Hillfort: OS Grid Reference – **NM 8544 0366**

**Getting Here**

There's two real ways to get up here: one from the Oban-Kilmartin roadside; the other from Ford village. I'd go for the latter as it avoids the traffic. Walk up the track to Salachary from the village centre, heading west. It’s a gradual uphill climb and after about half-a-mile (past six or seven cup-marked rocks) the great hill rises to your left. **Dun Dubh** is to your right. Climb over the fence and head for the hilltop.

**Archaeology & History**

It’s my opinion that this fort, above all others in the region apart from **Dunadd**, was of paramount importance to our prehistoric ancestors. The reason being that it’s the great pyramidal hill to which the line of tombs in the Kilmartin Valley align, three miles to the south. This prehistoric alignment was quite intentional (if you’ve got your doubts, gerrup there & have a look for y’self — you’ll soon change yer mind).

The main part of the structure is an irregularly-shaped construction with walling on all sides, measuring about 40 yards by 20 yards. Much of it is pretty well defined – though has been vandalized by various doods in the past: one bunch being a film-crew who used the site in the early 1980s! Inside the main walled fortress are several ruins. The Royal Commission (1988) report told:

> “Much of the interior is occupied by a rock spine which is surmounted by a modern cairn, but the NW half is relatively level and it contains, in addition to the modern round-house…and an S-shaped structure associated with film-making, a number of ruined stone foundations. On the north side there is a rectilinear building, and between the modern round-house and this rectilinear building, there is a further structure…an arc of walling, but its precise shape cannot now be determined without excavation.”
Dun Chonallaich means “the fort of King Connal’s people,” and although much denuded, is well worth the clamber for a short archaeological day out. A curious “gaming-board” was found here (see photo). A portable cup-marked stone in the fort’s southern wall is a modern artifact.

It’s a lovely view from up here too. This is one of many places I’ve sat during a raging thunderstorm. One helluva buzz, believe me!

References:


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Druimyeonbeg, Isle of Gigha, Argyll

Posted on October 3, 2008 by megalithix

Cairn (destroyed): OS Grid Reference – NR 648 495

Archaeology & History

An old tomb could once be seen where now we have yet another one of those environmentally damaging golf courses! (I get many emails from people who are very upset at finding the destruction of our archaeological heritage because of golf courses) The tomb was reported in 1953 to have been, “discovered in the southwest corner of a field south of Druimyeonbeg farmhouse.” Any relics that may have been there were destroyed and there’s now no trace of anything.

References:


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Druid’s Stone, Bungay, Suffolk

Posted on October 3, 2008 by megalithix

Legendary Rock: OS Grid Reference – TM 337 898

Folklore

Described in 1926 by local antiquarian and early ley-hunter, W.A. (1926), as “a fallen monolith” — this old stone is probably just a glacial erratic. Found in the churchyard of St. Mary’s, tradition tells that in ages past young girls danced twelve times around this old stone, then placed their ears upon it to hear the answers to their questions and wishes. A similar legend tells how children danced around the stone seven times on a certain day of the year to conjure up the devil. Mr Dutt thought the great rock may have been “a ley or direction stone.”

References:

Druid’s Altar, Bingley, West Yorkshire

Getting There

Pretty easy to get to. Best thing to do really, is ask a local and they'll send you in the right direction. From Bingley, take the Harden road (B6429) across the river. As it bends sharply left, note there's a track going up into the woods to the right. Walk up it! Keep going and, unless you take a detour, you'll end up at the rock outcrop eventually (where the woods come to an end, Druid’s Altar appears before you with the track running along its top-side).

Archaeology & History

Mentioned in the Tithe Awards of 1849, this lovely outcrop of rocks looking down the Aire Valley on the southern edge of Bingley has “an immemorial tradition” of druidic worship, said Harry Speight in 1898 – though quite when it first acquired such repute is outside of any literary record. In Sidney Greenbank’s (1929) rare book on this place, he could find little by way of archaeological data to affirm the old tradition, save the odd prehistoric find of flints here and there; though it is said that Beltane fires were burned upon the crags here in bygone centuries.

There was a 19th century account from the Ilkley Scientific Club where a member described there being a cup-and-ring carving “near the so-called Druid’s Altar, at Bingley,” but I'm unaware of the whereabouts of this carving and Boughey & Vickerman’s (2003) said nothing about it in their survey; though a possible cup-marking can be seen on one rock less than 100 yards west, which might account for the report. (a bit dodgy though!)

Folklore

Harry Speight (1898) makes what sounds like a rare flight of fancy when he described faerie being seen atop of the many oaks beneath the Druid’s Altar. In Clive Hardy’s (2003) work (from whence the old photo of the Altar is taken), he tells how “local antiquarians say that the cobbled way running from the Brown Cow Inn towards the site, is an old processional route walked by the druids.”

One, possibly two wells, each beneath the Altar rocks, are also reputed to have been associated with the old pagan priests, as their names tell: the Altar Well and the Druid's Well – though the Altar Well has seemingly fallen back to Earth in recent years.
Machuim, Lawers, Loch Tay, Perthshire

Stone Circle: OS Grid Reference – NN 682 402

Also Known as:

- Lawer’s Mill

Getting Here

From the north-end of Loch Tay at Kenmore, follow the road (A827) round down the lochside, through the village of Fearman and then another 4 miles down. If you park up at the pub at Lawers, walk back up the road for ½-mile, keeping your eyes peeled up the slope on the left where you’ll see the circle visible from the road.

Archaeology & History

Much has been said of this fine old place – also known as Lawer’s Mill – which seems to have been first described by Thomas Pennant in his rambling Tour in Scotland (1772). The local writer William A. Gillies (1938) told that after

“a recent examination of the ground around the circle…suggests that at one time there was an outer circle of stones concentric with the existing one. Most of the stones were removed in order to make more of the field available for cultivation, but there are still large stones buried within a few inches of the surface.”

Folklore

In J. McDiarmid’s Folklore of Breadalbane (1910) he tells of a man from Killin who, on passing by this old circle, heard haunting fairy music. Being inquisitive, he walked up to see what was going on and walked into the circle where the little people were playing. He was obviously lucky and the faerie-folk enjoyed his company, for when he left he was given the gift of a strong, fast, white steed.
Solar folklore may be…?

References:


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Drayton Cursus, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Posted on October 2, 2008 by megalithix

Cursus Monument: OS Grid Reference – **SU 490 941** – **SU 492 950**

Archaeology & History

This minor cursus monument was etched into the landscape in neolithic times. Found to the south of Abingdon and close to the River Thames, one report showed finds from the site dating from 2900 BC. There is also a neolithic henge monument very close to its northern terminus and a plethora of other Bronze Age remains all round. Paul Devereux (1989) described how crop marks revealed,

"a substantial former cursus immediately to the east of Drayton: its crop marks extend southwest to northeast for a little over a mile, and are 225 feet (68 metres) wide. The cursus has a squared south end, but the northern terminus has not been found. The crop marks are not evident in the middle portion of the cursus, as it was formerly overlaid by a Saxon village. There is a plethora of other crop marks within and around the cursus… The northern section… which has a slightly different orientation to the southern segment, points squarely to"
Dove Stones, Thornton Rust Moor, North Yorkshire

Cup-Marked Stone: OS Grid Reference – **SD 96634 87493**

Also Known as:

- **DS3 Carving** (Brown & Brown, 2008)

**Getting Here**

Takes a bit of finding and ain’t too accessible for those of you who need footpaths! Below the eastern slopes of **Addlebrough** Hill, by the present source of the Gill Beck right beneath the Dove Stones (the water tastes gorgeous), are the ruinous remains of an old sheepfold. In the field immediately behind (south) of here are a number of small rocks. Look around and you’ll find the stone in question!

**Archaeology & History**

Unless you’re a real rock-art-freak, I can’t imagine too many of you checking this one out! When Richard Stroud and I visited this spot a few years back (2006), it was a mixture of love and madness that brought us here!

Amidst the many stones scattered hereabouts, one of them possesses two clear cup-marks on a stone measuring roughly 3ft by 2ft, along the line of a much ruined ancient wall. This might be the one that Beckensall and Laurie (1998) described in their *Prehistoric Rock Art of County Durham, Swaledale and Wensleydale*, as “a rock with several cups (which) has recently been noticed on Thornton Rust Moor, near the Dovestones” — though it seemed blatantly apparent to us that there were only two
cups here, not “several”. However, Brown (2008) appears to list the site, citing it as having “two cups”, just like the one we found, and being “found in prehistoric low field settlement wall,” which fits the picture perfectly — although Brown gives a slight difference in grid-reference to the one Richard Stroud took. It looks a good area to scout around and, I reckon, find previously unrecorded sites.

References:


© Paul Bennett, *The Northern Antiquarian*
Folklore

The folklorists Harland and Wilkinson (1882) included this in their survey of druidical sites, mentioning the several cup-markings, or druid basins as they called them. (though most of ’em on here are Nature’s handiwork)

For me, this is an incredible place – full of raw power and magick. It has a curious geomantic relationship with the Whinberry Stones, a couple of miles to the south, around which should be a ring of stones…though none can be found.

References:


Links:

1. More images of the Dove Stones

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Dorchester Cursus, Oxfordshire

Posted on October 2, 2008 by megalithix

Cursus: OS Grid Reference – SU 569 958 – SU 581 948

Also Known as:

1. Dorchester-on-Thames Cursus
2. Overy Cursus

Archaeology & History

Nowadays marked on modern Ordnance Survey maps as part of a ‘Neolithic Sacred Complex,’ this linear monument was part and parcel of the Dorchester Big Rings henge complex and was associated with a number of other important prehistoric sites, many of which have been destroyed by ecological disfigurement projects in recent years. In Gordon Copley’s (1958) description of the monument, not long after its initial discovery, he said that this “was a cursus which consists of parallel ditches some 4000 feet long with 210 feet between them.” In more recent times Paul Devereux (1989) described how the cursus here,
Jean Cook (1985) told that later excavations on the site in 1981, found the shallow ditch which surrounded the entire cursus, “was interrupted by a central entrance on the southeast side. The southeastern terminal ditch respected a small prehistoric monument which has been dated to approximately 2000 BC.” This and other factors has led to the thought that the cursus may not all have been built at the same time. And indeed excavations at other sites scattering the northwestern ends of the cursus (shown in the plan here, Ed.) proved that a D-shaped enclosure “pre-dates the rest of the structure.” Other mortuary sites scattered the edges of the cursus that were added in the centuries which followed, but which need excavation work to uncover their secrets. Although much of this was done in the Atkinson digs, they were summarised well by Jean Cook (1985), who told:

“Site VIII, excavated in 1948, was a monument known as a mortuary enclosure. Sometimes such structures take the form of long barrows, but this one was a rectangular enclosure bounded on all four sides by a ditch with an internal bank. There were narrow entrance gaps on the two longer sides and a wider entrance in the centre of the shorter southern side. It is dated by the substantial sherds of Ebbsfleet ware (pottery) which were found in the upper filling of the ditch; part of a human jaw from within the enclosure helps to confirm the mortuary function.

“Site XI, excavated in 1949, consisted of three or more concentric ditches, of different dates, enclosing an incomplete ring of 14 pits. The middle ditch seems to have surrounded an oval barrow or enclosure and to have then been converted to a circular plan. Some of the pits contained animal bones, one contained an antler pick and one contained a complete human cremation, but there were no accompanying grave goods.

“Both these sites were in existence before the cursus was built (my italics, Ed.) This is shown by the fact that the southernmost ditch of the cursus cuts through Site VIII and abuts Site XI. These two earlier sites seem to share the same alignment, but once the cursus was constructed it set a new alignment which may have been of significance until the end of the 3rd millennium BC. Three monuments built after the construction of the cursus were located inside it, two of them being along the central axis, and two others were just outside the southernmost ditch of the cursus but shared the same general alignment.

“Sites IV, V and VI, which were also excavated in 1949, have a similar overall plan and all of them contained a number of cremation deposits suggesting that amongst other things they acted as cemeteries. All three sites had a circular plan and consisted of an outer bank, to define the central area, and an inner ditch, the purpose of which seems to have been to provide earth for the bank. In Site IV the ditch was made up of eight oval pits, enclosing an area of about six metres in diameter. There was a broad entrance gap on the southeast side.
Inside the enclosed area there were 25 deposits of cremated bones. An arrowhead was found with one of the cremations. Site V was very similar in construction, except that the entrance gap was on the northwestern side and contained 21 cremation deposits. No grave goods were found. Site VI again had a similar plan with the entrance gap to the north. There were 49 cremation deposits, one accompanied by a flint fabricator, an arrowhead and burnt flint flakes.

“Site I was excavated in 1946 and consisted of a small square ditch, enclosing another more or less circular ditch with an internal bank. Inside this ditch were 13 holes, forming a ring with an entrance gap on the western side. There were no entrances in the surrounding ditches. A crouched burial was found within the entrance to the ring of holes but there were no accompanying grave goods. Four cremations were found, two accompanied by fragmentary bone pins, in or besides four of the central holes. At a later stage in the neolithic period, parts of the ditch may have been enlarged to make temporary shelters: it is not clear to which period of use the cremations belong.

“Site II, also excavated in 1946, consisted of a causewayed (interrupted) ring ditch which was enlarged on two occasions. The third ditch had an internal bank in which were 19 cremation deposits. Two more cremations were found at the centre of the enclosed area. There was no evidence for any gap. Bone pins were found with four of the cremations as were flint fragments. In addition, antlers and other flint fragments were found, as well as pieces of pottery.

“In 1981 a small semi-circular enclosed ditch was excavated within the southeast terminal of the cursus. Though sited off-centre, the ditch shared the same alignment with the cursus. An antler (dated to c.2000 BC) was found close to the bottom of the ditch. After the ditch had virtually filled up with silt, the surviving low central mound was used for cremation deposits, one of them associated with a heavily burnt flint blade.”

Paul Devereux (1989) pointed out how one of the archaeologists studying this site found that if the axis of the monument was extended southeast, across the river, it lined up perfectly with another set of perfectly straight lines which were thought “likely to be a Roman trackway.” Unfortunately much of this area has been destroyed through the self-righteous ignorance of modern industrialism.

References:


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