

## **A group of Cumbrian megaliths / by C.W. Dymond.**

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### **Publication/Creation**

[London] : [British Archaeological Association], [1877?]

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/nwupmkz7>

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2.



Spence Bate, Esq: F.R.S.  
With the Author's kind regards.



## A GROUP OF CUMBRIAN MEGALITHS.

BY C. W. DYMOND, ESQ.

"These antiquities are so exceedingly old that no bookes doe reach them, *sc.* that there is no way to retriue them but by comparative antiquitie, which I have writt upon the spott from the monuments themselves."—JOHN AUBREY.

THE four plans<sup>1</sup> which illustrate this short paper have been selected for publication as representing the most important megalithic antiquities in the county, and as the only ones connected with that part of England in my possession which have been accurately surveyed. At the same time, they are remarkable as exhibiting most of the distinctive peculiarities which characterise various classes of these remains in Britain. For instance, we have—1st, a fine specimen—taking rank as the fourth in England—of the great stone-circle, with the added feature of a gateway or rudimentary avenue, and an external *mênhir* ; 2nd, an excellent example of the smaller circle, with stones in close order, and with a perfect entrance gateway ; 3rd, an instance of a circle, partly in open and partly in close order, with some sepulchral indications, and with an inclosed chamber on the eastern side ; 4th, a typical specimen of an irregularly inclosed cemetery, with no marked peripheral feature.

To the memoranda written on the plans I will add the following particulars :—

LONG MEG AND HER DAUGHTERS.—The earliest published account of these remains is that of Camden, who made a survey of Cumberland in 1599. He says :—

"At Little Salkeld there is a circle of stones, seventy-seven in number, each ten foot high : and before these, at the entrance, is a single one by itself, fifteen foot high. This the common people call *Long Megg*, and the rest *her daughters* : and within the circle are two heaps of stones, under which they say there are dead bodies bury'd."

A little later we find Aubrey writing of the same at about the middle of the seventeenth century. His information,

<sup>1</sup> Of Long Meg and her Daughters, the circles at Swinside and Keswick, and the principal circle on Eskdale Moor.



he says, was derived "from Mr. Hugh Tod, Fellow of University College in Oxford, a Westmorland man," and runs thus :—

"In little Salkeld in Westmorland are stones in an orbicular figure about seventie in number which are called Long Meg and her daughters, Long Meg is about ..... yards : and about fifteen yards distant from the rest." And, in a note, he adds : "Quære Mr. Robinson the minister there, about the Giants bone, and Body found there. The Body is in the middle of the orbicular stones."<sup>1</sup>

The same writer has the following, which can hardly have referred to anything but the same object of antiquity, whose distance from Kirk Oswald is only about three miles ; though, if it be a description of this circle, most of the particulars are greatly exaggerated :—

"From S<sup>r</sup> Will. Dugdale Clarenceaux : but 'tis not entred in his Visitation of Cumberland ; but was forgot by his servant." "In Cumberland neer Kirk-Oswald is a Circle of stones of about two hundred in number, of severall Tunnes. The Diameter of this Circle is about the diameter (he guesses) of the Thames from the Heralds-Office, which by Mr. J. Ogilby's Mappe of London is [880] foot. In the middle are two Tumuli, or Barrowes of Cobble-stones, nine or ten foot high."<sup>2</sup>

If this be a description of the circle in question, we must reduce the diameter from that guessed at 880 ft. (I have supplied the hiatus by measuring on a modern plan of London) to the real, average one of 332 ft. ; and, if the alleged number of stones (200) be reduced in the same proportion, we shall have 75, which agrees very closely with the evidently much more accurate account in the former description, that the number of stones was about 70. The statement as to the two tumuli or barrows seems to harmonize with the report about the giant's bone and body, and also with what is stated by Camden.

All traces of these two cairns have long since been obliterated by cultivation. The number of stones is now 69, exclusive of several rather large fragments lying by the roadside ; so that it looks as though but few, if any, have been entirely removed since Aubrey's date. At the same time, there can be no doubt, after reports which I heard on the spot as to the depredations of former occupiers of the ground, that the sizes of many of the stones must have been

<sup>1</sup> From Part I, *Monumenta Britannica*, MS., in the Bodleian, a copy from which has been kindly lent me by our associate, Mr. Long.

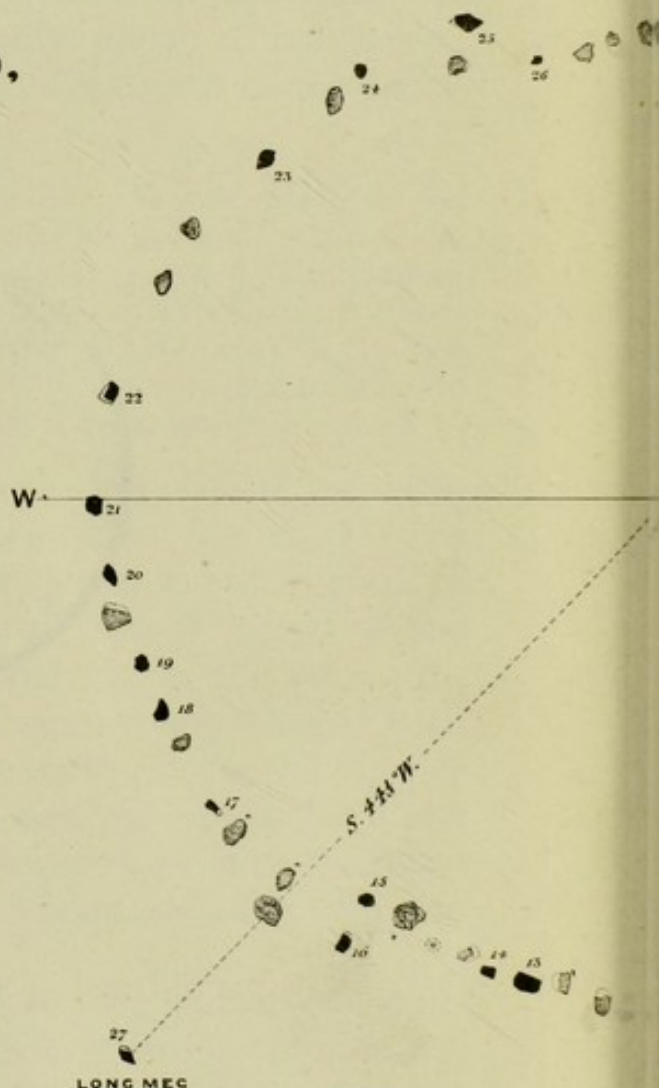
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.





PLAN  
OF A  
STONE CIRCLE AND MÊNHIR,  
CALLED  
"LONG MEG AND HER DAUGHTERS,"  
NEAR  
LITTLE SALKELD,  
CUMBERLAND.

Nº	HIGH FT. INS.	BROAD FT. INS.	THICK FT. INS.	Nº	HIGH FT. INS.	BROAD FT. INS.	THICK FT. INS.
1	6.4	4.11	2.6	8	5.4	5.1	3.0
2	7.4	8.8	3.6	9	3.11	5.1	3.4
3	2.10	4.10	4.3	10	3.3	5.9	5.2
4	5.2	5.10	2.9	11	5.7	5.0	5.2
5	6.10	4.5	5.11	12	2.10	6.3	4.4
6	4.6	5.5	5.4	13	6.9	8.8	5.2
7	5.5	5.10	5.9	14	4.5	5.5	3.4



#### MEMORANDA.

*This Plan is plotted from an accurate instrumental survey. The magnetic bearings were taken with a prismatic-compass. The local deviation of the needle was ascertained to be  $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  W.*

*Those stones which remain erect are filled-in with black on the plan: prostrate ones are stippled and line-shaded. These latter have generally been so dislocated, and, for many years, have been subjected to so much destructive violence,—having, until a comparatively recent period, been wantonly broken-up for walling and road-materials,—that it is seldom possible, in the case of any prostrate stone, to say with any degree of assurance which was the base, and where it stood; but whenever this can be conjectured, it is indicated by a small cross.*

*The open road which intersects the eastern half of the peristalith was formerly bounded on the west side by a hedge,—since grubbed-up,—on the site of which lie two or three large fragments of the stones of the original work. These, being evidently at some distance from their original place, are not shown upon the plan.*

*The number of stones that remain, including "Long Meg," but not including the small stone in front of N<sup>o</sup> 4, or the fragments by the road-side, is 69, of which 27 are erect—*

Draught

North and South, 305 feet

SCALE



SCALE OF ORIGINAL

Surveyed by C.W. Dyson

# STONES.

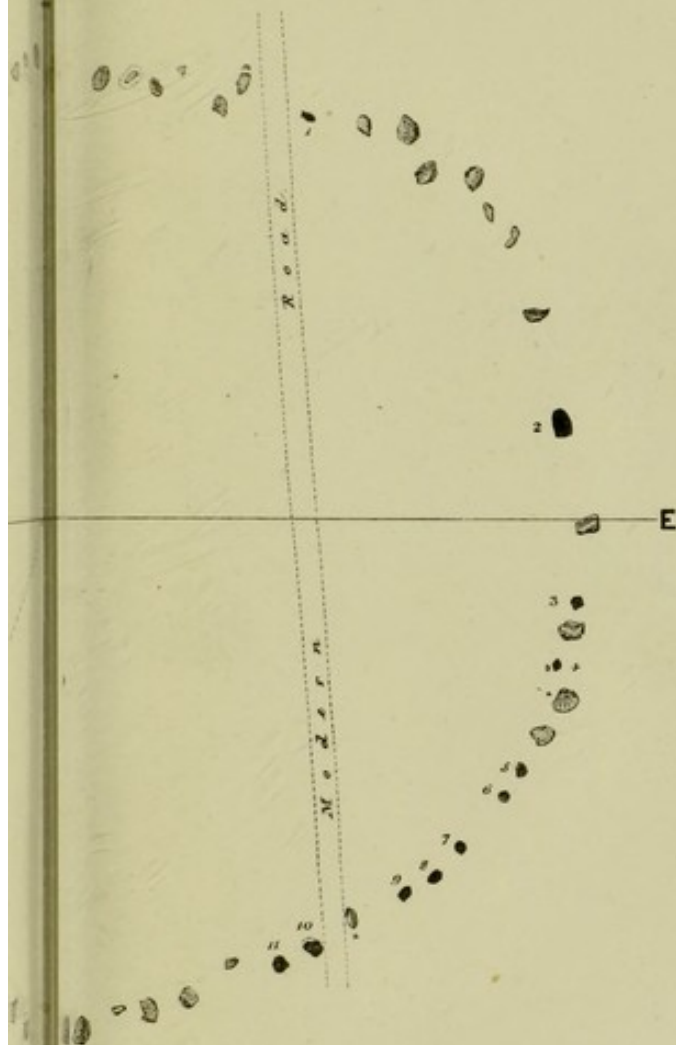
	HIGH FT. IN.	BROAD FT. IN.	THICK FT. IN.	No.	HIGH FT. IN.	BROAD FT. IN.	THICK FT. IN.
1	7.6	5.0	4.0	21	8.0	6.0	4.6
2	6.6	6.6	3.6	22	5.6	7.0	5.3
3	6.6	6.4	2.2	23	5.9	7.3	4.8
4	6.3	6.0	5.0	24	5.6	4.4	3.0
5	4.10	4.10	4.6	25	-	8.8	5.8
6	4.8	6.11	5.3	26	5.5	5.6	2.6
7	LONG MEG			12.0	5.6	3.6	3.6



VIEW OF LONG MEG.

(LOOKING S.W.)

FROM A SKETCH.



## MEMORANDA.

A gateway or rudimentary avenue interrupts the peristalith in the direction of the mênhir. This last is a monolith of hard red sandstone which, it is believed, was brought either from the banks of the Eden,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. N. W., or from Leazonby Fell, on the farther side of the river, in the same direction. All the other stones are of a very hard porphyritic nature. The rock of the site is a red sandstone of the Permian group; but small stones of, apparently, the same kind as those used in the circle, are found almost everywhere on the surface, and are both built extensively into the walls, and used for repairing the roads over a large area in the locality.

Traces remain of a ring-embankment, from 10 to 14 wide, and now, at the most, a few inches high, forming the seat of the circle, especially of the western half.

These Remains stand on nearly the highest part of a plateau, elevated about 350 feet above the surrounding valleys. The site dips from Long Meg, which is erected at the highest part, toward stone N<sup>o</sup> 1, where the ground is about 20 ft. lower.

Overhangs are shewn in unshaded outline. The dotted lines indicate, approximately, the buried portions. Abt 658 y<sup>d</sup>s. N. 63° E., from the centre of this circle is a cist inclosed in a ring of 11 stones, formerly cov<sup>d</sup> with a mound.


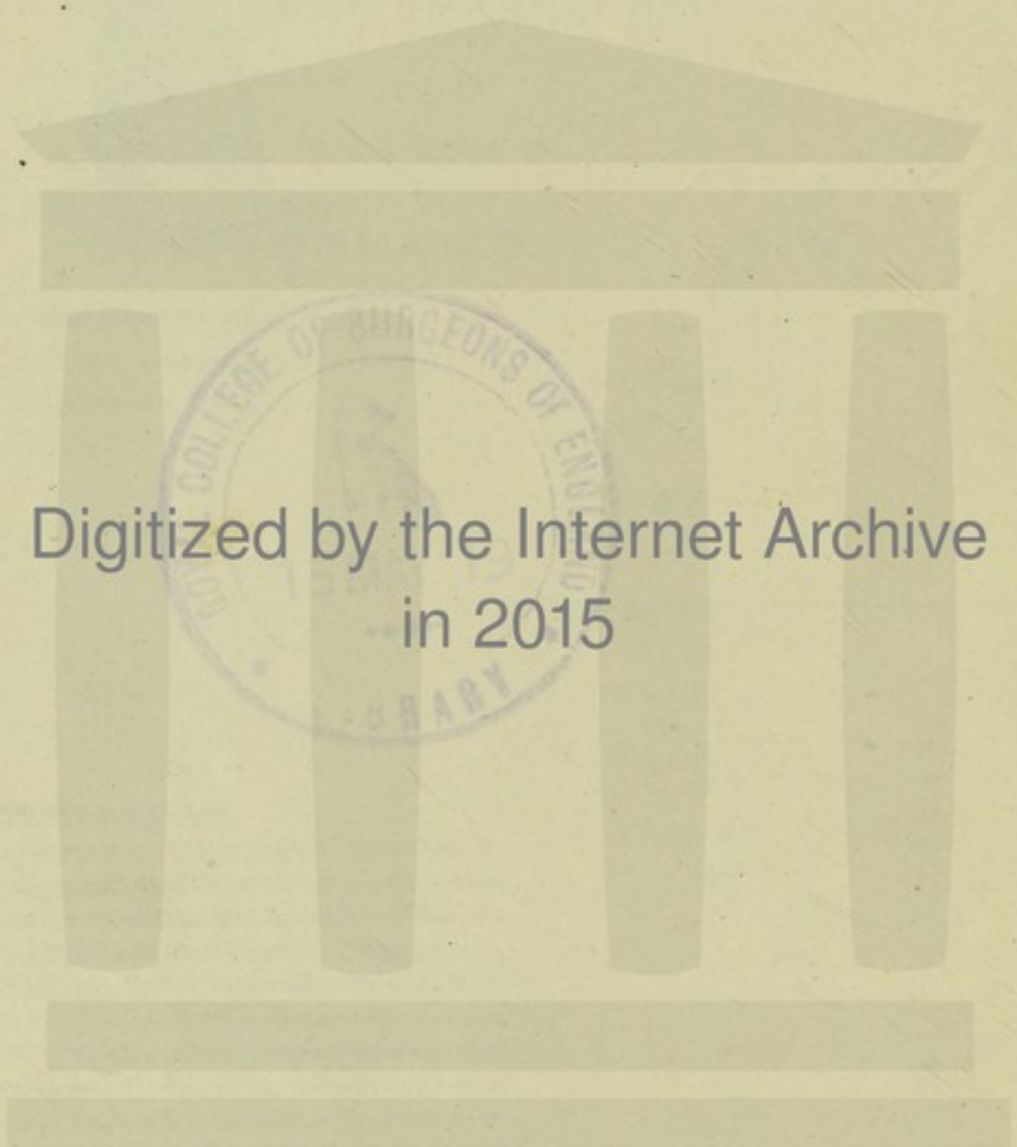
FEET.

100 200

1 INCH = 50 FEET.

C.E., 21<sup>st</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>, 1875.





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# A STONE CIRCLE NEAR KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

## MEMORANDA.

This Plan has been plotted from an accurate instrumental survey. The magnetic bearings were carefully taken with a prismatic compass. Ascertained local deviation,  $23^{\circ} \frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  W.

These Remains are situated on a nearly level site, at the northern end of a flat ridge,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. E. from Keswick, 706 ft above the sea, and in the midst of an amphitheatre of mountains. A Naddle beck flows N. through an adjoining valley,  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. E. of the Circle; and the river Greta washes the foot of the ridge on the N. and N.W. sides at a distance of from  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. to  $\frac{3}{4}$  m.

The stones are set in a ring, bed of small rubble, some of which is exposed, and is shown in the Plan. Those stones which are erect, or which have only declined somewhat from the perpendicular, are filled-in with black, the overhangs being shown in outline. Prostrate stones are stippled and line-shaded. In one or two cases—as, e.g., Nos 25 and 27—there may be some room for doubt as to whether the stones are in situ or have been overthrown, but, as appearances are in favor of the former, they are so

## MEMORANDA.

represented. Thus arranged, the peristalith now consists of 38 stones, 33 of these being erect, and 5 prostrate: the rectangular inclosure is fenced by 10 stones, 8 erect, and 2 prostrate. A Disregarding small fragments, the total number of stones now remaining is 48. No 49 is the bed of a removed stone.

All the stones appear to be of metamorphic slate from the rocks of the locality. Portions of some of them exhibit both a gritty and a granitoid structure.

Within the area of the peristalith is a shallow circular trench, 13 ft in diameter, probably the remains of a barrow.

The peristalith is ranged on an irregular oval, or rather pear-shaped figure, the longest diameter of which, from centre to centre of the stones, is that measuring 107 feet N. and S., between Nos 38 and 21, and the shortest, that lying E. and W., between Nos 11 and 30, and measuring 96 feet 8 inches. The clear area of the inclosed rectangular chamber measures 22 feet  $\times$  11 feet.

SIZES OF STONES.

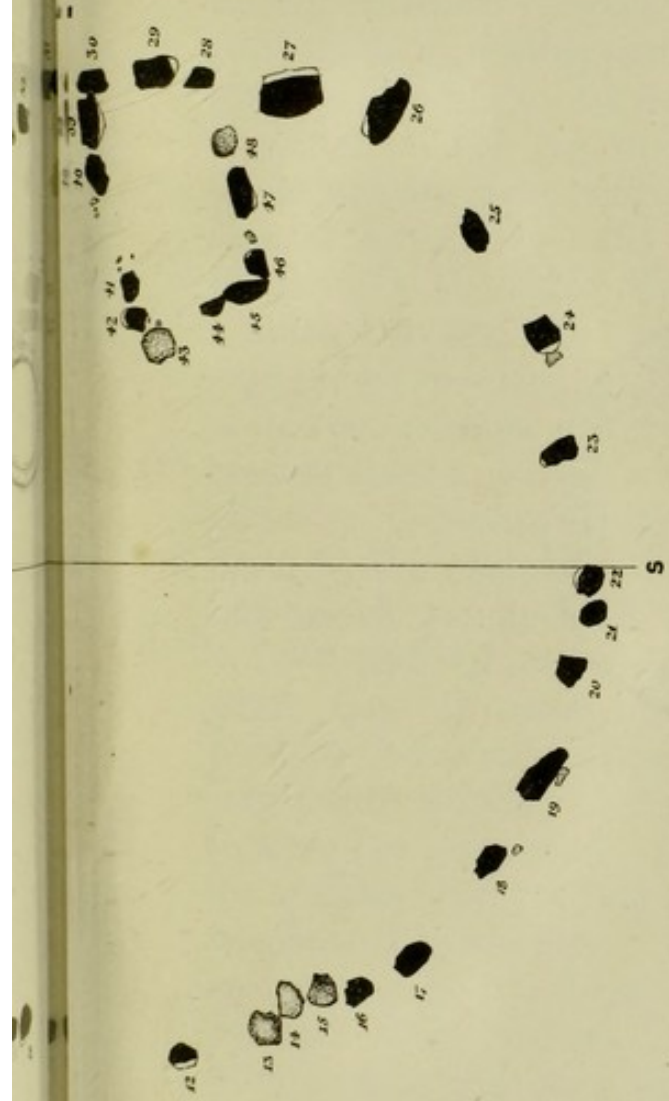
NO	HEIGHT FT INCH	LENGTH FT INCH	BREADTH FT INCH	THICK- NESS FT INCH
1	5.8	—	5.0	2.8
2	2.4	—	3.4	2.0
3	1.5	—	2.9	1.7
4	4.0	—	3.1	3.0
5	—	4.6	4.1	—
6	—	5.0	2.6	—
7	3.9	—	3.8	2.10
8	2.9	—	2.10	2.3
9	—	—	—	—
10	—	—	—	—

SIZES OF STONES.

NO	HEIGHT FT INCH	LENGTH FT INCH	BREADTH FT INCH	THICK- NESS FT INCH
25	2.5	—	4.5	2.3
26	7.6	—	7.0	3.4
27	5.3	—	6.3	3.8
28	4.0	—	2.11	2.2
29	4.4	—	3.9	3.1
30	2.11	—	3.1	2.8
31	3.8	—	5.4	2.11
32	2.10	—	3.10	2.8
33	—	—	—	—
34	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	—	—
36	—	—	—	—
37	—	—	—	—
38	—	—	—	—



36	3.2	—	3.0	2.40
37	3.2	—	2.3	1.6
38	5.6	—	4.3	2.4
39	3.0	—	5.9	2.0
40	3.1	—	4.5	1.40
41	2.6	—	3.1	1.9
42	3.0	—	2.6	2.4
43	—	3.7	3.0	—
44	2.9	—	2.4	1.8
45	3.0	—	4.7	2.2
46	3.0	—	3.0	2.0
47	2.3	—	5.0	2.2
48	—	3.1	2.5	—

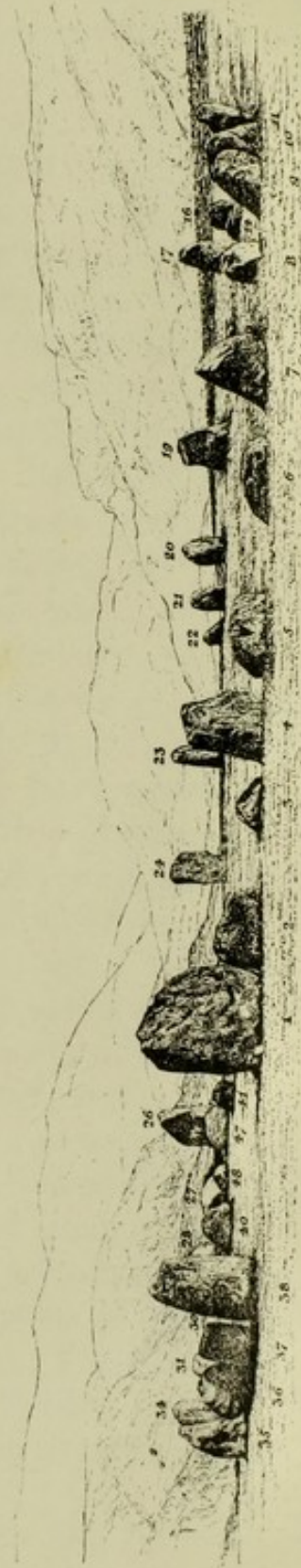


SCALE OF FEET.



SCALE OF ORIGINAL PLAN, 1 INCH = 16 FEET.

13	—	3.40	3.7	—
14	—	3.5	2.6	—
15	—	3.5	2.4	—
16	3.2	—	3.2	2.6
17	5.6	—	4.0	2.6
18	2.40	—	3.9	2.1
19	5.2	—	6.4	2.6
20	4.10	—	3.0	2.6
21	4.4	—	3.0	2.4
22	2.8	—	3.0	2.8
23	5.8	—	3.2	2.3
24	6.4	—	3.6	3.2

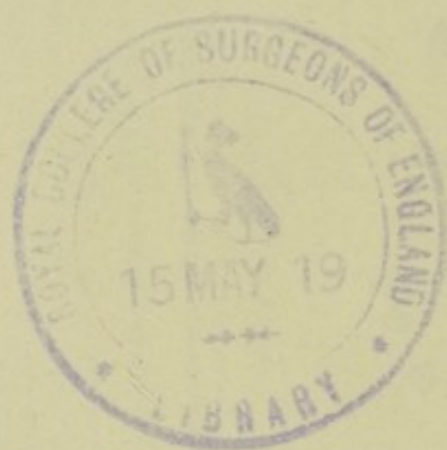


View looking S. 17 E. — From a photograph.

Surveyed and drawn by

C. W. Dymond, C. E., 8<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1877.





greatly reduced ; and, probably, some have been overthrown in comparatively recent times. Among the largest of the prostrate stones there are two measuring respectively 10 ft. by 8 ft. 8 ins., and 9 ft. 11 ins. by 8 ft. 6 ins. A sufficient number remain erect to show that this peristalith was an irregular oval, the departure from continuity being very manifest on the northern side, especially about the stones numbered 24, 25, and 26. It may, however, be well to note here that No. 25 is so much inclined as to make it difficult to decide whether it should be called prostrate or erect ; and, thus, it may possibly not be *in situ* ; though, even with this angle removed, No. 24 is still considerably out of the line of the curve. For the information of those who set a high value on such facts, it may be well to mention that the eastern face of Long Meg—the only one that is distinctly flat—points  $26\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  W. of N. The spacing of the stones seems to be a mean between the open order and the close ; and, if we supply seven evident gaps with one stone each, we shall obtain an average distance, from centre to centre of the successive stones, of a little over 14 ft. As to the aspect of the gateway, it points nearly S.W., and slightly up-hill, in contrast to the majority of examples which I have examined, and which usually look toward a valley with a stream.

SWINSIDE CIRCLE.—This is a very good example of a circle built in close order, for it is probable that, when perfect, all the stones nearly touched one another. The gateway points slightly down-hill. But few of the stones seem to have been removed—probably because plenty of materials for walling and road mending could be collected from the neighbouring hill-side. It is curious that a rowan tree has sprung up in a rift in stone No. 2, which has been rent asunder by its growth. The occurrence of such a tree in such a place has been seized upon by the advocates of the Druid-theory, who view it as a veritable relic of the cult which they associate with these structures. The falling of all the stones but one (and that a doubtful one) inward is a rather singular circumstance, for which I do not quite know how to account.

KESWICK CIRCLE.—It has generally been the fashion to class this with the temples of the prehistoric ages. The magnificence of its site, and the existence of a rectangular inclosure on the eastern side,—which has been thought to



be an *adytum*, foreshadowing the chancel of the Christian church,—have lent strength to the idea. In the present crude state of our knowledge on this subject, it is, however, better to refrain from using any technical terms which involve the advocacy of premature theories, and to confine ourselves to such as are simply descriptive of that which meets the eye. Nothing now remains to show for what purpose this chamber was constructed. If it once contained a barrow, it is singular that all traces of this should have disappeared, while the shallow trench of what appears to have been another barrow still remains within the circle. Had there been no such indications existing in the second case, it might, with more show of reason, have been conjectured that barrows might have occupied any part of the area, and that they have since vanished. The existence, however, of the relics of this one barrow (if such they are), while giving to this circle a *quasi* sepulchral character, affords an argument rather against than in favour of the former existence of others.

I have described the principal features of this peristalith on the plan ; and therefore proceed to notice here one or two which involve the element of speculation. On reference to the plan, it will be observed that the circumscribed area narrows up toward the north, and there, exactly bisected by the meridian of its centre, occurs an opening, nearly 11 ft. wide, flanked by two fine stones, set, with the smaller ones which adjoin them, in a peculiarly symmetrical position. This gives it the appearance of having been intended for a gateway. As possibly throwing light upon this point, it is noteworthy that the very remarkable, but little known, compound circle at Gunnerskeld, near Shap, which consists of two concentric rings of prostrate stones—giving the impression that they were never erect—is also, at the north point, distinguished by a *pylon* formed by a pair of very fine monoliths—the only standing stones of any consequence in the work. This gateway looks out along the low flat ridge on which the circle is found, parallel to the stream which flows north, hard by on the eastern side. Returning to our plan, and noticing the transverse position of stone No. 26, the question arises, May not this also have been one jamb of a gateway of which the other may have been stone No. 27 (if that has fallen), or, more probably, a missing one between Nos. 26 and 25 ? Its position, as to the points of the com-



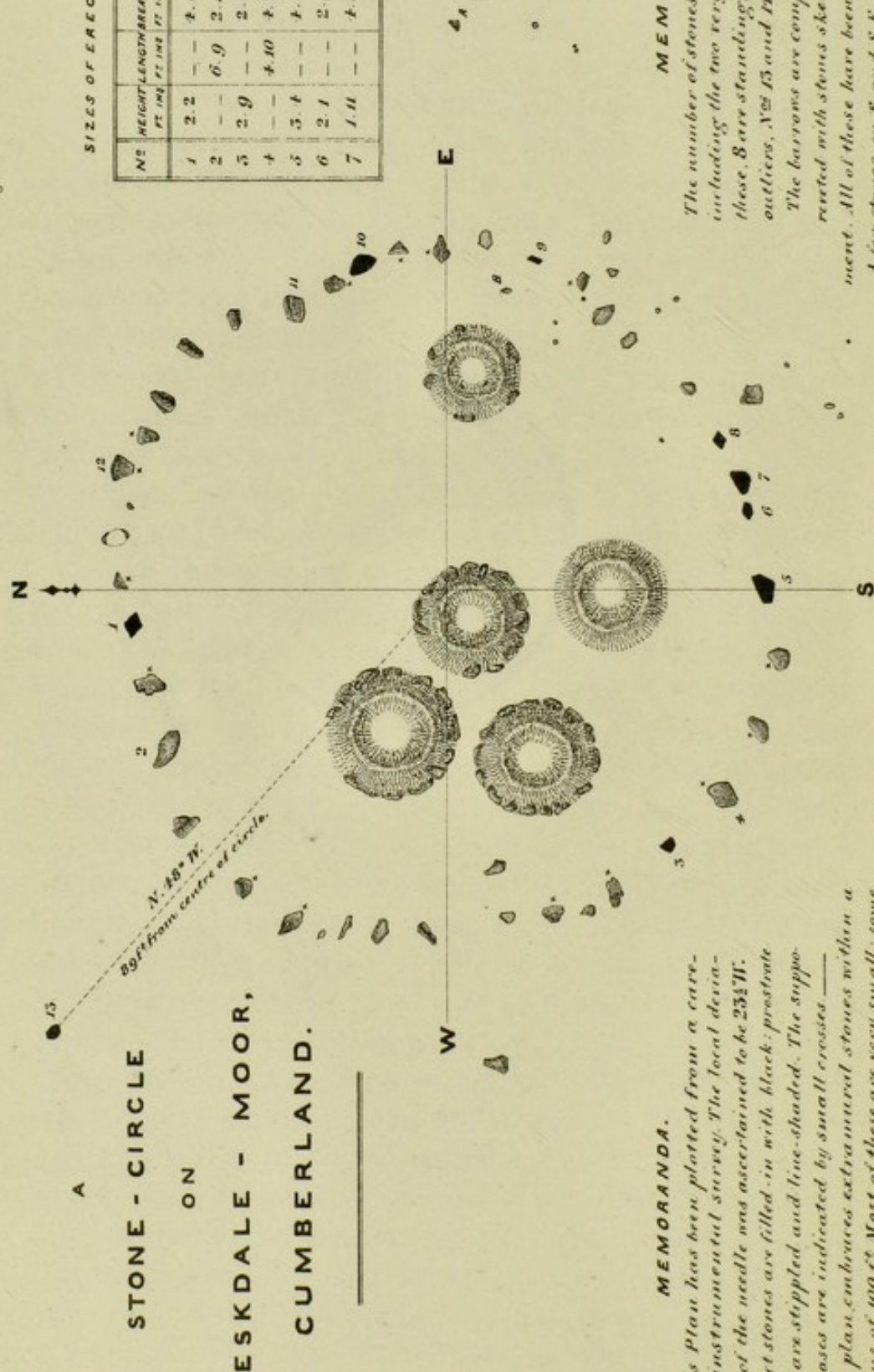


Lying on the ground.

Diameters.—

W.N.W. & E.S.E., 103 ft.

N. & S., 93 ft.



SIZES OF ERECT & OTHER STONES.

N <sup>o</sup>	HEIGHT FT. INCH	LENGTH FT. INCH	BREADTH FT. INCH	N <sup>o</sup>	HEIGHT FT. INCH	LENGTH FT. INCH	BREADTH FT. INCH
1	2.2	—	4.0	8	2.0	—	2.9
2	—	6.9	2.10	9	2.0	—	2.0
3	2.9	—	2.6	10	2.11	—	4.4
4	—	4.10	4.2	11	—	4.6	3.6
5	3.4	—	4.6	12	—	3.8	3.6
6	2.1	—	2.8	13	1.0	—	2.6
7	1.11	—	4.3	14	—	—	—

# MEMORANDA.

This Plan has been plotted from a careful instrumental survey. The local deviation of the needle was ascertained to be 23½° W.

Erect stones are filled in with black; prostrate ones are stippled and line-shaded. The supposed bases are indicated by small crosses.

The plan embraces extramural stones within a radius of 100 ft. Most of these are very small; some are loose; and some, as A and B, (the latter can be traced for a distance of many feet just below the surface) with perhaps others, may be living rock.

# MEMORANDA.

The number of stones remaining in the ring, including the two very small ones, is 41. Of these, 8 are standing, the rest prostrate. Two outliers, Nos 13 and 14, are erect, the last small. The barrows are composed of peat and stone, reared with stones sketched in without measure.

All of these have been opened. A few stones, on E. and S.E. sides, are porphyritic, from Seafell; the rest are granite of the moor. These Remains are situated on a boggy, elevated plateau, on which are several others of a like kind.

SCALE OF FEET.



SCALE OF ORIGINAL PLAN, 1 INCH = 20 FEET.  
SCALE OF ORIGINAL PLAN, 1 INCH = 50 FEET.



# A STONE - CIRCLE

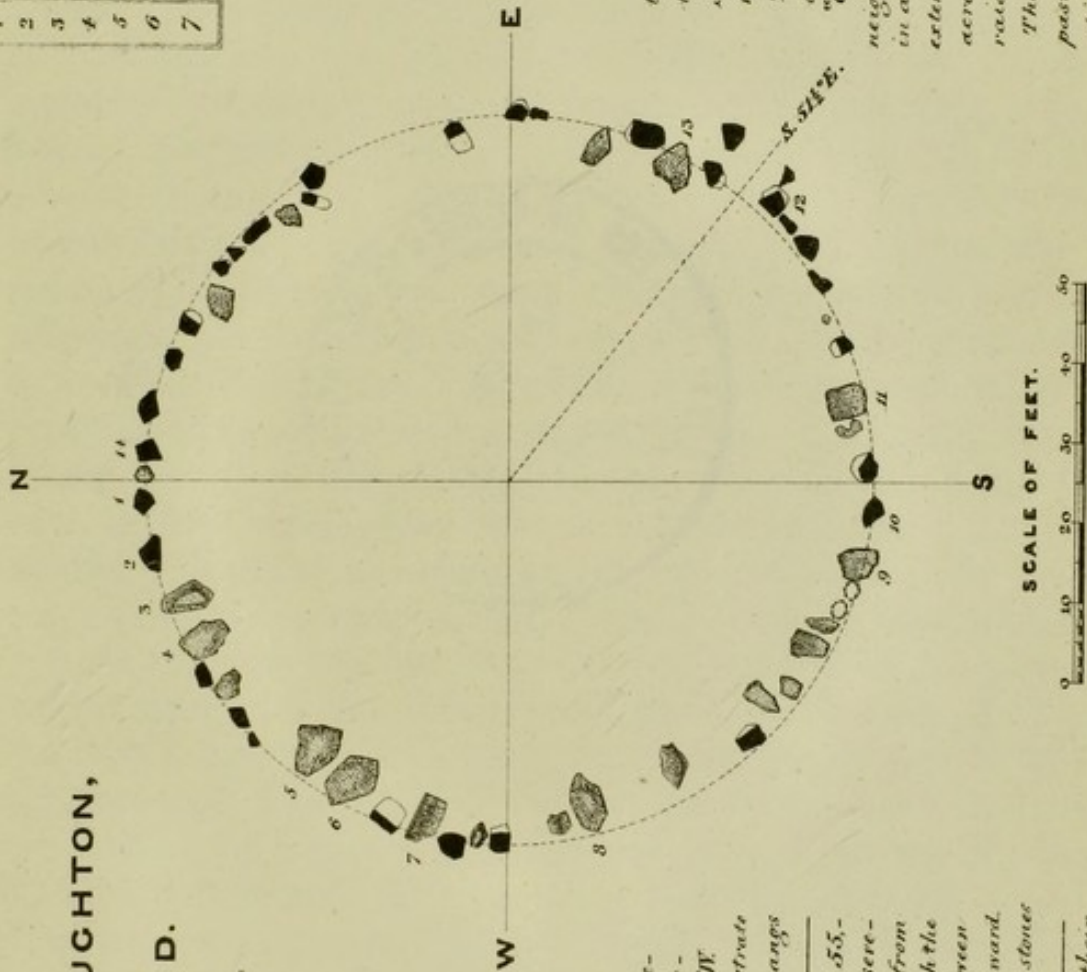
AT

## SWINSIDE, NEAR BROUGHTON, CUMBERLAND.

Diameter of average circle = 92 feet.

SIZES OF PRINCIPAL STONES.

N <sup>o</sup>	HEIGHT FT. INCH	LENGTH FT. INCH	BREADTH FT. INCH	N <sup>o</sup>	HEIGHT FT. INCH	LENGTH FT. INCH	BREADTH FT. INCH
1	6.0			8	—	7.9	4.0
2	—	4.8		9	—	5.0	4.0
3	—	6.10	3.9	10	6.6		
4	—	6.9	4.5	11	—	5.0	4.0
5	—	7.0	6.0	12	5.7		
6	—	8.0	5.4	13	—	6.6	4.4
7	—	6.5	3.6	14	7.6	2.9	2.9



SCALE OF FEET.

SCALE OF ORIGINAL PLAN, 1 INCH = 20 FEET.

### MEMORANDA.

This Plan has been plotted from a careful instrumental survey. The local deviation of the needle was found to be  $25\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  W.

Erect stones are filled-in with black; prostrate ones are stippled and line-shaded. Overhangs are represented by unshaded outline.

The number of stones now remaining is 55, of which 52 are still standing, (though several of these have declined considerably from the upright,) and 25 are prostrate. With the doubtful exception of the fragment between Nos 1 and 14, all of these have fallen inward. West of No 9 are the seats of two more stones which have been removed.

If the leaning stones were restored to their original upright position, it would be more evident than it is now, that the members of the peristalith were — with some little deviation from exact regularity — ranged on the circumference of a circle, 92 ft diam.

### MEMORANDA.

The stones, which consist of a porphyritic slate, are of a kind locally known as "Grey Cobbles", and were furnished by the neighboring hill-slopes. They are found in a seating of small rammed stones which extends around the whole of the ring, and across the floor of the gateway, but is not raised into an embankment.

These Remains are situated in an elevated pasture, at the foot of a mountain-spur from which the surface dips, at first very gently, toward a stream which flows S.E., at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the circle. The view from the spot is not extensive.

Surveyed by C. W. Dymond, C. E., in April, 1872.  
Revised and redrawn, 13th October, 1877.





pass, would be almost identical with that of the gateway of the Swinside circle. A slight peculiarity, common to both the circles at Keswick and at Long Meg, may be noticed in the breach of continuity made by No. 49 (missing stone) of the former, and No. 25 of the latter—each at about the same part of the circumference.

ESKDALE CIRCLE.—This, though the finest, is only one of several similar remains on the same moor. About one hundred yards W. are two smaller rings in an imperfect state, each about 50 ft. in diameter, and each inclosing one barrow. A quarter of a mile W.N.W. on Low Longrigg are two others; one apparently perfect, about 50 ft. in diameter, consisting of nine stones, and inclosing one barrow; the other imperfect, with diameters of about 75 ft. and 65 ft., and inclosing two barrows. A number of ancient "dykes", each consisting of a slight ditch and embankment, intersect the moor near these remains. An imaginary plan of this circle appears in Dr. Fergusson's *Rude Stone Structures*. In addition to a conventional representation of the existing stones, it shows an outer concentric circle of megaliths, fourteen in number, and an inner, nearly rectangular inclosure fencing-in the eastern barrow. There is no evidence on the ground to show that such an outer ring ever existed; nor is it likely that, placed as these remains are, out of the way of risks of molestation, such evidences, if there were any, would have disappeared. One small erect stone stands as an outlier to the N.W.; and three or four others, equally small, lie prostrate on the surface, or partly sunk into the ground, on the N., E., W., and S.E. sides. That is all. Not the slightest trace of a barrow-inclosure can be found, though I carefully sought for it by probing. The eastern barrow was being opened at the time of my first visit in 1866, though the exploring party were not then on the spot.

Now I think a comparison of the four examples herein described will lead to the conviction that, though they have an outward similarity of arrangement, they may not all have been devoted to the same purposes. The character of the last mentioned is, I think, purely sepulchral. There is a careless irregularity in the ranging of the peripheral stones, which gives the impression of being sufficient for purposes of separation, while little congruous with the dignity of a



structure intended for ceremonial uses. Much of the area is occupied by the barrows ; while, hard by, we find four other similar inclosures, also devoted to sepulture. Who can resist the conviction that, in this case, but one end was to be answered—that of consecrated interment ?

There is, I believe, no record of any barrow having been observed within or near the Swinside circle. The ruins are those of a bold and carefully constructed peristalith. The stones were ranged nearly on a true circle, well founded on a dry site in a rammed stone bed, and placed, for the most part, in juxtaposition—often, indeed, so close that it is possible there would have been no convenient access to the interior, except through the gateway. Hence, in this case, a necessity for this feature, which evidently was considered an important one, and must have been designed to give ceremonial access to the sacred inclosure. Perhaps this is one of the best examples we have of a structure which, according to our ideas, would be eminently suited to be a hypæthral temple ; and I suggest that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, this may have been the chief purpose for which the Swinside circle was erected.

The importance of a gateway is much enhanced when we find it, either in its simple form, a characteristic feature of an open stone peristalith, as in the case of Long Meg, or extended into a short avenue, as at Stanton Drew, or into a long one, as at Callernish, and in other English and continental examples. In all these, the inference is irresistible, that the recognised mode of entering and issuing from these inclosures—which were open on every side—was by the prescribed avenue ; and hence we arrive, by an easy step, at the conclusion that processional services were a common feature of their use. Whether these were connected with religious, political, judicial, or sepulchral objects, or with all of them, we know far too little of the customs of our remote ancestors to decide. Suffice it for the present, then, to say that, for anything we know to the contrary, some of these structures may have been temples, primarily ; courts of judicature, secondarily ; sometimes memorial buildings, thirdly ; and, thus consecrated, the great may have sought to take their last sleep around, and even within their pale, as, in later times the remains of the departed came to be laid in the church-yard ; and, in special instances, within the walls of the building itself.