

I.

A RECORD OF THE CUP- AND RING-MARKINGS IN THE STEWARTRY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT. BY FRED. R. COLES, CORR. MEM. SOC. ANTIQ. SCOT.

In the sixteenth volume of the *Proceedings* of the Society, Mr J. Romilly Allen contributed an important list of the then "undescribed stones with cup-marks in Scotland;" but at that date (1882) the Stewartry was credited with only two sites—the rock at High Arvie and the stone at High Auchenlarie, attention to which was first drawn by the late Sir J. Y. Simpson. The next notice, by the late Mr George Hamilton, marks an epoch in the history of our cup- and ring-marks. In the autumn of 1886, the discovery on a field at Milton, by William Thompson, of a most interesting group of these scribings, drew the general attention of local antiquaries to the subject, and each succeeding month added new sites to our ever lengthening list. The record now submitted to the Society contains a description (as brief as possible) and an accurate drawing of every important cup- and ring-marked rock or stone which came to my knowledge up to the date of March 1893. Other observers, especially Messrs E. A. Hornel, William Thompson, D. Corson, have helped largely towards this result; but in every case I have measured and drawn the sculpturing myself, frequently paying more than one visit to the spot, so as to examine the markings by different lights.

Till quite recently it was held that these unique rock-scribings were confined to one very narrow strip of the shore on both sides of the river

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Dee, all the sites being comparatively near to the sea—say, within three miles. The very remarkable series, *e.g.*, at High Banks, on the east of the river (casts of some of which are in the Museum), are a bare mile and a half from the nearest tide-mark. Those which occur in the Milton parks are within nearly the same radius; while, at Balmae, many peculiar forms are found within a couple of hundred yards of the sea. Again, on the west of the river, one mile exactly inland, are others on the land of Senwick; and at Auchenlarie and Bardristan in Anwoth, seven or eight miles further west, in addition to the sites mentioned by Simpson, there are several other groups, occurring on loose stones as well as on rock. As recently, however, as 25th June 1892, quite a new group was found at Nether Linkens, six miles inland from Balcaary Point, and nearly four miles north-east from the previously observed most inland group at Castle Creavie.

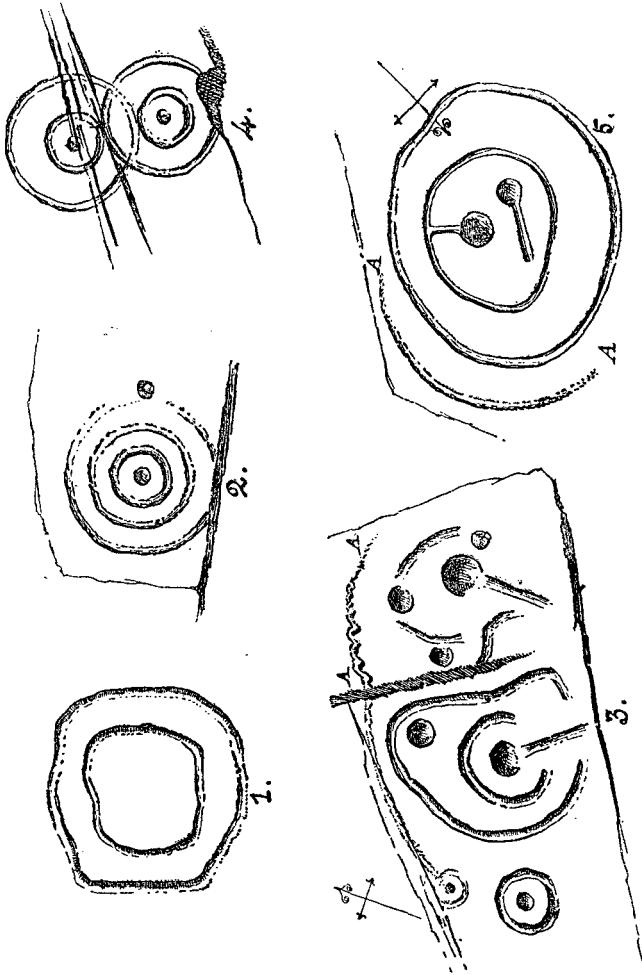
The drawings accompanying this notice are—unless otherwise stated—done to a uniform scale of one-twelfth. In every case I have drawn and measured the sculpturing on the spot, noting also the form, composition, and inclination of rock or detached stone on which they occur. A feathered arrow indicates the direction in which the sculptured surface slopes, and the orientation is shown in the usual manner.

The cup- and ring-markings are comprised under several groups, and to treat of them in this style will be simplest and most consistent with their known distribution.

I. THE BALMAE GROUP.

This, the most southerly group, contains very varied sculpturings, all on solid rock, which here is of the finest-grained glaciated whin-stone, so common throughout many districts of the Stewartry. Fig. 1 shows two concentric ill-formed rings, believed to be the most southerly¹ in the country. The rock inclines slightly towards the west. It is about a hundred yards south of Ross View Cottage. The “circles” here figured

¹ With the exception of some discovered (since this notice was written) on rocks below high-water mark on the island called Little Ross, at the mouth of the Dee.



Figs. 1-5. The Balmae Group.

are 17 and 10 inches in diameter, and are much worn down. Fig. 2 shows a group—also very indistinct—cut on a small rock not many score yards N. of the first, and containing three concentric and well-formed

rings, with central cup, and cup outlying; the overall diameter being 13 inches.

Fig. 3, which lies but a few yards from Ross View Cottage, on its N.W., is much more complex, eight cups being associated with four rings and several grooves, both straight and curved.

In fig. 4 we have an interesting variety in the form of overlapping circles, the rings being specially well formed. This rock-surface is

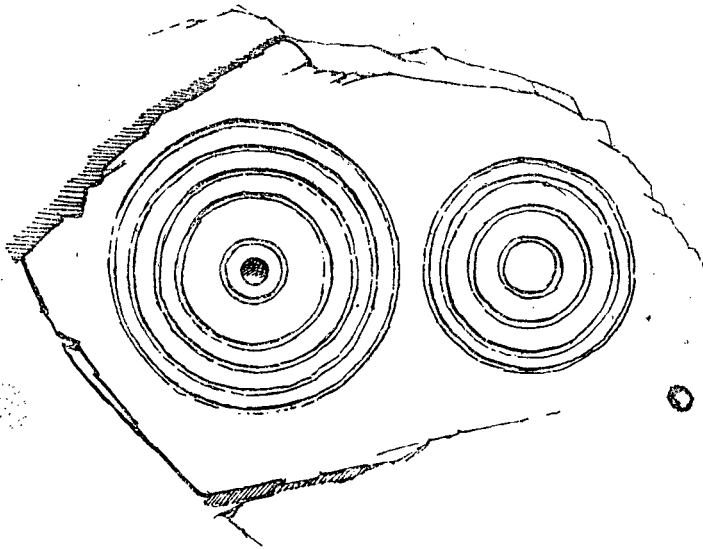


Fig. 6. Balmae.

much split up by sharp, deep fissures, and its general inclination is south-westwards.

Fig. 5 represents a sculpturing to the W. of the last, on an almost flat rock. This was imperfectly figured in Mr Hamilton's paper (*Proceedings*, vol. ix. p. 157), because at the time that drawing was made, the outermost segment (A A in diagram) had not been observed. During further investigations, I so frequently found this peculiar

feature—an unfinished outer groove — that I do not think I am wrong in attaching some importance to its presence. Other “cups” may be seen on rocks close to these, and are claimed by some as artificial, but my opinion is that they are weatherings, occurring, as they do, too regularly in the line of cleavage to be void of suspicion.

Fig. 6 shows two sets of concentric rings, one having four, the other five and a central cup. The rock bearing these is some three hundred yards S.E. of Balmae House. It is smooth, and slopes to the W. at an angle of 40° . The largest ring is 24 inches in diameter.

7. A rock immediately below, also having a like inclination to the W., bears a group of five concentric rings, the outer one being 18 inches in diameter.

8. To the N. of Balmae House, on the home-fields, is a very much worn cup and partial ring. The centre of the cup is 13 inches from the upper or N.E. corner of the rock. The cup measures 5 inches across, and the ring must have been about 7 inches.

9. Farther N. and W., and higher up, is a single cup on the corner of a rock, in much the same position as the last. It is 2 inches wide, 1 inch deep, very clear and well defined.

II. THE KNOCKSHINNIE GROUP.

This curious sculpturing was found by Mr Hornel in February 1887. It lies on the summit of a hill 300 feet above sea-level, facing N.E. Probably owing to its position, this sculpturing is extremely weathered (fig. 7).

III. THE TORRS GROUP.

Two separate localities are included in this.

1. That nearest the sea (on the Well Hill) is a mass of rock, measuring 9 feet by 3 feet, W. of and not very far from the Ewe-bughts. The much worn condition of the sculpturing renders examination very difficult; but it appears to consist mainly of shallow cups 1 inch wide, very numerous scattered about; a groove follows the

edge of the rock and connects two cups, one of which is surrounded by a ring. The rock has a slight inclination eastwards.

2. This group is on an almost flat rock-surface, 6 or 7 yards N. of the wall of Torrs farmhouse (see fig. 8). Near it, on the E., are surfaces quite as smooth and far broader than this space, which measures over all but 30 inches by 18—and yet on none of them is there a vestige of any sculpturing. At *mm* in the diagram the two ends of an encircling groove touch the edge of the rock, here flush with the summit of the hillock.

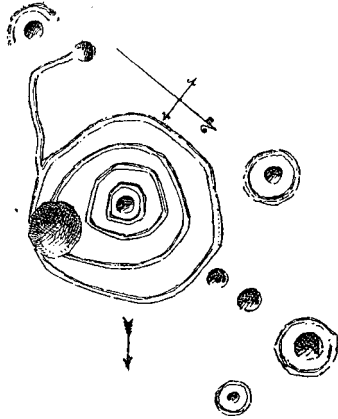


Fig. 7. Knockshinnie.

3. Two feet three inches eastwards, on a portion of the same rock, 3 inches higher, and also flat, are two small cups, joined by a straight groove $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and running E. and W.

4. Three feet S. of this is a vague, nearly complete, ring, crude and uneven, with a dot in its centre, on a small flat rock, on a level with the rest.

5. Eastward 66 feet, also on flat rock, are two small and very shallow cups, due N. and S. of each other, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart. There are other dots and small marks picked out apparently round these two, which suggest the notion that here a group was about to be cut, but abandoned.

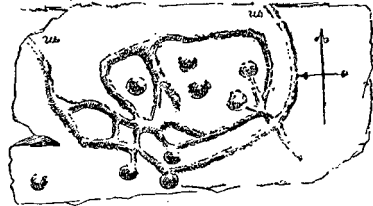


Fig. 8. Torrs.

6. Next, E.S.E. of the upper of these two cups, and 8 feet 6 inches distant, is a very unusually fine cutting. It occupies a small, squarish (natural) hollow in the rock, and has, no doubt, for long had the advantage of being turfed over, hence the remarkable clearness of its lines. It presents a cup 2 inches wide and two rings $5\frac{1}{2}$ and $8\frac{1}{2}$ wide. Neither cup nor ring is particularly deep, but the sharpness with which the edge of rock is left between each separate grooving is very noticeable, added to which is the almost mathematical circularity. Nine inches S.S.E. is a clearly-cut cup, without a ring.

7. Thirteen feet N.N.E. of the ringed cup just noted is the design

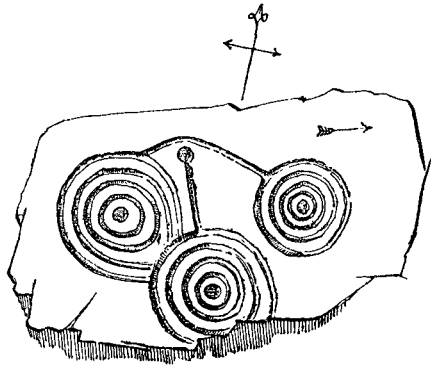


Fig. 9. Torrs.

shown in fig. 9, which speaks for itself. The rock has a distinct slope eastwards. The outermost rings measure 10 and 8 inches in diameter.

IV. THE GRANGE GROUP.

This group, containing the somewhat novel designs shown in the five following diagrams, was noticed in August 1892, when, with the assistance of Mr Dudgeon, I removed several square yards of turf, and brought to light sculpturings scarcely less interesting than, and quite as well preserved as those at High Banks.

The site of the first sculpturing (see fig. 10) is in the remote south

corner of the Dam Park, on the lower part of an extensive bulky ridge

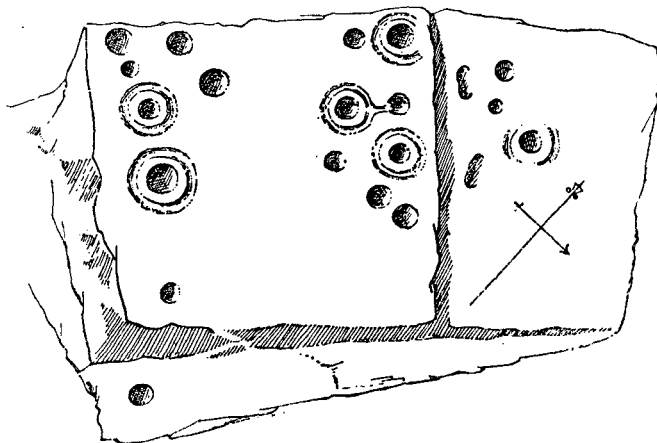


Fig. 10. The Grange.

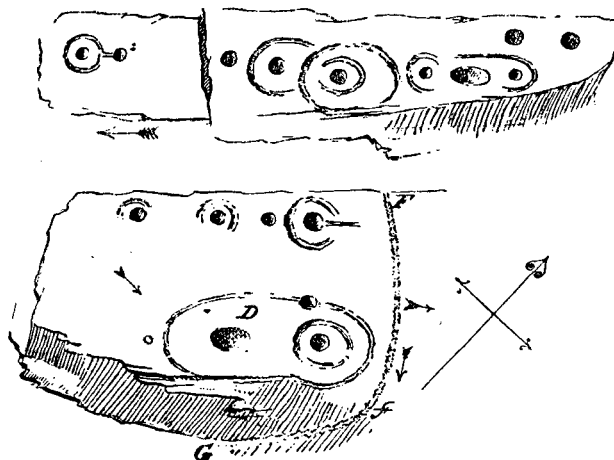


Fig. 11. The Grange.

of whinstone sloping in all directions; another set (fig. 11) is close to

this, while the summit bears the forms shown in fig. 12. What most strikes an observer in all these groups is the appearance of remarkably large and deep cups, and the placing of cups, sometimes with rings, within a long elliptical groove. On the summit-rock (fig. 12), however, there is, in addition, the peculiarly distinct pick-marked groove (G G') carried down the slope, then up and round, encircling one cup and almost entering another. A second groove, left in the same initiatory stage, is carried from F' to F, also downwards. At its lower end are

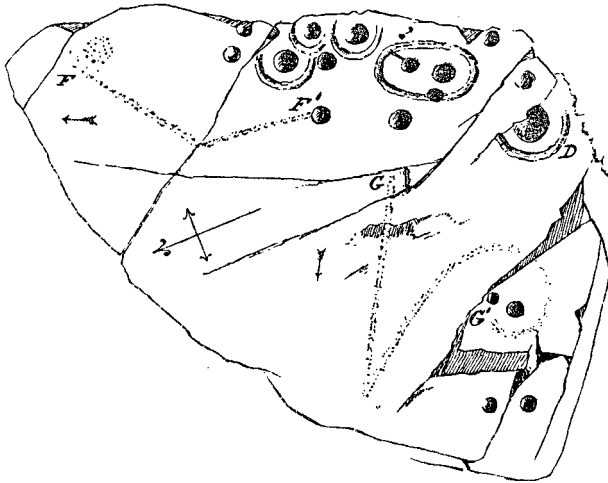


Fig. 12. The Grange.

numerous small picked holes, evidently the first dotting-out of the contour of a cup.

About a mile up the road from the Grange towards Townhead School, in a high field (350 feet contour-line) S.E. of the cottage known as Blackhill, and some 50 yards distant from it, there is a solitary uneven lump of whinstone, having one fairly flat surface a little more than 3 feet square. On it occurs the very curious design shown in (fig. 13). The four outlying cups and rings are almost exactly placed to form a rhomboid, while the distance from the centre of the large saucer-like

depression to the S.E. cup is just twice that to the S.W., the other two cups being equidistant.

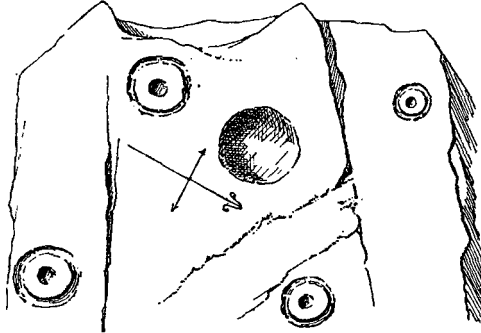


Fig. 13. Near Townhead School.

Near Gilroannie, in a field to the S.E., close on the edge of a quarry, there are the two cuttings shown in fig. 14—an oval and a horse-shoe shape, the latter enclosing a small cup. The rock slopes steeply to the N.E.

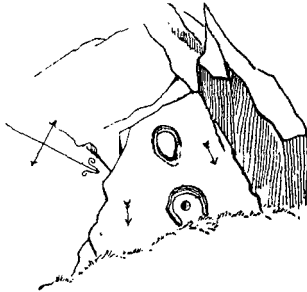


Fig. 14. Gilroannie.

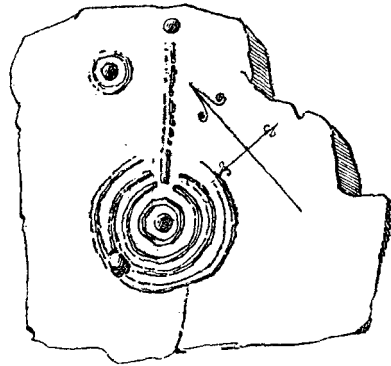


Fig. 15. Milton Park.

V. THE MILTON GROUP.

Under this head I place all the sculpturings, which cover a large number of isolated rock-surfaces, in the fields known as the Milton

Parks. Here there are six separate localities, four of them on the east of the long dike here dividing the fields, bearing each either a simple or a very complex design, and apparently lying, in regard to each other, in no systematic order.

1. The first sculpturing (fig. 15) is on the top of a lumpish rock, and shows four concentric rings, with central cup and three other cups, with a perfectly straight groove connecting two.

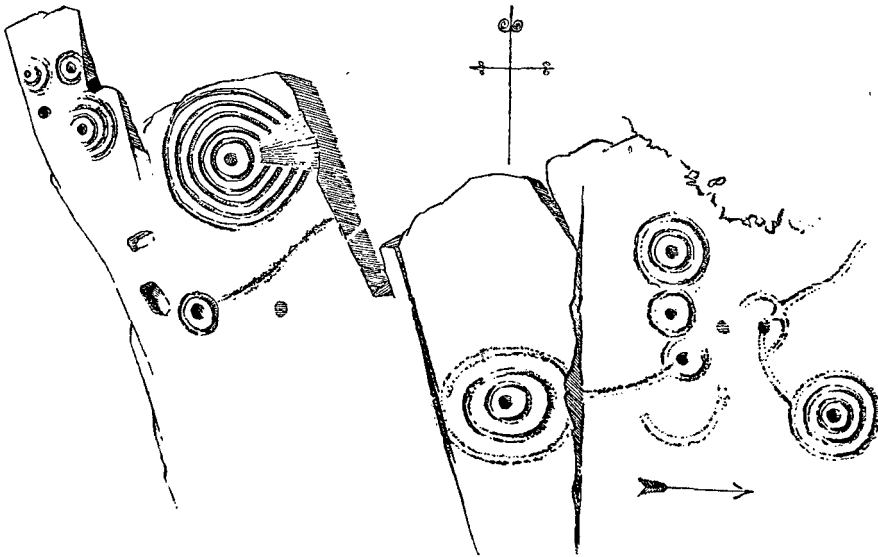


Fig. 16. Milton Park.

2. Two very much worn rings, 4 and 7 inches wide, round a small and shallow cup—the whole extremely vague.

3. The very remarkable set of cups, rings, and grooves shown in fig. 16. There are, in addition to these features, two small oblongs close to the largest ring group. This rock slopes downwards and eastwards, nearly one in three.

4. On a rock jutting up some 4 feet above the grass. At its W. corner is a cup 1 inch wide, partly surrounded by a groove, perhaps an intentional semicircle, 3 inches in diameter.

5. On the W. of the dike, and touching it, is the flattish rock bearing the very clear and peculiar design shown in fig. 17. The finding

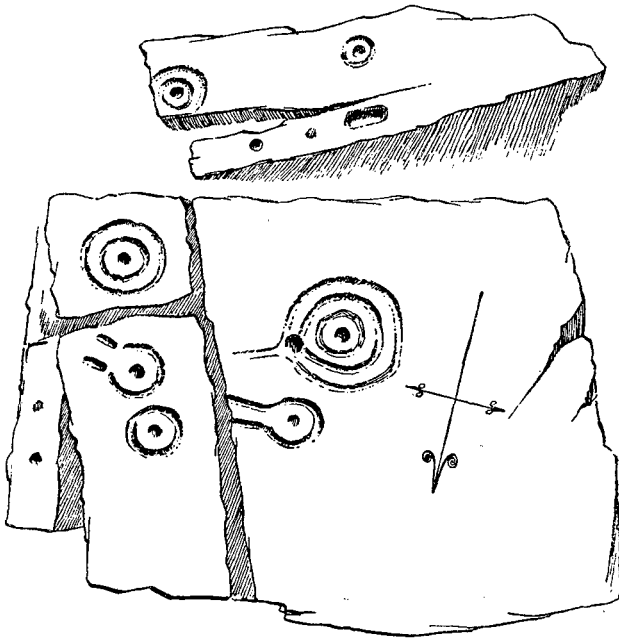


Fig. 17. Milton Park.

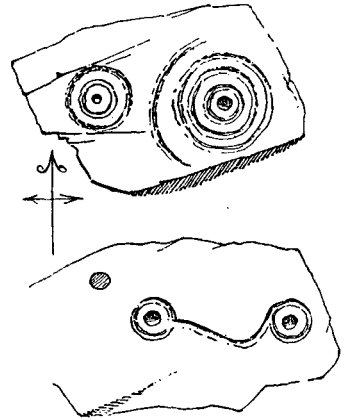


Fig. 18. Milton Park.

of these sculpturings by Mr Wm. Thompson was the incentive to our more thorough searches for cup- and ring-marks in the Stewartry.

6. The last site is N. of Low Milton, but my drawing (fig. 18) does not show these two rocks in their actual relative positions. They each face westwards, and in each the cups lie due E. and W. of one another.

VI. GALTWAY AND HIGH BANKS GROUP.

At Galtway, as at Dunrod, we are again on traces of earlier human habitation; for here, too, there was a thriving village, known to have

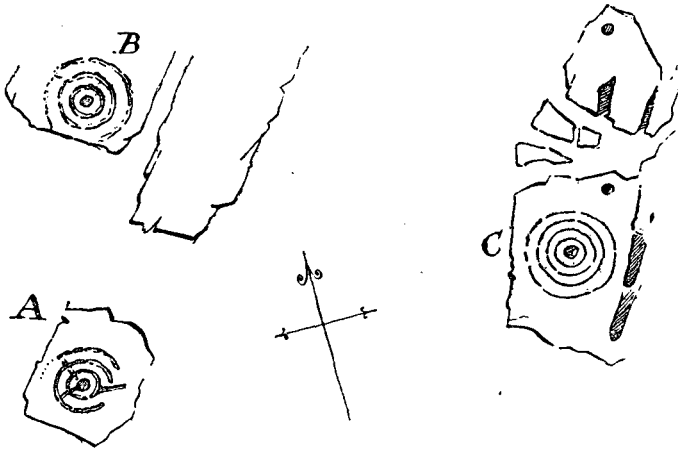


Fig. 19. Galtway.

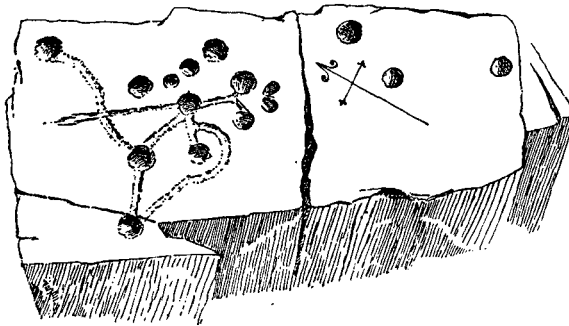


Fig. 20. Sculptured Rock, Galtway.

been inhabited during the Irish Rebellion of 1641. Heaps of its ruins, now all grassy, may be seen in many directions.

1. Towards the west of the village precincts there is, on a piece of flat, coarse-grained, sandstone-like rock, a cutting consisting of a central cup, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide; a nearly complete circle, 4 inches wide; two-thirds of another circle, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide; and a segment of about a fourth, which lies N. of the rest, and would make a circle 11 inches in diameter. See fig. 19, A. Three short shallow grooves run radially out,

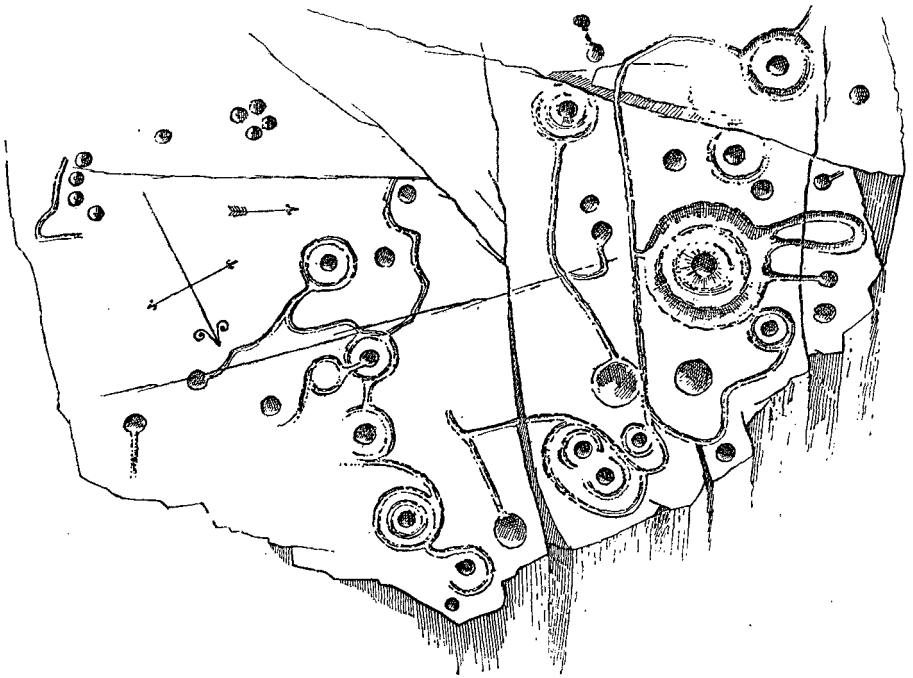


Fig. 21. Sculptured Rock, Galtway.

as shown in the drawing. Associated with this are two other sets of concentric rings, with central cup (B and C, fig. 19)—the circles of the latter being extremely weathered. This last is almost equidistant 10 feet from B and A, and in reality lies due E. of A.

2. The next group occurs several hundred yards to the E., at the base of cairn-crowned Galtway Hill. See fig. 20, sculptured Rock.

3. Sculptured Rock—also at the base of the same hill—shows a wonderful variety of sculpturings, and is perhaps the richest piece of rock surface in the Stewartry. (See fig. 21.)

4. Sculptured Rock—occupies a higher site than the last, and to the E. of it. My drawing (fig. 22) shows to what a very different result these detached surfaces have been used by our archaic sculptors.¹

The two fine sets A and B are among the most perfect specimens

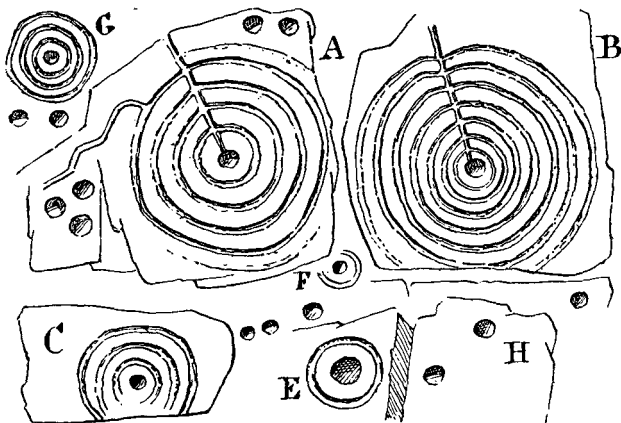


Fig. 22. Galtway.

we have of clear and regular concentric cutting. A occupies a "saddle-back" rock; its greatest diameter is $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches. In B the largest ring measures 20 inches across. The peculiar incurving of its rings is very marked.

High Banks.—The cup- and ring-markings at High Banks are now well known; partly through the excellent casts taken (as mentioned in Mr Hamilton's paper) and presented to the Museum.

There are, however, many more sculpturings on a portion of this

¹ These scribings occupy in reality a space of rock about 12 feet square. In my drawing they are compressed.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY.

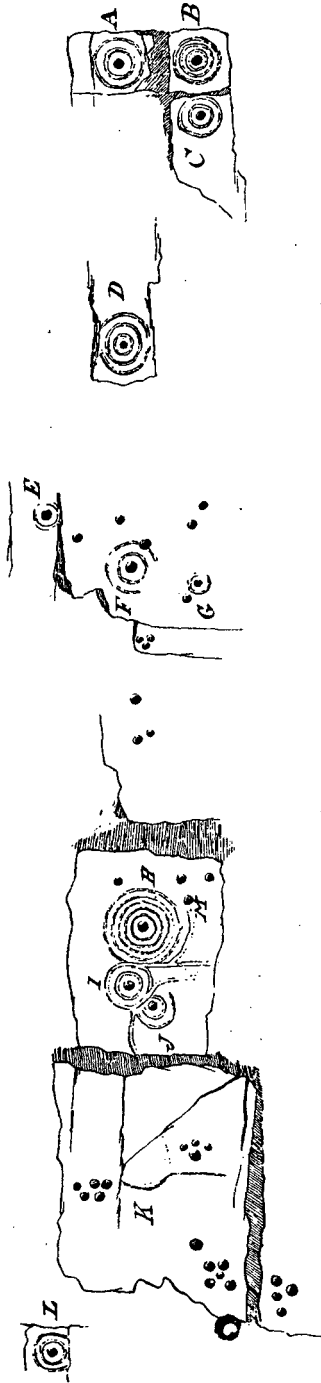


Fig. 23. High Banks.

same rock-surface which the casts do not include. The plan next shown (fig. 23) is meant to supplement the illustrations in Mr Hamilton's paper. It represents the higher, nearly level surface N.E. of those. If the solitary group of two rings and cup (L), at the extreme left of my plan, were placed 3 feet N.E. of the edge of fig. 1 in Mr Hamilton's paper, we should arrive at a correct understanding of the arrangement and general disposition of this extraordinary specimen of cup- and ring-markings. Many of these lie in an almost direct line (A D F H) N.E. and S.W.; many others are clustered in threes, in a manner which seems peculiar to the locality.

On a small flat stone unearthed during the excavation of the South Cairn in the Woodfield, a single cup was noticed. The stone was not preserved.

VII. CASTLE CREAIVIE AND BOMBIE GROUP.

The next drawing shows somewhat unusually distributed cups and rings, which occupy three separate rock-surfaces on a very hilly sixty-acre field, known as the Rough Tongue of Bombie. This particular ridge of rock is the one nearest the public road; and N. of it, and but a few yards distant, trending N.E., is an old road, marked by a tall hedge and fallen dike. All these sculpturings, except

the two at K (fig. 24), have been greatly weathered, and are barely visible but at sunrise or sunset. Thick turf has protected the two at K; and as the west edge of this rock has been quarried, it is possible—as was certainly the case at High Banks—that pieces bearing sculpturings have thus been lost. Close to this very clear group is a deep, small

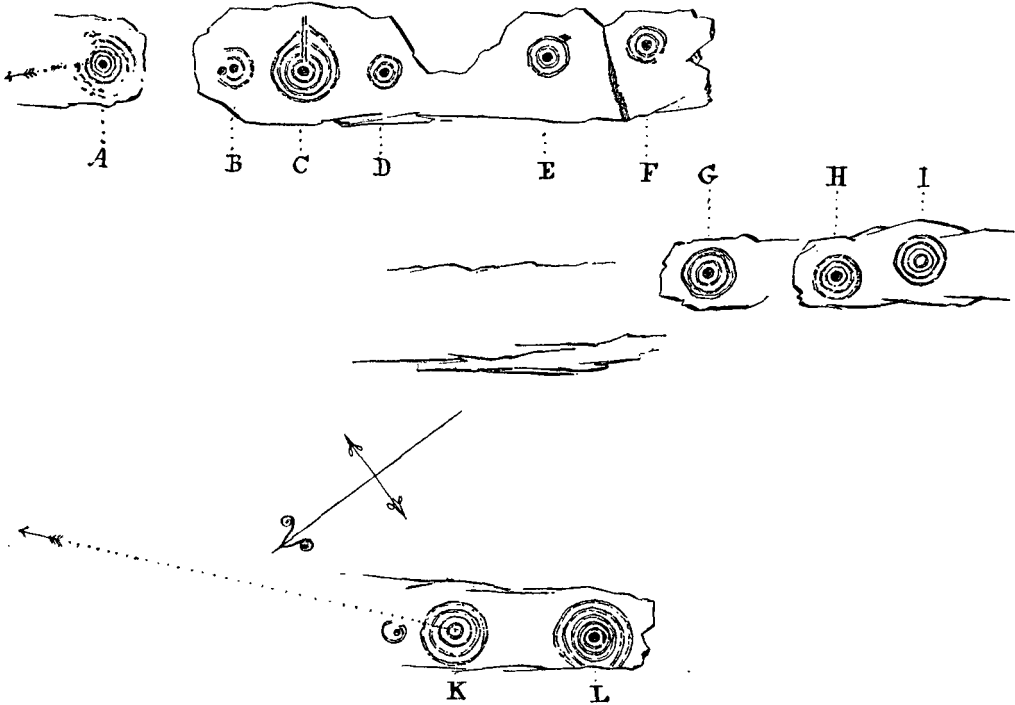
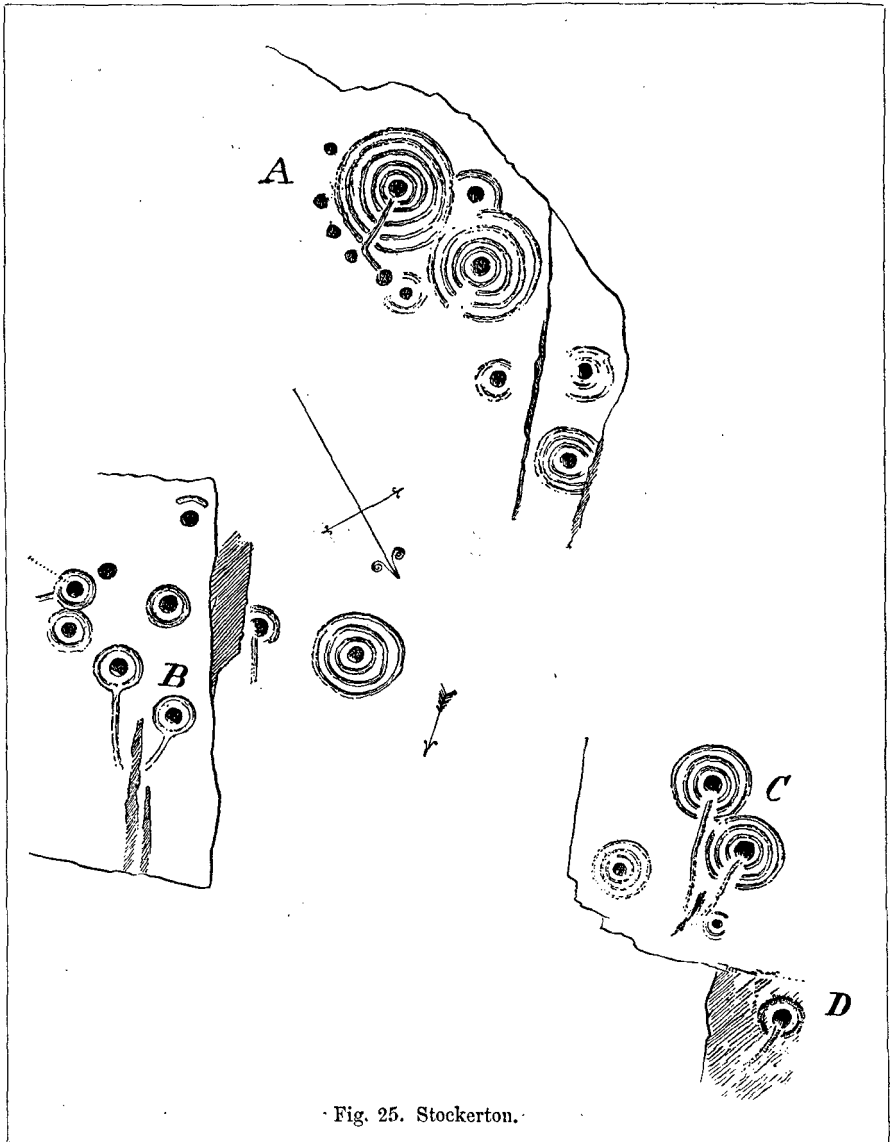


Fig. 24. Rough Tongue of Bombie.

pit, and what looks like the beginning of a spiral—a form not hitherto found in Galloway. Nineteen feet in the direction of the arrow from K is a group of 4 rings and central cup, greatest diameter being 12 inches.

A few score yards W. of the loaning at Castle Creavie, and S. of the public road, is a quarry. On the last remnant of its original surface, at its eastern edge, and within a foot of the broken rock, is a sculpturing



showing four much-worn concentric rings, with central cup. The inclination of this rock-surface is E.N.E., and at an angle of more than 30°. Above it is a single small cup, and 7 inches from it one of those reniform hollows, the result possibly of two genuine cups being run together by weathering. Still higher up is another of the same.

VIII. THE LITTLE STOCKERTON GROUP.

The designs next to be noted were discovered by Mr D. Corson on the 27th August 1892 (fig. 25). The site is the second-highest rock in the upper part of the field known as North Brockloch, and at about 60 yards S. of the long dike going E. The rock is one of the unlikeliest for sculpturings in the whole district, being not only inclined at a very steep angle, but ribbed and rough in the extreme; much of it is thickly bedded with turf. The site is specially interesting on account of its isolation; there being no other within miles of it, and no tradition of any ancient habitation or of cairns near it.

IX. THE NETHER LINKENS GROUP.

The isolation of this small group is also noteworthy: from the Rough Tongue of Bombie, three miles and a half, and in any other direction, the country, for a much greater distance, has yielded no others. The nature of the rock in this example differs from all that we have hitherto noticed. It is a rounded mass (probably a huge half-buried boulder) of smoothish "porphyry," finer in the grain than the bulk of that rock trending through this part of the country, but still much coarser than the familiar "blue whinstone." The rock is a few feet to the N. of the dike dividing the fields E. of the farm from the open hillside, and close to a small wood. My drawing (fig. 26) shows ten separate sets of rings with central cups, and there is no cup without a ring. That at G appears to start a spiral. The roundedness of this rock is shown on the right by a section. At K is the largest circle, on a lump of rock like the first. Its central cup is 58 inches distant from J, and 68 from C.

X. THE NEWLAW BURN GROUP.

This set of semicircles may be seen and studied by any one travelling by the road between Chapelton and Dundrennan. On the north coping of the little bridge that carries the road here over Newlaw Burn there is a longish stone, probably from the Orroland shore; it bears the sculpturing shown in fig. 27.

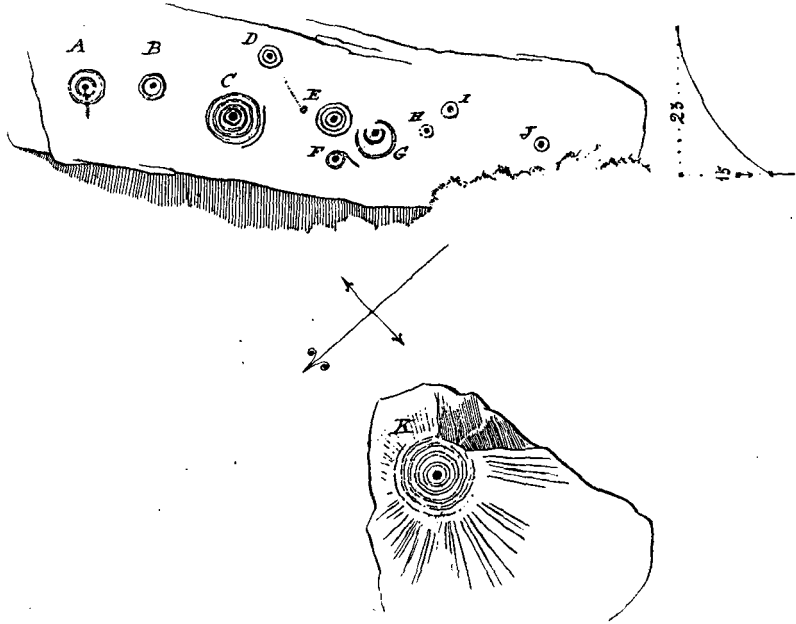


Fig. 26. Nether Linkens.

Intermediate between these two localities, Newlaw and Senwick, is Conchieton in Borgue, where, in an ancient grave, I found two stones bearing cup-marks. The larger, which measures 24 inches by 16 inches and is rudely triangular, is a thin slab of indurated sand-stone, and may have formed part of the cover of the cist. It has one cup of an inch in diameter not far from the centre. The other stone—of rough-grained

porphyry—is part of one of the sides of the cist: it is rhomboidal, 24 inches long by 12 inches wide; and, in addition to one very distinct cup, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide, has numerous very small cups, the beginnings, possibly, of a group.

XI. THE SENWICK GROUP.

Westwards of the river Dee the localities of the cup- and ring-marks are less numerous.

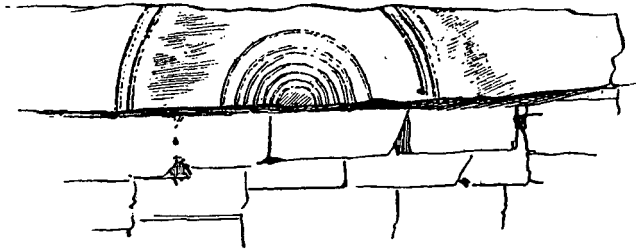


Fig. 27. Newlaw Burn.

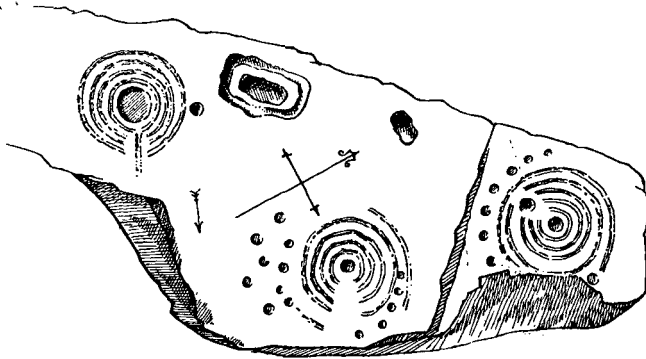


Fig. 28. Clachandolly, Senwick.

1. The most interesting is that shown in fig. 28. It is on a very low, flattish rock in a hollow of the large pasture-field S.W. of Clachandolly smithy, the field itself being known as "the cleagh." The rock is

barely 50 feet above sea-level. Each of these ring-groups is worth study, for though all are remarkably symmetrical and neat, each has its special feature. The centre of the four ringed group to the left, *e.g.*, is not an ordinary cup, but a hollow disc, and there is a straight, clean-cut groove between the sharply-defined points of the incomplete rings. In the middle group, also, none of the five rings meet, but the level of the rock is left bare;

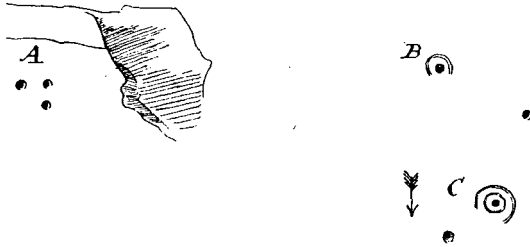


Fig. 29. Senwick Croft.

while in the right-hand group the corresponding space is bound by the outermost ring, and bears also a cup. The small oblong we have met with previously, but the larger one with its surrounding groove is unique.

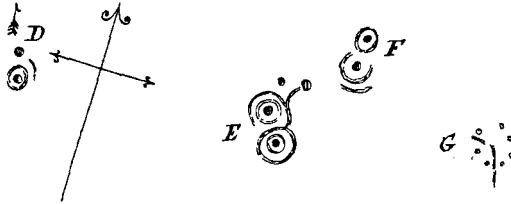


Fig. 30. Senwick Croft.

2. The next groups occupy the summit of a long flattish rock (150 feet above sea-level), near the middle of Senwick Croft, about 100 yards E. of the house. As the space used measures some 20 feet in length, I have not only made the diagram (figs. 29 and 30) to a smaller scale than usual, but contracted the drawing, the space between B and D indicating a chasm of 7 feet, bare of sculpturings. On this long rock-surface there

are other cup hollows which some observers claim as artificial. I cannot, and therefore do not represent them.

3. South of the gamekeeper's house 110 yards, on the Clash field, there is, on one out of a score of equally suitable rock-surfaces, a design of four much-worn rings with central cup, the largest ring measuring 10 inches in width.

4. About 300 yards further south and 50 feet higher up, only a few feet from a dike running E.N.E., is a small group, which, as shown in fig. 31, presents a remarkable likeness to a constellation.

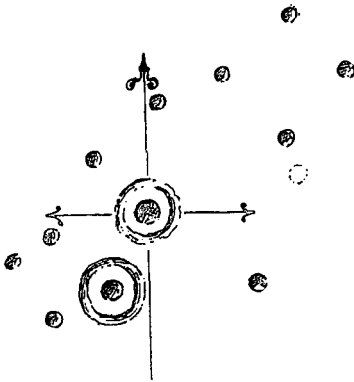


Fig. 31. Senwick Croft.

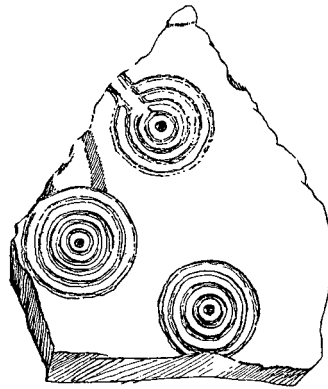


Fig. 32. Laggan Stone, Anwoth.

XII. THE ANWOTH GROUP.

Under this I place the four separate sites known to me up to the present date, viz., Laggan, Auchenlarie (2), and Bardristan. In a district so rich as this in antiquities, fresh sculpturings may be found at any moment; but up to 1887 the only authentic example was the fine group described by Simpson.

1. The Laggan Stone (fig. 32) was, I believe, first noticed by Mr Kinna, of Newton-Stewart. Through him I was led to see it. The site is a stony, thorny, whin-grown slope near the base of Laggan Hill, almost exactly 660 yards W.N.W. of the Four Standing Stones of Newton. It is merely a thinnish block of whinstone, rudely shaped

into a pentagon, placed on the top of a low irregular heap of stones, in such a position that its apex points direct to the Four Standing Stones. In size and arrangement its rings are very like those at Torrs (fig. 9), and its cutting is very clear,—so distinct, indeed, as to lead one to the conclusion that its present resting-place is only recent, and that it has been for long under cover.

2. The Bardristan slab (see fig. 33) was removed from amongst the stones of an old drain in 1889, and, through Mr Kinna's care, it is now preserved at Bardristan. The evident attempt to square the stone itself ;

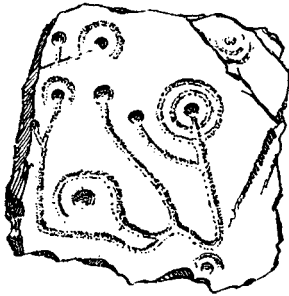


Fig. 33. Bardristan.

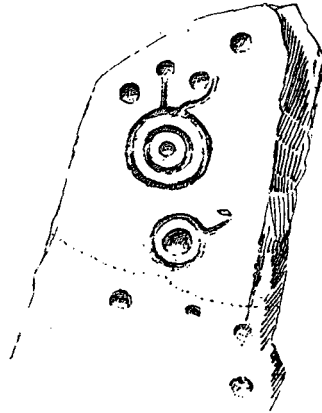


Fig. 34. High Auchinlarie.

the extreme smallness of the rings ; the direct connection of the grooves, in all cases but one, with cups ; and lastly, the vivid sharpness of the whole sculpturing, in which the tool-work is clear much beyond the ordinary, all combine to render this Bardristan slab unusually interesting and valuable.

3. High Auchenlarie.—The rock-sculpturing here brought under notice (see fig. 34), and which I discovered in 1886, is about 51 feet S.W. of the tallest stone in the stone circle on the uplands of this farm. It is the rock nearest to the circle, a low-lying pointed piece, with only a

couple of feet exposed to light and weather. Below the turf (see dotted line in diagram) I found the cups and rings as here shown.

4. The slab now noticed as the Auchenlarie slab has been beautifully illustrated in Simpson's *Archaic Sculpturings*. Its general appearance (see Appendix to *Proceedings*, vol. vi. p. 30, and pl. xiii. fig. 3) is not unlike the Bardristan slab. It has been compared by Stuart, who figured it, to the cist-cover at Coilsfield. Like the Bardristan example, its exact relations to any cist or other stone were not noted at the time of its discovery. Many years ago it was removed from the hillside to the garden at Cardoness, where it may still be seen.

XIII. HILLS STONE-CIRCLE GROUP.

This locality, far inland, is on the farm of Hills, about a mile N.E. of the railway station at Lochanhead. There is here a good example of a stone circle, and on the stone lying due E. in the circumference of ten stones there are three very small cups, in a perfectly straight line, on the top of the stone, two of them 3 inches apart and the other two $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Another stone, that nearest the N. stone on the W., bears a single cup. There are no rings in connection with these cups.

Summing up all the localities comprised under these thirteen groups, we have in this record not less than 49 separate surfaces on which cup- and ring-marks are found in Kirkcudbrightshire; and these surfaces vary in size, direction of slope, texture, and position, to such a degree that no safe conclusions can be drawn as to the meaning or use of these mysterious incised markings, occurring, as they do, not only on solid rock, but upon thin slabs, as at Auchenlarie and Bardristan; on boulders, as at the stone-circle at Hills; and even on the very apex of a piece of rock, as in one of the Milton Parks examples; and also on stones within a cairn, as at Conchieton and High Banks. At the present date Inverness heads the list with 120 sites, Kirkcudbrightshire is second with 54, and Nairn and Perth have 46 each.