

THE PREHISTORIC MONUMENTS OF SCORHILL,
BUTTERN HILL, AND SHUGGLEDOWN
(SHOVELDOWN).

BY R. HANSFORD WORTH, M.INST.C.E., F.G.S.

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SCORHILL CIRCLE.

SCORHILL CIRCLE has long been known, and often described, but, as is frequently the case, the descriptions have gathered more each from the other, than has always accorded with accuracy, and where they have not borrowed they are inconsistent. As far as I know the circle has never been carefully planned and the plan published, an omission the more surprising in that it has been fully recognized as one of our principal Dartmoor monuments, indeed, most writers have agreed with ROWE in the importance which they have attributed to it. ("This is by far the finest example of the rude but venerable shrines of Druidical worship in Devonshire.") It is certainly a fine circle, well placed on ground which slopes to the south and west, and commanding an extensive view of the valleys of the North Teign and Wallabrook. It has suffered much spoliation, but has been spared from the hand of the restorer.

ROWE, in the *Perambulation*, says that but twenty stones were standing, several having fallen. CROKER, writing in 1851 three years later, says that twenty-seven stones formed the circle, of which several were prostrate. ORMEROD states that in 1858, twenty-nine stones were erect, and two prostrate. MURRAY's *Handbook*, 1865, sets the tale at twenty-six standing stones, and six fallen, and it is to be noted that MURRAY gives the accurate diameter of the circle, 88 feet. CHUDLEIGH (first edition ? 1891) reports twenty-three stones as then standing, but does not say how many lay fallen; his sketch appears to show seven. BROOKING ROWE, as editor of the third edition of his uncle's work, states that, in 1896, twenty-four stones were standing, and eight had fallen.

It is very difficult to account for these discrepancies, one can not even say that the record shows a progressive loss of standing stones, either by robbery or collapse. Nor is there at the present any difficulty in discriminating between the

standing and the fallen. The matter is further complicated if we refer to the one descriptive reference which appears in our *Transactions*:—SPENCE BATE, D.A., Vol. IV, 1871, p. 514. There we find the entry—"There are thirty-one stones, all of which are in position excepting two which have fallen. *Rowe says that there are thirty-seven, two of which have fallen.*" The italics are mine. Pursuing this statement I find that, in the first volume of the *Transactions* of the Plymouth Institutions, ROWE, as the result of investigations made in 1827-1828, stated that the stones were "thirty-seven in number, *ten* of which are fallen". It is traditional of certain groups elsewhere in Britain that no two counts can be made agree, a tradition which may be better founded than I had heretofore credited.

I have gathered in the following table, all the data which I can find on my shelves; the list is certainly not complete.

Date.	Authority.	Stones erect.	Stones fallen.	Diameter feet.	Probable number of stones when complete.
1827-28	S. ROWE .	27	10	90	—
1848	S. ROWE .	20	—	100	—
1851	CROKER	Erect and fallen		27	—
1858	ORMEROD .	29	2	90	51
1865	MURRAY .	26	6	88	55
1876	SPENCE BATE .	29	2	—	—
1878	R. N. WORTH .	—	—	90	—
1879	LUKIS & ANDREWS	24	8	—	—
1889	PAGE .	25	several	85	—
1891	CHUDLEIGH .	23	?7	72	—
1896	BROOKING ROWE	24	8	90	52
1900	BARING GOULD	24	8	92	—
1909	CROSSING .	24	8	90	—
1931	THE AUTHOR .	23	7	88	65 to 70

I conclude that twenty-four stones were standing in 1879, and that for many years that had probably been the number.

A stone next to and east of the cart track on the southern circumference of the circle, is shown by LUKIS and ANDREWS as standing, but "leaning in"; this has since fallen and is easily identified. It would appear to have fallen before CHUDLEIGH visited the circle, so that from 1891, at least, there have been but twenty-three standing stones. This leaning stone added to the stones shown by LUKIS and ANDREWS as fallen should bring the total of fallen stones to nine certain, and one queried; but I cannot accept some of the stones which they plan as being other than casuals, never involved in the circle.

Their survey also shows that the outlying stone to the south of the circle, which I mark as having the end cut off, had already in 1879 been so mutilated. Upon their survey the north point has been reversed, and indicates the south.

I believe that BROOKING ROWE took his information in 1896 from MESSRS. LUKIS and ANDREWS, and that BARING-GOULD and CROSSING copied him.

I am indebted to the Society of Antiquaries for the opportunity of quoting from the survey made by the Rev. W. C. Lukis and Col. Andrews, the Society having very kindly supplied me with a tracing of his plan.

We may call yet another witness, WILLIAMS, the artist who illustrated the first edition of ROWE'S *Perambulation*. WILLIAMS was rather artistic than accurate, in such matters as scenery, or the precise form of a stone, but he is likely to have shown just as many stones as he could see; he shows twenty-one stones standing; it is conceivable that one or two were obscured by those drawn, but hardly probable that six were so hidden.

ROWE makes the assertion that the two tallest stones yet erect stood at nearly opposite points of the circle, and that statement has constantly been repeated. The stones in question are easily identified, and are still erect; but they are not diametrically placed. The angle which they subtend at the centre of the circle is $146^{\circ}30'0''$ and not 180° . None the less, I have quite recently been told that the opposition of these two stones must have some hidden meaning. And, while there is some ground for supposing that the present tallest stone has always occupied that prominence, it is by no means certain that among the fallen stones, and those removed there have not been successful rivals to that which is now the second in height.

The dimensions of the stones now standing are as follows, starting with the tallest and proceeding clockwise. The dimensions are given in the following order:—Height above ground, width tangential to the circle, thickness radial to the circle.

$8'-2''$, $2'-2''$, $3'-0''$ at $2'-6''$ above ground $2'-3\frac{1}{2}''$, $1'-7''$ | $3'-7''$, $3'-0''$, $0'-11''$ | $4'-0''$, $2'-0''$, $1'-3''$ | $3'-3''$, $1'-7''$, $1'-2''$ | $2'-7''$, $2'-3''$, $1'-1''$ | $2'-10''$, $1'-2''$, $1'-1''$ | $4'-2''$, $5'-0''$, $1'-0''$ | $3'-11''$, $2'-2\frac{1}{2}''$, $1'-4''$ | $3'-7''$, $2'-6''$, $0'-9''$ | $5'-7''$, $2'-7''$, $1'-7''$, the second highest | $3'-6''$, $2'-3''$, $0'-9''$ | $3'-7''$, $1'-11''$, $0'-10''$ | $2'-8''$, $1'-6''$, $0'-9''$ | $2'-11''$, $1'-4''$, $0'-8''$ | $3'-4''$, $1'-9''$, $0'-11''$ | $3'-8''$, $1'-8''$, $0'-10''$ | $3'-0''$, $1'-9''$, $0'-10''$ | $2'-10''$, $3'-6''$, $0'-7''$ | $4'-11''$, $2'-6''$, $1'-0''$ | $4'-2''$, $2'-10''$, $0'-8''$ | $3'-2''$, $1'-7''$, $0'-10''$ | $4'-7''$, $3'-2''$, $0'-10''$ | $4'-8''$, $3'-2''$, $0'-10''$.

The nearest formal circle which will approximate to the actual setting of the stones has a diameter of 88 feet, and the

deviations from this ideal are but slight, in fact the circle is unusually near geometrical truth.

In addition to the fallen stones, but little displaced, and one which has been somewhat removed from the circle, it is locally recognized that other original members of the monument have found utilitarian use not far away. There is a pot-water leat to Scorhill and other farms which contours the hillside to the west and south of the circle, and at its nearest is less than 60 yards distant. Here it crosses a mire, and it has been found difficult to maintain its lower bank, with the result that the circle has at some time been raided to provide stones to retain the water. The stones are all columnar, and beyond doubt the local view that they came from the circle is correct. The following are measurements of the more important of these: 4'-9", 1'-6" / 7'-10", 1'-8", 1'-1", has been split off from a larger block of the same length 5'-5", 1'-2", 1'-2", also appears to have been split off a larger piece / 6'-0", 2'-7", 1'-0" ? / 4'-9", 1'-11", 1'-0" / and several smaller broken pieces.

In addition to this direct robbery, three of the fallen stones yet remaining at the circle have been attacked; one, lying outside has been shortened, by how much can not be said, but its original length must have exceeded six feet; two have been holed for splitting longitudinally, off one a piece has been taken, and the other has also been trimmed. The perpetrator of these last outrages was caught in the act, his desire was for gate-posts, but he had to obtain them elsewhere.

A rough cart track crosses the circle, leading to the fords on the Wallabrook and the North Teign. This track now passes through the western half of the area; roughly parallel to it, but in the eastern half, is a surface-water channel, which represents a former track. Why a route should be taken through the circle is difficult to conceive. The one point of interest is that the water channel has cut well below the surface and reveals nothing but the natural subsoil.

The illustrations which I submit are: a plan of the circle, surveyed on the 6th and 7th of August, 1931. Plate XI, a view of the circle, looking S.71°W., and Plate XII, Fig. 1, a view of the tallest stone, Fig. 2, the stolen stones in the side of the leat. In the plan those stones which are still erect have been indicated by hatching.

BUTTERN HILL CIRCLE.

At the foot of the western slope of Buttern Hill lies another circle, slightly smaller than that on Scorhill. Here five stones are still erect, nineteen have fallen, triggers give clear indication of the position formerly occupied by five stones now lost, and there are some doubtful, and small, stones. The



VIEW OF SCORHILL CIRCLE, looking S. 71° W.

Photo R. H. Worth,

Prehistoric Monuments.—To face page 282.



Fig 1. TALLEST STONE IN SCORHILL CIRCLE.

Photo R. H. Worth.

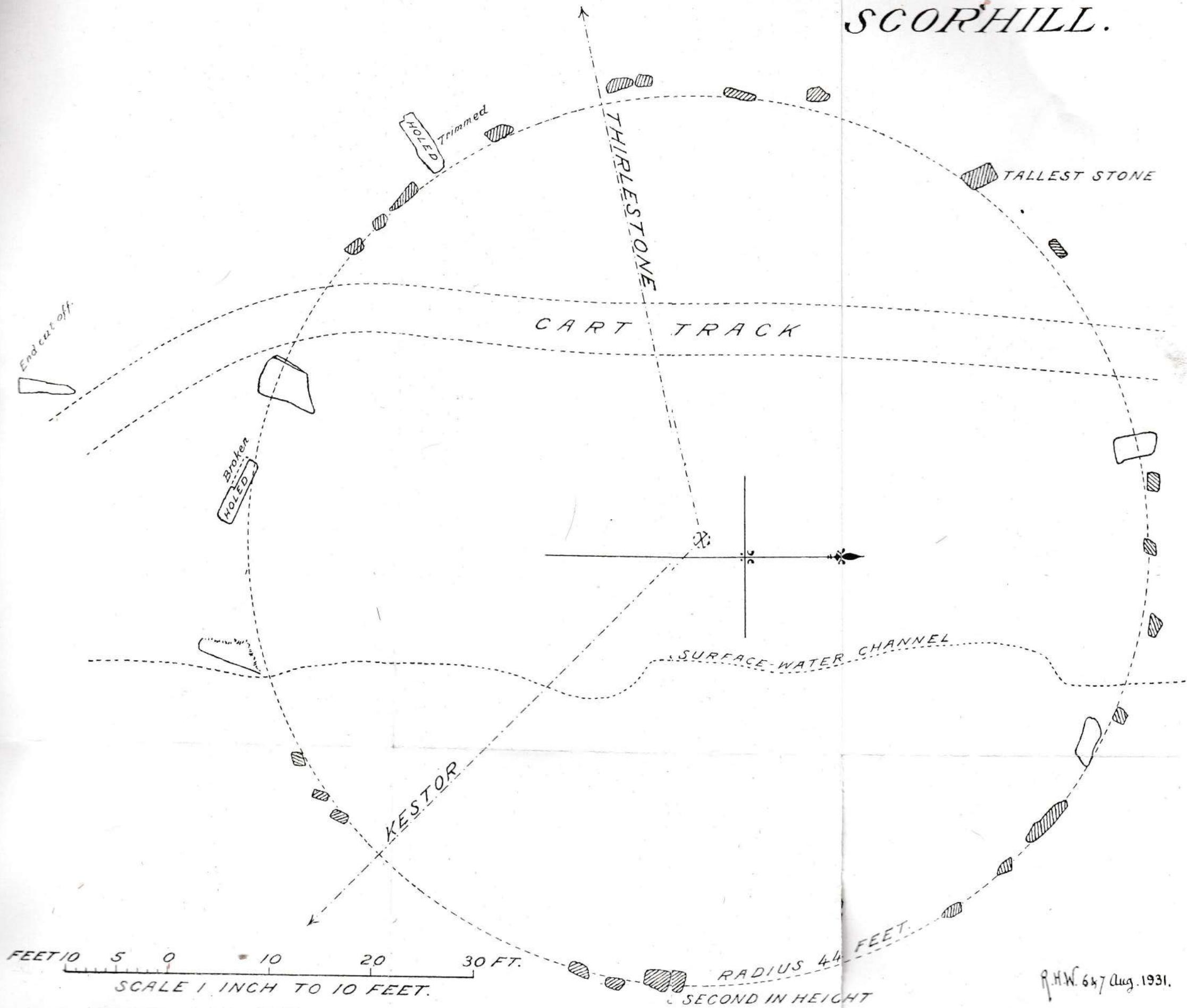


Fig. 2. STONES STOLEN FROM SCORHILL CIRCLE used in bank of Leat.

Photo R. H. Worth.

Prehistoric Monuments.—To follow Plate XI.

SCORHILL.



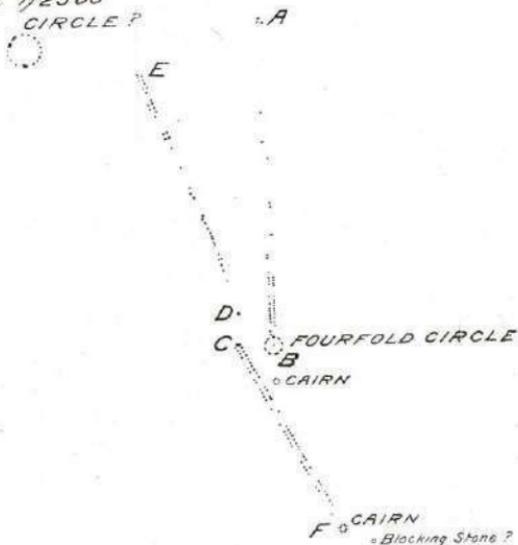
SHUGGLEDOWN.

FT. 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 FT.

SCALE 1/2500

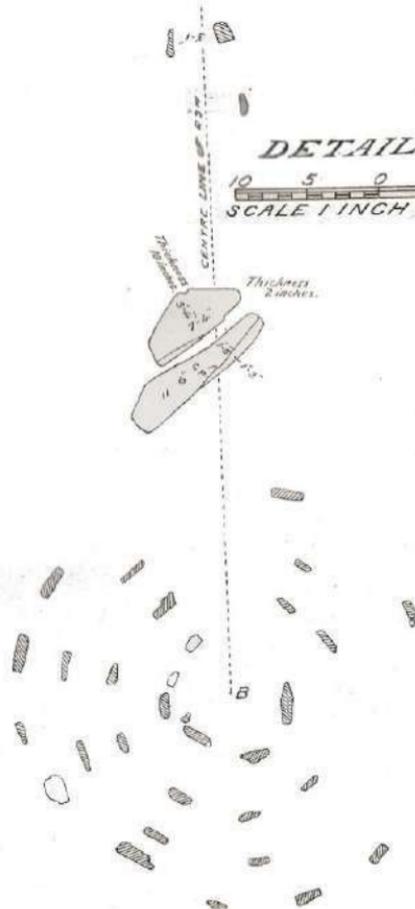
CIRCLE ?

BATWORTHY CORNER.



DETAIL AT B.

10 5 0 10
SCALE 1 INCH TO 8 FEET



C & Surrey Station



LONGSTONE

Stones of Row

THREE BOYS*

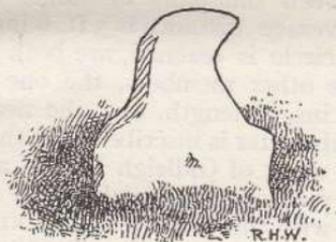
KISTVAEN

THORNWORTHY CORNER

tallest member now standing is but twenty-eight inches above ground, and of a curious shape, which seems to be purely natural in origin. The gatepost merchant has been here also, and some of the fallen stones owe their present shape to his interference, being now more columnar than before his attack. The nearest equivalent true circle would have a diameter of eighty-one feet.

In 1931 a great part of the turf within the circle was skimmed off for fuel, in accordance with an unfortunate habit which prevails in the Chagford district, where little true peat-cutting is now done. Although this habit disfigures the moor, and destroys pasture, it has one slight advantage. It reveals the worked flints that so often lie immediately under the turf; and this, and not the greater prevalence of implements, has probably led to the marked predominance in our museums of flints from the north and east of Dartmoor. So far nothing has been found as the result of this operation within Buttern Circle.

A Plan of Buttern Hill Circle is given overleaf, and a drawing of the tallest stone still standing is here inserted.



STONE IN BUTTERN CIRCLE.

STONE ROWS ON SHUGGLEDOWN.

These rows have often been described. A view is given in the first edition of ROWE's *Perambulation*, it may be rejected as valueless, more especially as regards the surrounding scenery. Of plans there are CROKER'S, 1852, inaccurate in many respects, especially in the serpentine course which it attributes to the stone rows; ORMEROD'S, 1873, is excellent and accurate, but not quite complete, it appears in his privately printed memoir: "*Rude Stone Remains situate on the Easterly Side of Dartmoor*"; and BARING-GOULD'S, surveyed in 1851, but not published until 1900, in his "*Book of Dartmoor*," this is inaccurate in many respects, but shows a row ranging alongside that which leads to the Longstone, which no other authority mentions, but which still exists. Finally, there is the Ordnance Survey, which is rather diagrammatic.

It has been alleged by more than one writer that the rows on Shuggledown form part of a series which once extended from the Fernworthy Circle to the Scorhill Circle. I can find no evidence in support of this statement, after making detailed surveys of the Fernworthy Circle and its associated rows, of the Shuggledown rows and of Scorhill Circle.

Probably the approach to the Shuggledown Rows is best made from Batworthy Corner, thus starting at the north end of the group. The description should be followed on the plan. Standing at Batworthy Corner, and looking a little west of south, you will see at a distance of about 285 feet the first stone of a row; except where it has been robbed the row is double. It is obvious that the north end has been much more severely despoiled than the south part, probably as being much nearer the walls and fences of Batworthy, which have very possibly swallowed a considerable length of the row.

This row, marked A-B on the plan, is in length 595'-7" to the centre of a barrow with a fourfold circle which forms its southern terminus. I noted 34 stones still standing, and four fallen. Between the pairs of stones constituting the double row the average distance is 3 ft. 6 ins. The two last stones, before the circle is reached, are both fallen, both are larger far than the other members, the one further from the circle being 7 ft. 4 ins. in length, and the nearer being 11 ft. 6 ins. in length; this latter is inscribed with the letters "G.P."; being a boundary mark of Gidleigh Parish, an adopted use.

I have given a plan of the fourfold circle to a larger scale. It is curious that, with the exception of LUKIS, every observer has described this as a triple circle. But CROKER came near the truth; his note is "a set of circles of upright stones placed as follows: the outermost circle consists of 17 stones, the second of 6 stones, the third of 8 stones, and within this are 3 stones irregularly placed, the whole being 15 feet in circumference". On which it may be noted that if the whole were indeed 15 feet in circumference, then it would be very restricted in dimensions, being but 4 ft. 9 ins. in diameter, a complex monument in a small space! For "circumference" *radius* should be read. On his plan CROKER definitely describes this as a triple circle, but his "3 stones irregularly placed" were some out of a larger number which form the fourth and inmost cincture.

To-day the outermost circle contains nine stones standing, and one fallen (ORMEROD, 1858, say ten stones in all), and has evident gaps; it may well be that seven stones have been removed since 1852, indeed the least number required to fill the gaps would be five. The second circle still presents six stones, all standing, and probably once had four more. The

third circle still has eight stones, all standing, and probably once had two more. (There is an obvious error in ORMEROD's statement that the diameter of this circle is 3 feet; the measure is 16 feet.) The fourth and inmost circle has four standing stones, two fallen, and room for two more. This fourfold circle has its parallel in the much larger example on Yellowmead Down (*D.A.*, Vol. LIV, p. 70), which is over twice the diameter.

LUKIS planned the Shuggledown Circle, and recognized its fourfold character, indexing the survey as "Plan of stone row leading to cairn with four concentric circles. Between the row and the cairn are two fallen pillars. . . ."

The direction of length of the row A-B is S. 1° -40' E. About 83 feet north-west of the centre of the fourfold circle is the end of another double row which extends 476 feet in a direction N. 21° -15' W. The average distance between the lines of stones is a little over four feet, but it varies considerably. For the more part the stones of one or the other line are missing and there are but nine pairs standing as such. I counted forty stones in all. No special feature now marks either end of the row, neither barrow, menhir, nor blocking stone.

On a bearing a little to the north of west from the north end of row D-E, and at a distance of 207 feet is the centre of the geometric circle which would pass through three stones still standing. Whether these stones are in fact the remains of a circle cannot be determined; they are three standing stones, and the greatest breadth of each is set tangentially to the circle which can be described passing through them, and would have a diameter of 56 feet 6 inches.

Returning to the point B, almost due west from this, and at a distance of 65 feet 6 inches, is the commencement of yet another double row, C-F, the direction of which is S. 28° -30' E., the length of which to the centre of the barrow which forms the southern end is 386 feet. The two lines of this row are 5 feet apart, twelve pairs of stones still stand, thirty-one stones stand the companions of which have been removed, and there are six fallen stones. At a point 94 feet along the row, measured south from C, and at a distance 29 feet to the east is a barrow of 13 feet diameter.

The Barrow at F, which forms the southern terminus of of the row C-F., has a diameter of about thirteen feet. It may have contained a kistvaen; indeed, ORMEROD describes this row as ending in a kistvaen.

About 225 feet to the S.S.E. from the centre of the barrow at F are the first remaining stones of a double row which runs S. 3° E. for a distance of 485 feet, to the Longstone, with which it terminates. Of this row ten pairs still stand,

and thirty stones which have lost their companions, while five have fallen. The average distance between the rows would appear to have been about three feet three inches.

The Longstone is a fine menhir, measuring at the base, N. $35\frac{1}{2}$ inches, E. 24 inches, S. 33 inches, and W. 21 inches; its height is 10 feet 5 inches (CROKER and PAGE both give the height as 12 feet).

Due South of the Longstone, at a distance of about 555 feet, is an isolated menhir, the last of three associated stones, known as the Three Boys, which ORMEROD suggests were once the supporters of a cromlech. (More probably these were merely selected large stones at the end of the row, as at the fourfold circle.) The two missing stones have doubtless gone as gateposts to the Thornworthy enclosures; and the same enclosures have absorbed in their fences the stones of a double row which formerly connected the Longstone and the Three Boys. ORMEROD states that, in 1858, the pits left by the removal of the stones of this avenue were still to be seen in the turf.

The remaining "Boy" is now much out of the perpendicular, and the length out of ground is about 4 feet 6 inches.

We may now return to the row running north from the Longstone. This has a companion lying at an average distance of forty feet to the east, being sixty feet away on the south and converging toward the Longstone Row to the north. Excepting BARING-GOULD, no previous writer has mentioned this row, and his plan shows it as, in part at least, double. It is now single, and appears always to have been so. From H to K it pursues a straight course, S. 11° E., 95 feet in length, and contains thirty small stones still set, the largest of which is 25 inches in height. But from H northward there is a curious apparent extension, consisting of nine small stones and a terminal of larger size which has fallen, its length is 4 feet 6 inches and its greatest width 2 feet 9 inches. This extension curves to the west, toward the point F. It may really be an independent row.

The interest of this group as a whole is increased by the fact that it supplies instances of rows which fail to conform with the rule that the direction should lie somewhere between South and West, and exceptions to that rule are exceedingly rare. Here we have the following directions:—

1. Row A-B. S. 1° -40' E.
2. Row E-D. S. 21° -15' E.
3. Row C-F. S. 28° -30' E.
4. Row H-K. S. 11° -0' E.
5. Longstone Row. S. 3° -0' E.
6. Longstone to Three Boys, due S.



Photo R. H. Worth.

Fig. 1 SHUGGLEDOWN, looking from fourfold circle to Batworthy Corner.



Photo R. H. Worth.

Fig. 2. THE LONGSTONE, SHUGGLEDOWN (Kestor in distance.)

The deviations from the rule may be ignored in the case of 1, 5 and 6, but 2, 3 and 4 are a different matter. No explanation can be offered ; we know too little.

It remains to mention a kistvaen which lies 177 feet distant from Thornworthy Corner, on a bearing N. 14° W., one side stone measures 5 feet 6 inches, and the direction of length is S. 1° E., conforming to the kistvaen rule as to the direction lying within the south-east quadrant. This kistvaen has not previously been reported.

As regarding the whole group, a plan alone is capable of some misinterpretation, the levels have a great influence in any attempt at realising the conditions. In this case the line of the rows crosses a ridge. The rows north of F lie on ground descending to the north, and those south of H lie on ground descending to the south. The two sets, north of F and south of H, are each wholly invisible from any part of the other. Even in each group there are parts obscured from points in the same group. Thus, from the north end of the row lying north of the Longstone, that menhir can not be seen.

The following illustrations accompany this report. A plan of the Shuggledown Rows. Plate XIII, fig. 1, view of rows A-B and E-D, from near the fourfold circle, with the large fallen stones in the foreground ; fig. 2, the Longstone.