

I.

REPORT ON THE STONE CIRCLES OF THE NORTH-EAST OF SCOTLAND
—THE BUCHAN DISTRICT—WITH MEASURED PLANS AND DRAW-
INGS, OBTAINED UNDER THE GUNNING FELLOWSHIP. BY FRED.
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The report which I have to submit this year deals with the central and eastern parts of the Buchan district, upon the western borders of which our last year's survey was brought to a termination. The area is a very large one, but the sites still possessing megalithic remains are deplorably few—a result to a great extent due, doubtless, to the fact that the Buchan, with Maud as its centre of mart and commerce, is almost wholly agricultural, and so strenuously utilitarian in aspect and custom that it is scarcely matter for surprise, however much to be regretted, that Standing Stones, Cairns, and Stone Circles are alike regarded as cumberers of the ground, and more frequently than not, utterly demolished. To bring the matter to its sharpest issue, the distressing statement has to be made, that out of the twenty-five sites noticed below, there now remains but one complete Circle having its several stones erect and *in situ*. Some half-a-score others have several stones; but of these not a few are so much out of position as to suggest the probability that they were disturbed in the inefficient and vain search for relics. In a very few examples the interior appears to give evidence of being quite untouched. These would probably reward the competent excavator.

The Buchan, taken as a whole in the ancient sense, once possessed some forty-five Circles, as recorded¹ by the Rev. A. Chalmers. "Buchan, however, is now ordinarily regarded," says Rev. J. B. Pratt,²

¹ *Buchan Field Club Trans.*, vii.

² *Buchan*, edition 1901, with additions, p. 11. My references hereafter are to the same edition.

“as comprising sixteen parishes.” If we take Maud as the centre of a circle with a radius of about 12 miles, these parishes will be parcelled out thus:—In the N.E. quadrant are Pitsligo, Fraserburgh, Rathen, Lonmay, and Crimond, having three Cairns and six Stone Circles. In the S.E. quadrant, which contains the parishes of Strichen, St Fergus, Old Deer, Longside, Peterhead, Cruden, Slains, and Ellon, we find remains of nine Stone Circles and the sites of no fewer than thirty Cairns. The S.W. quadrant, comprising the greater part of the three parishes of Methlick, New Deer, and Monquhitter, up to which our last survey was carried, shows three Stone Circle sites and but one Cairn; while on the north quadrant, bordering with Banffshire, there are four Stone Circles and only two Cairns. Many smaller subdivisions of these areas are entirely devoid of Stone Circles; and, speaking generally, we may say that, as previously noticed,¹ small areas replete with Cairns are not marked by Standing Stones or Circles.

In compiling this report, our grateful acknowledgments are due to various observers who have already described several of the sites now under review; especially to Rev. J. Peter, formerly minister of the parish church in New Deer, to Rev. J. Forrest of Lonmay, and to several members of the Buchan Field Club, whose papers are printed in the *Transactions* of the Club, and also to Mr J. Milne, formerly of Mains of Atherb, without whose most frankly afforded knowledge, intimate and long-extended, of the antiquities of the Buchan, this report would be lacking some of its most valuable matter.

The plans are in most cases drawn to the same scale of 20 feet to 1 inch as heretofore; where any departure from this occurs, it will be noticed at its proper place.

Beginning near the most southerly limit of the district, the first site to be noticed is at the farm called—

No. 1. Standing Stones of Hatton.—The village of Hatton clusters about the Water of Cruden, 4 miles due west of Port Errol. At a point half a mile south of it there once stood a Circle of “seven or eight

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxvii. p. 91.

stones, removed by the tenant in 1831 to make way for 'improvements.'"¹ No further information was to be obtained from anyone acquainted with the locality.²

In correspondence with Mr H. B. Mitchell, of Peterhead, information reached me to the effect that on the river bank in the village of Ellon there are standing "some stones of the type usually found in circles with recumbent stone, arranged in a sort of circle"—evidently removed from their original site, which seems now to be beyond identification.

No. 2. Greenhill.—This is also in Cruden parish, 1 mile west of Longhaven station, on the Ellon and Boddam Railway. All that now remains of the Circle, the site of which is recorded on the O.M., is a fine pyramidal block of Peterhead granite, situated on a level portion of a field having on its east side a hillock of sand (see fig. 1). The Stone is deeply set in the earth, and its almost square base measures in girth 16 feet 8 inches, its top about 5 feet. Its most regular base-line trends E.N.E. and W.S.W., and it stands 4 feet 4 inches above the ground.

No. 3. Denhead.—This site, distant from the last slightly over a mile to the N.N.E., is close on the boundary between Cruden and Peterhead. What was the nature of the remains it is now impossible to state, since the O.M. merely records "site of supposed circles," and no further information is now to be had.

En route for relics of more substance, we may here note the map record of a group of antiquities that lies between the farms of North Aldie and Cairn Catto, partly in Cruden, in Peterhead, and in Longside

¹ *Buchan*, p. 42.

² In *The Scottish Journal*, vol. i. p. 371, it is recorded, with reference to this circle, that on the removal of the stones the earth about them was of a black, soft nature, differing much from that around it. On the next page it is further recorded, without specifying the exact spot, that in a cairn or mound there were found a cist containing parts of two skeletons, two clay urns, seven flint arrow-heads, two flint knives, and a polished stone about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, neatly drilled through the four corners, and slightly concave on the one side and convex on the other [evidently a bracer]. Also, at about the year 1818, in a tumulus on Derryhill, Ardiffery, were found a chain of jet and amber beads and an axe-head of black flint. On the same land of Ardiffery, in 1821, there was found a cist containing a human skull, two urns, and seven flint arrow-heads.

parishes. Within a single square mile, the map shows the sites of seven cairns on the east bank of the Laecca Burn, the site of Silver Cairn, where an urn was found in 1818, a little farther to the north the site of a cairn and of an inscribed or sculptured stone,¹ found also in 1818, a spot called King's Grave, and described and figured² as a cairn-site with three cists exposed; next on Dun-na-Chaich, a long oblong

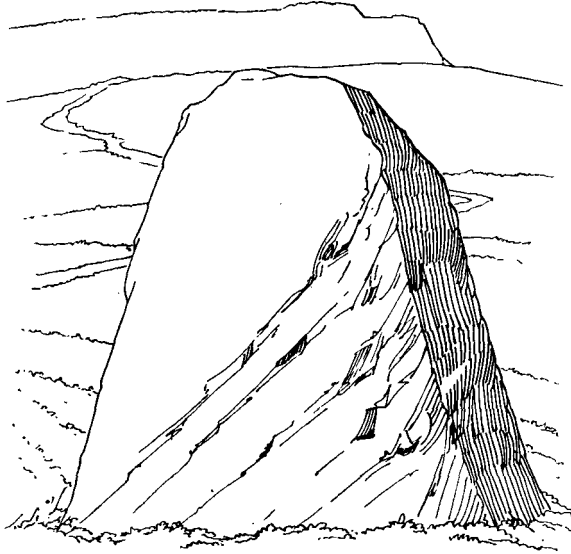


Fig. 1. Remains of Circle at Greenhill.

mound named "supposed camp"—merely a sand-hillock; and below it a "cromlech"—merely a huge ice-stranded granite boulder,³ the site of a stone cist found in 1840 near Newton farm, two other stone cists found in 1864, and numerous tumuli; while close to the road running N.W. to Longside, the vast amorphous remains of Cairn Catto, once of

¹ Removed to the garden at Aldie; see *Buchan*, p. 104.

² In *Buchan*, p. 101.

³ Called by the tenant—curiously enough—*The Hanging Stone*.

great extent and height, now bare and jagged, its cists riven asunder and rifled of all contents, and its huge mass of boulders serving now more as a landmark than aught else.

Throughout this once so richly stored district, scarcely one object now remains tangible to the archæologist; but the great abundance of large nodules of flint half hidden among the heather formed a conspicuous feature; one, moreover, which holds equally true of the site next to be described.

No. 4. Skelmuir Hill Standing Stones.—On reaching this site from Cairn Catto, we pass the Moss of Savock, and cross into Old Deer parish at Smallburn. The Stones are on a fairly prominent hill-ridge, 6 miles due west of Cairn Catto. On the O.M. two stones are shown standing 200 yards apart, and in separate fields. But since making our investigations, we have ascertained¹ that many years ago there was a group of three stones, and that deserved ill-fortune befell the two farmers (whose lands were divided by the dike) for their wantonly removing them. These three stones stood in a triangle, and were probably the remains of a Circle.

On the more easterly of the two present sites there are now two Stones, a smallish one leaning up against a greater (see fig. 2, B); they rest on the eastward slope of the hill, near its summit. They are both of grey granite; the latter measures 4 feet 5 inches at the higher edge, 4 feet 2 at the lower, and girths at the base 7 feet 3 inches. It is set vertically. The smaller Stone is 3 feet 5 inches at its highest above the ground, and girths 5 feet 10 inches. The broadest side of the larger stone, 2 feet 5 inches in length, faces the north, and it is probable that the area enclosed by the other Stones lay in this direction.

The Standing Stone on the westerly site is a very rugged and 'out of plumb' monolith, also of granite, measuring about 5 feet 6 inches in greatest length and 7 feet in basal girth. In the illustration (fig. 2, A)

¹ Through the good offices of friends at Longside whose relatives formerly lived near Skelmuir.

I show a view of this Stone from the south, with the Hill of Mormond several miles away in the distance.

No. 5. West Crichtie.—Site $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles N.W. from the last, and now unfortunately only a site. The circle of stones stood at a point midway between Turf-hill and West Crichtie, barely $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Stuartfield.

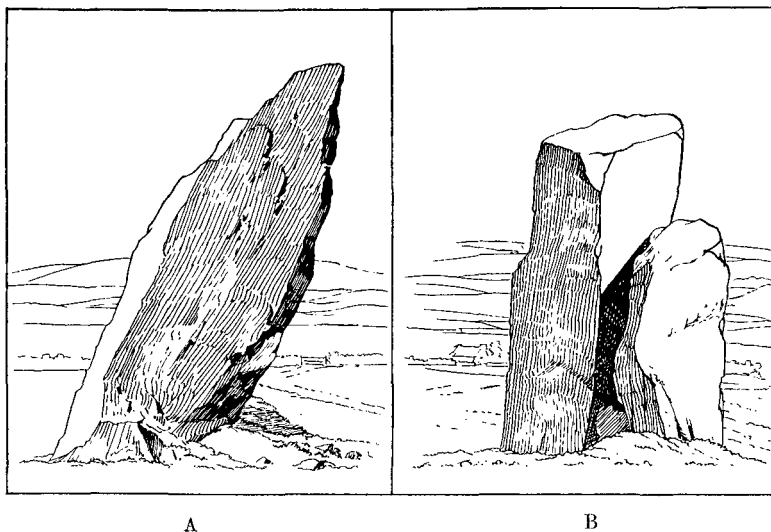


Fig. 2. Standing Stones of Skelmuir.

No. 6. Upper Crichtie.—One mile nearly due W. of the last, there is the site of a circle marked on the O.M.

No. 7. King's Crown.—Midway between the last site and Stuartfield is another, now featureless, site, given as the site of a circle on the map.

No. 8. The White Cow of Crichtie.—In the Buchan, this curious appellation is frequently given to great stones, presumably, as this one, of white quartz. We shall presently refer to the circle in the White

Cow Wood, near Pitfour ; and there is on the coast, not far from Troup Head, a rock called The White Cow.

The block of pure white quartz now lying on edge on the grass-border of the avenue at Crichtie is probably only a fragment of the White Cow described by Pratt¹ as one of the old boundary-stones of the district, as its dimensions are 5 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 7 inches. No such stone, be it ever so white, could have been of much practical use as a boundary-mark at the distances given by Pratt.

No. 9. The Muckle Stane of Auchmaliddie.—Such is the designation bestowed upon another and much greater block of brilliant white quartz by Pratt.² No notice whatever is taken of this stone on the O.M. ; and as the description by Pratt is not definite, I had almost given up hopes of finding it, when, on communication being opened with Mr John Milne, late of Mains of Atherb, and now residing at Maud, I was conducted to it by him on one of the many wet and misty days of September, and, in spite of all drawbacks, made examination enough of this site to put on record some interesting facts regarding it.

There are in reality two great Stones on this field at Auchmaliddie ; and it was obvious, at a glance, that Mr Milne's long-handed-down tradition of the Circle that once marked the spot received confirmation from the relative positions of these two now prostrate megaliths, as the Recumbent Stone and the West Pillar (see ground-plan and profile view, fig 3).

The site is a flat low field one mile and a third south of New Deer Church, and due west of the Upper Crichtie site, just noticed, 5 miles. For a radius of 6 miles from Auchmaliddie, in all directions except the N.E., there is not a relic to be classed as archæological recorded on any of the maps.

This prostrate Recumbent Stone looks as shown in the profile view when seen from the east. Its dimensions are, greatest length 10 feet 5 inches, greatest breadth 5 feet 7 inches, greatest thickness 3 feet 4

¹ *Buchan*, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 188, where it is described as having been a rocking-stone.

inches. A goodly portion of it is of equal breadth, but the entire south edge is thin in comparison with the opposite one.¹ The longest face of the Stone points W. 60° N. (mag.), and thus it is probable that this fine block lies in almost exactly the line that its base originally occupied.

The other fallen block, which I assume to be the West Pillar,

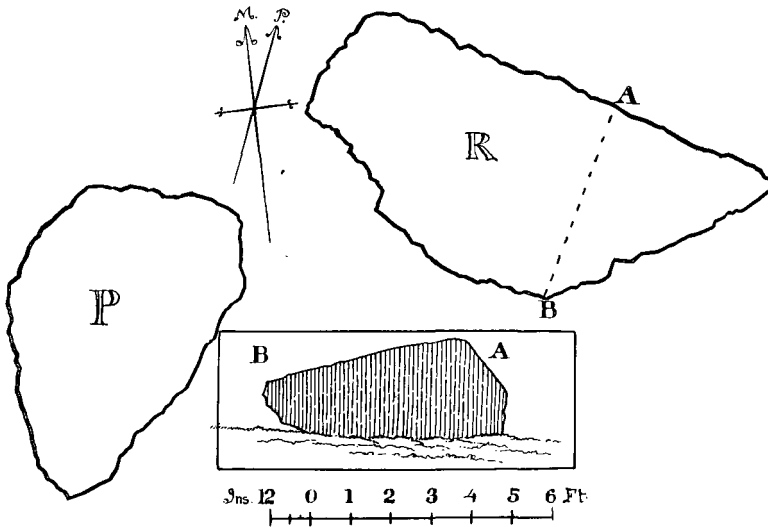


Fig. 3. Auchmaliddie; Plan and View from the East.

measures 7 feet 6 inches in extreme length, 4 feet 6 inches in breadth, and its western edge is 3 feet 2 inches above ground, its thinner portion varying from 20 to 24 inches. This Stone, like its companion, is of pure white quartz.² The dike hard by, on the south, is so full of fragments of the same species of stone as inevitably to suggest that the absent East Pillar—possibly even other Stones in the Circle—was of

¹ The computed weight of this stone is rather over eleven tons.

² For other instances of the use of this material see my reports in *Proceedings*, vols. xxxv. p. 231 and xxxvii. p. 97.

this conspicuous material. There is an extensive vein of the quartz about half a mile to the S.W. of this site, some of which may be seen in outcrops.

A few yards to the north, the very slightest swelling remains to faintly indicate the probable contour of the mound upon which the Stones anciently stood.

In a south-westerly direction over the dike, and about 20 yards away from the western edge of the Recumbent Stone, Mr Milne pointed out a very low circular mound, surrounded by a trench and low external ridge, measuring from crest to crest some 45 feet—extremely like a very ancient and, from its smoothness and regularity, an untouched cairn or sepulchral mound, of a variety not as yet classified.

No. 10. The Standing Stones of Culsh.—This site is 1 mile N.N.W. of New Deer. It has for long been only a site, but the memory of the circle is preserved in the name of the farm—Standing Stones. It is on record¹ that about the year 1770 the stones were removed for the purpose of building the parish church manse.

In the spring of 1901 the Society received news of the discovery of urns on a piece of ground presumed to be within, or close to, the area once enclosed by the stones. The site was visited by the Hon. J. Abercromby, who contributed² a full account of the discovery and a description of the objects found, which included a so-called 'incense cup,' a glass bead, and a small portion of a bronze blade.

No. 11. Standing Stone at Place Croft, Auld Maud.—On a little knoll, evidently on its surface artificially levelled, almost excluded from the observation of even a keen eye by the surrounding fields and the remnant of an old scantling of timber, there stands this one oddly-shaped and lowly monolith (see fig. 4). But although a humble specimen of Standing Stone, its archæological record is a good one. As far back as any tradition goes, the stone has stood solitary; but close to it (at what precise distance I could not discover) there were found, about the year 1846, five or six small urns placed simply in the earth;

¹ *Buchan*, p. 186.

² *Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. p. 258.

with them some bones were also found, and seen by my informant, Mr Andrew Henry. All the urns and the bones were replaced.

The Auld Maud Standing Stone measures 3 feet 9 inches in height, 3 feet in width, and rather less than 1 foot in thickness. Its main axis points W. 63° N. The stone is of red granite.

At the back of the old cottage on this croft, roughly some 130 yards to the north of the Stone, there was discovered in 1898, in the course of digging, an urn, covered by a small slab and resting

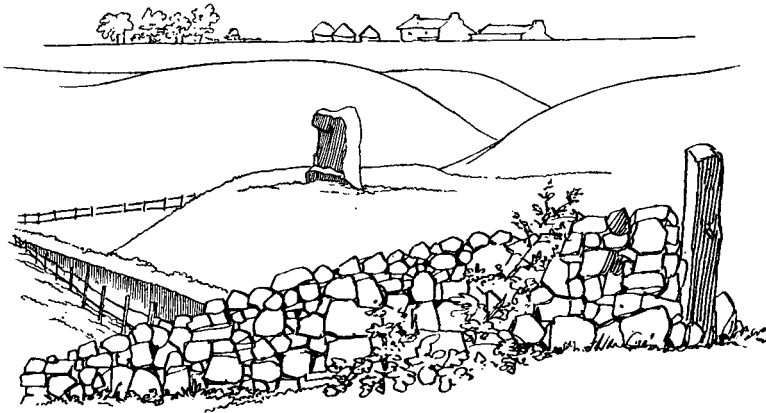


Fig. 4. Standing Stone at Auld Maud ; View from the North.

upon another. The upper slab was lifted away by Mr J. Milne, who then proceeded to remove the stiff soil from round the urn; but although the greatest care was exercised, the pottery was so extremely brittle that it crumbled to fragments in his hands. It was half filled with burnt bones, and the estimated dimensions were, height 13 inches, diameter of the rim 9 inches, and of the base about 6 inches.

The discovery of the urns at the Standing Stone is recorded on the O.M.

No. 12. Upper Benwalls, Old Deer.—Two miles and a quarter due east from the last there is shown on the O.M. the site of a stone circle.

Concerning it no information is now to be had ; there is nothing on the ground, and it is only possible to assert that the demolition of the stones took place between sixty and seventy years ago. There are several sites of cairns on the same hill. The name is locally pronounced Bennes.

No. 13. *Aikey Brae, Old Deer*.—Situated exactly 1 mile N.E. of the last, on an isolated eminence of Parkhouse Hill, rather over 300 feet above sea-level, stand the goodly remains of this famous Circle, familiar as a household word throughout the Buchan, and the *rendezvous* of many an exploring or picnicking party. At the northern foot of the brae the Midsummer Fair is still held. Nor is this Circle unnoticed in the annals of the antiquary. The late Rev. James Peter, in an excellent but brief article,¹ has described and illustrated Aikey Brae, along with several other of the more conspicuous Circles in Old Deer and adjacent localities. The members of the Buchan Field Club, keenly alive to the need of discussing certain features of these Circles, have paid more than one visit to them, and put on record² both descriptions and plans ; and this Circle in particular has been well photographed by Mr J. Park, of Old Deer.

The Circle on Aikey Brae, in its present state, consists of five erect Stones (inclusive of the Recumbent Stone) and five prostrate blocks, all of considerable magnitude and weight. The erect monoliths are carefully set upon a bank of small stones and earth, which displays the somewhat novel feature of being very sharply defined on both the inner and outer sides by many good-sized slab-like stones set upon edge. (See the ground-plan, fig. 5.) This bank measures from 5 to 6 feet in width, and from about 2 feet 4 inches to 2 feet 9 inches in vertical height above the enclosed area, which is pretty level and quite overgrown with grass. Below the mere surface-soil, however, the interior is evidently made up, in parts at any rate, of a mass of small boulders—an arrangement frequently observed in other circles.

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xix. p. 377.

² *Trans. Buchan Field Club*, p. 29 of the volume for 1887.

It is difficult to be sure whether some disturbance may not have taken place; the position of an irregular hole (T on the plan), of the two small loose blocks near it, and of the large flat stone (S) lying 6 feet or so from the Recumbent Stone, certainly suggest tentative excavation. Some mutilation also has been done, for Stone F lies in at least two large measurable fragments.

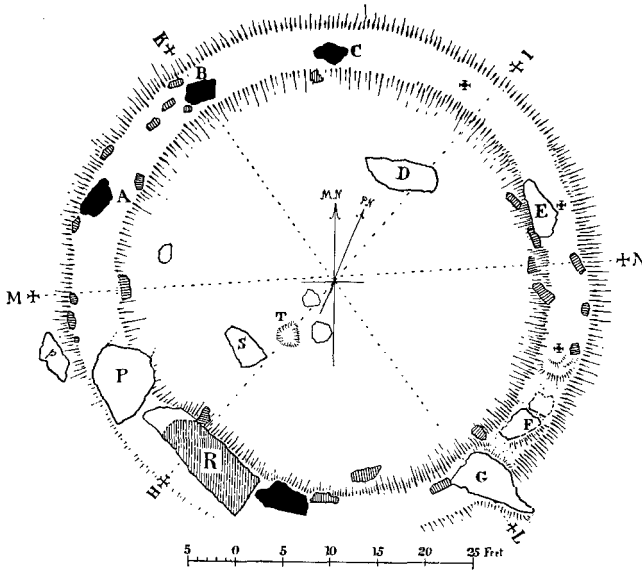


Fig. 5. Aikey Brae ; Plan.

The distances between the Stones, taken as usual from centre to centre, are as follows :—

Stone A to Stone B,	. . . . .	16 feet
„ B „ „ C,	. . . . .	15 „
„ C „ „ E,	. . . . .	31 „
„ E „ „ F,	. . . . .	24 „
„ F „ „ G,	. . . . .	7 „ 4 inches
„ G „ East Pillar,	. . . . .	19 „ 3 „

East Pillar to West Pillar,	22 feet
West ,, ,, Stone A,	19 ,,

yielding a circumference of close upon 160 feet.

The dimensions of the stones are—

Stone A, 6 feet 7½ inches outside height	}	granite
,, ,, 5 ,, 10 ,, inside ,,		
,, B, 5 ,, 10 ,, both sides		,,
,, C, 5 ,, 0 ,, ,, ,,		,,
,, D, 8 ,, 0 ,, long, 1 foot 5 inches thick		,,
,, E, 7 ,, 6 ,, ,, 3 feet broad, 2 feet thick		,,
,, F, broken, 1 foot 9 inches thick		,,
,, G, 8 feet 7 inches long (thickness not ascertainable)		,,

East Pillar, 7 feet high, granite, pointed; West Pillar, fallen, over 9 feet long, of whinstone. The smallest piece close on the west of the Stone appears to have been broken off this pillar. If so, then the Stone may have stood nearly 9 feet above the ground.

The Recumbent Stone, an irregularly oblong block of primitive trap, terminates in an abruptly vertical face next the East Pillar, but overhangs by a good space close to the West Pillar. It is remarkably uneven all over its upper surface. In extreme dimensions, it is 14 feet 5½ inches in length, 5 feet 5 inches in breadth at the middle of its height, and 4 feet 4 inches across the top. At the east end it is 3 feet 10½ inches above ground, at the middle of its length 4 feet 3 inches, rising to 5 feet near the west end, where it dips again to 3 feet 6 inches. Its weight has been computed to be about 21½ tons. Its median line runs (mag.) N.W. and S.E.

In the accompanying sectional views (fig. 6) I have endeavoured to show the true relations between the heights of the Stones and the level of the area within,—the lowest section, M N, showing also the relative height and size of the slabs set up on each edge of the bank.

Two views (figs. 7 and 8) are also appended.

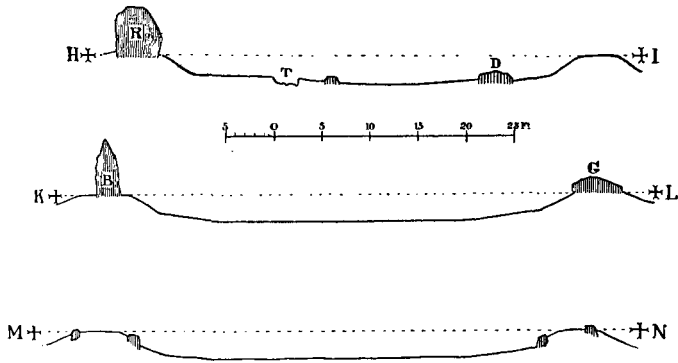


Fig. 6. Aikey Brae ; Sections.

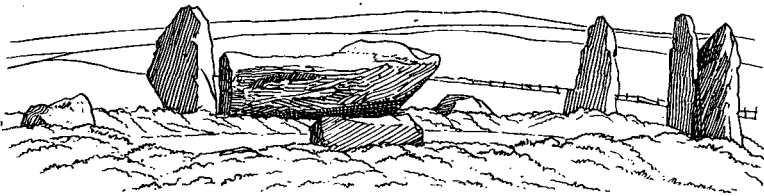


Fig. 7. Aikey Brae ; View from the North.

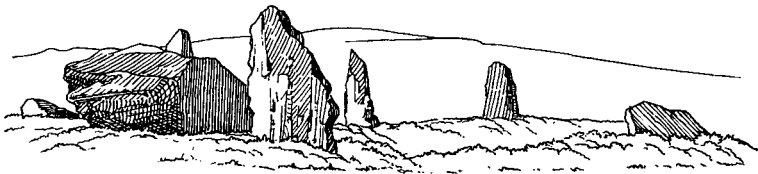


Fig. 8. Aikey Brae ; View from outside on S.E.

In a recent publication¹ there occurs the following paragraph:—
“The present editor was present during a long summer day, some years ago, along with the late Col. Forbes Leslie of Rothienorman, Charles Elphinstone Dalrymple, Esq., James Russel, Esq. of Aden, J. G. F. Russel, younger of Aden, and Thos. Ferguson, Esq. of Kinnmudy, when the circle at Parkhouse was thoroughly and carefully examined for traces of sepulture. The central space was excavated to a depth of 6 or 8 feet without a trace of evidence that the soil had ever before been disturbed. Numerous small cairns, which looked like sepulchral monuments, and which surrounded the circle, were also thoroughly examined, and the day closed without any trace of graves.”

Now observe, a piece of ground containing considerably over 900 square feet was “excavated to a depth of 6 or 8 feet,” and “numerous cairns” hard by were also “thoroughly examined”—all this during one long summer day!

Had the men who plied pick and shovel spent a week over this excavation, and reported no “trace of graves” or other form of interment, the negative result might have been accepted.² As it stands, the account cannot, in reason, be taken to mean that every square foot of the soil enclosed by the Stones was dug into, even to the depth of a few inches; and unless every square foot is laid bare, the excavation cannot be held to be thoroughly exhaustive and scientifically complete. It does not by any means follow that, because “the central space,” whatever its dimensions were, yielded no traces of sepulture, some other portion of the enclosed area, *e.g.* close to the Recumbent Stone, or to the base of any of the other monoliths, might not have contained some such deposit.

No. 14. *Louden Wood, Pitfour*.—This Circle is shown on the O.M. as having five Stones, and with no individuality in the plan of the Recum-

¹ *The Great North of Scotland Railway Guide*, p. 105, by W. Ferguson, Esq. of Kinnmudy, ed. 1881.

² Even then the absence of relics at the date of excavation does not prove that interments were not ages ago made, and possibly removed subsequently.

bent Stone. In reality, there are still seven Stones, three of which are fallen.

The site is an extremely difficult one to find, and we received scarcely any help towards its discovery in the dense woodlands from anyone on the policies.

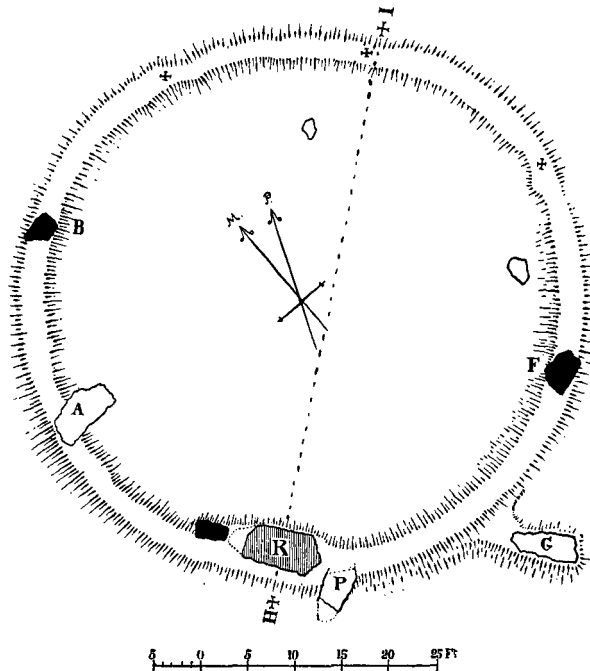


Fig. 9. Loudon Wood; Plan.

Loudon¹ Wood Circle is of almost precisely the same character as that on Aikey Brae, the work of destruction having, of course, obliterated its minuter features, and a perennially abundant growth of blaeberreries aiding this effect by softening and rounding off all angles and sharpness of contour.

The Stones are set upon a bank (see ground-plan, fig. 9), the circum-

¹ Locally pronounced Lowden, the *ow* as in *how*.

ference of which is 178 feet; its estimated height above the interior is about 2 feet 6 inches. The spaces from centre to centre between the Stones are—

Stone B to Stone A,	21 feet 2 inches
„ A „ West Pillar,	19 „ 0 „
West Pillar to East Pillar,	14 „ 6 „
East „ „ Stone G,	15 „ 6 „
Stone G to „ F,	17 „ 0 „

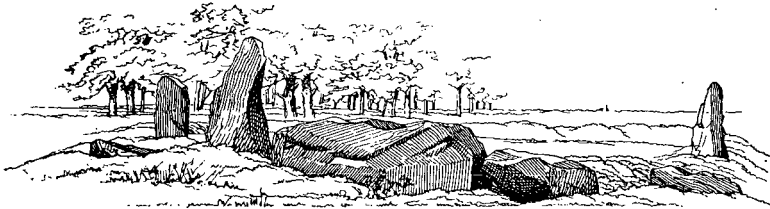


Fig. 10. Louden Wood; View from the S.E.

The heights and dimensions are—

Stone B, 5 feet 8 inches outside height, 4 feet 6 inches inside;
a very square block of granite.

Stone A (fallen), 7 feet 4 inches by 3 feet 9 inches.

West Pillar, 6 feet 5 inches; granite, pointed.

East „ (fallen), 8 feet by 3 feet 6 inches; granite.

Stone G, „ 7 feet 6 inches by 3 feet; „

„ F, 5 feet; high pointed, granite.

The Recumbent Stone almost touches the West Pillar, but is 12 inches apart from the East.

Its top slopes down towards the interior, and is very rugged and uneven. In extreme length it measures 10 feet 3 inches, in breadth near the middle 4 feet, and 2 feet 10 inches at the east end. It is of an average height of 4 feet. Its weight is about 12 tons; and its inner face is towards the E.N.E.—a slightly unusual position.

The view (fig. 10) is from the S.E..

No. 15. *Auchmachar*.—Before passing on to describe the remains of the Circle here, notice should be made of a remarkable mound of stones situated in a wood about a furlong to the west, at a height of 410 feet above sea-level. This is called Knapperty Hillock. Its dimensions are, length 216 feet, breadth of its flat summit 12 feet, with a downward slope on each side of about 15 feet, and a mean height of 7 feet. This whole mound seems to be composed of stones—smallish boulders and the like. Some of these are exposed at either extremity. Through information sup-

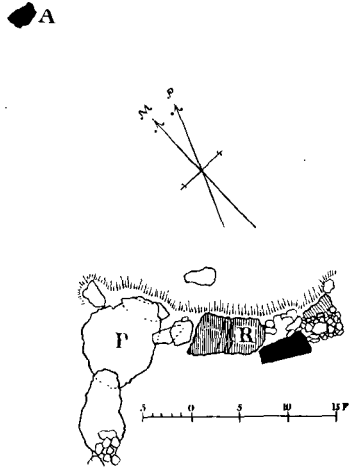


Fig. 11. Auchmachar ; Plan.

plied by Mr John Milne, I am able to record that, up to 1850 or thereabouts, there stood a cairn at either end of this great oblong mound. These were both removed for the building of dikes, and though several urns and quantities of bones were discovered, none of them were preserved.

The Circle at Backhill of Auchmachar stood complete in its ring of nine great Stones up to the year 1850, at which date some of the tallest, over 11 feet high, were removed, to be used in repairing the mill. The poor remnant now left may be seen illustrated in the ground-plan (fig. 11) and the view (fig. 12). It consists of what once

was a massive Recumbent Stone of dolerite, shattered by some lads who had lighted a Midsummer Day fire on its broad surface; of the still erect East Pillar, the fallen West Pillar, upon which partly rests another great Stone, and one tall Stone of the original Circle yet *in situ* (A on the plan). Several smaller blocks lie about these in great disorder.

The diameter of the circle was under 50 feet.

The site is a field on the Backhill of Auchmachar, about 400 feet above sea-level, and a furlong from the steadings, on a fairly level space where two dikes meet.

Where so much recorded damage has occurred, it is hardly profitable to discuss present features; otherwise, I should direct attention to the position of the East Pillar—the only one now erect—which projects so

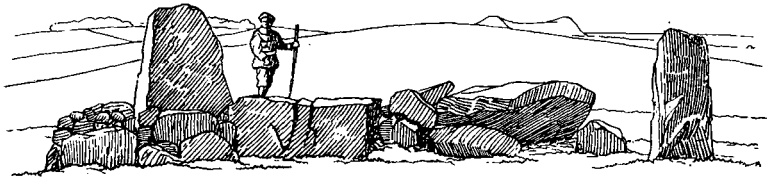


Fig. 12. Auchmachar; View from N.E.

considerably beyond the outer edge of the Recumbent Stone. Possibly the latter was originally very much broader. The height of this Pillar, of granite, is 8 feet 4 inches, and where the top of the dyke abuts against it the girth is 12 feet 7 inches.

The height of the recumbent stone is 3 feet 6 inches; to give its other dimensions would be superfluous. The one monolith, A, still left, to the N.W., stands nearly 7 feet 2 inches above ground, and is a vertical well set-up block of granite, squarish on two sides. (See the illustration, fig. 12, in which these Stones are drawn from measurements.) In the distance is an outline of Knapperty Hillock, with its cairns, as they probably looked in times past.

In the Arbuthnott Museum, at Peterhead, there is a fragment of the upper part of an urn, labelled as "found in 1840 beside the Stone

Circle at Backhill of Auchmachar." It is not of Bronze Age type of pottery, however. Probably the actual spot of its discovery was not noted at the time with sufficient accuracy.

No. 16. *White Cow Wood*.—This site, which is almost as widely known as that on Aikey Brae, lies very nearly on the highest part of a very greatly-rising eminence 2 miles due south of the station at Strichen, and 1 mile north of the Auchmachar Circle, at the height of 466 feet above sea-level.

From descriptions and drawings already published,¹ an unusual interest and curiosity were aroused regarding this remarkable setting of stones; nor were these one whit lessened when, on approaching the site, we found the configuration to be as shown in the sketches (figs. 15 and 16).

Having in mind the severely rigid setting of outer and inner slabs connected with the bank in the Circle at Aikey Brae, it was perhaps a quite natural conclusion to form, that in this Circle at White Cow Wood we had a repetition of this arrangement. On further examination, however, no evidence was forthcoming that in this partial and low bank there had ever been an outer setting of such slabs on edge. And the surmise then flashed upon me, that probably these earth-fast slabs constituted truly the rim-stones of a cairn, and were never the limits of a bank upon which there once stood the great monoliths of a true Circle. In this guess, as I afterwards found, I proved correct.

As such an arrangement as this is, however, possibly unique among our recorded plans of cairns, it is surely advisable to give it a place here.

In the ground-plan (fig. 13), all the earth-fast Stones are shown in their exact relation to each other and to the interesting remains of the sepulchral chamber enclosed within them. They were all measured in a series of offsets from five chords drawn across the arcs of the circle.

The diameter of this nearly perfectly circular setting of Stones is 46 feet 8 inches measured from centre to centre of opposite Stones, forty-one of which are still *in situ*. On the S.W. is a gap, with a good-sized

¹ By the Rev. J. Peter, in *Proceedings*, vol. xix. p. 373, and in papers in *Trans. Buchan Field Club* (1887).

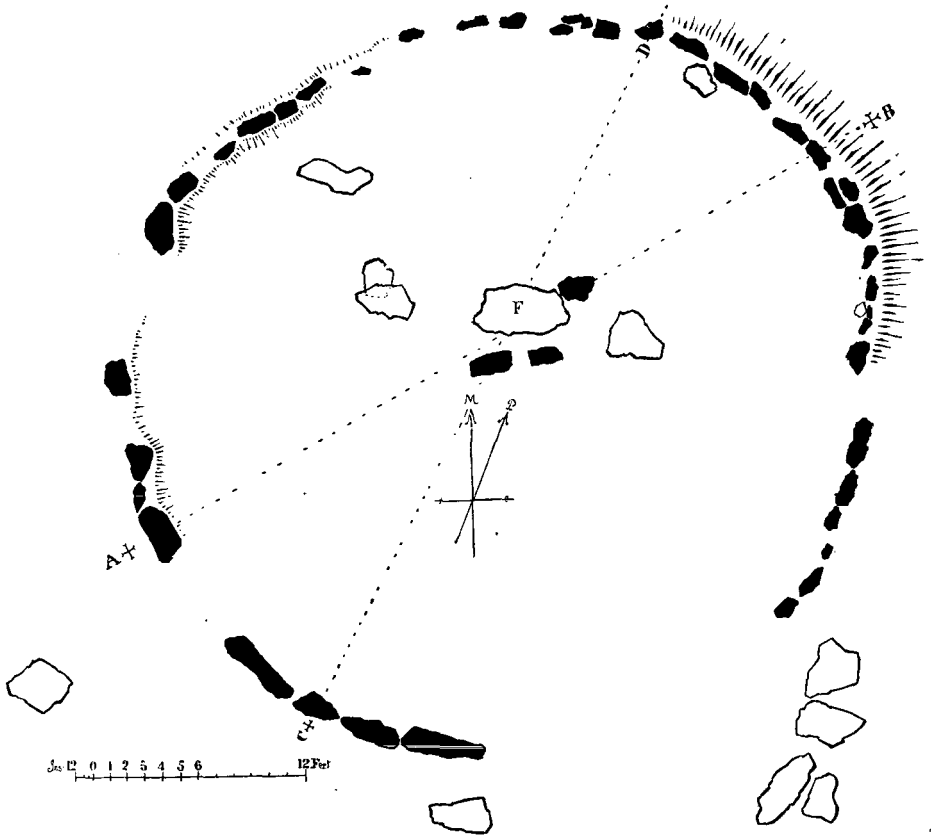


Fig. 13. White Cow Wood Cairn Circle ; Plan.

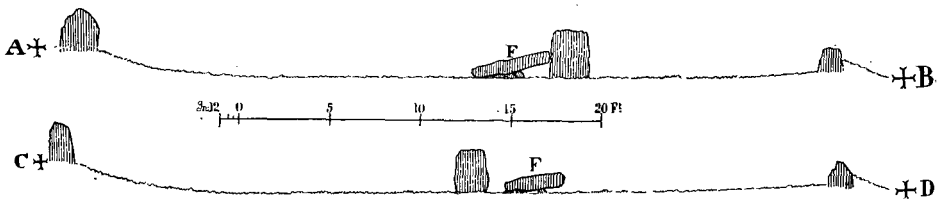


Fig. 14. White Cow Wood Cairn Circle ; Sections.

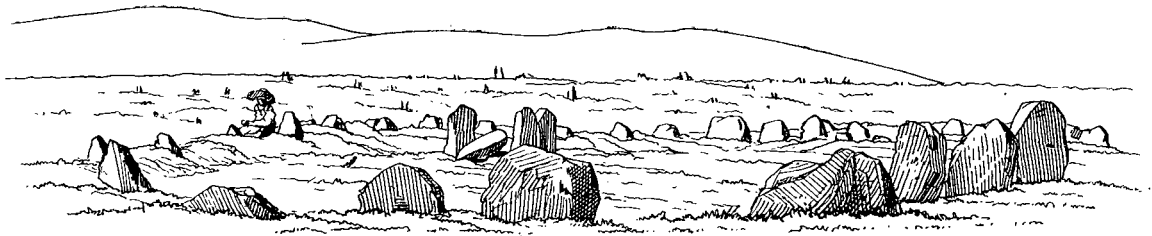


Fig. 15. White Cow Wood Cairn Circle ; View from the S. W.

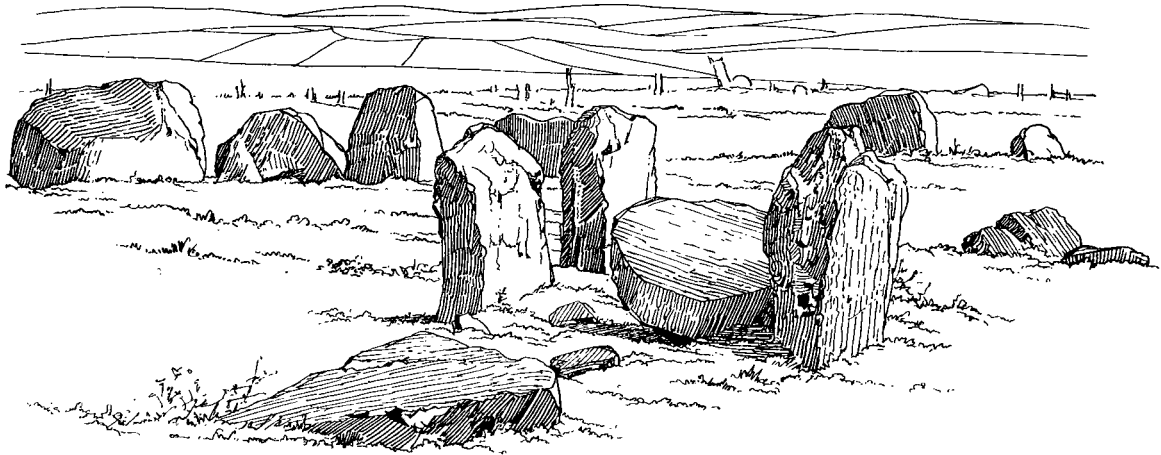


Fig. 16. White Cow Wood Cairn Circle ; View of remains of Sepulchral Chamber.

squarish Stone lying near it; on the W. another gap, which might be filled by two Stones; on the N. and the E. there is space for three others; and on the S.E. and S. there lie five great Stones, which, if placed side by side, would fill up the long gap there. Thus fifty-two or fifty-three Stones complete this environing portion of the structure. All the largest and highest are set on the S. arc.

Within the area, and somewhat N. of its centre, are three Stones standing erect (see view, fig. 15), and between them a large nearly flat block (F on the ground-plan, fig. 13, and sections, fig. 14); on the E. of these a large block, and on the W. two others lie. These seven are all that now remain of the sepulchral chamber once constructed here, and apparently containing the only interment within the cairn. Of the three upright Stones, that on the N.E. of the flat slab is 2 feet 6 inches above ground, and the other two are 2 feet 3 inches high. The sectional view on line A B going S.W. and N.E. shows the respective depths and heights of the structure. The sloping bank outside the low Stones at B is really due to the falling down of many of the smaller stones of which the cairn was composed, and not an integral portion of it. There is no such running over of small stones on the S. arc, where the four much larger and higher blocks have properly served the purpose of a retaining wall.

Mr Milne remembers this site when it was a cairn of about 10 feet in vertical height, and accounts for the wide gap on the S.E. by the removal of the five Stones there, so as to admit carts which carried away the enclosed boulders.

No. 17. Auchcorthie.—This site is not shown on the maps. For it I am indebted to Mr Milne, in whose grandfather's time the Circle was well known. It stood on the summit of a rather high field a quarter of a mile N. of the farm-house, and the Stones were all removed by the tenant, Hardie, about 1840. There was a Recumbent Stone, hollow on the top. The site is about 330 feet above the level of the sea.¹

¹ There stands, to the S.W. of the farm, a fairly massive stone, which we at first assumed to be the remnant of this circle. Two sides showed rather fresh fractures; and the tenant "rather thought that it had been set up some fifteen years ago."

In this name, Auchcorthie, we have yet another instance of its meaning and association with standing stones, as previously noticed in other reports.

No. 18. Strichen House.—This is given on the O.M. as a Circle of Stones standing among the beautifully-wooded policies of this estate.

As described by Rev. J. Peter,¹ it consisted of several Stones, with the Recumbent Stone set on the north arc. By another writer, the late Mr J. Spence, of Peterhead, this statement and observation are endorsed.² Afterwards, another member of the Buchan Field Club³ throws doubt upon the present position of the Stones, and refers to a rumour of their long ago having been removed, and then, by the orders of someone in authority, replaced, and misplaced in so doing.

On examining the site, it became quite clear to me that this rumour had its origin in fact; for not only is the Recumbent Stone group on the north arc, but all the Stones are placed several feet within the very compact and continuous earthen bank at this spot—two features utterly at variance with any of the arrangements hitherto observed in our surveys.

I am now in the position to be able to state the following facts on the authority of Mr Milne: that during the somewhat early years of last century his grandfather worked on the estate of Strichen; that about the year 1830—during Lord Lovat's proprietorship—the Stones of this circle were all removed, but that, before any further destruction took place, his Lordship ordered them to be replaced; and, according to old Mr Milne's recollection, they were not all replaced, and those that were, were set up not in their original positions.

The only means by which the facts regarding the original positions of the Stones can now be obtained is by a reference to an estate map of date prior to 1830–20. For aid in this direction I wrote in June 1903 to the factor, Mr Sleigh, who, by the 1st of February 1904, was able to reply to the effect that on neither of two estate plans, of dates 1796 and 1847, was there any trace of this Circle shown.

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xix. p. 372.

² *Trans. Buchan F. Club* for 1887.

³ *Ibid.*

At the same date, 1st February 1904, I also received from the Rev. J. Forrest of Lonmay personal assurance that for many years it had been the current local tradition that these Stones had been removed, and were subsequently wrongly placed.

At present, therefore, it is obviously unnecessary to show a plan of the Circle at Strichen House.

No. 19. Gaval.—The Circle here “stood on a high sunny eminence looking eastward over the wide open country towards the sea. The Recumbent Stone was of enormous dimensions, and the destroyers

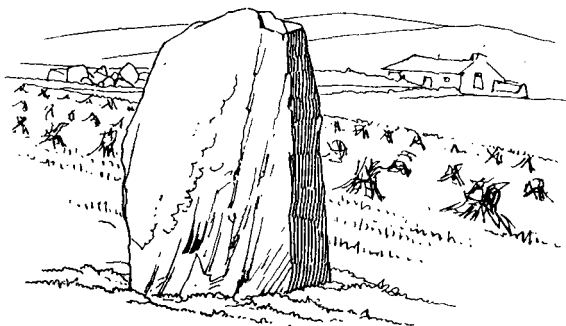


Fig. 18. Remains of Circle at Gaval.

shattered it with gunpowder.” Thus writes Rev. A. Chalmers in 1902.¹ The map record is merely a site, at a height of about 320 feet above sea-level.

Only one Stone now remains *in situ* (fig. 18), a fine, vertically set block of dolerite, girthing at the base 9 feet 6 inches, at the top 5 feet 1 inch, and clear above the ground 4 feet 10 inches. The N. edge is rounded, the others rather sharp, but all fairly vertical and smooth. As its broadest base-line lies due N. and S., I conjecture that the area of this Circle extended to the east of this Stone. Mr Milne remembers the Recumbent Stone and three others *in situ* up to about the year 1872, when they were destroyed by the tenants; destroyed, moreover, not to serve any

¹ *Trans. Buchan F. Club*, vol. vii.

useful purpose whatever, but split into easily movable fragments, and deposited at an angle between the main road and the loaning, where we counted over sixty pieces.

No. 20. The Gray Stone of Cortiecrum.—There is no record of this on the maps, but it is situated just 3 miles slightly to the S. of E. from the last, a quarter of a mile to the E. of the road between Mill of Hythie and Mains of Kininmonth, and about a furlong to the S.W. of Cortiecrum farm-house.

I have again to thank Mr Milne for this addition to my list for the past season.

This Gray Stone is a huge pillar-like mass of whinstone, but fallen half prostrate towards the south.¹ Around its middle it measures about 18 feet. Its present greatest height is 6 feet 8 inches, and its greatest length over 11 feet. By old residents it was always claimed as the last remaining Stone of a Circle.

No. 21. Auchnagorth.—In connection with the remains here, I experienced for once in this district how very misleading the record on the O.M. can occasionally be. On the 6-inch sheet, a very small and conventionally dotted ring and the ground-plan of only one stone had most naturally led me to expect a mere site marked by a monolith. How great was my surprise, therefore, when, on accosting Mr Jessiman, the tenant of Upper Auchnagorth, on the afternoon of my visit to this remote spot, I was at once informed that “all the ten stones were still yonder”! Hurrying up to the site, which is on a long level plateau, surrounded on three sides by deep natural trough-like hollows in the extensive peat-mosses, we truly found the ten Stones, seven of them, however, now for a long time prostrate. When all were erect, though none is conspicuously tall, this Circle must have been a very outstanding object for a great distance on all sides, since there are few knolls in the

¹ Its position is accounted for in local tradition by its having fallen upon and crushed to death an old-time farmer who was digging below it in search of a bull's hide full of gold. The same legend is told of two other monoliths in Aberdeenshire, one at Kildrummy and one at Binghill.

immediate vicinity overtopping the height of the plateau, which is 497 feet above sea-level.¹ What other greater enclosing hills there may be farther away it was quite impossible to tell, for the mist lay heavy over the entire landscape, frequently, indeed, so thickly enshrouding us as to render the path invisible at the distance of a few yards.

The Standing Stones of Achnagorth are ten in number, and do not

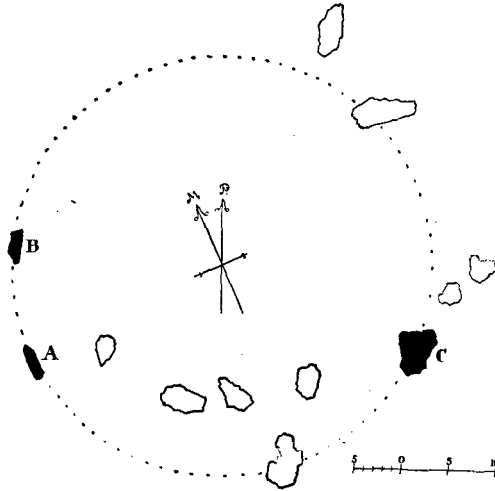


Fig. 19. Achnagorth ; Plan.

include a Recumbent Stone, or, from their relative positions, suggest the former existence of such. They appear to have been set (see the ground-plan, fig. 19) directly on the level of the ground, for what looks like a bank around the bases of the two stones on the west is really the modern turf-dike for carrying the posts of a farm fence. Of these ten Stones, however, only three are now erect—A, B, and C; three

¹ Between the Hill of Torlundie, 651 feet, near New Pitsligo on the east, and this Circle at Achnagorth, there is a long strip of ground at the 500-foot contour, which goes by the strange name of Cairny-whing.

others lie close to the circumference, and four smaller blocks lie considerably within it. All the Stones, so far as discoverable, are of a species of "rotten porphyry," rough, blueish in some parts, reddish in others, and coarsely veined with white quartz—evidently an easily disintegrated stone. All these features are most evident in Stone C, the most massive of the group (see fig. 20). It is prism-shaped, and across its westward face measures fully 5 feet. It is 4 feet 6 inches in height, and girths at the base 17 feet 5 inches. The Stone on the S.W. arc (A on the plan) is 5 feet 6 inches in height and 4 feet 4 inches broad ;

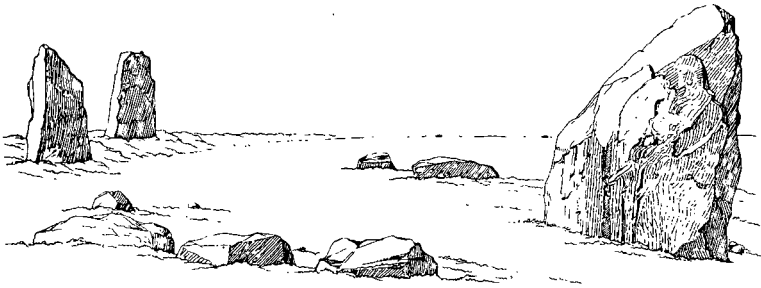


Fig. 20. Auchnagorth ; View from the South.

and the third Stone, B, is 5 feet 9 inches above the level of the field on the outside of the fence. It is over 3 feet 6 inches in breadth.

The true diameter of the circle is 44 feet 6 inches.

In view of so much displacement, we can scarcely hazard a guess at the exact positions occupied by the seven fallen Stones ; yet, taking the space of 13 feet which separates the centres of Stones A and B as the probable average interval, we find there is just room enough for these seven fallen Stones. Further, it is to be noticed that the two longest of all the prostrate blocks lie close to the N. and the N.E. points, and the shorter ones to the south, an arrangement corroborating that observed in other circles of similar type, viz., that when the Circle has no Recumbent Stone, the tallest stones stands on the north arc, but in

those examples having a Recumbent Stone, the tallest Stones are invariably on the south.

There are two smallish stones near C ; they are flush with the ground, and their thickness, therefore, is unascertainable, but from their position they suggest the probability of their being parts of one of the

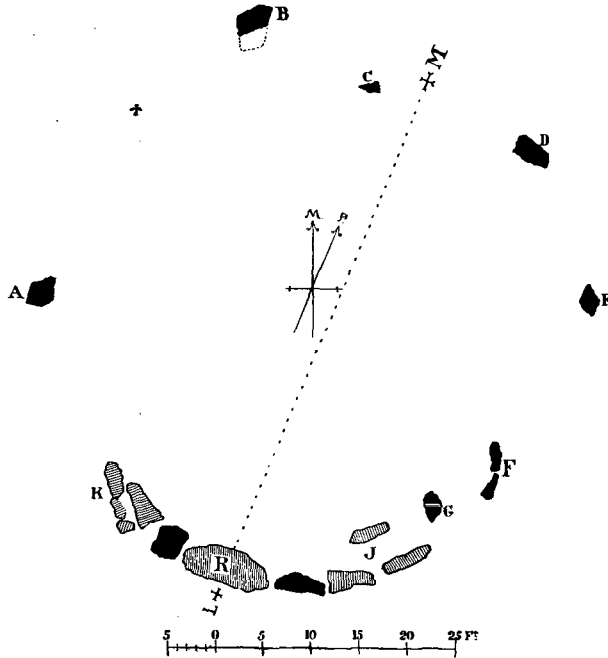


Fig. 21. Netherton of Logie in Crimond ; Plan.

formerly erect Stones. If so, we get rid of the difficulty of claiming the unusually small stone (near A on plan) as really one of the group.

No. 22. Netherton of Logie in Crimond.—This, the one specimen of a complete Stone Circle (fig. 21) to be noticed in this report, can best be reached from Lonmay station, from which it is distant in a S.W.

direction two miles and a quarter. It is within four miles of the sea at Middleton of Rattray, and a bare hundred feet above sea-level. The site is a wooded roundel in a field close to the north of Netherton farm-house, and between it and the main road connecting Loumay with Crimond. The fact of its being on Lord Carnegie's estate of Crimonmogate probably explains the fine state of preservation of this Circle, which also has the good fortune to be under the care of the present tenants, Mr and Mrs Keith, who have spent over forty years on the land, and who, like others in a similar position, welcomed our surveying party with true old-fashioned hospitality.

Unlike in many respects to the Auchnagorth Circle, so many miles distant on the west, this Netherton Circle bears a resemblance to that in having its Stones set apparently on the natural level of the ground, without any surrounding bank of earth. I make this statement with some diffidence, because, although the interior displays no signs either of having been ploughed or roughly explored by digging anywhere, it is, of course, possible that such operations were conducted at a date so remote that nature by this time has so laid her softening hand upon man's interference as to obliterate all signs of it (see view from the north, fig. 23).

The spaces between the stones are as follows:—

Stone A to original site of Stone B	21 feet 6 inches
„ B „ Stone C	24 „ 8 „
„ C „ „ D	18 „ 2 „
„ D „ „ E	16 „ 9 „
„ E „ „ F	20 „ 6 „
„ F „ „ G	7 „ 10 „
„ G „ East Pillar	16 „ 0 „
East Pillar to West	14 „ 9 „
West „ to Stone A	29 „ 6 „

from which we have a circumference of almost 170 feet. The diameter, as measured between Stones A and E, is exactly 57 feet.

The heights and characteristics of the stones are—

Stone A,	5 feet 5 inches,	vertical, broad ;	red granite.
„ B,	4 „ 0 „	much out of plumb ;	red granite.
„ C,	4 „ 0 „	sharp-edged,	„
„ D,	3 „ 7 „	bulky, flat ;	grey granite.
„ E,	4 „ 5 „	pointed ;	whinstone.
„ F,	3 „ 10 „	sharp-edged ;	red granite (one stone).
„ G,	3 „ 6 „	pointed ;	whinstone.
East Pillar,	6 feet,	flat-topped ;	red granite.
West „	6 „	pointed,	„

The Recumbent Stone, of grey granite, measures in full length 9 feet 9 inches, in height 4 feet 2 inches, and is perfectly rounded throughout its contour, not having an angular or level space on it. In girth it measures transversely 11 feet, from the level of its base on both sides. Its weight may be put at 8 tons and a quarter.

Even in this Circle some shifting of the Stones must at some long-past period have taken place ; it is obvious that Stone B is considerably out of its proper position, and that F and G are too near each other.

In addition, we must observe the three massive and apparently earth-fast blocks at J and the four at K. The positions occupied by the first group of three certainly suggest their being a portion of the original structure. They should be compared with the similarly-placed blocks in the Circles at Hatton of Ardoyne¹ and at New Craig, Daviot.² They average 5 feet in length and 1 foot 8 inches in thickness, and the relative positions of the J group suggest the boundary-stones of a bank of earth such as we find in other Circles belonging to the Buchan and elsewhere.

With regard to the feature noticed when describing the Auchnagorth Circle,³ the presence of the smallest and shortest Stones at points N. and N.E. of the Recumbent Stone is well accentuated in this Netherton Circle. I append two profile views (fig. 22), the upper one on line LM

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. pp. 242, 244.

² *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvi. p. 523.

³ *Vide supra*, p. 284.

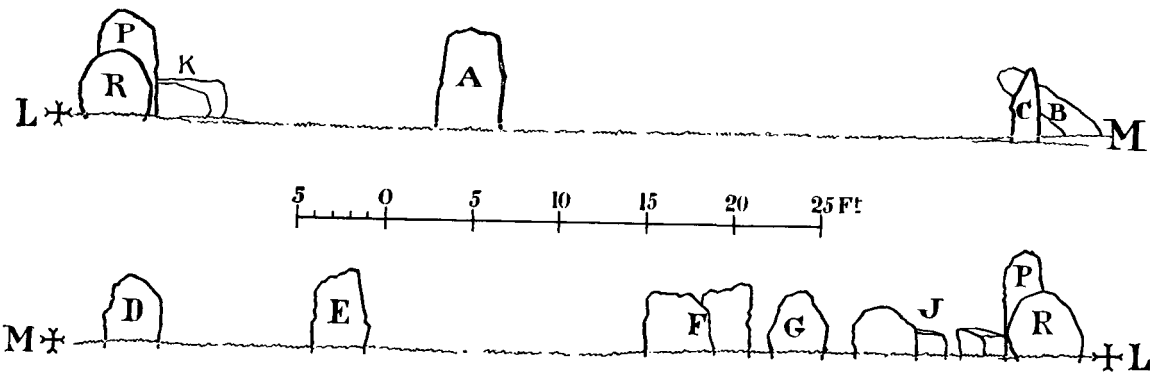


Fig. 22. Netherton of Logie in Crimond ; Sections.

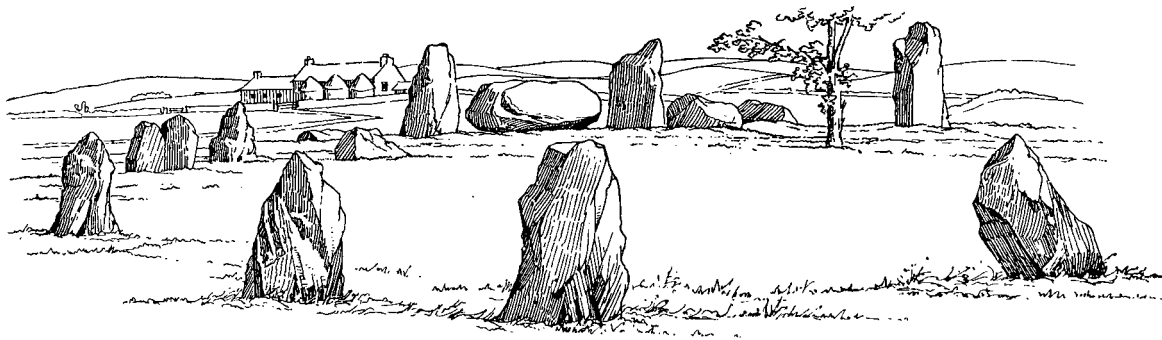


Fig. 23. Netherton of Logie in Crimond ; View from the North.

from south to north, the lower from north to south on the same line; and in the view from the north (fig. 23), the Stones are shown disencumbered of the trees planted about them.

No. 23. *Berrybrae, Lonmay*.—This Circle is due west of the last-mentioned exactly 1 mile, and from Lonmay station, by Lumbs, about a mile and three-quarters to the S.E. A roundel of trees and a low dike mark off the spot; but the dike is quite unprotective against the inroads of cattle, many of the trees are fallen across the central enclosed area, and only five of the Stones now remain.¹ These comprise a Recumbent Stone and two very massive Stones still *in situ*, and two prostrate and broken. The interior space is level, and seemingly undisturbed, and lies fully 2 feet 3 inches below the surrounding bank on which the stones are set, the bank being quite complete throughout, and fairly measurable at any point. One characteristic of this Circle appeals forcibly to the eye as one walks round it on the outside of the bank; this is, that the ground within the Circle bank is on a higher level than the natural surface on its exterior. In other words, the vertical height of the bank, though only 27 inches measured to the interior, is 45 inches measured on the outside.

The Recumbent Stone, a roughly prism-shaped and long mass of whinstone, trends in the direction of W. 40° N. (mag.). It is 10 feet 10 inches in extreme length, a large portion of it being sharply gable-shaped, and otherwise full of irregularities. Both its outer and inner sides are nearly vertical, and its basal width is 3 feet 8 inches. In height above the ground at its base it stands 4 feet 4 inches. Its eastern extremity is the narrowest, measuring there only 2 feet 2 inches, but at the west fully 3 feet. At each end it falls short of touching the pillars by several inches. Its weight is over 9 tons.

The East Pillar lies broken in two (see ground-plan, fig. 24). This, at least, is the only reasonable purpose to assign to the two great fragments of red granite that are embedded near to its proper site. The West Pillar is a grand monolith, being an oblong block of red granite,

¹ In *Buchan*, this circle is mentioned as "a very perfect circle, near Lumbs."

5 feet broad by 2 feet 6 inches thick, and standing clear of the ground over 7 feet.

The first Stone of the Circle (A on the plan) is also a very massive and striking one. It has a rhomboidal base which girths 12 feet 2 inches, and its outside height is 5 feet 2 inches ; on its inner side, where its base touches the bank, the height is 3 feet 7 inches. The second Stone, B,

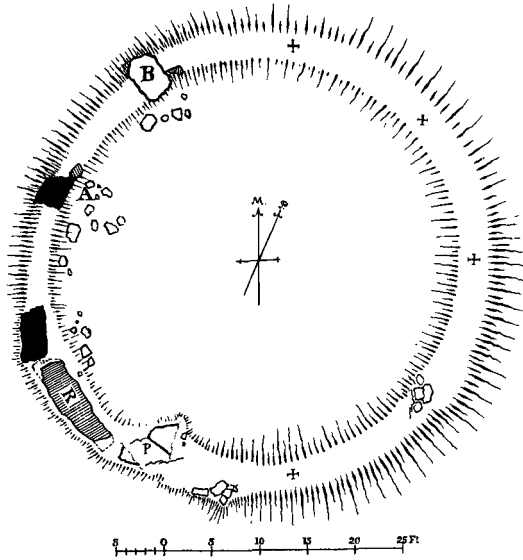


Fig. 24. Berrybrae, Lonmay ; Plan.

is now prostrate. It is a broad mass of, I think, whinstone, measuring 5 feet by 3 feet by 1 foot 6 inches. Close to its upper and inner edge is a set slab, and several others of similar shape and size lie about near it, and also near Stone A, and between that and the West Pillar, suggestive of the former existence of an inner setting of stones limiting the bank.

The spaces between these three Stones are almost exactly equal—
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15 feet ; and on this proportion we find room for five more Stones, thus completing a circle of ten Stones.

The diameter is 45 feet. In the view from the N.E. (fig. 25), the massive grandeur of the three remaining erect Stones is shown, and causes the greater regret at the loss of the others, which contributed, even so lately as the date of Pratt's description, towards the distinction and completeness of this Circle. The Hill of Mormond is seen in the distance.

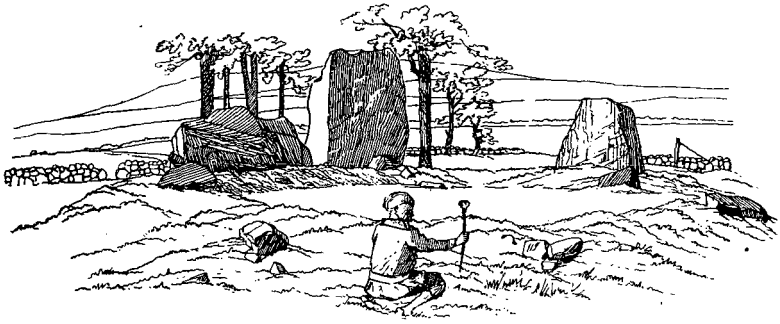


Fig. 25. Berrybrae, Lonmay ; View from the N.E.

No. 24. Cortie Brae, Lonmay.—At this place the O.M. records the site of a Circle on the crown of the rising ground, half a mile N.W. of the station at Lonmay. The site is now marked by two Stones only, one of which (A on the ground-plan, fig. 26) stands 2 feet 10 inches above ground—a rather bulky grey granite boulder. The other is flush with the ground, and measures 4 feet 5 inches by 3 feet. Both Stones rest on a roughly semi-circular mound (indicated by the dotted line in plan), which is confined by a dike, and is about 3 feet high. This possibly is part of the ancient mound upon which the Stones were originally set. More probably, however, all the Stones were lifted and huddled together at this spot, which is now distinguished by a flagstaff. We could derive no information from anyone we met here.

The longer axis of the still erect Stone A trends nearly N.E. and S.W., and measures 5 feet.

This site marks the most northerly Stone Circle site now extant in Aberdeenshire.

No. 25. The Gray Stone of Clochforbie.—The Circle once crowning this comparatively lofty and conspicuous height, 420 feet above sea-level, is almost as far to the north as the site last noticed. It is several miles to the west, and in the parish of Kinedart.¹ It is quite likely that the Standing Stones of Auchnagorth were visible from Clochforbie, as the two sites are only a couple of miles apart; but, for reasons above given, I could not be sure of this.

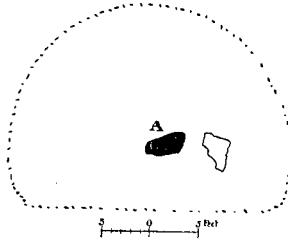


Fig. 26. Remains of Circle at Cortie Brae.

The site is at a point 4 miles due south of Gardenstown in Gamrie Bay. The road between Clochforbie and the Crofts of Clochforbie passes within a few feet of this Gray Stone, and its construction must have caused the demolition of the Circle; for this one remaining is doubtless, by its horizontal position, its bearing by compass, and its ponderous proportions, the Recumbent Stone of the old times. It is a rough, rounded, rather boat-shaped boulder of whinstone (see figs. 27, 28), irregular on all sides, but fairly flat on the top; and though almost 12 feet in over-all length, and 2 feet 10 inches broad near the middle, it is in contact with the ground for only some 5 feet, thus having a very

¹ It is well pointed out by the author of *Buchan* that the older spellings of this name Kynedor, Kenidor, Keineder, and Kyuedart, etc., prove that it is Gaelic in origin, and has no connection with any King Edward.

considerable overhang at each extremity. Its greatest height is 3 feet 3 inches, and it rests upon several small stones. Its main axis lies N.W. and S.E. (mag.), and its weight is 4 tons and a quarter.

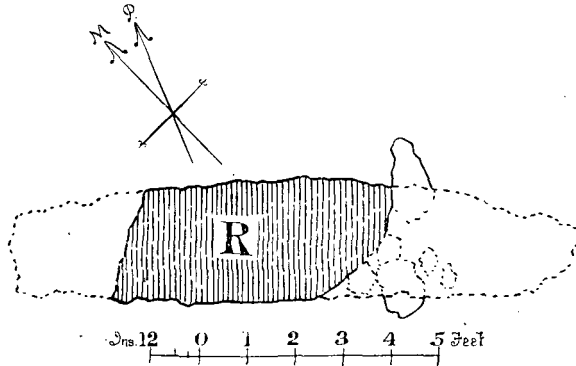


Fig. 27. The Grey Stone of Clochforbie ; Plan.



Fig. 28. The Grey Stone of Clochforbie ; View from the North.

Not the slightest vestige of any other Stones or of a circular area likely to have been that of the Circle is now to be seen, and I came in touch with no one whose memory could recall any different conditions.

This site at Clochforbie is distant west from Berrybrae $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and for nearly 8 miles farther west, close to the town of Banff, there is

no indication on the maps of any circle or cairn extant. In other words, in a district comprising 156 square miles, we have now only five sites recognisable as sites of Stone Circles.

Conclusion.—Out of the diversified megalithic remains thus reported on, there are eight localities which are, and have been for long, mere sites; three others, Greenhill, Auld Maud, and Cortiecrum, are each marked by a single Stone; at three other sites, Skelmuir Hill, Cortie Brae, and Auchnagorth, there are remains of Circles; and at the following sites we have either the personal testimony of old residents for the existence of a Circle with Recumbent Stone, or Recumbent Stones themselves, viz., at Auchmaliddie, Aikey Brae, Loudenwood, Auchmachar, Strichen House, Gaval, Netherton in Crimond, Berrybrae, Clochforbie, and Auchcorthie.

A period of five years having now elapsed since I received the commission from the Society to undertake the Survey of the Stone Circles of the North-East of Scotland, it seems an appropriate moment at which to place on record a few generalisations deduced from our investigations.

We can, for instance, now answer some of the questions propounded at the close of my first report. We can, with the map before us, point to no fewer than one hundred and fifty-five sites at which there either still remains a Standing Stone or a Circle of Stones, or at any rate the symbol used by the Ordnance Surveyors to indicate that such remains did formerly exist at these sites.

Taking into account the solitary Recumbent Stone of the Circle once existent at Millplough, near Bervie (which did not come within the scope of this special survey, but which I have seen and illustrated¹), we can even state with precision that this remarkable megalithic feature, unknown in any other part of the world; so far as records are trustworthy, distinguishes the Circles of Kincardineshire, Aberdeenshire, and Banffshire (so far as yet examined), from Bervie in the south to

¹ In *Proceedings*, vol. xxxvii. p. 197.

within a half dozen miles of Gamrie Bay in the north, and extends right across from the coast at Slains and at the mouth of the Dee to the high hilly districts in Alford, and up to the Deveron beyond Huntly. And we have ascertained the proportion between the Circles devoid of the Recumbent Stone and those possessing it to be this, that out of one hundred and twelve measurable Circles, sixty-one are proved to have had Recumbent Stones,¹ a large number of these being still *in situ*.

Regarding the important feature of the discovery of sepulchral relics within the Circles, there is indisputable evidence that in over thirty examples in which competent and thorough excavation was made, interments of various kinds have been brought to light—a number surely sufficiently large to constitute a type, and to set at rest the idle speculations, even yet so frequently indulged in by fanciful persons, as to these ancient burial-sites being vaguely associated with a class of men who in England worshipped in groves of oak, and held the primitive community in terror by some indescribable necromancy and magic.

It is only right to add, that there are yet several sites so remote from the places of our sojourn in the different districts of Aberdeenshire (some of them also not known to me at the date of our visits) that they were necessarily passed over. These are described on the O.M. thus:—Remains of Circle at Corshalloch, in Glass; Lulach's Stone, a Kildrummy; sites of two supposed Circles on Clachcurrhill, Tarland; and in the same parish a Standing Stone at Middle Sinnahard, and the remains of a Circle called Tom-na-veerie; the remains of a Circle, one stone; a Standing Stone at Boltinstone in Logie Coldstone; and in the same parish, remains of a Circle at Wester Braehead, St Wolock's Stone, the sites or remains of four other Circles, and the remains of another at Waulkmill (definitely recorded); the remains of a Circle, two stones, on the farm of Standing Stones in Skene, and at Auchinclech; a Standing Stone at South Auchronie in Kinellar; the Warlock Stone on

¹ In this numeration, I include only one Recumbent Stone site unvisited by myself. It was called by the strange name of Gingomgres, and was at Milleath in Cairnie. See *Place Names of Strathbogie*, by the late Jas. Macdonald.

Craighash in Kincardine O'Neill, and a Standing Stone in Glenmuick, near Ballater. These would, if the map-records were all proved correct, bring up the total number of sites to one hundred and seventy-five.

A few sites in very out-of-the-way localities in Banffshire, contiguous with Aberdeenshire, have also been unvisited, *e.g.*, in Marnoch and in Boyndie.

But in studying the larger Stone Circles of this extensive north-eastern district of Scotland, with the yearly increasing opportunities for adding to our knowledge of them, one feature has emerged, which, because of its structural interest and importance, calls for a somewhat detailed and careful notice. It first suggested itself to me after planning the great Circle at Auchquhorthies¹ on Kincausie Estate, near to and S.W. of Aberdeen, again in the circle at Tom-na-gorn,² and latterly in others.

The measurable Circles, out of the grand total on record, number only seventy-seven. We may divide these into three groups, according to their size: thus, (1) of Circles whose diameter is 60 feet and more there are forty examples; (2) Circles of the second magnitude, with diameters of from 30 feet to 60 feet, are twenty-eight in number; (3) the small Circles number nine examples.

It is with the larger Circles that the following inferences have to be made.

Taking the ground-plan of the great Circle at Auchquhorthies (fig. 29), in Kincausie, as starting-point, and measuring with compasses to ascertain the common centre of the three Stones (A B C), we find that the circumference thus obtained runs many feet outside of the Recumbent Stone group. That group of three great Stones is on the circumference of a considerably smaller circle, concentric with the inner stone setting of low slabs placed on edge.

The same observation applies to the circles at Garrol Wood, at Esslie, at Sunhoney, at Dyce, at Tom-na-gorn, at Kirkton of Bourtie, probably also in two or three other examples in the lower districts not now dis-

¹ *Proceedings*, xxxiv. p. 145.

² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

playing sufficient data for exact measurements; and certainly at Yonder Bognie and at Rothiemay (surveyed in 1902).

The structural point specially urged may be stated in a different manner; it means that the stones respectively to the west and to the east of the two pillars do not—in the nine examples adduced—stand

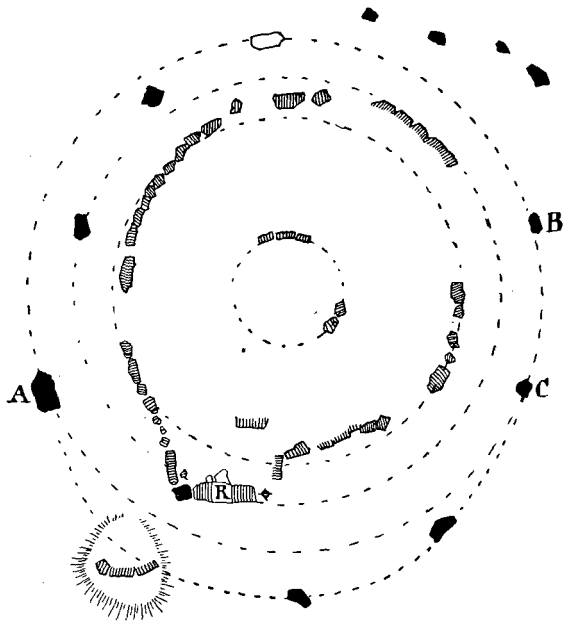


Fig. 29. Auchquorthies, Kincausie.

with their longer axis 'in line' with the pillars, but always 'in line' with two stones, which (if not demolished) would complete the external circumference of the circle, and which *are* present in part in the Auchquorthies Circle, which therefore gives us a key to the constructive principle governing the circles of the first magnitude.

Now, if—as the plans and drawings show—there are several circles having the Recumbent Stone group definitely connected with the inner

stone setting by a series of long slabs, we have, in truth, looking at the structure as a whole, a double circle of stones, and we also have an arrangement that answers to the earliest descriptions of Stone Circle with an accuracy much greater than is generally supposed.

For, at a date long previous to the modern era of close agriculture, what caught the eye of the wandering antiquary was a ring of great pillar-stones, and within it, that one peculiarly placed stone—the Recumbent Stone—which it pleased our forefathers to call the altar. This great massive Stone, reclining east and west, roughly speaking, and far greater in bulk, ordinarily, than any of the Standing Stones, must necessarily have attracted immediate notice, because, the interior of the Circle being grassy all over, scarcely anything of the inner setting would be visible. The Recumbent Stone and its two pillars thus formed an isolated group, well within the earthen bank on which stood the boundary-stones of the Circle. Nor would it be until after a good deal of attempted excavation had occurred that the true structural connection between the Recumbent Stone and the inner setting was even partially revealed. Therefore, with a great ring of Stones guarding, as it were, the semi-prostrate one within, it is hardly matter for surprise that the earlier observers, content to examine superficially, filled their imaginations with scenes of sacrifice and of so-called Druidical ceremonial.

From some of these early notices I shall now proceed to quote.

(a) Probably the first careful description of a Stone Circle in Scotland is that penned by Gordon of Straloch¹ in the following words: “visuntur septa ingentium saxorum, in orbem disposita; unum, intra orbem, latitudine prae ceteris conspicuum, austro obversum, arae locum praebuisse videtur: saxa haec, difficili vectura, saepe a longinquo petita.”

The map accompanying the description is dated 1654.

This is as terse a description as could be of a great Recumbent Stone situated, like an altar, well within the area of the orb of the circle.

(b) In 1692 the Rev. Dr James Garden, Professor of Theology at Aberdeen, in writing about Stone Circles to John Aubrey in London

¹ *New Description of Aberdeen and Banff* (Spalding Club), p. 8.

says: "Two of the largest and most remarkable of these monuments that ever I saw are yet to be seen at a place called Auchincorthie, in the shire of Mernis, and five miles distant from Aberdeen, one of which has two circles of stones, whereof the exterior consists of thirteen great stones . . ." [In my plan of this great circle at Kincausie the number of stones in the outer ring is thirteen.] "The other monument," proceeds Dr Garden, "which is full as large, if not larger, than that which I have already described, and distant from it about a bow-shot of ground, consists of three circles, having the same common center."

This is the Circle at Old Boutree Bush, the remains of which we planned in our first survey, but of which neither of the two inner concentric settings remains. It is clear, however, that Dr Garden recognised two varieties of Stone Circle here.¹ In the beautifully clear plan² of this same Auchquorthies Circle made by James Logan, the feature of the double circle of stones is well brought out, the Recumbent Stone group standing some 25 feet within the outer ring of great Stones.

(c) To quote but one instance out of several in the *Old and New Statistical Accounts*, the Rev. Robert Cook, M.A., minister of Clatt, in 1842 writes of "the distinct remains of a Druidical temple, of which only the supposed altar-stone and a few of the upright stones remain. The stone supposed to have formed the sacrificial altar, *in the centre* [italics mine], was of large dimensions," and so forth.

(d) Lastly, we cite Rev. James Pratt, who was a keen observer, and did so much towards the recording, by description at least, of the sites of the Circles, and in arousing the tenants to set some value on them as the most ancient memorials of the past left in the Buchan. In the course of some general remarks on the circles in Old Deer³ this author says: "Sometimes inside the circle—sometimes in the circumference of

¹ Dr Garden is also particular to note, with regard to the circles, "I have found nothing hitherto, either in the name of these monuments or the tradition that goes about them, which doth particularly relate to the Druids, or point them out." (*Archæologia*, i. p. 341.)

² *Ibid.*, vol. xxii. p. 202.

³ *Buchan*, pp. 164, 165.

the circle itself—there is one conspicuously large stone, lying flat, which is frequently designated the altar-stone.”

When describing Aikey Brae Circle he uses these remarkable words : “The diameter of the space enclosed by the inner circle is about 50 feet.” This description implies that the present ring of fallen and standing Stones was once surrounded by another. Whether this was precisely concentric with the Stones as they now remain, or, as at Auchquorthies, the outer circle tended towards a horseshoe contour, does not affect the point I am attempting to elucidate, which is, that in a large number of the greater Circles possessing a Recumbent Stone, that Stone and its pillars¹ were set a considerable distance within the area defined by the erect monoliths.

Reference should also be made to another special feature, about which perplexity frequently arose when conducting our examination on the spot, but which is now, I think, satisfactorily explained.

In the report of surveys made in 1901 I made use of a diagrammatic ground-plan of what formerly must have been a remarkably well-preserved specimen of Circle with Recumbent Stone at the Hill of Fiddes in Foveran. This plan, drawn by Jas. Anderson in 1777,² is held by him to be a fair typical example of the Aberdeenshire Circles ; and it contains a clear outline of the oblong-oval platform of small stones, projecting inward for a few feet from the inner face of the Recumbent Stone, and extending to the east and west of it for about the same distance.

In none of the Circles examined during these surveys does this definite detail of arrangement now exist, with any clearness or continuity of line. But, quite recently, having access to a number of letters written by Mr C. E. Dalrymple in 1855–56 to Dr John Stuart, letters which in many cases were accompanied by sketch-plans of the Circles he was at that time busily engaged in excavating, I observed, in the drawing of the Circle examined at

¹ By the older observers frequently styled “the horns of the altar.”

² *Archæologia*, vol. v. p. 246.

Castle Fraser,¹ this very platform-like structure, elaborated with an attention to detail that is valuable as evidence in a matter where so little evidence is obtainable.

The drawing is here reproduced² (fig. 30). Mr Dalrymple says

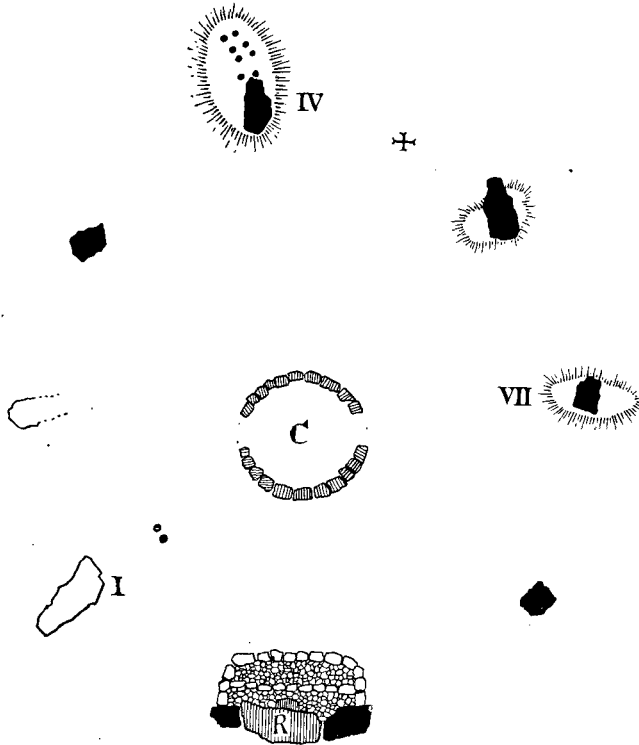


Fig. 30. Balgorkar, Castle Fraser.

of this circle:—"The diameter is from 63 to 66 feet, being irregular in shape. There is a small concentric circle, 13 feet in diameter, within

¹ Balgorkar, in the report, *Proceedings*, xxxv. p. 201.

² In this plan I have utilised my own ground-plans of the stones, and added the other important details from the Dalrymple sketch-plan.

the larger one, but only defined at the north and south sides by stones sunk down to the subsoil, and showing themselves only a few inches above ground. They touch each other, and show generally a flat side towards the centre of the circle.

“Heaped up against the [Recumbent] Stone and the upright pillars at either side of it was a low tumulus, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, which was found to consist of earth heaped over a rude pavement of small boulders, enclosed and intersected by lines of larger ones placed as shown in the ground-plan. Just above this pavement, and up against the [Recumbent] Stone, was a deposit of the usual black mould, covered by a small flat stone placed horizontally, similar to those which are so often found laid above and below these deposits, but of which this was the only decided example found in the circle. Below this rude pavement was a considerable quantity of very black mould, evidently largely composed of charcoal, both powdered down and in small pieces, and extending down to the subsoil.

“At Stone [IV.]¹ was another low tumulus of earth over a layer of small boulders, and containing beneath the latter no less than eight different deposits of the black mould and charcoal, seven of them having fragments of urns mixed with them. A curious feature of this tumulus is, that the Stone No. [IV.] lies embedded in it, only showing its surface or little more above ground, and having every appearance of having always formed part of it, as from the thickness of the stone its lower side reaches nearly down to the subsoil.

“At Stone [VI.] was found a deposit of black mould and charcoal, extending beneath the stone. No. [VII.] stands on a small tumulus, lower than either of the others, covering (as did also the soil at No. [VI.]) the same rude pavement, and containing beneath it a quantity of black mould and charcoal, extending under the stone and on either side of it.

¹ As Mr Dalrymple's method of counting the Stones differs from mine, I have altered the numerals, but of course the position of the Stone is the same in relation to the Circle.

“The whole area of the circle was found to be paved closely and firmly with small boulder¹ stones, lying about 6 inches or less below the surface. These stones were occasionally as large as one man could well lift.

“At the south-west side of the circle, where the ground falls away, the deficiency is made up by a sort of rude step of stones, thus raising the height to that of the rest of the circle, and making the area tolerably level.

“The small inner circle before mentioned [C in the plan] contained, beneath the pavement, a quantity of black mould, mixed with small fragments of charcoal and occasional small pieces of incinerated bones. These traces extended as far as the circumscribing crescents of small stones which mark the inner circle; but beyond them no bones were found, the soil being throughout the outer part of the circle quite different in character—a sandy loam, mixed throughout with small bits of charcoal, not presenting the appearance of black mould, but of yellow dotted with black.

“This seemed to extend everywhere down to the subsoil.

“At No. [I., several feet within the base of the stone] were found two deposits of black mould, mixed with fragments of urns.

“The whole of the urns seemed to have been thick and massive in material, and to have been burnt; but the subsoil, being very *close*, was particularly unfavourable for the preservation of any remains.

“The question suggests itself whether, from the thinness of the soil everywhere covering the rude pavement throughout the circle, the pavement had not been originally *bare*, but *had become covered* with soil, formed by the decay of vegetable substance, etc. etc., during the lapse of many ages. The area of this circle had evidently never been disturbed by tillage or planting, and the pavement seemed to be everywhere in its original state.”

Apart from the clear presentation of the platform in this plan and

¹ Compare remarks on the central portion of the Circle at Balquhain in *Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. p. 235.

description by Mr C. E. Dalrymple, the account is valuable because it quite as clearly points out in what, to us, strange portion of the megalithic arrangement we must search for interments before we venture to pronounce an opinion on the barren condition of the site.

During our investigations there were found traces, and on some sites rather more than traces, of this platform at the following localities:— Auchquhorthies (Kincausie), Tyrebagger (Dyce), Tomnagorn, Whitehill (Monymusk), Cothiemuir Wood, Old Keig, Auchquhorthies (Fetternear, Inverurie), Balquhain, Hatton of Ardoyne, and Loanhead in Daviot. These examples are sufficiently numerous to prove that the platform in front of the Recumbent Stone is an integral part of the original structure in this type of Circle; and this being so, we may fairly conclude also that the great low-set slabs which spring out of the ends of the platform and then expand into the circumference of the inner setting are part and parcel of the original design, as exemplified in several of the Circles just mentioned.

Concerning one other special detail, conspicuous in only a few of the sites examined, the presence, I mean, of two large blocks of stone projecting inwards from the Recumbent Stone nearly at right angles, we have not discovered any facts helpful towards the apprehension of their purpose.¹ These projecting blocks occur at Auchquhorthies in Fetternear, at Tyrebagger or Dyce, where they have been moved out of place, at Cothiemuir Wood (partially), at New Craig partially, at Ardlair in Kennethmont, and at Arnhill, Rothiemay, where they seem to be flush with the ground.

Mains of Mundurno, Old Machar.—This site, which is marked on the 25 inch scale O.M. by a group of three Stones, was not examined during any of our regular surveying months, partly because, being so near Aberdeen, we invariably postponed a visit, partly also because stress of weather prevented us in reaching the site on the few occasions that an hour or two were spent in the Granite City.

¹ Observers who theorise upon scanty *data* suggest that the Recumbent Stone rested on these blocks.

TABULAR SUMMARY OF CIRCLES SURVEYED IN 1903.

Survey No.	Locality.	Parish.	Diameters in Feet.	Peculiar Features.	Relics Found.
2	Greenhill	Cruden	...	Only one stone left.	
4	Skelmuir Hill	"	...	Two stones left.	
9	Auchmaliddie	New Deer	...	Recumbent Stone and West Pillar left.	
13	Aikey Brae	Old Deer	...	Particularly well-defined bank. Recumbent Stone.	Insufficiently examined.
14	Louden Wood	"	...	Recumbent Stone in unusual position.	
15	Auchmacliar		About 50'	Recumbent Stone.	
16	White Cow Wood	Strichen	46' 8"	Really the remains of a Cairn.	
18	In the grounds of Strichen House	"	...	None of the stones in original positions.	
19	Gaval		...	Recumbent Stone.	
21	Auchnagorth		44' 6"	Ten stones in the ring.	
22	Netherton of Logie	Grimond	57'	Recumbent Stone.	Apparently undisturbed.
23	Berrybrae	Loumay	45'	Recumbent Stone.	
24	Cortie Brae	"	...	Two Stones left.	
25	Clochforbie		...	Recumbent Stone left.	

However, being requested by the council of the Buchan Field Club to read a paper on the Stone Circles, at Peterhead on the 1st February 1904, I so arranged my journey as to admit of going out beyond the Bridge of Don to see the remains at Mundurno.

The site has long been known as that of a Circle, but no further details were available on the day of my visit, through inquiries made in the locality. The one stone now extant is a fine vertical pillar of quartz-veined whinstone, 7 feet in height, set on a perfectly level piece of ground a quarter of a mile west of the Mains of Mundurno, at a height of 200 feet above the sea. This field would on a clear day command an extensive prospect; and though there is higher ground in close proximity, it is not high enough or near enough to overshadow the spot.

The Stone girths at the base 10 feet 5 inches, and its longer axis trends N.W. (mag.).