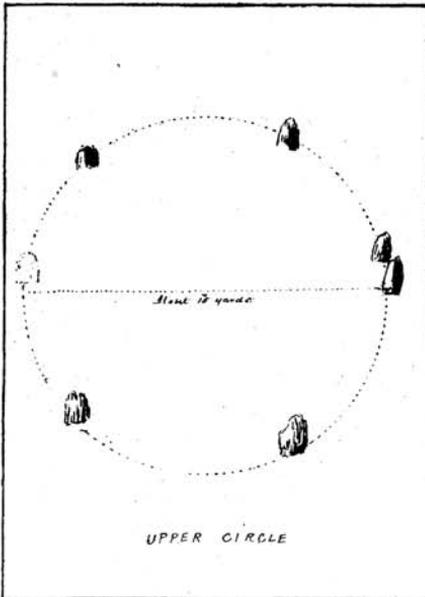


ART. XXXII.—*Ancient remains at Lacra and Kirksanton.*

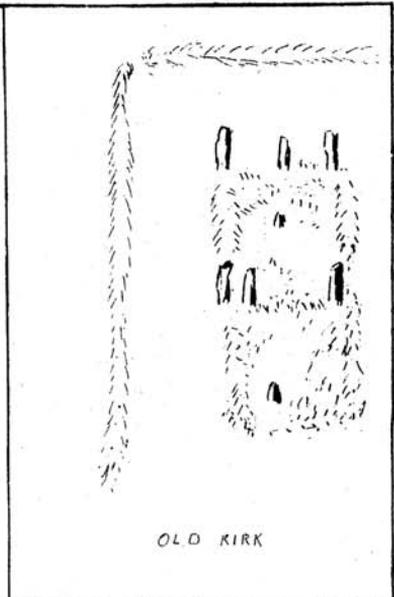
By J. Eccleston, Esq., Sylecroft.

Read at Millom, August 29th, 1872.

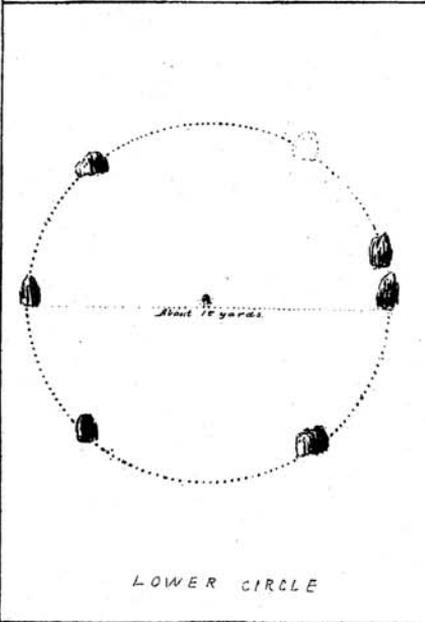
THE south of Cumberland, until the close of the last century, seems to have been especially rich in that class of ancient remains, commonly called "Druidical." More than ordinary facilities were offered for the formation of these rude structures, by the numerous fragments of rock that bestrewed the district. At the breaking up of the Eskdale and other glaciers, the plain at the foot of Black Comb, and for nearly 1000 feet up its sides, together with the minor heights, were sprinkled over with boulders of all sizes, and from various quarters. Many of these have been used in the circles; other stones of a more fissile nature have been conveyed from some neighbouring cliff, by means which to us remains a mystery. South of the Esk, ten different stone structures are recorded, viz., six stone circles, a "Giant's Grave," a kirk, a huge cairn, and a city, that of Barnscar. Of this catalogue we have to deplore the loss of nearly one half—three circles and the cairn have been wholly obliterated. In a history of Cumberland, of no distant date, the following is related concerning the remains in the neighbouring parish of Whitbeck: "At Hall Foss are the remains of a Druidical Temple, called Standing Stones, and consisting of eight massive rude columns, disposed in a circle of twenty-five yards diameter. Near to Annaside is another circular monument composed of twelve stones. On the Moor Green Farm, are thirty stones, called Kirkstones, forming part of two circles, similar in position to those at Stonehenge. About 200 yards south of this Druidical monument, is a large cairn of stones, about fifteen yards in diameter, and surrounded with massive stones at the base." It is more to be deplored that these have perished, since important analogies might have been discovered, and it is chiefly by analogy that the mystery of their origin must be unravelled. Still we have our Swineside, awful in mystery and solitude; our "Giant's Grave," grand in its high proportions; and our Lacra, though less striking as a spectacle, yet surrounded with wonderful diversity and interest. Lacra is altogether singular. Its name falls upon our ear as an unknown sound. It is an ancient cultivated estate, situated on the crown of a hill, 500 feet



UPPER CIRCLE



OLD KIRK



LOWER CIRCLE



GIANTS GRAVE

Sketches showing positions of the Stone in the ruins at
Kirkcaldon & Leura:

feet above the sea level. It is surrounded by a circular stone fence, the form of which shows it to have been drawn by an arbitrary hand, probably to keep off the settlers of the plain, and the construction of which differs from modern mural erections. It is held by the lords of Millom, by a peppercorn acknowledgement, which is to be paid on Christmas Day, at the castle of Millom, and a substantial repast is ordered to be provided on the occasion. The ancestors of the present proprietor, J. S. Myers, Esq., of Po House, purchased it from the Huddlestons. The objects worthy of notice on Lacra, are a kirk or keil called "Old Kirk," two stone circles, three artificial platforms or terraces, an enclosure dyke, and an extensively furrowed surface.

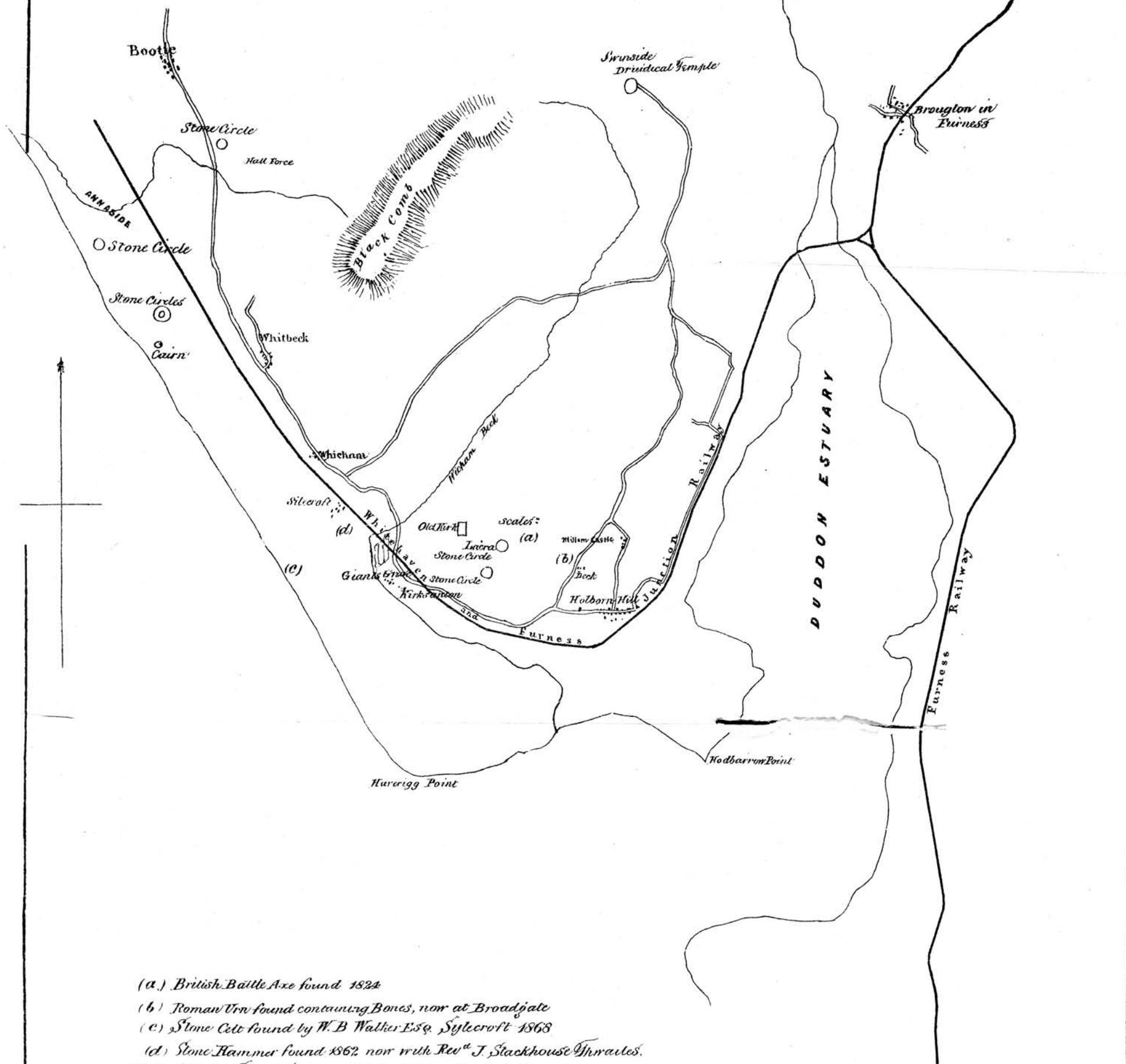
"Old Kirk" consists at present of an irregular heap of ruins, fifty yards long by twenty-five in width, which, in the lapse of ages has been coated over with soil and grass. Originally, the area was encircled by upright shafts, five or six feet in height, but about forty years ago, these were either rooted up, or broken off for gate posts. It is fortunate, however, that the stumps of several still remain to mark their position, as we are thus enabled to recall the appearance it then presented. Besides the upright unhewn posts before mentioned, there still remain two boulders set on end, after the manner of those set in stone circles here and elsewhere. From the state of the remains, it is impossible to say to what use the place was devoted. An investigation would probably lay aside conjecture. The kirk or keil is described as "consisting of a small enclosed area occupied "with graves, in the centre of which are the ruins of an ancient "church, generally of a quadrangular form, and of diminutive "proportions." On the western side, at a distance of fifty yards, are the remains of a wall or dyke, four feet in breadth, composed of stone and earth, and forming apparently an enclosure to Old Kirk. The entrance appears to have been at one of the angles, which is a position unique in modern enclosures. At a short distance eastward are three terraces or platforms, rising one above the other. They are evidently artificial, and may have been used for public gatherings, as the Tynwald Hill, in the Isle of Man. Of the two stone circles, the lower one is the most perfect, wanting only one stone to make it complete. They have been eight in number, of the boulder type, and have formed a hexagon, one at the centre, and two near together, at the eastern angle. The arrangement

arrangement of the stones is nearly mathematically correct, being about six yards apart, and the same distance from the centre. The upper circle is situated near to the farm house of Lacra. It is of the same dimensions as the lower, of the hexagon form, with one stone lately removed and one wanting. Here again are two stones placed at the eastern angle. This fact is significant with regard to the circles in these parts, the entrance to the Swineside circle being also on the eastern side. The summit of the hill at a subsequent day, but beyond record, has been brought under the dominion of the ploughshare. The furrows, which run in all directions, vary from five feet to nine feet in distance, and the work has been done at a time when no enclosure existed on Lacra. The plough may be traced to the verge of the steep, round the edge of the conical eminences, over the surfaces of rocks still bearing the grooves made by the ponderous ploughshare, and through the stone circles in regular line, without disturbing, to any great extent, the stones of which they are composed. From the nature of the work done it is manifestly that of oxen; and it is a fair inference that the race which then held dominion, had no regard or veneration for the works of their predecessors, whose customs, religion, and government were as unintelligible to them as to us. About half-a-mile to the west, is the "Giant's Grave." It consists of two huge unhewn stones, fifteen feet apart, profusely covered with shaggy lichen. The taller one, said to be at the head of the grave, is ten feet in height; the lesser is eight feet in height. There is a circular cavity on one of these stones (the larger), on the inner side, about three inches in diameter, and one-and-half in depth. The grey lichen, which covers the stone, is found also in the cavity, testifying to the antiquity of the mark. It appears to have been made by some blunt instrument, as a flint head or obtusely pointed drill. Dr. Simpson has drawn attention to these marks, and discovered them at Long Meg, and elsewhere. This mark forms an important connecting link of identity between the west of Cumberland and the Eden Valley antiquities. These stones give the name of "Standing Stones" to the farm on which they are situated. In a cliff near Kirksanton is the Giant's Chair, being a seat with a perpendicular rock behind. The "Giant," as the legend goes, was slain in battle, and buried between the Standing Stones.

It is somewhat singular, that no implement, either of war or of peace, has been preserved from Lacra; but in 1824, a British
battle-axe

Sketch to show relative positions of remains at

Kirkisanton and Lacer



(a.) British Battle Axe found 1824

(b) Roman Urn found containing Bones, now at Broadgate

(c) Stone Celt found by W. B. Walker Esq. Silcroft 1868

(d) Stone Hammer found 1862 now with Rev^d J. Stackhouse Thwaites.

Note All the Stone Circles in Whitbeck have been destroyed.

battle-axe, thirteen-and-a-half inches long, was dug up at Lowscapes, close to, and other relics are said to have been found at the same place. A Roman urn was also found on the Beck estate, not long ago. These relics are not without their significance, as it is historically true, that the Britons made their last stand against the Romans in the mountainous districts of Cumberland and Wales.

It may be noted that there is a great similarity between the antiquities of this district and those recorded in the Isle of Man. It has its kirks, its cairns, its giants' graves, and runic crosses. The most perfect stone circle in the Island, is Glen Darragh, which is nearly of the same dimensions as those on Lacra. It is an easy distance from the English coast, and might afford a place of refuge when troubles afflicted the mainland, or it might be a suitable place for an invader to sally from, when the coast was in a defenceless state. Such periods took place on the Roman and Saxon invasions of Britain, and when the Norsemen of Scandinavia made their settlements in the Western Islands. It is curious to note the recurrence of names in the two districts, as Kirksanton, Cleator, Fleswick, Crosby, Leece, Santon (in Gosforth), Kirkbride and Bridekirk, Kirkandreas, in the Island, and "Kirkanders," as the country people of Cumberland call it, or, properly speaking, Kirkandrews on Eden, and Kirkandrews on Esk. These names speak of colonisation.

There is a legend connected with Kirksanton, of some chronological interest. It is, that a chapel once stood here, on the situation of the tarn, that this chapel sank, and the place was called Kirksancktown; it is also said to have risen again at Kirksanton, in the Isle of Man. The tarn is not without its peculiarities. It has neither inlet nor outlet; it varies little between summer and winter, and it is surrounded by that most pervious of all material, sand and gravel. Though the first place of settlement is called Kirksanton, the township is called Chapel Sucken. If the legend be correct in data, we should be led to infer that Kirksanton in Cumberland is first, Kirksanton in the island, next, and the naming of the township Chapel Sucken a succeeding event. But as this is a matter which may be settled by appealing to another court, we leave the Cumbrians and Manxmen to settle this question of sacrilege in their own way.