

9. IN AND NEAR ANCIENT TOWNS (OPPIDA) AND CAMPS.

In many parts of Scotland and England we have the remains of the structures in which large congregations or communities of the ancient inhabitants dwelt, in the form of more or less extensive strongholds, defended by ramparts and ditches, and containing within their circuit the round foundations of those hut circles which then formed the dwellings of our British forefathers. Often, when the strongholds are on elevated spots, the clusters and relics of the hut circles are found arranged together, lower down the hill, in more favoured and sheltered situations. Near these remains of olden British habitation are sometimes seen megalithic circles, monoliths, and barrows; sometimes the cairns of the ancient dead are interspersed among the hut dwellings of the ancient living;¹ and occasionally the cairns now alone remain.

¹ One of the most remarkable examples of this kind which I have seen exists in the parish of Kirkmichael, in Strathardle, Perthshire. In this parish there formerly stood above twenty megalithic circles (see their enumeration in the old Statistical Account, vol. xv. p. 516, and in Chalmers' Caledonia, vol. i. p. 72); and Archdeacon Williams and others have hence described the locality in question as an ancient centre of Scottish Druidism. Some time ago, when in the neighbourhood, I took

Within and near these archaic and now nameless towns, cup and ring cuttings have been found occasionally, as in the following examples :—

Lothians.—The summits of various hills in the Lothians and adjoining districts have remains of ancient strongholds and defences upon them. These fortified hills are generally not the highest, but those of minor elevation, and isolated. Within the walls, and oftener still below on the slopes of the hills, are frequently the remains of hut circles, and other pit-like excavations. Few or none of them have yet been searched for sculptured stones and rocks. On the middle hill of Craigiewood I found, *some time ago, within a few miles of Edinburgh, an ancient British city of this description, abutting on a steep rock on the eastern side; and on its other sides defended by a triple rampart, and entered by gates placed obliquely.* The proprietor, Mr Hope Vere, was so kind as to examine, by the spade and mattock, the mode in which the three inclosing valli on the western side were constructed. We found that originally they each consisted of a rude cyclopic wall of uncut stones, now buried under a covering of accumulated soil and turf. The area of the inclosed town extends to about forty acres. In different parts of it are still visible the hollows or pits which formed the flooring of the original houses or huts; and a little digging beneath the turf showed rude circular walls built around over several acres. Not many yards outside the southern wall of this ancient town was placed the stone cist, which I have described (page 28) and figured (Plate XV. fig. 2), with nine groups of concentric circles cut upon its covering stone; and, in the low ground below, another cist at Caerlowrie, with circles cut inside the stone lid.

occasion to examine the few stones now left of the circles, with a view of ascertaining whether they presented any ancient cuttings upon them; but detected none. On walking up to the higher muir-ground above, in the direction of a rocking-stone and some other reputed “Druidical” relics, I unexpectedly came upon a series of extensive stone remains of circular hut foundations; and in the midst of this extensive archaic town stood a very large cairn which had been partially thrown down in an attempt to open it. In the “Old Statistical Account of Scotland” it is stated, that from the east side of this cairn there formerly extended two straight stone avenues, above thirty feet broad and a hundred yards long, while each had a small cairn at its further extremity. My excellent and active friend, Mr John Stuart, has latterly prosecuted various researches with the spade and mattock amid these remains of ancient human habitations.

In describing previously (p. 28) this cist-cover at Caerlowrie, I omitted to refer to the drawings of it, kindly made for me by Mr Hutchison, and copied into Plate ~~XVI~~ ^{XV}. fig. 2.

The Caiy Stone, in Colinton parish, a few miles south of Edinburgh (see antecedently, p. 32), is also placed near the remains of ancient sepulchres and dwellings. "Not far from it," writes Dr Daniel Wilson, "are still visible the rude earthworks of a British camp."¹ Maitland, in his History of Edinburgh (1753), describes the Caiy Stone as standing in the neighbourhood of "divers large cairns," which were placed near a "large oval camp," through which an old military way passed.² General Roy speaks of this military way as the continuation of the English Watling Street, which runs "under the east end of the Pentland Hill," onward to Cramond.³ Professor Walker describes this ancient encampment as of an oval figure, surrounded by one great ditch and rampart, and containing about fifty acres of ground.⁴ This fortified inclosure was, in the end of the last century, more correctly described by the Rev. Mr Whyte, of Liberton, as an ancient town rather than a camp; and this obliterated and long-forgotten city "must" (he naively remarks) "have made an important figure before the Castle of Edinburgh—so greatly famed for antiquity—existed, and, consequently, long before there was any appearance of the adjoining city, which is now so flourishing and extensive, and which has been so much admired on account of the height and grandeur of its buildings."⁵

Ross-shire.—Perhaps we may justly refer to this division some sculptured stones lately found by Mr Joass, of Dingwall, near that town. The hill Crock-ri-avach is situate about two miles from Dingwall. A mutilated megalithic circle stands on its south-west shoulder. Near its site, within a dilapidated circular wall, about fifty yards in diameter, is a hut circle, nearly thirty feet across; and at a short distance there are the more indistinct remains of a second. On the hill, nearly half a mile from these habitations, lie nine or ten loose schistose slabs, averaging

¹ Prehistoric Annals of Scotland, vol. i. p. 138.

² History of Edinburgh, p. 507.

³ Military Antiquities of the Romans in North Britain, p. 103.

⁴ Essays on Natural History, p. 605.

⁵ Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, vol. i. p. 308.

about five or six feet in length and breadth, and a foot and a half in thickness. Their upper surfaces are exposed, and sculptured with cups and rings. The figures vary from single isolated cups to two or more cups connected together with a groove or gutter, and others are surrounded completely or partially by a single ring. In some instances, the incomplete ring surrounding the central cup ends in two cups or depressions, as represented in the diagram of them in Plate XIV. fig. 1. On one slab there is the appearance of one central cup, surrounded by a circle of seven other cups. A piece of yellow flint was found near one of the stones. Near a hut circle on the top of the hill, flint arrow heads and cups are reported to have been formerly found in abundance. One of the sculptured stones was carefully dug under by Mr Joass, and was found to lie on undisturbed boulder-clay, while the boulder-clay rested on the soft shale of the district.

Kirkcudbrightshire.—The Rev. Mr Greenwell has directed my attention to a flat rock-scalp on the farm of High Arvie, in the parish of Parton, Kirkcudbrightshire, as presenting appearances of artificial stone-cutting, which he believes to be referable to the class described in this memoir. The carved rock is known as the “Cow’s Clout,” and is marked with three or four cup-hollows of the usual form and size, and a slanting ovoid circle, not unlike that which a cow’s foot produces in softish soil. It would be interesting to examine and uncover the neighbouring rock surfaces in search of other markings. Cairns, &c., exist in the immediate vicinity.

Berwickshire.—About two miles west from Spottiswoode is Harefauld, a camp or habitation of an irregular circular shape. The walls are formed of stones, and in many places are from ten to twenty feet thick. The enclosure is about fifty-five yards across in one direction, but more in an opposite line. There are vestiges of a dividing wall, running from north to south. On the north side, in the thickness of the wall, are several cells or houses—one of them measuring nine feet long by four across; and others also occur in the thickness of the wall towards the west. On the north side are circular walls projecting into the area from the outside wall, forming inclosures of varying size, from six feet to twenty feet in diameter. On the south side, in the wall, and near to what was the entrance to the fort, my friend, Mr John Stuart—to whom I am indebted for these and other notes—found a large slab or

gate-post, having several cup excavations of varying size cut upon its surface.

Doubtlessly a little more extended inquiry in Scotland will increase much the number of instances of stones with cup and ring carvings, found in connection with those aggregated hut circles, towns, and camps of ancient man that lie scattered in various positions over the country. If, passing from Berwickshire, we cross the Tweed, we find—within a few miles of the Scottish border—numerous and remarkable examples of cup and ring carvings upon the stones and rocks of Northumberland; and many of these lapidary sculptures stand in more or less direct relation with the sites of ancient human habitations in that county. In this district their character and numbers are so interesting as to deserve a more detailed notice of their position and peculiarities.

Northumberland.—A high and broad ridge of sandstone runs for a distance of many miles from north to south through the moorlands of Northumberland. There still remain, scattered thickly along its course, numerous relics and evidence of ancient human habitation, in the form of old camps or cities, hut-circles, cairns, barrows, stone cists, &c. The sandstone of the district projects upwards in different places, in the form of bare scalps and blocks of rock; and in various localities, near the sites of ancient human occupation and dwelling, these scalps and blocks have cup and ring markings cut upon them. It is further remarkable that,—as has been specially pointed out to me by my friend, Mr Tate, of Alnwick,—while the sandstone rocks in the northern region of Northumberland are thus profusely sculptured, the hard porphyry rocks in their immediate neighbourhood, forming the Cheviots, show no sculptures at all, although on their lesser heights, flanks, and spurs there are also camps, hut-dwellings, and sepulchres apparently of the same type and same age as those situated on the adjoining sandstone moors. Mr Tate believes that the sandstone, as more easily cut than the hard porphyry rock by the imperfect tools of the archaic sculptors, was alone carved by them. But possibly any sculpturings made on the porphyry rocks have—like other similar carvings on hard rocks elsewhere—disappeared before those on the sandstone, in consequence of the more deep and destructive weathering of the surface of the former.

The sandstone blocks and platforms on which the Northumberland

lapidary sculpturings have hitherto been chiefly found, stretch from Rowtin Lynn, not far from the village of Ford, to Beanley Moor, near to Eglington. Betimes they will probably be detected running further south. Between Rowtin Lynn and Beanley Moor—or within a distance of twelve or fifteen miles—between forty and fifty sculptured rock scalps and stones have been already detected, with, I believe, above three hundred examples of rings and concentric circles cut upon them. Mr Langlands, of Old Bewick, who most kindly showed me the rock carvings in his neighbourhood, was the first to notice one of these Northumberland sculptures as far back as 1825. In 1852, a most accomplished and able archæologist, the Rev. William Greenwell, of Durham, when accidentally resting, as he has informed me, near the sculptured rock at Rowtin Lynn, observed some appearance of carving upon an exposed piece of it, and speedily satisfied himself of the fact, by removing from the surface of the rock portions of its thick and ancient covering of turf. A few months afterwards, Mr Greenwell read an account of his discovery to the Archæological Institute, at its Newcastle meeting; but unfortunately the paper was lost, and hence not published in their Transactions. Next year (1853) Dr Johnston of Berwick figured and briefly described the Rowtin Lynn rock in his “Natural History of the Eastern Borders.” Subsequently notices of this remarkable rock were given to the Berwickshire Club, and to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by Mr Tate, who has extended his inquiry into all the other known sculptured stones of Northumberland with indefatigable zeal and characteristic talent.¹ Another very distinguished Northumberland antiquary, Dr Collingwood Bruce, has laboured most assiduously in the same walk, and

¹ The publication of the present essay has been greatly delayed by various circumstances, besides the more urgent claims of professional work; as by the search after new specimens; by the collection of drawings of the sculpturings; and, above all, by the misfortune of a half of the manuscript being lost with a travelling portmanteau on the railway. After it was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries, I had the pleasure of reading over the principal heads of it to Mr Tate, and found that in most points he and I were agreed. He has latterly drawn up and published, in the “Proceedings of the Berwickshire Naturalist’s Club” for 1865, p. 153, a long and admirable account of all “The Ancient British Sculptured Rocks of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders,” illustrated by careful and accurate plates.

has collected for the Duke of Northumberland an elaborate series of large and magnificent drawings of these sculptured rocks and stones.

The Northumberland rock sculptures present all the usual types of these lapidary carvings, with the exception of the form of the volute or spiral; no instance of which, I believe, has yet been detected among the three hundred and odd ring sculptures which have been found in that county. Cup-cuttings, though not specially noticed by the Northumberland antiquaries, are as frequent upon their rocks as upon our Scottish stones. On the rock at Rowtin Lynn, which stands out as an irregular oblong outcrop of stone some ten feet high by sixty feet in length and forty in breadth, there are still about fifty or sixty ring-cuttings and about thirty cup-cuttings;¹ but many more probably existed on it formerly, as a considerable portion of this rocky outbreak has been removed by quarrying. This is still the largest of the carved rocks in Northumberland, though some other rock-platforms and stones in the district—as those at Old Bewick and High Chorley—have each on their surfaces twenty or more groups of ring-cuttings. The figures in Plate XXIV. give a good idea of the general character of the Northumberland rock cuttings. They are taken from one of Dr Bruce's drawings of the sculptures on Chatton Law, two or three miles south of Rowtin Lynn. But, as already hinted, one of the most interesting facts connected with these sculptures on rocks *in situ* in Northumberland, and the circumstance which leads me to notice them under the present head, is their relation to the numerous old British towns, cities, or camps of the district. The position of these archaic towns or camps is marked by the existence of ramparts formed of rude earth and stone walls, and ditches; and sometimes, as at Beanley, Bewick, Horton, and Dod Law, the roots or foundations of the ancient hut circles or dwellings can be yet traced within the enclosed space. The camp or town walls are,—like the many similar structures in Scotland and England,—usually of a roundish form, and have generally a large second or supplemental enclosure—less perfectly defended—attached to one side of the primary camp. All, or almost all, of the Northumberland sculptured rocks are situated within a

¹ On the Rowtin Lynn Rock is an example (the only one I have noticed in England) of a cup surrounded by a circle of five or six cups—instead of a circular line—a already described at p. 8.

distance of ten, fifty, or at most a hundred yards of those archaic dwellings of human communities; and a few of the carved rocks are placed within the artificial ramparts. The camp or city of Old Bewick—strongly and strikingly situated on the brow of a high hill, with one side protected by a deep cliff, and the other, or land side, defended by four high and formidable ramparts—has two sculptured rocks or stones within the ramparts, and two or three placed outside of them. In Plate XXV. figs. 1 and 2, are two sketches, kindly drawn for me by Miss Langlands, of one of the sculptured stones at Old Bewick. The stone, which is placed about one hundred yards outside the walls of the camp, is nearly ten feet square on its slanting top, and stands about three or four feet high. Fig. 1 shows the ring sculptures on the top of this large sculptured block of rock, and fig. 2 represents a row of cup-cuttings carved upon its sides. The large sculptured rock at Rowtin Lynn stands within the enclosure of a secondary camp, the primary camp or town being defended by four separate ramparts and ditches. The carved stones at Beanley, placed amid the foundations of hut circles, are also situated in the supplemental enclosure near the old strongly-walled camp.

Stones sculptured with cups and rings have been found in connection with ancient camps and towns in other districts lying still farther southward, as in Yorkshire, Wales, Cornwall, &c.

Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire.—A large mass of sandstone in the moor above Robin Hood's Bay, near Whitby, had some sculpturings upon it, part of which were split off by Mr Kendall of Pickering, in whose garden I have seen the slab of carvings which he thus procured. Mr Kendall's slab is about five feet long and two and a-half broad. Upon its surface are three or four isolated cups about an inch and a-half in breadth, and five or six others surrounded by ring-cuttings. See a sketch of it in Plate XXVI. fig. 1. Two or three of the ring-cuttings consist of single circles. One consists of a triple circle and straight radial groove. The ends of the circles, as they reach the traversing groove, turn round and unite together, as in the horse-shoe pattern in Plate II. fig. 9. The two remaining circles, which are respectively five inches and eight inches in breadth, and consist of cups surrounded by two and by three circles, are conjoined together by a long gutter. The upper circle shows a single and the lower a double horse-shoe pattern. In the uppermost or

double circle the rounded ends of the rings are united and bestridden by a shallow right-angled line; and the ends of the lowest or triple circle are in part also conjoined by the gutter which runs from the double circle above, and by a cross straight line which runs off from it. The circles are more imperfectly finished than usual, and at some parts present almost an appearance of being punched out rather than cut out.

I am not aware whether or not any other evidences of the habitations of ancient man were found in the immediate vicinity of these rock-carvings on the Robin Hood Bay Moor; but, in his excellent History of Whitby, the Rev. George Young has shown that, in the vicinity of that town, barrows, stone circles, and pillars are common; and the remains of clusters of hut circles and circular pits, or "ancient British settlements, abound."¹

Wales.—No careful search has yet, as far as I know, been made among the ancient fortified stations and towns scattered over Wales for the presence of ring or cup carvings; but I have seen one remarkable specimen, and from it I should expect that many others will betimes be discovered in the Principality. Near the village of Llanbedr, in Merionethshire, are two tallish monoliths, and one intermediate stone of much smaller size, inscribed as "Meini Hirion" in the Ordnance map. The three are placed near each other, and stand in a row. The two lateral monoliths are respectively about seven and ten feet high. The short intermediate stone is only about three feet in height, and is cut on one of its faces with a faded volute, consisting of six or seven spiral concentric lines, the diameter of the outermost being about eleven inches. But this carved stone, instead of being a part—as supposed—of a set of standing stones belonging to the spot where it now stands, was—as I am assured by Dr Griffith of Hyeres—removed several years ago down to its present site from one of the ancient fortified enclosures, camps, or towns, which abound on the neighbouring high grounds.² *See Plate xxvi. fig. 8.*

Cornwall.—My friend Mr Blight, of Penzance, who has already done so much for the archæology of his native country, writes me, that he has found at Lancreed, on a fine-grained granite rock *in situ*, five cup carvings, with a curved incised line over them. The cups are, as usual,

¹ History of Whitby, 1817, vol. ii. p. 666.

² Mr Cliffe, in a short letter published in the *Archæologia Cambrensis* for 1849;

from two to three inches in diameter. These sculpturings are placed, Mr Blight adds, "about two hundred yards from a strongly fortified group of hut circles, and one hundred yards only from the site of a large walled grave, which, on being opened by a former occupant of the estate, was found to contain an urn with ashes."

Isle of Man.—In the wood situated immediately behind the churchyard of Kirk Braddan—a locality so celebrated for its number of Runic inscriptions and crosses—is an ancient city or town, with an angled portion of its strong encircling walls still standing, and faced with huge upright stones. The foundations of circular and other forms of ancient structures and dwellings exist in a secondary town or camp within the circuit of the wood. On the sides of the largest outcrop of rock standing within this circuit, Professor Babington and I traced, after the removal of a covering of old moss, a number of cup excavations, some of them conjoined together, by grooves or guttered lines, as represented in Plate II. figs. 1 and 2. One of a great group of massive stones placed on the northern border of the wood has between twenty and thirty cups cut upon it,—some of them apparently arranged in a circular form. Three or four stones within or near this interesting site of an ancient Manx community, appear to show artificial straight lines and markings, for tracings of some of which I am indebted to the kindness of Dr Alcock of Birmingham. In his "Vestigia Insulæ Manxiæ Antiquiora" (pp. 96 and 190), Dr Oswald alludes to this ancient town, and states that its remains extend over ten acres or more; and he gives a drawing of portions of the walls, and of a flat excavated flagstone surrounded by the remains of a small circle.¹

p. 321, alludes briefly to some of the many megalithic remains in this district of Merionethshire, and incidentally states that, in a large cairn on the summit of Penmorn, he observed "a huge stone with remarkable indentations." Are these indentations artificial cup excavations?

¹ Another old churchyard in the Isle of Man, rich in Runic monumental stones,—that of Manghold,—is still surrounded at different parts with a deep ditch and a high rampart. Within the area of these ancient fortifications at Manghold stands the church, thickly surrounded by graves. The line of fortifications is much more extensive than the site of the interments, containing about five acres; and in other parts within their circuit, I traced in the green sward the remains of old hut

PLATE XXIV.

ROCKS AT CHATTON LAW, NORTHUMBERLAND.



PLATE XXV.

ROCK AT BEWICK, RUTHVEN WEEM.

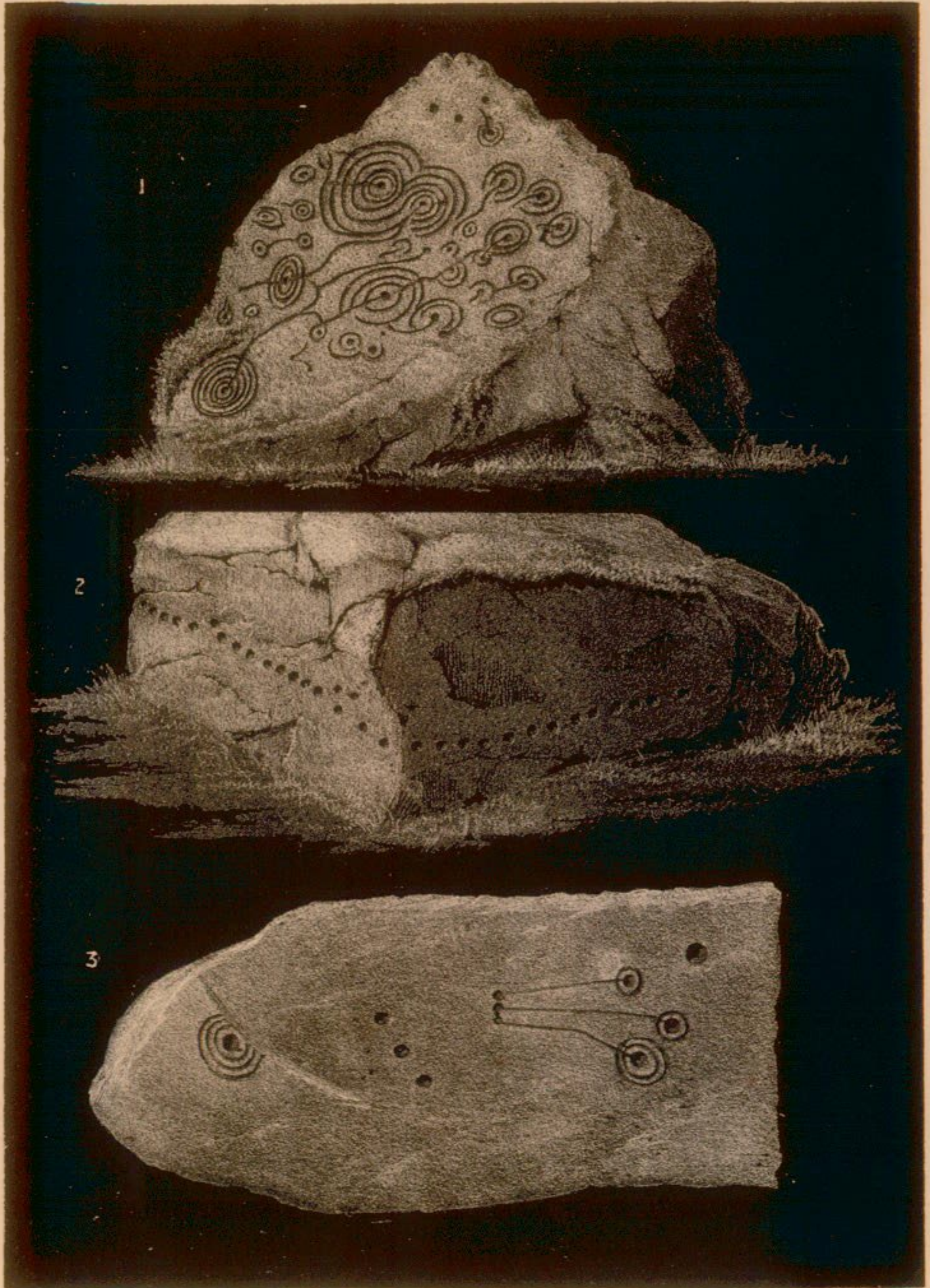


PLATE XXVI.

FROM CARLOWRIE, ROBIN HOOD'S BAY, &c.

