

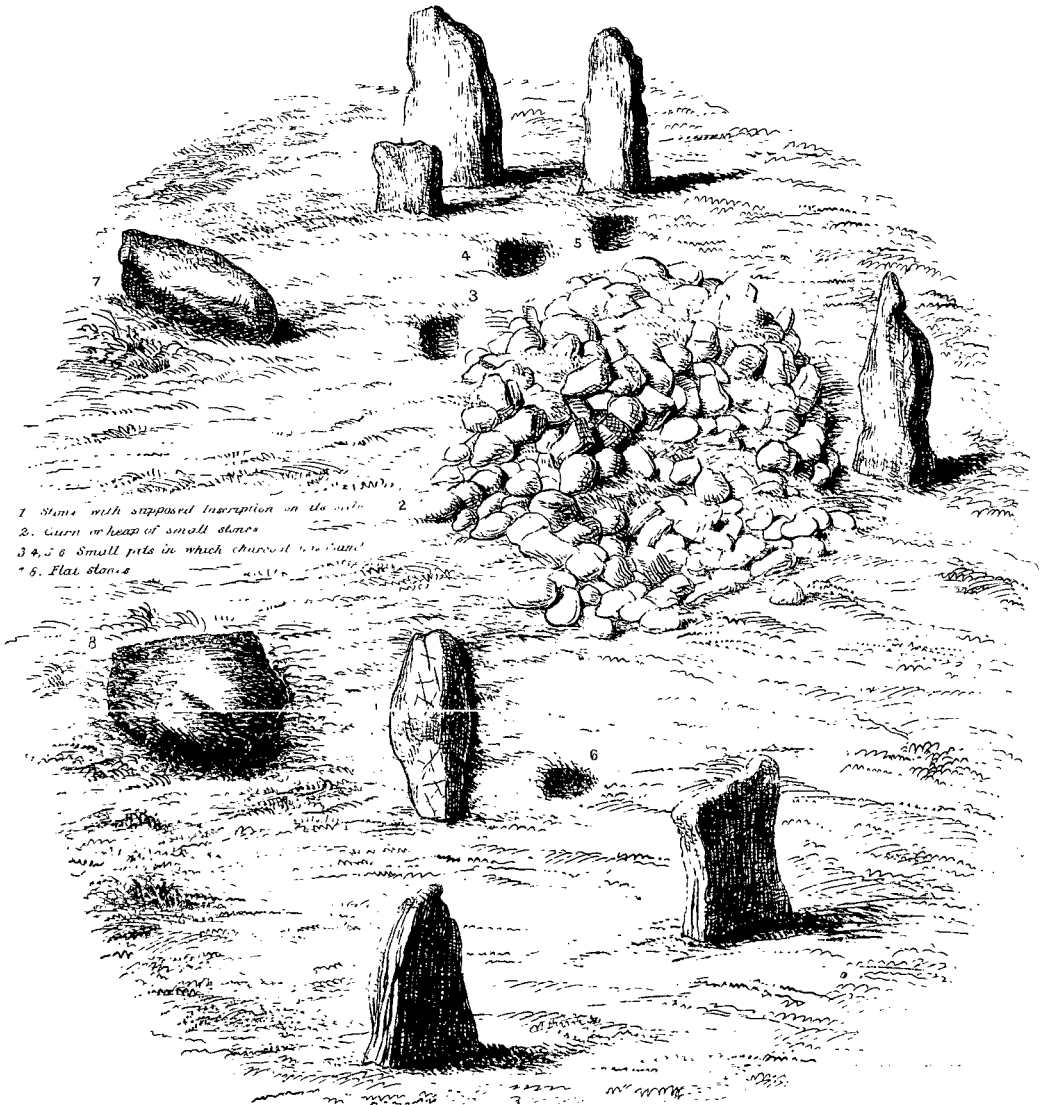
I.

NOTE OF INCISED MARKS ON ONE OF A CIRCLE OF STANDING STONES IN THE ISLAND OF LEWIS. By JOHN STUART, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The circles of standing stones which occur so frequently in most parts of Scotland, and have been without any foundation associated with the ancient Druids, have of late been more systematically examined than they were in former days, and the result has almost always revealed traces of sepulchral deposit, sometimes in the centre of the circle, and at others at the base of all the stones of which it was composed.

Sir James Matheson communicated to the Society last session the discovery of two sepulchral chambers, found near the central stone of the great circle of Callernish in the Lewis, over which a deposit of moss eight feet in depth had accumulated. From a more recent communication from Sir James to Mr Innes, it appeared that, about a mile from the great circle in question, there is another group of stones of a semi-circular shape, on one of which are cut certain lines, which will be understood from the sketches (Plate XXV.) and casts now produced, for which the members are indebted to Sir James Matheson.

It is difficult to say whether these marks were meant to convey any



- 1 Stone with supposed inscription on its side
- 2. Cairn or heap of small stones
- 3, 4, 5, 6 Small pits in which charcoal was found
- 7, 8. Flat stones

THE STONE CIRCLE OF STANLEY STONES
2 1/2 miles north from the large Stone Circle near Callernish, Orkney Islands

meaning or idea, but they seem to have little affinity to the system of marks which has been called Ogham writz. There a centre line, or the edge of a stone, is always found, on each side of which are groups of short lines, of no great length, and varying arrangement. In one instance, at Newton, in Garioch (Aberdeenshire), these short lines are disposed round a circle.

I sent sketches of the marks near Callernish to Dr Reeves, with a request that he would bring them under the notice of Dr Graves of Dublin, who has long studied the Ogham system. In answer Dr Reeves wrote:—"I have not had an opportunity of showing the scratchings to Dr Graves, but I think I may safely affirm they are not Ogham, and that he would be unable to make anything of them. Such scorings are occasionally met with in Ireland in ancient monumental stones; but their design and import are, I believe, a mystery. Even in the more regular, methodical, and professed verbal inscriptions, in acknowledged Oghams, see what doubt and uncertainty exist! As yet these seeming random lines, in vestiges such as you have sent, are about as unmeaning to mortals of this day as the fleeting pictures of the clouds."

Although it is probable that some of the sculptured symbolic stones in Scotland¹ had a connexion with the circles of stones in their immediate vicinity, yet, beyond this example at Callernish, I am not aware of any but a single other case in which incised figures have been found on one of the stones of the circle itself. In the centre of the market-place of the town of Huntly, in Aberdeenshire, are two stones, which have been known for centuries as the *Standing Stones of Strathbogie*, and are obviously the remains of a circle round which the village grew. On one of these may still be seen the figure of an arch, of horse-shoe shape, and a small portion of a concentric circle.

In the circle near Callernish now in question were found some holes about four inches square, containing wood charcoal, of which specimens, sent by Sir James Matheson, are now produced—agreeing in this respect with many circles on the east coast, where diggings have almost always brought to light marks of fire in some shape or other.

[This circle was buried under several feet of peat moss, the inscribed

¹ Sculp. Stones of Scotland, Pref. p. vi.

stone (fig. 1, Plate XXV., which measures 7 feet in length by 3 feet in breadth) being covered to the depth of about 3 feet. It may be suggested that these apparently scratched lines are probably due to the unequal wasting or weathering of the stone itself; some of the "heap of loose stones" in the adjoining cairn (see Plate XXV. fig. 2) being stated in one of the notes written on the original drawing to "have also characters scratched upon them." The small cavities containing charcoal are described by Mr T. S. Muir—who visited the place—to have resembled small wells: they are stated to have been surrounded by stone borders, and below the charcoal, water was found in each.—Ed.]