

III.

RECORD OF THE EXCAVATION OF TWO STONE CIRCLES IN KINCARDINESHIRE—(1) IN GARROL WOOD, DURRIS; (2) IN GLASSEL WOOD, BANCHORY-TERNAN; AND (II.) REPORT ON STONE CIRCLES IN ABERDEENSHIRE, WITH MEASURED PLANS AND DRAWINGS; OBTAINED UNDER THE GUNNING FELLOWSHIP. BY FRED R. COLES, ASSISTANT KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

During the spring of last year it was suggested to me by the Hon. J. Abercromby that some excavations might be made within a few of the Stone Circles of which I had prepared plans and drawings. I therefore put myself into communication with several of the proprietors on whose estates the Circles stand, with the view of obtaining permission to excavate. In some instances consent was readily and courteously given. Out of three exceptionally eligible sites, viz., Tomnagorn, belonging to Lady Gordon Cathcart of Cluny; Loanhead of Daviot, on the lands of Major Seton; and Garrol Wood, Durris, which lies near the western boundary of the superbly wooded estate owned by H. R. Baird, Esq., the last was chosen. The selection was made mainly because the site is the most southerly of all the sites in Kincardineshire likely to yield interesting results. Grateful acknowledgments are due to the proprietor for his permission to excavate; to Mr A. Macdonald, of Durris School, through whose interest in, and knowledge of, the general antiquities of the district I was led to approach Mr Braid the factor, and to Mr Braid himself, who most heartily seconded my efforts by obtaining the desired permission, selecting workmen, getting the Circle-area cleared of trees and undergrowth, and supplying tools and implements according to my directions.¹

Excavation of Garrol Wood Circle.—The site is near the western limit of the wood covering Mullach Hill, and at the altitude of close

¹ The forester, Mr Crosier, and the three excellent workmen, William Maccallum, Alexander Marshall, and James Marshall, did all in their power to render the investigation complete and trustworthy.

upon 800 feet above sea-level. Formerly the Circle would most probably be visible for a considerable distance in several directions. In many parts of the planted portion of the hill great granite and whinstone boulders lie conspicuously above the ground, and there seem to be indications of a general stoniness also in many directions.

Operations were begun on Monday, September 5th, and occupied my band of observers daily until Saturday the 17th. Having already my own ground-plan of the Circle to work from, I came to the spot provided with four sketch-plans, each sheet showing an area representing on the ground 30 feet by 24. Every sheet was so lined off in connection with the rest that when the investigation was complete, and the four sheets placed edge to edge, the detailed results on the ground-plan were at once discernible.

The object I kept in view was to unearth the Circle in sections, squared off by lines of posts which we drove into the ground at points already measured to scale on the ground-plan sheets. We dug no trenches and used no pickaxes.¹ Every stone that was obviously not a part of the structure—and there was a vast quantity of stones there naturally as well as a great deal of structure—was levered up and overturned, and in all cases where an apparent “setting” of stones was laid bare we dug within these always down to the hard, gritty, yellow sub-soil, in order to be quite certain that no isolated deposit was overlooked. The men were instructed to be most careful not to move any stones that were earth-fast or appeared to be part of an alignment of stones, wheresoever such might be found; and this rule was faithfully kept to throughout the whole excavation.

While the men were clearing the ground of the superincumbent small stones, peaty soil, roots, and other obstacles, we set out a new plan of the Circle, the plan previously made,² when the trees stood dense all

¹ The tramp-pick used in the North, and, to the best of my knowledge, unknown in the South of Scotland, is a much more manageable and efficient implement than the pickaxe. A large portion of the excavation was done with trowels.

² See *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv. p. 158.

over the site, not being sufficiently accurate. To a post vertically fixed behind, *i.e.* outside of the Recumbent Stone, at the middle of its length, a strong cord was attached at a point level with the summit of this Stone. It was then carried forward due north and fastened to another post at the same level and near the centre of the Circle. Lastly, it was made fast to another post in line with the other two, at a point 15 inches west of the western outer edge of the North Stone. This correct north and south line served the double purpose of keeping the bearings of the general contour of the Circle accurately in view, and acted afterwards as a datum-line from which all sectional measurements were made. When carefully measured, we ascertained this line to be 51 feet 2 inches in length. The opposite axis, due east and west, lies between a point 3 feet south of Stone II. and a point 7 feet 3 inches north of Stone VIII. It measures 63 feet 6 inches, an increase of 12 feet 4 inches over the first diameter. To these points of difference reference will afterwards be made.

At the outset, it must be borne in mind that the whole area within the great Standing Stones was extremely stony; towards the centre this stony accumulation was doubtless the low cairn formed by those who had placed their interments here, but in the other portions natural causes had formed it.

The complete ground-plan (fig. 1) shows the results obtained at the conclusion of the entire excavation, on the scale of $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet to 1 inch. Several of its detailed features are also shown in the illustrations (figs. 4-6), reproduced from photographs taken by Mr Turner, of Banchory, and Mr James Ritchie.¹

The mere order in which discoveries were made being, as I think, insignificant, I shall begin by describing everything as from the nominal centre of the Circle, *viz.*, at a point 19 feet 2 inches north of the

¹ Mr Ritchie, of Port Elphinstone School, a corresponding member of the Society, merits a special word of thanks for the keen interest he has long displayed in photographing the Circles and the Sculptured Stones of Scotland. His photographs rank quite among the very finest things of their kind.

outside edge of the Recumbent Stone. This point was the upper surface of the gritty granitic rock which was encountered nearly throughout the excavated area. It was at the depth of 4 feet 7 inches below the level of the top of the Recumbent Stone (see the lower section, fig. 2). Round it were found six small slabs of granite,

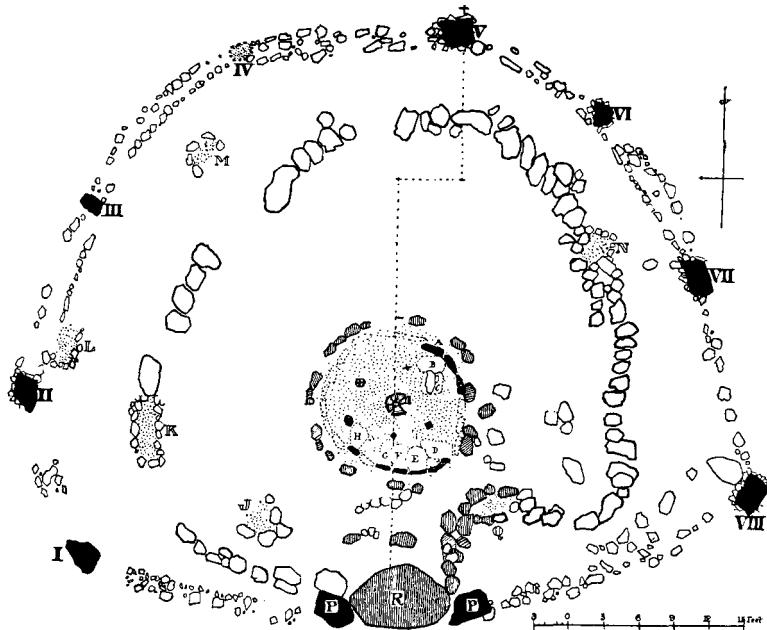
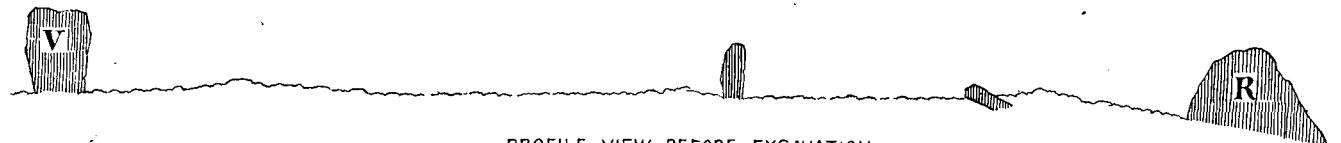
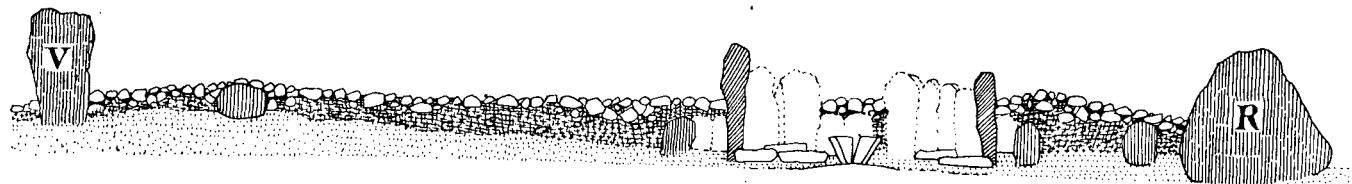


Fig. 1 Garrol Wood Circle ; Ground-plan.

rudely wedge-shaped, set round a cavity scooped out of the subsoil, with their edges contiguous, so as to form a funnel-shaped pit, which measured 2 feet 2 inches in diameter across the mouth, 10 inches in depth, and 4 inches across the base. This was full to the brim of comminuted burnt bones and fragments of charcoal. The gap on its S.E. shows where a seventh small slab had originally been placed. Almost due north of the pit, at the point marked on the plan with



PROFILE VIEW BEFORE EXCAVATION



NORTH AND SOUTH SECTION

Ins 12 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 FEET.

Fig. 2. Garrol Wood Circle ; Sectional Views.

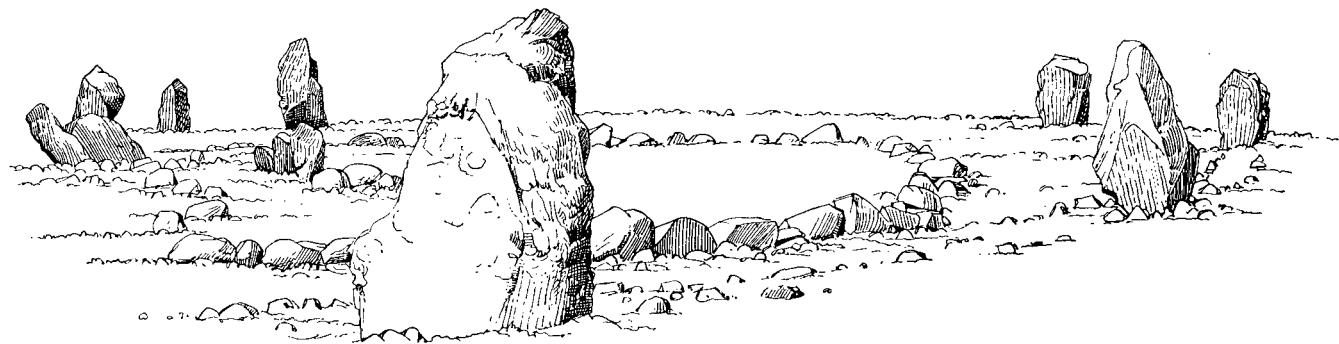


Fig. 3. Garrol Wood Circle ; general View from the East.

a thick square cross, we found charcoal and several fragments of a rather coarse kind of pottery, presumably of an urn; the pieces are too small to be identified as those of any special type of sepulchral vessel, and are quite devoid of ornament. On the N.W. of the pit, marked on the plan with a barred hexagon, was a deposit of incinerated bones, resting upon a small thick slab of granite. At three other spots marked in black, the S.W., the S., and the S.E., there were also found similar deposits in shallow cavities scooped out of the subsoil, but without any stones either below or beside them.

None of these latter deposits was more than a few inches below the surface of the subsoil. The upper edges of the central pit were about flush with that surface, and the whole of this flattish central space, (dotted in the plan), measuring 12 feet 6 inches in diameter, was at a lower level than the edges of the thick squat stones (shaded on the plan) which inclosed it. The trowelling out of all the soil from this central flat space, and its subsequent riddling through two sieves, occupied us for the better part of two days, and it may therefore be held to be exhaustive.

Near to the inner faces of these thick earth-fast stones there were, at A and at D, long, fairly thick, flat slabs; that at A quite vertical, the other at D sloping into the ground outside.¹ On removing the mould and the low mound of small stones accumulated here, the two large, broad, flat stones B and C were discovered, and, not unnaturally, great interest was aroused by their extremely cist-like appearance. When they were both carefully levered up, there was nothing below but soil. Later, when the other similar slabs, E, F, G and H, were disclosed, the same absolutely negative result was obtained. Several of these stones, F and G in particular, bore evident signs of having lain beneath the mould for only a comparatively short period, for lichens and moss were visible, adhering to their broader edges. It seemed, therefore, just to conclude that, like the stones A and D,

¹ Both these stones are shown in my original plan; see *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv, p. 158.

these other six stones had originally been set up as an innermost fence, as it were, their edges nearly touching, to the principal interments. I therefore had these stones reared up into what appeared to be their original positions; and the view (fig. 4) shows them thus in their "restored" sites. It also shows the central pit. In the plan, the bases of these eight stones are shown black; and the conjectural positions of the others, which doubtless completed this part of the structure, are given in thick dotted lines.

The ring of thick, short stones (shaded in plan) rose on the average about 13 inches above the subsoil; their line, also, was very incomplete; and all these features taken in conjunction confirm the early impressions of this Circle, that a good deal of disturbance must have once occurred, partly due to the planting of the site with the firs and to dike-building.

All the eight vertical slabs but one are of the "heathen" whinstone; the exception (Stone F) was a fine red granite. They were all of a pretty equal height and breadth, 3 feet 8 being the utmost height.

Roughly concentric with this central ring of stones, and at about 12 to 15 feet outside of it, there was unearthed a ring of great stones of all forms and dimensions; these are shown in thick outlines on the plan (see also the views from the N.W. and the E., figs. 5, 6). They varied in size from one on the N.W. arc, 4 feet 4 by 2 feet 2, to those on the extreme east, which average 2 feet in breadth. The majority were flattish, a few being bulky and rounded boulders. None was over 14 inches in height. It will be observed that this ring of boulders is broken by wide gaps at several points on its western semicircle. These, I think, indicate that the builders of the dike bounding the wood on the west removed many stones from this, the most convenient, part of the Circle; and this explanation of the gaps here also befits the broken-down condition of the two innermost rings just described.

The ring of flat boulders is continued on the S.S.W. arc till it ends in a broad thick slab which is wedged in underneath the base of the West Pillar (just visible in fig. 4). On the S.E. arc, the boulder-ring

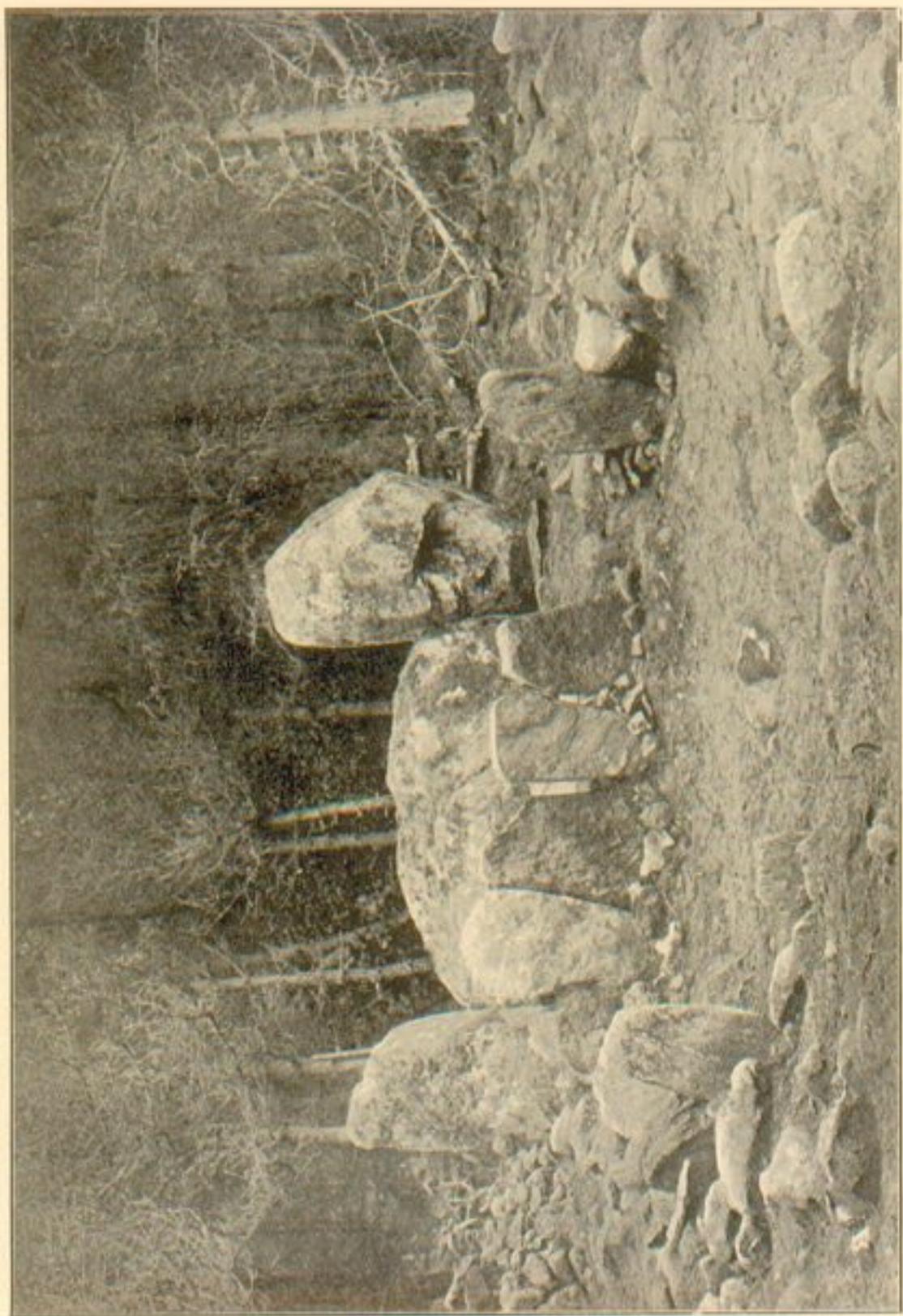


Fig. 4. Garrol Wood Circle; View from North across centre. (From a Photograph by Mr Turner, Banffshire.)

turns sharply and ends in an almost rectangular line where it joins the last of a row of massive stones placed due north between the East Pillar and the Recumbent Stone. These stones (shaded in the plan) are from 14 to 22 inches in height; two others of the same character and size are still *in situ* in front of the Recumbent Stone; but the corresponding angle on the west, if ever complete, is now devoid of any stone-setting. In connection with the boulder-ring and the space outside of it, six small spaces are shown dotted in the plan, J, K, L, M, N, Q. From the contours of their stone-settings, these were the most suggestive spots for possibly containing interments; and in each case the interior was carefully searched, every spadeful of soil being sifted, but without the discovery of any substances indicating deposits of a sepulchral nature. Several of the large stones of the boulder-ring were also lifted up and the soil below examined, and at the bases of each Standing Stone (I.-VIII.) the ground on all the four sides was dug into down to the subsoil, but in all cases with the same negative result. Careful examination and vertical measurements were also taken of all the Standing Stones still *in situ*, the details of which are appended in the subjoined table:—

Stone	I.	.	.	.	vertical height, 4 feet 11 inches.
„	II.	.	.	.	„ 5 „ 9 „
„	III. (broken)	.	.	.	„ 2 „ 8 „
„	V.	.	.	.	„ 4 „ 1 „
„	VI.	.	.	.	„ 3 „ 11 „
„	VII.	.	.	.	„ 5 „ 4 „
„	VIII.	.	.	.	„ 6 „ 10 „

The West Pillar measures to the surface of the subsoil on the inner face 6 feet 5 inches, but on the outer face quite 8 feet. The East Pillar, from its dangerously inclined position (see view, fig. 6), we had to leave unexplored.¹ In all the other cases, however, these vertical heights were

¹ It was arranged that none of the Standing Stones should be overthrown, or if overthrown by accident, the stone should be restored to its original position; and as heavy tackle would have been required for such re-erection, I did not choose to run any risks with regard to this Stone.

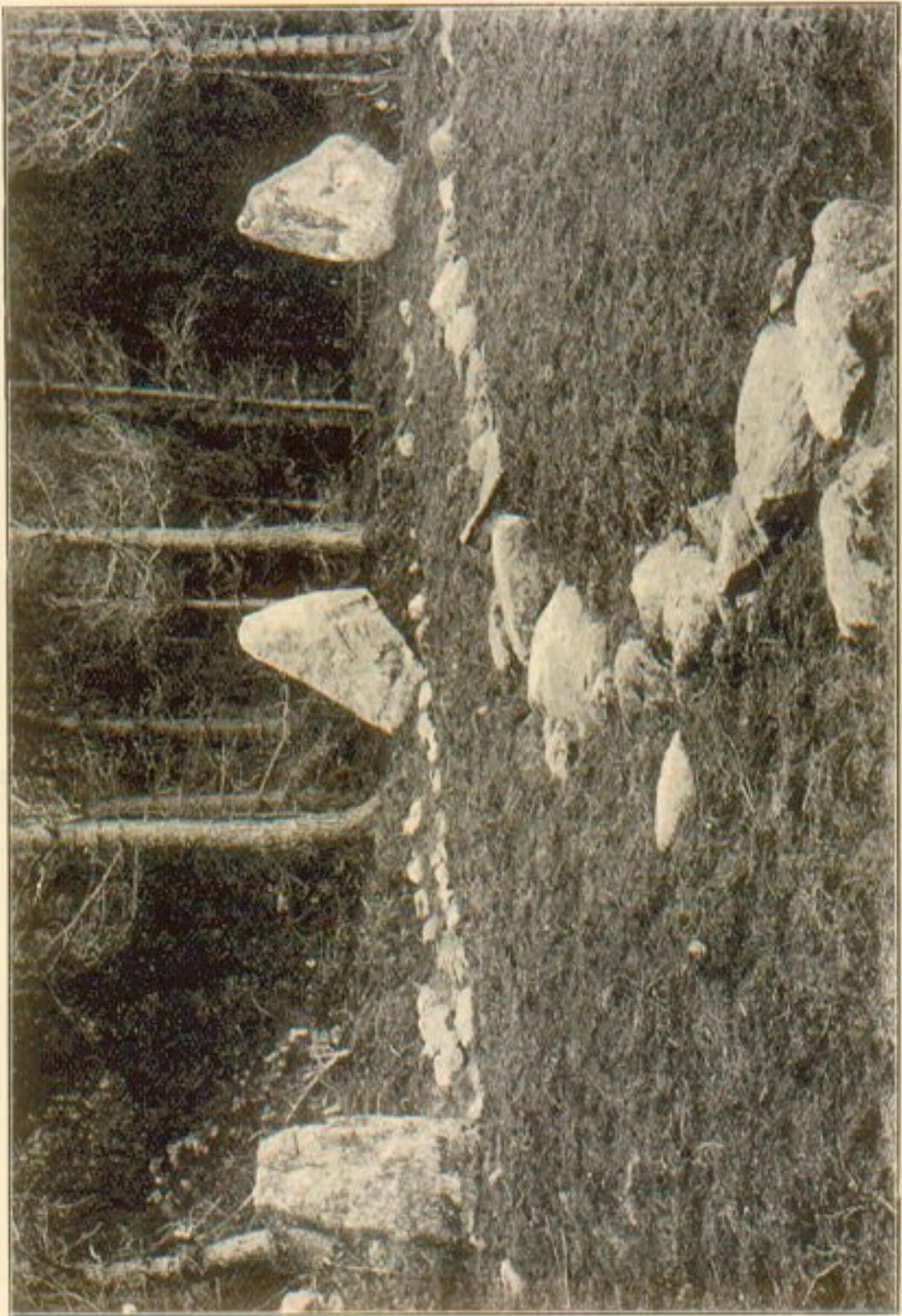


Fig. 5. Garrol Wood Circle ; View from the N.W. (From a Photograph by Mr James Ritchie.)

ascertained by digging actually beneath the one edge of the Stone and feeling its turning inwards; and the main result, therefore, relative to the depth of the setting of these stones is, that in no instance were their bases found to be more than 16 inches into the subsoil.

They were all well packed round with fragments of stone more or less angular, against which, as notably in the case of Stone VIII., a weighty boulder was sometimes placed.

Around the Recumbent Stone and the West Pillar, we removed a great quantity of small waterworn stones of all shapes and kinds before touching the accumulation of black mould upon which they lay. The highest portion of this heap of stones was about 6 feet distant from the inner edge of the Recumbent Stone, and its height was 2 feet 3 inches above the surface of the subsoil there (see the sectional views, fig. 2). At the outer side, the base of the Recumbent Stone turned inwards just at the subsoil level, 4 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the summit of the Stone; on its north or inner face it was necessary, in order to reach the turn of the base, to dig through the subsoil for a depth of 9 inches, at which point our tools encountered hard gritty rock of the same composition as that forming, as already shown, the base of the central pit.¹

Between every two of the great Standing Stones we laid bare a double row of smallish earth-fast stones, the breadth between being the breadth of each Standing Stone (see fig. 5). At some parts the rows were filled in with small stones. It is, perhaps, extremely difficult to assert with any certainty either that these stone-rows are coëval with the Circle and belong to it, or that they do not. After full consideration, I am led to the conclusion that they do not belong to the prehistoric era of the Circle, and, indeed, that they may be merely the remnants of an old dike of a century ago. This view is strengthened by the fact that these stone-rows are continued on the S.E. arc between

¹ In front of the Recumbent Stone we discovered no traces of charcoal or other indications of the action of fire. And although black mould of the surface and subsoil were dug into to a joint depth of about 3 feet 6 inches, nothing in the nature of an artificial arrangement of stones was revealed.

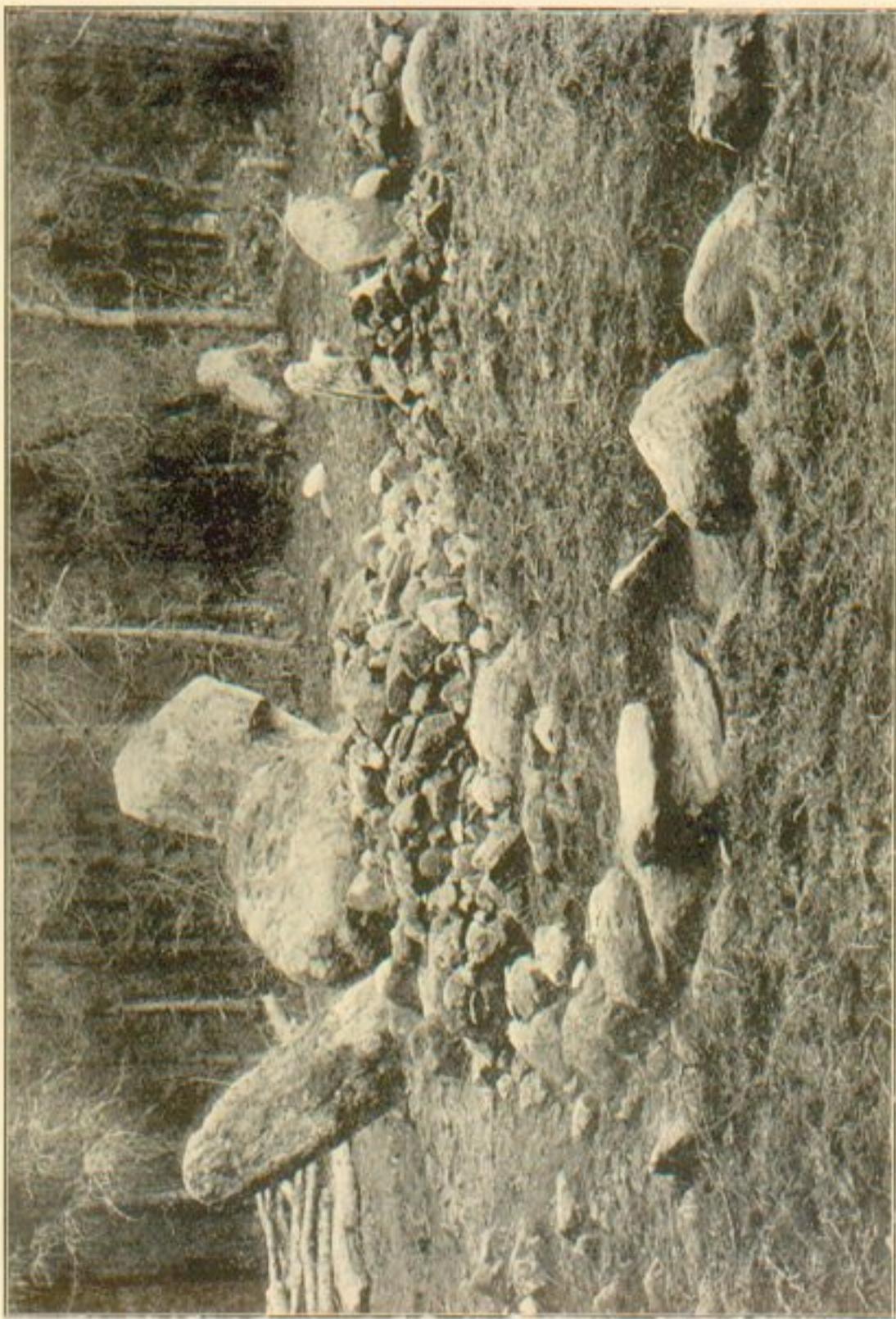


Fig. 6. Garrol Wood Circle; View from the East. (From a Photograph by Mr James Ritchie.)

Stone VIII. and the East Pillar, and on the S.W. are between the West Pillar and Stone I., where, however, their continuity is much broken.

I have already had occasion¹ to point out that in many of the larger Stone Circles of the Recumbent Stone variety, it is clear that the Recumbent Stone group stood, when the Circle was complete, well within the circumference outlined by the great Standing Stones. Our exploration of Garrol Wood Circle tends to confirm this, because the new plan shows, more pronouncedly than ever, that the central interment was placed in the true centre of a ring of stones which went fully 12 feet south of the Recumbent Stone; or, in other words, that the east and west diameter of 63 feet 6 inches was originally balanced by a north and south one of the same length.² In searching the ground, however, on the south of the Recumbent Stone, we have to admit that no traces of any other blocks of stone could be seen; but that cannot, of course, be taken as proof that they never stood there.

When the whole excavation was completed, most of the smaller stones and boulders were restrewn over the ground lying between the various structural rings of stones, and sufficient soil cast over them so as to throw up the structural portions into strong relief; and under these conditions the photographs taken by Mr Ritchie were made. And the opportunity was then afforded, also, for making a drawing of the whole Circle, the reproduction of which is shown in the previous illustration (fig. 3).

Dr T. H. Bryce, to whom I submitted the several deposits of incinerated bones found near the centre of the Circle, has reported on them as follows:—

“The remains from Garrol Circle submitted to me by Mr Coles consist of four separate deposits of burnt bones. They have all the usual characters of bones deposited in the soil after cremation. They

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxviii, pp. 296–299.

² As the triangulation of the Circle was checked by other measurements, in three different ways and by several different readers, under my direction, both by chain and by tape, its accuracy cannot be called in question.

are completely burnt through; are grey on the surface, but show the usual white fracture.

"Certain of the fragments from each deposit are indubitably human, and each lot of bones seems to represent the remains of a single cremated body.

"The fragments are not of sufficient size to allow of a determination of age or sex, but they admit of the statement that in each case the individual had reached adult life."

2. *Gassel*.—The small and curiously-shaped group of Stones here was described in the report for 1899,¹ at which date I was under the impression that it was wholly undisturbed. There being no other site, for which permission to excavate had been granted, within any feasible distance from our headquarters near Strachan, I called on Mrs Mitchell of Gassel, and readily obtained her permission to make a thorough examination of this Circle. We did this on the 20th September; and it was not until the digging had actually begun that one of the workmen employed informed us that about twenty-five years ago the Circle had already been dug into. This notwithstanding, we carried out the excavation, Mrs Mitchell and friends being much interested spectators; and during the day we explored the whole interior, measuring 21 feet by 10 feet, and consisting for the most part of fine gravelly sand. All of this was riddled with our usual care, but the only evidences of deposits were a minute flake of light grey flint and a few fragments of charcoal. It was proved that the previous excavation—not necessarily, therefore, the original prehistoric one—took the form of an oblong with rounded ends, as shown in the plan (fig. 7) by a dotted surface. The contour of this hollow was well marked off from the hard subsoil around it by being easily worked. In it were found three waterworn boulders, and at the S.E. Stone (No. 5) of the four forming a square there was a small reddish stone, not granite, and quite unlike the others. It was under the edge of this small stone that the flint chip and charcoal fragments were found. Two other large waterworn stones lay beside

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv. p. 168.

Stone 3, both resting upon the subsoil; they were raised, and the soil beneath and about them searched.

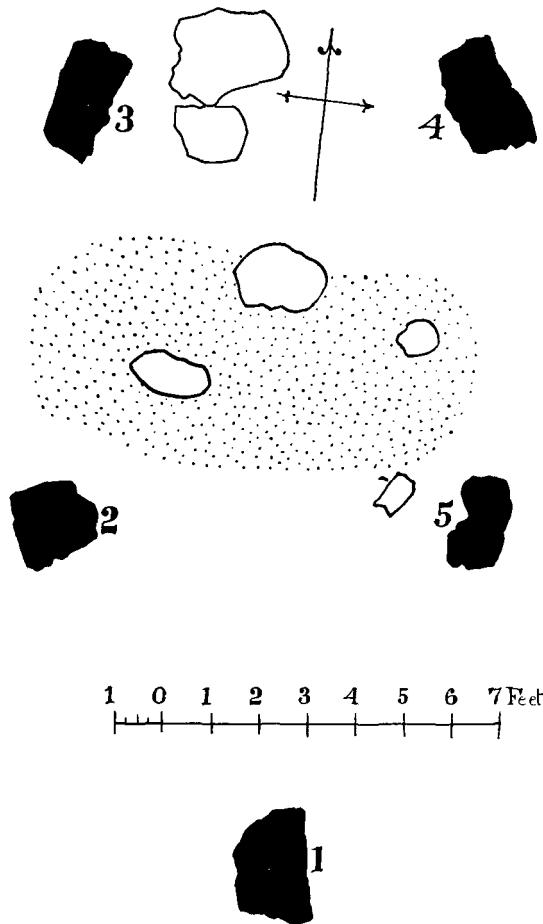


Fig. 7. Glassel Circle ; Ground-plan.

Near and outside of Stone 3 lay a large flat, not very thick, slab of indurated clay-slate, or stone of some kindred species. It was totally

unlike any of the Standing Stones in character, size, and form, and at our former visit it suggested itself to me as possibly a cist-cover. On this hypothesis, I ventured to suggest that its future resting-place should be in the centre of the Circle, and there it was placed at the close of our excavation.

Among our observations it should be recorded that the true vertical height of two Stones was ascertained: No. 2 measures 4 feet 7 inches, 15 inches being in the surface mould and only 4 inches more into the subsoil; No. 5 is 4 feet 5 inches high, and scarcely goes into the subsoil at all.

In correspondence with Mrs Mitchell since the date of our excavation, I have not been able to elicit any further account of the Circle, except that it was certainly dug out several years ago, but that no relics whatever were then discovered. The probability therefore is, that at some much earlier date than 1879 the site was explored and despoiled of its contents.

To the south of Glassel House, between the north bank of the Beltie Burn and the mill walk and lade, there are two large Stones standing on the edge of the limestone rock here forming the bank of the stream. They appear to be blocks of whinstone, but are so thickly clad with mosses and lichens as to render it almost impossible to state the nature of the stone. They stand due N.W. and S.E. of each other. The centres of their summits are 9 feet 9 inches apart. One is 3 feet 8 inches, the other 3 feet 6 inches in height; the taller being five-sided and 11 feet in girth, the shorter four-sided and 7 feet 10 inches in girth at greatest. There is no record of there having been other stones in association with these two here, but they obviously seem to be the remnants of a group.

In the wood, a little way to the north of the Glassel Circle, is a great boulder called the Bishop's Stone. In ground-plan it is irregularly triangular, the sides measuring 17, 15, and 16 feet respectively. In general height it is nearly 6 feet, and near the middle of the summit 6 feet 6 inches. The computed weight is about 38 tons. It is composed of grey granite.

II. REPORT ON STONE CIRCLES IN ABERDEENSHIRE.

1. *In the Image Wood, Aboyne.*—During all our surveys it has never been our lot to meet with so small a Circle as this. The space

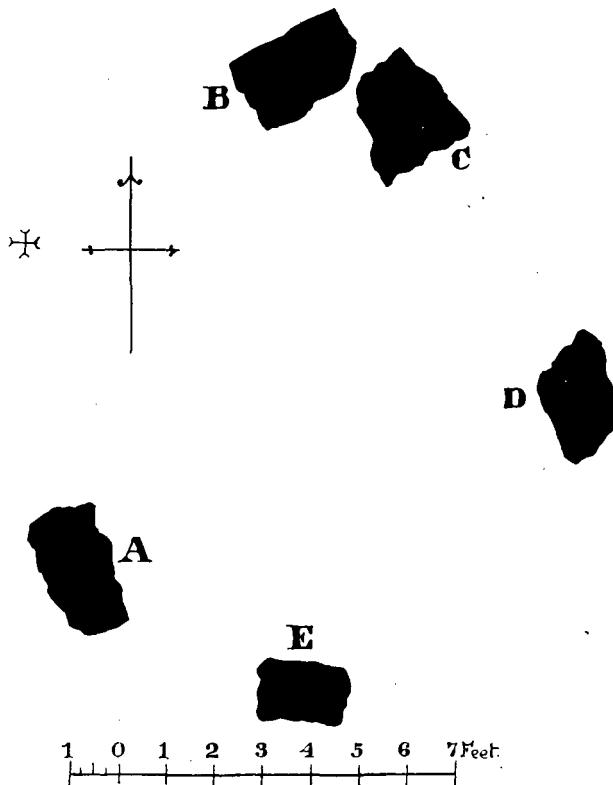


Fig. 8. Circle in the Image Wood, Aboyne; Ground-plan.

between the inner faces of its north and its south Stone is only 11 feet wide. In the prospect of being able to excavate such a small area with ease in one day, I visited the site, and in the meantime wrote

to the agent of the Marquis of Huntly to obtain permission for the purpose. No reply having come, I, after some few days' suspense, revisited Aboyne, and hearing that Lord Huntly was then in the vicinity, I despatched an express message to him requesting the

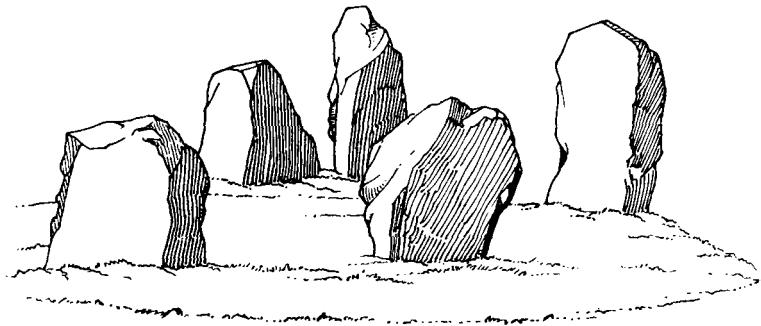


Fig. 9. Aboyne Circle ; View from the South.

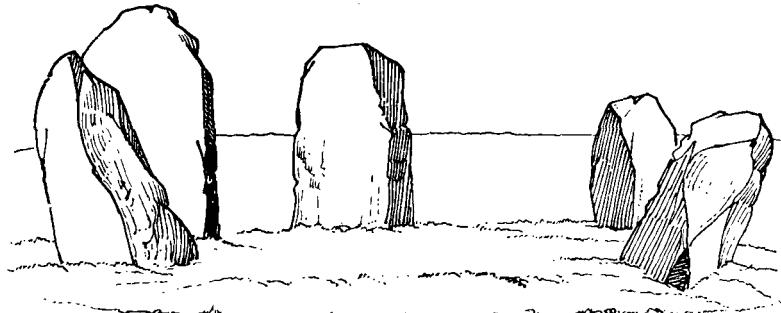


Fig. 10. Aboyne Circle ; View from the West.

permission. Unfortunately, it was not in his lordship's power to grant the permission at once; but in his reply Lord Huntly said :— “I may tell you that some years ago I dug a cross-trench at this Circle and found only some black earth and cinders, insufficient to enable me to decide whether the Circle was a Pictish dwelling-house or a burial-place. Nothing of interest was found.”

As time was passing, I had now to content myself with making a plan and drawings of this Circle (see figs. 8, 9, 10).

The site is in an oak plantation on the left of the road to the home-farm at Aboyne Castle, and is distant from the front of the "Huntly Arms" about half a mile.

On the 25-inch Ordnance map the Circle is shown as one of five Stones, and incomplete on the east—the exact opposite of what their present positions are (see the ground-plan, fig. 18).

The first notable feature is, as already stated, the extreme smallness of the inclosed area; the next is, the close juxtaposition of the two Stones on the north, and the third is, that all the Stones are beautifully erect, massive, and shapely blocks of granite and whinstone. I subjoin their heights:—

Stone A,	3 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches,	whinstone, flat-topped.
„ B,	3 „ $6\frac{1}{2}$ „	pale red granite, pointed.
„ C,	4 „ $3\frac{1}{2}$ „	whinstone, rugged-topped.
„ D,	3 „ 11 „	pale red granite, flat-topped.
„ E,	2 „ $7\frac{1}{2}$ „	„ rugged-topped.

The circumference, taken through the centres of the Stones, is exactly 40 feet. A very slight mound rises around the bases of all the Stones, causing the inclosed space to be slightly higher than the general level of the ground outside; but this may be due, I think, in some degree, merely to the modern path being carried round the Circle.

There is a very brief notice of this Circle in the *New Statistical Account*, where it is also recorded that a Sculptured Stone, formerly at Loch Kinord, was removed thence and set up near the Circle.

2. *On the Hill called Tom-na-vere.*—This remarkably situated Circle came under observation as long ago as the year 1792, when the minister of Coull parish wrote of it thus:—"About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the manor are to be seen the remains of a Druidical temple. The place is called Tam navric [sic], which signifies the Hill of Worship . . . only a few

large stones, some upright, some fallen.”¹ In 1842 the following remarks are made by the Rev. W. Campbell, A.M.²:—“One of those Circles of Stones standing upright, so common in Britain, and called Druidical Circles, may be seen on a small hill called Tom-na-hivrigh, or the Hill of Worship or Justice.”

In the description of the parish of Tarland and Migvie by the Rev. Andrew and the Rev. J. Watson, this hill and Circle are noticed as the “distinct remains of a distinguished Druidical temple, containing two Circles formed of large erect stones at short intervals, from 4 to 5 feet in height, 3 broad, and 2 feet thick.”³

Reference is also made⁴ to it by Dr John Stuart in these words:—“. . . . the eastern termination of the ridge is called Tom-naverie, on which are to be seen the remains of two Circles of large erect stones.”⁵

The site, on a fine green hillock 597 feet above sea-level, is encompassed by hills on every side—hills near at hand in the adjoining parishes, hills in the middle distance, as *e.g.* Clochnaben, Kerloch, and Morven, while Lochnagar and some other Grampian peaks close in the panorama in the extreme west. The Circle is placed on the crest of the green and broomy hill at a point 300 yards S.S.W. of the Mill of Wester Coull, and would in past times have commanded the view of perhaps six or seven other Circles on the N., the N.W., and the W. In this respect we may compare it with the fine entrenched Circle near Insch, on the Candle Hill.⁶ Only poor remnants of these are said still to remain. What little soil there is seems to be very thin, and great masses of the underlying granite protrude in several directions. On the west a large

¹ *Old Stat. Acc.*, vol. iii. p. 201.

² *New Stat. Acc.*, vol. xii. p. 958.

³ *New Stat. Acc.*, *ibid.*, p. 842.

⁴ *Proceedings*, vol. i. p. 260.

⁵ It is somewhat disconcerting to be unable to decide from these accounts whether there were on Tom-naverie really two separate circular groups of stones standing apart, or whether the “two Circles,” as above described, were really one group, having concentric rings of stones. Dr Stuart notes three other Circles in the vicinity—one at Knowehead, one between the Doune and Tarland, and the third to the west of it; also several Cairns in close proximity to them.

⁶ See *Proceedings*, vol. xxxvi. p. 545.

portion of the hill-face has been quarried away, and quite recently the quarrying has been carried close up to, within indeed 3 feet of, one of the few Standing Stones yet *in situ* (see the plan, fig. 11). The close cover of the broom-bushes tends further to disfigure the Circle, and renders exact mensuration extremely difficult.¹

Technically, there are several interesting features in Tom-na-vere Circle. The first to arrest the eye is the size of the massive earth-fast Stones set in on the east and the west of the Recumbent Stone (A B and C D on the plan, fig. 11). Like those in the Circle at Hatton of Ardoine,² they are much larger and higher than any of the settings of such stones elsewhere observed. Further, the interior space shows indications of two concentric settings of Stones, several of those in the outer ring being specially large and massive. And lastly, the position of the Recumbent Stone is so widely abnormal, that it was only after repeated readings of the compass and the most careful comparison of the general topographical features of the district that it was possible to feel assured of the correctness of our observation. The plan (fig. 11) shows this great prism-shaped block of whinstone lying with its longer axis pointing N.N.W. 25°; or, to restate the case, if a vertical line be drawn from the centre of its inner face at right angles, it would bisect the Circle in the direction of N. 65° E. This is by far the greatest easterly divergence yet recorded in the positions of recumbent stones.

All the other great Stones, whether still erect or fallen, appear to be of the pale red granite of the hill *in loco*. Stone I. stands 5 feet 7 inches clear of the ground, and girths at the base 8 feet 6 inches; it is a rugged and rather top-heavy block, and the rock near its base has been quarried away so close as to cause real uneasiness lest this fine Stone should be shaken from its foothold. Stone II. is awanting; whether it has met

¹ This, I am pleased to say, will no longer be the case; for I enlisted the interest of the miller, Mr M'Robbie, in the Circles, and gained his promise that these incumbrances should be cleared away. His ready help in the second day's planning of the interior I here cordially acknowledge.

² *Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. p. 244.

the fate we dread for its fellow cannot now be affirmed ; but it is high time that steps were taken to ensure the future safety of all the Stones that are left. Stone III. has a very square flat top, and is only 3 feet 3 inches in height ; its basal girth is 5 feet 6 inches.

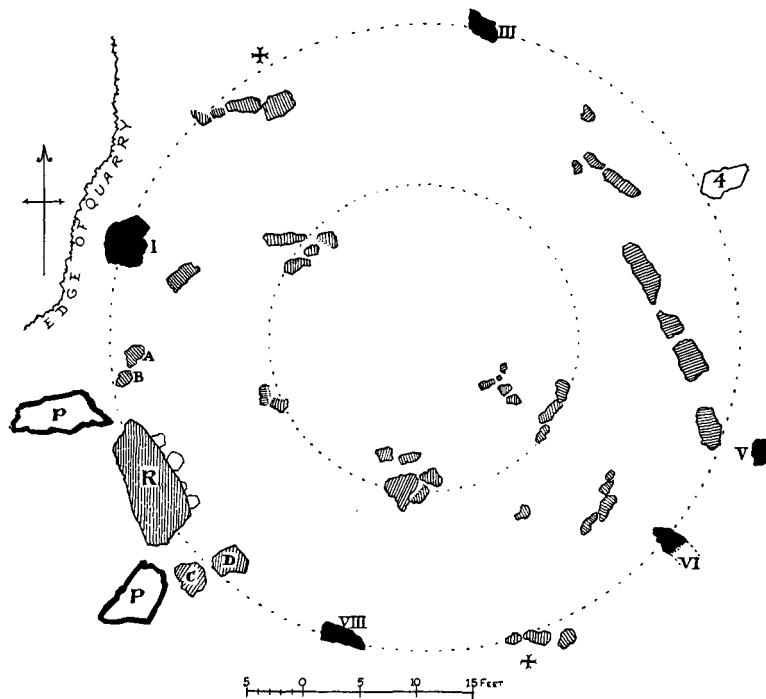


Fig. 11. Circle on Tom-naverie ; Ground-plan.

The fourth Stone has fallen prostrate backwards down the slope of the hill. It measures 4 feet 6 inches in length, 2 feet 6 inches in breadth, and is 14 inches thick above ground. Stone V. has a rhomboidal base, girthing 6 feet 6 inches, and is 3 feet 1 inch in height, measured to the crest of its ridge.

Stone VI. leans inward, having at present a vertical height of 2 feet 11 inches. Its full length down the slope of its back is 5 feet, and in girth at the base it measures 6 feet 9 inches. Stone VII. is awanting, unless the fragments lying near its site are pieces of it broken up for some utilitarian purpose. The VIIIth Stone has a flat top, stands 4 feet 8 inches above the ground, and girths 9 feet 8 inches. Its outer face is quite smooth and vertical, and measures fully 3 feet 9 inches across the base. The East Pillar (see fig. 12), in its present fallen state, shows a thickness above ground of 2 feet 3 inches. It is a huge, ponderous, and very uneven mass, measuring in extreme length and breadth 7 feet 3 by 4 feet 6 inches. The West Pillar, also prostrate, is

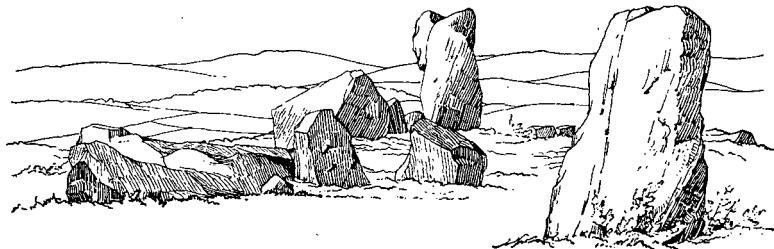


Fig. 12. Tom-na-averie Circle ; View from the South.

even larger and probably heavier. Its ascertainable thickness is 1 foot 10 inches at the western edge. It is 9 feet long and 4 feet wide.

The Recumbent Stone, which has been computed to weigh $12\frac{1}{2}$ tons, measured along its nearly straight gable-like summit, is 10 feet 4 inches in length, but its base is 11 feet 3 inches long and nearly 5 feet in breadth. The lower inside edge of the Stone goes deep down amongst small stones and cavities beyond the reach of hands or tapes ; and its position suggests the probability that it is not now what it was originally, but that, owing to some attempt at searching below it, the Stone has fallen forward a couple of feet or thereby. Its outer slope, from apex to ground, measures 5 feet 3 inches, and its steeper inner slope 3 feet 5, the apex-ridge being 3 feet above ground in vertical height.

The four great earth-fast blocks A B and C D are part of one of the concentric settings now proved to be so frequent an adjunct of the Circles. They seem to have been placed here with more than usual care, for B and C are each 2 feet 4 inches exactly above ground, and A and D 1 foot 8 inches. All the rest of the earth-fast stones, near the assumed site of Stone II. *e.g.*, and the larger ones on the east arc, do not rise to this height, none being over 17 inches high.

It will be noticed that the five Stones still erect and the fallen one (No. 4) are set almost precisely on the circumference of a true Circle 56 feet in diameter, and also that the Recumbent Stone is on the same circumference, and not within it, as in some of the larger examples. The innermost low setting of smallish stones (shaded in the plan, fig. 11) is almost truly concentric with this, and is 28 feet in diameter ; but with regard to the middle setting, much confusion exists, which, without excavation, it would be futile to attempt to explain.¹

3. *Waulkmill, near Tarland.*—A little to the north-west of the village, and on the west bank of the Millhead Burn, there is marked on the O.M. the site of a Stone Circle—a site now marked by only one Stone. The height above sea-level is 520 feet. The surrounding

¹ As to the name of the hill on which the Circle stands, the following six forms of spelling occur :—Tom-na-yerie on the Ordnance map ; Tom-na-verie, Tom-na-hivrich, Tam-na-vrie, Toms-na-verron, and lastly, Tom-nàve-rie. This last, and most aberrant, as at first it seems, of all these pronunciations, was the accentuation used by an old Tarland resident who laid great stress upon the middle syllable, “nayv-rie.” In the neighbourhood there is the name Carnaveron, or Carn-na-veron, to supplement this name. To what language these names are to be ascribed may in itself be perplexing ; but, through the good offices of a friend, I may quote the following suggestion, made by one with whom the study of Gaelic place-names is a long-cherished and accurately developed science. “The form given in the *Statistical Account* seems the best,—*Tom-na-hivrich* ; and may be for *Tom-na-h'-iubhraich* (pronounced, Tom-na-hi üvrich)=the Mound of the Yewwood. Though there may be no yews at the place now, the mound may have been a burying-place, and we know that the yew was closely associated with graveyards, *e.g.* the ancient Fortingall Yew.” This suggested interpretation of this puzzling name is merely given by Mr Gow as a probable one from the spelling ; he has not heard the name pronounced. But the remark raises the question : Is it a fact that the yew-tree was planted in Scotland in direct association with burying-grounds ?

ground swells very gently into a slight rise, and the Stone leans a little to the south. It is a broad and massive block of whinstone, having a girth of nearly 9 feet and a height of 5 feet 8 inches. Its northern face, trending due N.N.W. 5° , is the smoothest and most vertical (see fig. 13).

The following particulars were gleaned through inquiries made by Mr Ritchie, of Port Elphinstone School:—That about seventy years

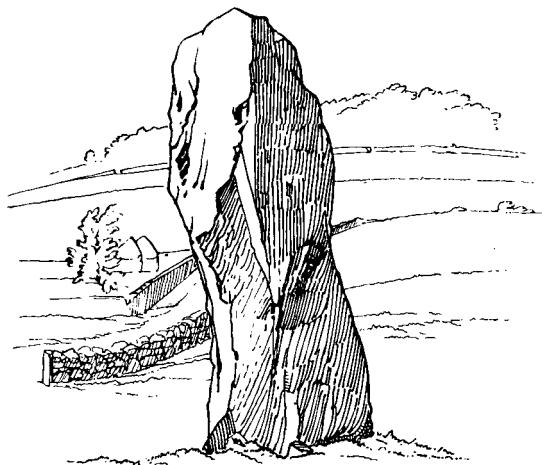


Fig. 13. Remains of Stone Circle at Waulkmill, Tarland.

ago Mr Esson, the father of the present tenant of Waulkmill, had removed the ten or eleven other Stones forming the Circle, an action he afterwards much regretted; and that he also knocked off two projecting pieces of this one Stone now left, because they interfered with the ploughing. Mr Ritchie also informed me that Mr J. A. Milne of Melgum, who owns these lands, had in his possession certain relics, believed to be stone and glass buttons, which were found in 1898 in a stone coffin unearthed in the sand-pit closely adjoining the Circle. Upon this, I wrote to Mr Milne requesting the favour of an inspection

of these relics, and in the course of a few days they were forwarded to me. The account given of their discovery is to the following purport. In the *Aberdeen Evening Express* of 6th August 1898 we read :—

“ An interesting find of an antiquarian character was recently made by Mr Cooper, gamekeeper, Melgum, Tarland, in the shape of what appeared to be the grave of some person of distinction. Mr Cooper was digging in a sand-bank when he came upon four undressed stones, each measuring about 2 feet broad and 18 inches high, placed one above the other, and at a depth of 4 feet from the surface. The position of the boulders aroused Mr Cooper's interest, and on making further search he discovered eight stone and glass buttons . . . which were of different colours, and were about an inch or $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter, lying at regular intervals, as if they had fallen from the garment worn by the occupant of the tomb. A silver buckle of antique workmanship, and two or three pieces of steel or wrought-iron, apparently the remains of some weapon, as well as a number of small bones, were also found. The bones, when lifted, immediately crumbled into dust. . . . ”

“ Mr Duguid Milne, proprietor of Melgum, we understand, is taking a great interest in the find.”

In his letter to me accompanying the relics Mr Milne observes :—

“ I think the printed cutting was supplied by the policeman at Aboyne, who had the things in his possession for some months, until I heard of them and claimed them.”

Then, after noting the resemblance between these buttons, of blue glass and vitreous paste, and others he had seen in the museum at Palermo (which had been found amid the ruins of Girgenti), Mr Milne continues :—

“ At a later date, some time in 1899, a number of silver articles were found in the same sand-pit. My own keeper, Cooper, heard of them about 1901, and told me they had been taken away by the man who had found them, who was working in the pit. No one else seemed to know about the things, whatever they were, and I fear all trace of them is lost.”

The objects found in 1898 by Mr Cooper, associated with the interment in the sand-pit, consist of—(1) Seven small flat rounded discs of reddish-brown and light-brown quartzite. Four of them are perfectly circular, and are $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch in diameter and $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in thickness; the other three measure respectively $\frac{15}{16}$ inch by $\frac{7}{8}$ inch,

$\frac{1}{16}$ inch, and $\frac{1}{16}$ inch by $\frac{7}{8}$ inch. They are all evidently natural pebbles, showing no signs of artificial abrasion, shaping, or tooling of any kind; but they have been, as evidently, selected on account of their marked equality in size, form, and thickness, so as to form a set. Two quartzite discs of almost precisely the same form, size, and colour were found among the relics obtained by the Society during the excavation of the Middle Fort on Dunadd, Argyllshire, during 1904. Smaller stone discs, varying in species, were also found at Camelon. A polished disc of serpentine, pale green mottled with black, is amongst the relics preserved in the Museum, found amid the ruins of an ancient inhabited site on the Ghegan Rock, near Seacliff, presented by Mr J. W. Laidlay in 1870. This disc measures very slightly over $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch in diameter by $\frac{5}{16}$ of an inch in thickness, and is perfectly round and naturally smooth.

Somewhat similar are the two much smaller and thicker flattish pebbles of brownish-grey quartzite which were found, with two other irregularly-shaped pebbles and a portion of a thick ring of jet, in a cist near the underground house at Cairnconan, Forfarshire.

Dr Anderson suggests that stone and glass discs of these types were used as tablemen, or counters in a game, analogous examples being found in Norway and elsewhere, and that the roughness of the flat under surface of the discs of glass and vitreous paste is due to the process of manufacture.

Any of these discs of quartzite could have been utilised as buttons by being tightly wrapt in a small piece of leather, left sufficiently long on one side to be twisted up into a tang for fastening.

(2) Two flat rounded circular discs of translucent rich dark-blue glass and portions of two others. These compare closely in diameter and thickness with the quartzite discs just described, except that the under surface is quite flat and somewhat roughened, as if by having been affixed to a socket or setting. If this was the case, these glass discs also could have been used as buttons. I am indebted to Mrs L. M. Smith, F.S.A. Scot., for sending for comparison a small glass disc, said to have been found in a Phœnician tomb, and acquired with other relics in Sicily. It is of translucent pale green, not so neatly finished as the

Tarland discs of blue glass, and measures $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch in diameter—about the same dimensions as the discs from Camelon.

(3) Two circular discs of nearly the same size and form as the rest, one measuring $\frac{5}{8}$ inch the other $\frac{13}{16}$ inch in diameter, but composed of vitreous paste of three tints, run into a decoration which is not formal or regular enough to be classified as a recognised pattern. The colours employed are a pale turquoise-blue, a dull Indian red, and a pale biscuit-yellow. Both in colour-scheme and the very effective and pleasing, although irregular, lines of this decoration, these vitreous paste discs are unlike any other pieces in the Museum.

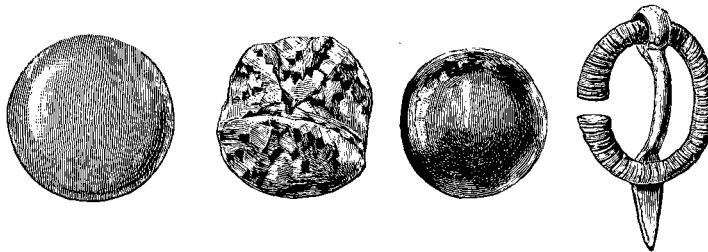


Fig. 14. Discs of quartzite, vitreous paste, and blue glass, and small penannular brooch of silver found at Waulkmill. (†.)

(4) A piece of almost colourless glass, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches in length, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in thickness, and cylindrical in form, not unlike part of the stem of a large wine-glass.

(5) A small silver penannular brooch, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, oval in cross-section, with very slightly expanded ends, and the upper surface corrugated with deeply and regularly incised transverse bars. The fastening-pin measures $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, and is of the type shown in the illustration (fig. 14).

4. *Corsedardar Stone, Birse.*¹—The site of this Standing Stone is close to the road that here tops the ridge dividing the policies of

¹ For this investigation I am indebted to my son Cecil.

Finzean from the Wood of Balnahard, at an altitude of 745 feet above sea-level, and half a mile N.W. of Whitehill post-office, as marked on the old Ordnance map.

Quite near it, in a fir plantation, are two great Cairns, marked on the O.M. as irregular oblongs.

The Stone has been split, and now has the two portions set into a bed of concrete and pieced together by strong iron bands, rather to its disfigurement, but much to its preservation. It is a thick and

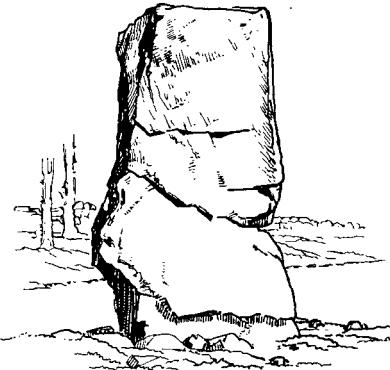


Fig. 15. Corsedardar Stone, Finzean.

squarish block of reddish granite, not more than 4 feet 7 inches in height and 7 feet in girth (fig. 15). The name, Corsedardar, is on the O.M. given to the hill, and not to the Stone, the word being printed in plain lettering.

In the *New Statistical Account*¹ the Rev. George Smith writes:— “A little farther eastwards [from Finzean] a long granite stone, such as was used in ancient times to mark the grave of some eminent person, was dug up a good many years ago, and now stands on the top of the hill of Corsedardar.”

¹ Vol. xii. p. 789, date 1842.