

May 15, 1828. Alfred John Kempe, Esq. F. S. A. communicated the following Account of some Monuments conjectured to be British, still existing upon Dartmoor, in a Letter addressed to Henry Ellis, Esq. Secretary :

“ On the mountainous, wild, and barren tract of Dartmoor, about four miles eastward from the town of Tavistock in Devon, on the road to Exeter, through Moreton Hampstead, are some curious vestiges of a druidical character, hitherto, I believe, but little noticed by topographical writers on the County.

“ These vestiges are on an eminence to the right of the road, and at a short distance from Merriville Bridge. They consist of long rows of stones, of various dimensions, imbedded in the ground, and arranged with much regularity on either side a cursus or way, about thirty yards in breadth. The tallest of these stones stand three or four feet above the surface of the soil ; they have evidently been collected from the scattered fragments of granite with which this part of the Moor is every where covered. This cursus extends, as far as it can now be traced, from east to west about 500 yards. (See Fig. 1 of the accompanying Plan. ^g) The eastern termination of the southern double line of stones is formed by a single flat stone, placed perpendicularly on end, and standing at right angles with the line ; and here it may be well to observe, that this is precisely the mode in which a double line of stones appears to be terminated in a druidical temple described by Borlase as extant at Classerniss in the Island of Lewis, the largest of the Hebrides, the character and arrangement of which it might be well to compare with these remains.^h

^g Plate XXXIX.

^h See Borlase's Cornwall, p. 190.

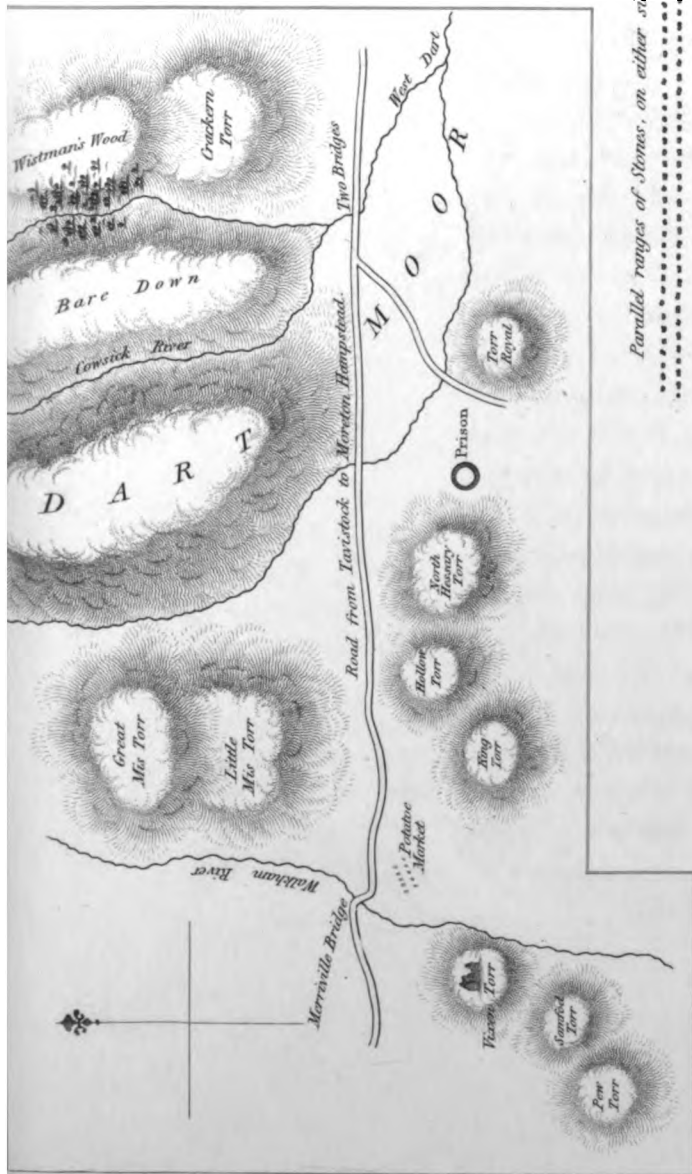
“ About two hundred and twenty yards from the eastern end the above line is broken by a small circle of stones.ⁱ On the north side of the grand cursus are numerous circular foundations of huts each about fifteen feet in diameter, and composed of loose uncemented granite fragments. All these huts have an aperture or doorway facing towards the cursus.^k

“ On the south side of the cursus, and at the distance of some 150 paces from the outer range of stones, are, first a cromlech or druidical altar,^l consisting of a tabular stone which has originally rested on three supporters, the whole are now fallen next a low tumulus:^m then, somewhat to the south-west, a circle of 17 or 18 yards in diameter.ⁿ At a short distance from this circle stands a granite stone resembling a rude obelisk, about ten feet high.^o Below these, another low tumulus, having in the centre a sort of kist-vaen or aperture, the sides of which are formed by flat stones.^p This cavity was, I suppose, sepulchral, and was large enough to contain an urn. At the distance of several furlongs, and in a line with the vestiges last described, appears the lofty insulated rock called Vixen Torr, a mass of granite, divided by perpendicular and horizontal fissures, and bearing in one point of view a rude resemblance to the Egyptian Sphinx.^q This rock cannot be less than 60 or 70 feet in height; the top is of very difficult access; from the perpendicular nature of the sides, it can only indeed be attained

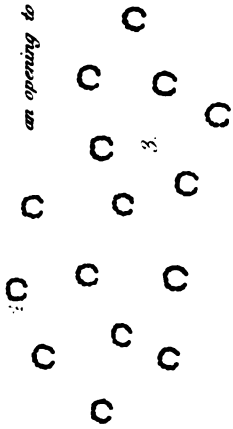
ⁱ Plate XXXIX, fig. 2. ^k Plate XXXIX, fig. 3. ^l Fig. 4. ^m Fig. 5.

ⁿ Fig. 6. “ This is about the diameter of other similar circles on the Moor. See Burt’s notes to Carrington’s beautiful Poem. ^o Fig. 7. ^p Fig. 8.

^q Fig. 9. “ This rock, although introduced on the face of the accompanying Plan in order to show the line in which it ranges with the other remains, should, if correctly laid down, be at the distance of a mile or upwards.



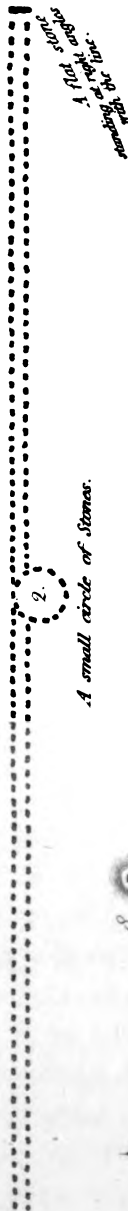
Foundations of Huts, composed of loose stones, each foundation having an opening to the South.



Paralleled ranges of Stones, on either side a space 34 paces wide. Length of the longest range 525 paces.



A small circle of Stones.



8. *Turnulus* having a square aperture fixed with flat stones.



9. *Vixen Torr* an insulated granite mass.



5. *A Turnulus*



4. *A Cromlech or Altar - fallen.*



A Circle of 18 paces in diameter. 10 stones only remain.



7. *A wide massive altar.*



by climbing up the narrow shaft-like opening made by one of the fissures. The Rev. E. A. Bray of Tavistock, a Fellow of the Society, has, however, attained the summit in the course of many curious researches which he has made relative to the druidical antiquities of the Moor; he assures me that it is perforated with several of the artificial cavities called rock-basins. These have been considered by some as intended to retain water to be used in the lustrations of the Druid Priests. Vixen Torr was therefore in all probability a rock idol, and the placing the sepulchral vestiges, &c. in a line with it was not perhaps the effect of chance.

“ A tradition exists among the country people that the spot on which the stones are so remarkably arranged, as I have described, was used as a place of traffic at the time the plague was raging in Tavistock, and it has in consequence acquired the appellation of the potatoe market; it is not indeed improbable that it might have been selected as a point of rendezvous at such a time, but numerous similar remains, scattered over the whole surface of the Moor, plainly indicate the remote antiquity of its origin.

“ The walls of circular huts remaining to a very considerable height are seen in numerous places. Grimpound, near Widdicomb, is, according to Burt,^r an earthen work, enclosing an area of four acres, which is filled with the ruins of these stone huts. Three miles east of Twobridges, and about seven from the place on which I have been treating, is Lakehead circle, a space of two acres in extent, surrounded by a wall of loose stones three feet thick. Cairns, Cromlechs, the Logan

^r “ Notes on Carrington's Poem on Dartmoor, p. 155, et seq.

stone at Drewsteington, upright obeliscal stones,^s remains of urns, bones, &c. all attest that this tract has been extensively inhabited in the remote ages, and that the Poet of Dartmoor draws a fair inference when he says,

— ‘ These roofless huts, these feeble walls,
Thus solitary, thus decay’d amid
The silent flight of ages. In these once
The fierce Danmonii dwelt.’

“ And it is further evident from the sterile and stony nature of these districts, which look like the ruins of a volcanic world, that the object of the ancient Britons for inhabiting them could not have been for extensive pasturage. The numerous remains of ancient stream works in the neighbourhood of the circular huts, shew that the British inhabitants of the Moor were employed in collecting the tin ore, and for procuring it by these alluvial means, the numerous springs with which that tract abounds afforded them every facility. Nor were there wanting, probably, in these early times, scattered over the face of Dartmoor, woods, where the Druid priest might cut the sacred misletoe, and celebrate his mystic rites. Indeed it has been conjectured by some, that the Moor was once very thickly interspersed with forests; and it has been asserted in confirmation of this, that the wolf, whose abode is always in the covert of the wood, was not extinct in these wilds in the time of Elizabeth. However this may be, the only vestige

^s “ Burt says there is an upright stone at Lustleigh inscribed with unknown characters resembling those of an inscription at Nashki Rustan, near Persepolis, delineated in Morsiers Travels (page 127, plate 35); on referring to that work, I find that some of the letters of the inscription which I suppose is alluded to are of the Greek character. This circumstance, coupled with the assertion of Cæsar, that the Druids used Greek letters, makes me very desirous to examine the inscription at Lustleigh.

of wood in these stony districts, (if we except some patches at the bottom of the deep ravines, by the side of the rivers, where the soil has been favourable to its growth,) is Wistman's wood, a place of so singular appearance, and doubtless of such high antiquity, that I will trespass on your patience briefly to describe it.

“Wistman's or Welshman's Wood, the last remnant, as has been said, of the once perhaps extensive forests of the Moor, is situated on the east declivity of a deep and precipitous ravine, through which a branch of the west Dart rushes, foaming over the opposing granite rocks. The west bank is formed by the opposite heights of Baredown. Wistman's Wood lies about a mile north of the celebrated Crockern Torr, where the Stannary Parliaments were held, and presents to the eye a scene of the most wonderful and fantastic description. It grows in a straggling manner on the sides of the lofty steep before-mentioned, amidst a surface of granite fragments, some ten, some twenty, some thirty feet in length. Among the interstices and crevices of these primitive rocks a race of dwarf oaks interweave their fantastic roots in search of such scanty nourishment as the fall of their own leaf for ages has produced. Skilful naturalists declare the age of these oaks beyond their calculation, their average height is from seven to ten feet, and the acorns which they bear are remarkably diminutive. Their foliage is, however, flourishing and luxuriant, and spreads itself from many of them to a diameter of thirty feet. Their trunks and branches are so overgrown with a luxuriant, soft and tumid moss, mingled with wild weeds, that the trees appear frequently as thick as they are high; and thus, as the author I have before quoted, describes,

APPENDIX.

— ‘ Round the boughs,
 Hoary and feeble, and around the trunks
 With grasp destructive, feeding on the life
 That lingers yet, the ivy winds, and moss
 Of growth enormous. E'en the dull vile weed
 Has fixed itself upon the very crown
 Of many an ancient oak, and thus refused
 By nature's kindly aid, dishonour'd, old,
 Dreary in aspect, silently decays
 The lonely wood of Wistman.

“ That the present trees at Wistman's Wood are the original standards or descendants of some Druid grove is rendered the more probable from numerous circular stone huts being placed on either side of the wood.

“ The trunk of a huge oak has been lately dug up by a farmer of the neighbourhood in a bog on Bare down, where also, at a considerable depth, he found some oaken bowls. The same person states, that on Long-beat Torr he discovered, under a cairn, two silver coins, and that from a Kistvaen in the neighbourhood he had taken a quantity of human hair, the durability of which substance beyond all other animal relicks is a fact well known.

“ These Kistvaens are numerous, but they have been generally deprived of their long covering stones, which have been converted to *rubbing posts* (as they are termed in the West of England) for the cattle. The rock-basins also on the Moor must not be passed over unnoticed; they are visible in many places, and their forms are so artificial, their sides so perpendicular and acute, that they cannot be considered as the effect of decomposition of the granite by the weather. †

† The Rev. E. A. Bray of Tavistock, my brother-in-law, has a large collection of sketches by his own hand of these rock-basins. On Pew Torr, near Tavistock, the antiquary will find some good specimens.

“The imperfect sketch which I have thus ventured to lay before you of the vestiges of British occupation in Dartmoor, may be sufficient to intimate that they would afford a wide field for the exploration of the Antiquary studios of the primitive monuments of the country, and that accurate plans and delineations of them would furnish materials for comparison with those of a similar nature in other districts. Very conclusive evidence might thus be obtained from the whole.”

June 5, 1828. William Macpherson Rice, Esq. F.S. A. exhibited to the Society by the hands of Henry Ellis, Esq., a Roman Tessera or Ticket



found in Cookham Wood, near the village of Frindsbury, in Kent, and, at present, the property of the Rev. Dr. Joynes of Rochester.

The Romans, in imitation of the Greeks, used Tesserae or Tallies, for various purposes. There were the *Tesserae comitiuales*; the *Tesserae convivales*, for admission at entertainments; the *Tesserae frumentariae*, for