

NOTES ON SOME CORNISH CIRCLES.<sup>1</sup>

III.

Boscawen-un, N. lat. 50° 5' 20".

MY wife and I visited Boscawen-un on a pouring day, when it was impossible to make any observations. Mr. Horton Bolitho, who was with us, introduced us to the tenant of Boscawen-noon—Mr. Hannibal Rowe—who very kindly, in spite of the bad weather, took us to the circle and the stone cross to the N.E. of it.

Lukis thus described this monument<sup>2</sup> :—

"The enclosed ground on which this circle stands is uncultivated and heathy, and slopes gently to the south. Twenty years ago a hedge ran across it and bisected the circle.

monolith enclosed within it was inclined, it is possible that it was upright at that time.

"Dr. Stukeley's supposition was that it originally stood upright, and that 'somebody digging by it to find treasure disturbed it.'

"On the north-east side there are two fallen stones which Dr. Borlase, in 1749, imagined to have formed part of a cromlech. It is more probable that they are the fragments of a second pillar which was placed to the north-east of the centre, and as far from it as the existing one is. There are instances, I believe, of two pillars occupying similar positions within a circle. One of the stones, that marked C in my plan, on the eastern side of the ring was prostrate in the doctor's time.

"At a short distance to the south-east and south-west there are cairns, which have been explored."

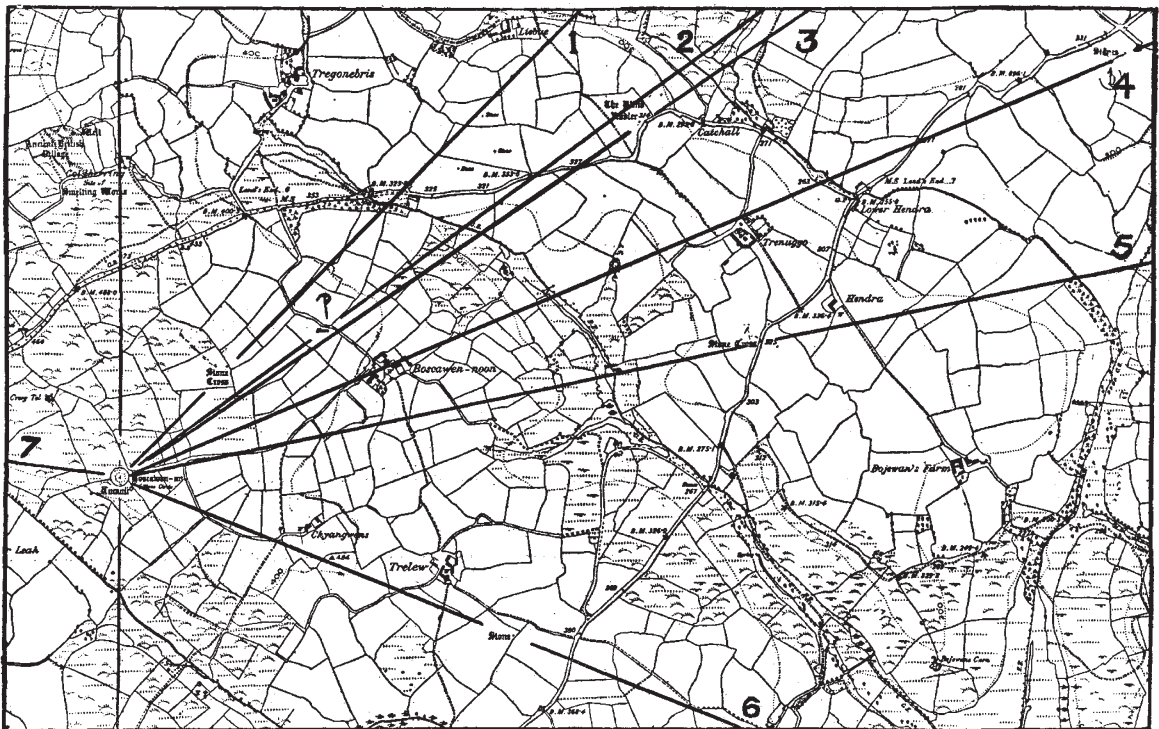


FIG. 8.—Photograph of the Ordnance Map showing sight-lines.

"This monument is composed of nineteen standing stones, and is of an oval form, the longer diameter being 80 feet and the shorter 71 feet 6 inches. One of the stones is a block of quartz 4 feet high, and the rest, which are of granite, vary from 2 feet 9 inches to 4 feet 7 inches in height. On the west side there is a gap, whence it is probable that a stone has been removed. Within the area, 9 feet to the south-west from the centre, is a tall monolith, 8 feet out of the ground, which inclines to the north-east, and is 3 feet 3 inches out of the perpendicular.

"In 1594 Camden describes this monument as consisting of nineteen stones, 12 feet from each other, with one much larger than the rest in the centre. It must have been much in the same condition then as now. As he does not say that the

For this monument I have used the 6-inch map, as the circle lies nearly at the centre, and all the outstanding stones are within its limits. The heights of the sky-line were measured by Mr. H. Bolitho at a subsequent visit with a miner's dial; the resulting declinations have been calculated by Mr. Rolston. A theodolite survey will doubtless revise some of them :—

Marks	Az.	Hills	Dec.	Star	Date
1. F. Stone cross	N. 43 15 E. ...	2 7	+29 26	Capella	2250
2. P. fine menhir	N. 53 30 E. ...	2 23	23 59	Solstitial Sun	
3. E. Blind Fiddler	N. 54 30 E. ...	2 23	23 25	" "	
4. 2 Large menhirs	N. 66 50 E. ...	1 0	14 55	May sun	
5. Stone cross	N. 78 0 E. ...	1 0 (?)	+ 8 8	Pleiades (May)	1480
6. Stone	S. 66 30 E. ...	1 0 (?)	- 14 32	November sun	
7. Stone	N. 83 30 W. ...	1 0 (?)	+ 4 36	Pleiades (September)	2120

I gather from a report which Mr. H. Bolitho has been good enough to send me that modern hedges

<sup>1</sup> Continued from v. l. lxxiii., p. 563.  
<sup>2</sup> "Prehistoric Stone Monuments of the British Isles: Cornwall," W. C. Lukis, p. 1.

and farming operations have changed the conditions of the sight-lines, so that 1 and 3 are just invisible from the circle. This is by no means the only case in which the sighting stone has just been hidden over the brow of a hill and in which signals from an observer on the brow itself have been suggested, or a *via sacra* to the brow from the circle; there are many monoliths in this direction which certainly never belonged to the circle. From menhir P (No. 2) a fine view is obtained from N. to S. through E., so that the Blind Fiddler and the two large menhirs, and almost the circle, are visible. The curious shapes of 1 and 2 are noted, the east face vertical and the west boundary curved, like several sighting stones on Dartmoor.

The circle itself has several peculiarities. In the first place, as shown by Lukis, it is not circular, the diameters being about 85 and 65 feet; the minor axis runs through the pillar stone in the centre and the "fallen stones" of Dr. Borlase towards the "stone cross" (which is no cross but a fine menhir) in Az. N. 43° 15' E. This would suggest that this was the original alignment in 2250 B.C., but against this is the fact that the two stones of the circle between which the "fallen stones" lie are more carefully squared than the rest. It is true, however, that this might have been done afterwards, and this seems probable, for they are closer together than the other circle stones.

The one quartz stone occupies an azimuth S. 66° W. It was obviously placed in a post of honour. As a matter of fact, from it the May sun was seen to rise over the centre of the circle.

As there are both at Tregaseal and Boscawen-un alignments suggesting the observation of the summer solstice sunrise, it is desirable here to refer to the azimuths as calculated. For this purpose Fig. 9 has been prepared, which shows these for lat. 50° both at the present day and at the date of the restoration at Stonehenge.

My readers should compare this with the table on p. 33, vol. lxxii., which gives the solstice sunrise conditions of Stenness in lat. N. 59°. Such a comparison will show how useless it is to pursue these inquiries without taking the latitude and the height of the sky-line into account.

*The "Stripple Stones" (lat. 50° 32' 50" N., long. 4° 37' W.)*

This is a very remarkable circle consisting of 5 erect and 11 prostrate stones situated on a circular level platform 175 feet in diameter on the boggy south slope of Hawk's Tor on Hawkstor Downs in the parish of Blisland. The circle itself is about 148

feet in diameter, and the whole monument is, in Lukis's opinion, the most interesting and remarkable in the country. Surrounding the platform there is a ditch 11 feet wide, and beyond that a penannular vallum about 10 feet in width. The peculiarity of the vallum is that it has three bastions situate on the north-east, north-west, and east sides. It is to the north-east bastion that I wish to refer.

Sighting from the huge monolith, which is now prostrate but originally marked the centre of the circle along a line bisecting the arc of this bastion, we find that the azimuth of the sight-line is N. 25° E.; the angular elevation of the horizon from the 1-inch Ordnance map appears to be about 0° 22'. Thus we get in the same form as before:—

Alignment	Dec.	Star	Date
Centre of circle to centre of bastion ...	35° 1' N.	Capella	1250 B.C.

indicating that this alignment was formed for the same purpose as that which dominated the erection of "The Pipers."

*The "Nine Maidens" (lat. 50° 28' 20" N., long. 4° 54' 35" W.)*

In this monument we find a very different type from those considered previously.

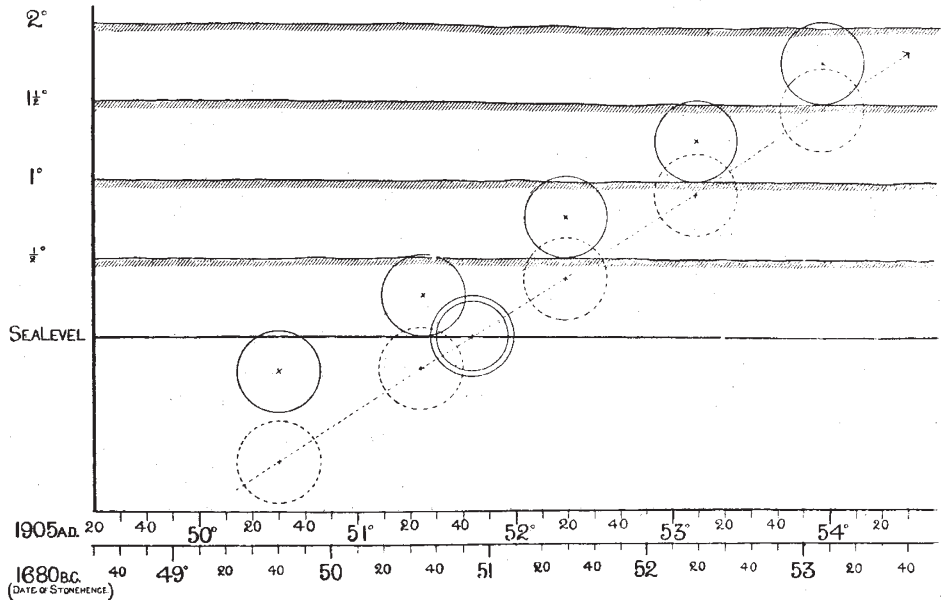


FIG. 9.—Showing the azimuths at the present time and in 1680 B.C. at which the sun rose in Cornwall at the solstice, with different elevations of the sky-line. These are shown at the side.

The Nine Maidens are simply 9 stones in a straight line 262 feet in length at the present day; possibly, as suggested by Lukis, it may have extended originally to the monolith known as "The Fiddler," situated some 800 yards away in a north-easterly direction. Measuring the azimuth of the alignment on Lukis's plan, and finding the horizon elevations from the 1-inch Ordnance map, we have the following:—

Az.	Hills	Dec.	Star	Date
N. 28° E. ... 0° 0' ...	33° 47' N.	Capella	1480 B.C.	

It may be remarked that here we have a date for the use of Capella intermediate between those obtained for "The Pipers" and the "Stripple Stones" respectively.

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