

## IV.

## NOTES ON CERTAIN STANDING STONES IN ARGYLLSHIRE.

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The object of these notes is to suggest a line of investigation in dealing with the numerous standing stones found in Scotland. The notes deal with two "ancient monuments" in Argyllshire.

1. *Duachy Standing Stones*.—During summer visits to Kilninver, on Loch Feochan, I observed four standing stones near Duachy. The position is 10 miles south-west of Oban and 6 miles north-east of Easdale, a short distance to the north of the Oban and Easdale road. The stones are not visible from the road. The precise position is as nearly as possible  $5^{\circ} 33' 25''$  W. and  $56^{\circ} 19' 35''$  N. In the vicinity there is an ancient fort, *Losgann Lornach*. The stones are marked in the Ordnance Survey map (6-inch scale, Argyllshire, sheet cx., S.W.) as "Stone Circle." I was unable to find any stones except the four which still stand, and these are so placed as to make it highly probable that there never was any "circle," but that the four stones form a complete scheme in themselves. Three of the stones are placed together, two standing upright, with one between them sloping at an angle of about  $28^{\circ}$ . This last stone, however, does not appear to have fallen from the upright position, but rather to have been placed in the position which it now occupies. It is so placed that the middle of the longitudinal upper surface forms a ridge pointing due east towards the fourth stone. This fourth stone is a standing stone inclining west at an angle of about  $75^{\circ}$ , and is distant 127 feet 6 inches from the foot of the ridge in the centre stone. Of the three stones at the west end, the two standing stones are so placed that their flat sides to the west are in line, the line passing over the spot where the ridge of the centre (reclining) stone leaves the ground. This line, however, does not run due north and south, but from about

28° west of north to about 28° east of south, *i.e.* from N.N.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W. to S.S.E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. It is thus not at right angles to the ridge of the reclining stone. If, however, the centre stone had originally been placed so that the ridge pointed to the top of the hill Meall Ailin—the highest point visible towards the east,—then its ridge would have been at right angles to the line of the three western stones.

The following rough diagram (fig. 1)—which it need hardly be said

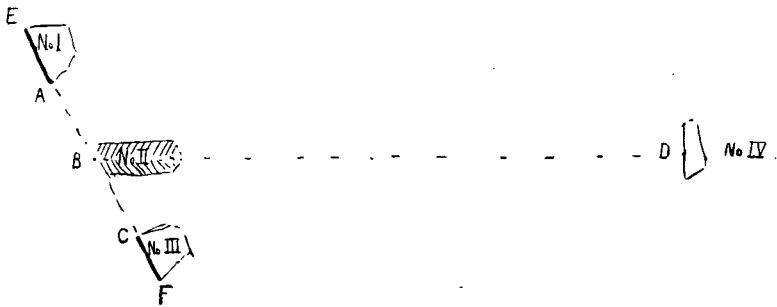


Fig. 1. Diagram showing positions of the Stones.

is not to scale—is given to show the measurements. B is the point where the ridge of the reclining stone leaves the ground. It is equidistant from points A and C—the nearest points of the standing stones No. I. and No. III.,—being 9 feet distant from each. The distance from B to D—the nearest point of stone No. IV.—is 127 feet 6 inches. The distance from E to F is  $22\frac{1}{2}$  feet.

These facts suggest that the four stones complete a design, of which the two outstanding features are (a) the fact that the reclining stone points east, and (b) that it has the two standing stones equidistant from it, “guarding” it.

2. *Lagavulin Standing Stones.*—On visiting Islay in the summer of 1913, I learned by accident of what appeared to be a similar monument near Lagavulin. Unfortunately, I was able to make only one hurried visit, and I did not secure accurate measurements. There was

some difficulty in locating the stones, but they were reached by striking to the north on a track which leaves the Port Ellen to Lagavulin road, about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles from Port Ellen. The situation is about  $6^{\circ} 9' W.$  and  $55^{\circ} 38' 15'' N.$  Here there are two upright stones inclining towards the east, with a prostrate stone between almost covered with grass. The flat sides of the upright stones face east and west, and the two stones stand north and south of each other. Enough could be seen of the prostrate stone to satisfy me that it had a ridged back running east and west—*i.e.* at right angles to the line of the two “guarding stones.” The centre of the ridge was 9 feet 1 inch from one of the standing stones, and about 10 feet from the other. I found no trace of any stone due east from the prostrate stone. But the general arrangement of the three stones resembled the arrangement at Duachy, the chief difference being that at Lagavulin the line of the “guarding” stones ran due north and south—*i.e.* at right angles to the ridge of the prostrate stone. There were other standing stones in the vicinity, which at the time I did not connect with these three. One in particular, built into a wall with a fallen stone behind it, attracted my attention as being possibly due east of the prostrate stone, but I found that it lay considerably to the north of due east.

On returning home I purchased a 6-inch Ordnance map of the district (second edition, 1900, Argyllshire, island of Islay, sheet ccxxxii.), and discovered that the three stones in question appear to have been part of a very much larger scheme.

The following diagram shows the position of the stones of this larger scheme :—

A is the position of the three stones already described ; D is the position of the standing stone built into the wall with a fallen stone behind it ; B, C, and E are single standing stones which were not examined particularly ; C and E are equidistant from B.

The distances AB, Bx, xC are equal to each other, and the three

stones C, A, D are in a straight line. The angle  $ABx$  is as nearly as possible  $100^\circ$ . The distance from A to D is about 2000 feet, and the distance from A to  $x$  is as nearly as possible 4000 feet.  $x$  is the point at which a line drawn from B to C intersects a line drawn east and west through A.

The measurements may be shown more clearly by giving them on the diagram (fig. 2).

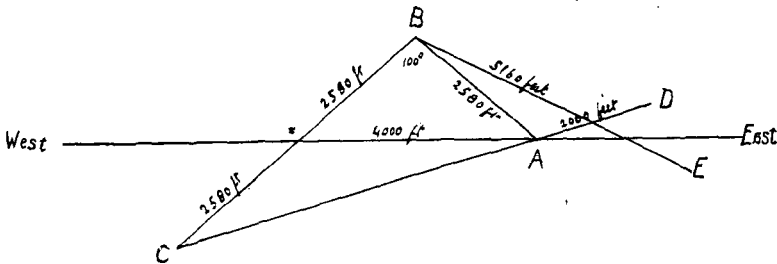


Fig. 2. Diagram showing positions of the Stones and their distances from each other.

The measurements may not be exact. They are taken simply from the Ordnance Survey sheet. But their relation to each other is not affected by this, and when the position of these stones is thus shown in diagram, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that their position has been deliberately determined in pursuance of some design; *e.g.* it can hardly be a mere coincidence that stones C and E are equidistant from B.

What that design is, it is for experts to determine. I have formed one hypothesis, but it does not exhaust the problem, and is the mere speculation of an amateur.

*Conclusion.*—The facts above stated relating to these ancient monuments suggest that there is room for further investigation into the problem of their construction. They suggest that there may be a class of ancient monument consisting of two upright mono-

liths standing more or less north and south, with a recumbent stone between them pointing east. They suggest further that the apparently disconnected monoliths which are found in one vicinity may be related to each other by way of distance and direction, so as to form part of one design. It is impossible to generalise from two instances, but they indicate a direction in which there is perhaps something to be learned by further investigation.