

II.

THE STONE CIRCLE AT BROOMEND OF CRICHIE, ABERDEENSHIRE.

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One of the most interesting Stone Circles in Aberdeenshire is that situated in the parish of Kintore, just outside the village of Port Elphinstone, about a mile and a quarter south of Inverurie Railway Station. It stands in a field on the east side of the Aberdeen road, nearly 30 yards south of the large sand-pit known locally as "The Sandhole." Known as The Broomend of Crichtie Stone Circle, though the name is often shortened into The Broomend or The Crichtie Circle, it has been a subject of much interest to antiquaries, and a great deal has been written about it. Dr Stuart describes it in *The Sculptured Stones of Scotland*; Mr Charles Dalrymple gives an account of the excavation of it in vol. xviii. of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*; Mr Alex. Watt, who assisted in the work of excavation, describes it in his *Early History of Kintore*; and Mr Fred R. Coles, who surveyed the circle on behalf of the Society, describes it, with accompanying plans, in vol. xxxv. of the *Proceedings*, and also in the *Transactions of the Buchan Field Club* for 1903. There is, however, a considerable amount of additional information now available concerning this circle and its surroundings, and it seems desirable that a new account of it should be written to embody all that is known about it, even though this should necessitate the repetition of facts already known to experts but not readily accessible to others.

While the circle itself is of exceptional interest, it forms but one member of what must originally have been a very striking group of prehistoric monuments. These began at a point 450 yards south of the circle, where there was a sandbank in which several cists have been found. From this sandbank an avenue of standing stones proceeded northwards to the circle. The path between the lines of standing stones led into the circle by means of an embankment crossing the southern arc of the ditch which surrounded the circle. It then crossed the northern arc of the ditch by a similar embankment, and proceeded to another but larger circle about 50 yards north of the circle still standing. This second circle was destroyed towards the end of the eighteenth century, and its existence seems to have been unknown to the writers previously mentioned. (Refer to map, fig. 10, p. 170.)

THE CISTS.

The sandbank which formed the southern member of this group of prehistoric remains was close to the gateway at present leading to Mr Tait's residence at Broomend. Though utilised as a prehistoric burial place, it seems to have been of natural formation, part of the existing series of sand and gravel banks which fringe the valley of the Don in the neighbourhood of Inverurie. The late Thomas Tait, Esq., who founded the Inverurie Paper Mills in 1858, found it necessary to make a new road from the mills to the Aberdeen turnpike to facilitate the conveyance of his goods to and from Aberdeen, and in doing so cut through the bank of sand and unearthed the cists. The one first discovered appeared to be empty, but on 27th August 1866 a second was found. It was formed of five large slabs, one at each side, one at each end, and a cover on the top. The inside measurements were 5 feet 3 inches long, 2 feet 6 inches broad, and from 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet deep. It contained the skeletons of two tall, strong-boned men, who had been buried in a bent position, lying on their sides with their heads near each end of the cist. The skeletons were covered with some felt-like substance which was probably the remains of a hide in which the bodies had been wrapped. Two urns were found, one near each head, and there were also some twigs, two or three flint flakes, and a few pieces of charcoal. The bottom of the cist was covered to a depth of about 10 inches with water-worn pebbles, averaging about an inch in diameter at the top of the layer, but rather larger near the bottom. They were of similar character to those found plentifully in the bed of the Don and in the gravel beds on its banks. Several large pieces of charcoal were found among the pebbles.

Exactly two months later, on the 27th of October, another cist was found. It lay about 2 feet north of that last described, and was slightly less in size, measuring 4 feet 2 inches in length, 1 foot 10 inches to 2 feet 3 inches in breadth, and 1 foot 7 inches in depth. It also was paved to a depth of 12 inches with round waterworn pebbles underneath which lay a slab of stone. Soft well-worked clay had been forced between the edges of the slabs to render the cist watertight. This cist also contained two skeletons, a full-grown male and an infant female. The male skeleton lay on its left side, with its head towards the east, the legs bent and drawn up nearly to the chin, and the arms so bent up that the hands were close to the head. Some of the bones were in a fairly good state of preservation, and among these were the thigh-bones, which measured $19\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length. One of these was presented

to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and is now preserved in the National Museum.

The infant female skeleton lay in the north-west corner of the cist, behind the male skeleton, and was not in so good a state of preservation. The body appeared to have been buried in a sitting posture with its face turned towards the east. Both skeletons had been covered originally with an oxhide, the felt-like remains of which were found lying above them in a manner similar to that discovered in the other cist.

At the back of the male skeleton stood a clay urn of the drinking-cup or beaker class, but of a type peculiar to the north-east of Scotland (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Urn and Horn Spoon found in cist at Broomend.

Its height was $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the diameter at the top $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and at the bottom $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches, while it measured nearly 20 inches in circumference at the widest part, slightly below the centre. It was richly ornamented with a series of horizontal lines round the circumference; between each pair of horizontal lines short lines formed a sort of herring-bone pattern, while at the base a series of upright isosceles triangles had the spaces between them filled in with short lines. Standing within this urn, and resting on its edge, there was what at first sight appeared to be a lamp made of bark or some leather-like substance, but this proved to be a spoon, formed of horn much altered in appearance through age and exposure to damp. Part of the horn on the underside of the spoon had become split up, and the weight of the spoon had caused the handle to curve over the edge of the urn, thus adding to its lamp-like appearance. In the illustration the spoon is shown lifted out of the urn and supported by a sheet of glass so as to show its form exactly as it

appeared when discovered in the urn. Nothing like this spoon has ever been found in any other urn so far as I am aware. In addition to the spoon, the urn contained some fragments of decayed bone and a small quantity of black earth—all that remained of the food which had been placed beside the dead body to help it on its long journey to the spirit land. Behind the remains of the infant there was also a small urn containing a little black earth but no bones, food containing bones not being suitable for an infant. Two flint flakes were found within the cist, and several pieces of charcoal rested on its cover, while a considerable number were mixed with the gravel which covered the bottom.

About 2 feet east of this cist a fourth one, of small size, was afterwards found. It was only 16 inches long, from 12 to 14 inches broad, and 11 inches deep. It contained the remains of a thin skull and five half-formed teeth, showing that it was the burial place of a child. It also contained a small urn lying on its side and much broken. No cup-marks or figures of any kind were found on any of the stones of which the cists were formed.

Mr Tait was much interested in the finding of these cists, and had them at once examined by competent authorities. Among these were Mr James Hay Chalmers, a well-known antiquary and discoverer of the Rothiebrisdane Sculptured Stone now in the gable of the Parish Church of Fyvie, and Mr Charles B. Davidson, advocate, a native of Port Elphinstone, and for many years Town-Clerk of the Royal Burgh of Inverurie. These gentlemen wrote the accounts of these discoveries which appear in vol. vii. of the *Proceedings* of the Society and to which I am indebted for most of the details described above. The discovery of the cists created a great deal of interest in the neighbourhood, and many people visited the spot. To allow these visitors to inspect the remains, and at the same time to protect them from unauthorised interference, Mr Tait caused the cists to be covered with sheets of glass for a time. Most of the articles found in this ancient burial-place have been carefully preserved and are yet available for inspection. The stones of which the cists were formed are at Broomend. Portions of the oxhide and other remains, together with two skulls; a thighbone, and the unique horn spoon, are in the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh. Another portion of the oxhide is in the Museum at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and two of the urns and the fragments of a third are in the Inverurie Museum.

The cists are so similar in construction and contents that it may safely be concluded that the burials were made within a short time of each other. The well-preserved condition of some of the bones and the

presence of the horn spoon would seem to indicate a comparatively recent date for the interments. But the urns and their ornamentation are of a character similar to many others belonging to the Bronze Age, so that we may conclude that the burials took place towards the end of that period.

THE AVENUE.

A few yards east of the spot where the cists were found there stands a stone 4 feet 6 inches high, 2 feet 6 inches broad, and from 1 foot to 1 foot 9 inches thick. It is in an exact line with the other stones of the avenue and is clearly the southernmost member of it. Being almost hidden in a small plantation bordering the north side of the road to the paper mills, it easily escaped notice before the publication of the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps upon which it is marked. The failure to observe it has led to a serious mistake in estimating the length of the avenue, which is really 450 yards long, not 200 yards as has been frequently stated. Another stone stands in the corner of the field nearly 60 yards east of Broom Lodge. It is 5 feet high, 3 feet broad, and from 2 feet to 2 feet 6 inches thick, with its broad side facing the line of the avenue. It stands almost 200 yards south of the circle, so that it has evidently been mistaken for the southern terminus of the avenue. A third stone stands in the same field as the circle, and about 70 yards south of it (fig. 2). It is a massive square-shaped block of whinstone, 6 feet high, 3 feet 8 inches broad, and 3 feet 3 inches in average thickness, and is very similar in appearance to the standing stones of the circle. Only these three stones of the avenue now remain in their original positions; a fourth was removed in 1851, and a large stone near the edge of the lawn at Crichton Bank may possibly be the remains of a fifth. The avenue runs directly north to the circle, and, judging from the stones that still remain, these appear to have increased in massive bulk the nearer they lay to the circle.

No record of the original number of avenue stones is known to exist, but from the facts available a fairly correct estimate may be made. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some agricultural improvements were made on Crichton, and trees were planted on the rough moorland where the circles and avenue stood. The trees were cut down in 1850, and the land was thereafter trenched and prepared for agricultural purposes. Two of the avenue stones stood near each other in the field thus formed to the south of the circle, and as it was considered that they were likely to interfere with the cultivation of the ground, one was removed, the other being left as a rubbing-post for cattle. According to the account of Mr George Guthrie, who in 1851 broke up this stone

with gunpowder, it stood from 10 to 15 yards north of that still remaining in the field. They were therefore neighbouring stones, and thus indicate that the average distance between the standing stones forming the boundary of the avenue was approximately $12\frac{1}{2}$ yards. As the southernmost block is 450 yards south of the circle, each side of the avenue would therefore have contained thirty-six stones. All the stones still erect are in an exact line with each other, and appear to have formed part of the eastern side of the avenue, so that no indication is given by which its width might be ascertained. That portion, however, which crossed the



Fig. 2. Stone in avenue nearest the Circle at Broomend.

ditch surrounding the circle by means of an embankment is 9 or 10 feet broad, but it is likely that the main portion of the avenue was considerably wider than this. If the block on the lawn at Crichtie Bank is really one of the avenue stones in its original position, it must have been on the western side of it, and indicates a width of about 20 yards—about double that of the avenue at Callernish.

The avenue stones seem not to have been used solely to form the boundary of the road leading to the circles, for at least some of them have also served as memorials of the dead, just as did those erected within the circle. When the ground was trenched, an urn containing calcined bones was found near the base of the stone still standing 70 yards south of the circle, and a similar find was made beside the stone to the east of Broom Lodge. Nothing appears to have been

found near the stone destroyed in 1851, but near the southernmost stone the cists already described were found.

This is the only existing avenue leading to a stone circle in Aberdeenshire. There are two stones standing in line near the circle at Castle Fraser, and single stones at the Druidstown, Balquhain, and Shelden Circles, and there was one, now removed, at Cullerlie, but it is doubtful if any of these outlying stones were ever connected with avenues leading to their respective circles. There were also several circles in Aberdeenshire to which causeways, now destroyed, formerly led, and at Bankhead, in the parish of Clatt, faint traces of such a pathway may still be seen. An avenue stretches northwards from the circle at Callernish in the island of Lewis. It is 90 yards long and contains nineteen stones including one at the end, midway between the parallel lines. The average distance therefore between the stones is about 10 yards, a little less than that at Broomend of Crichtie, and the width of the avenue is 9 yards.

By far the best example of such avenues is, or rather was, at Avebury in Wiltshire, where the large stone circle has two avenues leading into it—one on the east side, the other on the west. Each of these was originally upwards of a mile long, but they have suffered great dilapidation, and few of the stones which originally stood along their sides now remain. At Stanton Drew, in Somerset, there is a group of three circles, two of which have each an avenue leading into them from the north-east, but many of the stones have fallen and the avenues are far from complete. Stonehenge also has an avenue approaching it from the north-east, but it is not bounded by standing stones like the others mentioned.

THE LESSER CIRCLE.

This, the existing circle, stands at the northern end of the avenue, in the middle of a field on the east side of the Aberdeen turnpike. It is surrounded by a trench about 20 feet wide, and from 5 to 6 feet deep, the earth removed from the trench having been thrown up on the outside so as to make a protecting rampart about as wide as the trench itself. Round the outside circumference of this rampart there lies a ring of stones having the appearance of an enclosing wall now in ruins. This outer ring, however, is of comparatively recent date, and forms no part of the original structure. The stones were collected when the field was trenched, and were laid down in their present position for the purpose of supplying material for a stone wall to enclose and protect the circle, but the wall was never completed. The trench is crossed on the south side by an earthen embankment about 9 feet wide, which forms a continuation of the avenue already described. A similar embankment

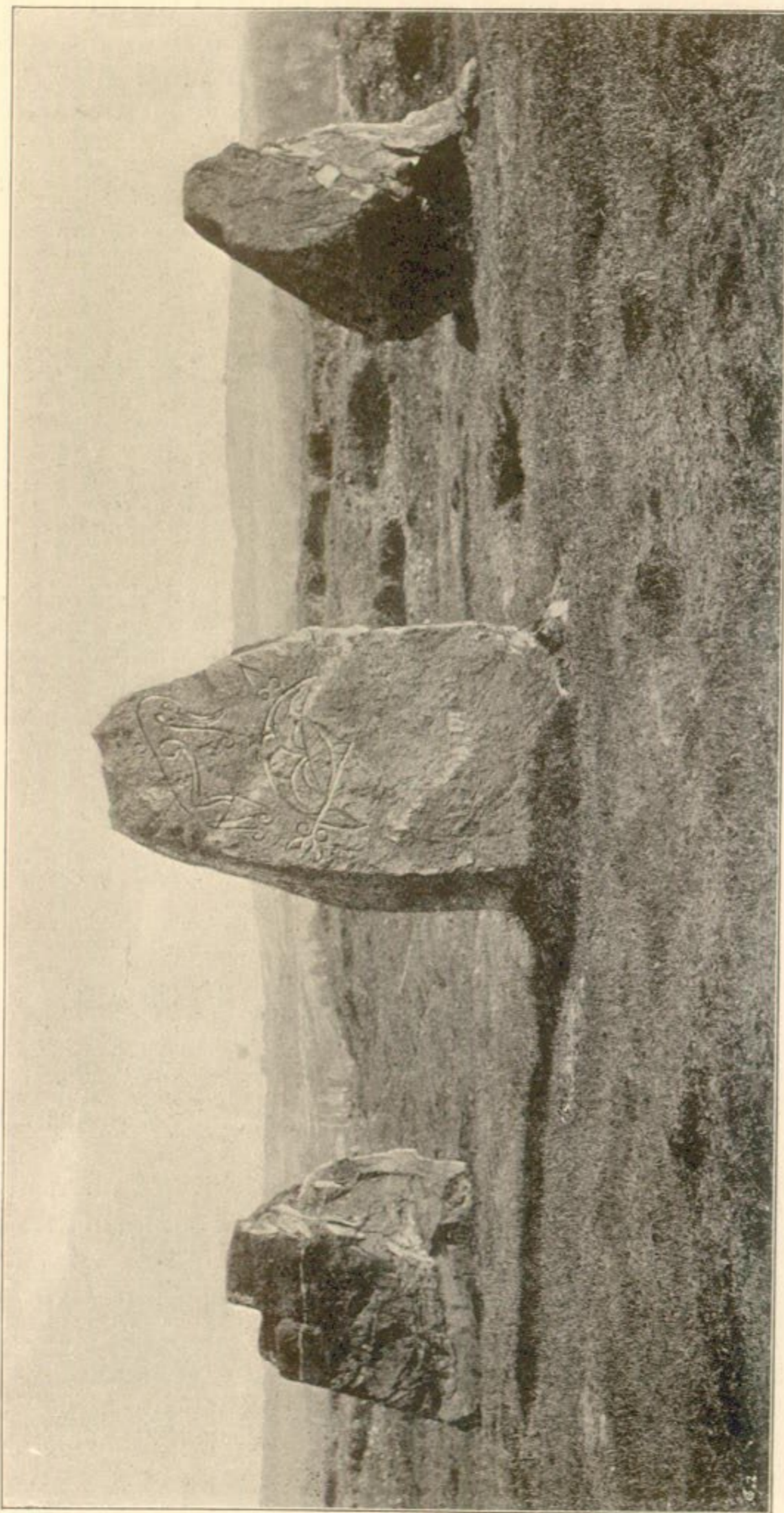


Fig. 3. Surviving Stones and Symbol Stone in Circle at Broomend.

crosses the trench on the north side, and leads to the greater circle. A close inspection, however, shows that these two embankments are not in a perfectly straight line with the southern portion of the avenue, but instead of running exactly south, have a very slight inclination east and west.

The circle on the hill of Tuack, in the parish of Kintore and about

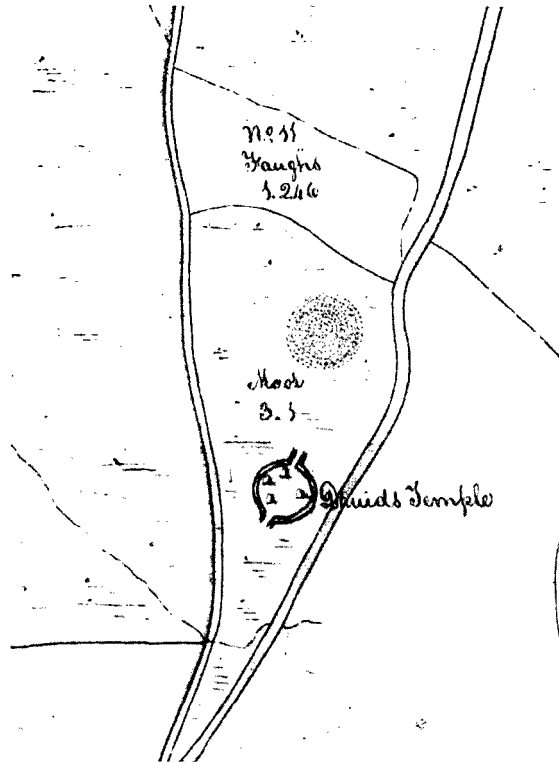


Fig. 4. Portion of Map dated 1780 showing the two Circles at Broomend.

3 miles south of Broomend, has a similar, though not so well preserved, trench surrounding it. The Brogar Circle, at Stennis in Orkney, is also enclosed by a trench, but by far the best example is that at Avebury, where the central area of nearly 30 acres is surrounded by a deep trench and high embankment.

The circular area within the trench at Broomend has a diameter of 50 feet. The excavation of the surrounding trench has given this central area the appearance of a raised mound, but its surface is really on a level with the rest of the field. Round the edge of this central space was

originally a circle of six standing stones, only the two most northerly of which now remain (fig. 3). In 1780 four were still standing, as shown on the map of that date (fig. 4). The interior of this circle was

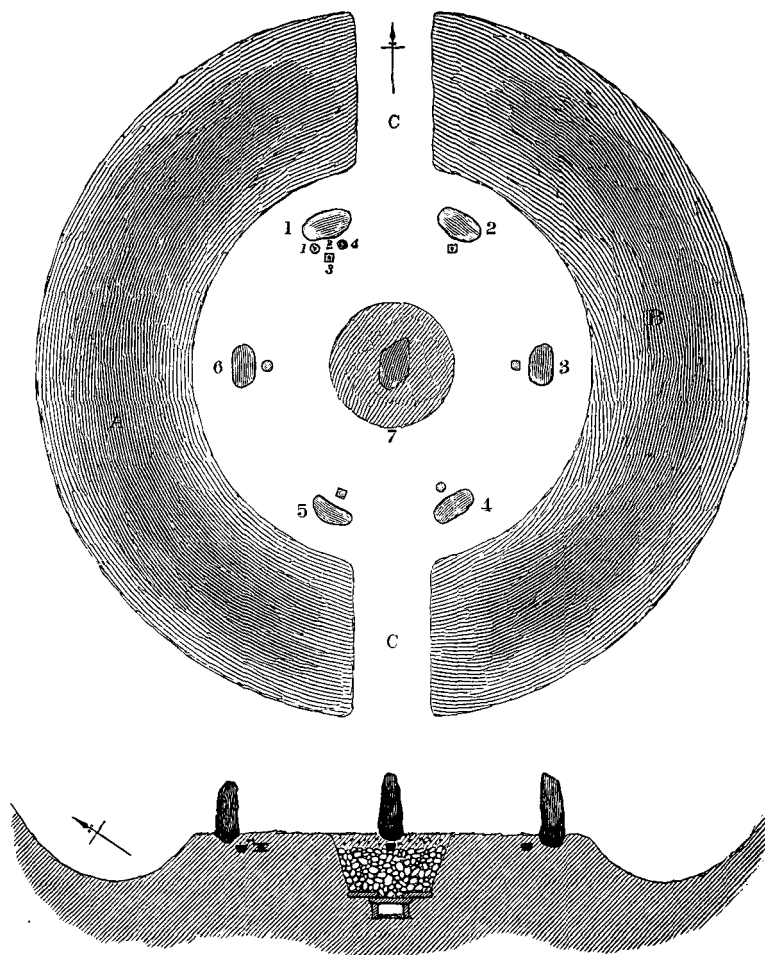


Fig. 5. Plan and section of Circle at Broomend at time of excavation.

excavated in November 1855 by Mr Charles Elphinstone Dalrymple, who about the same period examined several other Aberdeenshire circles, including those at Fularton and Tuack, also in the parish of Kintore. A full report of his investigation appears in vol. xviii. of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, and to it I am indebted for the details of the discoveries within the circle. In the accompanying

plan, reproduced from that report, the stones numbered 1 and 2 are those still standing within the circle, while Nos. 3, 4, 5, and 6 indicate the sites of those which were missing at the date of the investigation (fig. 5).

The discoveries within the circle were very numerous, remains of burial being found near the base of each of the stones, in every case at the side facing the centre of the circle and usually about 18 inches from the base. At that distance from No. 1 there was found a small circular stone-lined space 1 foot deep, 9 inches in diameter at the top and slightly less at the bottom. It was filled with calcined bones, and near it lay a hammer of sandstone (fig. 6), $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad, with

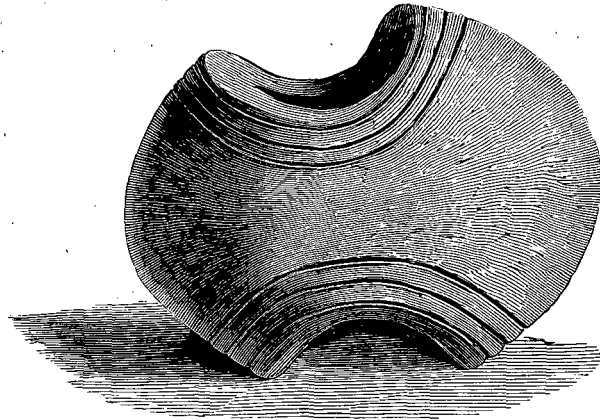


Fig. 6. Stone Hammer found in Circle at Broomend.

a curved hollow at both sides, where the hole for the handle had been made. The edges of the curved hollows were ornamented with three incised lines. The good condition in which this hammer was found, and its ornamental appearance, suggest the idea that it had been made rather for ceremonial purposes than for ordinary use. A little nearer the centre of the circle an inverted urn was discovered. It rested upon a flat stone, had a similar stone above it, and was full of calcined bones, among which was a small and delicately formed lower jawbone. Another deposit of calcined bones was found in the soil not far from the urn. In front of No. 2, the other stone still standing in its original position, there was found an inverted urn, full of calcined bones, and with a flat stone above and another below it, for protective purposes. No. 3 represents the site of one of the missing stones, and in front of it a small rectangular stone-lined cist was discovered. It measured 11 inches long, 9 inches broad, and 16 inches deep, and also had a flat

stone both at the bottom and the top. The interior space was full of calcined bones. In the soil in front of the site of No. 4 there was a small round pit which contained burnt matter and bone dust. At No. 5 there was a small stone-lined space containing an inverted urn full of calcined bones, and, like the others, protected by a flat stone above and another beneath it. At No. 6 only a small pit filled with calcined bones similar to that found at No. 4 was discovered. The urns are shown in figs. 7 and 8.

In the centre of the circle the investigators came upon a deposit of burnt bones about 18 inches beneath the surface. Underneath this

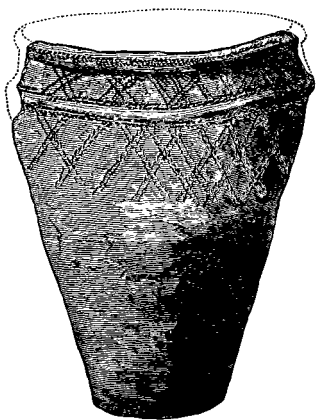


Fig. 7. Cinerary Urn found in Circle at Broomend.

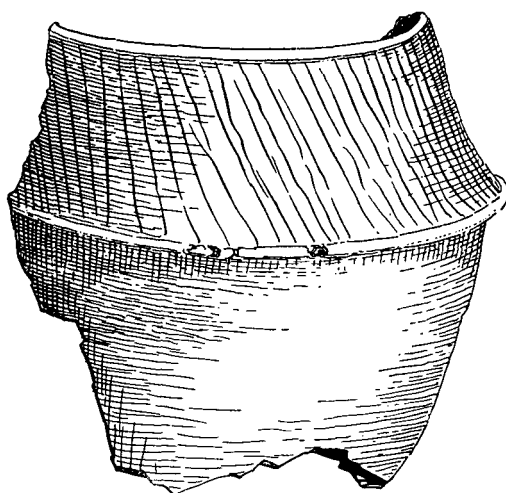


Fig. 8. Cinerary Urn found in Circle at Broomend.

was a circular pit full of small rounded stones similar to those found in the cists at the southern end of the avenue. The pit was 15 feet in diameter at the top, and its sides tapered gradually inwards so that it was only 10 feet wide at the bottom. When the stones were removed, underneath them large stone slabs were discovered at a depth of 7 feet beneath the surface. These proved to be the covering of a cist which contained the remains of a human skeleton, with the skull and leg bones in a fair state of preservation. Near the centre of the cist there was also a deposit of incinerated human bones.

The investigators noticed that, mixed with the various deposits of calcined bones found within this circle, there appeared to be fragments of the bones of some small animals, possibly birds. No traces of metal were found, though in the Tuack Circle, nearly three miles distant,

several fragments of bronze, which had been subjected to the action of fire, were discovered among the calcined bones contained in two of the urns which were deposited within it. The small cist-like hollows lined with flat stones found within the Broomend of Crichtie Circle seem to have been similar to that discovered in the centre of the Garrol Wood Circle, when it was excavated on behalf of the Society by Mr Fred R. Coles in 1904, and of which an account is given in vol. xxxix. of the *Proceedings*.

In the plan and section accompanying the original report of the excavations at the Broomend of Crichtie Circle a seventh stone is shown standing in the centre (fig. 5). It is very doubtful, however, if such a stone ever occupied that position. It was not there when the excavations were carried out, and the sole evidence for its existence is derived from the recollection of Mr Alexander Watt of Kintore, who assisted in that work. In this case it seems likely that his memory misled him. No knowledge of a central stone exists in the locality, all the evidence available being opposed to it. In the map dated 1780 (fig. 4), four stones are marked in the circumference of the circle, but none in its centre, and this alone is sufficient to discredit the statement. The late William Tait, Esq., LL.D., of Broomend, who was born at Crichtie, and whose ancestors had occupied the farm for over a hundred years, stated that no stone stood in the centre of the circle, until the sculptured stone was placed there after its removal from the neighbouring field. Mr George Guthrie, who helped to trench the field surrounding the circle when it was being brought into cultivation, and who broke up the avenue stone removed in 1851, four years before the excavation of the circle, never saw or heard of any standing stone in the centre. A deposit of burnt bones was found in the centre of the circle, 18 inches below the surface, and it seems improbable that a large standing stone would be placed immediately above such a deposit. In every other case where deposits were found they were placed at least 18 inches from the base of their respective stones.

There are no central pillar stones in any of the Aberdeenshire circles that are still in existence, and they are of rare occurrence in Scottish circles generally. One occupies the centre of the circle at Callernish, in the island of Lewis, three occur in Kirkeudbrightshire, and Pennant records one at Langdale, Strathnaver, in the county of Sutherland. The Tuack Circle, three miles south of the Broomend of Crichtie Circle, was like it in several respects. It consisted of six standing stones, and had an encircling trench, the centre being occupied by what the investigators describe as a small dolmen, but no pillar stone stood there. Unfortunately this circle is in a very bad state of preservation. The

Garrol Wood Circle had in the centre a heap of rounded boulder stones entirely underground, beneath which there was a small stone cist full of calcined bones, and was thus not unlike the centre of the Broomend of Crichtie Circle. These boulders were surrounded by a ring of upright stones which kept them together, and which in one or two instances protruded nearly a foot above the surface of the soil. This may have been the arrangement at Broomend also, and the appearance of one or two of these binding stones above the surface may easily have given rise to the central pillar story.

The present condition of the circle is admirably shown in the accompanying plan drawn by Mr Fred R. Coles and reproduced from his report in vol. xxxv. of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (fig. 9).

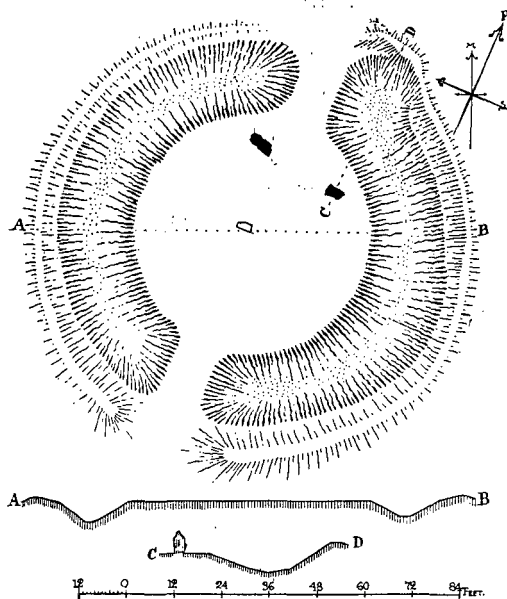


Fig. 9. Plan and section of Circle at Broomend drawn in 1900.

THE GREATER CIRCLE.

Several years before his death in 1757 Mr William Maitland, a native of Brechin and for some time a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, made preparations for writing a book on the History and Antiquities of Scotland. For this purpose he undertook a tour through the country, in the course of which he appears to have travelled along the old road leading from Aberdeen, through Inverurie, to Huntly and the north. This road, of which traces still remain, passed within ten yards to the east of the Broomend of Crichtie Circle, so that anyone passing along the road could not fail to see the stones. It is evident that Maitland both saw and examined the circle, for the description of it, which appears on p. 154 of vol. i. of his *History and Antiquities of Scotland from the Earliest Account to the Death of James I., etc.*, is clearly that of an eyewitness. This publication was issued in two volumes in 1757, shortly after the author's death, and thus gives us an accurate, though not very full, description of the circles as they existed in the middle of the eighteenth century. It is the earliest account so far discovered, and seems to have

been unknown to previous writers on the subject. For directing my attention to it I am greatly indebted to Miss A. M. Davidson, of Aberdeen, who is much interested in our circles, and whose knowledge of them is both extensive and accurate.

In vol. i. of his *History* (p. 154) Maitland gives an account of what he calls "The Pagan Temples of Scotland," in which he describes the Broomend of Crichtie Circles. He says "I shall give an account of one of the said temples, which is situated on the western side of the highway, about a quarter of a mile besouth the river Don, near Inverury, in the shire of Aberdeen. This anonymous temple consists of two parts, the smallest, lying towards the south, is surrounded with a ditch, and the largest encompassed with three rows of stones erect, with a small cairn or heap in the middle. That this has been a place of worship of great eminence and distinction appears by its long avenue of about 200 yards enclosed with a row of large stones erected on each side; it leads from the south to the lesser circle, and having crossed the same, continues its short course to the larger, enclosed with stones. . . . Near to this there is said to have been an altar of one stone, with a cavity in the upper part, wherein some of the blood of the sacrifice was put and offered as a further propitiation for the trespass of the offender. This altar for burnt offerings, like those in the other temples, was an artificial heap, or cairn, of rough unwrought stones, with a large flat stone on the upper part whereon to burn the sacrifices." In the part which I have omitted in quoting, Maitland describes the ceremonies attending the offering of sacrifices at the circle, a subject on which he could have had no personal knowledge. Had he instead given us a fuller account of the circles and avenue his description would have been of much greater value to posterity.

For the purpose of confirming Maitland's account, and if possible discovering the exact site of the greater circle, of which no trace now remains, search was made among all the old maps of the district which could be discovered. In a copy of a map of the Barony of Crichtie dated 1780, now in the possession of Messrs Tait & Sons of Inverurie Paper Mills, both circles were found marked. This map forms one of a series showing the plan of Crichtie at various periods while it was in Messrs Tait's possession. A portion of this map showing the circles is reproduced in fig. 4, which indicates that the larger circle stood some 50 yards north of the smaller one. The three rings of upright stones encircling the central cairn, described by Maitland, are not distinguishable as such on the map. Probably the stones were small, and in the eyes of the map-maker not of sufficient importance to be marked on a map intended primarily to show the agricultural land. For the same reason,

apparently, he has omitted the avenue stones, and also the sculptured stone which then stood about 50 yards north-east of the lesser circle. It is evident, both from Maitland's description and from the map, that the larger circle was not surrounded by a trench and rampart like the smaller one.

The existence of this larger circle explains what is otherwise a puzzling feature in the smaller one, namely the fact that the northern arc of the trench was crossed by an earthen embankment similar to that which crossed the southern arc. The avenue, instead of terminating at the smaller circle, extended beyond it to the larger one, and therefore the northern passage across the trench was a necessary part of it. These two embankments, however, are not in an exact line with the southern or main portion of the avenue, but have a slight inclination towards the east. This indicates that the northern or greater circle lay not exactly north of the smaller one, but slightly to the east of north. Maitland says that having crossed the lesser circle the avenue continued its course to the larger, enclosed with stones. The map shows that the two circles were about 50 yards apart, so that this extension of the avenue would be bounded by four standing stones on each side. Therefore the whole length of the avenue, from the southernmost standing stone to the northern circle, was about 500 yards, and it was bounded by about forty stones on each side, as far as can be judged.

Not a trace of this larger circle now remains, even its site has disappeared, and its place is now occupied by a large sand-pit. Diligent inquiry has been made to discover if any urns or other relics have been found during the removal of the sand, but none seem to have been noticed, nor have any fragments been found among the rubbish thrown aside in the pit. One or two portions of dark soil, having at first sight the appearance of burial pits, have been noticed in the subsoil, on the southern edge of the sand-pit, about 25 yards north of the lesser circle. A close inspection of these, however, showed that the soil was undisturbed, and that the dark appearance was probably due to the infiltration of some substance such as iron.

As already remarked, this northern circle has entirely disappeared, and it is not difficult to understand the reason. It appears to have been a cairn circle, so that the stones in the surrounding rings would neither be so large nor so heavy as those in the lesser circle which still remain, and therefore they would be more easily removed. The temptation to remove them occurred near the end of the seventeenth century, when the new turnpike road from Aberdeen to the north was being made. This road was opened for traffic in 1800, so that it was in process of formation shortly after the map of 1780 was made. It passes along the

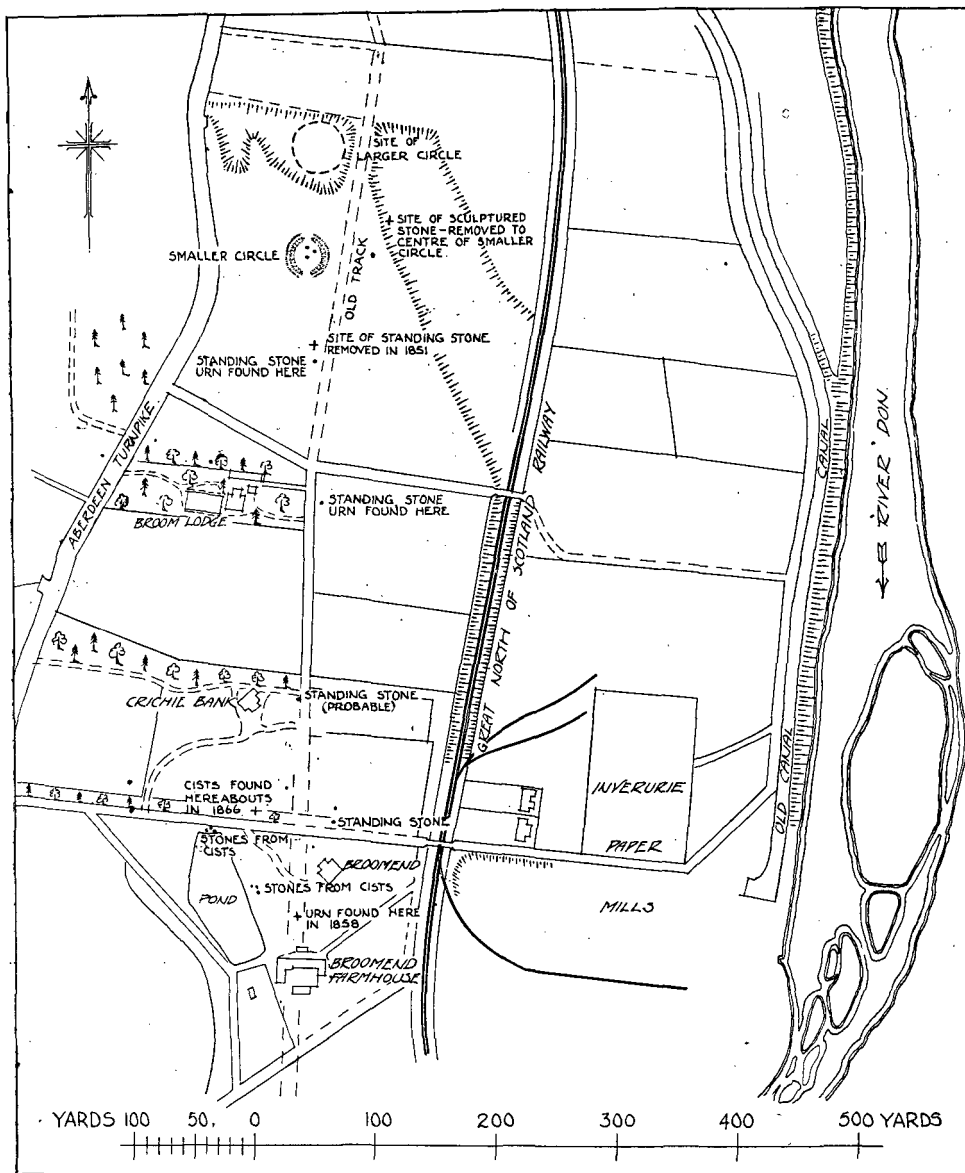


Fig. 10. Map of Stone Circle and other Remains at Broomend of Crichtie.

west side of the field in which the circles stood, and is only about 50 yards distant from them. Large quantities of stones were necessary for its construction, and those of the cairn circle were so temptingly near, and so suitable for the purpose, that workmen with little knowledge of, or reverence for, objects of antiquity would not be likely to pass them by. Not a few stone circles in Aberdeenshire have disappeared in a somewhat similar manner, and we are left to lament the loss of these interesting objects of antiquity, which can never be replaced.

THE SCULPTURED STONE.

Though this stone (fig. 3) now stands in the centre of the circle, it has, of course, no real connection with it, being of a very much later date. It stood originally at a spot nearly 50 yards north-east of the circle, and was removed to its present position for better preservation shortly after the circle was excavated. When the circle was being examined in 1855 the ground beside the sculptured stone was also dug up, but it seemed to have been previously disturbed, and no relics were found, though a few flat stones lying near looked like the remains of a cist. The whole of the ground on which the stone originally stood has since been carried off for railway ballast, but no remains have been found during the operations.

The stone itself is a block of grey granite crossed diagonally by a thin band of white quartz. It is 5 feet 3 inches high, 3 feet 6 inches broad, and about a foot thick. The flat surface, which now faces the south, has two symbols incised on it. On the upper portion is the long-jawed animal usually called the elephant, and beneath it the crescent crossed by the V-shaped rod. The figures are beautifully drawn, and the stone is so hard that the incised lines, though exposed to the weather for many centuries, are almost as sharp as when they were cut.

In conclusion, attention may be drawn to a danger threatening the existence of this most interesting circle. The ground on which it stands forms part of an extensive deposit of sand and gravel of considerable value for building, railway ballasting, and other purposes, and large quantities have therefore been removed. The railway line is fully 100 yards east of the circle, but the bank on that side has been removed for ballasting purposes so that the edge of the cutting is now only about 30 yards from the circle, and the original site of the sculptured stone has disappeared. Fortunately operations on this side have ceased for some time back, but the danger still exists on the north. Here there

is an extensive sand-pit from which material is still being removed, and the edge of this pit is now only about 25 yards from the outer ring of the circle. It is to be hoped that operations on this side will not proceed much further in the direction of the circle, so that it may be preserved as an object of interest and wonder to future generations.