

### III.

NOTE OF A DONATION OF FOUR SCULPTURED STONES FROM MONIFIETH, FORFARSHIRE. BY JAMES NEISH, OF THE LAWS, ESQ., F.S.A. SCOT. (PLATES IV.-VI.)

The sculptured stones of Monifieth, which have been portrayed in the Spalding Club volumes, having been transferred to the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, it seems desirable to repeat in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries any authentic information that has been handed down to us concerning the ancient history of the locality with which they have been so long connected. The name of the parish has been variously spelled, Monifuit, Monéfut, Monifod, Monifuith, Monifieth. The church dedicated to Saint Regulus<sup>1</sup> was in the diocese of Saint Andrews, is situated on the bank of the estuary of the Tay, within sight of the ancient city of Saint Andrews, the tower of Saint Regulus there forming a striking object in the distant view. The kirk of Monifieth was given to the Abbey of Aberbrothoc by Gilchrist, Earl of Angus, dur-

<sup>1</sup> The Edinburgh Almanack of 1706 gives Truel Fair as held at Kirkton of Monifieth.

ing the reign of William the Lion, about 1207. Malcolm, the fifth Earl, grandson of Gillechrist, gave the abthane lands of Monifieth to Nicolas, son of a priest of Kirriemuir, in 1220. About 1242, his daughter Maud, Countess of Angus, confirmed a grant to the Abbey of Aberbrothoc of certain lands south of the church of Monifieth, which the "Keledei" held in the lifetime of her father, with the toft and croft on the east of said church. That is the only evidence preserved to us of a Culdee establishment having existed at Monifieth. The church, which was taken down in 1812, had existed from before the Reformation. When the present church was erected, the foundation was laid at a depth of 10 feet, through accumulated, rich, black soil, mixed with human bones. One skeleton was found entire, which had been laid on its back.

The largest of the sculptured stones is of shaft-like form,<sup>1</sup> and must have been discovered at an early period, for it had been converted into a lintel for the "Queer" door of the pre-Reformation church; it was afterwards, with two more, built into the walls of the present church. They were removed in order that both sides might be copied by the artist for the Spalding Club, and are now presented by the Heritors of Monifieth to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries, Edinburgh, for preservation.

In 1864, when Messrs Cosmo Innes, Joseph Robertson, and John Stuart visited Monifieth, to inspect those stones, the proprietor of a cottage adjoining the church, hearing of their object, sent to the Rev. James G. Young, minister of the parish, the fourth sculptured fragment,<sup>2</sup> which had been found when a well was being dug in his garden. Mr Young has kindly allowed this stone to be transferred to the Museum, along with the other three, and it is now presented with them to the Museum of the Society. (See Donation List, p. 59.)

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[The larger fragment, which is of reddish stone, 4 feet long, is part of the shaft of a cross, presenting on one face the lower portion of a crucifixion, with a figure standing on each side. Beneath this there are two compartments, each containing two figures apparently of ecclesiastics, and below them a third, containing a man seated, and playing on a harp. The other face of the shaft and the two edges are sculptured with knotwork.

<sup>1</sup> Sculptured Stones of Scotland, vol. i. p. 29, plate xcii.; vol. ii. p. 41, plates lxxx., lxxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. plate cxxiii.

The other two stones are smaller, and of a greyish sandstone. The larger is 3 feet in length, by 14 inches in breadth; the smaller only 17 inches in length, and 10 inches broad. They are sculptured on both faces, having an interlaced cross on the one face, and figures and symbols on the other, as shown in Plate IV., where careful drawings are given of both sides of the two stones.

The first mentioned of these is remarkable in having the "spectacle ornament" twice repeated in close juxta-position (See fig. 1, Plate IV.), first presenting the ornament alone, and again in conjunction with the Z-shaped appendage, or "zig-zag" or "sceptre ornament" so often associated with it. The middle of the stone is disfigured by a groove, coarsely cut when the stone had been made use of for building purposes. At one side is a well-carved representation of a double-edged comb of the usual early form, made of small pieces of bone enclosed between two slips running along the centre, and rivetted together with bronze or iron rivets. Towards the bottom, and partially broken away, are the remains of what was in all probability a circular mirror, which often accompanies the comb on these stones.

On the reverse side (see Plate IV., fig. 2) is a cross ornamented with a species of fret-work.

The second of the two smaller stones bears a cross on one of its faces of similar form to the last, but differing considerably in its ornamentation, (see fig. 3, Plate IV.), which combines the interlaced work so common on these monuments with the fret and the scroll-like work styled "Late Celtic." On the other side (see Plate IV. fig. 4), the stone is divided into three compartments. The upper and larger of the three is filled in with bird's heads depending from the two upper corners, over a nondescript monster with a long neck, and the detached head apparently of a hound. In one of the lower compartments is a human figure clad in a loose robe folded closely round the body and reaching to the feet. On the breast appears a circular object, and a nimbus surrounds the head. In the third compartment is the "crescent symbol" conjoined with the V-shaped appendage or "sceptre" usually combined with it.

The fourth fragment has been part of a large slab. It measures  $3 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and has a sculptured cross (?) having on one side a wheel-like or floriated pattern running down the centre, flanked by sculpturings of

beasts of various forms. The sculpture on this side, which is in relief, is now almost entirely defaced. On the other side the sculptures consist entirely of representations of various animals. Some of these are in relief, and others merely incised.

#### FIGURES FROM SCULPTURED STONES IN SCOTLAND.

The stones above mentioned, which have now been presented to the Museum, display several examples of a class of peculiar sculptures occurring frequently on rude stone monuments, and rarely on objects of metal (Plate V. fig. 6), which are principally or almost entirely to be found in the north-eastern districts of Scotland. The same patterns of sculptures occur again and again with different degrees of ornamentation and grouping. Some of these stones have been described and figured by various authors, as well as in our "Archæologia Scotica," vol. ii. p. 314, and vol. iv. p. 345, but most fully in Dr John Stuart's important work on the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," published for the Spalding Club. The peculiar character of these sculptures has not, however, been noticed in our "Proceedings," and we take the opportunity of giving here a series of figures of the more important ones copied from Dr Stuart's work. (See Plates V. and VI.)

Trivial names have been given to these sculptured figures according to their shape or fancied resemblance to some common or well-known object, and they have been believed by some antiquaries to be "Symbols" of a mysterious character, the meaning of which is probably still to be discovered.

In the accompanying plates the symbols of most common occurrence on the sculptured stones are represented, and a detailed list of these is here given in the order of their frequency of occurrence on these monumental stones:—

1. The symbol of most frequent occurrence is the "Crescent" (Plate V. fig. 1). It presents many varieties of ornamentation, and is always accompanied by the V-shaped sceptre. It occurs on 30 of the pillar-stones and 23 crosses.

2. The next symbol in point of frequency is the "Spectacle Ornament" (Plates V. fig. 2, and VI. fig. 6), of which there are upwards of 30 varieties figured in Dr Stuart's book. This ornament has very frequently

passing through it a figure resembling the letter Z, generally more or less ornamented; it has been designated the Z-shaped or zig-zag ornament or "bent sceptre." See Plate V. figs. 4, and 6. It occurs on 23 of the pillar-stones and 19 crosses.

3. The "Mirror," which sometimes occurs singly, and at other times in conjunction with the comb (Plate VI. figs. 4 and 5). The mirror occurs on 23 pillar-stones and 14 crosses, and in 18 cases it is conjoined with the comb on the same monument.

4. The "Elephant" (Plate VI. fig. 7), which occurs on 13 pillar-stones and 19 crosses. "While other animals (says Dr. Stuart), including the camel, are represented in various and natural attitudes, this creature appears only in one; and while attempts are made to imitate the wool of the sheep, the plumage of a bird, or the scales of a fish, the 'elephant' is covered with the ornamental patterns which occur on the crosses in our MSS., metal work and other *inanimate* objects. It may thus be supposed that the 'elephant' was copied from *an object* which had come to be a badge."

5. The "Comb" (Plate VI. fig. 4), of which 13 occur on pillar-stones and 8 on crosses.

6. The "Serpent," which sometimes appears alone and at other times as in the figure in the plate from the stone at Newton (Plate V. fig. 3), combined with the zig-zag or "bent sceptre;" occurs 4 times on pillar-stones and 9 times on crosses.

7. The "Horse-Shoe" figure or arch (Plate VI. fig. 3) occurs on 10 pillar-stones and 1 cross.

8. The "Fibula-like" figures (Plate VI. figs. 1 and 2) occur 5 times on pillar-stones and 4 times on crosses.

9. The "Oblong Ornament" (Plate V. fig. 5) occurs 9 times, 6 being on pillar-stones and 3 on crosses. It is often also combined with the Z ornament, as in Plate V. fig. 5.

10. The "Dog's Head" (Plate V. fig. 6).

There are, besides these, various peculiar figures or symbols sculptured on these ancient stones, which have not been even referred to here, and the whole subject invites further examination and elucidation.

In Dr Stuart's "Sculptured Stones" notices of these stones and sculptures by early historians are pointed out. Hector Boece, in the

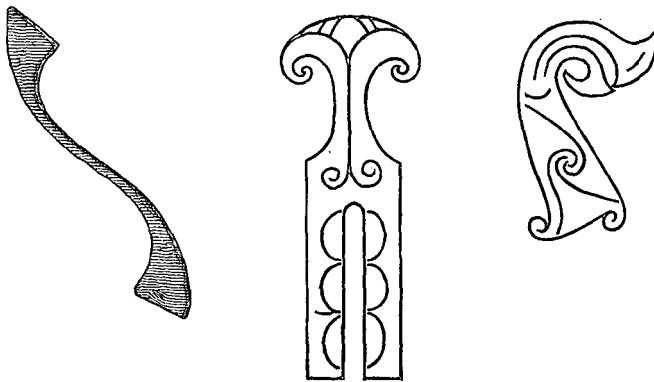
"Chronicles of Scotland," states, that on the ancient monuments of noble men "was ingrain imageris of dragonis, wolfis, and other beistis; for no inventioun of letteris was in thay dayis to put the deidis of nobil men in memore." He also states, in his "New Maneris and the Auld of the Scottis," that the old inhabitants "usit the ritis and maneris of the Egyptianis," not writing with common letters, but with "sifars and figuris of beasts made in manner of letteris, sic as their epithafis and superscription above their sepulturis schawis." Other old authors have repeated the same story. Cordiner, in his "Remarkable Ruins," figures and explains a number of these monuments with reference to the Egyptian hieroglyphics. Boece in his History, and Gordon in his "Itinerarium," suppose many of them to be Danish, but Worsaae considers that there is no authority for this opinion.

Some antiquaries have supposed these sculptures to be of pagan origin, and the Christian emblem of the cross, which occurs combined with them on some of the stones, to be of a more recent date,—an appropriation of the pagan monument by the later Christian people. Others have fancied they might, perhaps, be simply early Christian sculptures; and others again have made various suggestions attributing to the symbols mysterious and occult meanings which it is needless to specify.

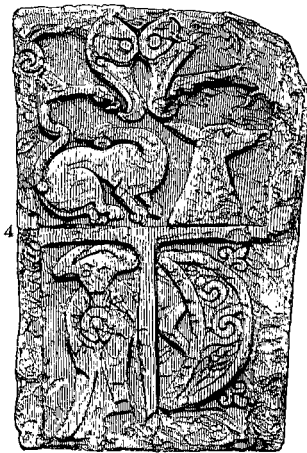
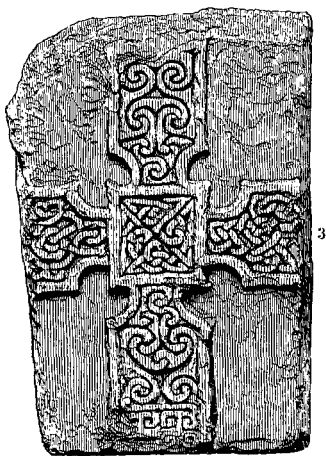
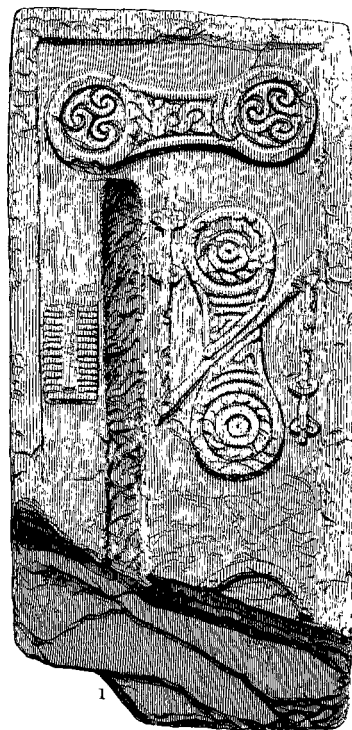
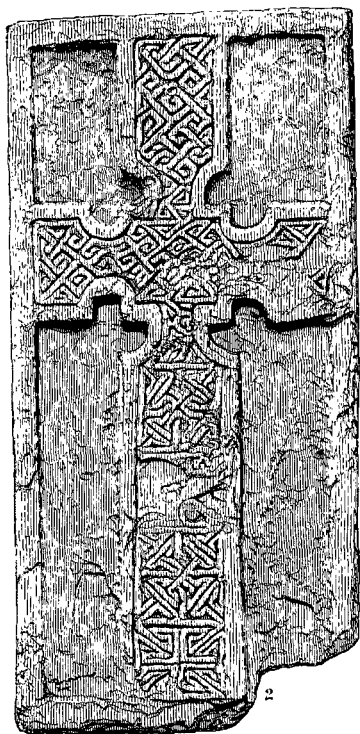
In the preface to the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," however, Dr John Stuart, after adverting to the usage so prominent among early races of representing by symbols on their tombs the occupation and rank of the person commemorated, and to the general custom of burying with the dead the objects used and loved by them during life, and when this usage ceased, of representing such objects on their tombs, is inclined to believe that these unknown symbols represented objects not dissimilar in character from the mirror, comb, and shears,—that is, articles of personal use or ornament. He also extends this conclusion to the other figures which occur on the monuments, such as the "elephant" and the "horse-shoe figure," the "oblong figure," and "the crescent," and points out that the "bent sceptre," which never appears alone, seems from various details, such as the strengthening at the angles, &c., to be a piece of mechanism for attaching the objects with which it is figured to something else. "If therefore," he adds, "we should be led to regard the 'spectacles,' 'horse shoe,' 'oblong figure,' serpent and crescent as figures of

personal ornaments of various kinds, the so-called 'sceptres' may be held either to be parts of such ornaments, or to represent the contrivance by which they were fixed to the person. If these can be held to be of the nature of clasps, brooches, and objects of personal use, their occurrence among other recognised sepulchral symbols, sculptured on tombstones, may be regarded as a mere variety of the idea which led to the frequent deposit of these objects in early graves, in conformity with the statement of Mr Didron, that after the custom had been abandoned of burying them with the dead they still continued to be represented upon the tombs." . . . "The conclusion at which I arrive," says Dr Stuart, "is that the symbols—the comb, mirror, books, brooches, 'spectacles,' 'crescents,' and associated figures, were all objects of personal ornament or use, and that when they appear on our pillar-stones they are to be regarded as symbols representing the dignity, office, or descent of individuals."

Dr Stuart considers, from the harmony of style between the ornamental details of these stones, and many Irish manuscripts of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries, that these monuments are not later, probably, than this period.—Eds.

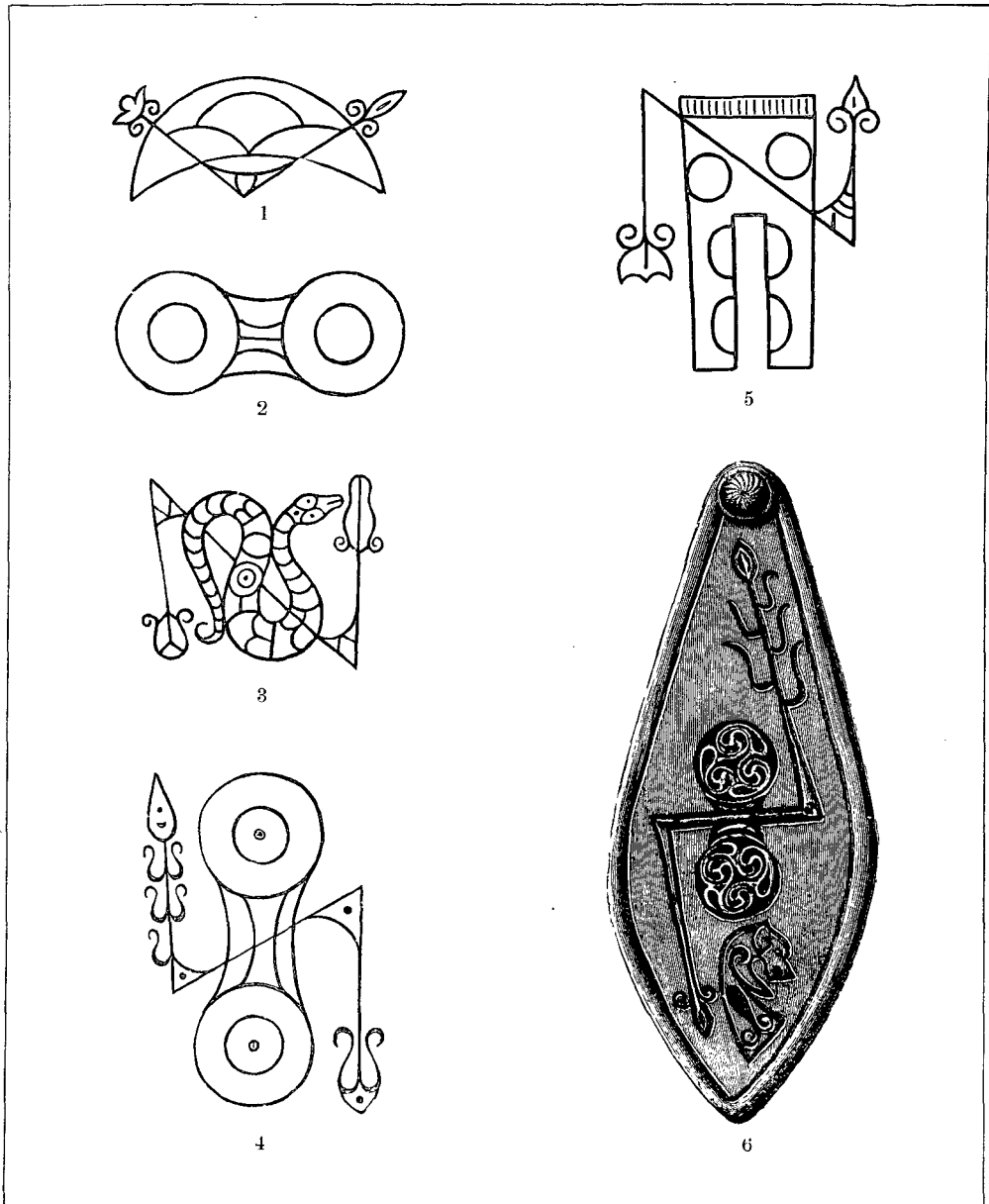


Additional Figures or Symbols on some of the Sculptured Stones of Scotland.



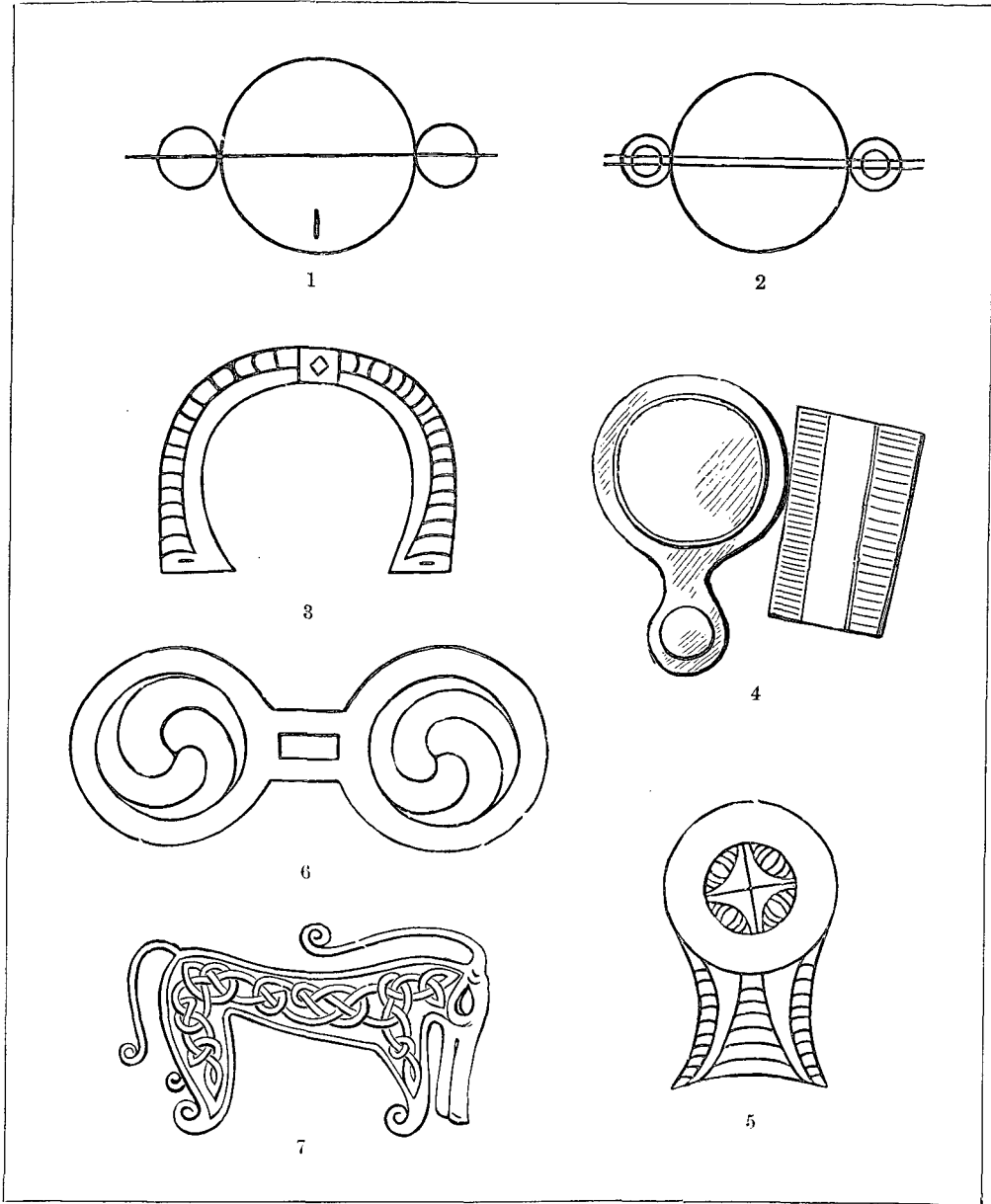
SCULPTURED STONES FROM MONIFIETH FORFARSHIRE.  
(Now in the Museum.)





FIGURES ON SCULPTURED STONES—SCOTLAND.

1. Crescent with V shaped Sceptre. 2. Spectacle Ornament. 3. Serpent with Zig-Zag or bent sceptre. 4. Spectacle ornament with do. 5. Oblong Monument with do. 6. Silver plate from Norrie's Law, with Spectacle Ornament and Dog's Head.



FIGURES ON SCULPTURED STONES—SCOTLAND.

1 and 2. Fibula-like figures. 3. Arch. 4. Mirror and Comb. 5. Mirror and Case. 6. Spectacle Ornament with spiral scrolls. 7. Elephant.