

CHAPTER X.

MOOT CIRCLES OF THE BRITISH ISLES, ETC.

Torhousekie in Wigtownshire—Barrows and Circles of Strathclyde—Circles of Cumberland—Gunnerkeld, etc.—The Circus in Strathclyde—Borcovicium, Hugill, and Gunnar Peak—Why no Camps, etc. in S. Northumberland, etc.—Grassington Circle—Stone-Circles in Derbyshire—Peculiar Features and Distribution—Analogies between Circles and Churches—Welsh Circles: Penmaenmawr—Circles in Montgomeryshire—The θῶκος in Wales—Gyffylliog—So-called Cairn-Circles—Circles of Radnorshire—Circles of Breconshire—Circles of Glamorganshire—Circles of Carmarthenshire—Pwll Mountain and Bannside—Circles of Pembrokeshire—Cornish Circles: Stripples Stones—Boscawen Un and the Dawns Men—The Number '19'—Tredinek and Trevorrian Round—Llanidan—The Hurlers and Stanton Drew—Devonshire Circles: The Greywethers—Free-standing and Contiguous Circles—Fernworthy—Circles in Ireland—Mons Killaraüs—Cruc Mag Slecht—Other Examples—The Cromlech as Sepulchral Monument.

We have arrived at two fixed points: one is the highly elaborated variety of circle seen in Aberdeenshire; the

other is the simple turfed *circus* of Dorsetshire. The next step is to trace and identify forms intermediate between these two. With any questions of chronology we are not yet concerned, nor must it be assumed that an Aberdeenshire circle, because of its practical identity with the Achean moot of 1000 B.C., is therefore of the same age, or indeed of any remote antiquity. It is clear, however, that some of the British Celts used the Achean form of moot, while others used the Latin form, and both were circular. It is a probable inference that the national moot of the Celts was invariably circular, and if there can be shewn to exist a series of works of that form, otherwise inexplicable, which fall into place in a probable sequence of evolution, it will be a legitimate conclusion that these also were Celtic moots.

Evidently there was much variety among the moots not merely of different tribes, but even of the same tribe. We are therefore prepared to find yet other forms, and the varying details of the Romano-British *circi* warn us that we may also expect to find hybrid forms. Lastly, we may expect an overlap of one type with another; for this is known to have occurred with successive barrow-forms, and moots were modelled upon barrows.

It has been repeatedly asserted that there does not exist elsewhere in the British Isles anything resembling the peculiar circles of the Aberdeenshire type.¹ The case next to be described raises a doubt whether such a statement is justifiable.

On the farm of Torhousekie, 4 miles out of Wigtown on the road to Kilcowan, is a 'very fine and complete' circle of 19 stones set on the periphery of an oval measuring 66 ft. by 61 ft. A few feet short of the centre of the arena, set in a line pointing NE.—SW. is a row of three blocks, the middle one of smaller size (3 ft. wide and 2 ft. 10 ins. high), the other two much larger; and 'with its extremities resting on the outer ends of the two terminal boulders of the row, and containing the centre of the circle, is a peniannular ring of loose stones in form of the letter C, measuring interiorly some 25 ft. by 16 ft. There are no visible signs of structure, but the details have been much

¹ Tibullus, i, i, 38. The correct vessel was a *patera* (*patella*), and from one or other Roman writer one gathers that it was usually small (Varro, Juvenal), of a black colour (Festus, Juvenal), and easily broken (Juvenal); but Ovid (*Fasti* ii, 540, 615) is evidence that it was common to make

shift with a broken household crock or even a scrap of tile. The 'sacrifice' was probably proportionate: at the *Feralia* (a festival of the dead, as was the *Consualia*) it might consist merely of a little fruit, a little salt, a little grain steeped in wine, and a few common flowers (*Fasti*, ii, 538–540).

¹ So A. L. Lewis in 1900 (*Journal Anthropol. Inst.*): 'All enquiries I have made have failed to discover a case of this type anywhere except in this district (Aberdeenshire).'

obscured by the interior of the circle's having been made a dumping-ground for stones gathered from the adjacent field. The area within the ring is not so stony as to suggest that this is the site of a cairn which has been removed.¹

On comparing the plan of this circle with those of Garrol Wood (p. 153) and Auchquhorthies (p. 162)

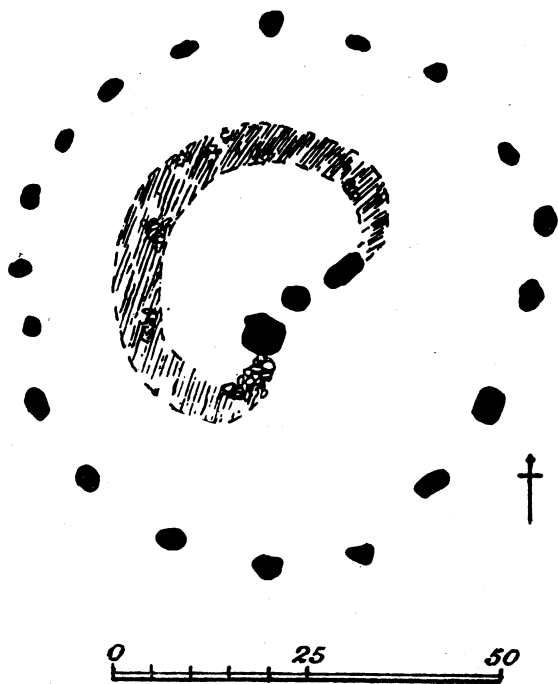


FIG. 25. CIRCLE OF TORHOUSEKIE.

Scale 25 feet to one inch.

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it is impossible to doubt that all belong to one and the same class, the three boulders at Torhousekie representing the remains of what was once a $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ of construction similar to, if not identical with, that of the Aberdeen-

¹ *Royal Commission on Anct. and Hist. Monts. Scotland, Co. of Wigton* (1912), no. 531.

shire type¹; and this conclusion is borne out by the further facts that the Torhousekie circle, like the others, is so built that the $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ faces to the gradually rising ground in front of it, and that of the 19 stones of the peristalith the larger are those adjoining the $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$, the smaller those on the opposite side. As at Auchquhorthies, the $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ is pushed inwards towards the centre of the whole. It is a further point of resemblance that the circles of Torhousekie and of Garrol Wood are in point of area to all intents identical. When once it is realised that the $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ was nothing more than the presidential chair of its moot, there ceases to be anything odd in slight occasional differences in its position. Nothing can be argued to the contrary from the present condition of the medial boulder at Torhousekie; it is probably a mere fragment of what was originally a horizontal stone of 8 ft. 6 ins. in length.² It is tolerably safe to prophesy that excavation within the penannular ring of stones would at once reveal the usual mass of burnt matter, if not more substantial evidence of an actual *bothros*.

Wigtownshire has few other remains of circles.³ In Kirkcudbrightshire they are more numerous: one at Cauldside (diam. 70 ft.) in Anwoth may have had 19 stones,⁴ but nothing is said of any trace of medial rings, or indeed of any feature except sometimes a central monolith.⁵ Dumfriesshire has a number of circles, some of great size, as e.g. the 'Twelve Apostles,' an oval (longer diam. 291 ft.) of 12 stones,⁶ in the parish of Holywood, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles NW. of Dumfries. One of them is a 'foreign' stone (porphyry), but of any horizontal stone there is no trace.

Torhousekie circle lies in the northern portion of what was once Strathclyde, in a region occupied in the seventh

¹ It may be compared with that at Ardlair (figured in Bp. Browne's *Antiquities of Dunecbt*, plate xxvi) which is known to have been greatly reduced in size within the last 70 years (*ibid.* pp. 81-3).

² F. R. Coles asserts (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxi, pp. 92-94) that this 'stone' has been moved.

³ There is said to have been one at Eldrig; *op. cit.* p. xxxix and no. 230. Allusion is also made to possible remains at Glassenton (nos. 12, 13), Boreland (no. 110), and Wigtown (nos. 532, 534).

⁴ *Royal Commission, etc. Kirkcudbrightshire*, no. 16.

⁵ *op. cit.* no. 292 (Glenquicken) and no. 293 (Claghreid), both in Kirkmabreck: cp. no. 446 (Lairdmannoch in Toryland). This (diam. 22 ft.) was probably sepulchral. At Drannandow in Minnigaff was one of 90 ft. diam., of which remain seven stones only (no. 366). In *Proc. S.A.S.* xxix, pp. 301 sqq. is given a list of 22 circles in the county.

⁶ There remain eleven at the present day, some of them unusually large. *Proc. S.A.S.* xxviii (1894), pp. 84-90.

century by the Southern Picts. Much of Strathclyde remained Celtic until the twelfth century. It was Brythonic, and to this day its western verge retains a name—Cumberland—derived from the Brythonic Cymru whom the Saxons found in possession. The Cumbrian Celts retained their independence until the great fight at Dunmail Raise (945). Moreover, there is so singularly little trace of any occupation of the region in pre-Roman times¹ that one is led to think that it was merely a sort of no-man's land until the Roman conquest drove the retreating Brythons into its uninviting fastnesses. Yet Strathclyde, and more particularly Cumberland, is famous for the number, size, and good preservation of its great circles. It is not absurd to surmise firstly that these circles were the handiwork of the Brythons, and secondly that as Strathclyde is remarkable also for the number and elaboration of its peristalithic barrows, this type of grave-monument was a favourite with the same people. Nor is there as yet forthcoming any certain evidence that in Cumberland such barrows are of earlier date. As the circle-moot was developed from the peristalithic barrow, this second conclusion is in accord with the first. And the circles and the peristalithic barrows being proportionately more numerous in the western² than in the eastern parts of Strathclyde, one infers that, thirdly, this peculiar distribution is directly related to the fact that in Cumberland the Celts longest retained their national traditions.

In Cumberland alone are known upwards of a score of great circles, and it is probable that others yet remain to be recorded upon the remoter fells. Only that known as Sunkenkirk (diam. 92 ft.) has been scientifically explored, and it yielded no evidence whatever that it was sepulchral.³ That on Castlerigg near Keswick (diam. 107 ft. by 96 ft. 8 ins.) has or had within it a low mound and the ruins of a

¹ R. S. Ferguson remarked (*V.C.H. Cumberland*, i, 249) upon the odd fact that, while there was in existence plenty of sepulchral pottery from the local barrows, there was not to be found in any public or private collection any domestic pottery recognisable as of pre-Roman date. He clearly held the usual view that the sepulchral pottery is pre-Roman, and if it were so, the fact of there being no contemporary

domestic pottery would be truly remarkable. Not so, however, if the sepulchral pottery itself be not pre-Roman; and there is no evidence that it is.

² In the sw. extremity of Cumberland, between Whitbeck and Kirksanton, is, or was, a group of not less than seven of the circles.

³ Below, ch. xxiv.

rectangular enclosure (26 ft. by 13 ft.) abutting upon the periphery on the south-east; but as the whole area is known to have been under plough in 1769, neither of these features can well be original.¹ There are said to have been two mounds within the circle at Salkeld² (diam. 360 ft. by 305 ft.), in point of area the largest remaining peristalithic circle in England, but as this also has been under cultivation it cannot be shewn that the mounds were sepulchral.³ Eskdale circle (103 ft. by 95 ft.), on Burnmoor near Wastwater, includes five separate proven cup-barrows each with its own peristalith, but it has yet to be shewn that these, or any of them, are of the same age as the circle rather than later and intrusive.⁴

Each of these four circles retains its entrance-way, and this is in each case directed to a different point of the compass.⁵ That of the Salkeld circle faces towards the British and Roman highway from Penrith to Carlisle. That of Keswick circle faces similarly to the road from Penrith to Keswick.⁶ The Roman road from Hardknot to Ravenglass passes near the Eskdale circle and continues along the coast to Dalton-in-Furness, and beside it, between Whitbeck and Kirksanton, are or were seven other circles. Tall menhirs stand a short distance away opposite the entrances of the circles of Salkeld and Eskdale.

Of a circle (diam. 156 ft.) of 88 stones which stood 7 miles south-east of Carlisle on King Harry Common in Cumwhitton, under Carrock Fell, there remain but a few stones known as 'The Grey Yauds.'⁷

On Moor Divock⁸ in Askham, Westmorland, on the crest of the fells east of Ullswater, scattered on either side

¹ *V.C.H. Cumberland*, i, p. 246. There remained in 1877 thirty-eight stones, of which all but five were erect.

² The menhir called Long Meg stands 60 ft. away to sw. and the whole group of megaliths is popularly known as 'Long Meg and her Daughters.'

³ Gibson's *Camden* (1773) explicitly says that 'they are no part of the monument, but have been gathered off the plowed lands adjoining' (ii. 176). A woodcut in *Gents. Mag.* for 1752, p. 310, shows a low stone fence crossing the area, part of which is under cultivation.

⁴ Canon Simpson (*P.S.A.S.* iv, 447) suggested such intrusive occupation of pre-existing circles. Another case is the

Pembrokeshire circle of Eithbed in Prescelly (p. 244).

⁵ They face thus:—Sunkenkirk, south-east; Keswick, north; Salkeld, south-west; Eskdale, north-west.

⁶ As both Penrith and Keswick were Roman stations, this road is certainly as old as the Roman time, if not older.

⁷ 'Yaud' is said to be identical with 'jade': cp. the name of 'The Grey mare and her Colts' in Dorsetshire.

⁸ Also written Duvock and Doveack. Hereabouts are one or two of the so-called 'star-fish' barrows, from one of which, cruciform in plan, the spot was locally known as 'Druids' Cross.'

of the Roman road from Penrith to the south, is a very extensive group of remains chiefly sepulchral, which speak plainly of a once dense population long vanished. Here, amongst many smaller cromlechs, is the circle called the 'Cockpit' (diam. 297 ft. by 270 ft.), formed of thick stones of irregular shapes, most of them still erect. It crowns a knoll in a *col* between Moor Divock and Swarth Fell, close beside the Roman road. It has no fosse. The area is covered with bracken, while outside the circle grow only heather and coarse grasses.¹ A smaller circle on Swarth Fell (diam. 57 ft. by 42 ft.) had lost one third of its periphery in 1920. It was formed of thin slabs 3—4 ft. in height and nearly contiguous, though all but one had been overthrown and seemingly on purpose.² The number now visible is 65, which means that the complete circle contained 100 more or less. Here the area is clothed with short bright grass, while without the grass is long and coarse.³

Amongst the other remains on Moor Divock, Dr. Greenwell mentions⁴ a circular work (diam. 68 ft.) surrounded by a low vallum and having its entire area paved with smooth water-rolled stones. He believed it to be sepulchral, but offers no proof thereof, he does not specify its precise whereabouts, and it is not clear that he had examined the 'entire' area. In dimensions it agrees with the so-called Copstone circle, which has the plan of a peristalithic ring-barrow, but is not described as paved by other recent observers.⁵ Whether sepulchral or not, its alleged paving provides a valuable parallel to the Scottish circles of Castle Frazer and North Stone and Culdoich (pp. 145, 168) on the

detail, and the details of the circle last mentioned, to Dr. Eliot Curwen.

³ cf. *Proc. S.A.S.* xl (1906), p. 186: a report made in 1853 upon a now destroyed circle at Gingomyres, Hill of Milleath, Banffshire, mentions that, while the ground about was moor-like, 'the interior of the circle was of a rich green colour, which induced the Rev. Mr. Cowie, the minister of the parish, to dig downwards, when he found a layer of charcoal and bones of animals.' Possibly the peculiar colour of the grass is to be explained by the presence of the 'charcoal.' See further *Sussex Arch. Coll.* lxiv (1923), p. 39.

⁴ *British Barrows*, p. 400.

⁵ *Cumb. and West. Trans.* vi, 180, vii, 325.

one hand, and to Mayburgh (p. 198) on the other, and it prepares us to find paving of some kind in other moot-circles.

On Knipe Scar and in Oddendale, in Crosby Ravensworth, are two pairs of circles. Of those on Knipe Scar one consisted of three concentric rings of stones with diameters of 7, 21 and 63 ft. respectively.¹ Within the inner ring, 18 ins. below the surface, was a rough flattish stone (2 ft. 6 ins. by 1 ft. 3 ins.), and under it 'evident traces of charcoal and burnt earth.' In the centre of the second circle of this pair, at the same depth, was 'a rude pavement of cobbles, about 6 ft. long and 4 ft. wide, and under this again a similar deposit of charcoal.' Of the two circles in Oddendale, there was 'the same kind of deposit within each central ring, but no trace of pavement'; but the ground here had been previously disturbed.² In none of the four cases was there found any indubitable interment. In all four cases, and more particularly at Knipe Scar, the finds may very well represent the remains of *bothroi*.

Waistell Taylor speaks³ of the '100-foot circle at Gunnerkeld' as shewing the same features as those in Oddendale, and in particular he mentions that it 'has within its inner belt a segmental chamber.' He notes other circles 'of considerable dimensions' in the vicinity, one lying beside the railway $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Shap,⁴ a second on Karl Lofts, and others at Brackenber⁵ and Rosgill.

Sunbrick Circle, on Birkrigg in the parish of Bardsey, peninsula of Furness, still shews the remains of two rings: the inner (10 stones) was a regular circle of 27 ft. in diameter, and the outer (13 stones) a decided oval measuring 88 ft. from east to west by 75 ft. from north-west to south-east.⁶ The two rings are not concentric, the interspace on the south side (26 ft.) being nearly double that on the north

¹ The ratio of the figures (1, 3, 9) is noteworthy. The centres of these two circles were 96 ft. apart only, so that, if the circles were of equal size, the interspace was but 33 ft.

² Canon Simpson in *P.S.A.S.* iv (1863), 444-7.

³ *Cumb. and West. Trans.* viii (1886), 341.

⁴ In J. B. Waring's *Stone Mon. and Tumuli and Ornament of Remote Ages* is a drawing of a circle 'on Shap Moor,' in which an outer circle (diam. 63 ft.) surrounds

an inner ring (diam. 21 ft.), and at the centre is a circular pit in which were found ashes. The measurements are precisely the same as in the case of the two circles on Knipe Scar, suggesting a local standard of size for the moot.

⁵ Canon Simpson believed this to have had a diameter of 400 ft. (*Arch. Journ.* xviii, 29). It is now all but destroyed.

⁶ Swainson Cowper in *Archæologia*, liii (1893), p. 418.

¹ M. Waistell Taylor described it in 1886 (*Trans. Cumb. and West.* viii, 323) as consisting of two concentric circles and having within it the ruins of four cairns. In 1920 there remained no trace of any inner circle, and the four cairns were reduced to two irregular heaps of stone lying on the periphery to s.e. and n.w. It is quite possible that such heaps, sometimes mistaken for cairns, may occasionally have been formed by tearing up the stones which once constituted inner circles or pieces of pavement, or both. These, being smaller than the stones of the peristalith, would naturally be removed first.

² All seem to have been overthrown so that their tops fell inwards. I owe this

(15 ft.).¹ The ground slopes gently to the south-east. The entire area is roughly paved with undressed cobbles, for the most part water-borne, lying at a depth of from 2 to 6 inches only below the present surface of the turf. Immediately beneath this was a second pavement of the same kind laid on the undisturbed marl, in which also the limestone boulders of the two rings were so set as to prove that they were fixed in position before the pavement was laid. At the centre of the area both pavements 'were slightly depressed, forming a saucer-shaped cavity about 3 ft. in diameter.'² Here was found nothing beyond an exceptionally large stone which formed the centre of the lower pavement; but beneath the paving elsewhere, were as many as four separate deposits indicative of burials, and at a fifth point a small and rude urn in an inverted position. This was 20 inches below the surface. None of these finds was at the actual centre, and in most cases the pavement appeared to have been removed to receive the deposit and again replaced. In the space between the two rings had been found to date (1922) a few stone implements, but no metal.

Parallels for the external features of this circle—the non-concentric plan, the regularity of the inner as contrasted with the outer ring, the paved area—have been already furnished; and the arrangement of the centre, if at the time of writing exceptional, is not so much so as to preclude its having been a *bothros*. As for the interments, the fact that the pavement had been broken to admit them, and their entire lack of symmetrical relation to the circle, strongly suggest that they were intrusive; and the complete absence of any grave-furniture points to their being of late date and possibly of surreptitious character. The urn may be paralleled from those found in the circles at Cadster (p. 228) and at Pwll Mountain (p. 241), and was to all appearance in the nature of a consecration deposit.

There is evidence enough that the people of Strathclyde constructed circles of types closely analogous to those found in Aberdeenshire and the surrounding areas; but there is evidence that they also constructed moots of simpler types.

¹ Jopling, in *Archæologia*, xxxi (1846), p. 450, has a wood-cut showing them as concentric, with respectively 12 and 20

stones. He gives the diameters as respectively 30 ft. and 90 ft.

² *Cumb. and West. Trans.* xii (1912), p. 265.

Mayburgh has been described above (p. 198), as also the small *circus* at Borcovicium (p. 179). The latter so nearly resembles other *circi* of South Britain as to leave no doubt about its purpose. It is, nevertheless, so far removed from the standard Roman plan as to leave little question that it is not Roman work.

A circular area (diam. 56 ft.), with surrounding vallum and a single entrance, was a feature of the settlement at Hugill in Cumberland.¹ It lay within the *enceinte* of the 'village,' and appears to be the precise counterpart of such a *circus* as that on South Tarrant Hinton Down in Dorsetshire (p. 193). There are many analogous works associated with the forts and villages of the shires of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. At Ringheel, parish of Mochrum, Wigtown, a 'small circular fort' (diam. 80 ft. by 70 ft.) without fosse, was found to have a clay floor which had been subjected to the action of fire, and the overlying soil was black and full of fragments of charcoal.² It is the same in Berwickshire and in Northumberland: in both counties stone circles are extremely scarce, whereas works of the correct *circus* form are numerous. That within the *enceinte* of Old Rothbury (p. 196) may be regarded as a proven case.

Fifteen yards away from the gate of the fortified settlement on Gunnar Peak, near Gunnerton in Northumberland, was a low, oval, barrow-like mound. It was composed of burnt stuff 'intermingled with many animal bones,' amongst them part of a human jaw. Beneath it, a little west of the central point, was 'a circular or nearly circular pit, about 16 ins. in diameter and nearly 3 ft. in depth. Charcoal and ashes lay on the bottom, and the inner surface of the lining sandstone-slabs, set upright, bore marks of the long-continued action of fire.' Dr. Greenwell seems, with some hesitation, to have approved the excavator's view that this represented the cooking-place of the settlement, but the pit was too deep and too narrow to serve any such purpose, and analogy suggests a different use. This

¹ *Cumb. and West. Trans.* xii, p. 6. The observer (C. W. Dymond), unwilling to regard it as a hut-circle because of its size, seems to scoff at its being called a circle at all, but mentions that it had been so termed by earlier observers and so represented in their plan of the settlement.

² *Royal Commission Ant. Hist. Monts. Scot. Wigtownshire*, no. 198. In the same parish are (no. 232) the remains of another unfossil 'fort' bearing the suggestive name of Corwall.

suggestion is borne out by the observation that, of the stones found in the mound, many were 'flat and smooth, and may have served for seats.'¹ The settlement was extremely small, yet it had, it would seem, the inevitable moot.

Works of the class under consideration have up to the present been noticed chiefly in the northern part of Northumberland amongst the Cheviot Hills, where 'camps' in profusion bespeak a large population; but in south Northumberland, and in the county of Durham, circles are entirely unknown, 'camps' strangely few, and even barrows are rare. The contrast, for which Dr. Greenwell² confessed himself unable to account, may be found to admit of easy explanation. The building of the Roman Wall, as it was designed to do, completely sundered the northern Celts. The country immediately to the south of the Wall, previously occupied by the troublesome Brigantes, seems to have been cleared of its inhabitants over wide areas, these including south Northumberland and Durham, through which ran the chief line of communication between the Wall and the administrative capital at Eboracum (York). On the other hand the lands to the north of the Wall and right up to it are crowded with the vestiges of a dense native population. The plain inference is that to the south the Romans systematically carried out that policy whereof Tacitus³ makes Galgacus speak so bitterly—'they make a wilderness and they call it "peace"'; and many of the evicted population, escaping beyond the Wall, and obstinately maintaining themselves there with the aid of the Scottish Celts, built up in northern Northumberland a Brythonic kingdom which held its ground against Roman and Saxon successively until the ninth century. This simple explanation of the facts might long since have been recognised but for the unhappy preconceptions which underlie and result from a mistaken chronology of anhistoric remains.

¹ Rev. G. Rome Hall in *Arch. Aeliana*, x (1895), pp. 34-5. Unhappily the article is accompanied by no adequate plans and gives few details. There were found fragments of Roman and Romano-British pottery within the settlement.

² *British Barrows*, p. 400.

³ *Agricola*, 30. Agricola (*ibid.* 24) is made to speak of these northern tribes as *Britannorum fugacissimi*. Tacitus himself uniformly terms the northern tribes Britanni (never Caledones), and mentions by an individual name the *Boresti* (*ibid.* 38) only, a tribe of which the locality is quite unknown.

The whole wide area of Yorkshire can shew the remains of no more than half a dozen great circles, and these for the most part clustered along its eastern fringe—the 'Bride Stones' of Bilsdale, Doedale, Sleights Moor, and Grosmont. Clearly the Brythonic population of most of the county was left in a condition too poor and feeble to

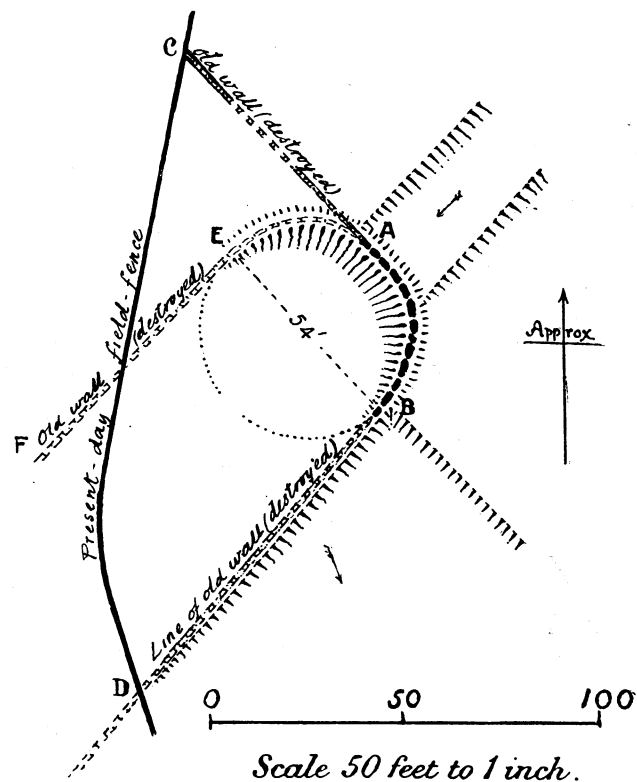


FIG. 26. GRASSINGTON: THE 'DRUIDS' CIRCLE' AT BORRANS.¹

aspire to the building of such pretentious works—possibly had never been in a position to do so. But—and consistently enough, in other parts of the county—there are cases of equal significance, if less pretentious. That called Castlestead Ring has been described (p. 196), and it is said to be but one amongst a series of similar works in that region.

¹ The figure is from a field-plan kindly made for me by Dr. Villy, M.D. in June, 1923. For the interpretation of the plan he

is in no wise responsible. The dotted line suggests what may have been the original form of the work.

Another case is that of Grassington in Wharfedale (fig. 26). Here, at a spot known by the significant name of Borrans, were identified some 30 years ago the remains of one of the most extensive native settlements in the county, although no satisfactory account of it seems to have been published ; and amongst the most remarkable of these remains ' a large circular, or rather oval, enclosure formed by a bank of earth and stone, upon which is a double row of raised stones—I have counted nearly 60 in all—not a little suggestive of the so-called Druids' Circles. The enclosure is 54 ft. in diameter.'¹ The measurement, it will be noticed, is almost the same as that of the circle at Hugill (p. 223).

Lying on ground which falls gently to the south-west, the work is carved out of the slope in the fashion of a Greek theatre. Of the probable ring of stones there remain some 45 feet only, and this portion seems to have been broadened and filled in to serve as part of a field-wall (CABD).² The residue was probably torn up and utilised to build this wall, which was in its turn demolished to make the existing wall CD. The vallum enveloping the area EAB is quite unmistakable, and the floor of the area, noticeably depressed, is 5 feet below the vallum at A. The other half of the vallum has been levelled. The whole stands amongst a series of rectangular lynchets of the Iron-age type. The wall BD followed the line of one these lynchets, and there are signs that a similar and parallel wall once ran along EF. The features suggest that here, as in other less dubious cases, the circle was at one period adapted to the requirements of a shepherd or stock-farmer.

The settlement at Grassington was a large one, covering more than 100 acres, and ancient roads—some of them certainly Roman and some possibly earlier—are evidence that it had a continuous existence down into the days of the Roman occupation. It must, therefore, have had its own moot. The work at Borrans answers the requirements of such a moot : it is circular, and while it has the depressed floor and the broad unfossed vallum which were characteristic of one type of moot, it has apparently had also the peris-

talith which was characteristic of the other type. That the features of the two types should occasionally be combined in one and the same moot-circle is not surprising, for they were frequently so blended in sepulchral circles. Even of the Aberdeenshire circles some shew a tendency in this direction, and in the circles of Derbyshire it may be said to be the rule.

Amongst English counties Derbyshire is easily foremost in regard to the number of stone circles there surviving. So says W. J. Andrew,¹ who has made a special study of them. They lie scattered over the high moors of the north-western portion of the county, where, within an area of less than 400 square miles, there yet remain some 20 circles more or less complete, while there is record of at least a dozen others which have been destroyed, ' and no doubt as many more lie hidden by the heather of our little-frequented moors.' Derbyshire was included within the territories of the Ordovices, the Brythonic tribe who subsequently made themselves paramount over a great part of North Wales.² Through the heart of the circle-area of the county runs the Roman road from Buxton northward to Chapel-en-le-Frith.

In diameter the Derbyshire circles range from as little as 10 ft. to as much as 150 ft. In the cases of Arbor Low and the closely analogous work at Chapel-en-le-Frith (the ' Bull Ring '), the size of the fosse and vallum preclude the idea that these circles were intended for moots. The rest of the circles are smaller in area, and the fosse and vallum, if present at all, are of the feeblest and most perfunctory description. There seem to have been always two entrances, usually to the north and south, but never exactly opposite to each other.³ The stones of the peristaliths, though varying greatly in size, are in no case large. But amongst much diversity there is again an underlying uniformity which stamps the whole series as the outcome of one same culture. With the exception of the diminutive

¹ In *Memorials of Old Derbyshire*, pp. 79-88. For another opinion upon the matter, see *V. C. H. Derbyshire*, i, pp. 183-4.

² Lloyd, *Hist. Wales*, i, p. 41.

³ So says W. J. Andrew, who explains this as indicating the presence of some central features—dolmen or pillar or cairn

—in the original plan. A thoroughfare of which the gates were not exactly opposite would just pass this without needing to be deflected. From the evidence of the Aberdeenshire circles and others one would infer that the central feature was rather the *βωθρός* or other provision for the ceremonial fire.

¹ H. Speight, *Upper Wharfedale*, p. 430. The spot is now known locally as the ' Druids' Circle,' but the earlier and very suggestive name of the locality is Borrans,

a fairly reliable index to antiquity: see *Earbwork of England*, p. 327, n.

² Possibly the circle was of the kind called contiguous; see below, p. 253.

10-ft. circle Mr. Andrew is confident that they were not sepulchral, regarding the few interments which they have yielded as either consecration-graves or intrusive. He notices that the circles are never situated upon the actual summits of the hills, but invariably upon gentle slopes near the summits,¹ exactly as has been observed to be the case in so many other areas. The pottery found within them is exclusively of 'Bronze-age' types, while of metal they have produced absolutely none; and again the parallelism with Aberdeenshire is remarkable. There does not, however, appear to have been noticed in the Derbyshire circles anything in any way resembling the Aberdeenshire dais. The circle on Eyam Moor is typical of the whole series. It lies on a gentle slope, so that the upper side is some 7 ft. higher than the lower, and the stones are set upon a very slight annular vallum giving a diameter of 98 ft.² Within the Cadster circle Mr. Andrew found an inverted and empty urn, placed near the centre, but eccentrically.³

The characteristic of the Derbyshire type is the presence of a similar slight, but decided vallum, usually 2 ft.—2½ ft. only in height, on the inner face of which are ranged the stones of the peristalith. These are never large, and in the case of Wet Withens (diam. 120 ft.) they are only some 9 ins. above the soil. None of the circles has a fosse worth calling such. They suggest a compromise between a newer and an older way. Thus that called the 'Nine Ladies,' on Stanton Moor, slightly elliptical, has an area of 50 ft. by 45 ft. enclosed within a vallum of 2 ft. vertical height, but of the disproportionate breadth of 10 ft. There are two entrances, and along the inner slope of the vallum are set 9 stones, the tallest rising but 3 ft. above the heather which covers the site.⁴ The slight elevation of the vallum—as if designed not to keep any one out of the circle, but to give the greatest possible seating-space for an assembly—and the standing-stones, all agree with the view that circles

of this type are modifications of the non-vallated circle, possibly produced under the influence of the Roman *circus*. With a diameter of 50 ft. and a bank giving an interior slope of 5 ft. such a circle would provide some 600 superficial feet of space, or as much as is afforded by a building 40 ft. by 15 ft. There are a good many ancient town halls, a multitude of ancient churches, which even at the present day are no larger.

While claiming for the circles of Derbyshire an immense antiquity in point of type, W. J. Andrew is careful to say¹ that he believes many of them to have been actually constructed at a very late period, and he remarks that 'there is evidence that the great circles of the country were centres of native population at the time of the coming of the Romans, for the roads of the invaders were driven straight for them.'

In regard to the Derbyshire circles Mr. Andrew has remarked a fact which overbears anything that can be adduced in support of the theory that they were erected as places of burial: they are distributed over the map at regular intervals of 8 miles. So uniform is this relation of each circle to its neighbours that, finding upon the map one or two *lacunae* where a circle might be expected but was not recorded, he went to the spot and immediately found what he sought. This occurred in more than one case. Obviously the 8-mile interval was an intentional feature in the plan of those who built the circles, and it was, moreover, carried out with an accuracy which, in view of the broken character of the country, is astonishing.

Now it is scarcely conceivable that mere burial-places should have been thus methodically distributed over the surface of the country, even if this theory of the purpose of the circles could be reconciled with the uniform presence of the two entrance-ways, and the almost uniform absence of any trace of burials such as the theory assumes. But if the circles were in reality built for some totally different purpose, their peculiar distribution, equally with other features, becomes not so much inexplicable as reasonable.

The evidence suggests that their purpose was that of moots. In the light of what is known of the thoroughness of the organisation of the Celts in the days when Druidism

¹ They face in various directions. That at Cadster, Whaley Bridge (diameter 35 ft. by 40 ft.), was provided with a level floor by building up the lower side with a dry stone revetment. Like the rest this produced 'not a single human relic.'

² J. S. Wilson and G. A. Garfitt in *Man*, March, 1920, where are elaborate drawings of it.

³ His experience had led him to expect such a find, and in this precise part of the circle, and a very few minutes' digging brought it to light.

⁴ W. J. Andrew, *Memorials of Old Derbyshire*, p. 82. The same arrangement of the stones is found in the circle of Wet Withens, and in that of Cadster near Whaley Bridge.

was paramount, it is in no wise unlikely that a whole area may have been regularly mapped out into sections and each section provided with its own moot, especially in a district such as the Derbyshire hills, where there have been discovered few signs of any such well-developed town-life as prevailed, for example, in Dorsetshire. To this day in many of the Dales the parish church stands to all intents alone, and the dalesmen come thither from miles around, riding or driving to the occasional services.¹ There is no reason why there should not have prevailed in some parts of Celtic Britain a state of things precisely similar. If there are to be found upon the wild fells and moors of the northern counties circles remote from any discoverable traces of contemporary habitation, revealing even to the excavator either no trace whatever of interments, or only such insignificant interments as are found in the Derbyshire circles, is there not a curious parallel between these circles and the solitary churches of those very same areas to-day ?

The fact that no settlement has yet been discovered at a given spot is no proof that it never existed. Those *vici* of which Festus speaks (p. 210) must have represented parishes rather than villages enclosed each within its own walls. They must have possessed their own moots, and if there were no 'town' at the gates whereof the moot could be set, its position must have been arbitrarily determined on some other principle. The whole of this thinly-peopled area of Derbyshire may have been so parcelled out, the unit being area rather than population.² Whether the authority which introduced the system was Roman or Celtic is of no particular moment to the present enquiry. If it was Celtic, the moot would be the Brythonic circle-moot, and this may have been subsequently modified in some cases, as has been suggested, to bring it more into accord with the Roman *circus*. If it was Roman, the peristaliths must be the work of a native population who could not wholly wean themselves from their Celtic traditions.

¹ Exactly the same state of things prevails in many parts of Scotland to this day. The occasion is commonly a 'Communion Sunday,' and it is possibly not wholly fortuitous that such 'Communion Sunday' is usually the first in May.

² As was the case in old Wales (Seebohm, *Engl. Village Community*, p. 205). One is strongly tempted to see a connexion between the old Venedotian land-system (described *op. cit.*) and the distribution of the Derbyshire circles, both seeming to be based upon the numeral 4 and its multiples.

The probabilities are decidedly in favour of the former view, viz. that the circles represent the native organisation of this area in Celtic times. It is quite possible that certain tribes may have habitually followed such a system.¹ There are sound reasons for thinking that the Ordovices, albeit Brythonic, were on a plane of culture far below that of south Britain.

Those who believed that the Druids were adepts in geodesy will find no difficulty in the suggestion that they thus mapped and distributed the circles of Derbyshire. Those who do *not* hold that belief must explain, if they can, how the circles come to be so distributed in a rugged country where correct measurement of horizontal distances is very difficult. Whoever so arranged the circles, they were capable mathematicians and surveyors, as Caesar seems to say the Druids were. And if the builders were not the Druids, who were they ? We have no tradition of any other class or of any individual competent to do such a thing—unless indeed it were Merlin ; and Merlin himself was a Druid. It has been remarked that the names of Brown Willy and High Wilhayze, both derived from the Celtic word² meaning 'highest,' show that the Brythons were aware of the fact that these two hills are the highest in their respective localities ; yet for a long number of years the guide-books mistakenly gave the credit of highest elevation on Dartmoor to Yes Tor rather than to High Wilhayze, until corrected by the trained observers of H.M. Ordnance Survey.

It would be unreasonable to expect that a mathematical distribution like that apparent in north-west Derbyshire, should be capable of proof in every part of Celtic Britain. With the Derbyshire moors the passage of 2,000 years or so has interfered but little, whereas over most of the island agriculture and other developments have made away with all or most of the evidence. Nevertheless, there are traces of something similar in other localities.³

That the intervals should vary is to be expected.

¹ Welsh tradition avers that Dyfnwal Moelmud (p. 275), who was particularly concerned with the introduction and elaboration of the moot-system, 'measured out Britain.' The implied connexion between that system and some kind of 'measuring' is significant.

² (*Bryn Ucbella*, or *Ubella*).

³ Notably in Aberdeenshire. Thus the circle of Tyrebaggar (ch. viii) is 10 miles distant from those of Fiddes (N.E.), Aquhorthis in Inverurie (N.W.) and Sinhinny (S.W.); and there seems to be a similar relation between others.

A rigid uniformity of distribution extending over the whole of the British Isles from Land's End to Inverness would presume a unity of dominion for the builders, whoever they were, for which we have no warrant; and even supposing such a dominion existed—and after all there is no proving that it did not¹—no authority sufficiently intelligent to carry out the scheme would have been so unpractical as to ignore all considerations of actuality. Allowance must have been made for varying density of population, for example. Why build moots where none were needed? Why build more than were needed? We do not know what was the density of the population of any part of Britain at any period more remote than a century ago, but we do know that populations fluctuate in a most extraordinary way; so that the moors of Derbyshire may well have been as populous in the days of Druidism as were the lands we now call Aberdeenshire, and the fells of Strathclyde may have outdone both in point of population. At the present day Cranborne Chase is amongst the least thickly peopled areas in the southern counties, yet in Late-Celtic and Roman times it was crowded with towns and villages. Much of Cornwall is to-day a desolation, but there is evidence that in earlier days it teemed with people. The same is true of the wide area of Dartmoor, whereas it is to be doubted whether a modern Caesar would feel himself justified in speaking of the 'measureless multitudes' of the weald of Sussex and of Kent. The South Downs to-day are all but tenantless, but in the Roman time they were the home of a people whose lynchets climbed to their very loneliest crests.

Again, one may find an analogy in our parish churches. In the middle ages those churches were the normal moots of their parishes, but one parish differed from another in

¹ Even if the same *political* system of the druidical time extended over the major part of the country, there must still have been very wide differences in its forms, as there were in the culture of different areas. So far as the evidence goes the headquarters of the system was in the *ora maritima*, and specifically in Wilts. and Dorset. At the present day the same political and social systems prevail in Middlesex and the Yorkshire dales, but the facts of life in the two regions are widely different. As Prof. Anwyl remarks (*Celtic Religion*, pp. 17, 33), much

of the seeming contradiction to be found in the various ancient accounts of Druidism may be due to differences of date and of locality. What Caesar saw and faithfully described in the Belgica of his own day was probably very different from the state of things described in another part of Gaul and at another date by another writer equally trustworthy. Modern conditions are apt to blind one to the importance attaching in ancient days to an interval of a few score miles; and the same is probably true of a few score years.

point of area and of numbers in the same kind as now, if in less degree. Big or little, populous or otherwise, the parish foregathered to its church as the centre and the symbol of communal existence and communal freedom, regardless of whether it was near or far, little more concerned whether it was large or small. That it was their place of worship was much, but that it was also their moot was vastly more. It is a place of worship still, but it is no longer a moot, and for that reason it is no longer *the* place of worship. This is the fundamental reason for the perfectly justifiable complaint that 'the Church has lost its hold upon the people.' Paradoxically, but truly, it is because the people have lost their hold upon their Church:

τοῦτον δ' οὐτ' ἄγοραὶ βουλευφόροι

The Ordovices were possibly the builders of the circle (the 'Bride Stones') which stood on the borders of Staffordshire and Cheshire between Congleton and Bidulph, and the Cornavii of others in the neighbourhood of the Longmynd in Salop. One of these, known as Mitchell's Fold, is in good preservation. The westward advance of the Brythonic peoples into North Wales appears to be marked in the same fashion. Just as the circle of Pendine (p. 169) stands at the very gate of its community, so at the gates of the great Iron-age fortress on Penmaenmawr, Carnarvon, stands the circle called the Meini Hirion or 'Long Stones,' 81 ft. in diameter. The pillar-stones, perhaps originally 12 in number, are unusually lofty, rising to 8 ft. in height, as befitted the moot of an unusually formidable community. There seems to have been originally an inner circle, which was destroyed to provide materials for blocking up the interspaces of the peristalith¹ to make it serviceable as a sheep-fold. A small cist is said to have been found at the foot of the most easterly pillar. An ancient roadway leads from the fortress close past the circle,² and in the vicinity are many lesser circles, apparently sepulchral, between 20 and 30 in number, the diameters varying from 12 ft. to 22 ft.

In Flintshire remain 5 stones only of a circle (diam. 87 ft.) in Penbedw Park, parish of Cilcain, a so-called 'pointer' standing 237 yards away to the south of west.³

¹ As shewn in the woodcut in Jewitt, *Grave-Mounds*, p. 81: cf. *Arch. Camb.* i, 71; Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, ii, p. 308.

² *Arch. Camb.* loc. cit.

³ *Inventory, Flintshire*, no. 47.

Near Festiniog, Merionethshire, there remained in 1842 as many as 41 stones of a fine circle on Bwlch Craigwen in Penmorfa.¹ It was oval, measuring 44 by 36 cubits (66 ft. by 54 ft.). It appears to have vanished within the next 7 years.² Another, of exactly the same dimensions, is said to have stood at Cefn Coch.³ At Cilgwyn, on the road to Nant Nantlle, was 'a very complete cirque, 16 paces each way, having 24 pillars.'⁴

In Montgomeryshire, on Kerry Hill, parish of Kerry, survives a complete peristalith of 8 stones (diam. 85 ft.) with a ninth at the centre.⁵ On Newydd Fynyddog in the same county, in the hamlet of Tir y Myneich (*Terra Monachorum*) and parish of Llanbrynmair, are the remains of two circles, respectively 72 ft. and 81 ft. in diameter, separated by an interspace of 140 yards. Much ruined now, both were 'nearly perfect' in 1866.⁶ The larger bears the curious name of Lled Croen yr Ych, 'Breadth of an oxhide.'⁷ Of the 8 remaining stones of the other, Cerrig Gaerau, seven lie as if purposely overthrown, their *axes* in line with the centre of the circle. The eighth stone, which is at the northern point of the periphery, is likewise prostrate, but its axis is tangential to the circle, and it is remarked that, whereas the others are shapely stones, well adapted for use as pillars, the tangential stone, a drift boulder, is not only much larger than the rest, but is of an awkward shape.⁸ Was it perhaps the horizontal stone of a circle of the Aberdeenshire type?

The possibility of this theory is not lessened by the existence, so late as 1842, in the parish of Llandrillo, Merioneth, of a 'circle of stones 12 yards in diameter, *within which was formerly a circular cell* six feet in diameter.'⁹ It stood close beside a circular 'camp,' of whose occupants it was probably the moot.

¹ Lewis, *Topog. Dict.* Stukeley has a drawing (*Itin. Curiosum*, ii, plate 80) of a single circle of 11 stones 'by Mawnog Grigog, parish of Penmorfa, Carnarvonshire.'

² *Arch. Camb.* 1849, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *op. cit.* p. 6.

⁵ *Montgom. Collections*, xxiii (1889), p. 82; *Inventory, Montgomeryshire*, no. 282.

⁶ *Arch. Camb.* 1866, p. 540.

⁷ *Inventory, Montgomeryshire*, no. 308. D. H. Haigh (*Conquest of Britain by the*

Saxons, p. 215) refers to the ceremonial furrow drawn by an ox-team about the site of a proposed settlement. Such was certainly the proto-Latin way (above, ch. iv) and some such forgotten ceremony may underlie this odd name. The Danish duelling-ring was also determined by the extent of an ox-hide (Hibbert in *Archaeol. Scotica*, iii, p. 125), and the *bide* was the Saxon unit of land-measure.

⁸ *Inventory, Montgomeryshire*, loc. cit.

⁹ Lewis, *Topog. Dict.*

Two circles in the adjoining county of Denbighshire certainly possessed *θῶκοι*, albeit of less ambitious fashion than was usual in Aberdeenshire. One of these is the small ring-work (diam. 22 ft.) in the parish of Gyffylliog, known of late years as Llys y Frenhines, the 'Queen's Court'; whence was brought (*circa* 1804) 'the boulder somewhat resembling an armchair' which is called Cader y Frenhines, the 'Queen's Chair,' and is now in Pool Park, Ruthin.¹ The other, on Clocaenog Moor, is also small (diam. 26 ft.), surrounded by a penannular bank of earth 12—18 inches high, in which are embedded a few stones. The largest lies at the south-western side: it has the form of a rude chair, 2 ft. in height at the back, and faces to the centre of the circle. A 'pointer,' now fallen, lies on the moor 47 yards away behind it.² Some 50 yards east of this circle is another and larger one (diam. 45 ft.), of exactly the same construction, comprising at least 16 stones.³

A peculiar circle in Gyffylliog is to all appearance a capital example of the fusion of the Celtic stone-built circle-moot with the Roman *circus*. It shows a sunken floor (diam. 30 ft.) surrounded by a low and disproportionately broad vallum 17 ft. in width, in which the peristalith is largely buried. The stones stand 3 ft. in height, and the over-all diameter of the work is 64 ft.⁴ It lies near Ruthin, and somewhere hereabouts must have run Roman roads, one along the valley of the Alwen, the other connecting Caer Gae with Ffrith. Even in Aberdeenshire the otherwise unusual feature of the depressed floor is still visible in the circle of Greystones near Alford (p. 146), and was present in those of Crookmore (Tullynessle) and Tyrebagger; and there was permanent Roman occupation of that region during a number of years (p. 140).

A circle (diam. 43 ft.) of 31 stones, of an average height

¹ *Inventory, Denbighshire*, nos. 209, 374. There is a wood-cut of it in *Arch. Camb.* 1855, p. 155. It is not suggested that the stone has been artificially shaped. It appears to be entirely natural, but not the less convenient.

² *op. cit.* no. 116. On the analogy of the Aberdeenshire type the entrance to this circle would be beside where stands the

'chair'; and the position of the 'pointer'—if such it was—is explained. See below, p. 266.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *Inventory, Denbighshire*, no. 208. The general appearance of the whole is suggested by the local tradition that it was long used as a cock-pit.

of 18 inches, crowns the Eglwyseg Rocks near Llangollen.¹ It is associated, like that of Meini Hirion, with a number of smaller circles (average diam. 11 ft.), either sepulchral or residential, and all alike have been surmised to be the kerbs of vanished cairns.

This method of explaining away all stone circles of less impressive proportions is on a par with that which dismisses all earthen *circi* as 'pastoral' enclosures. Of a certainty a multitude of cairns has been destroyed, and the process is still going on; but unless there be conclusive evidence of the erstwhile existence of a cairn upon the spot, to write down a ring of stones as the kerb of a dismantled cairn is mere guess-work. It has not even probability to recommend it. Cairns have been destroyed for one or other of two reasons: either the ground or the material was required for another purpose. If the ground was wanted, obviously the theory will not apply so long as the ring of stones is there; and if the material was what was sought, why were the assumed kerb-stones left? The circle on Pendine Head has been thus lightly accounted for, but no one conversant with the facts can be satisfied with the explanation. It is more than likely that a number of the so-called cairn-circles are genuine moot-circles, of the same type as that of Pendine, which have passed unrecognised because the observers have not known what to look for.

Some 500 yards west of the circle of Cerrig Gaerau (p. 234) are the remains of a circle (diam. 28 ft.) comprising 12 stones, 'well shaped' and 'unusually accurately placed,' which, it is said,² 'must' have been the kerb of a cairn. Some excavations which are known to have been made at the spot some half-century ago, albeit no details of the matter are forthcoming, are held to account sufficiently for an obvious pit which marks the centre of the circle. The pit is written down as the site of a cistvaen, over which the cairn is assumed to have been reared; and three isolated stones, which lie within the arena, 'may,' we are told, 'be regarded as the remains of an inner circle, perhaps removed when the cistvaen was destroyed.' There is no

¹ *op. cit.* no. 408. The name of Eglwyseg (less correctly Eglwyseg) is as yet unexplained, but there can be little doubt that it has some connexion, if only by assimilation,

with *eglwys*, 'church,' and refers to the presence of these circles. See below, ch. xx.

² *Inventory, Montgomeryshire*, no. 310.

smallest evidence adduced for either cairn or cistvaen. Both are pure assumptions, and it is at least as justifiable to maintain that the pit, the peristalith, and the admitted 'remains of an inner circle,' are all good evidence that here too stood a moot-circle of a recognised type. Such a conclusion is certainly not weakened by the peculiar name of Yr Allor, 'the Altar,' which attaches to the spot, as it attached also to the site of the indisputable moot circle of Carn Llwyd (p. 239).

A second route of the Brythons into Wales is indicated by the circles of Radnorshire, of which there are five known.¹ One of these, the 'Druid's Circle' in Nantmel, has a diameter of 36 ft. only, and traces of a possible inner circle of 10 ft. diameter.² Of the remaining four, that on Gelli Hill in Bettws Diserth has some 12 stones set on a circle of 68 ft. in diameter³; Fedw Circle in Glascwm had about 40 stones and a diameter of 79 ft.⁴; the 'Six Stones'—they were originally 12—in Bryngwyn have a diameter of 87 ft.⁵; and that called Banc-du, the 'Black Chair,' in Llanbadarn Fynydd had originally some 17 or 19 stones on a diameter of 88 ft.⁶ The last-named seems at one time to have had a central menhir like some of the Cornish circles. There is no record of any sepulchral finds in any of them, and four out of the five are of the normal proportions of the British moot-circles. The *Inventory* expressly notes that the stones of the Fedw Circle stand only 'about 18 ins. in height.'

In southern Breconshire are four circles. That of Carreg Ddu (diam. 56 ft.) is very perfect. Another, a quarter of a mile only from the Roman station of Pigwn on the summit of Trecastle Mountain, is 75 ft. in diameter, and at the north-western foot of the Van Mountain are two others, 100 yards apart, with diameters of 56 ft. and 56 ft. by 75 ft. respectively.⁷ All are built of small stones and all are remarkably well preserved, and with that of Carreg Ddu is associated a stone avenue, a feature very unusual in

¹ Excluding the tiny 7-foot circle of 11 stones called Beddau Folau, in Llansantffraid Cwmteuddwr, presumably sepulchral.

² *Inventory, Radnorshire*, no. 478.

³ *ibid.* no. 41 B.

⁴ *ibid.* no. 189.

⁵ *ibid.* no. 65. Bryngwyn, according to Rowland (*Mona Antiqua*), means 'Royal

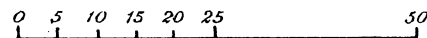
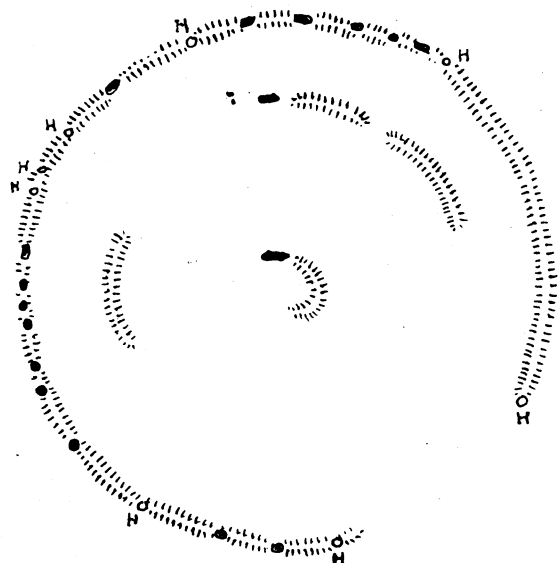
Court.' There is another parish of Bryngwyn in Monmouthshire, and several other places of the name in Wales.

⁶ *ibid.* no. 240.

⁷ Plans are given by Lt.-Col. W. Ll. Morgan in *Three Days with the Swansea Scientific Society*.

Wales though common enough on Dartmoor. In the centre of the circle on Trecastle Mountain is something described as 'a slightly raised platform,' 10 ft. in diameter and 4-6 inches high. A greatly ruined circle (diam. 27 ft.) some 90 ft. to the south-west is probably sepulchral.¹

This group lies on the upper waters of the Usk and probably represents a Belgic thrust up that river-valley



Scale 25 feet to 1 inch

FIG. 27. MOOT CIRCLE OF CARN LLWYD.

(After the original survey made in 1893 by Lt.-Col. W. Ll. Morgan, F.S.A.)

H.H.H.—holes from which stones had been removed.

from the direction of Caerleon. There are signs that each locality was once thickly peopled, although the region is now one of the loneliest. Lt.-Col. W. Llewelyn Morgan thinks that the Trecastle circle, from its close proximity to

¹ So Lt.-Col. Morgan, *op. cit.*

the Roman *castra*, must be either contemporary therewith or later, arguing that any such monument, if older and already *déclassé*, would be destroyed for the sake of its component stones by those who built the *castra*. But even if it was older one may conceive that it might be spared because it was still used for its original purpose.

Further south, on Mynydd y Gwryd, was Carn Llwyd (or Carn Pryfod), described in 1842 as a triple concentric circle with extreme diameter of 65 ft. The outer ring was peristalithic (p. 238). The medial ring lay 10 ft. within

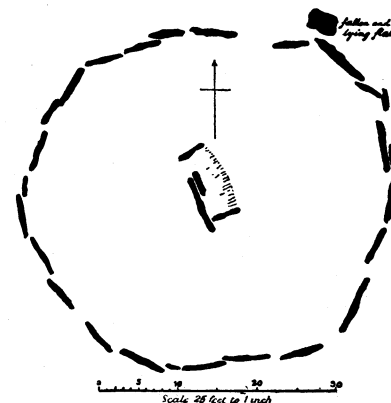


FIG. 28. SEPULCHRAL CIRCLE OF CARN LLECHART.

(After the original survey of Lt.-Col. W. Ll. Morgan, in 1893.)

this, and at the centre was a circular something, 7 ft.-8 ft. in diameter, which was held to be a cistvaen. There is no proof that it was such, and cistvaens are not usually circular. It was much more probably the *bothros*, i.e. the altar, of a circle which, in everything but the recorded presence of the horizontal stone, was precisely like those of Aberdeenshire; and it is significant that the circle was locally known as Yr Allor, 'the Altar.' It is now unhappily quite destroyed. Two miles to the west is the circle of Carn Llechart (fig. 28). It is a simple circle (diam. 40 ft.) of contiguous stones set lengthwise on their edges about an unmistakable cistvaen, 8 ft. in length and rectangular in plan. It was certainly sepulchral, and its close contiguity to Carn Llwyd, which was as certainly a moot-circle, is a

valuable confirmation of the view that in Celtic Britain, as in Celtic Greece and in ancient Italy, the form of the moot-circle was determined by that of a grave.

In Glamorganshire stone circles are 'very rare indeed,'¹ but the Rev. John Griffith could in 1912 adduce a list of five² examples. Of these that called Hên Dre'r Gelli in the Rhondda Valley, nearly complete, had a 'pointer'; while another at Tythegston, 2 miles west of Bridgend, shewed traces of an avenue like that of Carreg Ddu (p. 237). The remaining three—one at Lalestone, also 2 miles west of Bridgend, that called Hên Llan in the Vale of Neath, and that called Cae'r Hên Eglwys at Llangenydd in Gower—are of special interest in another connexion (ch. xx). The last-named had 'three standing stones, a roughly circular outer bank, and an inner bank-ring 'still traceable in 1912, 'while two fairly upright stones seem to have formed the entrance into the larger enclosure.'³ Clearly this was a moot-circle of fully developed type.

The distribution of these examples indicates a further advance of the Brythonic peoples from the Upper Usk south-westward by way of the Vale of Neath, and so into Gower, where is mentioned another circle (diam. 60 ft.) on Rhossily Moor⁴ near Worms Head. The physical features of the native population of the county to this day bespeak them largely non-Brythonic, and the rarity of moot-circles in the county is exactly parallel with the rarity of all peculiarly Brythonic forms of sepulchral barrows in the same region. Hereabouts even reveted barrows are very rare.⁵ The main current of the Brythonic advance ran on westward through Carmarthenshire into Pembrokeshire.

In Carmarthenshire, besides the little non-peristalithic circle of Pendine already described (p. 169), four other circles are known.⁶ That of Garnfawr, in Newchurch, has a diameter of 150 ft. and is said to have been once surrounded by a ring-wall of small stone 6 ft. in width and 5 ft. high.⁷ That called Meini Gwyr or Buarth Arthur ('Arthur's Cow-garth') in Llandysilio East, close to the

borders of Cilymaenllwyd, has a diameter of 70 ft. and was once peristalithic.¹ A circle in Llandybie, called Y Naw Cerrig ('the Nine Stones') was 60 ft. in diameter.² The fourth example, which has never been fully described,³ is of extreme interest.

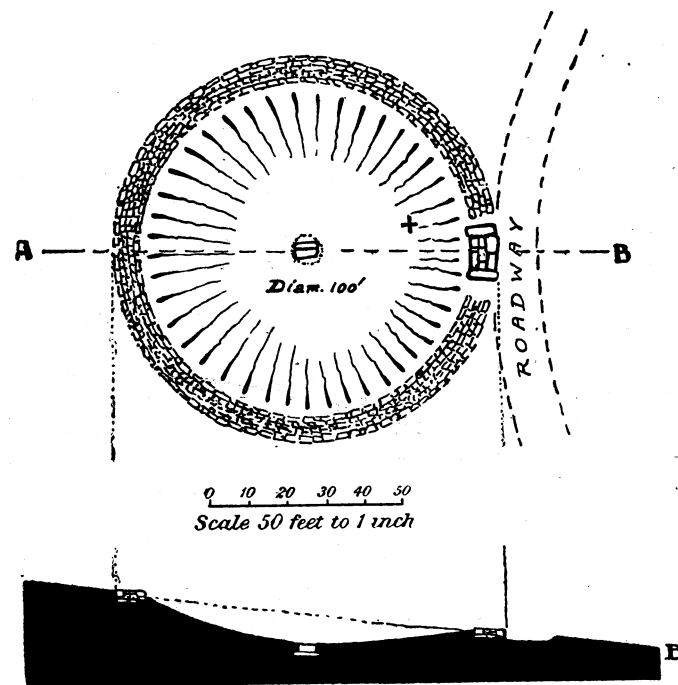


FIG. 29. CIRCLE ON PWLL MOUNTAIN, MARROS, CARMARTHEN.

(After a survey made by the late John Ward, F.S.A.)

The sign + shows the position of the consecration-deposit.

It lies in the parish of Marros, some 3 miles from Pendine, near the foot of the northern slope of the hill (600 ft.) known by the somewhat misleading name of Pwll Mountain. The area, which is markedly concave,⁴ is

¹ *op. cit.* no. 321. Stukeley shews it (*Itin. Curiosum*, ii, pl. 83) with a peristalith of 15 stones and an elaborate entrance-way.

² *op. cit.* no. 292. Destroyed quite recently, it had in the centre a mound, thought to have been thrown up half a century ago that it might be r'anted with trees.

³ This work, which is wholly nameless,

seems to have been first noticed by Mr. W. Clarke, of Wenvoe. It was explored by him in 1915, in collaboration with the late G. G. T. Treherne and John Ward, F.S.A.

⁴ John Ward inclined to think it was originally a swallet, of which there are many in the district. Writing of the circle at Tyrebagger, Jas. Logan (*Archaeologia*, xxii,

¹ *Royal Commission Anct. Hist. Monts. Wales and Mon.: Minutes of Evidence*, vol. i. (1912), no. 1898.

² *op. cit.* appendix ii, L.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *op. cit.* no. 1898.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Of the elaborate triple circle figured by Stukeley (*Itin. Curiosum*, ii, pl. 80), nothing now appears to remain. He shews it with a peristalith of 21 stones, 'the highest not 3 ft.,' set on a diameter of 'about 10 yards.'

⁷ *Inventory, Carmarthenshire*, no. 658.

surrounded by the remains of a broad stone terrace, dry-built, 9 ft. in width. This terrace, built up of two or three courses of the undressed boulders of the locality, with larger stones as a kerb, might easily be mistaken for the ruins of a wall.¹ There is no exterior fosse, and the area is markedly free from any litter of stone. Owing to the slope of the hill the south side of the circle is some few feet higher than the north, the lowest point. At first sight the work is precisely like scores of other circular works which commonly pass for 'pastoral' enclosures and are frequently written down as sheepfolds of no great antiquity. Clearly it was never intended as a military work. Excavation revealed the remains of a solid rectangular platform, slightly raised and about 10 ft. in length, interrupting the inner face of the terrace at the lowest (north) side, and projecting into the arena. Some 6 ft. in front of this, and 12 ft. west of a line drawn from the centre of the circle to this platform, were found the remains of an urn of the type assigned to the Late Bronze age²; and in the precise centre of the circle, resting upon two flat slabs of stone 3 ft. below the surface, a mass of black stuff, apparently the residuum of many fires. There seems to have been an approach to the circle from the lower side, with a narrow entrance at one or both sides of the platform.³ Nothing else was discovered, although much of the area was turned up by a series of trenches.

The only superficial difference between this work and such a circle as Tyrebagger is that, whereas the latter once had a peristalith, the former seems to have had none. In position each is exactly like the other; each has the same sunken floor and each also has the dais, and that at the same (lowest) point of the circle. The broad annular

410, and plate) remarked that its area had been 'hollowed beneath the level of the surrounding soil.' This he believed to be a recent modification, designed to make the circle more suitable for a cattle-fold, for which it was used when he saw it. The case of this circle at Marros, and certain features of Romano-British *circi* already described, raise a doubt whether the sunk floor be not original.

¹ John Ward was emphatically of the opinion that it never was a wall.

² Now in the Cardiff Museum. It was about 2½ ft. below the surface. W.J. Andrew has found similar deposits, in positions precisely analogous, in more than one of the Derbyshire circles.

³ At this point the circle abuts upon a very ancient road which, coming up the valley from the direction of the circle on Pendine Head (ch. viii), is traceable past the farmstead of West Pwll northwards to Llandowror and the ancient (? Roman) ford of the river Taff at Dolgam, leading towards Carmarthen (Maridunum).

terrace of the Welsh circle has its parallel in the medial ring still traceable in some of the Scottish examples,¹ and the central deposit of ashes is common to both. At Pwll Mountain was found indeed a seemingly sepulchral urn. But this was not such, or so disposed, as to suggest that the whole elaborate work had been constructed merely to serve as barrow to this burial. The urn was accompanied by no grave furniture, it was not a remarkable specimen of its kind, and—most significant of all—it was not deposited in or near the centre of the circle, but eccentrically, at the lower side of the circle and near the dais. It was perhaps the consecration-token of the whole *locus consecratus*. In the corresponding position within the Scottish circle at Castle Frazer were found two deposits of black mould mixed with fragments of urns of coarse thick paste.²

There are no discoverable signs of permanent occupation of this circle. Some 600 yards higher up the hill, however, are two, possibly three, smaller circles of totally different character, simple enclosures of piled stone shewing nothing like the peculiar flat and purposed terrace of the larger circle; while one of them (diam. 70 ft.) contains the very visible remains of a number of circular huts. The smaller circles probably represent the homes of the community whose *gorsedd* (place of meeting) was the large circle.

A definite sepulchral analogue to the proven non-sepulchral circle on Pwll Mountain is provided by the ring-work (diam. 65 ft.) on Bannside Moor in Coniston (Lancs.), where an annular terrace 9½ ft.—12 ft. in width, faced on the inner side with thin upright slabs, enclosed the urns and ashes of several interments.³ The chief external difference was that the Bannside circle, being sepulchral, had no entrance-way.

Still further west, among the Prescelly⁴ Mountains of Pembrokeshire, was a number of great circles, many of them destroyed only within the last few years. One (diam. 78 ft.) in Dyffryn Syfynwy shewed (1911) an inner ring

¹ Notably in Auchquhorthis and Tomnagorn. F. R. Coles remarks that in the Scottish circles this paving or kerb starts from, and is connected with, the sets which bound the small paved area in front of the horizontal stone.

² *Proc. Soc. Antiqs. Scot.* xxxv, 199.

³ W. G. Collingwood in *Cumb. and West. Trans.* 1910, p. 342.

⁴ A moot at 'Preseleu in Dyfed' is mentioned in *Mabinogion, Story of Pwyl Prince of Dyfed*.

(diam. 40 ft.), 'a sort of [annular] platform from 1½ to 2 ft. high . . . much obscured by vegetation.' Not far off, at Eithbed, parish of Maenclochog, were two others. One of them, an oval (mean diam. 150 ft.) stood 330 ft. distant from the second (diam. 120 ft.), and like that of Dyffryn Syfynwy, surrounded a circular litter of stones 'which may have formed a central cromlech, or perhaps an inner ring.' When this was removed (1909) there was found 'a very definite circle of ashes of a red colour, 10 ins. thick,' which can scarcely have marked anything but the site of a *bothros*. Three, or possibly four, other circles at Maenllwyd, Clyn-saithmaen, and Bedd Arthur (diam. 70 ft.), have wholly disappeared, but that called Gors Fawr, 2 miles east of Clyn-saithmaen, still keeps intact its peristalith of 15 stones set on an exact circle of 60 ft. in diameter at regular intervals of 24°. Done Bushell, from whom¹ these details are borrowed, remarks upon the abounding evidences of human occupation in the vicinity of these circles, but being himself concerned only with their possible astronomical significance, he failed to make any further examination of their still existing remains.

The circle called the Stripple Stones, on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, was explored (1905) by H. St. George Gray.² Of its pillars only four remain erect, but they are the tallest in Cornwall, and they represent a circle of 135 ft. diameter, set out upon a very gentle southward slope. The unique feature here is a perfunctory fosse which covers the three higher quadrants of the circle and at three points throws out small loops or 'demilunes.' The excavator satisfied himself that the fosse was merely a catchwater designed to keep the arena dry; the purpose of the demilunes he leaves undetermined. Possibly they marked the sites of three isolated stones belonging to an earlier circle, for there is evidence to shew that here, as at Stonehenge, there has been reconstruction. In the case of Stonehenge there were preserved of the earlier work only the three stones commonly regarded as 'pointers,' viz. two small blocks upon the outer edge of the circular arena, and that called the 'Friar's

Heel' which stands in the entrance-way. These three stones being untooled, whereas all the rest of the stones employed have been dressed, one is justified in regarding them as portions of an older structure which were for some reason reverently conserved; and their disposition being suitable, it is not unlikely that they were actually the solstitial and equinoctial 'pointers' of the original circle. Similarly the three demilunes of the Stripple Stones may have marked the positions of the three 'pointers' of an earlier circle, and if their disposition is not so obviously agreeable to the surmise, the probable explanation is that, as there is otherwise reason to think, the reconstructed circle was not in this case concentric with that destroyed. But neither here nor at Stonehenge were such 'pointers' preserved for any purely utilitarian purpose, for they stood too near the new circles to be of practical use.

The circle at Boscawen-Ūn in St. Buryan—it is in reality an ellipse measuring 81 ft. 3 ins. by 72 ft. 6 ins.—is to this day the most perfect of its kind in Great Britain. When Dr. Borlase¹ made his drawing of it in 1754 only one stone had become displaced, and seventy years later only one other had fallen.² The stones, which are of no great size—they vary from 3 ft. 2 ins. to 4 ft. 7 ins. in height—are all of granite with one exception, a block of quartz which stands opposite to what would seem to have been the original entrance on the north-east side. Their number is 19. In the entrance-way are the two halves of another block which in Cotton's time (1826) lay outside the circle and at right angles to it. Within the arena is a menhir 9 ft. in height.³

The circle called the Dawns Mên ('Stones of Dancing'), 2 miles away,⁴ is only second to that of Boscawen-Ūn in point of preservation. It is an almost exact circle (diam. 76 ft.) of 19 stones, with an entrance slightly to the north of the eastern point. The stones are of much the same average size as those of Boscawen-Ūn, but there is no 'foreign' stone among them. This circle was perfect as

¹ *Arch. Cambr.* ser. 6, xi (1911), pp. 220

sqq.

² *Archaeologia*, lxi (1908), p. 1. The name is possibly related to that of Stiper Stones,

the ridge of hills running through Shropshire from Church Stoke (sw.) to Church Pulverbatch (ne.), from ? *A.-S.* *stipere*, 'pillar.'

¹ *Antiqs. of Cornwall.*

² W. Cotton, *Illustrations of Stone Circles, etc. in West Cornwall* (1826). The fallen stones are now replaced.

³ Shewn in Stukeley's drawing, *Itin.*

Curiosum, ii, pl. 83, but not certainly original.

⁴ On Rosmoddress Farm, hamlet of Boleit, parish of St. Buryan.

late as 1801,¹ but lost two stones (both now replaced) within the next 25 years.² There are known to have been a large number of barrows in the vicinity.

To all appearance these two circles—Boscawen-Ūn and the Dawns Mên—are the most recent of all those in Cornwall, and they belong to that part of the county in which the old Celtic kingdom of West Wales or Dyfnaint maintained itself longest. Nothing sepulchral has ever been found in them.³ There is nothing known of them which in any way conflicts with the theory that they were moots of the West Welsh, and that, if not actually constructed at so late a date, they were used as such down to the close of that people's existence as an independent kingdom.⁴ The ruins of the dwellings of the people who may have so used them are strewn broadcast about them.

As 19 happens to be the cardinal number of the Metonic cycle, much capital has been made of the fact that it is also the number of the pillar-stones at Boscawen-Ūn and the Dawns Mên of a circle on Whitemoorstone Down on Dartmoor, at Torhousekie, etc.⁵; and it is paralleled with the assertions that 'the god (Apollo) comes into the island once in every 19 years,'⁶ and that 19 was the number of the priestesses of the fane of St. Bridget in Kildare (ch. xvii). These are coincidences only and have their parallels in other lands: Nieburh⁷ long ago remarked the constant occurrence of 'astronomical' numbers in the constitutions of Athens, Rome, and Carthage; and, were it worth while, as much might be made of the frequent recurrence of the numbers 8, 10, 12, and 60, in various circles. The number

of the stones may have had a meaning in ritual or symbolism without its following that the circles were themselves used as observatories.

If there is no record of the erstwhile presence in any Cornish circle of the inner ring of smaller stones or of a central *bothros*, the fact merely means that no observer has hitherto looked for such things. Dr. Borlase seems to have seen a true *ἱερός κύκλος* at Tredinek, for he illustrates a circle of contiguous blocks of the required size,¹ and opposite to the entrance something which at once recalls the horizontal stone of the Aberdeenshire circles. Unluckily he gives neither scale nor other details, and the circle has now wholly disappeared.

Great circles are less numerous and less well-preserved in the north of Cornwall than in the south. Yet the northern portion of the county is far less thickly peopled than is the southern, so that one might have expected just the reverse. The facts accord with the theory that the people who built the circles were gradually retreating towards the Land's End, and there maintained themselves longest. Such were the West Welsh.

Roman influence in Cornwall was small,² yet there seems to be some evidence to suggest that the native Celtic villages were provided with circular moots analogous to the Roman *circus*. There was something of the kind³ at Trevorrian in St. Buryan, in the extreme south of the county. This, noticed⁴ for the first time in 1876, was described as 'a stone circle or roundago' of elliptical plan, with a single

¹ Britton and Brayley, *Beauties of England and Wales*, ii. 496.

² H. St. George Gray remarks (*Archæologia*, lxi, p. 8) upon the rapidity with which the circle of the Striple Stones has been mutilated 'within the last three decades.'

³ A small barrow has 'overflowed and invaded' a portion (SE.) of the periphery of the great circle of Boskednan in Gulval (diam. 69 ft.). J. T. Blight (*Gents' Magazine*, 1868, pt. i, pp. 308-19) says that urns had been taken from the barrow. W. C. Borlase (*Nenia Cornubiæ*, p. 281) reopened it and found a rifled cistvaen, much burnt wood, and some shards of an urn of very coarse fabric; but there was nothing to establish the age of the barrow. Cistvaens were used for Christian burials almost into

the last century, and urns have been found accompanying interments to all appearances Christian. Assuredly the barrow was later than the circle, and that is all one can say.

⁴ According to the *A.-S. Chronicle*, the kingdom ended in 926.

⁵ Stukeley figures (*Itin. Curiosum*, ii. pl. 83) a circle of 19 stones 'in the parish of Maddern (Madron), Cornwall.' According to R. N. Worth (*Cornwall Royal Inst. Journal*, xii, 78) the circle in Boleit (the Dawns Mên) is the only Cornish example in which it is certain that the number of stones was originally 19 and no more.

⁶ So Diodorus Siculus, after Hecataeus. See below, ch. xiv.

⁷ *Hist. Rome* (1838), i, p. 291.

¹ *Antiqs. of Cornwall* (1754), pl. xiii, fig. 1. He describes them (p. 194) as 'stones to sit on.'

² The earthwork at Bossens ('House of the Saints') in St. Erth, not many miles from Penzance, is unquestionably Roman. In Subsidy Rolls it appears as Car-Sens (*Castra Sanctorum*), so C. H. Henderson tells me, and the name probably has reference to its occupation by some Scotie missionary, as St. Fursey occupied the site of Garianonum (Burgh Castle, Suffolk), and St. Ebb appropriated that of Echester. There is a summary of the Roman *vestigia* in Cornwall in *Antiquaries' Journal*, iii, 3 (July, 1923), p. 235.

³ The Cornish 'rounds' are considered below, ch. xv and xxi.

⁴ *Proc. Soc. Antiqs. Lond.* 2nd ser. vi, 500. It was traceable still in 1914, but is now completely destroyed, and unhappily there

is no other record of its form [on the O.M. of 1860 it is marked as a circle]. Nevertheless its discoverer, Corporal Norgate, R.E. a trained member of the Ordnance Survey, must have known what he was talking about. The illustration which accompanies his description shews no scale, and one is left to infer the size of the work from the Ordnance Map. W. C. Borlase suggested that it belonged to a class usually associated with groups of British huts, and (like Warne and others with the Dorsetshire *circi*) looked upon them as 'defensible enclosures for agricultural and domestic purposes,' comparing a large ring-work at Castlallack, which appears to have nothing in common with this and to be very much larger. In any event one fails to understand the presence and peculiar disposition of the peristalith in a 'defensible enclosure.'

entrance at the east end. As at Charterhouse (p. 178) topographical conditions had made necessary an external fosse on one side only. The oddity was the presence of a continuous peristalith, the stones of which were set, not on the crest of the vallum but upon its inner slope, and seem to have had a slight eastward extension suggestive of an incipient avenue of approach to the entrance.¹ A short distance away to the north stood the menhir known as the Pridden Stone. It was this stone indeed led to the discovery of the earthwork, for, says Corporal Norgate, 'I took particular notice that the Kerris roundago, parish of Paul, . . . is about half a mile south of the Tresvenack Stone, and when I saw the Pridden Stone in the parish of Buryan, it struck me that there might be a roundago similarly situated in respect of it, half a mile to the south.' He went, looked, and found it. The village of Paul is $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of that of Buryan.

The description of this work suggests that it was the outcome of an effort to transform an older stone circle into a *circus*: the interior was hollowed out, the *déblai* thrown up as a vallum along the line of the peristalith, which in consequence was almost buried. But the compromise was half-hearted, for the single Celtic entrance was retained, although it would have been easy to substitute the usual two entrances of the true *circus*, and the old approach by an avenue was not entirely removed. But there can be little doubt that it served the same purpose after re-modelling as before; and there being no doubt that the *circus* was a moot, the inference is that the stone circle was likewise a moot.

Other cases of such possible compromise have been noticed at Gyffylliog in Denbighshire, in Derbyshire, and even in Aberdeenshire itself.

Some adaptation of the older to the newer fashion is what was to be expected. Sentiment, or the lack of means, might well prevent here and there a community from wholly making away with its older moot and building one entirely new. Yet some alterations must be made if the community would keep abreast with the times. Modern life has its parallels in plenty. Some of our English boroughs

¹ cf. the prolongation of the surrounding earthwork of Stonehenge, and the constant occurrence of stone avenues in connexion with the cromlechs of Dartmoor.

are still content with the town-halls which sufficed in the seventeenth century; some have built wholly new ones and entirely demolished the old; and yet others have contrived to preserve the old side by side with the new. So with our churches. It is not often that a parish, especially an old parish, will go so far as to pull down *in toto* the church in which its forbears worshipped, whereas there are few will not alter the old fabric to any extent short of this.¹

Doubtless in some instances there was a complete break with the old order, and the community would even pride itself on possessing a brand-new moot of the very latest type, whatever that might be. In such cases there could be little chance of the survival to the present time of any trace of the older moot. One such case, however, would prove that the thing happened, and the case is perhaps provided at Llanidan in Anglesey (p. 180). Here on the one hand was one of the most complete examples of the newer *circus*—it is almost identical in area with the *Amphitheatrum Castrense* in Rome, and was almost the last of such works in Britain to preserve part of its stone seating—and on the other hand, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away is said to have stood a great stone circle.² A parallel case at Charterhouse-on-Mendip has been mentioned above (p. 178).

In this light there ceases to be anything mysterious in cases like those of the Hurlers, the Greywethers, Botallack, and Erlanic in Gavr'inis, Morbihan, where are or were several great circles either immediately contiguous or actually intersecting. These represent so many re-constructions. We know so little of the feelings of that age that we cannot guess under what circumstances, or with what reservations, a community would remodel its place

¹ cf. what occurred when the old moot-hall of Corfe was reconstructed (ch. xxvi).

² *Arch. Journal*, xxxi (1874); *Earthwork of England*, pp. 593-4. The probable significance of the close neighbourhood of these two monuments was suggested by Owen Stanley in *Arch. Journal* (*loc. cit.*). At the present time there is nothing either here or elsewhere in Anglesey that is recognisable as a stone circle (E. Neil Baynes, *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymmrodorion*, 1910-11), but this may be sufficiently accounted for by modern vandalism fol-

lowing upon the possible ordered destruction of all such *loca consecrata* of Celtism. E. Nicholson (*Cambrian Travellers' Guide*, p. 161) explicitly says that it was (1840) a circle of upright stones with a diam. of 52 yds. cf. Pennant, *Tour in Wales* (1770), ii, 229-30, who speaks of 'a great copped heap of stones' near by, and 'the reliques of a circle of stones, with the cromlech in the midst.' In *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.* xi (1891), p. 200, C. W. Dymond (citing Camden's *Britannia*, ii, 199) speaks of 'the circle of stones, 8 or 9 in number,' which was called Bryngwyn.

of meeting,¹ but obviously this would have to be done if the community had outgrown the capacity of an earlier moot, or if the earlier moot had been damaged or desecrated by hostile act or by the inevitable accidents of time. Nothing would be more likely than that it would be reconstructed; nothing would be more unlikely than that it would be removed to a wholly different site. If it were a

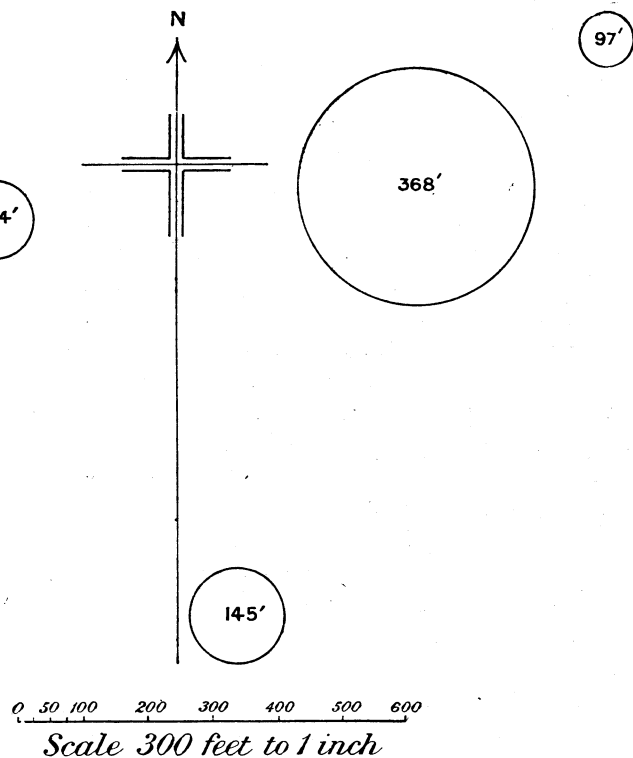


FIG. 30. THE HURLERS IN ST. CLEER, CORNWALL (LEFT), AND THE CIRCLES OF STANTON DREW, SOMERSET (RIGHT), COMPARED.

question of enlargement only, there was no alternative but to make an entirely new moot, supposing the moot were a circle and it were intended to keep it a circle. To enlarge a circle is a geometrical impossibility.

¹ There is evidence that in Iceland the shedding of blood within the moot-circle might entail its disuse. There is some

reason for the belief that the same rule prevailed amongst the British Celts.

'The Hurlers' are three associated circles in the parish of St. Cleer, North Cornwall. The three lie roughly in line north and south, the most southerly having a minor diameter—for all are slightly elliptical—of 108 ft.¹ This is the smallest of the three: its constituents were 10 stones, of which only two remain standing. The most northerly circle is next in size, having a minor diameter of 115½ ft. It now shews 13 stones, of which 6 are erect. The midmost circle is the largest (diam. 139 ft.) and also the best preserved, having 9 stones still *in situ* out of a total of 13. Thus the varying degree of preservation shewn by the three circles harmonises with the requirements of the theory, which regards the smallest of them as the oldest, the largest as the most recent (fig. 30).

All three belong to the class of the 'great circles,' the smallest of them being so large that it can hardly have been sepulchral. They shew a gradual increase of size, the largest being in point of area very nearly twice as big as the smallest. If merely a coincidence, it is an odd coincidence that the number of stones still standing in the three circles should be respectively 2, 6, and 9, the smallest and presumably oldest circle being the least well preserved, the largest and presumably latest also the best preserved; so that the visible remains suggest just that sequence of antiquity which the theory requires.

At Stanton Drew in Somerset, so named from its sometime Norman lord Drogo, there are again three circles, arranged in the same manner. Their dimensions are respectively 97 ft. (NE.), 345 ft. by 378 ft. (centre), and 145 ft. (sw.), so that the largest is again in the centre; and again the largest is also the best preserved (fig. 14).

The same explanation may possibly account for the group of three circles in Llanbrynmair (p. 234), though these are not so closely clustered. The recurrence of the number 3 in such cases is accidental, for Dr. Borlase figures² a group of four intersecting circles at Botallack in

¹ There is a plan by C. W. Dymond in *Journal Brit. Arch. Assoc.* 1879, but his measurements (108 ft. 114 ft. 140 ft.) are slightly different. According to Lukis (writing in 1885) there probably remained in each circle, erect or fallen, half the original number of stones. The numbers,

therefore, were originally 20, 26, and 26, and the percentage of these still standing is respectively 10, 23, and 34.

² *Antiquities of Cornwall*, plate xvi; Fergusson, *Rude Stone Monuments*, p. 161. The group appears to have been totally destroyed very soon after Borlase made his

St. Just in Penwith. Their diameters he gives as 50, 55, 62 and 75 feet respectively, and it has been suggested that they were sepulchral. It is highly improbable that the *sepulchral* circle of one generation would be deliberately desecrated to make room for another, the more so as those who may be assumed to have done it were no race with alien ideas, but obviously expressed their religious feelings (*ex hypothesi* in respect to sepulture) in precisely the same form. On the other hand, the dimensions of the circles, various as they are, are all well within the mean of the normal moot-circle; and they possibly represent so many phases in the history of one community. Growing numbers would from time to time call for larger accommodation, and the four circles correspond well enough with such a view of their purpose.¹

Of the two circles (diam. 105 and 100 ft. respectively) called the 'Greywethers,' near Gidleigh in Devon, it was estimated that the one had originally 25 stones, the other 15. Of the former there remained standing 7 stones, or 28 per cent.; of the latter 9 stones, or 60 per cent. In default of other evidence one infers that the latter was the more recent, as it was so much the better preserved. Yet another instance is that of the two circles at Tregaseal in St. Just, West Cornwall. They are disposed east and west, with an interspace of 75 ft. The eastern circle has a diameter of 65 ft. and the western 72½ ft. In 1738 Dr. Borlase records that there stood 10 stones of the larger, 17 of the smaller circle.² In 1885 the numbers were respectively 5 and 9.³ In this case, however, recent agricultural operations have materially hastened the ruin of the larger circle.

The summer of 1924 was exceptionally rainy. Visiting the Greywethers in June of that year, Dr. Eliot Curwen found the area of the northern circle to be extremely wet, whereas that of the southern circle, though only

21 ft. away, was quite dry. In this case, then, the presence of two circles may be explained by nothing more abstruse than the question of drainage—a question which was shewn above (ch. ix) to be of prime importance. Those who built the northern circle selected a site which was presently found to be unsuitable, and to redeem the error was presently erected the second circle as near to the first as the circumstances allowed. In both these circles occur stones of which the heads have obviously been squared,¹ a fact which militates against any very great antiquity; and the further fact that this dressing is more noticeable in the southern than in the northern circle accords with the view that the southern is the later of the two. Finally, the fact that the number of the constituent stones is not in each case the same, confirms the previous conclusion that their number was of no particular significance.²

Dr. Borlase wished to draw a distinction between the great circles of free-standing stones and those in which the stones, commonly of very much smaller size, are to all intents contiguous. The former he regarded as places for some sort of ceremonial, the latter he believed to be sepulchral. In Cornwall there are contiguous circles at Fernacre (146 ft.) and on Stannon Down (138 ft.), both in the parish of Breward in the eastern portion of the county. St. George Gray places in the same category the Cumberland circles of Salkeld, Keswick, Sunkenkirk, and Eskdale, as also that lately observed at Withypool (119½ ft.) on Exmoor.³ E. F. Tregelles notes the presence, in the close vicinity of the Cornish examples, of great numbers of anhistoric huts and other evidences of settlements, asking suggestively 'Did the people who lived in these huts put up and use the circles?'⁴ St. George Gray notices the like fact in regard to all the circles of East Cornwall, whether free-standing or contiguous, and writes 'it seems highly probable that these (huts) were the dwellings of the people who constructed the neighbouring stone circles'⁵; and,

plan (see W. C. Borlase, *Nenia Cornubiae*, p. 123), and it has been roundly said that he was mistaken, and took a litter of natural boulders for the ruins of circles. There is no warrant for any such charge.

¹ Taking 100 as the area of the smallest circle, the others will be represented

severally by 125, 150, and 266 (approximately).

² *Antiquities of Cornwall*.

³ Lukis, *Prehistoric Monuments of Cornwall*. He estimated the original number to have been 25 in the larger, 28 in the smaller circle.

¹ Rowe, *Perambulation of Dartmoor*, p. 30.

² The circles, as re-erected by command of H.M. the King, now count 29 and 20 stones respectively. See plate iii, no. 3.

³ *Archaeologia*, lxi, 40; *Proc. Somerset*

Arch. and N. H. Soc. lii (1907), pt. ii, p. 42. 'No stone exceeds 2 ft. in height, and the average height is 1'03 ft.'

⁴ *V. C. H. Cornwall*, i.

⁵ *Archaeologia*, lxi, p. 3.

admitting the proof to be as yet lacking, he thinks it probable that the huts and the circles are contemporaneous.¹ That the circles were sepulchral he does not believe: 'In England no *ancient* burials are recorded to have been discovered in stone circles, with, perhaps, the exception of the little Duloe circle.'²

There is no evidence whatever that the contiguous and the free-standing circles were different either in age or in purpose. Communities, then as now, must build according to their means and according to the materials available; a circle such as that of Fernacre probably represents much less cost and labour than does a free-standing circle even of smaller diameter. The peristalith being in any case a mere ornament, as Homer testifies, it was open to the builders to exercise their own discretion in the fashion of it, as they seem to have done also in the number of stones employed.

At the same time it is more than possible that the contiguous circles are in many cases the result of later efforts to adapt free-standing peristaliths to some utilitarian purpose: smaller stones which had formed the circle of seats, the central *bothros*, or possibly the pavement, would naturally be cleared away from the area and as naturally utilised to build a continuous wall between the pillars of the peristalith. This certainly happened at Garrol Wood in Aberdeenshire. According to Jewitt's woodcut it happened also with the Meini Hirion by Penmaenmawr (p. 233). It may have occurred also at Grassington (p. 226), and the cut of the Salkeld circle (1752) here reproduced (plate III, no. 1) strongly suggests a similar happening: it will be noticed that the four stones answering to the cardinal points are greatly larger

than the rest,¹ and that further the four stones intermediate between these are larger than the residue; as if the peristalith had originally consisted of these eight stones only. When it is further remembered that the stones of free-standing peristaliths are frequently of insignificant height, it will be realised that such peristaliths might very easily be converted into 'contiguous' circles by the activities of any one wishful to make them into gardens or cattle-folds.

R. Burnard, F.S.A. partially explored the Fernworthy circle (60 ft. diam.) on Dartmoor, two miles east of Gidleigh. He found the floor of it to be as deliberately formed as that of a pit-dwelling, but wherever the surface was opened the mould, right down to the subsoil, was full of fragments of wood-charcoal. The circle being closely associated with a large group of sepulchral remains, he formed the opinion that his discovery of so much charcoal was 'interesting and important,' as possibly solving the riddle of all the 'so-called sacred circles,' for 'it is very probable that we can now see in this the crematorium or the site of the funeral feasts, or both.'² He found no trace of any interment within it, but wood-ash, it is said, was found in most, if not in all, of the great circles of Dartmoor which have been investigated.

With the exception of *busta* of the Roman period there is not known anything to suggest that crematories were ever used in Britain, still less that they were constructed in a form so elaborate and so large as the Fernworthy circle. On the other hand, the evidence has led us to expect a considerable deposit of ashes at or near the centre of such a circle. That the circle was sepulchral, or in the remotest way connected with matters sepulchral, there is no jot of evidence to shew.³ The entrance to this circle remains

¹ *ibid.* p. 40. The huts appear to be much of an age with those of Dartmoor, and according to one view (*Journal Antropol. Inst.* xxv, 4) they are very early, according to another (W. C. Borlase in *Nenia Cornubiae*) they are relatively late. In the lack of evidence one may remark that, topographical conditions being fairly permanent, there is no reason to suppose that the standard of life in Cornwall was not always, as now, far behind that of the south-eastern counties; and therefore rudeness of culture in that county need not of

necessity imply immense antiquity. These huts may very well be the leavings of the Celts of the last days of Cornish independence. The Celts made themselves at home in Cornwall, not because they liked it, but because they had to do so; and all said, the kingdom of Geraint was a kingdom of refugees.

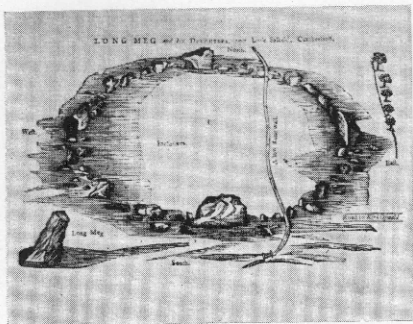
² *ibid.* p. 24. Duloe circle (30 ft.) was unquestionably sepulchral, and no relation to the great circles. W. C. Borlase mentions other Cornish examples in *Nenia Cornubiae*.

¹ This is not merely a bit of imagination on the part of the artist, for the fact is explicitly noticed in the text accompanying the cut.

² In *V.C.H. Devonshire*, vol. 1, 359-60 (1906). Some two miles west of this is another circle (Scorhill circle, or the 'Long Stones') with a diam. of 85 ft., and under Sittaford Tor, about a mile sw. of Fernworthy Circle, are the two circles called the 'Greywethers.' Other great circles on the Moor are those of Throwleigh (two, with

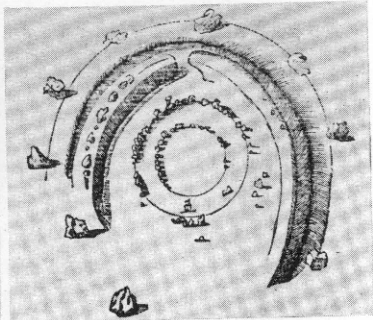
diam. of 90 ft. and 60 ft. respectively), Ringmore (75 ft.) and Raybarrow (60 ft.). See *Cornwall Royal Inst. Journal*, xii (1896).

³ It was the common Gallic custom to build up the captured spoils of war into heaps within *loca consecrata* and there leave them (Caesar, *B.G.* vi, 17) or burn them (Florus, II, iv, 4). The Romans followed precisely the same practice (Florus, IV, xii, 9, *arma victorum ex more belli cremata*: cf. Livy, viii, 30, 9; xxxviii, 23, 11; xli, 12, 4. So Appian).



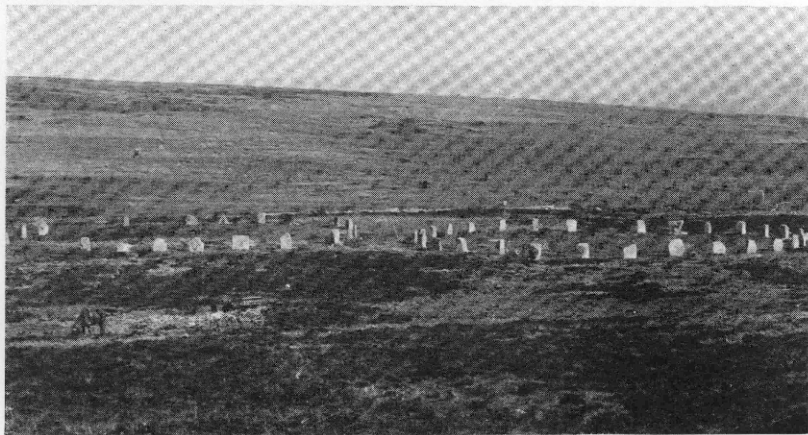
NO. 1. LITTLE SALKELD CIRCLE,
CUMBERLAND, IN 1752.

From *Gents. Mag.* 1752, p. 310.



NO. 2. TRIPLÉ CIRCLE AT
BALLYNAHATNA, DUNDALK.

From Wright's *Lowbiana*, 1746.



[Chapman, Dawlish, phot.]

NO. 3. THE GREYWETHERS, NEAR SITTAFORD TOR, DEVON.

intact, and the stones which flank it, as in the circles of the Aberdeenshire type, are markedly larger than the rest.

If no structural *bothros* has been found in the circles of the south-western counties thus far explored, the fact is not surprising, for these circles probably belong to the last days of Celtic independence in these areas. Convincing evidence that they are of any remoter antiquity there is none at all, while on the other hand the extraordinary preservation of many of them, the striking exactitude of their lay-out, and the presence in some cases of stones which have unquestionably been tool-dressed, all suggest a date relatively late. It is not at all unlikely that some of them were erected after the Edict of Milan, and one consequence of that Edict would be the speedy disappearance of the *bothros*, just as in Iceland it disappeared so soon as the Northmen became Christian, while there might still continue some kind of formal fire-ritual to account for the features observed at Fernworthy and elsewhere. The evidence shews that even in pre-Christian times there was a tendency to minimise the *bothros*: prominent in Achean Greece, it is hardly traceable in Greek moots of the post-Homeric times; in the Circus Maximus of Rome it is reduced to a survival to be remembered only thrice in the year, while in the multitude of local *circi* the primitive ritual may well have been replaced by a merely formal fire kindled upon a makeshift altar of sods (*caespitè vivo*)¹; and in Aberdeenshire, though now and again it takes such elaborate shape as is seen at Old Rayne and Garrol Wood, in other cases it appears to have been nothing but a makeshift hole, without recognisable structural features of any kind.

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth,² when Aurelius Ambrosius had resolved to rear in memory of the British nobles massacred by Hengist's Saxons a suitable memorial, he was bidden consult the prophet Merlin. The latter bade the king 'send for the Giants' Dance, which is in the mountain of Killaraus in Ireland'; and this he did,

¹Is it possible that the much-debated *prunae batillum* of the 'crazy town-clerk' of Fundi (Horace, *Sat.* I, v, 36) was the symbol of such a formality? Some of the commentators on the passage seem to have guessed as much. If so, the *batillum*

answered to the *thuribulum* of prosaic phraseology.

²*Hist.* viii, 9-2. Giraldus Cambrensis (*Topog. Hiberniae*, ii, 18) tells precisely the same story.

removing and setting up the stones of it at Stonehenge by aid of Merlin's arts. The story proves, as Sir John Rhys remarked, 'that formerly a circle of stones like that of Stonehenge,¹ or like a portion of it, was well known to exist in Ireland; and its site can hardly have been other than the Hill of Usnach (Usny), which plays a great rôle in Irish legend. It stood in the parish of Killare, barony of Rathconrath, in county Westmeath.' Giraldus Cambrensis mentions as standing at the same spot the great stone *qui umbilicus Hiberniae dicitur, quasi in medio et meditullio terrae positus*.² 'The stone is described as a very large one, and it was believed to have been cursed by St. Patrick on account of the pagan worship there.'³

Obviously non-sepulchral was the stone circle of Mag Slecht, the 'Plain of Adoration,' at Ballymagauran, barony of Tullyhaw, co. Cavan. Here, one is told, was for central feature a monstrous 'idol' covered with gold and silver, known as Cenn Cruaich or Cromm Cruaich, 'the chief idol of Ireland.' Around it were ranged twelve lesser 'idols' decorated with bronze. Here the Irish were accustomed to immolate their children, as well as lesser victims, to secure plentiful harvests of corn, honey, and milk, until St. Patrick again interfered, disfiguring Cenn Cruaich with his crozier and causing all the lesser idols to sink into the ground, so that only the tops of their heads remained visible.⁴ 'Idols' means, as in the Psalms and Bede, merely false gods, and the story is a transparent effort on the part of some monkish chronicler to account for the presence at the spot of a circle of stones which a long-Christianised populace still continued to regard with veneration. It is clear that this circle was not formed of very tall stones.

The finest remains of a great circle at present to be seen in Ireland are said to be those at Wattle Bridge, near Newtownbutler, in the extreme south of co. Fermanagh. 'It actually claims state with that of the famous Avebury in

¹ See the very explicit remarks of Giraldus Cambrensis, *loc. cit.*

²*Topog. Hiberniae*, iii, 4. It marked the point where the several provinces met, i.e. its position with reference to Ireland as a whole was analogous to that of the

other great meeting-places of the Celtic peoples (ch. xii).

³*Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (1888), pp. 188 sqq.; Girald. Cambr. *Topog. Hiberniae*, Dist. iii, 4.

⁴ Rhys, *op. cit.* p. 202; *Life of S. Patrick, Books of Ballymote, of Leinster, and of Lecan.*

England,' wrote W. F. Wakeman in 1881, 'some of the stones being over 16 ft. in length.'¹ Its diameter was, however, but 126 ft. and it shews no trace of outer works.² In co. Down, near Downpatrick, are others. That of Leggamaddy, near Ballynoe Station, is double: the inner ring (22 stones) is peculiarly oval (90 ft. by 40 ft.), while the outer (45 stones) is 100 ft. in diameter, and the two rings are not concentric. At Ballynahatna, near Dundalk in co. Lowth, are the remains of an elaborate triple circle (plate III, no. 2): a medial circle of small stones surrounded an inner ring of half the diameter; the whole was completed by a peristalith of 10 great stones, and in the medial ring was something which might represent the remains of a $\theta\omega\kappa\omicron\varsigma$. At some recent period has been built a wall between the medial ring and the peristalith, apparently no part of the original plan.³ The circle called Beltany at Raphoe in Donegal has been mentioned above (p. 164, n.). On the battlefield of South Moytura at Cong are the remains of a number of circles, mostly perhaps sepulchral, but if Stukeley's drawing of 'four circles near Ballinrope, co. Mayow,'⁴ refers to these and is good evidence, one of the number (diam. 30 paces) contained an inner ring of smaller stones, and something remarkably like the recumbent stone of the Aberdeenshire type. But speaking generally, Ireland is singularly poor in 'great circles,' while on the other hand it abounds in sepulchral cromlechs.⁵ The latter are scattered over the whole island, whereas the few 'great circles' are almost confined to those regions which are known to have been Brythonised, and that at a very recent date. The facts, therefore, support the view that the smaller sepulchral⁶ circles are derived from the

Goidelic tradition, whereas the free-standing larger circles are Brythonic and not sepulchral.

The characteristic sepulchral monument of the Irish Brythons appears to have been the ring-barrow, a mere circle of piled earth or stone with the customary fosse, merging by imperceptible stages into the outward semblance of the ubiquitous *rath* and *lis*. One of them is the famous royal cemetery of Cruachan, now Rathcrogan, co. Roscommon, 5 miles west of Carrick-on-Shannon. When Petrie described it, it was already greatly ruined, but had once been a regular circular enclosure 300 ft. in diameter, ringed with a vallum of dry stone. The area was covered with a number of small circular mounds each marking a grave. The bodies had been laid unburnt in rudely-built cists of unmortared stone.¹ Ireland has numberless other striking forms of grave-monuments, but the simple ring-work, usually without peristalith, seems to have been the standard type all over the Brythonised portion of the island when Christianity at last made its appearance.

¹ *Journal Roy. Soc. Antiqs. Ireland*, 1881, p. 538.

² Wakeman, *Handbook of Irish Antiquities* (3rd ed. 1893), p. 125. At that date the largest remaining stone measured slightly over 10 ft. The circle is popularly known as the 'Druid's Temple.'

³ It is not clear that it ever surrounded the whole, it is not concentric with the three original members of the circle, and in the drawing (made not later than 1746) it is shewn as having an almost perpendicular face, which suggests that it was of very recent construction. Old Dundalk was the traditional stronghold of the Brythonic hero Cuchulain.

⁴ *Itin. Curiosum*, ii, plate 84.

⁵ As, for example, at Lough Gur near Kilmallock, co. Limerick. The measurements of five circles in co. Cork (*Journal Roy. Soc. Antiqs. Ireland*, xlv) are as follows:—

Loughatooma ..	33 ft. × 28 ft.
Annagannihy ..	.. 19 ft.
Rylane ..	12 ft. × 10 ft.
Keel Cross ..	.. 9 ft.
Oughtihery ..	.. 8½ ft.

⁶ Some of the smaller circles seem to have had a votive or commemorative purpose only, without reference to any interment. Thus W. C. Borlase (*Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 906), speaking of the cairn called *Leacht*