

III.

NOTICES OF THE LOCALITIES OF THE SCULPTURED STONE MONUMENTS
 AT ST VIGEANS, INCHBRAYOCH, PITMUIES, AND MENMUIR, IN ANGUS,
 AND OF FORDOUN IN THE MEARNS. PART IV. BY A. JERVISE, Esq.,
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The church of ST VIGEANS is situated about eight miles N.E. of the Cross of Camus, noticed in the previous paper, and within a mile of the German Ocean. According to Hector Boece, St Vigean flourished towards the close of the tenth century, and his cell is said to have been at Grange of Conon, about three miles N.W. of the parish kirk, where a spring well, in a romantic grove, still retains his name. The writer of the old statistical account of the parish says, that vestiges of St Vigeans' Chapel still remain, measuring 28 feet in length by 15 feet in breadth.¹ This, however, could scarcely have been, and the foundations referred to were most probably those of one of the many chapels which were scattered throughout this large parish in early times, and suppressed at the Reformation. The remains of a so-called Druidical circle is near that spot. The parish kirk of St Vigeans, within which there was an altar to St Sebastian,² is built upon the summit of a conical mound, by the side of the river Brothoc. The site is natural, and the church is in the Romanesque style of architecture, with nave, arches, and side aisles; and tradition says it was built much about the same time as the Abbey of Arbroath. In the vault underneath lie the ashes of Sir Peter Young, who was joint almoner and teacher with Buchanan to King James VI., and proprietor of the old property of Seaton, near Arbroath.

One of the sculptured monuments here, or rather the remains of it, is one of the very few in Scotland which bears an inscription.³ It has been variously interpreted, and according to Mr Skene, ought to be read thus:—"Aroiten ire Veret ett Forcur," *i.e.*, Prayers for Veret and Ferchair.⁴ All the monuments were got on the mound upon which the church stands; a fact which perhaps shows that the site had been a place of note even in Celtic times. Perhaps the less enigmatical of the strange groups with which they are embellished may have had reference to incidents in the lives of the ancient people to whom they were raised, of whom also, and of the country in general, the personal costumes, and other particulars, may be descriptive.

¹ Vol. xii., p. 165.

² Sculptured Stone, &c., Plates 69, 70.

³ Reg. Nig. de Aberb., p. 367.

⁴ Proceed. So. of Antiq., vol. i., p. 82.

The church of INCHBRAYOCH, about twelve miles N.E. of St Vigeans, and in the immediate vicinity of the town of Montrose, stood upon an island in the middle of the South Esk, near its fall into the German Ocean. It was inaccessible in old times, except by boats, and at neap tides. St Braoch, patron of the kirk, gave name to the district, and in 1328, in witnessing a charter regarding the adjoining lands of Rossy, John de Cadiou designs himself "Rector Insule Sancti Braochi."¹ Braoch had probably been a provincial saint, most likely a recluse or hermit, of whom there appears to have been many in Angus in old times, of whose history all trace has been lost. According to Wodrow, the kirk was in ruins in the year 1573,² and perhaps it had been removed to near the present site about, or soon after, that date; but it is much more certain that the name of "Craig," by which the parish is now known, is of comparatively recent origin, and that the district was known as *Inchbrayoch* down at least to 1664.³ Indeed, Mr Ochterlony of Guynd, who wrote some twenty years later, says, "the whole parish is designed from the island."⁴

As now constituted, Craig is composed of the old ecclesiastical districts of Inchbrayoch, to which two chapels were attached, and Duninald. Duninald and St Skeoch, although the latter is not mentioned in the ancient *taxatio*, appear to have been one and the same place, and the tithes belonged to the priory of Rostinoth;⁵ while the church had a singularly romantic site upon a cliff which overhangs the sea, on the S.W. side of the parish. The two chapels referred to as dependent upon Inchbrayoch are said to have borne the names of St Mary and St Fergus.⁶ Of the latter the name only exists; but the locality of the chapel of the Virgin is preserved, both by a spring-well and a meal-mill, which bear the significant names of *Mary*, and also by a private burial-place of the families of Scott and Renny, late proprietors of Usan. The chapel stood by the sea shore, about half way between the villages of Ferryden and Usan, and at very high tides, when the sea encroaches upon the site, quantities of human bones are frequently exposed, which perhaps shows that at one time the chapel had been surrounded by a place of common burial. It may be added, that "the rock of St Skeoch," and the kirkyard of Inchbrayoch, are the only two places in the parish now used for interment.

The old proprietary history, and the extent of the lands of Inchbrayoch, are not very clear; but, to judge from the reputed localities of the chapels of St Fergus and St Mary, it had at least included the lands of Usan and Rossy. If

¹ Reg. Vet. de Aberb., p. 339.

² Brechin Presbytery Records, MS.

³ Inq., Spec., Forfar, Nos. 60, 603.

Reg. Vet. de Aberbrothoc, p. 239; Ainslie's Map of Forfarshire.

⁴ Biog. Collections, Erskine, p. 60.

⁵ Spottiswood Miscell., vol. i., p. 339.

so, it may be added, that the oldest recorded proprietors of these places were a Norman family of the name of Malherb, who possessed them in the time of William the Lion, and by whom they were given to vassals, who, as was the custom of the period, assumed their surname from the lands. The De Rossys (for such was their name) long flourished in the district, and appear to have been succeeded in the Usan portion somewhere about the year 1260 by the ancient family of Leighton, who survived till past 1619.¹ In the most ancient charters of Usan, the name is written *Hulysham*; afterwards it was converted into the classical form of *Ulysseshaven* (most frequently written *Ulishaven*), and more lately it has been abbreviated into *Usan*. Perhaps in the ancient spelling, however, the true etymology is to be found from the facts, that the coast abounds in creeks and openings, and because the Gaelic word, *huil*, or *kyle*, means "an opening among rocks or cliffs," and the Saxon word *ham*, "a house, home, or place of refuge."

It is curious to notice, that the singularly sculptured stone monument, which was accidentally found in the kirkyard of *Inchbrayoch* in 1849,² though set up, time out of memory, as a common grave-stone, had been previously unnoticed and uncared for. In fact, it had become identified with the family and burial-ground of a Ferryden fisherman, whose descendants laid claim to it as their private property, upon the ground of its having been erected by one of their immediate progenitors. Since 1849 it has been removed from the graveyard to the parish church of *Craig*.³

Although a slight digression from the point more immediately under notice, it may be interesting to know, that in the year 1832, when the old steeple of the parish church of *Montrose* was taken down, to make way for the present elegant fabric, a human skeleton, nearly entire, was found in the bottom. It lay at full length, was protected by rude stone slabs, and a clay urn was found at each side of the head and feet. These were of superior manufacture, and each of the four sides was perforated by a rudely shaped hole, little more than an inch square. One of these urns, here represented, is from the specimen preserved in the *Montrose*



¹ Reg. Vet. de. Aberb., p. 337; Miscell. Aldbar., MS., p. 306; Inq. Spec., Forfar., 118-22.

² Sculptured Stone Monuments, Plate 68.

³ There was another cross at *Inchbrayoch*, the upper portion of which was lately found while digging a grave. One side of the fragment contains a mounted horseman, &c., the other side bears two winged figures, and other ornaments. It is also at the kirk of *Craig*.

Museum, and measures about 4 inches in height, 5 inches across at the broadest part, and 3 inches at the mouth. I am not aware that urns of the same sort have before been found in Forfarshire; and, perhaps, the *four* urns in one coffin, and also the manner of their perforation, are unique features in the style and use of old cinerary vessels.

The obelisk at PITMUIES, near the Guthrie Junction of the Aberdeen and Forfar Railway, is about half a mile south of the parish kirk of Guthrie. It is also within a mile and a-half of the hill of Dunbarrow, which is mentioned in the first of these papers as a reputed site of the imprisonment of Guinora, the faithless queen of Prince Arthur;¹ but the figures engraved upon this stone, so far as can now be discovered, are of a different character from those upon the monuments at Dunnichen and Meikle.²

Although in near proximity to the kirk of Guthrie, which, along with its patronages, were granted by William the Lion to the Abbey of Arbroath, and which was afterwards made a prebend of the Cathedral of Brechin,³ no connection is traceable between the ancient history of that place and this monument. Tradition says that it marks the route of the Danes through Angus, when on their way from Barry to Aberlemno, where, history says, they were totally defeated; and the more credulous affirm, that the stone and the locality were named *Pit-muies*, in consequence of a Danish general of that name having been killed and buried there who bore the name of "Muies." *Pitmagh*, in Gaelic, of which Pitmuies *may* be a corruption, signifies "hollow meadow ground," and nothing could better describe the physical appearance of the place. The stone at one time formed a foot-bridge over an adjoining burn, but nothing is known of its original position.

The kirk of MENMUIR, situated upon the south side of the Grampians, was in the diocese of Dunkeld, and dedicated to St Aidan.

The residence which Alexander III. had in this parish perhaps stood upon a rising ground south-east of the kirk, and the well-known hill-fort of Caterthun is within two miles of it. A number of barrows, having an artificial *look*, is on the low ground south of the church, but these have not been investigated. In the Cottown Muir, immediately adjoining, a stone coffin was some time ago found in a dry part of the moss. It contained human bones, and a flint arrow-head as large as a man's hand, and a piece of the wooden hilt of the arrow or

¹ Ut sup., p. 188.

² Sculptured Stone Monuments, Plates 72-92.

³ The kirk was dedicated to the Holy Virgin.—"Land of the Lindsays," 295.

spear was fixed firmly into it. A thin bronze hatchet was also got near the same place.

In the valley to the south, betwixt the parish kirk of Menmuir and Craigend of Careston, an immense quantity of tumuli have from time to time been opened in the course of agricultural operations. The more important of these have been found upon the banks of the Cruick, in the vicinity of the moss of Findowrie, and the Killievair Stone. With the exception of the battle, which is recorded to have taken place at Stracathro, in A.D. 1130, betwixt David I. and Angus Earl of Moray, when the latter was himself killed, and his forces routed,¹ there is no evidence of any other warlike transaction having occurred in the same quarter until the wars of the Marquis of Montrose.

Findowrie, and the Killievair Stone, are about six miles due west of Stracathro. It is not therefore improbable but the most of the tumuli in the vicinity of that stone may be coeval with the battle of 1130; indeed the prefix *Kil* rather favours the idea of the place having been a cemetery.² It is only a few years since three or four stone coffins were found in the immediate vicinity of Killievair; and it ought to be noticed, that this is only one of a number of stones now remaining which, it is said, formed at one time a complete circle. About fifty years ago, a coffin, constructed of rude slabs, and containing an urn, was got quite close to that circle. An old popular rhyme says, that

“Tween the Blawart Lap and Killievair stanes
There lie many bluidy banes;”

and about four years ago, near the “Blawart Lap” (fully a mile N. of the Killievair Stone), an interesting discovery of ancient remains was made upon the Law or Gallowshill of Balrownie. Upon digging into that mound, a dyke, or circle of loose stones, gathered apparently from the adjacent muir, was ranged around the bottom. The circle, 120 feet in circumference, was filled with earth brought from the banks of the Cruick water, and was raised about 6 feet above the surrounding level. It contained a stone coffin, the sides of which were constructed of two large slate or pavement stones; a flag-stone, rounded at one side, lay at the head, and the whole was covered by a heavy slab of whinstone. The coffin contained mould mixed with small pieces of bones, among which was part of a human skull. The head had been laid exactly in the centre of the mound, and the body lay due south.

Scarcely a mile east of the Law of Balrownie, and upon the same side of the Cruick, various other traces of ancient sepulture were found so late as the month of November 1855, while gravel was being taken from an uncultivated hillock

¹ Hailes's Annals, i., p. 76.

² Land of the Lindsays, 262.

upon the farm of Bankhead. Upon that occasion two graves were found, one of which contained a coarse clay urn, of which I then forwarded some fragments to the Society's Museum, which I received from the proprietor, Mr Carnegie Arbuthnott, of Balmamoon. These graves were about 9 feet apart, and nearly 2 feet below the surface. The coffins, which were about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and 18 inches broad, were constructed of rough slabs of red sandstone. Only some pieces of charred wood were got about the grave which contained the urn, and bits of bones, much decayed, were found in the other.

These remains were found within the boundary of the ancient forest of Kilgary, in which stood a hermitage, and a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin.¹ Peter de Spalding, who betrayed Berwick into the hands of the Scots, had the keepership of that forset, and several lands in the same neighbourhood, from Robert the Bruce, as a reward for that service. It appears, however, that Spalding was not allowed to enjoy those privileges for any great length of time; for the Scots, the very people whom he had but shortly before served, had him put to death—facts which are thus briefly narrated in *Hardyng's Chronicle* (p. 308):—

“ The castell then of Berwyke and the towne,
Kynge Robert gatte, after stronge and greate defence,
By treaty with [peace Spaldyng] and treason,
The Wednesdye before Easter's reuerence,
When that traitour, without long suspence,
Betrayed the towne, and into Scotland went :
By Scottes slain, as to a traytour appent.”

Whether Spalding was assassinated in the forest of Kilgary, or where, is unrecorded, and, so far as known, no cairn or hillock in the locality preserves his name. Still, it is certain that towards the end of last century, when the “Blue Cairn” (which was within the boundary of that forest) was opened, it was found to contain a rudely constructed stone coffin, in which there was an urn of baked clay. At another period, not far from the same spot, a gold cup is said to have been found, and a wily chapman having bought it for old brass from the ignorant finder, the foundation of a fortune was laid, which the chapman's descendants enjoy at the present time.

The forest and chapel of Kilgary were named from a burn which rises out of the bogs or marshes of the hill of Lundie, east of Brown Caterthun; and in a line with that burn, stretching from the West Water on the north, to the site of the old chapel of Kilgary on the south, are the remains of a strong earthen

¹ Till within these few years the name of Kilgary was quite unknown in the district. Mr C. Arbuthnott, however, has lately given the name to a farm which is in course of being made out of a part of the ancient forest.

dyke or fence, from 6 to 10 feet high, and about 15 feet broad at the base. Tradition says that this fence stretched continuously from hill to sea; but as the estate of Dunlappie was a separate property during the most remote periods of our history, it is probable that the dyke formed merely the boundary betwixt the forest of Kilgary and the lordship of Dunlappie. It is still the march between Menmuir and Dunlappie, which last was of old a separate parish, now united to Stracathro.

It can scarcely be supposed that the two sculptured stones at the parish kirk of Menmuir¹ could have belonged at any time to the chapel of Kilgary; nor is there anything to identify them either with the slaughter of Spalding, or with the battle of 1130. It is well known, that from earliest date down to the days of King Robert the Bruce, the lands of Menmuir were governed by thanes, or king's stewards; and we have already seen that Alexander III. had a residence there—facts, however, which throw no light upon the origin of these sculptures.

The church of FORDOUN, where St Palladius long ministered, died, and was buried, is a midland parish in the county of Kincardine. The kirk is romantically situated upon the eastern slope of the hill of Strathfinla, overhanging the mountain stream of the Luther. Within the chapel of St Palladius, which is a small building in the graveyard, the bones of that saint are said to have been deposited in a nich in the east end of the building. The nich is now built up, and surrounded by a plain moulding. There is also a curious piscina within the chapel, here represented. It is of rude masonry, cut out of a single stone, which measures 2 feet by 18 inches; the arch is 18 inches high, and 11 inches broad. It is *locally* believed that this chapel was erected at the time of the reputed death of St Palladius, in A.D. 452; and, keeping this in view, some think that the Gothic arch of the piscina is one of the earliest known examples of the kind existing in Scotland; ideas, however, for which there appears to be no good ground.

According to Butler, the relics of Palladius were held in so great esteem by Bishop Schevez of St Andrews, in whose diocese the church was situated, that he had them



¹ Sculptured Stone Monuments, Plates 92-132.

collected together, and deposited in a silver shrine set with diamonds.¹ To this period, most probably, the oldest part of the chapel also belongs; and, according to tradition, the shrine was afterwards stolen by the sacrilegious knight of Pitarrow, from which time, it is said, the family fortunes of the Wisharts began to decline.

The old barons of Glenfarquhar and Monboddo bury underneath this chapel, which is now used as a female school; and at the entrance door stands a sculptured stone, carved upon one side.² It is the only example of those singular monuments which is known in the Mearns, if we except the fragments found in the neighbourhood of Stonehaven, now preserved at Banchory House.

The Fordoun Stone is said to have been raised to commemorate the death of King Kenneth III., who, according to tradition, was killed in that neighbourhood, through the stratagem of Finella, wife of the Thane of the Mearns. Of this tragedy Wyntown gives the following account:—

“ As throw the Mernys on a day
The Kyng was rydand hys hey way,
Of hys awyne Curt al suddanly
Agayne hym ras a cumpany
Into the Towne of Fethyrkerne:
To fecht wyth hym thai ware sa yherne,
And he agayne thame faucht sa fast;
Bot he thare slayne was at the last.”

This murder is said to have been committed while the king was passing either to or from the shrine of St Palladius, to which, among several other shrines, he went, by way of penance, for the part he had in the assassination of Duffus. But the scene of King Kenneth's murder is laid (by Tytler, I think) in another and different part of the country—at Stracathro, near Brechin.

Apart from the traditions of the murder of the king; of St Palladius having ministered at Fordoun, and of the parish having given birth to St Erchad, a Pictish saint, whose feast is on 24th of August³—it ought to be noticed that the kirk of Fordoun stands nearly equi-distant from a Roman camp on the south, and a so-called Druidical circle in the north. The former of these, which has been often described, occupies about 2 acres, and owing to the good taste of Viscount Arbuthnot, who reserved the site, and had it planted, the dykes and ditches are yet in pretty good preservation. Some years ago a Roman (?) spear head, and the bronze top of a banner-staff, were found within the camp, the last of which relics is in the possession of Mr Carnegie of Redhall.

¹ Lives of the Saints (PALLADIUS), July 6.

² Sculp. Stone Monuments, Plate 67.

³ Aberdeen Breviary.

The "Druidical" circle stands upon a hill called "the Herscha." It is but a single circle, about 25 yards in diameter, and consists of six large boulders. It was carefully searched towards the close of the year 1855, but no vestige of early sepulture was found within it. Upon the same hill, about 50 yards to the westward, are the remains of a hillock, in which, about sixteen years ago, while digging for gravel, an immense rude block of stone was found, from 12 to 15 tons weight. It lay near the middle of the knoll; and on being blown to pieces, it was found to be the cover of a nicely constructed grave. The sides of the grave were composed of rude slabs, cemented together with clay, which, as I was told by a person who was present at the discovery, bore the impress of the fingers of the builders. The bottom of the grave was also of baked clay, and in the end lay a quantity of black clammy earth. The Herscha stands at the entrance of the fine pastoral district of Glenfarquhar, in which the monks of the Abbey of Arbroath had a right of pasture in old times,¹ and where more lately stood the castle and birth-place of the Lord Presidents Falconer.

Besides the Roman camp, already mentioned, there are the remains of another at Clattering Brigs, on the east side of the parish, engraved in Chalmers' Caledonia.² There is also a British fort at the foot of the old Roman pass of Cairn o' Mount, overlooking the ruins of the ancient castle of Kincardine. This castle (which is so often mentioned in the charters of King William the Lion, and in those of some of his successors, and in which also King Edward I. abode on at least two different occasions, and where he had the scroll of Baliol's resignation of the kingdom prepared in 1296), still shows, by its remains, that it had been of old a place of considerable size and strength.