

RETAINING-CIRCLES ASSOCIATED WITH STONE ROWS, DARTMOOR.

BY R. HANSFORD WORTH

MANY of the Dartmoor stone rows either start from or end with a barrow ; there is no criterion by which to determine whether the row should be regarded as starting from, or ending in the grave.

These barrows are often provided with retaining-circles, the stones of which unite with those of the row to form a single monument. There is no known example of a row which has a retaining-circle at each end ; the long row in the *Erme* valley, which ranges from *Stall Moor* to *Green Hill*, has a barrow at either end, but only that on *Stall Moor* has a retaining-circle.

There is an instance, at *Merrivale*, of a retaining-circle which breaks the line of a row, being placed at about the centre of its length ; and on *Staldon* a row touches a retaining-circle tangentially. This retaining-circle, of which the stones have fallen, would appear to have been of the *Closed-random* type ; that is to say the stones formed a closed circle, each touching its neighbours, the stones irregular in shape and setting. In this it is an exception, all other (single) retaining-circles directly associated with stone rows being of the *Open* type, with the stones set at intervals in the circumference, a clear space separating each from its neighbour. But the position of the circle relative to the row is also exceptional.

The following notes record in some detail certain circles which are in some degree typical, and which have not previously been adequately described.

STALL MOOR—GREEN HILL ROW.

This row, the longest on Dartmoor and, as far as is known, the longest in the world, extends from a retaining-circle on *Stall Moor* northwards to a barrow on *Green Hill*, a distance of 11,150 feet as measured on the plan. LUKIS, in 1879-80, measured the length of the row and made it 11,239 feet 8 inches. He was certainly in error, even when it is remembered that his measurement was taken along the undulating surface of the ground ; a circumstance which would add six feet at the most to the distance.

The retaining-circle at the south end of this row is marked on O.S. six inch to the mile, cxiii s.w., lon. $3^{\circ}55'-23\frac{3}{4}"$, lat. $50^{\circ}27'-47\frac{3}{4}"$.

Seated well out on the open moor, at a distance from all enclosures, excepting the ancient circuit of *Erme Pound*, both circle and row are especially interesting, having suffered little, if any, at the hand of the despoiler, nothing from the good intentions of the restorer. The stones of the circle must have been well set originally, since of twenty-six that still form the circumference, two only have fallen. Their arrangement is far from regular, as will be seen from the plan (fig. 1). The largest stone lies a little to the west of the

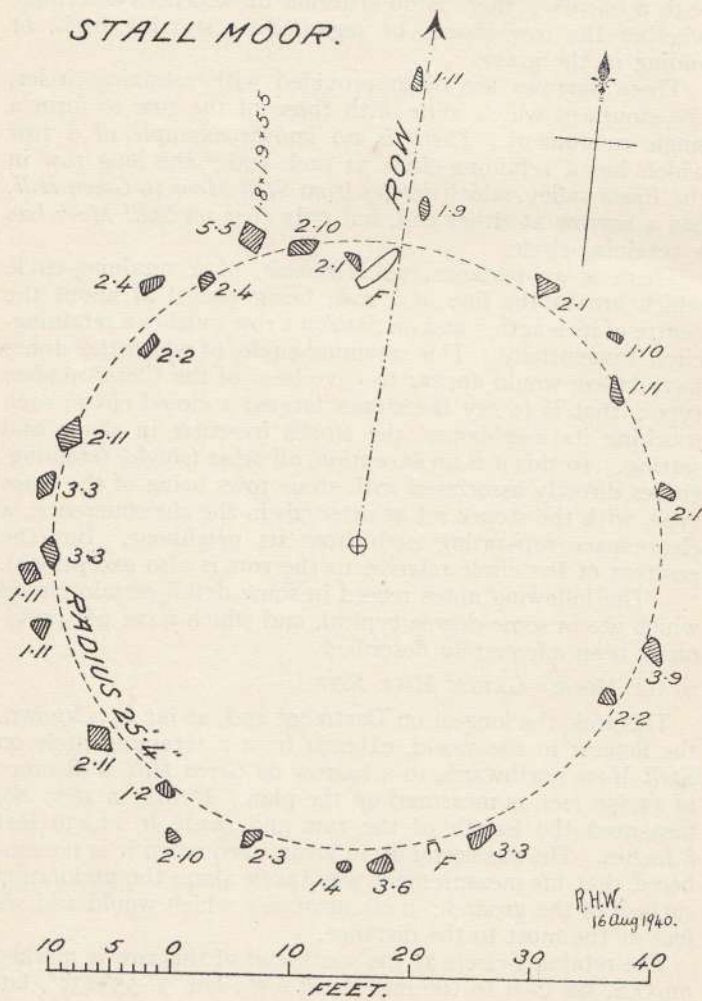


FIG. 1

line of the row, in the northern circumference; it stands 5 feet 5 inches in height, and measures 1 foot 8 inches by 1 foot 9 inches at ground level. The figure against each stone on plan indicates its height above ground. The formal circle which most nearly corresponds with the inner faces of the stones has a diameter of 50 feet 8 inches. I am aware that I have previously stated the internal diameter of this circle as 45 feet, but this was before I had made a detailed survey, in the absence of which error is easy, especially by measurement along a chord less than the diameter.

It will be noted that in the eastern half of the circle there are but ten stones, as compared with sixteen in the western part. This may have been an original feature. Within the circle lies a low barrow, and a shallow trench surrounds the whole; such trenches are extremely rare on Dartmoor, but common on Exmoor.

The circle is very effectively placed on the crest of a spur of *Stall Moor*, at an elevation of approximately 1220 feet O.D., the barrow at the north end of the row has an elevation of 1553 O.D. Between these points the line is undulating, crossing the valleys of some small tributaries of the *Erme*, of that river itself, and of the *Redlake*.

Plate VI gives a view of the circle and the south end of row, looking south.

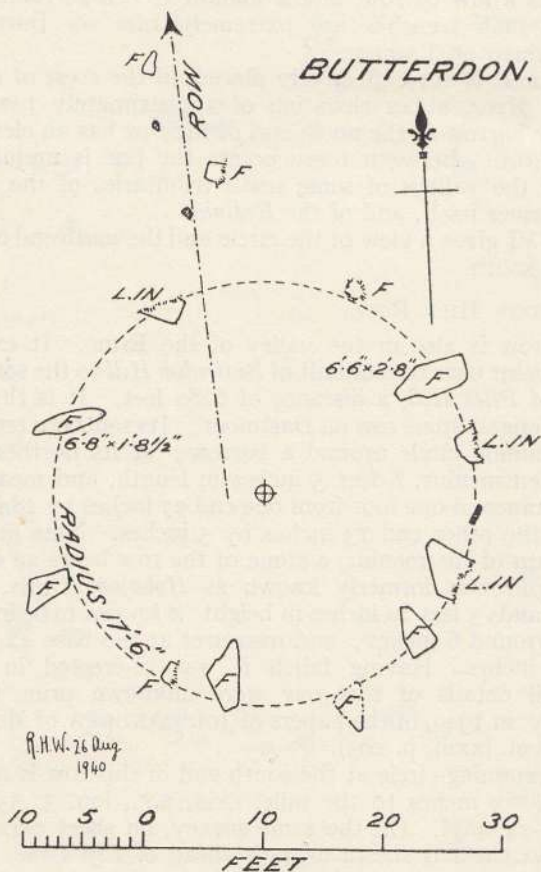
BUTTERDON HILL ROW.

This row is also in the valley of the *Erme*. It extends from a point near the summit of *Butterdon Hill* to the southern slopes of *Piles Hill*, a distance of 6280 feet. It is thus the second longest stone row on Dartmoor. Its southern terminus is a retaining circle around a barrow; at its northern end is a fallen menhir, 8 feet 5 inches in length, and measuring at a distance of one foot from one end 27 inches by 18 inches, and at the other end 13 inches by 5 inches. Nine hundred feet south of the menhir, a stone of the row bears an incised cross, and was formerly known as *Hobajons Cross*. This stone stands 3 feet 10 inches in height; is known to be inserted in the ground 6 inches; and measures at the base 22 inches by 20 inches. Having fallen it was re-erected in 1800. The full details of this row were unknown prior to the recovery, in 1940, of the papers of JOHN ANDREW of Modbury (*D.A.*, vol. lxxiii, p. 203).

The retaining-circle at the south end of this row is marked on O.S. six inches to the mile, cxix, S.E., lon. $3^{\circ}53'27\frac{1}{2}''$, lat. $50^{\circ}24'48\frac{3}{4}''$. On the same survey, on sheet cxix, N.E., *Hobajons Cross* is shewn near the head of *Left Lake*, a mile and a half out of position, and at a point where there is nothing resembling a cross.

The letters "B.S." on sheet cxix, s.e., at lon. $3^{\circ}53'37\frac{1}{4}"$, lat. $50^{\circ}25'41"$, indicate the stone which should be identified as *Hobajons Cross*; and on sheet cxix, n.e., the letters "B.S." near the spot level 1251, lon. $3^{\circ}53'41\frac{1}{2}"$, lat. $50^{\circ}25'49\frac{1}{2}"$, indicate a boundary stone which stands beside the fallen menhir, terminal to the *Butterdon* stone row.

The retaining-circle comprises twelve stones, of which one remains erect, three lean inward toward the centre of the circle, and eight have fallen. The diameter of the circle which most nearly coincides with the inner faces of the stones is 35 feet. The row does not point to the centre of the circle, but its direction passes three feet to the west of the centre. Within the circle are the remains of a low barrow.



For a plan of *Butterdon* retaining-circle, see figure 2. In the *Erme* valley there are six stone rows, *Stall Moor*, *Butterdon*, *Burford Down*, near *Spurrells Cross*, *Glasscombe Ball* and *Erme Pound*. Of these all but *Glasscombe Ball* are directly associated with retaining-circles. In the first four mentioned the retaining-circles are at the south ends of the rows, at *Erme Pound* it is at the north end.

TROWLESWORTHY.

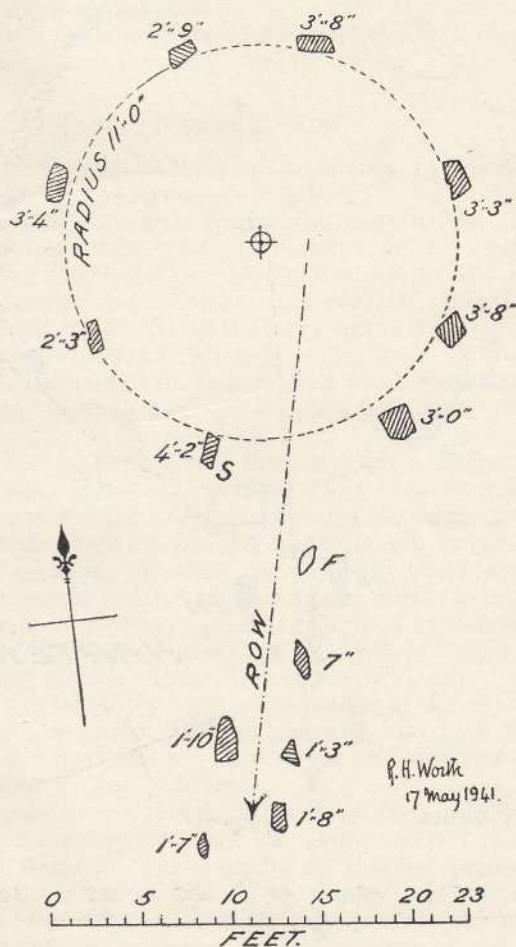


FIG. 3

TROWLESWORTHY, EASTERN ROW.

A double row, approximately 426 feet in length; at the north end is a retaining circle. The direction of the row is some few degrees west of south. It has an associate, a single row, to the west, the direction of which is very nearly east and west.

The retaining-circle comprises eight stones, all still erect,

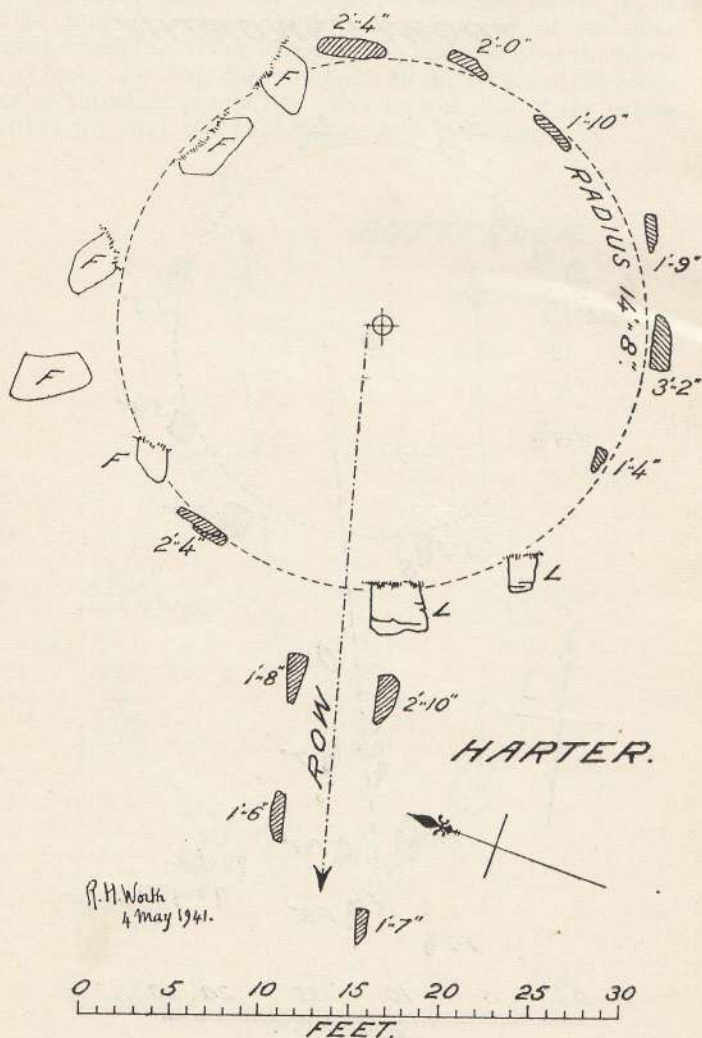


FIG 4

and all columnar in type. The tallest stone lies next to the row, and is 4ft. 2ins. in height. Its longer axis on plan lies in the direction of the row, and not tangential to the circle. The diameter of the formal circle which most nearly coincides with the inner faces of the stones is 22ft.

The tallest stone has been marked "S" on the plan, fig. 3; it is unusual in that it has obviously been shapen, being reduced on both the north and south, in such manner that it has a "waist," see plate VII. It seems improbable that this work upon the stone should date to the time of the construction of the circle, and subsequent interference is the more likely explanation.

This circle will be found marked on O.S. Devon, six inch, cxii, s.e., lon. $4^{\circ}-0'-20\frac{1}{2}"$, lat. $50^{\circ}-27'-27\frac{1}{2}"$.

HARTER, MEAVY, NORTHERN ROW.

A double row, bearing approximately 15 degrees south of west, at least 150 yards in length.

The retaining-circle lies at the eastern end, it comprises seven stones still erect, two stones which lean outward, and five fallen stones; fourteen stones in all. The stones are slab-like rather than columnar, the tallest still erect stands 3ft. 2ins. One of the fallen stones is 4ft. 9ins. in length, and another equals this.

The diameter of the formal circle which most nearly accords with the inner faces of the stones is 29ft. 4ins. For plan see fig. 4.

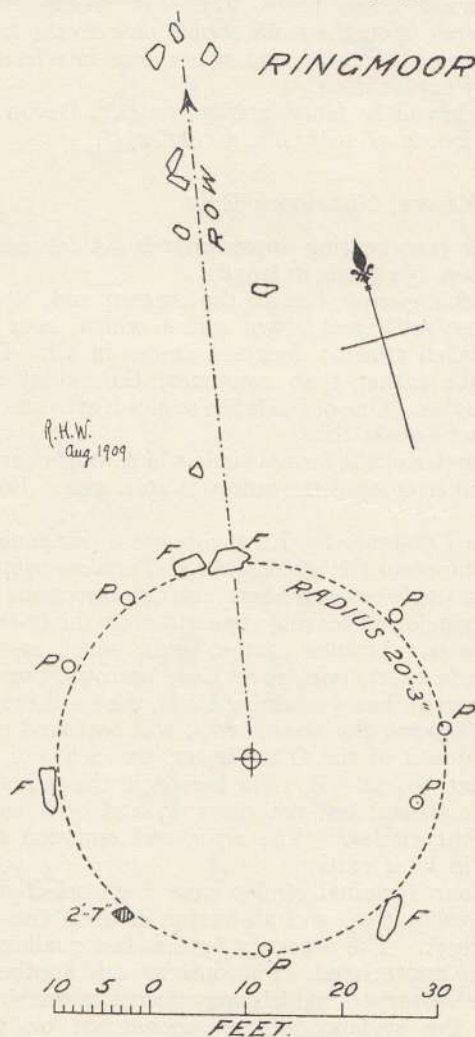
Like the *Trowlesworthy* Row, this has a companion; lying in this instance to the south. As at *Trowlesworthy* the companion is a single row, and here also the directions are divergent; the single row bearing approximately thirty-two degrees south of west. At their eastern ends, which are but some twelve yards apart, both rows have barrows, but while the northern barrow has a retaining circle, the southern has none.

This circle, and the double row, will be found marked on the first edition of the O.S. Devon, six inch, cvi, s.e., lon. $4^{\circ}-0'-27"$, lat. $50^{\circ}-31'-38"$. The barrow at the end of the single row is also shewn, but not the row, and both barrows are named "hut circles." The error and omission have been corrected in later editions.

These four terminal circles have been selected as being fairly representative, and as having escaped the attentions of the restorer. The necessity for this last qualification may not be fully appreciated. I accordingly add another terminal circle, the history of which may prove a warning against accepting the evidence of any monument on which the restorer has worked his will.

RINGMOOR ROW.

On *Ringmoor*, in the parish of *Sheepstor*, is a double row of approximately 420 yards in length, its direction lies $11\frac{1}{2}$ degrees east of north; at the south end is a retaining-circle. I found this row in 1894; in 1909 the circle and the south end of the row were restored by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould. Happily I had an inkling of his intent, and I surveyed the circle in its original condition. From fig. 5 it will be seen



that the circle comprised one standing stone, four fallen stones, and six pits in the surface soil, which may presumably have been at one time occupied by stones of the circle.

Those who now visit the circle will find ten standing stones. This means that five *extranei* were imported by BARING-GOULD, one at least from a distance of a full quarter of a mile.

What we now have is no prehistoric monument, but a self-memorial reared by unrestrained enthusiasm. It is merely misleading.

Wherever restorations have taken place they should be marked as such in "plain figures." I received a short time ago a copy of a paper on the Dartmoor Stone Monuments, the author of which had, wholly unconsciously, sustained his very assured position as to a number of debateable points by reference to BARING-GOULD restorations.

My survey indicates 40ft. 6ins. as the diameter of the formal circle most nearly approximating to the indications which I found. The one standing stone stood 2ft. 7ins. above ground.

This circle is not marked on the first edition of the O.S., it will be found on sheet, six inch, Devon, cxii, S.E., at lon. $4^{\circ}-1'-36''$, lat. $50^{\circ}-28'-33\frac{1}{2}''$, in the later editions.

STALDON, D.A., vol. xxix, p. 145, as *Stall* or *Staldon Moor*.

The stone row on *Staldon* was restored, unfortunately the condition which is essential was neglected, the row was not surveyed prior to restoration.

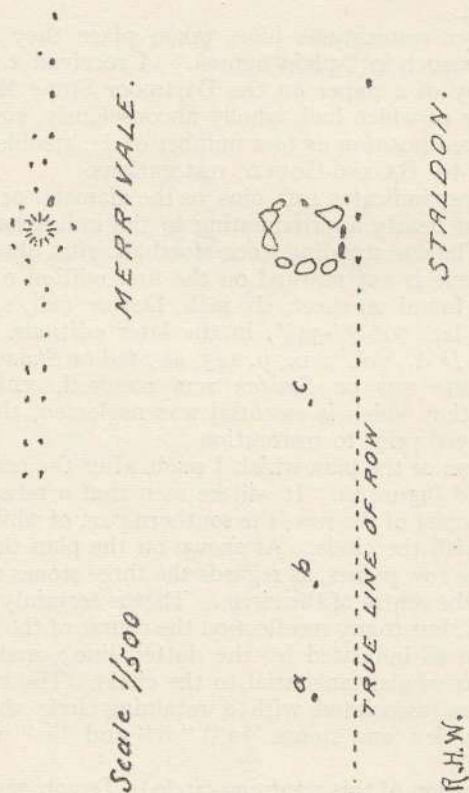
A portion of the plan which I made after the restoration is reproduced (figure 6). It will be seen that a retaining-circle lies to the east of the row, the southern part of which makes a tangent with the circle. As shewn on the plan the northern part of the row points, as regards the three stones next to the circle, to the centre of the circle. That is certainly as restoration left it, but to my recollection the course of the row should have been as indicated by the dotted line; making it one continuous whole, tangential to the circle. The restorer felt that a row associated with a retaining-circle should point to that circle; and stones "a," "b" and "c" were placed accordingly.

The location of this retaining-circle is, Devon, six inch O.S., cxix, N.W., lon. $3^{\circ}-55'-35''$, lat. $50^{\circ}-26'-42\frac{1}{2}''$.

Plate VI shews the Circle and Row.

MERRIVALE.

The two principal stone rows at *Merrivale* are both double. The southern row is interrupted by a barrow with a retaining-circle. The internal diameter of the circle is approximately 12 feet. The plan, figure 7, illustrates the relation between the row and the circle.



FIGS. 6 and 7.

YAR TOR.

The triple stone row on the slopes of *Yar Tor* has been much plundered. It probably presents another instance of a row broken by a barrow. Here the barrow contains the remains of a kistvaen, around which is a retaining-circle of the *Closed* type, the external diameter of which is 11ft. 4ins. (internal diameter 10ft. 2ins.), while an outer, *Open*, circle has an outer diameter of 36ft. (internal diameter 34ft.). A full description of this row will be found in *D.A.*, vol. lxix, pp. 76 *et seq.* The general plan is here repeated, figure 8. (Note:—*D.A.*, vol. lxix, p. 101, the external diameters of the retaining-circles at *Yar Tor* are incorrectly given as 10 feet and 17 feet respectively.)

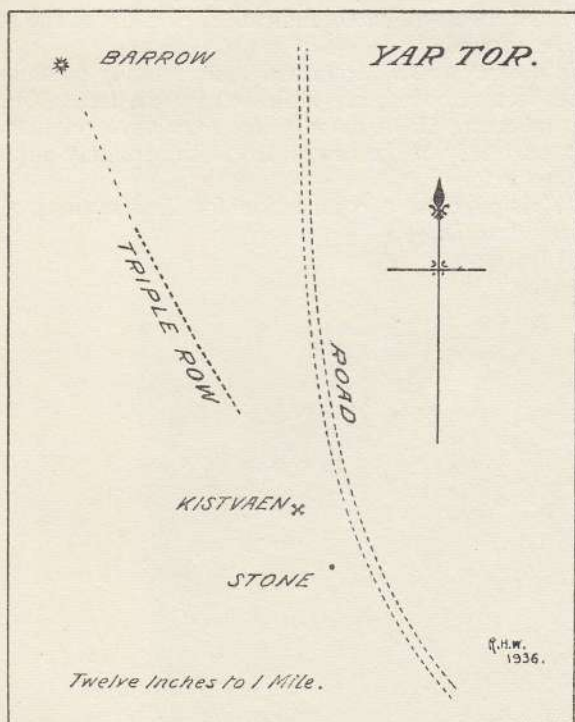


FIG. 8.

SHUGGLEDOWN, parishes of GIDLEIGH and CHAGFORD.

Near *Batworthy Corner* is a double row 581 feet long, measured from the outer circumference of a four-fold circle which lies at the south end of the row. The direction of the row is south 1° -40' east.

The circles most nearly approximating to the internal faces of the stones are :—in diameter, first circle 7ft. 10ins., second circle 15ft. 4ins., third circle 18ft. 10ins., fourth, and outermost, circle, 28ft. 8ins.

For a plan and further details see "*The Prehistoric Monuments of Scorhill, Buttern Hill and Shuggledown*," D.A., vol. lxiv, 1932, p. 284 *et seq.* The plan follows plate xiii, which faces page 286.

CONVENTIONS used :—

Stones still erect at the time of survey are hatched on the plans.

Stones leaning but not fallen are indicated by the letter "L."

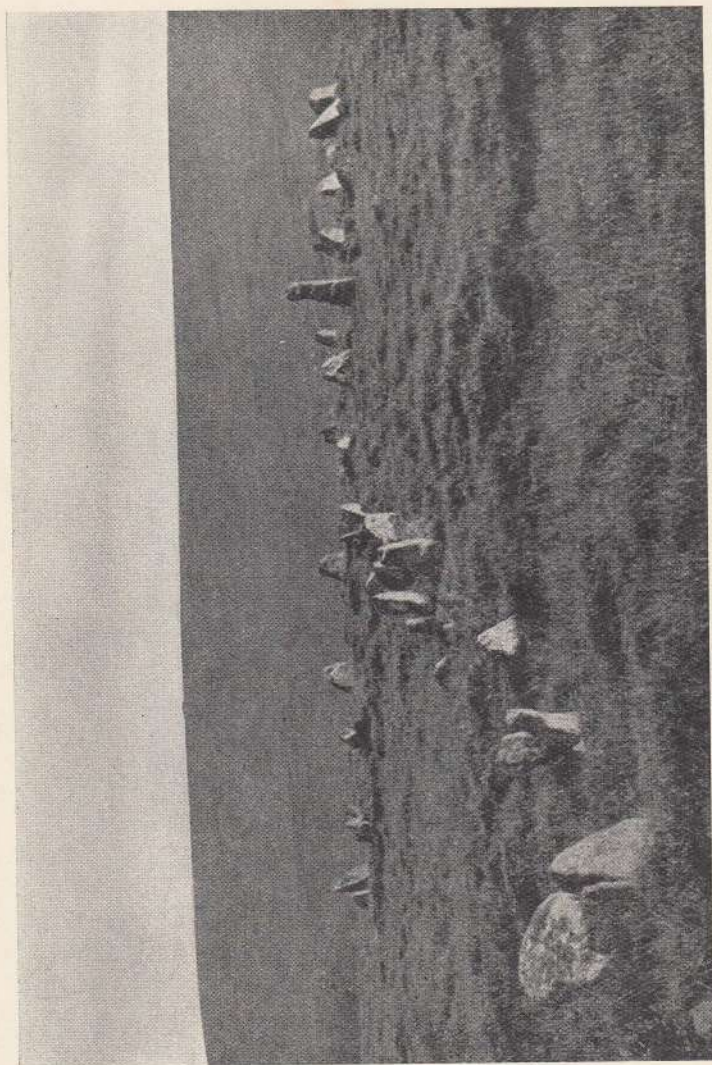
Fallen stones are indicated by the letter "F."

Figures set beside the stones indicate the height of the stone above ground.

Pits in the surface soil, from which stones may presumably have been removed, are indicated by the letter "P."

Lines indicating the direction of the rows have reference to that part only of the row which is immediately adjacent to the circle.

"D.A." is used as a contraction for *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*.



R.H.W.

STALL MOOR CIRCLE AND ROW, looking south.



TROWLESWORTHY
STONE IN CIRCLE

R H W, 1889

Probably deformed by workmen in 1859.