

THE STONE ROWS OF DARTMOOR.

PART III.

BY R. N. WORTH, F.G.S.

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SINCE the last meeting of the Association much important material has been added to our knowledge of the Stone Rows of Dartmoor, and among the additions to the list is one of the finest and probably most complete of the whole series. The total number now recorded, excluding doubtful cases, is 37, against the 25 known when my first paper was prepared.¹ Though the possible area of discovery has become much limited to what it was, such a find as that of the fine row on Watern Down, encourages the hope that the muster roll is not yet filled.

At the same time, it is now more than ever certain that some, if not many rows, have disappeared. These may in part be represented by such fragments—two, three, or four standing stones or so, more or less in line—as we find here and there on the Moor, but are hardly capable of definite identification. And it is even possible, seeing there are cases in which the smaller stones have been found to remain *in situ* below the surface, at a depth of eighteen inches, that there may be rows in existence buried beneath all chance of discovery.

To the list of hypotheses contained in my first paper, I should add that of Captain Conder, R.E., from his most interesting work on *Heth and Moab*, to which my attention was called by the Rev. S. Baring Gould. There do not appear to be any rows in these countries, though rude stone

¹ Forty, if all the Batworthy and Fernworthy examples are dealt with as independent. The thirty-seven are made up of 17 single, 14 double, 2 triple, 1 quadruple, 1 septuple, 1 partially double, 1 double continued as single. To this the doubtful have to be added.

uments of other classes abound, but he refers to a kind of monument to be found in Palestine at the present day—which singularly recalls the general idea of these alignments, and may possibly serve to illustrate their meaning." It is said that the Arab pilgrim, when he reaches a point at which a shrine first becomes visible, builds up a little pillar of stones, which it is considered afterwards impious to move, and pious to repair. When no stones can be found, groups of pebbles in the ground appear to take their place. "This practice"—says Capt. Conder—"taken in connection with the usual erection of memorial stones in India, may, perhaps, suggest some idea of the meaning of the menhir alignments. They also may have been memorials of visits to sacred places and circles, or votive stones before the graves of the pious dead. Many may have been erected at one time in regular rows, other added later by individual pilgrims; but whatever this may be, there is no doubt whatever that the menhir is the emblem of the man himself who erects it, and that such stones were of old considered to be themselves the manifestations of divinities."²

The suggestion of the votive character of such stones, and their being the emblems or the representatives of the individuals who erect them, comes very close indeed to my suggestion that the rows indicate the graves of heads of families or tribes, and that the length of the line and the number of the stones depends on the size or the strength of tribe or family.

Capt. Conder also notes the existence of three N. and S. rows at Hajr Mansüb, in Moab; and Col. Meadows Taylor mentions circular stones at Shahpoor, connected by alignments running E. and W., adding, "the tumuli of Algeria have regular connecting lines of stones."³

I am now inclined to believe that the line of monoliths at St. Columb, known as the "Nine Maidens," to which I alluded in my first article, must be regarded as a true row. Curiously enough, the written description by Mr. Lukis, in *Prehistoric Stone Monuments of Cornwall*, differs very strangely from his plan, and hence obscures the identification. In the printed account he gives them an average distance of feet apart. The plan, however, shows that the average interval is something less than $37\frac{1}{2}$ —the total length of the row being 262ft. 5in., and the distances on the plan respectively, 27ft. 11ins., 28ft. 3ins., 39ft. 5in., 46ft., 37ft. 3in.,

² *Heth and Moab*, pp. 206-208.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 254, 219.

40ft., and 43ft. 7in. The direction is N.N.E. and S.S.W., and 800 yards in a direct line to the northward is the menhir known as the Old Man, which Mr. Lukis suggested as its possible extremity. That may or may not be, but the reduction of the intervals strongly increases the presumption in favour of the Nine Maidens being a true row. No doubt most of the stones were removed long since.

Assycombe.

Further investigation of the row at Assycombe by the Rev. S. Baring Gould and Mr. R. Burnard, has yielded very important results, which I give in Mr. Baring Gould's own words: "The stones themselves are small, hardly any bigger than one man might carry, except at the head by the cairn and circle, where are 'three boys,' one 7 ft. 6 in. high, and the other two about 4 ft. 6 in. But the important feature is this—the double row runs close, within 10 ft., of a hut circle,⁴ and I believe not one stone has been cribbed from the 'avenue' towards the construction of the hut, nor *vice versa*. Consequently it is certain that both are contemporary. Though the stones are so insignificant, the lines are singularly perfect in number of stones, but also singularly irregular, so much so that it is puzzling to account for the carelessness in getting the stones in line. We found every pit hole with triggers, and half the stones fallen flat on their faces, and buried from 6 in. to 1 ft. 6 in. under turf and peat."

The row at Hook Lake on the Erme runs to the wall of the big pound there; but, as with the circle and the row at Assycombe, neither seems to have interfered with the other. The evidence is not so conclusive, but it evidently points in the same direction, at Hook Lake, as at Assycombe.

The most important point here is the irresistible deduction as to the age of these rows. Huts and pounds at Broadun, Tavy Cleave, at Grimspound, and elsewhere, lately investigated by the Rev. S. Baring Gould, Mr. R. Burnard, the Grimspound Committee, and others, have been found to belong to the Stone Age, to a people living under Neolithic conditions. The rows, and circles, and menhirs with which they are associated are therefore Neolithic likewise, and so of vast and hitherto unsuspected antiquity.

⁴ This on examination does not, however, prove to have been a "hut, but there is no reason to question that it is of kindred date.

Challacombe.

Since last year I have had the pleasure of inspecting the rows at Challacombe—immediately above Headland Warren, which were “restored” by the Rev. S. Baring Gould and Mr. R. Burnard. The re-erected stones had been so bleached by the peat that they now stand out with singular distinctness on the bold hill ridge. Further examination has shown that instead of the three rows which were at first recorded by Mr. John Prideaux, or the eight which seemed to be the result of the investigation in connection with the restoration, there are really four, and that the additional fragmentary rows form parts of a circle on the west of the rows and near their northern end, some of the eastern stones of which may be described as “engaged” with the western of the four lines. The arrangement is therefore unique, and the points of difference between the Challacombe and Coryndon groups quite as noteworthy as their resemblances. It seems likely that Challacombe may have something more to reveal.

Hookner Tor.

On the ridge, immediately north of Grimspound, near Hookner Tor, is a kistvaen and cairn surrounded by a circle, to the eastward of which is a single small stone set lengthwise to the circle, which had somewhat the appearance of having been the commencement of a row. But there is no continuation visible; and more probably it may have formed part of an outer circle. Still the point is anything but clear and the position curious.

Further to the north-west, on the slope from Hookner Tor towards Shapely Tor, is what appeared to be a stone row which had at some time been partially utilized as the line or nucleus of a wall. It seemed clearly to end in a ruined wall which trends to the westward somewhat; and as clearly to begin in a group of stones which had all the appearance of forming the remains of a cairn with a menhir. There was thus suggested a single line of big stones, irregular, several fallen, the bearing nearly N.E. and S.W., following, in fact, the favourite direction of this locality. Investigation, however, led the Rev. S. Baring Gould and Mr. Burnard to conclude without hesitation, that it is merely an old hedge, which has been dug up and the bulk of the materials used in building a newtake wall close by. The upright stones “were simply stuck up on end in the meat earth, and packed around with

tinner's spalls, which were obtained from a waste heap close by."

There should be no doubt that it is to this vicinity Dr. Croker refers (and not to Challacombe Down, as suggested in the first paper) when he says of Shapely Common—"Here also may be distinctly traced an avenue or trackway of double stones leading to Grimspound, similar, though smaller in size and extent, to the great Sacred Avenue on Gidleigh Common."⁵ But Mr. Ormerod never could find this "avenue" nor could I, which was the chief reason for suggesting a possible confusion with the Challacombe series. It seems possible, however, that Dr. Croker may have had in view the stones just mentioned.

Launceston Moor.

In describing the stone row found by the Rev. S. Baring Gould on Launceston or Longstone Moor, I suggested that the boundary bank to the west really concealed another and much finer row, which had been used by way of nucleus. The opposing hypothesis was that the long stones in that bank had been removed from the undoubted row. The point has been set at rest by an examination conducted by the discoverer. He found by the socket holes that the stones in the row had all been small, and that it could never have supplied the big stones in the bank. *Per contra* he found also that big stones in the bank were set in sockets in the "calm" or subsoil, and is satisfied that the bank is really built on a stone row, and a far finer one than that ending in the Longstone. We have to credit Launceston Moor, therefore, with two rows instead of one.

Oke Tor.

Diligent search has failed to discover any stone row in the valleys of the Lyd or of the West Okement, or more than one on the East Okement. We may be fairly certain, therefore, that they are practically, though not wholly absent from the north-western angle of the Moor, a fact which must have some explanation, though it is not easy to see what the explanation may be. The slopes of the tors in this quarter are, for the most part, so easily surveyed by a glass, that it is hard to conceive how any row of importance, or indeed any row at all, unless hopelessly ruined, or absolutely insignificant and sunken, could elude detection. And this is the more evident from the conspicuous aspect in the distance of

⁵ *Guide to the Eastern Escarpment of Dartmoor*, p. 15.

the lines of dummy soldiers, set up as targets for the artillery, which, as irresistibly as absurdly, recall Mr. Fergusson's famous battle-plan hypothesis. These are so visible from afar, as to render it all but impossible that any real row could escape observation: and over all but very small portions of this region I feel certain, therefore, that none exist.

The exception, now noted for the first time, is on the western slope of Oke Tor. I was not, at first sight, absolutely positive as to its character, but on full examination, I had no doubt. It runs a little N. of W. and E. of S., directly down hill towards the river. My attention was first called to it by seeing two large slabs of granite set breadthwise on their edges in a line with various cumbent stones, some of which appeared to have fallen, and following on downhill, I found that the indications ended with a couple of menhirs lying prone lengthwise, and within a couple of yards of each other—the one at the extreme end being six feet in length, and its neighbour 11ft. 6in. long, and over two feet in greatest width, the shape being irregular near the base. A few irregularly spaced stones intervene between this menhir and the first of the erect slabs, which stands three feet high, being 3ft. 6in. broad, and eight inches thick. The second slab is some fifty yards higher up the slope, the most important feature between being a fallen stone, five feet long. This slab is also about three feet high, but is 3 ft. 10½ in. wide, and slightly thinner than its neighbour. It is set amidst other stones, which show that it once formed part of a kistvaen, that may have had a small circle. There are indications as if the row might have continued further, but they are very doubtful.


My suggestion, therefore, is that the Oke Tor row began with this kistvaen, of which the eastern erect slab formed one end, and ended with the menhirs. Both slabs probably indicate former kistvaens, to which the two menhirs may be meant to correspond. At Merrivale, apparently at Cosdon, and indeed elsewhere, cairns or kistvaens are found intervening in rows, precisely in this manner. The row is single.

Long stones—natural menhirs, ready for adoption—are found in plenty in the clatter on the other side of Oke Tor, but on the western face the slope is grassy and clear, and the stones stand out quite distinctly.

There are two small slab stones set breadthwise in line on the western slope of Hound Tor, about 20 yards apart, bearing N. and S. I simply record the fact of their occurrence.

It occurred to me as being possible that the monolith known as the White Moor Stone, near the Raybarrow circle, might have some connection with the circle, but I found that this was not the case. There is no trace of a row between the circle and the stone, which bears thence 8 deg. of S. magnetic. A low cairn lies more to the west, forming an obtuse angle with the circle and the stone, but neither does that show any connection; and I have little doubt in my own mind that the White Moor Stone may be a comparatively modern boundary mark. There are remains of the mound which supported it on the east. I think it very likely that, as suggested by Dr. Prowse, the circle may have originally consisted of some twenty stones. I could clearly identify eighteen.

Round Hill, Postbridge.

On a tall brow at Round Hill, Postbridge, there are five stones thus arranged  There seems no possible reason to question that they *** are the remains of what was once a triple row, the remainder of the stones having been taken to build the wall of the tree-planted enclosure hard by. The Rev. S. Baring Gould has no doubt whatever of the original character of this much ruined monument.

Sharpitor.

There are two dilapidated and fragmentary stone rows on the flank of Sharpitor, within half-a-dozen paces of the Princetown road, which had most strangely escaped all notice until found this year by the Rev. S. Baring Gould, though clearly and definitely in sight of every passer-by. Most of the stones however, are very small; they are irregularly placed, and there are several gaps—the general aspect indeed being such as to suggest at first that instead of two lines of stones there have been three or four. Closer examination however, leads to the conclusion that there are two rows, one double, and the other, commencing parallel to the termination of the first, single. The double row runs 10 deg. N. and S. of E. and W.; and is just 100 yards long. The first recognizable stone on the west—there is no circle, or cairn, or menhir, or trace of either—is a slab eighteen inches high, set lengthwise in the southern line. The eastern termination is clearly marked by three big stones, one at the end of each line and a closing stone beyond. These are the largest stones of all. That on the north, in place, stands 15 in. high and 2 ft. 1 in. broad. That on the south is sloping to its fall, and 3 ft. 6 in. long. The

closing stone is down, 4 ft. 9 in. by 3 ft., and of irregular outline. Where the double line is most perfect the width averages about 4 ft. 6 in.; but elsewhere the width was evidently greater. Though the gaps are considerable, 41 stones can clearly be identified in place, including fallen; and as several are only a few inches above the surface, it may be regarded as certain that there are others *in situ* beneath the turf. However, the row never can have been of any importance; and the most interesting feature is that 9 feet to the S. of the eastern terminal stones, another—single—row begins, of which only a very few members remain. The double row points to a kistvaen 70 yards lower down the slope of the hill, which has a 10 ft. circle; but it is clear that there never was any material connection between the two. Nor is any connection supplied by the single row, the direction of which is not towards the kistvaen, but more to the north, crossing in fact, slantwise, the ground between the double row and the kist. The two must be regarded, I think, as quite distinct, and the single as probably the older.

Throwleigh.

The moors between Hound Tor, on the shoulder of which the White Moor Stone stands, and Throwleigh, are in the watershed of the Teign, where rows are even more plentiful than on the Walkham, Plym, or Erme. With the exception of the triple avenue on Cosdon, which all but belongs to the Taw, none, however, have been recognised hitherto in the district adjacent to Throwleigh and South Zeal; nor has my search been more successful, though suggestive indications are not wanting, as, for example, near Ruelake Pits, where there are cairns and remains of small circles. The "old men," however, have been very busy here, for the pits are those of ancient mine workings.

The rows associated probably with the Scorhill and directly with the Fernworthy circle are so important—or rather, in some portions, unfortunately, *were*—that the neighbourhood of the great Throwleigh circle claimed careful examination. Though one of the finest, this is certainly the least known of the larger circles on Dartmoor. It is remarkable for occupying a position on low ground, all but at the bottom of a shallow valley westward of Buttern Hill—a circumstance which militates heavily against the "sacred" idea. Most of the stones are fallen—indeed only half-a-dozen are still earthfast; but nearly all the stones are present—if not quite

all, and I have counted 36 more or less in place. Some are of considerable size, the longest 6 ft. 9 in., another 5 ft. 8 in., others between four and five feet. One of the standing stones has a curious top, much resembling the rudely formed head and beak of a bird, but this is evidently natural. The diameter of the circle cannot be taken exactly, as so many of the stones are down—but was between 80 and 90 feet. There is no trace of a row or of an associated menhir, but there is a very significant sepulchral fact, in the presence of the remains of a small cairn between five and six yards in from the southern edge.

Throwleigh circle is also noteworthy for having a companion, a short distance on the slope to the westward. The existence of this circle has not been put on record until now, and indeed it might well escape observation, seeing that there are only four certain stones still standing, with possibly a fifth, and that the remainder have disappeared. This circle was clearly not less than 60 feet in diameter. There is a very large block of irregular outline within its limits, which at one time may have stood fully six feet high. Menhirs occur in circles in Cornwall.

The upper portion of Buttern Hill is crowded with the remains of ancient enclosures and hut circles, showing that it was once occupied by a large population. The rectangular planning which is prominent in the enclosures, and is seen also in some of the buildings, to my mind suggests a much later date than the more massive and characteristic pounds. These enclosures are largely formed by boundaries of stones set on edge, connected where needed by rough walling, now represented merely by fallen heaps. In the distance some of these old fences are very deceptive, but there is no mistaking their character on examination. At the same time, there are several large upright stones scattered here and there through the settlement, which do not belong to any boundaries, or to the remains of any buildings, and the purpose of which it is very hard to see, if they had any relation to these structures. Whether even a careful and minute survey and planning would solve their origin and purpose may be doubtful, but assuredly nothing else could. All that can at present be said is that these stones have been placed in the position they occupy, and that they bear no recognisable relation to their surroundings. I cannot of course claim them as rows under existing circumstance. I can only add them to the already long list of unsolved Dartmoor problems.

Watern Down or Hurston Ridge.

One of the most perfect of the stone rows of Dartmoor was first observed a few months since, by Mr. George French, of Postbridge. It stands on Watern Down, called on the map Hurston Ridge, to the north of the road from Postbridge to Moretonhampstead, and is all but absolutely perfect. In fact only two stones appear to be missing, at a point where it is interfered with by a ruined newtake wall. The row is double, of unusual breadth, and of unusual irregularity in the size of the stones, some only peering above the surface. The general direction is along the hill, N.E. and S.W., and there are ninety-nine stones in place; these which had fallen having been re-erected under the direction of the Rev. S. Baring Gould in their original holes. The row commences at the southern end with a cairn and kistvaen; and the eastern line starts with a menhir, nearly 6 ft. high, placed with its greatest breadth lengthwise. This line ends in a stone of ordinary dimensions; but the western line, which begins with an ordinary stone, is extended beyond its neighbour by a menhir placed breadthwise and blocking. A noteworthy feature here is that among the stones used to "trig" the southern menhir was a large hammer stone, the striking end of which had been broken off—another indication of Stone Age date.

For the sake of convenient reference I append an alphabetical list of the rows noted on Dartmoor up to the present date, giving the river areas in which they occur, their direction, and other leading features. Where tributaries are mentioned the name of the main river follows.

- Assycombe: S. Teign; double; E. and W.; cairn to menhir,
 Batworthy: S. Teign; double; doubtful whether three, four,
 or five sets—if three one begins with a cromlech
 and has a menhir midway, another with a
 kistvaen, and a third with a triple circle;
 generally N. and S.
 Butterdon: Erme; single; E. of N. and W. of S.; circled
 cairn to menhir.
 Challacombe: Webburn—Dart; quadruple; nearly N. and S.;
 circle on West, near northern end, menhir at
 southern end.
 Cholwich Town: Torry—Plym; single; N. and S.; circle to
 menhir.

- Cocks Tor: Tavy; single, traces; E. of S. and W. of N.; begins with circled cairn.
- Conies Down: Cowsic—W. Dart; double; S.S.W. and N.N.E. barrow or cairn indicated near centre, slab at end.
- Coryndon Ball: E. Glaze—Avon; single; N. of E. and S. of W.; begins with cairn.
- „ E. Glaze—Avon; seven rows, close to preceding in same direction; begins with circle.
- Cosdon: Blackaton—Teign; triple; S. of E. and N. of W.; has double head—a circled slab, and a circled kistvaen.
- Down Tor: Meavy—Plym; single; E. and W.; begins with circle enclosing barrow and kistvaen.
- Drizzlecombe: Plym; three sets—two single and one partially double; N. of E. and S. of W.; each begins with circled barrow and ends with menhir; very probably another one existed connected with kistvaen near Kylesborough.
- Drewsteignton: Teign; double; E. and W.; connected with cromlech and circles; this does not now exist.
- Fernworthy: S. Teign; double; N. and S.; either two, or one intersecting Fernworthy circle, and suggested as continuing to the chief of the Batworthy rows—of this however, there is no evidence. Fernworthy circle (60 ft.) is the largest on Dartmoor connected with rows.
- Glazecombe: W. Glaze—Avon; double continuing as single; N. and S. nearly; begins with cairn.
- Harter: Meavy—Plym; double; E. and W.; begins with circled cairn.
- „ Meavy—Plym; single; E. and W. nearly; begins with cairn close to last.
- Hook Lake: Erme; single; N. and S.; begins with circle.
- Laugh Tor: E. Dart; double; N.E. and S.W.; ends with menhir—there were apparently circles and kistvaens associated.
- Launceston Moor: Tavy; single; E. of S. and W. of N.; circled barrow to menhir. A boundary bank close by encloses the remains of another single row in the same direction, connected with cairns which are plainly traceable.
- Merrivale: Walkham; two double; S.W. by N.E.; northern double row begins with circle and menhir, ends menhir; southern has menhir each end, circle with kist midway.

- Merrivale: Walkham ; single ; E. of S. from big menhir.
 Round Hill, Postbridge : Dart ; triple ; much ruined.
 Oke Tor : E. Okement ; single ; slightly N. of W. and S. of E. ; begins with kistvaen, apparently circled, ends with menhirs.
 Sharpitor : Meavy ; two, one double, the other single ; mainly E. and W. ; kistvaen with circle 70 yards distant.
 Stalldon : Erme ; single ; S.S.W. and N.N.E. ; begins with large circle enclosing barrow, ends with tumulus possibly enclosing kistvaen ; over two miles long.
 Trowlesworthy : Plym ; double ; nearly N. and S. ; circle at head, menhir at some distance from other end, not quite in line.
 „ Single ; little S. of E. and N. of W. ; circle to menhir.
 Watern Down : Bovey—Teign ; double ; N.E. and S.W. ; cairn and kistvaen to menhir,
 Yadsworth: Erme ; single ; nearly N. and S. ; begins with circle.

There are menhir groups at May's Newtake, Swincombe, and at Joan Ford's Newtake, Sherberton, which may be the remains of rows ; but the so-called "avenue" at Meville near Thornworthy, has clearly no claim to the title, and is now finally excluded. The Rev. S. Baring Gould, and Mr. R. Burnard, confirm my view that it has no connection with the opposite kistvaen. It is simple a double wall leading to a circle, which was probably an enclosure for cattle or sheep.