157. **Scorhill Circle, Dartmoor.**—I am glad to see, in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, Vol. LXIV (1932), Mr. Worth's plans of the circles on Scorhill and Buttern Hill, both near Gidleigh. This fills a long-felt want. The photograph of the general view of Scorhill Circle is excellent.

Well may Mr. Worth draw attention to the traditional difficulty of counting the stones of a circle. Even in surveys it seems difficult to get agreement of numbers. Fortunately, the surveying of Scorhill Circle does not bring the calamities threatened to a surveyor of Stanton Drew Circles, in Somerset! I made a survey of it in 1930, the year previous to Mr. Worth's planning, and found 30 stones, viz., 23 standing and 7 fallen—apparently the same as Mr. Worth's counting. But I omit one that he shows, and he omits one that I show. The former is the fallen stone which lies just west of the "surface-water channel" of Mr. Worth's plan, and the latter is one lying a few feet inside the circle, just between the tallest stone and the one next to the east of it.

I think, therefore, that we may fairly call the total number of stones, fallen and standing, 31—not 30, viz., 23 standing and 8 fallen.

In the British Museum (*Additional MS.* 31,333, "Ancient Earthworks in England," by W. Flinders Petrie) is a plan made by Petrie about 1879, at nearly, if not quite, the same date as that of Lukis and Andrews; but he calls it the circle on Buttern Hill, an obvious error. He shows a total of 28 stones only, viz., 24 standing and 4 fallen, and, in addition to those still erect, that one which Mr. Worth says Lukis and Andrews show as "leaning in," but which is now prostrate. Petrie omits two stones that Mr. Worth and I both show; that one which Mr. Worth shows and I omit; and that which I show and Mr. Worth omits; total 4, all fallen now.

Truly it seems next door to impossible to get identical counts—any way of fallen stones—even from surveys. And the tradition seems to be justified.

Mr. Worth does not accept some of the stones shown in Lukis and Andrews' plan, but does not say which, classing

them as "casuals." In their original plan (now at the Society of Antiquaries, as Mr. Worth tells us) they show 34 stones, viz., 24 standing and 10 fallen, so that the stones which Mr. Worth does not accept are two fallen. On comparing plans, I conclude that these two lie on either side of the water-channel (with Mr. Worth's stone, at that position, between them). As neither of these seems to lie far enough from the very true formal circle which takes in the rest, there seems little reason to refuse them recognition. They are certainly not so far from the circumference as the stone with its end cut off, shown in Mr. Worth's plan. He may have some other reason for rejecting them.

With regard to the "much spoliation" mentioned by Mr. Worth (p. 279), and the "local view" that certain stones from the circle are in the bank of the leat (p. 282): is the local view always to be relied upon? To me the local view sometimes smacks very strongly of information imparted to a local man, perhaps years ago, by a chance remark of an archæologist; a Dartmoor farmer stopped to chat with me a few years ago on Shuggledown (many thanks to Mr. Worth for giving the correct name to "Shovel Down" of the O.S.), and when asked if there was any local tradition about stone rows, he replied: "No. But we call them 'Avenues'"—clearly a case in point, for the term can hardly be good "Dartmoor." In the case of Scorhill Circle, the local view which I have heard agrees with what Mr. Worth says; but inspection of the figures given in Mr. Worth's valuable list of stones recorded makes it appear that the ancient worthy who told the story was not quite correct, and was possibly merely repeating something that he had heard. A few years ago he told my chauffeur, who is much interested in these matters, that within his own memory a lot more stones were in the circle, and he, personally, remembered that many had been removed for utilitarian purposes. Granting even that the old man's "memory" went back to 1858—a long "memory,"—in that year Ormerod recorded only 31 stones, the same as recorded to-day. Where, then, is the justification for accepting this local view? And how can it be said that there was much spoliation? Or can we credit the local

view that the stones in the leat-bank really came from the circle? There are plenty of stones lying about the circle which could have been used, and there is no reason to suppose that the leat-stones must have been taken from the circle. Recorded figures since 1827 do not support this view; they may have been taken before that, but it seems that local opinion cannot be relied on to support the contention. One does not know—nor is there any guide to help us—how many stones the circle, as originally constructed, contained, nor even what the purpose of the circle was.

Mr. Worth refers to "hidden meaning" in the arrangement of stones in a circle (p. 281). His contention that what stones were there is unknown, and that the "second in height" may have disappeared, is perfectly sound. At the same time, some persons believe that there is, indeed, a hidden meaning in the arrangement of the stones of a circle, and Petrie seems to have shared this view, or at least to have been aware of it, for, on his plan, he made a note that "The eastern side (of the circle) seems like a part of an arrangement of 8 groups of 3 stones each." He gives no reason for this idea, but it may have been based on the fact that three such groups were then standing (and still are). Groups of 3 stones each would be significant. Unfortunately for the idea, the north-easterly group is spoilt by a fallen stone, close to it; and the south-easterly is spoilt by another, which Lukis and Andrews show in their plan. It is always possible (unless one can find the pits of these two fallen stones) that they may be casuals, removed across the circle from another position to be used up (that shown by Lukis and Andrews is now gone), and dropped where they were found on survey. But this is hardly an admissible conjecture, and we must allow that Petrie (who showed neither of the said stones in his plan) just overlooked them. The actual year of Petrie's plan is not known. It may have been made before that of Lukis and Andrews. Certainly, the three groups, each of 3 stones, which still stand on the eastern side of the circle, are a most remarkable sight. But one can hardly contend that they are original, however much one may wish to do so. In the north-easterly group is a

remarkably proportioned equilateral triangle. The triangular stone is well shown in Mr. Worth's general view of the circle.

I examined underneath the sides of the fallen stone beside this group, but did not raise it. It lies on black earth, but I was unable to satisfy myself whether or not there was a pit in which it had stood. I found the bowl of a briar pipe under one side of the stone. Has Mr. Worth examined any of the fallen stones?

F. C. Tyler.

158. **Scorhill Circle, Dartmoor.**—By the courtesy of Major Tyler I have seen the typescript of the above note. He has also very kindly sent me a copy of his own survey, and of that made by Sir William Flinders Petrie.

I do not think matters are quite as difficult as Major Tyler considers them. In the first place, he and I agree, except that I do not accept one of his "fallen" stones, and he omits one which I show. Petrie omits that stone which Major Tyler shows and I reject, and shows the stone which I give and which Major Tyler rejects, or does not show.

Both Major Tyler and I show one stone which Petrie omits; this is also shewn by Lukis.

Lukis supports Major Tyler as to the fallen stone, within the circle near the tallest stone, which Petrie and I do not accept. So far I find myself, as regards the last-named stone, one of two set against two: I have examined this stone many times in past years, and I am convinced that it is an earth-fast boulder which has never formed part of the circle.

As regards the stone which I show but Major Tyler does not, I have the support of Petrie and Lukis alike.

The stones which Lukis figures and I do not, are not given by Petrie nor by Major Tyler himself in his survey; here again I am in a majority of three to one. I do regret that Major Tyler should now want to add back these stones; they have not the remotest claim to consideration.

The stone to the south of the circle, which only Petrie omits, almost certainly came from the circle, and the verdict is again three to one in its favour.

Lukis's "leaning" stone presents no difficulty; it was erect, although probably leaning, when Petrie made his survey; it has now fallen, but is clearly identifiable. As to this member of the circle we are all agreed.

There is one error in Petrie's plan; the seventh stone, clockwise, from the tallest is shown too near the sixth. All three of the other surveys agree as to this.

Lukis gives the compass wrongly, showing south as north. As to this all three other plans are again in agreement.

Thus, except as to one stone, lying within the circle near the tallest, there is a majority of three to one in agreement with my survey.

Notwithstanding this fact, I think that I may be right (long ago an older man told me always to question my results if they secured majority acceptance).

As to the stones beside the leat, I do not gather that Major Tyler has seen them; they certainly are such as may well have come from the circle, and not such as are readily to be found among the scattered earth-fast boulders. I cannot trace that any antiquary other than myself has ever mentioned them, and I had never spoken of them to anyone at the time that I was told that they had been taken from the circle. I did know that, within my time and to the personal knowledge of the late Fabyan and John Amery and others, the attempt had been made to convert certain stones into gateposts. Mentioning this, I was told that it was well known that the circle had been used for a quarry before that, and that, in especial, the leat stones had been taken from it; and I was asked "had I seen those stones?"

Now Gidleigh is a singularly static parish; the same families have been in occupation, often of the same lands, for centuries, and if a member of one of those families tells me that his predecessors had been in the habit of doing certain things, up to the time of the last gatepost outrage, I am not readily to be persuaded that he is romancing. Whatever "ancient worthy" Major Tyler's chauffeur met, he was not my informant nor one of my informants. If Rowe was right in 1827, then according to me seven stones have been removed since that date, and I report five stones and several broken pieces as being in the bank of the leat. So that one hundred years' joint memory of the natives might suffice to bring down the fact that these stones had been taken from the circle. I cannot claim that the case is proven, and I know the mischief which is done by antiquary-started legends, but I know also that there have certainly been more stones than now stand or lie in the circle.

R. Hansford Worth.