

#### IV.

THE STONE CIRCLES OF THE STEWARTRY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT. By  
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In the *Proceedings*, vol. vii. p. 335, there is a passing mention of the existence of a Stone Circle on the farm of Nether Torrs, Kelton; and in vol. xiv. p. 284 the late Mr M'Diarmid describes the circle of stones at the Holm of Daltallachan, in Carsphairn. These are the only notices of remains of this kind in Kirkcudbrightshire hitherto brought before the Society.

In working out the distribution of the stone circles of any district, one is at the outset confronted with statements made by former observers, especially the compilers of the Statistical Accounts and the author of *Caledonia*, in whose minds a very clear conception of the use and purpose of such relics has crystallised itself, to the effect, in short, that all circles, the stones of which were conspicuously large and

massive, especially if also tall in proportion to their breadth, were of necessity "Druidical temples."

The writers above mentioned seem not to have been aware of the existence of numerous more or less circular groups of stones, possessing, it is true, none of the characteristics named more conspicuously than other groups, and yet, for want of better evidence, fully as much entitled to claim the honour—if it be so—of that favourite appellation. And, as a corollary to this, neither do the same writers appear to have noted that many a half-rifled cairn is to this day surrounded at its base by huge stones, which, if their interspaces were thoroughly cleared of smaller stones, would stand out upon many a bleak moorland as noble examples of stone circles.

It is a matter of conviction now, since working out this record of our stone circles, that had the cairns been left alone, in Galloway at least, the myth of "Druidical temple" had never gained adherents. For, as I shall presently show, there is scarcely one instance in the country bounded by the Nith and the Cree of a stone circle which at least may not have been the base-stones of a cairn.

My research leads me to classify these remains under three groups:—Circles wholly destroyed; Circles partially destroyed; and Circles still apparently complete.

#### I. CIRCLES WHOLLY DESTROYED.

The six examples once, on fairly authentic record, existent, have been made away with between the years 1790 and 1870 or thereabouts.

(1) Near the "Roman Camp," Bombie, in the parish of Kirkcudbright. According to Dr Muter, the stones "were seized by some vandal for the building of Buckland Bridge."

(2) A small Circle, also mentioned in *N.S.A.* as being some two hundred yards distant—direction not stated—from a mote on Boreland of Parton.

(3) Near the manse of Kirkgunzeon; according to my informant, Rev. J. Gillespie, not now discoverable.

(4) Also in Kirkgunzeon, and stated in *N.S.A.* to be close to "the

site of the very large cairn at Glaisters." Now, at this spot there are three sites of what I took to be cairns. Two are neat and circular, the third oval and very much larger—evidently the site of the cairn mentioned in *N.S.A.* Had the compiler of the parochial notice really seen these remains, I do not doubt that all the three rings would have been described as the sites of cairns.

For better elucidation of this point, I append a plan (see fig. A.) of these three groups of stone remains. All these spaces are slightly hollow, deepening towards the centre; the large oval one is not clearly

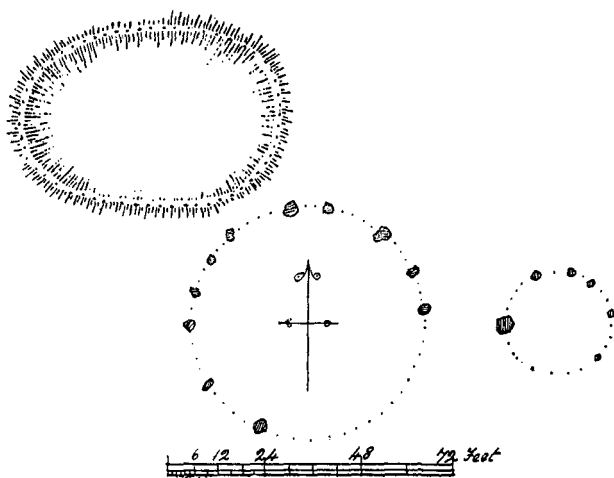


Fig. A. Glaisters.

marked out by stones, but its grassy rim is more defined than in the others. Its two diameters are 66 feet by 45 feet. On the north arc of the middle circle are nine well-defined and large stones, lying as shown, and two others on the S.W. arc. The spaces between are also stony, but these eleven stones are conspicuous. The diameter of this circle is 60 feet; and a level space of 21 feet separates it from the small circle, exactly its counterpart in general features, but with one very massive stone on its western arc. This small circle is 60 yards

distant from Breckonside Burn, and the group is nearly two-thirds of a mile north of Glaisters farm, about 300 feet above sea-level.

(5) and (6) In Kirkbean; one on the farm of Airdrie; but though mentioned by Harper in *Rambles in Galloway*, Mr G. Arnott, in the *Trans. Dfs. and Gall. N. H. and Antiq. Soc.*, says, "at present no trace of these can be found, and tradition fails to give even a hint of their probable sites, for which a careful search was made during the Ordnance Survey of 1893."

If the surveyors were searching for a circular group of prominent monoliths, disappointment was almost bound to follow. It is possible that these stones, both of which figure in the books as "Druid temples," are now overgrown by whin and briar, and would evade all but enthusiastic searching.

## II. CIRCLES PARTIALLY DESTROYED.

(1) S.E. of Little Balmae, Kirkcudbright. This was insufficiently examined by Mr E. A. Hornel and myself in 1887, and found to consist of five granite boulders, all of them large, *in situ*, and the ridgy grassy hollows of five others—removed, no one can say when. In the centre of this nearly true circle, 90 feet in diameter, is a slight mound, possibly artificial.

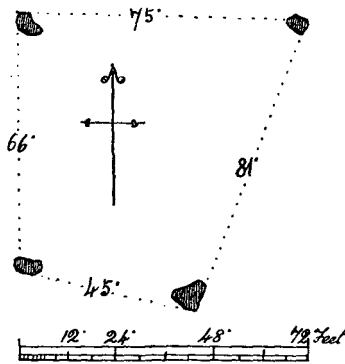


Fig. 1. Drummore.

(2) W. of Balmae House, and near the base of Knockshinnie, four stones *in situ*, all, I think, granite, and the sites of six others as distinctly observable as in the last instance. A massive stone lies outside the circle on the S. Diameter 72 feet.

(3) *Drummore*.—Close to the fine, massively ramparted fort there, and in a hollow between it and Drumbeg, there are four great stones, all that now remain of a circle of nine which was so far destroyed, much to the

late Lord Selkirk's indignation, in 1867, by one Samuel Jolly, then tenant of the farm. The former completeness of this circle is attested



Fig. 2. Park of Tongland.

by Mr J. Blacklock, late of Kirkcudbright Academy, and Mr J. Watson of Twynholm, who supplied me with the above name and date. Of the four stones now remaining (see the plan, fig. 1), that at the S.E. point is quite flat and stands 2 feet 6 inches above ground; the S.W. one, rough and ridgy, is 2 feet high, while the others, also flat, are a bare 12 inches above ground. The 5 lost stones were very much higher,—about 5 feet above ground, say my informants. The probable diameter was about 80 or 90 feet. A line continued due S. from the S.W. stone would bisect the N. ramparts of Drummore Fort. This circle is not named or shown on the O.M.

(4) *Park, Tongland*.—On a ridge of Tongland Hill, 325 feet above sea-level, and 208 yards W. of the steadings,

there are three stones which at once arrest the eye—they are so

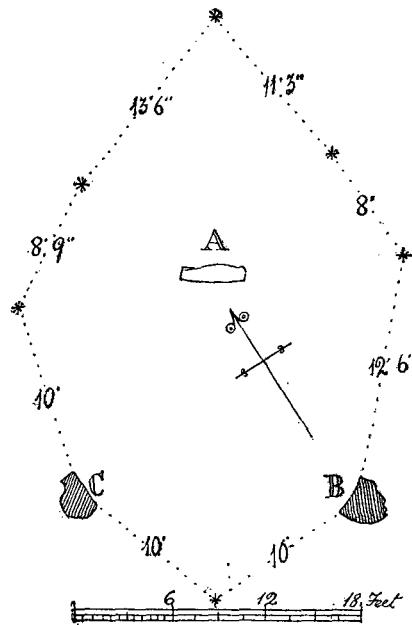


Fig. 3. Park of Tongland.

unlike any others near by. Two of them (see fig. 2, sketch from the S.W., and C and B on the plan, fig. 3) are conspicuous by size and form. C is 3 feet 5 inches high and in girth 5 feet 4 inches, B 3 feet 2 inches by 6 feet 1 inch in girth, and overhangs towards the central space  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Near the middle is a prostrate stone (A) measuring 4 feet 2 inches by 2 feet 10 inches. On examining the ground carefully, the remains of another stone S.E. of the centre and the grassy ridges of the sites of five others are clearly discernible, as shown in the plan. The two main diameters are 36 feet and 21 feet 6 inches. These stones are neither named nor drawn upon the O.M.

(5) *Balannan, Tongland*.—In a field called the Cowpark, S.E. of the steadings, on a high hillock, is a grassy rim full of embedded stones, not mentioned on the O.M., nor, so far as I know, definitely claimed as a stone circle, but as much entitled to that designation as many others. Its diameter is 44 feet; the stones are mostly small and irregularly placed; it is evidently the base of a cairn.

(6) *Torrs, Kelton*, at the eastern base of Erne Hill, about 215 feet above sea-level, and distant from Ernespie House only  $\frac{1}{6}$ th of a mile. The O.M. names it "Druidical circle," and shows three stones. At the date of my visit to the spot in 1891 there were only two stones, and there were no further indications to suggest the sites of the others.

(7) *Torkirra, Kirkgunzeon*.—Between the railway and the road, about 300 yards E. of the fortlet at Torkirra, is an irregular circle of large granite boulders, the stones themselves being very irregularly placed, and the contour broadly oval, the curved sides bounded on the S. by a straight one. This site, which was but cursorily examined during a long day's exploration of the forts, measures some 84 feet across its greatest width. It does not appear on the maps, nor is it called either a stone circle or a cairn, but it is most obviously the remnant of a good-sized cairn.

(8) *High Auchenlarie, Anwoth*.—There is here, at 500 feet above sea-level, and about 230 yards E. of Auchenlarie Burn, one mile from the sea, a well-defined grassy rim, circular and stony, evidently the outer vestiges of a cairn. Its diameter is 36 feet. On its N. and N.E. are five earth-fast stones, the highest of which is 4 feet 10 inches above ground (B in

the plan, fig. 4), the next is 3 feet 8 inches, the third 3 feet, and the other two prostrate. Measured in the same direction, the interspaces are 12, 18, 12, and 6 feet respectively. At a point 24 feet due N. of stone C is a stone of about the same size, and at 27 feet S.S.W. of the tallest stone stands a tall, tapering stone 4 feet 6 inches. To the S. of this same stone B, at a distance of 51 feet, there juts out a piece of rock bearing the cup- and ring-markings described and figured in my record for Kirkcudbrightshire.<sup>1</sup>

These stones are shown on the O.M. under the usual name of "Druidical circle."

### III. CIRCLES APPARENTLY COMPLETE.

(1) *Glenquicken Moor*. — The rather small circle here extant is one of three named and drawn on the O.M. It is exactly  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile W.S.W. of Cairnywanie: N.W. of it 217 yards is the site of a second, and beyond that, in the same line, about 60 yards, the site of a third; S.W. by W., 217 yards off, is an exposed and empty kist-vaen. This last I have seen, but the two stone circle sites must have become totally obliterated since the Survey, as there is no trace of them now. The site of the one remaining is a grassy level, 522 feet above sea,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile S.S.W. of the farm, and 118 yards east of the Englishman's Burn, in a rectangular space cut off by its current. There is no trace of a raised central mound nor of an earthen ridge in the line of the stones, which are twenty-eight in number on the circumference. These are nearly all rather rough water-worn boulders; none of them is large, and all are quite low, the two highest

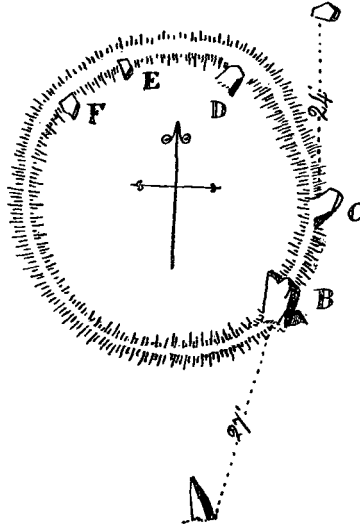


Fig. 4. High Auchenlarie.

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings*, vol. xxix. p. 90.

(shown on the plan shaded, fig. 5) being but 3 feet above ground, and the only stones that are narrow and slightly rectangular. The stones are set with evident attempt at regularity, one markedly wide space of 8 feet intervening between the two on the S.W. arc, and two very narrow spaces dividing the north stone from the north-east one and the fourth and fifth stones on the same arc. The circumference taken through the

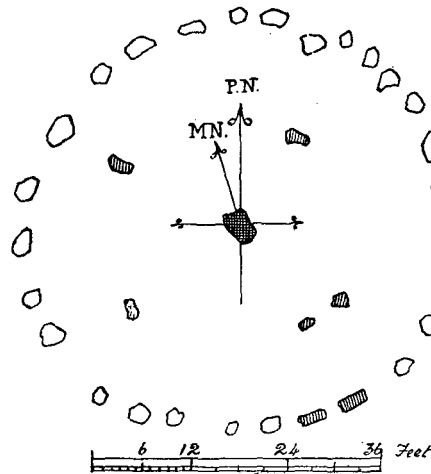


Fig. 5. Glenquicken Moor.

centre of the stones is 225 feet. The diameters also are unusually equal :—

N.	and S.	centre to centre of stones	51 feet.
E.	„ W.	„ „	53 „
N.W.	„ S.E.	„ „	51 „
N.E.	„ S.W.	„ „	52 „

The whole interior area is covered with smallish stones, five of which (shown in plan), though considerably larger and heavier than the rest, are easily moved, and even raised up,—a task impossible of performance by any man single-handed with any of the earth-fast stones of the circumference.



The centre of the circle is occupied by a tall, massive granite boulder, 6 feet high by 12 feet in girth.

(2) *Hills, Lochrutton*.—Drawn on the O.M. as a circle of nine stones, on the 500 foot contour-line, 1 mile almost due S. of Culloch Castle, and nearly 1 mile S.W. of Castle Hill Mote ; it is named "Druidical circle, supposed." At the date of the *N.S.A.* there were nine

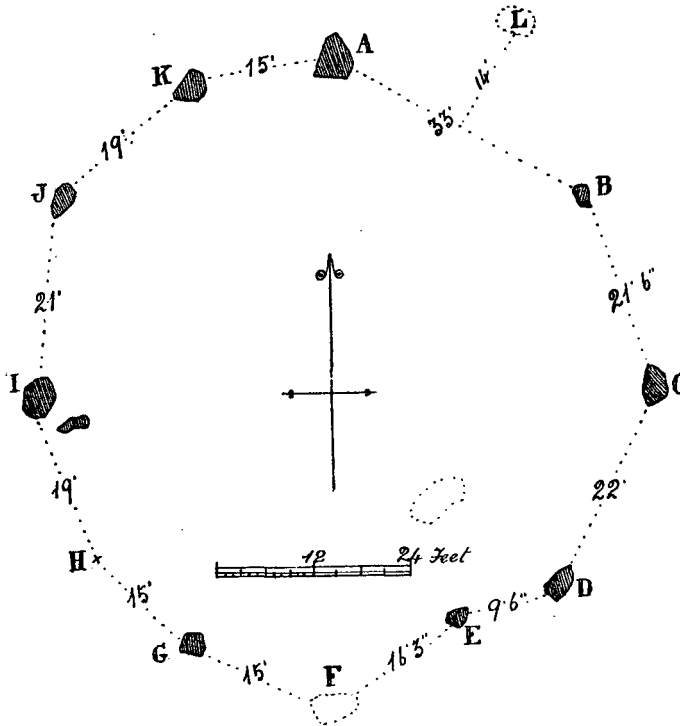


Fig. 6. Hills, Lochrutton.

stones, though the circle went by the name of The Seven Grey Stanes. Probably it had some connection, now forgotten, with The Grey Stane in Dumfries. Some of its stones seem to have been moved about, and one other removed altogether, and, I think, somewhat recently, as

its site (see F in the plan, fig. 6) clearly bears the shape and impression of a large stone materially different from the small nondescript hollow at H, which is supposed to be the site of another stone, and also quite markedly distinct in character from the rudely oval hollow, some 15 feet within the circumference, and which is probably the result of a little digging done here some years ago by Canon Atkinson. Outside the circle at L there is another probable site of a stone. The two main diameters are 81 feet N. and S. and 78 E. and W. The interspaces measured in line with the width of the stones gives a circumference of 232 feet. None of the stones stand more than about 3 feet above ground. The circle occupies the flat summit of a slightly raised artificial mound, and there is no trace of any former accumulation of small stones within the space enclosed by the stones.

A further interest attaches to this circle from the fact of two of its stones bearing what I believe are genuine artificial cup-marks. These are found on the east stone (a flattish "whin," much smoother than the majority), and are three in number, in a perfectly straight line, 10 inches long, the direction being east and west. These cup-marks are the smallest known to me in the district—scarcely more than half an inch wide.

(3) *Holm of Daltallochan*.—Close to the farm, almost midway between the Water of Deugh and Carsphairn Water, at the base of a mound called Holm Moat. It is dotted on the O.M. as a true circle at a point a little over 600 feet above sea-level, and is named "Druidical circle, supposed." Daltallochan Cairn is about a third of a mile away on the N.E.

The circle consists of thirteen stones, irregularly placed around the summit of a slight elevation. Three of the stones (M A B on the plan, fig. 8) lie in a nearly straight line, the others forming a deep semi-oval. They vary much in size; but only the two which mark the limits of the greatest diameter (M E) can compare with the stones in, e.g., Holywood Circle. My sketch, exactly copied from that taken on the spot (see fig. 7) shows at a glance this variety in size of the stones on the S.E. arc. The circumference measured through the centres of the stones is 210 feet. The greatest diameter, centre to centre of stones M and E, is 74

feet; its contrary diameter is 63 feet; the N. and S. diameter, A to H, and the E. and W., D to L, are 65 feet each.



Fig. 7. Daltallochan.

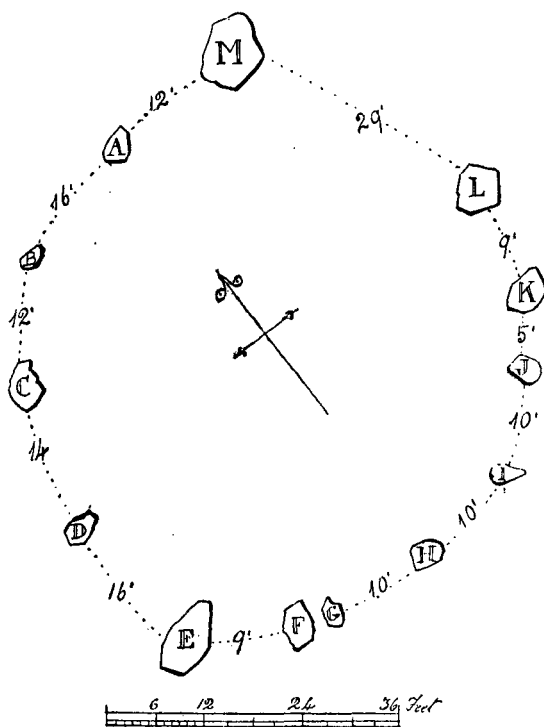


Fig. 8. Daltallochan.

(4) *Cauldside, Anwoth*, almost in contact with the base of a cairn. It consists of fourteen stones, ten of which are rather thin whinstone flags

set up on edge, and, with the four others, which are small boulders, forming an almost exact circle 66 feet in diameter. See fig. 9. The diagram has been compressed so that the space N. of the cairn-base to a solitary stone (A) represents on the ground 180 feet. Thirty feet further north is a second stone, and again 30 feet is the edge of the small cairn-site.<sup>1</sup>

(5a) *Lairdmannach, Tongland*.—This, the Park Circle, and the circle at Glenquicken are the only three examples having a central monolith. It is drawn on the O.M. on the 400 foot contour-line as a circle of five stones with a sixth in the centre; and in the *N.S.A.*, Rev. D. S. Williamson writes (Dec. 1843), "there are eleven stones, with a twelfth in the centre, the summits of them all just appearing at the surface of the ground."

This circle, which stands close to a cairn which is S.W. by W. of the farm of Upper Lairdmannach a little over half a mile, now consists of ten stones, all smallish granite boulders, equidistant from each other, on a circumference of only 63 feet; and its central stone, also of granite, has fallen prostrate into the peaty ground which year by year is covering the stones and rendering their identification a very difficult matter. The shape and size of the ten stones cannot be determined, as only a portion about the size of one's head is visible; but the monolith measures 5 feet 6 inches in length by 3 feet broad, and rests 14 inches above ground.

(5b) *Lairdmannach*.—At 78 yards N.E. of the base of the neighbouring cairn is a group of stones, which I take to be part of a very small stone circle, the diameter of which is only 12 feet.

(6) *Lochrinnie*.—This very peculiar group occupies the summit of a hill in the very extreme north-eastern corner of the Stewartry, midway between Lochrinnie Farm and Lochrinnie Mote, about 700 feet above

<sup>1</sup> This group of remains at Cauldside forms a good illustration of the point I have endeavoured to prove. Originally, there is no reason to doubt, all the three circular sites were cairns. We have no testimony proving the date at which the site, now called Stone Circle, on the south, was cleared of its heap of stones; but the small ring of stones on the N. was, up to forty years ago, a cairn, a dike close at hand having absorbed its stones; while it is quite clear that, should the same fate befall the great cairn in the centre, we should then have three stone circles.

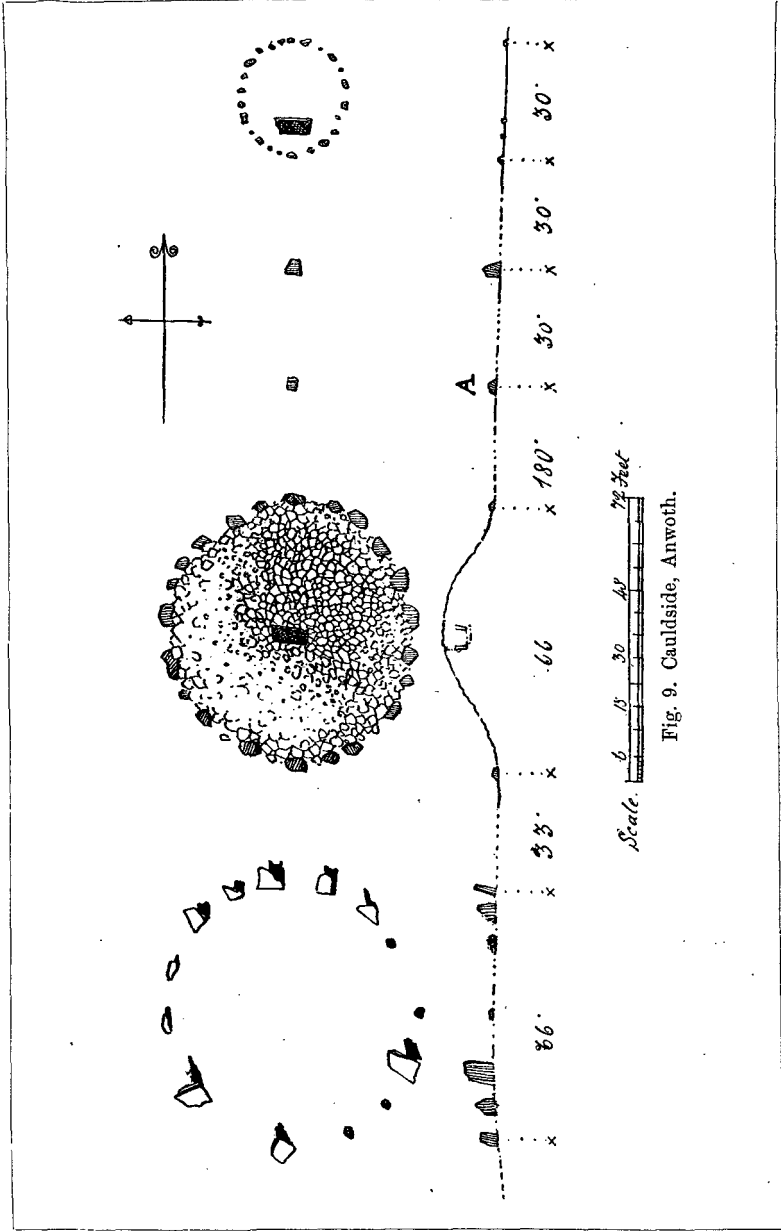


Fig. 9. Caudside, Anwoth.

sea-level, and on the north of the Blackmark Burn, which here joins the Castlefern Water, forming the boundary between the Stewartry and Dumfriesshire.

The holed stone (see H in the plan, fig. 10) has been placed on the

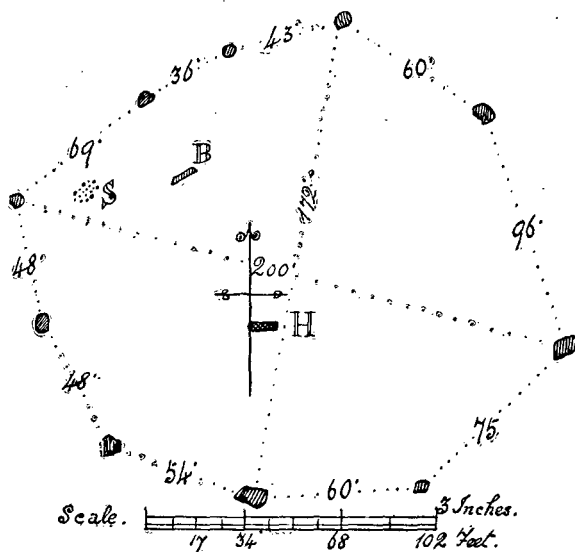


Fig. 10. Lochrinnie.

crown of this hill, the sides of which for some distance descend very gradually; and, at the ten points shown, there are stones forming an irregular circle, the greatest diameters of which are 200 feet by 172 feet, the N.W. and S.E. being 167 feet, the circumference 588 feet.<sup>1</sup>

None of the stones are prominent, some only just showing above the surface of the ground. The holed stone, a thin broad slab of hard "blue whin," stands very nearly on the E. and W. diameter. Its dimensions are 3 feet 2 inches by 2 feet 6 inches. The hole measures about 5 inches in width. We were told by the old

<sup>1</sup> This diagram is drawn to a scale of 68 feet to the inch; but the stones are purposely shown on double that scale. The circle was measured by Mr T. R. Bruce and myself in radii with the holed stone as centre.

gardener at Craigmuir (Thomas Todd, who remembers the stone when perfect) that the upper part had been wantonly destroyed (see fig. 11). Within the circumference, at a point 63 feet N.W. of the holed stone, lies a large flat stone, about 5 feet by 2 feet, and 30 feet W. of it is a small, low heap of stones (B and S on Plan).

During my earlier antiquarian rambles in Galloway, many other



Fig. 11. Holed Stone.

partly circular relics, of much the same character as these at present described, were casually observed, especially in the moorland districts of Tongland, Girthon, and Anwoth; but in the following summary I have placed the names and characteristics of the remains now passed in review, in the hope of its being useful as a record of ancient structures only too rapidly disappearing from the face of the earth.

## SUMMARY OF STONE CIRCLES.

## I. CIRCLES WHOLLY DESTROYED.

1. Near "Roman Camp," Bombie, Kirkcudbright.
2. " Boreland Mote, Parton.
3. " Kirkgunzeon Manse.
4. " Glaisters, Kirkgunzeon.
5. " Airdrie, Kirkbean.
6. In Kirkbean.

## II. CIRCLES PARTIALLY DESTROYED.

	Diameters.
1. S.E. of Little Balmae, Kirkcudbright, . . . . .	90 × 90 feet.
2. W. of Balmae House, " . . . . .	72 × 72 "
3. Drummore, " . . . . .	? 90 × 90 "
4. Park, Tongland (with central stone), . . . . .	36 × 21 ft. 6 in.
5. Balannan, " . . . . .	44 × 44 feet.
6. Torrs, Kelton, . . . . .	?
7. Torkirra, Kirkgunzeon, . . . . .	84 × 74 "
8. High Auchenlarie, Anwoth, . . . . .	36 × 36 "

## III. CIRCLES APPARENTLY COMPLETE.

1. Glenquicken Moor, Kirkmabreck (with central stone),	53 × 51 feet.
2. Hills, Lochrutton, . . . . .	81 × 78 "
3. Holm of Daltallochan, Carsphairn, . . . . .	74 × 63 "
4a. Cauldside, Anwoth, . . . . .	66 × 66 "
4b. " " . . . . .	30 × 30 "
5a. Lairdmannach, Tongland (with central stone),	21 × 21 "
5b. " " . . . . .	12 × 12 "
6. Near Lochrinnie Mote, Dalry (with holed stone),	200 × 172 "