurby	238350	500030	MAS 3, 1911, 14	Keeill Coonlagh	Y	0	0	human bones met with about two feet below the surface
Jurby	237580	498200	MAS 3, 1911, 15	Ballacurry	Y	0	Y	remains of burial were met with
Bride	24665	50266	MAS 3, 1911, 31	Port Cranstal	0	0	0	traces of graves but no lintels
Braddan	237200	475372	MAS 5, 1918, 19	The Nunnery Chapel	0	0	0	a great number of skulls and other bones
Arbory	22276	47014	MAS 6, 1966, 37-8	Keeill Catreeney (6)	Y	Y	0	c1885 'while graves had been found, there was nothing seen of the keeill'.
Malew	22640	47167	MAS 6, 1966, 11	Keeill Unjin (9)	Y	Y	0	'Graves, they say, had been found close by'.
Malew	22785	47032	MAS 6, 1966, 16-7	Crot Cabbal Leonard	N	N	N	'.... That graves have been found 100 yards north of the church' ie Abbey church'.