



Curse or coincidence?

The hidden secret of Alva Glen Quarry

Alva Glen was used as a source of rock and gravel for centuries, and this quarry was used until the 1920s. Had it closed a few years earlier, we might never have discovered its most intriguing secret.

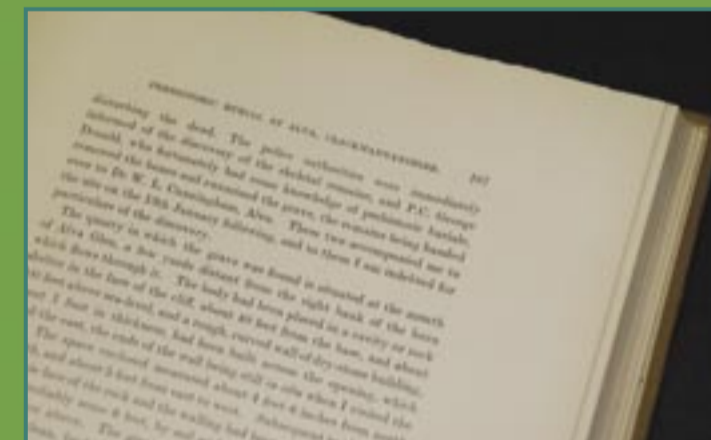
For on Christmas Eve in 1913, James Murdoch, of Beauclerc Street, was working in the quarry when he noticed an area of rock that looked more like a man-made wall than a natural rock face. The stones were not cemented together, and, intrigued, Mr Murdoch started removing them. What had started as an ordinary day at work was suddenly transformed as he looked into a cavity and saw, lying there with its knees drawn up, a human skeleton.

The skeleton was examined by experts, and an article in a learned journal concluded that the skeleton was prehistoric - an unusually short person, showing signs of dwarfism. He was not the victim of some prehistoric mining accident, but had been placed in the rocks after death.



Bronze Age (circa 2000 BC) woman buried in crouched position, Marshall, Alloa
(Photograph courtesy of Susan Mills, Clackmannanshire Council Museum and Heritage Service)

A tragic twist



The story had a sting in its tail. At the same spot a few days later, a slab of rock fell on James Murdoch, and killed him. Some saw this as coincidence, but others saw it as retribution for disturbing the dead...



James Murdoch's gravestone, Alva



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