

VIII.

REPORT ON STANDING STONES AND OTHER REMAINS, NEAR
FOWLIS WESTER, PERTHSHIRE. BY ALISON YOUNG,
F.S.A. SCOT.

Read October 16, 1943.

On the Moor of Ardoch, near Fowlis Wester (Ordnance Survey 6" sheet, 96 N.W.) is a group of stone monuments which were investigated by permission of the Laird, Captain Stirling Home Drummond Moray. The work was carried out in June 1939, with the co-operation of Miss M. Stirling and Miss K. M. Richardson, F.S.A.

The site is at the highest point of a ridge of moorland, running east and west on the 800-foot contour line. The ground dips on the north to Loch Mealbrodden before rising to Milquhanzie and Bracketriggs Hills, both 1150 feet above sea level. Westwards, the Loch Earn Hills can be seen, roughly 20 miles away, and on the east the Sidlaws. There is a sharp fall to Strathearn, and across this fertile valley to the south rise the Ochils.

The stones lie on the foothills of the Sma Glen Pass, the old entrance to the highlands, which must have been used as a "way" from all time. Fig. 1 shows Stone "A"; Stone "B," now fallen, the socket shown on Plan in dotted outline; and two groups of stones, the smaller 42 feet, the other 100 feet from Stone A. Stones visible before excavation are marked in black on the Plan, the outlines indicating their extent when stripped. This complex is noted in the *New Statistical Account* in 1837,¹ which states, "Fowlis appears to have been a favourite seat of the Druids," but notes, more succinctly, a double circle at the eastern group; the outer ring had disappeared when Mr Coles made his record and plan in 1910.² The *New Statistical Account* mentions forty stones in the outer

Coronation. The ascending pedigree was, in each form, taken to the founder of that particular "House." Now, this proceeding is, like the Heraldic Funeral, most closely associating "The Family" with religious observance—and in its modern form is immediately related to the fifth Commandment. The custom, however, is clearly "tribal" and the oral tracing backwards of the line to the Founder of the House is directly paralleled in Maori custom, where the occupants of an island trace their lineage (and that of their Chieftain—in actual instance a Maori Chieftainess) back to those who "came in on the canoe." Originally, no doubt, the custom related to actual ancestor-worship, since the Founder became a "private-god" (if I may so describe him!), and the Representer had the added influence of being the re-embodiment of the deified *eponymus*. Certainly a number of very ancient families—e.g. the Macleods and the Jarls of Orkney—trace their lineage back to Scandinavian deities, whilst others, such as the Earls of Northumberland, deduced their origin from wild animals, evidently the "totem animal" of the tribe. These things, however, carry the subject beyond the province of the Herald or the Genealogist, and into those of the Prehistorian and the Archæologist. Such aspects, however, emphasise the far-reaching significance and historical value of examination of such records as these two processional rolls.

¹ *New Statistical Account*, vol. xlv.

² *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. ix. series iv. (1910-11), p. 89.

ring, but excavation revealed only ten earthfast stones or sockets. This eastern group appears to have been a cairn, now denuded, leaving two circular settings. Very few hand-stones were left, and a nearby dry-stone dyke and an old track passing close by the standing stone may account for much of the missing cairn material.

The outer ring of the cairn has an approximate diameter of 26 feet taken from the centre of the stone or socket, and the inner circle is 16 feet across

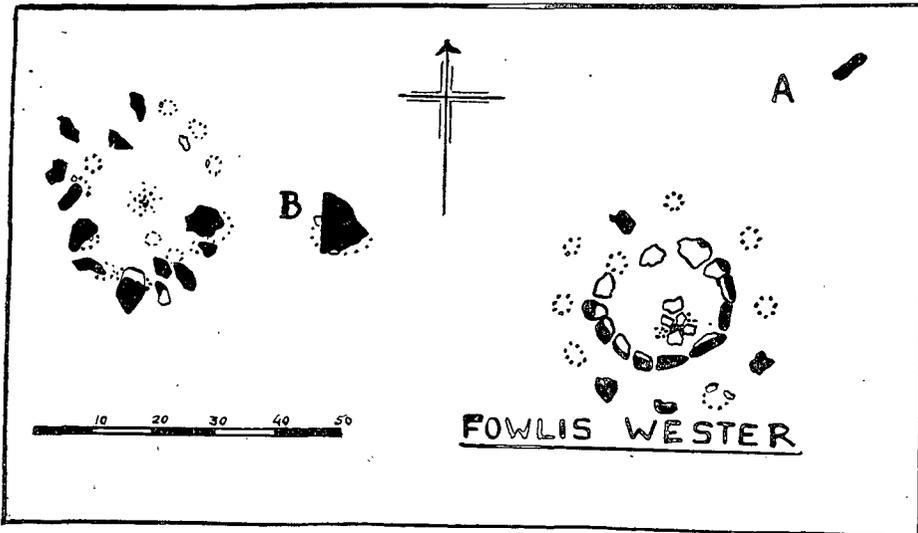


Fig. 1. General plan.

(Pl. XXIV, 1, 2, 3). The whole area has been planted and tree roots have caused a certain amount of damage, but the position of the missing outer stones could be traced in spite of this localised disturbance. Small slabs of sandstone were used as bedding or wedges for most of the earthfast stones and similar material remained in the sockets, which all contained quartz chips, and in some cases black earth. A made-up clay floor covered the area within the inner circle of stones (fig. 3), the outer uprights were up-ended in the natural clay. This floor was levelled within the central ring, of which the stones lay mostly on the long edge. These boulders were closely set, and packed with black earth and quartz chips. Lumps of charcoal, the size of a walnut, were found to a depth of 3 inches in the levelled floor and were probably trodden in.

There was some reddening of the clay in the inner ring, probably due to heat; burnt bone fragments and charcoal lay scattered over the stippled area (fig. 2), with patches of greasy black earth and concentration of bone at the centre. The bone, unfortunately, is in too poor a state to identify;

it had been deposited mainly in two scoops in the made-up clay; Stones P, Q, R, and S had then been laid in place and the whole covered with hand-stones. The larger boulders were packed round with black earth and white quartz, and lay in hollows on the levelled floor.

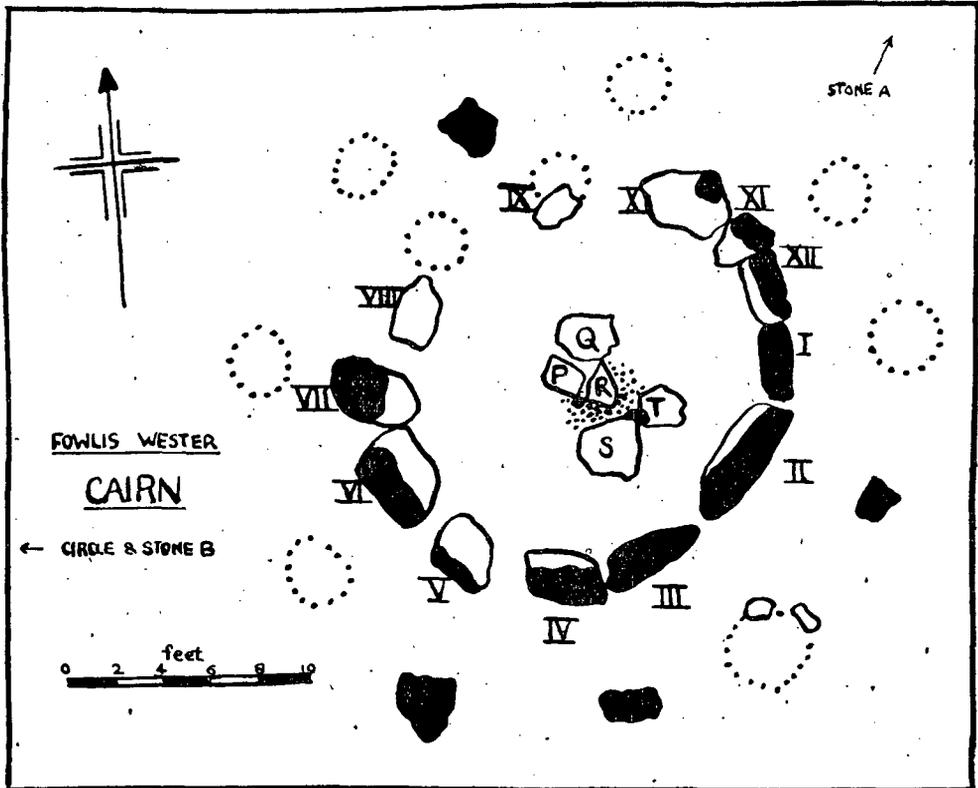
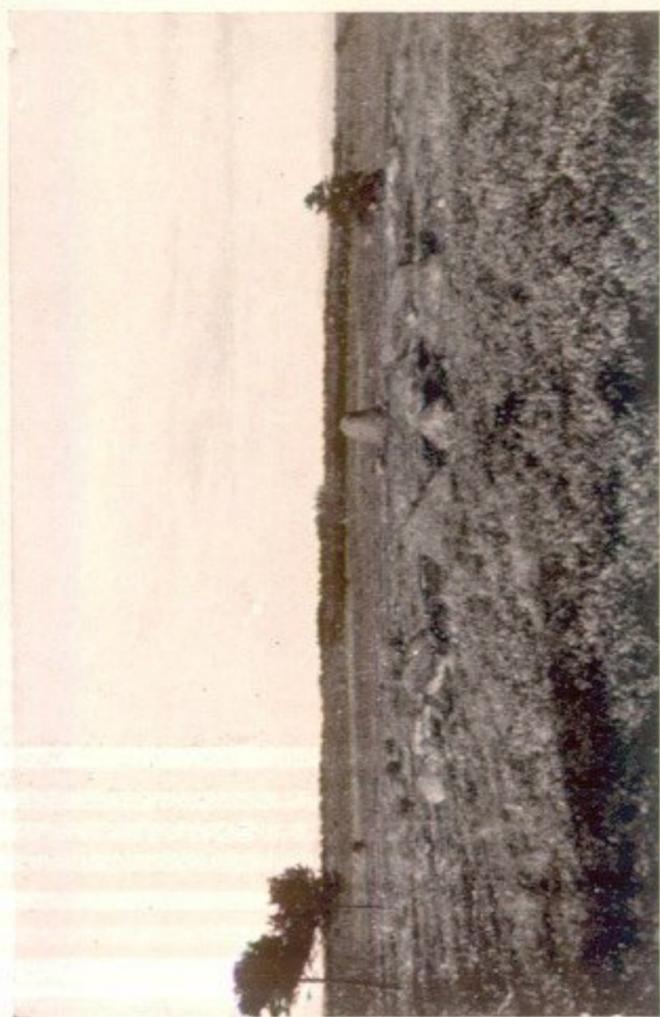


Fig. 2.

Stone "5" (Pl. XXIV, 4) had three cup-marks facing inwards. These were covered, even in the denuded state of the cairn, and must have been well below the original surface. They were the only markings on the site, other than one cup on the standing stone "A."

The western group of stones (fig. 4) was of a different character, the last of Dr Callander's series,¹ a simple circle. The tree roots had done more harm here than at the cairn, and the ground was considerably disturbed. Some of the stones had been blasted, which probably accounts for the fact that none remains upright; No. 1 has fallen towards the centre, and

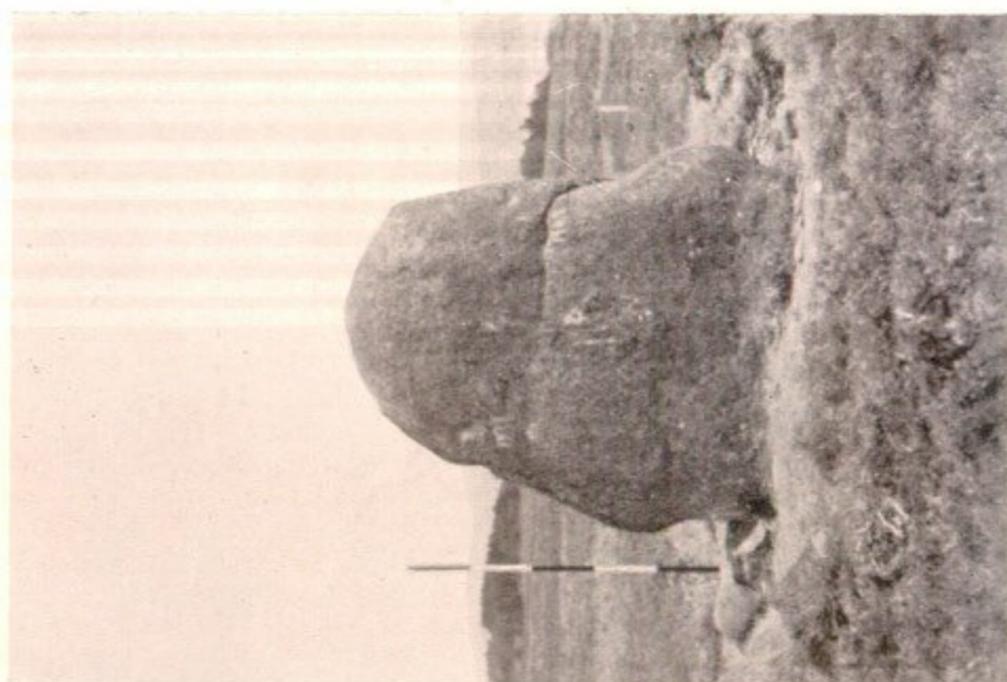
¹ *Archæologia*, vol. lxxvii. p. 97.



2. General view.



3. Stone A.



1. Stone A, east face.

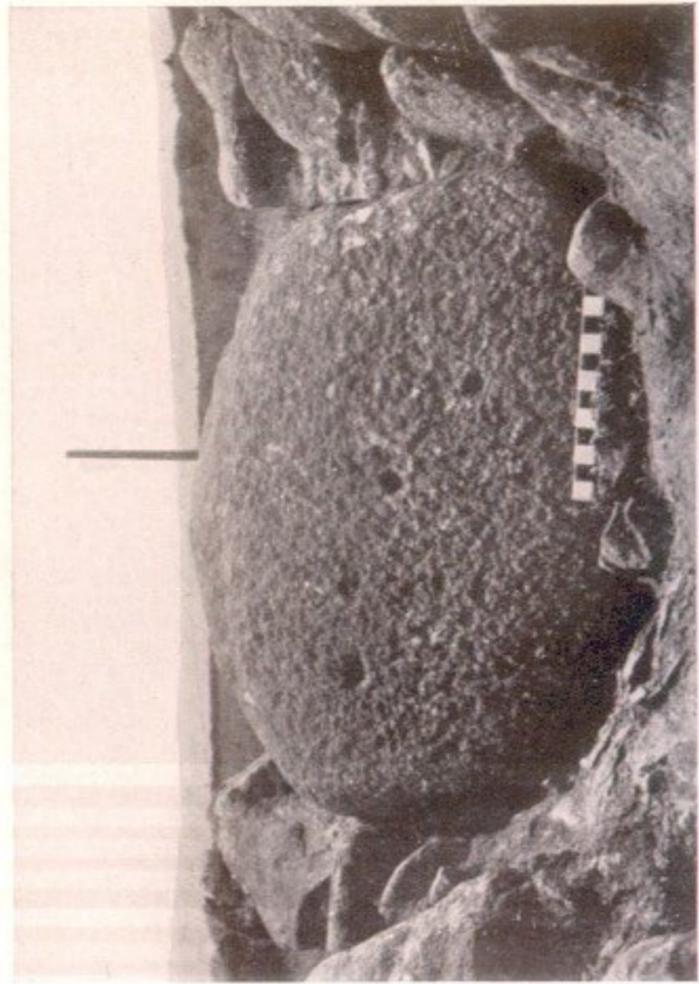
ALISON YOUNG.

STANDING STONES NEAR FOWLIS WESTER.

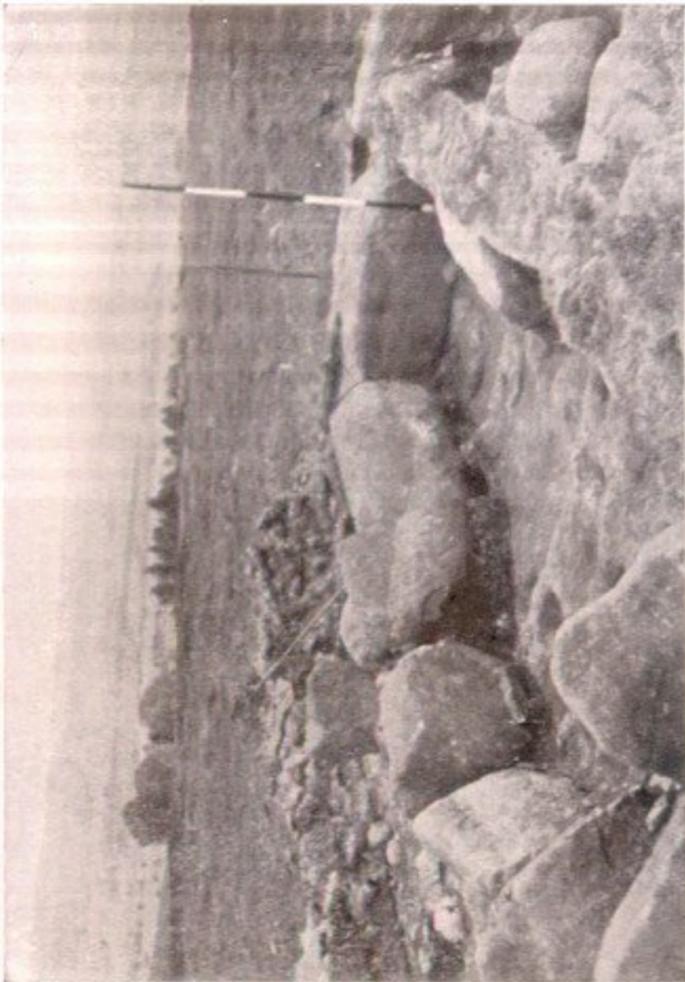
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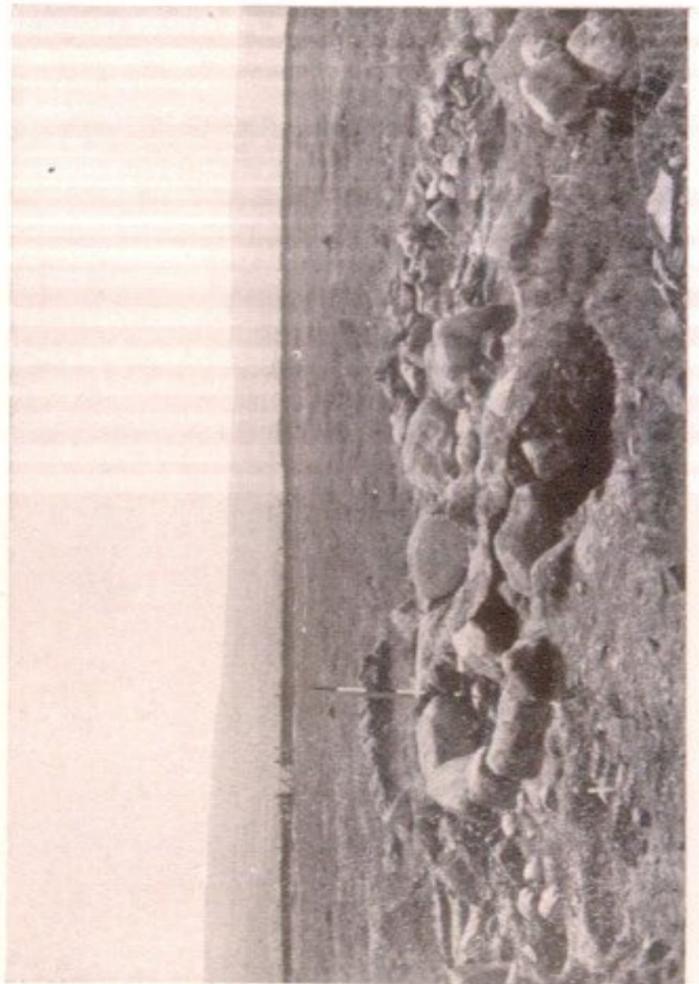
2. Inner ring of cairn facing east.



4. Stone V, fig. 2.



1. Inner ring of cairn facing south-east.



3. Cairn facing south.

the rest are all either sloping or fallen outwards. No. 9 is in two pieces, and a missing third is probably the foundation for a straining post in some

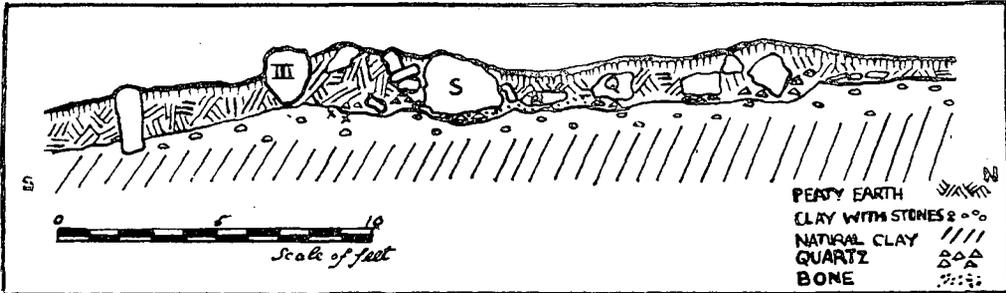


Fig. 3. Section across cairn.

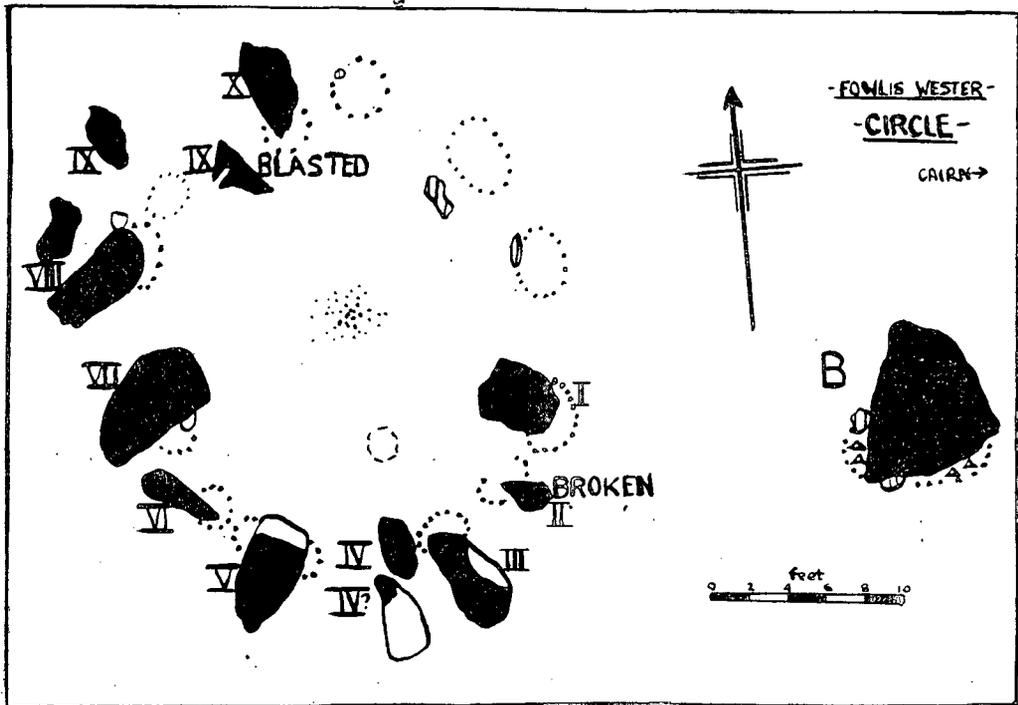


Fig. 4.

nearby fence. Three other stones are split, and though, over all, these stones are larger than the cairn boulders (the largest measures 7 feet x 4 feet), the sockets are shallow and ill-prepared in comparison. Wedge stones remained in most of the hollows of disturbed earth, and in each case a few white stones were used.

No floor, ditch, or inner stone-setting was found, and the only evidence of burning was a discoloration of earth at two points: in the centre, and in a shallow circular pit (shown on the Plan in dotted outline). Minute particles of burnt bone and charcoal had been deposited, apparently after burning. In both cases the change of soil was well defined, and was between 3 inches below the present ground level and a depth of 15 inches. No artificial markings are to be found on any of the stones of the western group, and, though the boulders themselves are large and well chosen, the slovenly treatment of the sockets seems to indicate degeneracy.

Stone A (Pl. XXIII, 1-3) now stands 6 feet above ground level, and is buried to the depth of 2 feet in a pit approximately $7\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ feet, dug into the natural clay. At the foot of this schistose boulder, to the east, fragments of unidentifiable burnt bone and charcoal were found, in greasy black earth, mixed with quartz chips. White water-worn stones were packed in a pit on the east side, the largest measuring 18 inches \times 5 inches, and a row of these was carefully placed across the west face at a depth of 6 inches below the present surface. Mr M. Y. Orr kindly examined the charcoal, and reported all the samples from the site to be hazel. The stone appears to stand on a little mound, no ditch could be traced, nor any connection with the other monuments. This standing stone has suffered at the hands of those who desire to perpetuate their initials, and a small and much weathered cross must have been added many years ago, but the only cup-marking is about 3 feet above present ground level. The packing of this stone in its bed hollowed in natural clay is akin to that at Monzie.¹

Stone B is now fallen, apparently the broad face was north and south, the loose earth filling in the socket showed no trace of bone or charcoal, nor was there any evidence of the elaborate quartz make-up recorded at Stone A, though packing stones lay under and around it, and a few quartzes were in the disturbed earth. The overall measurements are 9 feet in length, and 7 feet 5 inches at maximum breadth. It has long since lain in its present position, partly resting on small boulders, and the sheep, using it for shelter, have worn a deep path round it. The socket could only be traced when the trodden earth was cut away.

Apart from quartz, which lay on the clay floor and was built between and under the inner stones of the cairn, the only artefacts recovered were two slabs of sandstone, approximately 3 inches in diameter. These had been chipped into a roughly circular shape, and were both in the peaty subhumus of the eastern group. One was picked up by H.M. Inspector of Ancient Monuments, on his visit to the site, while the men were deturfing, the other was embedded in the peaty earth, and came from the centre of the cairn.

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiii. (1938-39), p. 66.

Of this group, the cairn is the oldest from its form, and the most intricate as regards structure. Not in the earliest Bronze Age tradition, its building implies knowledge and careful choice of subsoil; the patch of clay overlying sandstone, on which it was built, is of no great extent, as was proved by its absence at the circle on the west, and a trial trench 20 feet to the east. The levelled made-up clay floor argues some planning of the medium. Charcoal and small stones buried in the clay floor of the central circle give the impression of a trodden mass on which the stones of the inner ring and cairn were laid and built into position with special material. Mr Lacaille has kindly reported on quartz found on the clay floor, and the use of these white stones was characteristic of the cairn and standing stone "A," and suggests a ritual significance. The roughly circular pattern of these stones on Plan indicates no gap, the long stones are used end to end, and the uprights of the outer ring indicate that height was of little importance to the builders. The central clay showed traces of heat at various points, but these seem too slight for the burning suggested by Dr Zeuner, and the probability is that the bone fragments and ash were deposited after burning.

Of the west circle there is little to add, but that it appears to be a late interpretation of the tradition. The stones themselves have assumed a greater importance than in the cairn, they are larger, and set up to show their greatest height, but otherwise this monument is of the simplest construction. At the spot chosen for the circle the soil is unsuitable for uprights of such a size, a shallow, sandy loam overlying rock, so that the tradition of adding to a group of existing monuments overcame any foresight in the building. Stone "A" would appear to be nearest in dating to the cairn, from its setting. The character of the row of water-worn quartz on the west face was paralleled at Monzie, where these appeared at the base of the circle stones on the inner face. As a group these stones are an example of traditional sites, extending in use over a long period; of the persistence in form and of its gradual change.