

ART. IX.—*Notes on Excavations at Leacet Hill Stone Circle, Westmorland.* By JOSEPH ROBINSON of Maryport, and R. S. FERGUSON, F.S.A.

Communicated at Workington, June 16th, 1880.

“ Maryport, 31st March, 1880.”

“ SIR,—I have the pleasure of reporting to you a very interesting discovery in Westmorland.

“ Travellers by the Eden Valley Railway may have noticed that about midway between the Wetheriggs Pottery, Clifton Dykes, and the cottages near Mr. Richardson’s, Whinfell, there are, on the left hand side going towards Cliburn, several large upright stones close to Leacet Wood. These stones have long been known to me, but my attention having been more particularly called to them on Easter Monday by Mr. Muir, manager of the Wetheriggs Pottery, I proceeded to examine them in company with his two sons.

We found that the stones were seven in number, placed in the form of a semi-circle, one being inside Leacet Wood, and the others on land forming part of the farm of Mr. Richard Richardson. The land is the property of Sir Henry Tufton, Bart. Our first work was to ascertain if any central stone was below the surface, as we found that a line passed from the centre touched each stone. In carrying out this we found, about a foot below the surface, an inner half circle of five stones, about a foot square, and distant from the others from ten to fourteen feet. These, however, may be of much more recent date, and may be accidental. We next proceeded to ascertain the height of the largest stone (No. 2), the one most to the south, by digging on the inside of the circle, and at a depth of about three feet

**STONE CIRCLE AT FOOT OF LEACET HILL
NEAR CLIFTON DYKES, WESTMORLAND.**



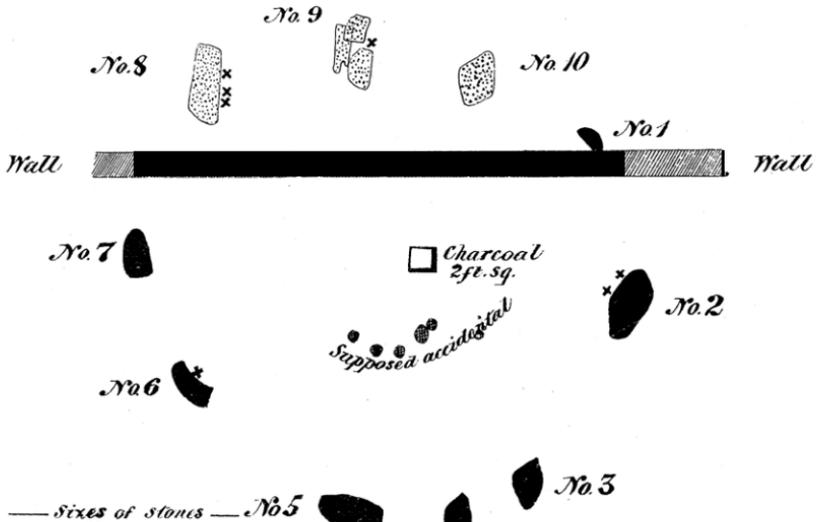
Reference.

Stones now above ground are filled-in with black.

Stones buried " " " stipple.

Urns found at places marked +

Leacet Wood.

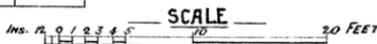


Sizes of stones — No. 5

No	Position	Above Ground	Below	Total	Circumference at Surface
1	Visible	1'-0"	3'-0"	4'-0"	5'-0"
2	"	4'-6"	4'-0"	8'-6"	12'-0"
3	"	1'-9"	3'-0"	4'-9"	8'-10"
4	"	0'-9"	2'-10"	3'-7"	6'-10"
5	"	2'-9"	2'-7"	5'-4"	12'-9"
6	"	2'-8"	3'-3"	5'-11"	10'-10"
7	"	0'-6"	4'-0"	4'-6"	5'-0"
8	Buried			5'-10"	6'-9"
9	"	Split into three by tree-root			
10	"			4'-6"	9'-0"

Examined by
Jos. Robinson.
March 29. 1830

Surveyed by
John B. Hurry.
Maryport.



feet six inches observed pieces of charcoal being turned up, and bones. These were followed by a piece of burnt pottery, and a careful examination showed that we had touched and broken into a sepulchral urn full of calcined human bones. Every effort was made to get this out entire, but the material was so brittle that after emptying it, and spending over two hours in the attempt, it came away in sections, the largest being about fourteen inches by eight. We had seen that the diameter of the urn was fifteen inches, and the depth about ten before it was disturbed. It had been inverted over the contents. The material is clay mixed with small pebbles, burnt red on the outside, and black inside, the thickness being half an inch. A rim runs round the urn, and the upper portion is ornamented with parallel lines scratched in by a series of prickings, and crossed by a zig-zag pattern. The floor on which the urn rested was paved irregularly and covered with black turf. No trace of any metal or stone weapon was observed. Under the stone at the opposite side, No. 6, we found a quantity of calcined and broken bones extending about three feet one way by one foot across.

“The diameter of the circle is 37 feet. The dimensions of the stones are as below :—*

“After I left, I arranged for the examination being continued, and Mr. Muir reports the finding of another urn near No. 2 stone, of an oval shape, five and a half inches by seven, and seven inches deep, with a good pattern, and one under No. 6 stone crushed, as the stone leans forward. I will get Mr. Harvey, who drew for me a plan of the Roman Camp at Beckfoot, to make a plan of this circle from the measurements I have,—I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

JOSEPH ROBINSON.

“To R. S. Ferguson, Esq., F.S.A.”

* These are omitted here, as they are given with more detail on the plan, which has been most accurately drawn by Mr. J. B. Harvey of Maryport.

NOTE.—

NOTE.—On Thursday, the 8th April, 1880, I had the pleasure of visiting the circle in question in company with Mr. Robinson and Mr. Muir, when we made a thorough exploration of it. The circle stands at the bottom of Leacet Hill, and the boundary line of the disparked Chace of Whinfell runs through it, being also the boundary wall of the Leacet Plantation. The soil is a reddish sand, evidently washed from the hill above; it rests on sandy rock, and has a top spit of decomposed ling and vegetable matter.

Prior to the excavation by Mr. Robinson, only seven stones were visible above ground, one within and six without the plantation; but three more have been found, which had fallen and been buried. One of these is a large block of freestone, No. 8 on the plan, five feet ten inches in height, by six feet nine inches in circumference. Another was split into three by the roots of a tree.

On digging into the centre of the circle we came upon traces of what was probably the funeral pyre. At about three feet from the present surface we found a layer of charcoal, apparently beech charcoal, about a foot thick, interspersed with minute fragments of calcined bones and bits of reddened stone. The interments had been made by collecting the calcined bones into urns of coarse paste, clay, and pebbles, baked before a fire, not in a kiln. The urns had then been buried at the feet of the stones of the circle. Two were found at the bottom of the largest stone; another urn, with food vessel and incense cup, was found under one of the fallen stones, while a fourth, a very large one, was under the stone that had been split, and the tree roots had grown into the urn. In all, five cinerary urns, one food vessel, and one incense cup were found,* but three of the cinerary urns were broken by the weight of the earth or of the fallen stones. The others were in a very wet and distorted condition, and cannot be properly examined until they have dried a little. One urn was inverted over its contents, the others were upright.

No implements, beads, &c., were found, though most carefully looked for, and a riddle employed, but bits of charcoal and calcined bones abounded. Near one of the urns was a red trace in the sand, which might have been a decomposed iron implement, but I could not undertake to say it was.

These interments are, probably, of the bronze period. I heartily congratulate Mr. Robinson on his discovery. His energy with the spade has already added much, and is likely to add more to our knowledge of prehistoric and of Roman Cumberland.

* On the plan they are all called urns.