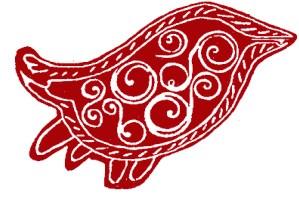


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Five Stone Circles of West Cork.

By VICE ADMIRAL BOYLE T. SOMERVILLE, C.M.G., F.R.S.A.I., F.S.A.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.



THE five Stone Circles which form the subject of this paper all lie within a distance of 5 miles from the town of Rosscarbery. If the region of "West Cork" may arbitrarily be taken as that part of the county lying westward of Crookstown and Clonakilty, there will be found in it, besides the five Stone Circles here described, 12 more thus marked on the Ordnance maps, and there possibly are besides these, another half-dozen either not marked at all, or named merely as "Gallauns." There thus exists a considerable field for research in Stone Circles, of which the five here discussed are but a small instalment. They are offered in order to call attention to the many interesting features they contain, in the hopes of attracting other investigators.

In order that proper analysis and comparison between those here shown may be made, a single method of representation on paper, and the same scales have been used in each case. The Circles themselves are shown in plan, originally plotted on the scale of $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch to one foot, and the upright views of the stones of which they are composed are shown in simple outline, and are drawn on a scale of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to one foot; with the lateral distances between the stones shown on the same scale.

The photographs which accompany this paper (Plates I, II, and III) were specially taken by Mr. Alec R. Day, of Cork; to whom the writer is greatly indebted for this assistance.

General Characteristics. The first, and perhaps the most important characteristic to be seen in all these five Circles is found in the facts that (1) in the southwestern segment of each of them there is a single large slab set in the ground not upright, as in the case of all the other stones of the ring, but laid on its side; and (2) that this stone is faced, on the opposite side of the Circle, by two specially important upright stones, always the tallest in the Circle and usually noticeable for some other reason. They form, as it were, "gate-pillars" on each side of the Entrance-way to the Circle, and the line passing midway between them, and on over the centre of the Circle leads, in each case, to the centre of the slab described above as being set on its side.

This slab is named in this paper as the "Recumbent" stone of the Circle; the two tall stones facing it will be referred to as the "Pillars," and the line between them across the Circle as the "Line of Entrance."

A particular interest in the "Recumbent" stone lies in the fact that a Recumbent stone, placed in the southwestern segment of the ring is a peculiarity found in all the Stone Circles of Aberdeenshire, and, so far as is known at present, nowhere else in these islands. This is all the more remarkable, geographically speaking, when we remember that Aberdeenshire is as remote from County Cork as it can well be in the British Isles.

In Aberdeenshire, however, the Recumbent stone is almost always flanked by two Pillar stones, one at each end, and nearly touching it; while in West Cork, as above noted, the two Pillars do not adjoin the Recumbent stone, but face it, on the opposite side of the Circle.

A second general characteristic of these five Circles is that all are placed either on the summits of hills, clear of trees, or else on some south-facing slope, of similarly open character: a fact which may perhaps indicate some connexion of these Circles with the rays of the sun. This same fact has also been noticed in the case of all the Aberdeenshire Circles.

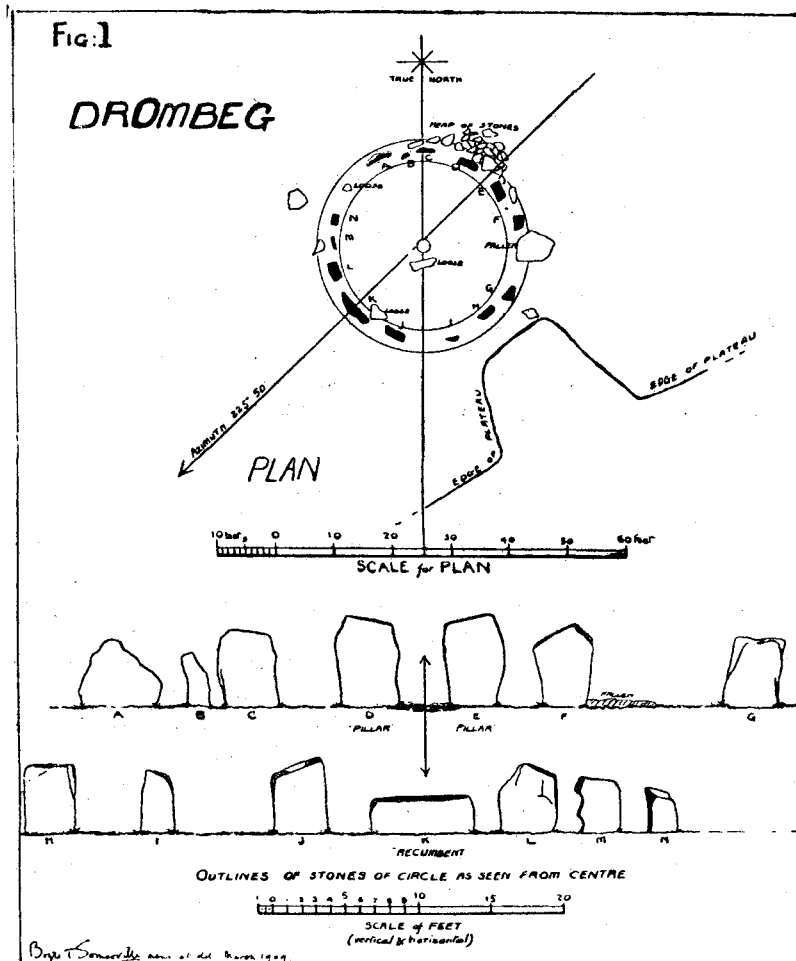
With the exception of the Drombeg Circle (which is named on the Ordnance map as "Druid's Altar") none of the Circles here described have individual, or local names. They have therefore been styled by the name of the townland in which each stands, as spelled on the maps. The original Gaelic of these names has been so badly mis-represented in English, in most cases, that the actual meaning of some of them has become a matter of conjecture; but as these townland names may possibly have some bearing on the Stone Circle within its boundaries, suggestions as to the original Gaelic name are given in the Remarks on the Circles that follow. These suggestions have kindly been supplied to the writer by Mr. John O'Donovan, N.T., of Castletownshend, a competent Gaelic scholar; who, moreover, is acquainted with the localities themselves, and has heard their names correctly pronounced.

So little is definitely known as regards the origin, and former uses of these monuments, that every possible clue, such as the name of the townland in which they are situated, requires investigation.

Notes. In each of the Figures that follow, the Line of Entrance is shown on each Plan, with its Azimuth written along it. As this term may be unfamiliar to many, it should be said that Azimuth is the direction in which a line falls, expressed in degrees, minutes, and seconds measured clock-wise from True North, up to 360°,—the whole circuit.

In the Views of the stones shown below the Plans in each Figure, the Recumbent stone (on the lower line of views) is placed in its relative attitude to the two Pillar stones (on the upper line), so that the appearance of the Recumbent stone, with the stones adjoining it, as seen from the Entrance point, may be visualised, and vice versa.

Following these Preliminary Remarks, an individual description of each Circle will now be given.



Note. A descriptive account of this fine Circle, by the present writer, with a Plan and photographs, appeared in this Journal for July-September 1909. The present account is supplemental in a slight degree to the original account, but is chiefly in order to show the connexion that exists between Drombeg and the remaining four Circles described in this paper.

It is pleasant to be able to say that no alteration in the stones composing the Circle, or its surroundings, has taken place during the past 21 years. The Circle still stands exactly as it did then.

The geographical and other topical facts relating to it are here repeated for convenience of reference and of comparison with the remaining Circles described.

PLATE I.



DROMBEG CIRCLE.

General View from Northwestward.

(Photo, A. R. Day, 1930. Copyright).

6" Ordnance map—Cork, No. 143
 Name of townland—Drombeg
 Local name of Circle—"Druid's Altar" (on map).
 Latitude—51° 33' 55" N. ; Longitude—9° 05' 10" W.
 Height of position above Ordnance datum level—about 250 feet
 Diameter of Circle—about 32 feet
 Present number of stones standing—14
 Probable original number—18
 Azimuth of Line of Entrance—225° 50'

Remarks. This Circle may be reached in the following way.

Take the road from Glandore to Rosscarbery ; and at a distance of 1½ miles the gate of Drombeg House will be seen on the right side of the road. (Permission to visit the Circle should be sought at the house). Three hundred yards further east along the same road there is a side-road to the right (Southward) ; and after following it for half a mile (with two sharp turnings) the Circle will be seen about a hundred yards away in a pasture field on the right of the road.

The name of the townland, Drombeg on the map, is *Drom Beag* in Gaelic, signifying "Small ridge." The name has thus no apparent reference to the Circle ; but only to the general character of the topography of the townland.

The Circle is almost complete, and its stones, with the exception of the Recumbent stone K, are of an average height of 5 feet.

The two Pillar stones, D and E, are each about 6 ft. 6 ins. high ; and, with the next stone, F, which is 5 ft. 7 ins. high, are the most important-looking stones of the ring.

The Recumbent stone, as will be seen in Plates I. and II., is of quite a different character from the remainder ; and has a wide, flat, top-edge, suitable in height as a seat.

Fallen Stones in the vicinity of the Circle.

The stone between F and G stones (see Plan), now fallen flat, probably once stood upright in the ring at or near its present position.

Nearly opposite to it, a small piece of a slab lies at the midway point between N and A stones, and with the pieces lying on the ground near it just outside the Circle, may be the remains of the stone that once stood at this position.

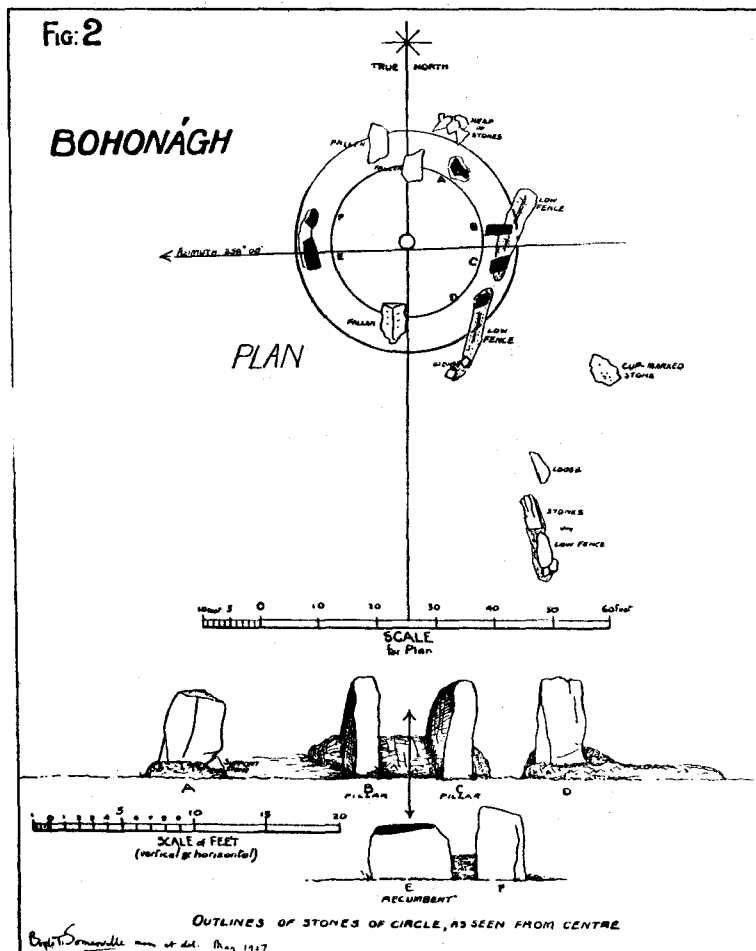
Besides these broken slabs there are two large pieces, also slabs 4 or 5 inches in thickness, lying within the Circle ; one piece nearly touching the Recumbent stone K, and one close to the centre of the Circle, while a third piece lies just outside G stone.

If these are the separated pieces of a once single slab, it could scarcely, when complete, have been a member of the Circle, for there is no space around the ring which it might have filled. Possibly it lay flat on the ground

within the Circle, and was used for a purpose similar to that suggested for the flat stones found inside the Circles described later under Figs. 4 and 5.

The large stones lying in a heap outside the Circle to the northeast, are probably field-stones collected there to be out of the way for ploughing, etc.

Orientation. The Line of Entrance, Azimuth $225^{\circ} 50'$, directs to a well-marked gap in the sky-line of hills, elevated $2^{\circ} 43'$; and is the line of Sunset in the gap on the day of the Winter Solstice (December 21st or 22nd). The gap is clearly seen in the photograph (Plate II.) taken on the Line of Entrance from just outside the two Pillar stones.



Note. A sketch of the appearance of this Circle appears in our Journal for June-December, 1930, facing page 33.

PLATE II.



DROMBEG CIRCLE.

View between Pillar Stones "D" and "E" over Recumbent Stone "K",
to notch in sky-line. (Line of Winter Solstitial Sunset).

(Photo, A. R. Day, 1930. Copyright).

PLATE III.



BOHONÁGH CIRCLE.

General View of remains of Circle, as seen from Westward, with Recumbent Stone "E" in line with interval between Pillar Stones "B" and "C".

(Photo, A. R. Day, 1930. Copyright).

6" Ordnance map—Cork, 143
 Name of townland—Bohonágh
 Local name of Circle—None
 Latitude—51° 34' 50" N ; Longitude—8° 59' 50" W.
 Height of position above Ordnance datum level—about 130 feet.
 Diameter of Circle—about 31 feet
 Present number of stones standing—6
 Probable original number—13
 Azimuth of Line of Entrance—268° 00'

Remarks. To reach the Circle, take the road from Rosscarbery to Clonakilty as far as a point named "Temple Bridge," $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Rosscarbery. There is here a side-road leading northward (to the left), and at 300 yards up this road from the bridge it is crossed by an ancient, and almost disused track-way coming down the hill to the westward from Liosfachtna, passing Teampull Fachtna and Tobar Fachtna, and crossing the stream near by on stepping stones. Follow this trackway on by crossing the fence on the east side of the road, when it will be seen going on up the hill at the side of the field, grass-grown, but quite distinct. After 300 yards, turn off from it to the left, when the stones of the Circle will be seen a hundred yards away, on the crest of the rising ground.

The position is shown on the Ordnance map as "Stone Circle," and "Cromlech" (*sic*).

The name of the townland, Bohonágh, is pronounced with the accent strongly on the last syllable, and thus may be rendered in Gaelic as *Do na c*, "(a place) abounding in cattle."

Another rendering may be *Duirde Eanácl* (or *Áinnácl*) both of which would sound much the same as the English rendering, above, and signify "Yellow marsh," (or "Yellow stream"), having reference to the stream running along the foot of the hill, which forms the boundary of the townland. Neither translation would appear to apply to the Circle itself, but to be merely topographical.

Fallen stones in the vicinity of the Circle.

There are two large slabs lying on the ground at the northern part of the Circle, and a third at the south side. These slabs evidently once formed part of the original ring, and stood at or near the positions where they now lie.

At about 40 feet southward of Stone D, there is a line of three big slabs, now laid flat, and forming part of what may once have been a low field-fence. These probably were once members of the Circle, removed here for this purpose.

At a point 25 feet southeastward from stone F, there is lying on the ground a stone slab 6 feet long, 4 feet wide, and about 4 inches thick, on the upper surface of which are 7 smallish, but quite distinct cup-marks. This stone, too, no doubt, was once part of the Circle, or connected in some way

with it, whatever may be the meaning of the cup-marks on it. The 6 stones standing, and the 7 lying down (including the cup-marked stone) would thus make up the number of 13 stones, of which, judging by the spacing of those that remain, the Circle was originally composed.

Notes. When complete, this Circle must have been as striking an object as Drombeg (Fig. 1) described above; the stones that remain standing being as large as those of the other. Fortunately the more important stones of the Circle, viz. the Recumbent stone, and its opposite Pillar stones are among those that remain in position. See Plate III.

An earth-and-stone bank about 3 feet high now fills the spaces between stones that adjoin in the Circle, and surrounds the feet of those that are isolated. Whether this bank was an original feature of the Circle, and fenced in the whole ring, it is not possible now to determine; but it seems unlikely.

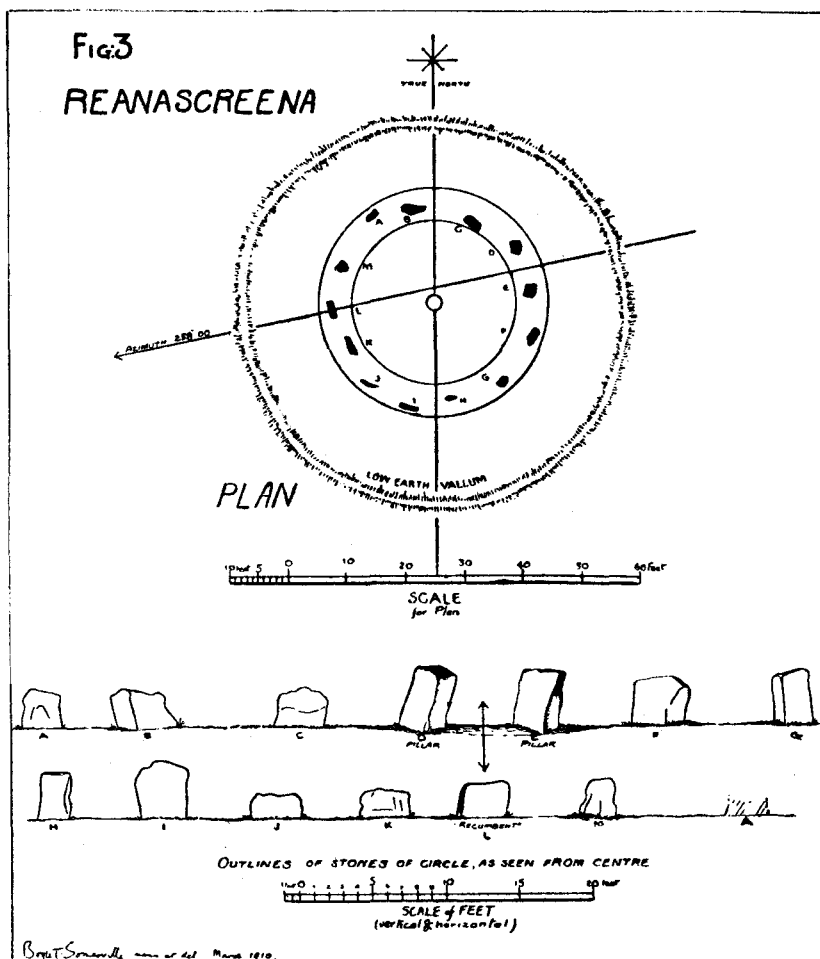
The S.E. end of stone A is broken away, and a supporting stone, (undoubtedly an original feature) has been inserted among the wedging stones at this point. This is of interest, as it shows that stone A was thus damaged at the time of erection.

The Pillar stones, B and C, facing the Recumbent stone E are, as at Drombeg, tall thick slabs of stone; but in this instance they are set in the ground *transversely* to the line of the Circle, instead of along it (or, strictly speaking, tangential to it) as in the case of the remainder which define the circuit. The space between B and C is thus clearly transformed into an "Entrance way" to the Circle leading to the Recumbent stone immediately opposite.

Orientation. The azimuth of the Line of Entrance passing through the middle of this space, and over the centre of the Recumbent stone is $268^{\circ} 0'$, and carries the eye to the crest of an even-topped hill, half a mile distant, elevated $2^{\circ} 00'$. This indicates the line of Sunset on the days of Equinox (March 21st and Sept. 21st). There is nothing now remaining on this hill crest to mark the line of sight (such as the gap in the hills at Drombeg), but the direction of the line of Entrance over the Recumbent stone is as stated. Plate III. shows the *opposite* of this line, namely the view looking eastward, but it shows the relative positions of the two Pillars and the Recumbent stone, when looking along it in either direction.

Cloch Togail. Though not belonging to the group of monuments (Stone Circles) dealt with in this paper, it should be noticed here that there is on the Bohonágh site, at a distance of 80 feet to the ESE of the Circle, a Cloch tógáil or "Raised stone," consisting of a massive boulder, measuring 9 feet superficially in each direction, and 5 feet in depth, propped on four rough lumps of stone to a height of about 18 inches from the ground. (See sketch in the Journal for June-Dec., 1930, page 33). One of these propping stones, the largest, is a block of white quartzite. The cap-stone

has on its top surface five smallish cup-marks. The space beneath it, now filled with small stones collected from the field, is large enough for a cremated burial (if this was the purpose of the monument), but not for an interment. The entrance to this space, between the propping stones, opens to the north west, and is in the direction of Winter solstice sunset (as in the orientation at Drombeg), viz. December 21st-22nd.



6" Ordnance map—Cork 134

Name of townland—Reanascreena South

Local name of Circle—None

Latitude— $51^{\circ} 37' 05''$ N. ; Longitude— $9^{\circ} 03' 45''$ W.

Height of position above Ordnance datum level—about 590 feet

Diameter of Circle—about 33 feet

Present number of stones standing—13
 Probable original number—13
 Azimuth of Line of Entrance—258° 00'

Remarks. To reach the Circle, take the road northward from Rosscarbery to Dunmanway, for 4 miles to the hamlet of Reanascreena. The Circle is on the summit of the big hill southward of the Creamery at this point, and can be reached partly by a small road in that direction, and partly across 4 or 5 fields and their fences. It can also be reached by a road from Connonagh, which passes the southern side of the hill, from which there is a small road leading to a farm about 200 yards from the Circle. It is no doubt partly owing to its remote position that it is still in so good a condition.

Its position is shown on the Ordnance map as "Stone Circle."

There are two townlands bearing the name of Reanascreena, North and South respectively; the Circle is in the latter.

The first syllable of the name is pronounced somewhat like the English word "ray"; and its Gaelic rendering is either:

RÉ NA SCRÍANA, "the loop, or ring of the Shrine," or is

REIRÉ NA SCRÍANA, "the mountain-flat of the Shrine."

(The word Ré is also used locally to mean the top rim of a basket, whether circular, or otherwise).

These translations seem to bear reference to the Stone Circle, either to its circular shape, or to its position on a "mountain-flat," supposing that it may, in any way, be regarded as a "shrine."

There is no vestige of a church in the neighbourhood, nor any tradition of the former existence there of a Christian shrine.

Notes. This Circle is composed of rather rough, low stones. It would be incorrect to say they are wholly untrimmed; for some, at least, are of definite shapes, to be described later.

It stands in a grass field on the summit of a large rounded hill, nearly flat-topped; and though not of imposing appearance, it nevertheless possesses at least three interesting features.

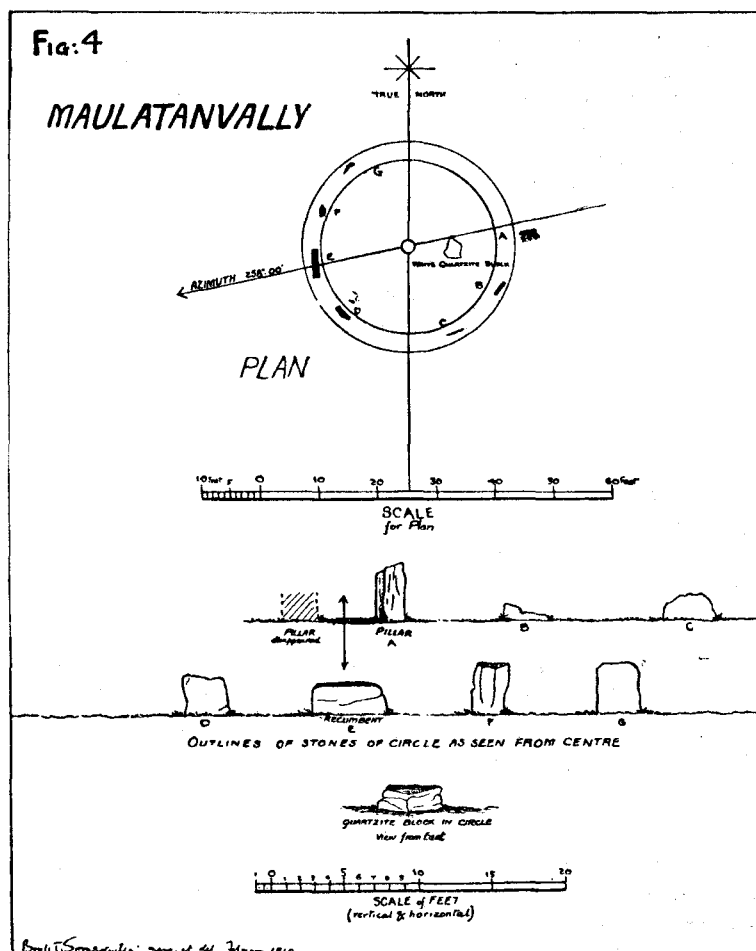
The first of these is that the Circle is surrounded by a low earth vallum, which, though its height, averaging 18 inches, varies somewhat, seems not entirely to be broken down at any point,—not even on the Line of Entrance of the Circle—and is easily traceable all round. There is no corresponding ditch, and its purpose is obscure; it certainly is much too low for any defensive purpose.

The second point of interest is that the Circle appears to be complete in the original number of its stones. It is difficult to be quite certain about this, as the distance between the stones are irregular, varying between 3 ft. 6 ins. and 8 ft., yet, in spite of this, the general effect is of an untouched Circle.

The third feature of interest is that this Circle, like the two already described, possesses a Recumbent stone, L, faced on the opposite side

of the Circle by an "Entrance way" between two Pillar stones, D, and E. These two stones are (again) the tallest in the Circle, and, in this case have the peculiarity of being roughly square in plan ; all the remaining stones of the Circle being either slabs, or, as in stones G and M, indefinitely shaped.

Orientation. The azimuth of the Line of Entrance, $258^{\circ} 00'$, has no orientational signification ; that is, it does not direct the eye along the line of sunset on any of the regular Quarter days or Half-quarter days of the year ; but indicates the sunset of 2nd March or 13th October. Reference to this date will be made in the description of Fig. 4, where the same exact azimuth of Line of Entrance is found.



6 in. Ordnance map—Cork 121
 Name of townland—Maulatanvally
 Local name of Circle—None
 Latitude $51^{\circ} 38' 47''$ N. ; Longitude $9^{\circ} 03' 54''$ W.
 Height of position above Ordnance datum level—about 550 feet
 Diameter of Circle—about 33 feet
 Present number of stones standing—7
 Probable original number—11
 Azimuth of Line of Entrance— $258^{\circ} 00'$

Remarks. The Circle may be reached by continuing the road from Rosscarbery past Reanascreena for another $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the northward, when the Circle will be found in the field next to the road, to the eastward, at a little more than 100 yards from the road fence. It is marked on the Ordnance map as "Stone Circle."

The Gaelic reading of the name of the townland in which this Circle stands is evidently *Meall an t-Sean-Óaite*, "The hillock of the Old Place." The "hillock" is probably the small, detached, steep hill on the opposite side of the road to the Circle, occupying a large part of the townland. Its summit is about 300 yards westward of the Circle, and 200 feet higher. It is likely that the words "Old Place" have reference to the Stone Circle itself.

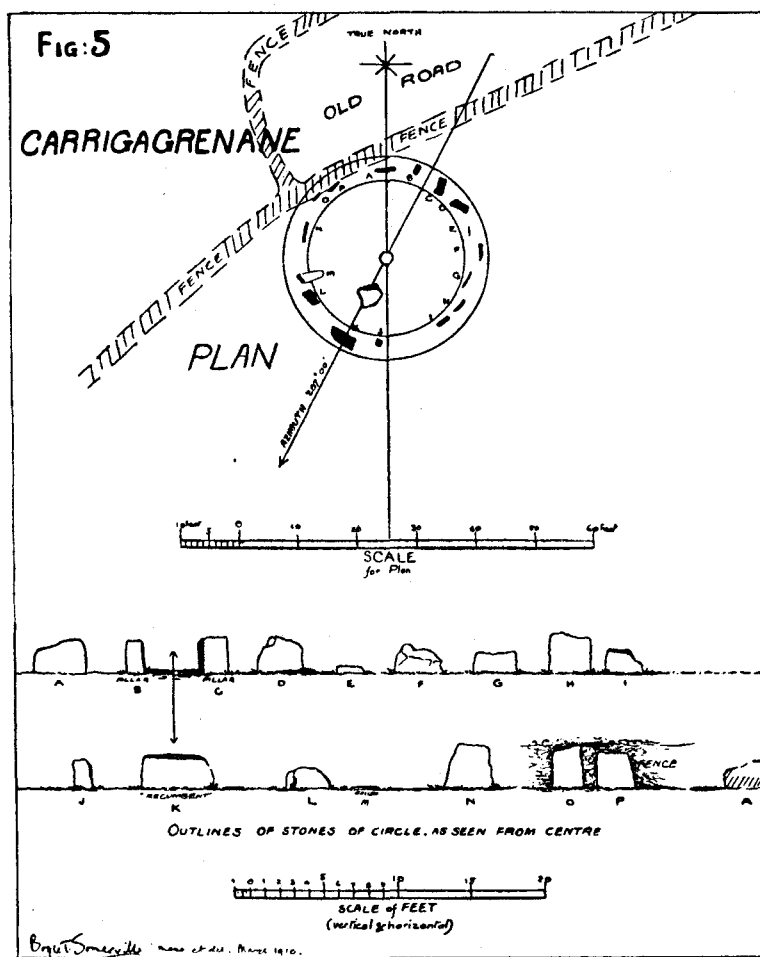
Notes. The Circle is not at all of striking appearance, partly because of its ruined condition, and partly because the highest stone remaining is only 4 ft. 2 in. high above ground; but, like Fig. 4 circle, (Reanascreena), a little close investigation brings out certain points of interest.

We again have here the Recumbent stone in the SW. arc of the Circle, faced by Pillar stones on the opposite side; of which, however, in this instance, unfortunately but one remains. It is set, as at Bohonagh Circle, transversely to the line of the Circle, and is rendered still more conspicuous by being planted about three feet outside it. There is no reason to doubt that the opposite Pillar, now disappeared, was similarly set, so as to form an "Entrance way" to the Circle, leading directly to the Recumbent stone.

An object of particular interest is the existence within the Circle of a large, flat-topped block of white quartzite, roughly square in plan, and 1 ft. 8 ins. high, lying on the ground nearly (but not exactly) on the Line of Entrance (see Fig. 4). It is obviously an original feature: and the suggestion may be put forward, with every reservation, that it may perhaps be a "coronation" stone, for use on the election of a local chief.

Orientation. The azimuth of the Line of Entrance passing over the centre of the Recumbent stone is $258^{\circ} 00'$. This angle is, as before pointed out, exactly the same as that found at Reanascreena (Fig. 3). It may be only a remarkable coincidence, but certainly is worthy of record, especially

as this azimuth has no reference to sunset on any of the ordinary days of Orientation (the Quarter and Half-quarter days), but signifies March 2nd or October 13th.



6'' Ordnance map—Cork 134
 Name of townland—Carrigagrenane
 Local name of Circle—None
 Latitude—51° 38' 20'' N.; Longitude—9° 04' 40'' W.
 Height of position above Ordnance datum level—about 480 feet
 Diameter of Circle—about 31 feet
 Present number of stones standing—15
 Probable original number—21 or 22
 Azimuth of Line of Entrance—207° 00'

For a sketch of this Circle, see Journal for Jan.–June, 1930, Fig. III., page 34.

Remarks. This Circle is situated at about a mile to the SW. of Maulatanvally Circle described above (Fig. 4) and is at the foot of the steeper slopes of Carrigfadda mountain. The road from Reanascreena village before described, meets the road to Dunmanway at Carrigagrenane Cross, immediately after crossing Deasy's Bridge. Turning southward along this road at the Cross, up the hill, there is a side road to the westward after 400 yards, leading to a farm named "Sunny Rock." This road continues past the farm in the direction of the Circle, and there is a small (disused) branch from it leading direct to the Circle, which is at a distance of about half a mile from the Dunmanway Road. The northern stones of the Circle are incorporated in the southern fence of this old bohereen, which ends abruptly at the Circle with a fence across it.

The position is shown on the Ordnance map as "Stone Circle."

The Gaelic rendering of the name of the townland in which the Circle stands is *CARRIGADZ AN SRIANAIN*, "Rock of the Sunny House" (or "Summer House"). With regard to this name, it seems likely that *CARRIGADZ* has reference to the steep rocky crags of Carrigfadda Mountain, for the townland occupies part of its south-facing slopes. There is a large lios about half a mile to the NE. of the Circle, just within the townland boundary; and this may be the *SRIANAIN* of former days. This word does not appear always to mean a "sunny house" as we understand the term, but usually connotes an artificial construction of some kind—something more than a mere site. It thus may refer in this case, either to the lios or to the Circle.

Notes. The Circle stands in the northern end of a small grass field, and, though unimpressive in appearance, the highest of the stones being only 2 ft. 7 ins. high, it is unusually complete; there being only one noticeable gap in its circuit,—to the southward.

Here again we find the same features noticed at all the other Circles described in this paper; namely, it has a Recumbent stone (K) in the southwest segment of the Circle, faced by two Pillar stones, B and C.

Moreover in this instance, as at Bohonágh (Fig 2.) and at Maulatanvally (Fig. 4) the two Pillar stones are set transversely to the line of the Circle; thus forming an "Entrance way" to the Circle, leading across its centre direct to the Recumbent stone. Here, too, again, as at Maulatanvally, there is lying within the Circle a large square, flat-topped stone, 1 foot in height, placed in front of the Recumbent stone, and on the Line of Entrance.

It is not, in this case, a block of white quartzite, but still may have the same significance as that suggested for the stone block at Maulatanvally; namely, as a "coronation" stone; or to be a stand-point from which an address might be made to an assemblage collected within the Circle for any purpose.

It is perhaps worth noting that the old bohereen leading to and stopping at the Circle passes along its *northern* side, that is, at a part suitable for entry

from the road into the Circle between the two Pillar stones in the northern part of the circuit. The possibility is thus suggested that the old road dates from the time when the Circle was set up, and was intended to lead to it.

Orientation. The azimuth of the Line of Entrance ($207^{\circ} 00'$) is remarkable, as it certainly is not a line of Orientation, nor does it direct to any sunset whatever in this latitude, being a line too far to the South. even for a mid-winter sunset ; and thus suggests no date, as in all the other Circles described above.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The serious study of Stone Circles, as to their uses and date of erection may be said still to be in its infancy. Though many conjectures concerning them (usually connected with "the Druids") have been put forward from time to time, they are only conjectures, and have but little of scientific data behind them.

The first essential towards a proper study of these objects, namely, accurate surveys of the site and the stones standing on it are seldom to be found ; and the second essential, namely, scientific excavation within and around the Circles has been still less frequent.

As regards those of West Cork, the discussion contained in this paper concerning five of our Circles represents merely a very small contribution towards the first-named of these essentials, namely that of accurate survey ; and as such is offered for what it may be worth. The second essential, excavation, has not even been attempted in any of them.

The field is large ; Stone Circles are still quite numerous ; and probably every reader of this *Journal*, in County Cork alone, has one within easy distance of his house. Anyone who can take up the investigation will at once realise its absorbing interest, and will be certain of adding some new fact of observation in the field on which further knowledge of the subject can be based. There is a reward of this nature at every Circle investigated.

Surveys. As regards surveys, the writer, after about 20 years experience of field-work of every description, would suggest that the best scale on which to plot the plans of Stone Circles is $\frac{1}{8}$ inch to one foot, while the elevations of the stones composing it should be on a scale of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to one foot. Any smaller presentment than these renders analysis difficult and uncertain ; and any larger scales, while not being necessary, render the field-survey work more exacting and complicated. From the point of view of comparison between the various Circles as plotted on paper, (which is an all-important need), the necessity of having all on *the same* scales is obvious.

Orientation. It is also important that all should be plotted on the same orientation ; namely, they should be shown (as in every geographical map) with the True North "up," and with the Meridan line drawn parallel

with the side of the paper, through the central point of the Plan, and for its whole length.

Judging from the five Circles here presented, it seems likely that some possess Orientation of some description, and some do not ; so that if the subject is to be discussed at all scientifically, as it should be, the direction of True North as regards the stones of the Circles must be included in the survey.

It is senseless to condemn " Orientation " as being figmentary, or non-existent, as many do, without taking the trouble to investigate the subject practically, by direct observation in the field.

Excavation. As to excavation, the second essential of the study, the writer is unable to offer advice ; but to those who can undertake it, it is certain that, hidden beneath the surface, and probably at no great depth, there are objects to be brought to light from the surroundings of Stone Circles, both within and without the ring, which, though of no intrinsic value,—mere stones, bones, bits of broken pottery, or ashes, the remains of fires or cremations—would add enormously to our knowledge of the uses of these structures.

Age: It seems that we cannot yet place within a thousand years or more the date of the origin of these monuments in this country.

They may belong, as has usually been considered from the rudeness of the stones employed, to the Neolithic, or Early Bronze Age, that is, scarcely later than 1000 B.C. ; or, as has lately been proposed, they may be a purely Celtic form of structure, whether Brythonic, as in England and Wales, or Goidelic, as in Ireland and Scotland ; thus dating them no earlier (in these islands) than about 500 B.C., and continued well into Christian times, even up to about 600 A.D.

Purpose: Then, again, the older idea was that all Stone Circles were purely sepulchral in origin ; while it is now suggested that only the smaller types, those of a diameter of 20 feet or less, were exclusively places of burial ; and that, if interments or cremations are found in the larger types (as they have been in some cases) these are what is termed "intrusive"; namely that the Circle was erected for some other purpose, and the burials were subsequent ; much as we find tombs inside Christian churches.

A recent view of the purposes of Stone Circles (of the larger kind) will be found in *The Circle and the Cross*, Vol. I., by the late A. Hadrian Allcroft, where argument is advanced to show that they were Places of Assembly, either for "political" purposes, or for religious purposes (including "divinations"), or for both ; and the presence (in the Aberdeenshire Circles) of the Recumbent stone is accounted for as being the chief place in the Circle, from which a leader should address an assembly gathered within its circuit, while the ashes commonly found at or near the centre are to be connected with sacrifices or sacred fires lighted on such occasions to be, as it were, prayers before the sessions of parliament.

These references merely show how much there still is to be discovered in connection with Stone Circles, and of what great interest any new feature, whether above-ground in the stones themselves, or below-ground as "finds," will be.

Investigators may look not for any dull uniformity in Stone Circles. On the contrary, regarding only the five described in this paper, it will be noticed that there is considerable diversity in the arrangement of each Circle, though the main design may be the same.

That is to say, while in each case there is a (roughly) circular ring of stones about 32 feet in diameter, with a Recumbent stone in the SW. segment, faced with two pillar stones, beyond these fundamentals there is considerable variety in (1) the number of stones forming the Circle; (2) in their height; (3) in the shape of the Pillar stones and the manner in which they are planted in the ground, and (4) in the azimuth of the Line of Entrance.

We may compare this with churches of the present day; all of which have the same general outlay of nave and chancel; yet, beyond this, no two are exactly similar in size, ground-plan, or details of construction.

It is probable that, when sufficient Stone Circles have been thus closely examined, classifications among them will be possible, according to one or other of the peculiarities of construction enumerated above. Each individual Circle has its own interest, and it is certain that those who undertake the work of examination will be rewarded by discoveries which will add considerably to our knowledge of Irish life in times of which no other record remains.

Bank Holiday Visit to Muskerry.

By JOHN J. FITZGERALD, M.D., F.R.S.A.I.



ON August Bank Holiday, the following members of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society visited some of the antiquities of Muskerry:—Mr. Cors. Cremen, Mr. M. J. Lavallin (Hon. Treas.), Dr. Philip G. Lee (Hon. Sec.), Mr. Michael Holland, Dr. John J. Fitzgerald, Mr. O. W. Fitzgerald, Mr. Charles McCarthy, Mr. McPherson, Mr. F. C. Long, Mr. R. R. Cogan, Mr. M. F. Cogan.

A short stop was made at Dripsey to inspect the castle of Carrignamuck, formerly owned by the McCarthys, the local tradition (in the days when Gaelic was spoken generally in the district) was that the proper name of Carrignamuck was Carrig Cormac (pronounced Carrig-coramuck), and that the castle was so called after Cormac Laidher McCarthy, the builder of Blarney Castle and founder of Kilcrea Abbey. Cormac Laidher was killed by his brother Owen. In consequence of this crime, Owen McCarthy was deprived