

1. ON STONES OF MEGALITHIC CIRCLES.

I have had the stones of many megalithic or "Druid" circles in Scotland and England examined, with the view of ascertaining the presence or absence of cup or ring-cuttings. In most instances no marks of ancient artificial tooling or sculpturing have been traced upon the surfaces of the stones. But in several examples, both cup-markings and ring-cuttings have been detected upon them, as in the following examples:—

Circle at Rothiemay, Banffshire.—About a furlong north from the house of Rothiemay "stands a Druidical temple," to use the language of the old Statistical Account of Scotland.¹ The circle consists of five

¹ Statistical Account of Scotland, 1797, vol. xv. p. 386.

remaining stones, the others having been removed. My friend Dr Black examined the stones for me, and found one of them distinctly marked. The marked stone is an immense oblong block thirteen feet long, six feet high, and about four in thickness. On the side of it, looking to the interior of the circle, are between fifty and sixty cups. Two of the cups are surrounded with rings. The sketch of this stone in Plate III. is accurately copied from a photograph of it. On the upper surface of the stone are also ten or twelve cup-cuttings. Upon the adjoining stone in the circle there are also four or five cups.

Circle at Thorax, Banffshire.—The circle is situated in the parish of Marnoch, Banffshire. It consists of six stones. On the inner surface of one of them, carefully copied into Plate IV. fig. 1, from a photograph, are numerous cup-cuttings; and an appearance of a ring-cutting is traceable around two or three of the largest cups. The cut stone, in this instance, as in the one at Rothiemay, is a hard granitic or syenitic rock.

*Circle at Bankhead, Banffshire.*¹—About four miles from Thorax is a stone marked with cups. It stands in the parish of Boyndie. In the new Statistical Account of Scotland it is stated that “three Druidical circles are in the parish; one near the parish church; another within a mile to the north-east; and a third on the farm at Bankhead.” Of this last circle three stones only remain, two standing and one lying. On the north side of one of the erect stones—a granite—Dr Black found twelve cup excavations of the usual size. He could not detect any similar markings on the other stones.

Circles at Bruiach, Inverness-shire.—At Bruiach, near Beaufort, stands a double circle of stones. About a dozen stones of the outer circle remain. On the upper surfaces of two of the fourteen or more stones left to form the inner circle, the Rev. Mr Joass of Edderton lately discovered markings of a few cups, and one or two connecting gutters, similar to those which his brother had discovered on other stones in that vicinity, as depicted in Plate XIV. At Bruach the inner circle is thirteen yards in diameter, and the distance between the inner and outer circle about nine feet. None of the stones are very high or large. Eight or nine measure about three feet in height, and the same in breadth.

¹ See the Spalding Club Volumes on the Antiquities of Aberdeen and Banff, vol. ii. p. 118.

Circle at Cults, Perthshire.—In the parish of Caputh there exist at Cults, within a few miles of Dunkeld, three stones,—the remains, it is alleged, of a large circle. Two of the stones are erect. The third is half prostrate. This reclining stone is nearly six feet long, and about two feet nine inches broad. Its upper surface is marked with numerous cup excavations, most of them round, a few oblong, and three sets of of them joined together by intermediate grooves or gutters.

Circle at Glendevin, Perthshire.—Two or three miles from the Cult stones, and within the policy of Glendevin, is an elevated round barrow now planted with trees. A circle of several large stones formerly stood around this barrow. On the face of one of them, which still remains, I found three or four cup excavations.

Circle at Moncrieff, Perthshire.—Behind Moncrieff House, a few miles south of Perth, is a small but complete megalithic circle. The stones are apparently secondary traps. In the centre was formerly a barrow, as the partial rise in the ground still indicates. Lately bones have been found in this position. A large block, which is said to have been removed from the centre of the circle about forty years ago, and now lies a few feet outside of it, has carved upon its surface a series of cups of different sizes, as represented in the sketch of it given in Plate IV. fig. 2.

Circle at Craighall, Perthshire.—Cup excavations exist also upon an erect stone standing at a megalithic circle behind Craighall House, Blairgowrie. The cups are five or six in number, and placed in a group near the foot of the stone.

Circle of Turin, Forfarshire.—On a large erect stone which once formed one of a fine circle of boulder stones at Nether Turin, my esteemed friend Dr Wyse discovered “several carefully excavated cavities upon its top in groups, without circles.”

Circles of Graystone and Holywood, Dumfriesshire.—Dr Dixon of Dumfries has been so good as send me drawings of a stone at Graystone, the only one left of a circle that formerly existed there. Its face is marked by four small cups, which (he writes) “occur in a linear series, and are obviously artificial.” The stone is a whin. In a subsequent section I will have occasion to allude to cup-marked stones in the great Circle at Holywood, in the same neighbourhood.

Circle of Calder Stones, Lancashire.—I have already (p. 7) referred to the circle standing near Liverpool, as remarkable by presenting specimens of all the types of cup and ring cuttings. The Calder circle is about six yards in diameter. It consists of five stones, which are still upright, and one that is fallen. The stones consist of slabs and blocks of red sandstone, all different in size and shape.

The fallen stone is small, and shows nothing on its exposed side; but possibly, if turned over, some markings might be discovered on its other surface.

Of the five standing stones, the largest of the set (No. I.) is a sandstone slab between 5 and 6 feet both in height and in breadth. On its outer surface—or the surface turned to the exterior of the circle—there is a flaw above from disintegration and fracture of the stone; but the remaining portion of the surface presents between thirty and forty cup depressions, varying from 2 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter; and at its lowest and left hand corner is a concentric circle about a foot in diameter, consisting of four enlarging rings, but apparently without any central depression. (See Plate VI. fig. 1.)

The inner surface (Plate V. fig. 2 of this Calder stone slab (No. I.), or that surface which is directed to the interior of the circle, has, near its centre, a cup cut upon it, with the remains of one surrounding ring. On the right side of this single-ringed cup are the faded remains of a concentric circle of three rings. To the left of it there is another three-ringed circle with a central depression, but the upper segments of the rings are broken off. Above it is a double-ringed cup, with this peculiarity, that the external ring is a volute leading from the central cup, and between the outer and inner ring is a fragmentary line of apparently another volute; a double-ringed volute being common on some Irish stones, as on those at the great archaic mausoleum at New Grange, but extremely rare in Great Britain. At the base of this stone, and towards the left, are two volutes respectively of two and three turns.

The next stone, No. II. in the series, is about six feet high, and somewhat quadrangular. On one of its sides, half-way up, is a single cup-cutting; on a second side, and near its base, a volute, consisting of five turns, and seven inches and a half in breadth; and on a third side (that pointing to the interior of the circle) a concentric circle of

three rings placed half-way or more up the stone. (See Plate VI. figs. 3 and 4.)

The stone, No. III. (Plate VI. fig. 5), placed next to it in the circle, is between three and four feet in height, thick, and somewhat quadrangular, but with its angles much rounded off. On its outermost side is a triple circle, produced by a spiral line starting from a central cup. The diameter of the outermost circle of the volute is nearly ten inches. Below this figure, and on the rounded edge between it and the next surface of the stone to the left, are the imperfect and faded remains of a larger quadruple circle. On one of the two remaining sides of this stone (Plate VI. fig. 6) is a double concentric circle, of an oval form, and measuring five inches by seven. The two rings are united together by a radial groove or gutter, the only instance of the radial groove which I observed on the Calder stones.

The fourth stone (No. IV.) is too much weathered and disintegrated on the sides to present any distinct sculpturings. But it is flat on the top, and there are nine or ten cups—one large and deep (being nearly five inches in diameter); and seven or eight of these cups are irregularly tied or connected together by linear channels or cuttings.

The fifth stone is too much disfigured by modern apocryphal sharp-edged cuttings and chisellings to deserve archæological notice.¹

Circle of Salkeld, Long Meg, Cumberland.—By far the most magnificent megalithic circle in the north of England is that of Salkeld, formed of sixty-seven stones, some of them of very great size. Standing a few yards outside of the circle is a huge square-shaped monolith, formerly about eighteen feet in height, and known under the quaint name of “Long Meg.” This monolith is—unlike the stones composing the circle—formed of sandstone. Three of its four sides are utterly destroyed by weathering. The fourth or east side is much more entire. Upon it Sir Gardner Wilkinson discovered a concentric circle of four rings, placed around a cupped centre. Lately I had an opportunity of

¹ The whole circle was enclosed some years ago by Mr Walker within an excellent iron railing, and the generous protection thus afforded will, it is hoped, save them for many years from farther mutilation. The day on which I visited these stones was damp and wet. On a brighter and more favourable occasion, perhaps, some additional markings might be seen.

examining this stone, and found, not one, but several series of concentric circles carved upon it, three or four of them low down on the stone, and much faded. The most entire—that discovered by Wilkinson—consists of four concentric circles, and is about ten inches in diameter; a straight radial groove or gutter runs from its third circle, outwards and upwards through the outermost ring, and onwards to the edge of the stone. This gutter does not apparently penetrate the two innermost circles. From the centre of this circle to the ground is a distance of four feet and a half. A foot lower down, and more to the middle of the stone, is a second series of four concentric rings, with a shallow cupped centre and a radial groove running from the innermost ring obliquely downwards and outwards. Still lower, and to the left, a third ring-cutting of four concentric circles, with its centre one foot nine inches high above the ground, has a sharpish radial line, most probably a natural fissure in the stone, passing from the cupped centre outwards and downwards to the edge of the monolith. A fourth ring-cutting of three concentric circles is placed immediately below this third or last group, and is connected to it by a groove or channel which runs from the centre of the concentric circles above to the edge of the group below. Alongside of it and to the right is another faded circle, apparently of three rings. Other more indistinct appearances of portions of circles are traceable higher up the stone than the circle first described, and between it and the second circle. My friend, the Rev. Mr Paterson of Melmerby, had a photograph of the stone kindly taken for me; and from this photograph the figure of Long Meg, in Plate VII., is taken. I found no traces of human art upon the surface of any of the sixty-seven stones of the Salkeld circle, except one, a large block placed on the opposite side of the circle from Long Meg, and which has the doubtful appearance of a faded circle upon its western face.

Circle at Maughanby.—Ring-cuttings have recently been found by my friend the Rev. James Simpson, vicar of Kirkby-Stephen, on two boulders, forming part of a circle of eleven stones placed around a short cist in a large cairn situated a few hundred yards to the east of Long Meg. I have seen them along with him. Two or three cairns or tumuli existed till lately in the same locality. One of them, of large size, stood on land belonging to the free school of the township of

Maughanby. After removing from its central mound or barrow a quantity of cobble stones mixed with earth, several large stones, one of them only erect, were found arranged in a circle about eighteen feet in diameter. Several of them were buried beneath the projecting edges of the barrow. In the centre of the circle was placed a semiovoid cist formed of rough stones, and measuring only three feet nine inches in length, two feet four inches in breadth, and ten inches in depth. The cist contained an urn, burnt bones, and charcoal. The only ornament upon the rude urn was a raised line near the top. No ornaments or weapons were detected, though careful search was made for them. On the inner and upper side of a large whin boulder, forming one of the eastern stones of the surrounding circle, is cut a spiral line which makes four turns or circles, the outermost having a diameter of ten inches. Alongside of it is a group of four concentric circles without any cup-centre or radial duct. The diameter of the innermost circle measures four inches, that of the outermost nineteen inches. The outermost edges of the volute and of the concentric circle touch and meet at one part. (For a drawing of this combined volute and series of concentric circles, see Plate V. fig. 1.) On the top of a second stone on the western side are two circles, both about eight inches in diameter. The lower has its centre cut out; the higher encloses within it the remains of a small central cup, with a ridge around it, as is shown in the sketch, Plate V. fig. 2.

Circle at Oatlands, Isle of Man.—Small megalithic circles, placed around a central kistvaen, like that previously described at Moncrieff, &c., seem to have constituted a not unfrequent form of sepulchre in ancient days in the Isle of Man. One of the best marked of these sepulchral mounds and circles that remains is situated at Oatlands, on the right side of the old road between Douglas and Castleton. In the centre of the mound is a stone cist, surrounded by a closely set circle of stones, seven of which are still in place. A second or outer circle is planted at the distance of some yards; and of this outer circle only four stones remain. On the outer surface of a stone belonging to the inner circle are some eighteen cup-markings, methodically arranged in five rows, as represented in Plate VIII. fig. 1. No artificial markings have been discovered on any of the other stones of this sepulchre.

PLATE III.

STONE FROM CIRCLE AT ROTHIE MAY.



PLATE IV.

STONES AT 1, THORAX. 2, MONCRIEFF. 3, DUNBAR,



PLATE V.

STONES AT MAUGHANBY AND CARGILL.



PLATE VI
THE CALDER STONES

FIG. 1.

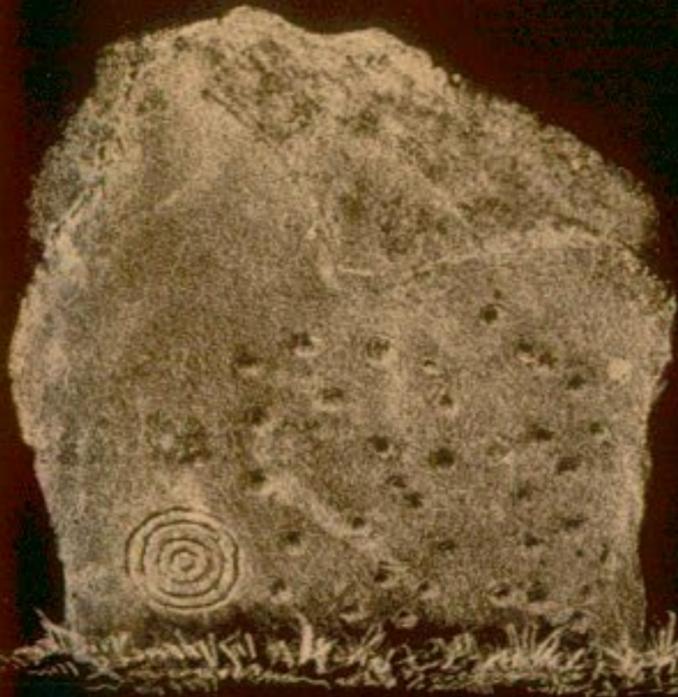


FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.



FIG. 4.



FIG. 5.



FIG. 6.



PLATE VII.

"LONG MEG," FROM SALKELD CIRCLE.



PLATE VIII.

OAKLAND CIRCLE, ISLE OF MAN, & CROMLECH, &c. IN GUERNSEY.

