

III.

NOTICES DESCRIPTIVE OF THE LOCALITIES OF CERTAIN SCULPTURED
STONE MONUMENTS IN FORFARSHIRE, &c.,—MEIGLE, ESSIE, GLAMIS,
THORNTON, AND COSSINS. PART II. BY ANDREW JERVISE, Esq.,
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The earliest description of the Sculptured Stone Monuments at MEIGLE occurs in 1569. They are then described as at Newtyle, a village nearly two miles south of Meigle. This error had obviously arisen from a want of local knowledge on the part of the writer ; and, according to the story of the period, they

were set up by the Thane of Glamis, "Quhen that countrey wes all ane greit forrest."¹ Unfortunately, there is no means of knowing what amount of credit is due to the idea of those monuments having been erected by the Thane of Glamis. History not only proves that persons were so designed of Glamis from a remote period, but also shows that Meigle was an independent barony, held, from at least the time of William the Lion, by an old family who assumed the surname De Meigle,² and possessed the same till the time of Robert III., when they were succeeded by the Earl of Crawford.³ The saint to whom the kirk of Meigle was dedicated is unknown; but it belonged to the diocese of Dunkeld; and Kirkhill (now Belmont), was a grange or residence of the bishops, some of whom died there, and were buried at the parish church. The ancient fraternity of Knights Templars had considerable interest in this quarter, and the kirk and kirkyard, in which the sculptured monuments are situated, is within the boundary of the old Temple lands. From this fact, and because the monuments bear the figure of the cross, it has been suggested that they were raised in memory of certain knights who died at Meigle after their return from the Crusades. Whether the De Meigles—the ancient proprietors of the barony—were engaged in the holy wars, history bears no record; and their arms, "A chevron between three boars' heads erased,"⁴ throws no light on that subject.

I cannot help thinking that, at an after period, some key will be discovered relating to the remote ecclesiastical and proprietary history of this locality, which may throw light upon the origin of these remarkable monuments, for in no other part of Scotland are those remains more numerous, or their figures more curious, than at Meigle.⁵ Two of the stones in the churchyard are carved

¹ Ext. Varia e. Cron. Sco.

² Denmylne MS.

³ Robertson's Index, p. 142.

⁴ Laing's Scottish Seals, p. 99.

⁵ Since this paper was in type, I have to add the following particulars regarding the discovery of *four* other Sculptured Stone Monuments at Meigle, of which, unlike most of those in the kirkyard, no record or tradition is known to exist. These were only brought to light in the month of February last (1858), while the old corn-kiln of Temple Ha' was being pulled down to make way for a new building. The kiln stood about a hundred yards north of the burial ground, and the carved stones were chiefly got in the foundations of it. They are all in a state of good preservation. The largest of the number, which is broken in two near the foot, contains figures of horsemen, dogs, birds, and other animals, together with the so-called sceptre ornament. It is 5 feet 7 inches high, varying in breadth from 3 feet at the bottom to nearly 2 feet at the top, and 8 inches thick. Another, bearing in chief a figure, somewhat resembling a double-bodied centaur, and a variety of other grotesque ornaments scattered over the rest of the stone, is about 3 feet high, 5 inches thick, and 20 inches broad. A third, cut out of a bluish sort of stone, is about 3 feet 4 inches high, 5 inches thick, and 18 inches broad. The carvings on this monument, with the exception of a small portion of

on both sides ; and one of them, inserted into a large plinth or foot stone, has tenons on the margin, for the purpose of joining it to some other object. Two other sculptured stones lie upon a rude piece of modern masonry ; one of them is nearly square, tapers slightly towards the end, and had perhaps stood in the form of a pyramid. The other stone, which lies below that just mentioned, loaded with carvings of "horsmen, fuitmen, and doggis, halkis, and serpentis," is, in its mutilated state, about sixteen inches shorter than that with "ane goddes in ane cairt, and twa hors drawand hir;" but the original size of this fragment cannot be ascertained. According to the description of 1569, it formed the centre of one of the monuments, though, in the old notice of it, it is placed between the first-mentioned stone and another part bearing "ane cors," and of which the fragments of a beautifully interlaced cross, preserved within the church, are perhaps the remains. The stone with the tenons, is evidently that described by the writer just quoted, as being on the west side of the one which has "ane cors curioslie gravit upon it;" and if this last-named stone occupies the same position as it did in 1569, the site of the chief cross, as it may be termed, of which the pieces just noticed alone remain, may be ascertained with some

one of the corners, which is broken off and lost, are almost as clear and distinct as the day the sculptor finished the work. One side bears a beautifully interlaced cross, about two feet long, with strangely-shaped fowls and other animals in the spaces above and below the shafts of the cross. The other side bears a mounted horseman, and on one of the margins are the elephant and mirror-looking figures, which prevail so much on these monuments. This cross is sculptured in bold relief, and in some points resembles the larger obelisk at Cossins.

The fourth and last of these relics is of a different type from anything of the sort hitherto found in the same locality. It seems to be of the class of funereal monuments known by the name of coffin-lids, and is shaped pretty much like a fisherman's boat reversed. The boldly sculptured figure of a serpent, with the snout projecting nearly an inch over the end of the stone, forms the keel, if it may be so termed, and the tail of the animal terminates in a square shield charged varyways (as old heraldic writers would say) with objects pretty much resembling the heraldic device called *flasques* or *flanches*, a figure which, according to Guillum, "is given for virtue and learning, and especially for services in an assemblage." Both sides of the stone are carved (the third, or that side on which the stone rests, being flat and unadorned) with three rows of *flanches* (?) gradually diminishing towards the end, and which, at a little distance, convey the idea of *vertebræ*. This stone is 6 feet 3 inches long, 20 inches high at the head or upper end, and tapers abruptly towards the foot, where it is only about 4 inches deep. Perhaps, as this stone has such a striking resemblance to the general appearance of a boat, it may be conjectured, in the absence of better evidence, that it had covered the grave or coffin of some of the more eminent of our early navigators, whose name and deeds have long since ceased to be remembered, and who had either been buried at, or had some considerable interest in the neighbourhood of Meigle. I learn from Mr Stuart that drawings of these monuments will be given in a supplement to "The Sculptured Stones of Scotland." (See the Spalding Club volume of the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," Plates lxxii.-lxxvii.)

exactness. The most westerly of the stones in the churchyard is unnoticed by the writer of the note of 1569, but, from the rudeness of its carving, it ought, perhaps, to be considered the most ancient of the whole.¹

During the autumn of 1855, in presence of Dr Wise and Mr Robert Chambers of Edinburgh, I investigated the neighbourhood of two of these monuments, viz., the stone with the tenons, and that bearing the figure of the transfixt serpent, it being thought unnecessary to meddle with the others, from the fact of their having been placed in recent times on the site of the old burial vault of the lairds of Drumkilbo. I was not aware at the time that the first-named stone had been previously searched, but was lately informed, on good authority, that in 1805, when the road was made on the north side of the churchyard, which was then uninclosed, at least two rude stone coffins, containing bones, were got within a few feet to the north of the monument, and the "curious stane," with "ane goddess in ane cairt" (now preserved within the church), was then found at the bottom of it. I found nothing of any consequence at the foot of the larger stone, or that with the tenons; but on the south side of the other, after digging to the depth of about 12 inches, pieces of rude flag stones were got, with decayed bones underneath. On removing these, two or three other slabs were got immediately below, and a still greater quantity of human remains, while the fibres of the root of an old ash tree grew through the hollow part of one of the thigh bones. Other fragments of bones and old stone slabs were also found about a foot farther to the west; but that particular point had the appearance of having been searched before. On excavating still farther to the westward of the same stone, and about 2½ feet below the surface, a skeleton was found lying at full length, measuring 6 feet 3 inches from the top of the cranium to the extremity of the tibia. In this case there was no stone coffin or other protection over the body, excepting that the head and feet were respectively guarded by two small flag stones, which were placed in an angular position. The head was slightly raised above the level of the body, it being laid upon a cushion of earth, and lay towards the west; the feet were directly under the sculptured monument, and the body was stretched on the original soil. When first discovered, the skull and larger bones seemed pretty entire; but on the earth being removed, they went to pieces.

Neither urns nor warlike weapons were got on this occasion; and, with the exception of a fine bronze armilla, of the serpentine pattern, which was found some time ago upon the Temple lands of Meigle, I am not aware that any old relics of importance have been got in the district. It weighs 1 pound 12½ ounces, and is now in the possession of Mr Dickson, distributor of stamps at Kirriemuir.

¹ "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," Plate lxxiii.

There are several tumuli in the neighbourhood of the churchyard of Meigle; particularly that of *Belliduff*, within the policies of Belmont. Local tradition asserts that Macbeth was there slain and buried;¹ and two granite blocks in different parts of the enclosures, one of which stands on end, and is calculated to be at least 20 tons weight, are said, by the same authority, to be connected with the wars of Macbeth and Macduff. It would be needless to inquire into the truth of these stories; they had no doubt originated from the name of the tumuli, *Belliduff*, which Mr Chambers suggested might rather be a corruption of *Belidubh*, or "the black town." There is no doubt, however, but that tumulus was a place of sepulture; for, at the same time, as the investigations above alluded to were made at the monuments in Meigle churchyard, Dr Wise had that mound searched, and in the centre, about 2 feet below the surface, an ancient stone coffin was discovered. This coffin lay north-west by south-west, was about 3 feet 3 inches long, 2 feet broad, 15 inches deep, and composed of rude stone slabs, with the bare soil for a bottom. No bones were found in it; but, from a deposit of variously-sized stones which were got in the trench made by the workmen, I am inclined to suppose that the grave, as in many cases that have come under my observation, is also surrounded by a mass of stones and earth.

Belliduff, as well as the largest of the two monoliths in the policies of Belmont, are said to have been before searched; but I am not aware that any particulars are known of that search. It is certain that Dr Wise had excavations made at *Seward's Stone*, as the lesser monolith is called, but found nothing.

Macbeth's stone stands on the west side of a plain, about 200 feet above the level of the sea, and commands a fine view of a great part of the valley of Strathmore, including a peep of the famous hill of Dunsinnan. It is situated nearly equi-distant between Glamis and Cupar-Angus, at the latter of which places the Romans had a large encampment; and upon a part of that old Roman site Malcolm IV. founded the abbey of Cupar. But the Romans had a station in the very vicinity of Meigle, at the junction of the rivers Dean and Isla, at a place still known by the significant name of *Caer-Dean*.² Traces of this camp are now slight; but previous to the change of the track of the highway and other improvements, goodly portions of the walls and trenches were visible, and several pieces of Roman potteryware, brass ornaments of horse furniture, and other relics were got on its site. This temporary station or camp lay in the track of the Romans, *en route* from south to north, and part of the Roman way, referred to by General Roy, is still traceable in the neighbouring parish of Airlie, near a place called Auchendorie. About two miles to the westward, upon the farm

¹ Old Stat. Aect., vol. i., p. 505.

² Roy's Military Antiquities, p. 108.

of Powmire, there is a mound, which is said to have been considerably larger at one time, still known as "The Camp." It has never been searched; but, so far as known, it is composed of a mixture of stones and earth; and to the westward, in the adjoining field, is the "Stannin' Stane" of Lunross. I am informed that the locality of this stone was investigated some years ago, and that a circle of common land stones was found near its base, but no trace of sepulchral or any other remains.

But to return. There is another military station, at Castleton of Essie, about two miles south-east of the camp of Caer-Dean. This camp, though small, is in excellent preservation, the dykes and ditches being almost entire; and, till about the beginning of this century, another and larger camp stood upon the adjoining property of Ingliston, written of old *Englishtoun*. In consequence of the peculiarity of that name, and from some coins of Edward I. having been found within the camp at Castleton, the late Dr Playfair supposes that both these old military forts had been occupied by the army of that king.¹ More lately a spear-head of the Roman sort (?) was got at the latter place; hence it is probable that both these camps were originally constructed by the Romans, although their route lay about a mile to the northward, and had been afterwards occupied by the English.

Near the site of those camps, close to the old Kirkyard of ESSIE, stands one of the most singular of the sculptured monumental stones.² Nothing is known of its original position, it having been found in the adjoining rivulet, and placed where it now stands within these fifty years. The district of Essie is meagre in historical and traditionary associations; and although the chartularies bear no mention of a chapel having been in connection with the church, there was a chapel at Balgownie in old times inscribed to the Virgin.

Essie and the adjoining parish of Nevay were long ago united. Both old churches are roofless and in ruins, a new one having been built in a different part of the parish. The old family of Lamy, long proprietors of the lands of Dunkenny, near the kirk of Essie, had their burial-place within that church; while the old lairds of Nevay were interred at Nevay, or Kirkinch, as it is frequently called, and the remains of a tombstone are still there, which bore this quaint motto—"Heir lye the Tyries of Navy, honest men and braif fallows."

About $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of the old kirk of Essie stands the kirk, castle, and village of GLAMIS. That church was not only dedicated to St Fergus, who was much revered in many parts of Scotland, but his ashes repose there, and a spring

¹ Old Stat. Acct., vol. xvi., p. 219.

² "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," Plate xc.

well near the church retains his name. At the door of the manse of Glamis stands the well-known obelisk, called "Malcolm's gravestone"¹—so named from the story of Malcolm II. having fallen there.² All history agrees that he fell somewhere in the neighbourhood of Glamis;—tradition says he was slain within the castle; and other two sculptured monuments in the same parish—at Thornton and Cossins—are associated with the same tragedy.

During last autumn, I had also excavations made at the monument called "Malcolm's gravestone," in presence of the Rev. Dr Tannach of Glamis, and the Rev. Mr Haldane of Kingoldrum, but unfortunately found nothing of any moment. The stone is sunk about 4 feet into the ground, and near the base, on the west side, are twenty-one circular holes, each about 2 inches diameter, and 1 inch deep. These are scattered over that part of the stone which is sunk into the ground, and without any apparent purpose.

The THORNTON obelisk stands at a place of that name, on the north-east slope of the Hunter's Hill of Glamis, close to an old public road.³ This property of Thornton, like that in the Mearns, is ancient, and gave name to a family who designed themselves "Thornton of that Ilk," and who flourished in considerable repute till within these 200 years. A stone bearing a shield, charged with a fess, and three hearts in chief (the figure in base being effaced), with initials P. T : A. L., and date 1619, is preserved at the site of the old mansion-house of Thornton. These refer apparently to Patrick Thornton and his wife, who was, perhaps, a daughter of some collateral branch of the Lyons of Glamis. The lands of Thornton were long since acquired by the Lords of Glamis, and the only notice in the Retours of the family of Thornton being possessed of them is the significant intimation that John Thornton was served heir to his father, Patrick Thornton, "de eodem" (the same party, in all probability, to whom the above initials refer), in these and adjoining lands, April 24, 1640.⁴

There is no tradition, either of the family of Thornton, or of the sculptured obelisk, in the immediate vicinity of which I made an unsuccessful search during last summer. I am told, however, that to the southward of the stone, on the farm of Knockenny, several ancient tumuli were lately found, containing coffins, with bones and urns.

About a mile north of Thornton stands the fine sculptured monument of Cossins.⁵ It is called *St Airland*, or *St Arland's Stone*, but of that saint nothing is known. Cossins is a place of considerable antiquity, and also gave name to a

¹ "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," Plate lxxxiv.

² *Ibid.*, Plate lxxxiii.

³ *Ibid.*, Plate lxxxiii.

⁴ *Inq. Spec.*, Forfar, No. 254.

⁵ "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," Plate lxxxv.

family who long designed themselves Cossins "of that Ilk," and were allied by marriage to the Lyons of Glamis.

The monument is situated about half a mile south-east of the site of the old castle of Cossins, on the extreme point of a terrace or high ground in the valley of Strathmore, overlooking an extensive marshy plain, and commanding a fine view of the vitrified hill-fort of Finhaven. Betwixt this stone and Finhaven is the loch of Forfar, in which, according to Boece, the assassins of King Malcolm perished, in making their escape from Glamis.¹

It has long been surmised, that this monument marked the burial-place of some person of note, but nothing certain was known of the fact, till during the month of September 1855, when, with a view of ascertaining the purpose of its erection, I had a particular search made in its neighbourhood. Operations were begun by digging a trench on the east side of the stone; but nothing being found there, a south-westerly course was taken, when the remains of a skeleton were got in a state of considerable decay. Clearing more of the earth away in the same direction, to the depth of from 10 to 15 inches, a quantity of thin red sandstone flags, irregular in position and size, presented themselves, which proved to be a cluster of five stone coffins, each containing human remains, to a greater or lesser extent. As the bodies had decayed, the pressure of the earth had forced the stones into an oblique shape, forming a sort of triangle. On removing the most easterly of the coffins, many pieces of the skull, arm, and thigh-bones were found, and portions of the vertebræ. The contents of this coffin were much decayed, and the coffin itself, which did not appear ever to have had ends, was about 3 feet long. The two which were next explored showed much the same result, only the remains in these were in a more perfect state. Only a small portion of the skull was found in the one; in the other it lay in profile, with the face towards the north, into which posture it had perhaps been forced by the top of the coffin falling obliquely down upon it. The skull in the last-named coffin was completely embedded in earth, and while lying in the ground it seemed to be pretty entire; but on the earth being removed it fell to pieces, and no part of the left side could be found. In this coffin, more distinctly than in the other two, the body seemed to have been doubled up over by the knees, for the leg bones lay under those of the thigh. The skull or head had the appearance of having been violently thrust down upon the breast, but the clavicles, vertebræ, and ribs were gone. Perhaps the fourth and fifth of these graves were made at a subsequent period to the others (at least the coffins and bones were more entire than in the rest), and the skull might then have been shifted into the position in which it was found.

¹ *Ut sup.*, p. 65.

One of the last discovered was the largest grave, and the bones found in it were in a better state of preservation than any of the rest. The skull in that case lay in the posture it had been originally placed, with the front upwards. It was quite filled with earth, and, when attempted to be removed, went to pieces. The following brief particulars regarding the bones found in this grave, which I noted at the time of the discovery, may be interesting:—

The upper and also the back parts of the skull were entire. The upper and lower jaws were pretty complete, with the teeth in both cases, particularly those of the right side—the rest of the teeth fell out on being taken from amongst the earth, and the lower jaw bone broke in several pieces. The bones of the left arm were entire, except a small portion of the lower extremity of the ulna. The humerus was 12 inches long; the radius $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the ulna, exclusive of the missing part, 10 inches. The leg bones were also found in this case lying underneath those of the thigh. The fore-arm was doubled up upon the humerus; and the small bones of the hand were lying beside the skull, as if the hands had been laid by the sides of the head. Two of the spinal vertebræ measured $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$; the ilium was 8 inches at deepest, and the socket for thigh-bone 2 by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches; thigh-bone, $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches long; tibia, 3 inches across at broadest part of the head; a metacarpal bone was $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and the largest of the finger bones, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long:—these, with a portion of the sacrum, were the principal parts found in the coffin.

In the last discovered coffin, which was the most entire (the lid being in its original position) the remains were very much decayed; still, it was clear that the same mode of burial had been observed as in that immediately before described; and some of the teeth, a part of a humerus, and a cervical vertebræ, were the only parts that could be picked up. This cist was rather nearer the surface than the rest, and quite filled with earth, which was so mixed with decayed bones, that it had all the appearance of earth mixed with marl.

The soil in which these interesting traces were found is a thin sandy loam, and formed the bottom of the cists. The sides and lids were of thin red sandstone flags, rude and undressed, varying in thickness from 1 to 3 inches—from 9 inches to a foot in height, and from 1 to 2 feet long, two or more stones being used for each side and top, with the exception of the south side and top of the two last discovered, which were respectively one stone, and about $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length.

The bodies had been laid with their heads towards the west, and their feet towards the east. All the coffins were found within a circle of twelve feet from the monument, lying east and west, but not quite in a line. The first three were about 15 inches below the surface, the other two barely 19 inches. The monu-

ment itself is from 18 to 24 inches into the ground, and has no pedestal or footstone.

This fine obelisk is fully two miles north-east of the castle of Glamis, on the opposite side of the river Dean; and Cossins having been held by the old family "of that Ilk," even in the days of the Thaners of Glamis, it is probable that the sepulchral remains had belonged to the old barons of Cossins. Perhaps since that stone bears carvings of mounted horsemen and hounds, and a boat, carrying six persons,—these emblems may be considered as indicative of the tastes of those who were interred beside it; or, it may be, that the rare figure of the boat (for it is the only one yet noticed on these monuments) relates to the fate of five of the persons therein represented, who may have accidentally perished while employed in fishing in the adjoining lake.