XII.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON HUT-CIRCLES.

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Since submitting my observations on hut-circles and Circle F, Dalrulzion in particular, in 1932, more work has been done.[2] Two more of the many cairns of stones near the hut-circles have been turned over and again nothing found, so that I think it is safe to say that all these cairns are the result of clearing the adjacent ground for agricultural purposes.[3]

Many more hut-circles have been brought to my notice in the district. A pair of tangential type hut-circles Q and Q[1] have been excavated. They were built on the slope of the hill (see plan and sections) and, like Circle F, the entrance to Circle Q was to the south-east lined with stones set on edge and paved to well within the area enclosed by a somewhat oval ring of heavy stones, also set on edge. Those still in place are shown solid black on the plan, and those fallen, dotted in their approximate position.

Unlike Circle F, the outside limit of the single wall was ill-defined, and it appears that the builders first levelled a circular area in the sloping ground to about the level of the entrance and with the material excavated (soil and disintegrated schist) formed a bank round it, leaving a gap for the entrance. They then erected on edge large flat stones quarried from an adjacent outcrop, and behind these on the bank and higher surface of the

[1] I have been unable to trace the ring specifically mentioned by Miss Farquhar as containing an example of the small medallion. Though it was exhibited at Fort William in 1925 (Catalogue No. 139) it was sent by a Mr John Stuart and is not likely to be the same as the one listed here as No. 10, for the latter is not said to be associated with James (VIII).

[2] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxvii. p. 190.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. lxx. p. 165.

slope they built a very rough wall of loose stones gathered from the adjacent ground (see Sections AB and AC). There is no outer wall or annular space as in Circle F.

On the north-east side, this wall of loose stones blended with the wall of the tangential Circle Q^1 and at the south-east junction of the two at the lower part of the slope of the hill; the building was of better quality and quite distinctly founded on the undisturbed ground.

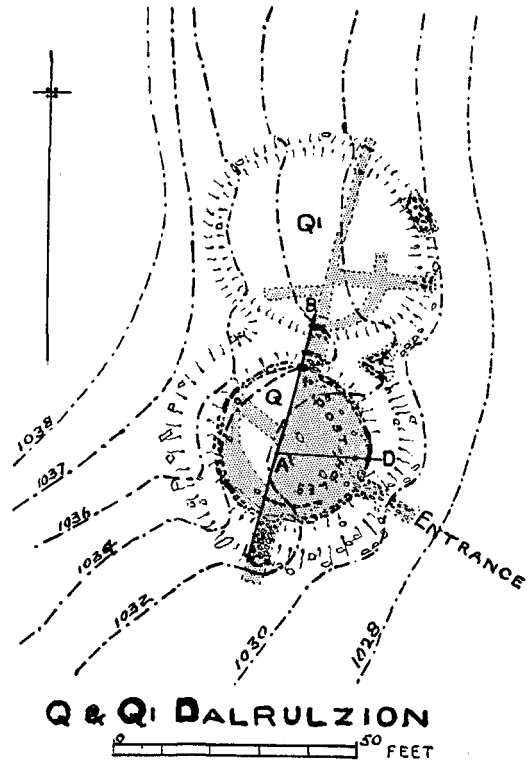

Fig. 1. Plan of Dalrulzion hut-circles.

Inside the ring of stones on edge of Circle Q below the turf there was a black layer 3 to 4 inches thick extending over the whole area. Two feet or more inside and roughly concentric with the stones on edge were a number of post-holes sunk into the undisturbed ground and containing fragments of charcoal (mostly hazel), some clay and definite packing stones. There was no large hearth-stone as in Circle F, but near the entrance there were red stones obviously heated by fires, and near the centre was a large flat stone unheated which may have been the foundation for a central post.

Below this upper black layer there was a layer of brown sand frequently having an irregular thin rusty red layer resting on it, sometimes quite hard.

Dr Ogg, of McAuley's Institute of Soil Research, visited the site and explained to me that this was "iron pan", formed by a process in soil formation.[1] The brown layer is part of the lower black mould leached by this process.

Inside the ring of post-holes below the brown sand was another layer of dark mould. In and on all these three layers we found pottery, bones, and considerable quantities of "daub" (burnt clay with impressions of twigs), especially in the south section, and on the top of the upper black layer

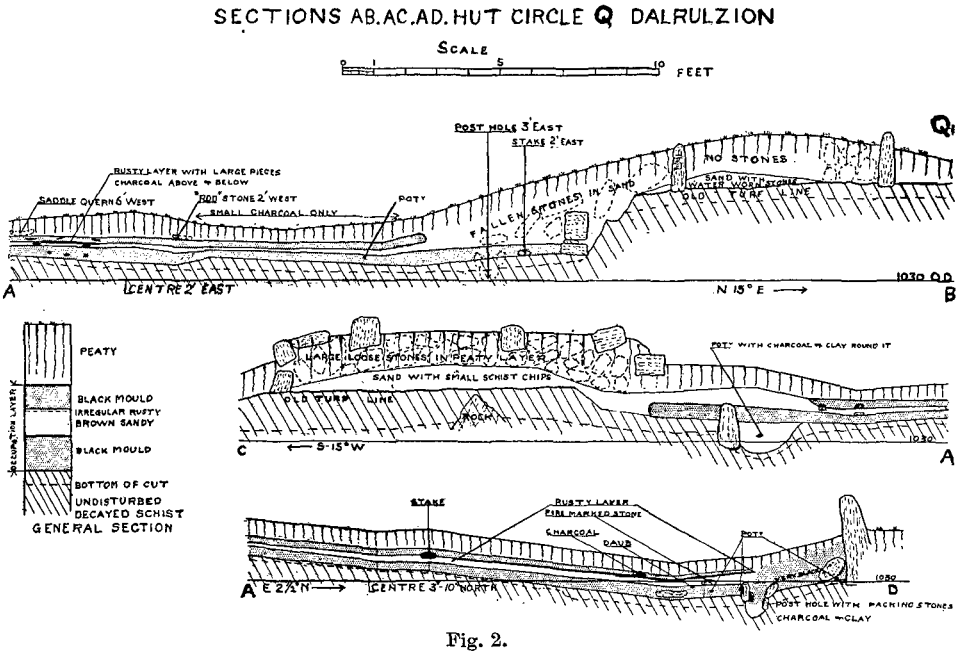

Fig. 2.

there were many large pieces up to 4 to 6 inches diameter and 24 inches long of charcoal or decayed wood, birch; the small pieces were mostly hazel and a few bits of oak.

It is therefore clear that inside this hut-circle there had been erected at some time a wattle-and-daub structure which may have been roofed. This may have extended through the entrance, as a piece of "daub" was found under one of the fallen stones on edge there.

The method of roofing these hut-circles, if there was a roof, and in particular whether or not a central pole was necessary to support a roof, is of interest.[2] There was no evidence of a roof over Circle F, but it may be that the narrow annular space formed round it was covered and that the occupiers used this space for shelter.

[1] Comber, *Scientific Study of Soil*, 2nd Edition, p. 50, and Robinson, *Soils*, pp. 205–212.

[2] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxx. p. 247.

I have collected evidence of circular huts built by primitive natives in Africa. Some near Sierra Leone are not unlike Circle F in general design. They have an annular space round a central living-room and are roofed without a central pole. The outside diameter of these is 25 to 30 feet, and the roof is thatch carried by light rafters, the thrust of which is taken by a strong rope-like band made of tropical creepers (lianes), and supported by vertical posts covered with wattle and daub. A similar rope-like band could be made in this country by branches of hazel.

The inside circular wall, about 15 feet in diameter, is also built of wattle and daub, and is carried up to within two feet or so of the thatch to provide ventilation; the doors are arranged to allow a through draught. The annular space, sometimes completely covered in, is used for various purposes, the front being a verandah used by the owner. Other and simpler types of circular huts can be seen in most parts of Africa, generally without a central pole.

No sign of wattle and daub or large pieces of charcoal or decayed wood were found in Circle F.

The trenches cut through the tangential Circle Q^1 disclosed a few fragments of charcoal on the undisturbed ground, but no distinct dark occupation layer. The wall of Q^1 was defined by a low bank and a few loose stones to the north and east, and more stones to the south on the lower slope of the hill. It must have been formed largely of turf. Some small post-holes concentric to the bank were found containing dark earth and a little charcoal, and in one case a fragment of pottery. No entrance was located.

Many pottery fragments were found in the southern section. The pottery included many bits of rim and bottom, and matched that found in Circle F of both A and B types.

Two broken saddle querns were found, and one good rubbing-stone and a good hammer-stone. These were left on the site.[1] Other stones noted were a thin and almost polished piece of schist which must have been used for some purpose, two large granite boulders and a number of water-worn pebbles, some of which are fire-marked, probably cooking-stones; many pieces of white quartz as in Circle F and another very good example of "rodding structure" schist. The fact that a specimen of this peculiar structure was found in both circles excavated seems to me to indicate that prehistoric man valued them; I have so far been unable to locate where he found them. No metal was found.

Last, but not least, Miss Liddell succeeded in separating a grain of corn from the black occupation layer, which Dr Orr identified as barley (*Hordeum*) and probably "bere". She also found one in Circle F.

The date of occupation of these hut-circles in Perthshire is variously

[1] One of the querns was very like fig. 4, pl. 11 (*Antiquity*, June 1937, in article on "Querns" by Cecil Curwen).

estimated by experts as between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, but I am not satisfied that we have yet sufficient evidence to fix the date. The best hut-circles D, E, F near the Rocking-stone, Dalrulzion, are still intact.[1]

My thanks for assistance are due to Dr Margaret Mitchell (now Mrs Stewart), Dr Orr, Dr Ogg, and Professor Childe and others, and especially to the late Miss Dorothy Liddell.