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SOME ANTIQUITIES IN STRATHFILLAN, PERTHSHIRE, CUPPED BOULDER NEAR HELENSBURGH, AND CROSS-SLABS IN GLEN FRUIN, DUMBARTONSHIRE. BY A. D. LACAILLE, F.S.A.Scot.

ANTIQUITIES IN STRATHFILLAN.

During fishing expeditions in the Crianlarich district, my attention was drawn to some ancient sites which, after a study of the Ordnance Survey charts and careful examination, I feel are worth reporting. I was fortunate in getting the co-operation of Mr Gordon Place, proprietor of a portion of the ground, and of Mr Ludovic M'L. Mann, who visited many of the places in question and helped in the examination, elucidation, and surveying of them.

The best known site is the ruined chapel of St Fillan, connected with King Robert I. (Bruce) and referred to in the *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xii. pp. 122-82. The chapel is in a bad condition, with scarcely an architectural feature of any moment to be seen. Of the Priory buildings no vestige remains. The stones were used in the building of Kirkton Farm and a Secession Church, but this place of worship has disappeared. Placed in the centre of the rectangular building, and resting on a slab or flagstone 5 feet long and 18 inches broad, is a schistose boulder with a deeply cut-out heart-shaped cavity. The relic is a font, and was identified with rites connected with St Fillan. (See *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, first series, p. 192, Jos. Anderson.) There are lying near it fragments of a rotatory quern.

Immediately to the north of the chapel is the modern graveyard, which became disused some fifty years ago. It is a small square enclosure surrounding a circular mound, which looks like a Bronze Age burial cairn. Some of the graves are covered with a long slab, probably taken from the floor of the adjoining ruined chapel. On one slab I observed the sculpturing of three Latin crosses, the longer arm in each case placed along the longer axis of the slab. The crosses are graduated in size; the middle one being of intermediate dimensions. On the right of the largest are two shallow cup-shaped depressions (fig. 1).

Farther to the north is a spring with carefully built stone-work showing signs of great age. This is the old water supply of St Fillan's Priory, and is still known as the "Priest's Well."

To the south-east of the well, on the top of a pronounced natural

gravelly ridge, is an inconspicuous circular mound, apparently much worn down. It has every appearance of being the remains of a cairn.

About 200 yards east of Kirkton Farm is a small rectangular enclosure encompassed by a ruined walling called the "Priest's Garden." One or two stunted orchard trees grow within this desolate little patch.

Some 50 yards east of this is a grassy ridge, on the top of which is a mound, which does not appear to be natural, with a long, undoubtedly artificial hollow in its centre.

On the south side of a small stream on the alluvial plain between it and the river Fillan, and about 150 yards south of St Fillan's Chapel, is a small circular cairn, probably a burial-place of the Bronze Age, to which my attention was drawn by Mr J. Paterson, J.P., of Kirkton Farm. The cairn seems to be intact except for a slight excavation near the top. Mr Paterson, who has been tenant since 1869, has never heard of any excavation of the cairn, but he mentions that while ploughing on the south margin some slabs were disclosed.

About 1 mile to the west is the farmhouse, once the manse, of Auchtertyre. Due south of this place are the remains of a circular cairn called the "Mòd a Cheann Drochaid," the centre of which seems to have been entirely robbed of its rubble stones, which were perhaps used in building the now demolished clachan which adjoins it. The stones were again probably used in the modern steadings and field walls. The Mòd consists of a circle of large boulders which were apparently set round the margin of the cairn, and many of these are still in position, their weight hindering their removal for building purposes. As the plan (fig. 2) shows, the circle is raised over practically all its circumference, the eastern portion particularly. Turf at this part has grown so thickly as to knit the stones into a homogeneous mass. The cairn resembles somewhat the Clava and many other Scottish sepultures.

It should be said that there are traces of an extension of the cairn due north for about 30 yards. It is not improbable here was once a Neolithic long cairn, and that the Bronze Age people disturbed the structure and erected a circular cairn at its south end. From the Mòd is to be seen a small circular cairn about 300 yards to the south-east.

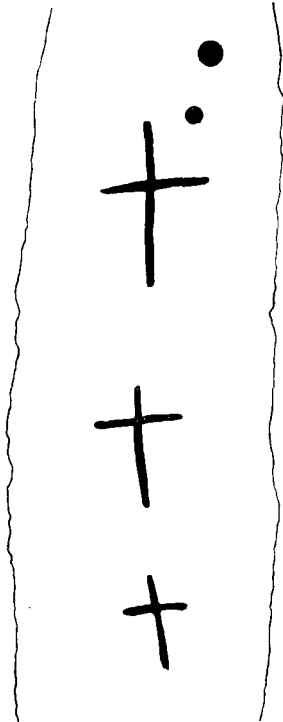


Fig. 1. Cross-slab at St Fillan's Chapel. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

It is in a field, and is a counterpart of that south of the Chapel of St Fillan. It has never been disturbed as far as can be ascertained.

Between the farms of Auchtertyre and Kirkton are traces of what are probably two cairns very much destroyed, but their precise formation is unrecognisable.

To the south-west of Auchtertyre and opposite Strathfillan Manse, at a bend in the River Fillan, is the Holy Pool, famous in connection

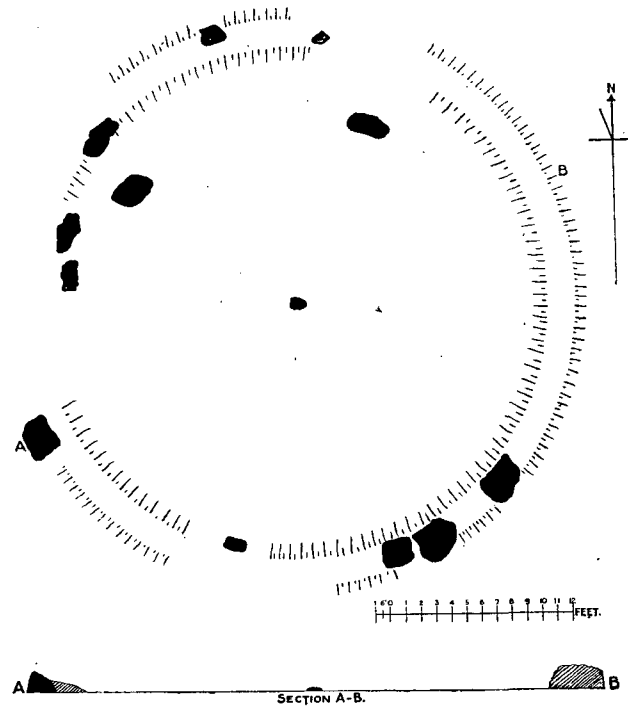


Fig. 2. Stone Circle, "Mòd a Cheann Drochaid," Strathfillan.

with the rites relating to St Fillan.¹ Insane persons, until the middle of last century, were bathed in the pool and thereafter taken to the chapel of St Fillan, where they were tied up all night to the font referred to. We are told that St Fillan's Bell (now in the National Museum, Edinburgh) was placed on the head of the patient for a few moments. The *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, 1843, vol. x. p. 1088, referring to these practices, states that the natives of the strath had long ceased to

¹ *Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, Parish of Killin; and Sir Daniel Wilson, LL.D., *Prehistoric Annals*, vol. ii. p. 278.

go to the Holy Pool, which still was visited by people who, in many instances, had travelled far. From an amusing paragraph in Mr Jas. M. Mackinlay's book, *Folklore of Scottish Lochs and Springs*, p. 126, we learn that "a farmer who had a mad bull thought that if the sacred water could heal human ills it would be efficacious also in the case of the lower animals. So he plunged the infuriated beast into the stream. What was the effect on the bull we do not know, but since then the virtue has departed from the water. . . . Strathfillan kept up its fame for over a thousand years."

Going back towards Crianlarich, one passes on the south side of the road, on the high ground after Euich Farm, a dolmen-like formation of rock. It is, however, undoubtedly of natural origin, caused by the displacement of sections of a huge schistose boulder, parts of which, becoming fractured, have slipped downwards and created the dolmen-like structure of two base stones with a large slab bridging them.

In her excellent little guide to Crianlarich, Mrs Place of Inverherive describes this rock as the "Sentry-box," for here was posted, in the days of clan feuds, a man who, from this eminence, could command a wide view of the strath and of the approach of an enemy.¹

Fifty yards to the north of it, between the road and the Callander and Oban Railway, is a small grassy circular plateau with roughly built periphery; its precise age and character are indeterminable until excavated.

About 400 yards farther to the north, and lying in a picturesque grassy hollow, is a circular setting of large, irregularly shaped prostrate slabs of native rock, 60 feet in diameter. It seems to belong to the older category of stone circles like Arbor Low in Derbyshire and Avebury in Wilts.

Again to the north is a natural knoll, the north side of which falls steeply towards the River Fillan. Quite close to the stream is an irregularly shaped and much fractured boulder, on the slanting east face of which five large cup-shaped hollows were detected.

To the east of the circle, and about 300 yards from it in a most conspicuous position on the top of a hill, is a quadrate boulder also of the native Highland schist. At a distance this landmark looks like a flat-roofed hut. On the vertical west face we discovered six large cup-marks.

¹ "Euich," Mrs Place tells me, is a corruption of Gaelic terms, meaning the "place of shouting," referring to the sentry's shouts through the aperture bridged over by the slab at the "Sentry-box." Such a call could, it appears, be heard over a wide area. The farm thus takes its name from this site.

SCULPTURED BOULDER NEAR HELENSBURGH.

The boulder is situated at an altitude of some 450 feet above sea-level, a hundred yards south-east of the gate on the "Highlandman's Road" (a track leading from Row to Glen Fruin), a short distance east of the upper part of the Ardencaple Wood and close to the Glennan Burn. It is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of the West Highland Railway, on the lands of Drumfad Farm, on the Luss estates of Sir Iain Colquhoun, Bart.

The boulder, presumably an ice-carried one, is irregularly quadrate in form, and is composed of very hard Highland schist; consequently many of the numerous sculpturings on its surface, which is about 5 feet from the ground, are well preserved. It is of such size—48 feet in girth—as to make it a most prominent landmark. It occupies a position from which an extensive view can be had to the east and south. The prospect to the north is shut out by rising ground known as the Mains Hill, while to the west it is obscured by the Ardencaple Wood.

It appears to have been the intention of a whilom holder of the land to break up the boulder for the purpose of using the stone so obtained in the building of the marches; to this end two holes were drilled in the horizontal surface, and it was rent into four unequal parts. The outline of the only drill-hole used may be clearly traced on the inside of three fractured sides. The destructive intention was apparently abandoned, as the boulder resisted too well. Doubtless, as the first attempt to break up the rock completely failed, it was deemed futile to make use of material which could only be obtained with great difficulty.

The date 1732 is deeply carved on the edge of the north side.

The shattering of the boulder has hindered a ready survey of the scheme of cups, rings, and other markings. Under the guidance of Mr Ludovic M'L. Mann this has been restored as shown (fig. 3).

SITE OF ST BRIDE'S CHAPEL, GLEN FRUIN, DUMBARTONSHIRE.

I visited the site of St Bride's Chapel last summer. No vestige of a building remains, but the site is apparently a large circular cairn now occupied by Glen Fruin School.

Near the door of the schoolhouse, within the garden and close to the road, is an erect slab 2 feet 8 inches in height, 16 inches wide and 9 inches thick. On it is sculptured a fine raised cross¹ of the Keills type in a fair

¹ *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, p. 31, No. 11.

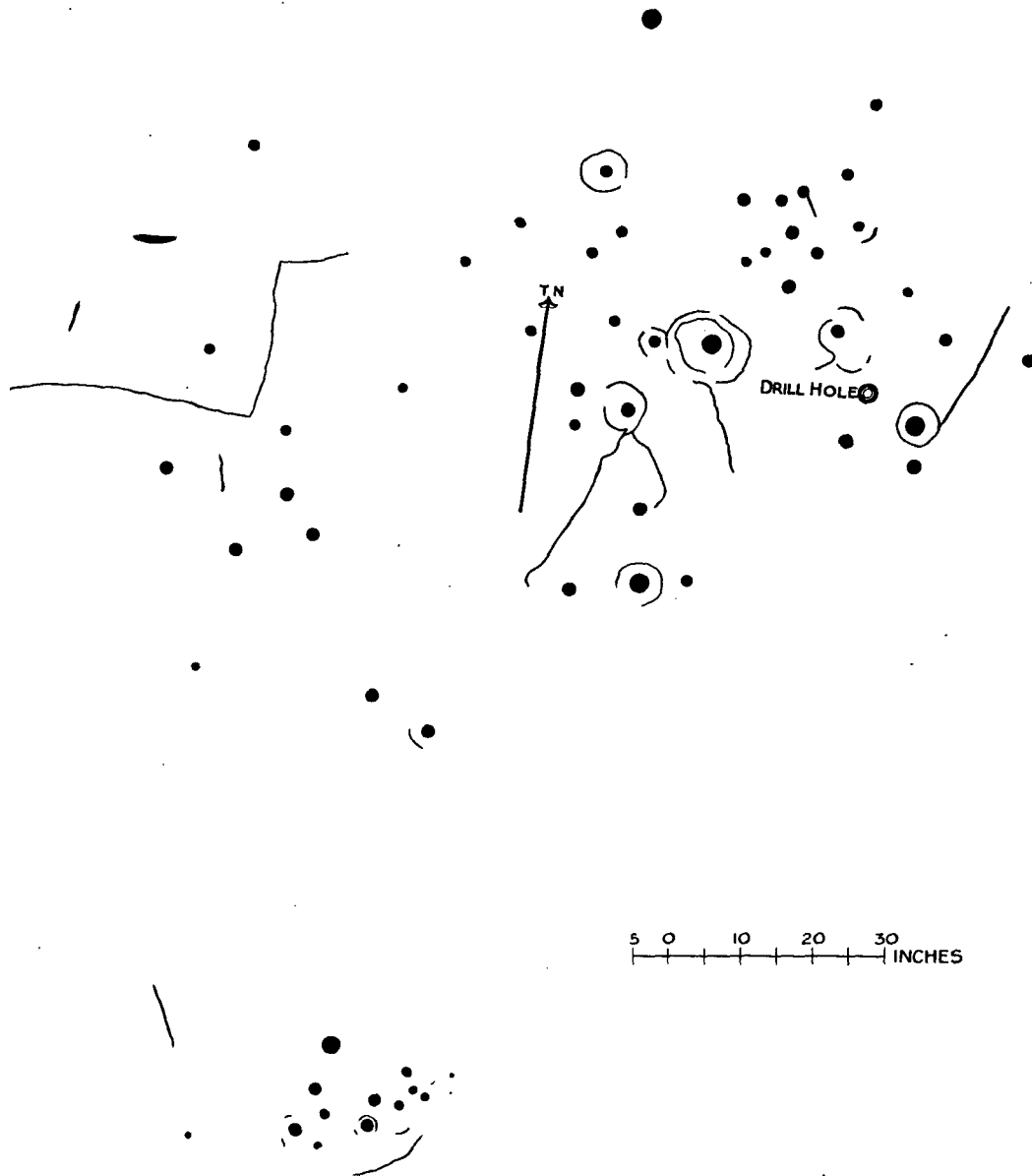


Fig. 3. Cup- and Ring-marked Boulder at Drumfad, near Helensburgh. ($\frac{1}{12}$.)

state of preservation. The edge of the stone possessed flat-band moulding, but save for the top and an inch or so at the side this has been destroyed.

I was told by Mrs Willan, the schoolmistress, that the stone was discovered some years ago when foundations were being dug for a washing-house.

The illustration (fig. 4) is reproduced from a rubbing.

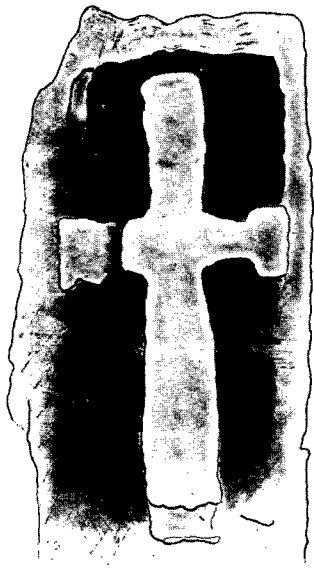


Fig. 4. Cross-slab at St Bride's Chapel. ($\frac{1}{12}$.)

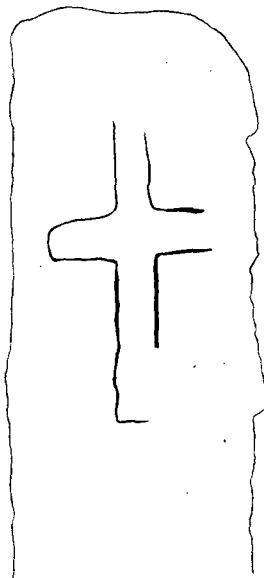


Fig. 5. Cross-slab at Ballivoulin. ($\frac{1}{12}$.)

INCISED LATIN CROSS ON ERECT SLAB AT BALLIVOULIN, GLEN FRUIN, DUMBARTONSHIRE.

Situated in a field a little to the south-east of Ballivoulin Farm, and about 50 yards from the road on the north side, is a small eminence, circular in shape and obviously artificial. Two stones, prominent objects on the south side of this knoll, attracted my attention.

The larger of the two is a hog-backed boulder, but no sculpturings could be detected thereon. The other, of schist, is most interesting, as it is an erect slab 2 feet 6 inches by 13 inches, and varying in thickness from 7 inches at the top to 9 inches at the base. A Latin cross is incised on the south face, and a rubbing was made of the sculpturing (fig. 5). Unfortunately, the stone is so badly weathered that the carving is not very clear. In fact, I fear that in the course of a few years it will have disappeared, as the surface is peeling off.