Stone Circles Near Aberdeen

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The following paper was read by the author:—

STONE CIRCLES *near* ABERDEEN.

By A. L. LEWIS, F.C.A., M.A.I.

[WITH PLATE III.]

THE comparatively flat part of Scotland, which forms its most easterly angle, and is chiefly included in the county of Aberdeen, has, up to a recent period, contained a great number of stone circles, no less than twelve having existed within the memory of man in the one parish of Old Deer, in the corner of the angle already mentioned, about twenty miles north from Aberdeen, and within a dozen miles of the sea. Many, however, which remained so recently as to be marked on the ordnance map, have now disappeared; amongst them one which formerly stood on the Burgh Muir of Inverurie, about sixteen miles north-west from Aberdeen.¹

There is a fine circle remaining at Tyrebaggar Hill, two miles from Dyce junction, and six or eight north-west from Aberdeen; it is 57 feet in diameter, and consists of eleven upright stones varying in height from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet, standing on a bank of earth and stones, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and 3 or 4 wide at the narrowest part; the two tallest stones are on the south side of the circle, and between them is a stone, 10 feet or more long, $6\frac{1}{2}$ high, and 2 thick, which leans inwards, but had planted round it a number of small stones, 2 or 3 feet long, and a foot or so square, as if to hold it in its place. The group formed by this stone with its little supporters and the two high stones, one on each side of it, is obviously the principal feature of the circle, and a line taken almost due north from its centre cuts through the centre of the

¹ I mention this to prevent others from making a useless journey.

circle and between two small stones set on the inner face of the bank to a single stone which is the most northerly of those forming the circle; of the other upright stones, three stand at irregular intervals forming the west side of the circle, gradually diminishing in size towards the north, and three in somewhat similar positions forming the east side; but, besides these latter three, there are, in the eastern half of the circumference, two other small stones, standing close together in such a position that a line taken from the front of the centre of the principal stone due north-east would pass between them; there is a tumulus about 375 feet away in this direction, but not, it would seem, in the exact line. Mr. McCombie Stewart, the station-master at Dyce, who should be consulted by any one visiting Dyce for scientific purposes, informed me that there was formerly a hole in the middle of the circle, which might be suggestive of the former existence of a kist; he also told me that there was supposed to be iron in the largest stones, and this seems very probable, for, on working my rough plans out at home, I found a disagreement in the compass-bearings. In this emergency I applied to Mr. McCombie Stewart, sending him a plan and asking him to verify my compass-bearings and some other particulars. He was so kind as not only to do this, but to get one of the Engineers of the railway to make an exact plan of the circle, showing the bearing of each stone from the centre. I am happy to be able to say, as showing the accuracy of my own methods, that my plan superposed upon his gave practically the same results.

In the letter accompanying the plan, Mr. McCombie Stewart, who is qualified to speak as a geologist, says, "We were unable to account for the peculiar ringing sound of the altar stone, unless it be caused by the flat shape of the stone, having its side firmly fixed in the ground, and the projecting part having a certain vibration—or if it were from the hard *heathen* substance of an iron nature—but one thing is certain, the stone is not of the same nature as those belonging to the neighbouring quarry." I may here mention that Mr. John Stuart¹ says of a similar circle at Ardoyne, Aberdeenshire (now nearly destroyed), that the oblong stone and the two upright stones flanking it were of Bennachie granite, while the rest of the stones were of gneiss. Here are two more instances of the custom of selecting stones from some other locality for the principal stones of a circle. Returning to the Dyce circle I ought to mention that there are two or three small stones (say 3 feet $\times$ 2 feet $\times$ 2 feet) in a plantation to the south-east, but whether thrown down from the

¹ "Sculptured Stones of Scotland" (Spalding Club).

circle or not, I cannot say. A cairn in the field to the north-east was, Mr. McCombie Stewart says, removed in 1886.

Mr. Christian Maclagan, in his "*Hill-forts, Stone Circles, &c., of Ancient Scotland*," published in large quarto at Edinburgh in 1875, gives a plan of the Dyce circle, which shows an inner circle of small stones close together, of which the two that I have mentioned were doubtless a part. He also shows three stones outside the larger circle, as though forming part of an outer concentric circle, they are probably those which I have mentioned as being in a plantation to the south-east, but I do not think there was any circle surrounding that which now exists. Mr. Maclagan's book appears to have been published at considerable expense to support a view of which he probably has a monopoly, namely, that all stone circles are the last remains of circular buildings of unmortared masonry of the *broch* type, and that the banks of small stones in which the upright ones are set and held fast are only the remains of foundations. He also thinks that the oblong stones have in every case been laid flat on the short pillars surrounding them, and have been the lintels of entrances, and he delineates a "restoration" of a circle at Aquhorthies, near Inverurie, showing the oblong stone in this position with a huge mass of uncemented masonry resting upon it. There can, however, be little doubt that all these oblong stones were originally set upright on edge, and that where they lean or are flat it is because they have slipped. Mr. Maclagan speaks of them as "south-west stones," whereas they are not at the south-west, but at the south of the circles—perhaps he forgot the westerly variation of the compass. Mr. Maclagan considers his theory to apply to Stonehenge, which he figures "restored" with an enormous tower embedding and surmounting it, and to Avebury, the great circle of which, 1,300 feet in diameter, he takes to have been the last remains of an immense circular wall, larger than the bank which still surrounds the site, and which is as large as a railway embankment. The utter improbability of the entire disappearance (especially in places where stones are a nuisance) of such tremendous quantities as Mr. Maclagan suggests the former existence of might, but for his nationality, lead us to suppose that in propounding his theory he was perpetrating a practical joke almost as heavy as his masses of masonry would have been had they ever existed; at the same time, it may be admitted that some very small circles may possibly have had some such origin as he suggests. It is a great but common mistake to assume that all circular arrangements of stones must necessarily have had the same origin and use.

About six miles south from Aberdeen and two west from

Portlethen station, four circles are marked on the ordnance map—two on each side of the hill of Auchorthies. These four circles were described in the “Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland” (June, 1863, Vol. V, page 130), by Mr. Alexander Thomson, who, with some others, dug inside them on 30th September, 1858. Of the most northerly of these circles—the Badentoy circle—four stones remain in the middle of a field, a wall has been built round them, no doubt from the fragments of other stones belonging to the circle, a mode of preserving rude stone monuments which, however well-intentioned, does not commend itself to the archæologist. I should not be surprised if these four stones have themselves been removed inwards from their original position, since they now stand at the four cardinal points *by compass* from a central point, the distance between the north and south pair being only 28 feet, and that between the east and west pair only 24 feet, the diameter of a small inner circle, for which 3 feet stones were generally used, while these stones are from 4 to 7 feet high, the size of those used for outer circles. Mr. Thomson, indeed, says that he found only three stones standing, and it would seem, on a comparison of the measurements he gives, that the most northerly stone (which is the smallest and most untruly placed) has been put in its present position, and the wall built since he visited it (perhaps in 1865, when the ordnance survey was made). Mr. Thomson found that this circle had been excavated before, some half-calcined bones and morsels of wood charcoal being left. The second circle from the north—the “King-causie” circle—appears to have been entirely destroyed, two or three very small stones and some heaps of fragments, which may perhaps have belonged to it, only excepted. In 1858, Mr. Thomson found here three concentric rings of small stones from 2 to 3 feet high, the outer circle 70 feet, the middle circle 56 feet, and the inner circle 12 feet in diameter. The latter was found upon digging to be full of black mould, fragments of bones, and wood charcoal, and in five places fragments of coarse earthenware vases. As he says this circle was so inconspicuous that one might pass within a few yards of it without noticing it, it is possible that I did not get to the right spot, and that there may be more of it left than I have said. Of the most southerly circle—the Bourtreebush circle—four stones remain upright and four prostrate, besides quantities of very small fragments, the stones which remain are about the same size as those at Dyce, and the diameter of the circle would appear to have been about 90 feet. Of these four circles (which do not seem to have had any connection with each other) only the second from the south—the Auchorthies circle—is in such preservation that its

plan can be clearly made out, and of this bad weather and want of time prevented my taking fully detailed measurements. I am able, however, to say that, like the Dyce circle, it has an oblong stone (9 feet long, by 4 feet high, by $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick), standing on edge at the south side, facing a trifle west of true north, which had an upright stone on each side, one of these remains, and the hole in which the other stood is plainly visible. The circle was formed of perhaps a dozen other stones, none of which were more than 6 feet high, its diameter seems to have been 65 feet from north to south, and 76 from east to west. There was a second circle about 12 feet inside the outer one, it consisted of stones measuring on the average 3 feet high by 3 feet by 1 foot, and standing close together. Close to the centre of these concentric circles and in the direct north and south line are three small stones (2 feet high by $1\frac{3}{4}$ foot by 1 foot) close together, perhaps forming part of a small interior circle or kist. The ground inside all these three circles is a foot or two higher than that outside. Mr. John Stuart says that in one of them a kist, 3 feet long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ wide, containing ashes, was dug up between the outer and second circles. This, however, was obviously a mere casual interment.

The two last-mentioned circles do not appear to have been much interfered with since Mr. Thomson explored them in 1858. He does not seem to have found anything in the Bourtreebush circle, but on turning up the area of the innermost circle at Auchorthies, he found charcoal, half-calcined bones, black unctuous earth, and small fragments of a vase, and he was told someone had dug there fifteen years previously and found nothing.

Mr. Maclagan seems to me to have mixed up his recollections and sketches of the circles at Aquhorthies, near Inverurie, and Auchorthies, near Aberdeen, which latter I have just been describing, and he says of the most southerly circle at Auchorthies, that Chalmers at the beginning of the century found sixteen stones, but that he himself going in 1873 found only one, but saw the places where the other fifteen had been, each with a little heap of stones round it, and argues from this the great rapidity with which these monuments have been destroyed, and the probability of the removal of his imaginary masses of masonry within the historic period. I, going in 1885, however, found, as I have said, four stones upright and four fallen, so that I cannot but think that Mr. Maclagan must have missed this circle, and found his way instead to a standing stone shown on the ordnance map about half a mile further south. Moreover, though Chalmers gives the description attributed to him, he quotes it (with acknowledgment) from a much older one, which I am now about to quote also.

A letter from the Reverend Dr. James Garden, Professor of Theology in the King's College of Aberdeen, to — Aubrey, Esquire, which contained, amongst other things, a description of the two circles last referred to, was read before the Society of Antiquaries of London, on the 4th December, 1766,¹ and from it I have made the following extracts:—

“Honoured Sir,

“Yours dated at London, April 9th, 1692, came to my hands about ten days after.² . . .

“What the Lord Yester and Sir Robert Morray told you long ago is true, viz., that in the north parts of this kingdom many monuments of the nature and fashion described by you are yet extant. They consist of tall, big, unpolished stones set upon end and placed circularly, not contiguous together but at some distances; the obscurer sort (which are the more numerous) have but one circle of stones standing at equal distances; others towards the south or south-east have a larger broad stone standing on edge, which fills up the whole space between two of those stones that stand on end, and is called by the vulgar the altar stone; a third sort more remarkable than any of the former (besides all that I have already mentioned) have another circle of smaller stones standing inside the circle of the great stones; the area of the three sorts is commonly (not always) filled with stones of sundry sizes confusedly cast together in a heap. Two of the largest and most remarkable of these monuments that ever I saw are yet to be seen at a place called Auchincorthie, in the shire of Merris, 5 miles distant from Aberdeen,³ one of which has two circles of stones, whereof the exterior circle consists of thirteen great stones (besides two that are fallen and the broad stone toward the south) about 3 yards high above ground, and 7 or 8 paces distant one from another, the diameter being 24 large paces; the interior circle is about 3 paces distant from the other, and the stones thereof 3 feet high above ground.⁴ Toward the east from this monument, at

¹ *Archæologia*, Vol. 1, page 312.

² I am informed by Professor Geddes, of the University of Aberdeen, that the Rev. Dr. James Garden was Professor of Divinity there from 1681 until he was dismissed for refusing to submit to William III, and that his successor was installed in 1698.—A. L. L.

³ “Merris” is Mearns or Kincardine. Chalmers, quoting this account in “*Caledonia*,” says that Achen-corthie signifies the “field of the circles,” on the ordnance map it is called Auchorthies, and I find there is also a place called Aquhorthies, near Inverury, where a circle still exists, or did till very lately. Gough, in his edition of Camden's *Britannia*, 1806, also quotes this account, but both authors have committed errors in transcribing and abridging it.—A. L. L.

⁴ This is apparently the most southerly of the four circles I mentioned, which is now nearly destroyed; and this old description is therefore very valuable, not only as showing what it was like, but also that it was like the others; Dr. Garden however understates the diameter, as a comparison of his own figures shows.—A. L. L.

26 paces distance, there is a big stone, fast in the ground and level with it, in which there is a cavity, partly natural and partly artificial, that will contain, as I guess, no less than a Scotch gallon of water, and may be supposed to have served for washing the priests, sacrifices, and other things esteemed sacred among the heathen. The other monument, which is full as large if not larger than that which I have already described, and distant from it about a bowshot of ground, consists of three circles having the same common centre; the stones of the greatest circle are about 3 yards, and those of the two lesser circles 3 feet, high above the ground, the innermost circle 3 paces diameter, and the stones standing close together. One of the stones of the largest circle on the east side of the monument hath upon the top of it (which is but narrow and longer one way than the other) a hollowness, about 3 inches deep, in the bottom whereof is cut out a trough, 1 inch deep and 2 inches broad (with another short one crossing it) that runs along the whole length of the cavity and down by the side of the stone a good way, so that whatsoever liquid is poured into the cavity upon the top of the stone doth presently run down the side of it by this trough, and it would seem that upon this stone they poured forth their *libamina* or liquid sacrifices; there is also another stone in the same circle and upon the same side of the monument (standing nearest to the broad stone that stands on edge and looks toward the south) which hath a cavity on the upper end of it, it is considerably lower on one side and will contain about one English pint, at the first sight it seemed to me to have been made for burning a lamp, but, when I considered that it was *sub dio*, I found it could not be for that use, afterwards observing it more narrowly I perceived that it was cut after the fashion of the cavity in the other stone already described, albeit not so clearly and distinctly, and that there is a natural fissure in the stone by which all the liquor poured into the cavity runs out of it down by the side of the stone to the ground.¹

“The general tradition throughout this kingdom concerning these kind of monuments is that they were places of worship and sacrifice in heathen times, few of them have particular names. In this part of the country they are commonly called *standing*

¹ The next stone to the broad stone is usually one of the highest in the circle, and according to the Rev. Dr. would have been three yards high, in which case he would hardly have seen the cavity at the top. This description in every other respect agrees with the second circle from the south, where the highest stone now remaining is six feet high, so that an error has evidently been committed, either in his original letter or in copying it. The stone next to the altar stone on the east has now been removed, but its fellow is about five feet high.—A. L. L.

stones, and in the Highlands of Scotland, where the Irish tongue is spoken, they call them *caer*, which signifies a throne, an oracle, or a place of address, as I am informed by a judicious person here, who understands that language, and was lately in those parts where, he says, they have such a superstitious veneration for these monuments that they will not meddle with any of their stones or apply them to another use; and being lately at Auchincorthie, I was told that a poor man who lives there having taken a stone away from one of the neighbouring monuments above described and put it into his hearth was, by his own relation, troubled with a deal of noise and din about his house in the night time until he carried back the stone unto the place where he found it.¹

"Some of them are called chapels . . . others are called temples . . . and those two whereof I have given you a particular description are called by the people that live near by 'Law Stones,' for what reason I know not, and 'Temple Stones.'² They have a tradition that the pagan priests of old dwelt in that place, Auchincorthie, and there are yet to be seen at a little distance from one of the monuments standing there the foundations of an old house which is said to have been their Teind Barn; they report likewise that the priests caused earth to be brought from other adjacent places upon people's backs to Auchincorthie for making the soil thereof deeper, which is given for the reason why this parcel of land, though surrounded with heath and moss on all sides is better and more fertile than other places thereabouts.³ All these names (except the first) confirm the general tradition concerning these monuments, that they were places of worship, and some of them, as that of the 'temple' and 'temple stones,' declare that they have not been erected by Christians, or for their use, which their structure also doth sufficiently demonstrate besides. . . . Old Aberdeen, 15th June, 1692."

¹ It is much to be wished that all destroyers of rude stone monuments and especially those of Avebury, had been plagued in the like or some worse manner, and, if the Welsh bards who are coming to London this year have had handed down to them any particularly awful Druidic form of curse, warranted to wear in the next world as well as in this, I would suggest that they should immediately put it in force against all circle-destroyers, past, present, or future. This superstition would, however, have assisted to prevent the removal of Mr. Mac-lagan's imaginary masses of masonry, and therefore diminishes the very slight possibility of their ever having existed.—A. L. L.

² The editor of *Archæologia* notes to this:—"From barrows and heaps of stones being intended for sepulchres they are called Lows in Staffordshire (and he might have added Derbyshire) and Lawes in Ireland," (*Antiq. Corn.*, 1st Ed., p. 200).

³ This tradition, which seems rather absurd at first sight, may have arisen from the custom which we know to have prevailed of bringing earth and stones from a distance to form special parts of tumuli and circles.—A.L.L.

This date and these last sentences are of the very greatest importance for this reason :—Mr. John Stuart and other writers of what I may call the anti-Druidic school have advanced the propositions that “the theory which ascribes to stone circles the purpose of temples or courts is modern and unsupported by facts.” “In the seventeenth century a theory was proposed by two English writers, John Aubrey and William Stukeley, which ascribed the great circles of Stonehenge and Avebury to the Druids as their temples, and since their day all stone circles have been called Druidical circles.”¹ These propositions must, however, be now and for ever abandoned in view of the proof contained in this letter, printed in *Archæologia* 120 years ago, but written nearly 200 years ago to Aubrey himself, who was the earlier of the two writers (for Stukeley lived not in the seventeenth but in the eighteenth century), that at that time the “general tradition” concerning the Scotch circles was that they were “places of worship and sacrifice in heathen times.”

It is true Dr. Garden uses the word priest instead of Druid, and says that he finds no mention of Druids, but he himself evidently looks upon the priests in question as Druids, and we know from other sources that the Druids were the priests of the Celts and would tolerate no rivals.

In former papers on stone circles I have insisted very strongly on the presence of a special reference to the north-east, and have drawn various conclusions therefrom, but, as regards the two comparatively perfect circles I have described (although in the Dyce circle there is an indication of a north-easterly reference) the main direction is north and south, and not north-east and south-west; if this were the only difference between these circles and those of southern Britain it might fairly be said that what I had previously pointed out about the north-east was a mere collection of accidental coincidences, but there is another most palpable difference which, when brought to notice, cannot fail to strike the most casual observer; the oblong stone, flanked by two upright stones, which is the principal feature in these circles appears, so far as I have yet been able to discover, nowhere except in the Aberdeen district, where on the other hand it is almost universal. It is true that, though I visited six sites, I only found two circles sufficiently well preserved to draw any conclusions from, but I am fortunately not entirely dependent on my own observation. The Rev. James Peter, Incumbent of Old Deer, read a paper on the subject before the Anthropological

¹ Transactions of International Congress of Prehistoric Archæology, 1868, and Sculptured Stones of Scotland, Vol. 2.

Section of the British Association at Aberdeen, at which I was present ; the substance of this paper is published with plans and illustrations in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1884-5, and I exhibit tracings from those plans and illustrations, showing this arrangement of one oblong and two upright stones in three circles, and from the illustrations to Col. Forbes Leslie's "Early Races of Scotland," showing the same arrangement in three other circles and from Mr. Maclagan's book before quoted showing it in four other circles which, added to the two I have myself described to you, make twelve circles in which I can prove pictorially that the oblong stone with its two supporters occurs, though, as a matter of fact, it has been much more general. Mr. Peter stated that in fifteen circles he was acquainted with, the "altar," as this oblong stone is popularly called, was at the south, and that in two circles it faced north-east ; at the Strichen circle the "altar" is at the north instead of the south, and at Sinhinny it appears to be at the west ; at the "White Cow Wood" circle there is no "altar," but the largest stones are at the south and a dolmen occupies the north-east corner of the circle. It is, however, clear that the "altar" and its supporters were prominent in most of the circles of the Aberdeen district, but I cannot find, either from friends of whom I have enquired, or from books which I have consulted, that they occur anywhere else ; even in what I may call the Inverness district, not fifty miles distant, but divided from the Aberdeen district in places by mountains more than four thousand feet high, it seems that, though there are concentric circles, there are no "altars."¹

The circle in England which, as I think, most resembles those near Aberdeen and Inverness is that at Gunnerkeld in Westmoreland, described by me in the "Journal of the Anthropological Institute" (November, 1885, Vol. XV, page 167), and pronounced by Mr. Dymond and myself to be in all probability a tomb rather than a temple, but it has nothing like an "altar" stone. Certain structures known as "Giant's Graves" in the north of Ireland, and described by Dr. Sinclair Holden in "Anthropologia," had some points of resemblance in principle, but still more of difference in form ; they consisted of a long covered burial chamber running from north-east to south-west with a separate covered niche, open to the air and facing outwards at the south-west end of it, which might have been a sort of altar place ; these were surrounded by an oblong wall of stones forming a promenade round the chamber, like that between the outer

¹ See for example Mr. Fraser's "Descriptive Notes on Stone Circles of Strathmairn and neighbourhood of Inverness," in Proceedings of Society of Antiquaries, Scotland, 12th May, 1884.

and inner circles in Scotland, and Dr. Sinclair Holden remarks that the covered niche never occurs without this surrounding wall of stone; notwithstanding the difference in shape, therefore, I am inclined to regard the Aberdeen circles as having more affinity to the "Giant's Graves" than to the English circles to which it has always been sought to ally them. Considering the relative position of this part of Scotland it might have been thought that the Aberdeen circles and "altars" had been constructed under a Norwegian influence, but I cannot find that any such arrangement of stones exists in any part of Scandinavia; it may be that this peculiar form of circle was developed by some tribe or tribes cut off from the rest of the world by the sea, the mountains, and hostile populations; certain it is that different countries have their specialities in rude stone monuments as in other things, and that the use of unhewn stones is no proof of the intercourse or common origin of the users unless they be used in some more markedly similar manner than a mere placing of them in circles. In the oblong "altar" stone, flanked by two upright stones we have a very obvious difference, which, combined with the absence of any such marked reference to the north-east as exists in the circles of southern Britain, might almost lead us to suppose that the circles of the two countries were constructed by a different set of people, and perhaps for a different purpose, but I am not aware that this has been previously pointed out, most writers seeming rather to dwell upon the points of resemblance between the circles of all countries. From their great number and close contiguity, and from remains found in them,¹ it might seem more likely in the case of the Aberdeen circles than in that of most English circles that their primary object was sepulchral, but the traditions already mentioned and the avenue between the inner and outer circles are suggestive of periodical processional or other rites culminating in some special observance before the so-called "altar" stones. Mr. John Stuart and Mr. Fergusson, though differing as to their date and origin, both maintain the Scotch circles to have been purely sepulchral, ignoring the common and, as I have shown, long-standing traditions concerning them, and, having established this to their own satisfaction, and finding in southern Britain other circles, with differences of construction of which they take no notice, they conclude that

² See list in "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," edited by John Stuart, Esq., for the Spalding Club. With special regard to the number and contiguity however Colonel Forbes Leslie says "several stone circles, close together, even intersecting each other, and lately erected to the same object of worship—viz., to Vital—may any day be seen in secluded rocky places near towns and villages of the Dekhan in India. Near Poona they are extremely common."—"Early Races of Scotland," page 214.

STRICHEN. (<i>Rev. J. Peter</i>)	MIDMAR. (<i>Col. Forbes Leslie</i>)	ARDLAIR. (<i>Col. Forbes Leslie</i>)	SINHINNY. (<i>Col. Forbes Leslie</i>)
LOUDON WOOD. (<i>Rev. J. Peter</i>)	"KIRK O' TOUCH." (<i>C. MacLagan</i>)	"KIRK O' KEIG." (<i>C. MacLagan</i>)	AUQUORTHIES. (<i>C. MacLagan</i>)
AIKEY BRAE. (<i>Rev. J. Peter</i>)	AUORTHIES, (<i>A. L. Lewis</i>) ABERDEEN.	DYCE. (<i>A. L. Lewis</i>)	OLD RAYNE. (<i>C. MacLagan</i>)
SKETCHES AND PLANS OF "ALTAR STONES" IN SCOTCH CIRCLES. (ABERDEEN DISTRICT.)			

those circles also must be purely sepulchral, Mr. Stuart, in particular, saying that unless some other difference than that of size can be shown to exist he must decline to admit any difference of purpose. I have now shown two other differences to exist between the circles near Aberdeen and those of England and Wales, namely, the oblong "altar" stone at the south, present in the Aberdeen district but absent in England and Wales, and the north-easterly references, indicative of sun-worship, and sometimes of mountain and phallic worship, which are prominent in England and Wales, but only subsidiary in the Aberdeen district.

Explanation of Plate III.

Two plans and ten sketches of "Altar Stones," showing the arrangement of an oblong stone with two supporters peculiar to the Aberdeen district, copied from illustrations to Mr. MacLagan's "Hill Forts, Stone Circles, &c., of Ancient Scotland;" to Colonel Forbes Leslie's "Early Races of Scotland;" to Rev. J. Peters' paper in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; and from original sketches by the author.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. JOHN EVANS complimented Mr. Lewis on the care he had bestowed in examining and describing these Scottish monuments. There were, he thought, two points especially worthy of notice. One, the presence of stones of a kind that must have been brought from a distance, and that were used for the so-called "altar stones." Analogies in this respect might be found among southern stone circles. The second point was the extent of the destruction of these stone circles within comparatively recent times. He suggested that the attention of General Pitt Rivers, as the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, should be called to these Aberdeenshire circles. As an illustration of the employment of concentric circles in places of worship, he mentioned the church of San Stefano at Rome, which is of early date, and the arrangement of which in three concentric circles may have been suggested by some far earlier monument. He regarded the question as to whether the Scottish priests referred to by the author were Druids or not, as involving many difficulties which could not be summarily discussed.

Miss BUCKLAND inquired whether Mr. Lewis had found any cup-markings or basin-like hollows in the stones he had examined, especially on the so-called "altar stones." Referring to the position of the circles as regards the cardinal points, Miss Buckland called Mr. Lewis's attention to the abstract of Mr. Peter's paper read at the Aberdeen meeting of the British Association, in which, according to the author, there would seem to be a special arrangement of

the "altar stone" on the south meridian in fourteen cases out of seventeen, whilst in the three exceptions it faces north-east, and of one circle Mr. Peter proved by measurements that the table stone of the dolmen standing in the centre was so placed as to face the point of the horizon in which the sun rises on Midsummer day.

Dr. GARSON remarked in reference to the observations that Mr. Lewis had made regarding the stones comprising the circles in Aberdeenshire not being obtained apparently from the neighbourhood of the circle, that the stones composing the circle of Stennis, in the Orkney Islands, appear to have been brought from a quarry situated in the hills between Quoyloo and Marwick, about eight miles or more distant. In that quarry there are several stones lying on their sides corresponding closely in size and form to those of the circle. There is no quarry near the circle known from which they could be taken. The question naturally arises how the erectors of these ancient circles, with probably only rude mechanical appliances at their disposal, managed to transport these large stones, which frequently measure from 18 to 20 feet long, by 3 to 4 feet broad, and 9 inches to a foot thick, so great a distance over rough hilly ground to their present resting place.

Mr. BOUVERIE-PUSEY remarked that he was much surprised that the author of the paper seemed to countenance the idea that stone circles had something to do with the Druids. We had long and detailed notices of the Druids and of their customs in ancient authors with no mention of stone circles, too characteristic a feature surely to be omitted, and he believed that the notices of Druidism found in the old literature of Ireland were equally silent on this point. It was his opinion that if stone circles were temples at all they must have been the temples of some pre-historic period.

Mr. HYDE CLARKE, after stating that it was by such investigations as those of Mr. Lewis that certain data would be obtained for the determination of the epoch and purposes of the monuments, observed that it was assumed the stones in a circle must be stationed equally. He thought it well worthy of consideration whether intervals were not to be found as in pre-historic and existing arrangements throughout the world. In the plans before them the numbers were twelve, thirteen, sixteen and twenty, numbers commonly found. Now in a circle of twelve it might happen that it was divided three, four and five, or six and six, or seven and five. It was possible that the stones of the Giant's Grave were to be taken not as thirteen, but as twenty-six, or twice thirteen. He should like to see some facts that Celts or Druids had anything to do with the stone monuments otherwise than making burials in them. Aberdeenshire had traces of Iberian occupation.

Mr. LEWIS said in reply to Miss Buckland that he had not noticed any cup-markings or hollows in any of the stones, but it was possible some might have escaped his observation; he thought, however, the cavities described so minutely by Dr. Garden were

very likely natural weatherings. Referring to Dr. Hyde Clarke's suggestion he had, he said, at different times considered the number and arrangement of stones in circles, but had never been able to formulate any rule, or come to any satisfactory conclusion. He thought it not unlikely that the erection of stone monuments was begun by a pre-Celtic race, but the evidence of the objects found in them showed that they had been used and he believed constructed down to if not beyond the commencement of the Roman occupation. It was perhaps, surprising that the traditions mentioned by Dr. Garden, and similar though fainter traditions in other places, should have survived, as they must have done, for more than a thousand years: but to suppose that they had been handed down as traditions from a pre-Celtic period, say three thousand years ago, was surely too much to ask anyone to believe. There was no doubt a want of direct evidence as to the use of stone monuments by the Druids, but that proved nothing, and he thought that such evidence as they had showed that the stone monuments were used by the Celts with the approval of their Druidic priesthood. The question of the transport of large stones had been dealt with by him in a paper on the "Devil's Arrows" published in the *Journal of the Institute* in November, 1878. He was much indebted to Dr. Evans for the reference to the church of San Stefano at Rome.

On PALÆOLITHIC IMPLEMENTS from the DRIFT GRAVELS of the SINGRAULI BASIN, SOUTH MIRZAPORE.

By J. COCKBURN, Esq.

DURING Christmas week, 1883, I was partially rewarded for a long and tedious journey in a country without water and without roads, by discovering a locality where palæolithic implements abounded. So numerous were they that I collected in three days five hundred implements, besides a vast collection of rude flakes and spalls amounting in all to twelve sack loads.

The implements themselves are undistinguishable from those found by Messrs. Foote and King in the laterite of the North Arcot district in Madras; those by Mr. Hacket in the Narbadda gravels; those of Mr. W. T. Blanford from Hyderabad; and those of Mr. Ball from Orissa. They, however, differ in being composed of a great variety of rocks, while all those hitherto found were either quartzite or vein quartz.

The majority of the implements in the Hinouttee locality were found on undulating ground, covered with shingle, over a frontage of a mile and a half along the south bank of the Balliah Nadi. The width of the exposed surface of Talchirs along this frontage varies from a quarter to half a mile, and between the villages of Hinouttee and Amaharee.