

ART. I.—*Gretigate stone circles, Sides, Gosforth.* By  
H. B. STOUT, A.R.I.B.A.

*Read at Carlisle, April 15th, 1961.*

DURING investigations into the Roman road from Ravenglass to Moresby I studied some of the charters in *The Register of St. Bees* by the late Canon Wilson (this Society's Chartulary series, vol. iii). Charter no. 116, printed at pages 158-159 of the Register, seemed to me to be of particular interest, especially the following extract:

*Adam filius Ade fil Richardi . . . Noverit . . . me dedisse . . . domino priori de sancta Bega et monachis ibidem Deo servientibus quandam terram meam in Newton que jacet inter sepem petrosam que descendit de le chance et tendit usque Gretigate et terram Johannis Kalewar . . .*

(Adam son of Adam son of Richard . . . Know . . . that I have given . . . to the Lord Prior of St. Bees and the monks serving God there certain of my land in Newton which lies between a stone fence, which runs down from the Chance and stretches to Gretigate, and the land of John Kalewar . . .)

I was curious about the reference to a stone fence (sepem petrosam) and inspected the land in question, particularly fields 988 and 989 (Cumb. LXXVIII 5 and 6 [1899] Scale 25-inch). No mention of this site is made by the late Dr C. A. Parker in *The Gosforth District* (C. & W. Extra Series xv).

The Cance or Chance is a hollow depression, running up from the old lane, Gretigate (gravel road) near Sides the name of the derelict old stone barn and also the adjoining bungalow. It is fenced around with sod and

cobble dykes and, because of its stony nature, it has never been ploughed, and, in effect, forms a service field from which access is gained to four adjoining fields (30576/50362).

Of the many stones in the field most appeared to be 90 per cent buried and several of the large ones had been dynamited and moved out of the way and were collected near the wire fence at the north end of the field.

Amid the many stones, I could see the outlines of what I thought was a stone circle. I was also struck by the line of the north-east dyke of field 989. This generally was a straight line, but towards the centre it changed from the normal sod and cobble hedge into a stone wall and also bulged curiously into the field.

On inspection I came to the conclusion that this was possibly the arc of a large stone circle, and further examination of it showed the existence of very large, partly sunk, stones. Furthermore on the inside of the arc, in the adjoining field 988, was a collection of large stones, which had been removed from the field when it was ploughed and had obviously formed part of the circle at one time. They appeared to have been dynamited for ease of handling.

Generally speaking, the site appears to contain the remains of three stone circles of various diameters and also the possible remains of nine cairns, but some of the "cairns" may be field clearance from adjoining fields. (Fig. 1.)

As soon as I was satisfied that there was something of archaeological interest here I got in touch with Miss Clare Fell, who fortunately was in the district lecturing to the S.W. Cumberland Group, and, after she had seen the site, she confirmed my suspicions and suggested that further work should be done. Accordingly my wife and I set about locating by probe, and exposing, all the available large, buried stones, which were then plotted with the result shown on the attached plan.