

VI.

ON A SCULPTURED STONE WITH CUP AND RING-MARKINGS, FOUND
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As the attention of this Society has been recently directed to the subject of Prehistoric Sculptured Stones, it may be of interest if I communicate this notice of a very remarkable cup-marked stone which was discovered last year at Redhills, in the neighbourhood of Penrith. Although the vestiges of a Celtic occupancy in this district are fairly abundant, yet lapidary inscriptions and sculpturings are less frequent than in Northumberland and some parts of Scotland. Cup and ring-markings, however, do occur on the monolith in the "Long Meg Circle," at Little Salkeld, on one or two of the members of the Stone Avenue at Shap, and in one or two other instances which I have given in a paper on the subject lately, in vol. vi. of the *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Archaeological Society*.

The stone to which I call the attention of the meeting, and of which I enclose a drawing from a photograph, was disinterred last year at Redhills, 2 miles from Penrith. I say disinterred, for it was covered with 10 inches of soil, and it was struck accidentally in forming a line of new

fencing. In point of fact, it was the cover of a kist-vaen. There are traces of ancient occupancy, and vestiges of cairn structure still to be discerned on the hill-side on which it was found, but no barrow nor mound covered this particular grave. A space had been excavated for the interment dipping into the limestone rock to a depth of about 3 feet; the length of the grave was 4 feet, and the breadth about 3 feet 6 inches. Cobble stones had been used partially to line the cavity, but there was no flagging at the sides or bottom. The space was filled with blackish soil, amid which was a quantity of burnt bones, all in a fragmentary state. No implement nor shreds of pottery could be found, but there were several pieces of charcoal. It had evidently been an interment of cremated remains.

The massive stone which formed the cover of the kist vaen I saw *in situ* immediately after its discovery.

This stone is a natural slab of white freestone; it is of a broadish ovoid form, 5 feet 4 inches long, and at the centre 3 feet 6 inches broad, tapering towards each end; and it varies from 8 inches to 13 inches in thickness. The superior surface is rough and irregular, and scored in many places with marks of the ploughshare and harrows, which have passed over it in frequent cultivation. The inferior surface, which was presented towards the grave, shows a fairly smooth cleavage, and on it were carved the sculptured markings which I shall describe.¹

It may be said, that the incised excavations display four types—(1) Cup-shaped hollows of various sizes and depths; (2) Central hollowed cones surrounded by two concentric circles, each bisected by a radial groove; (3) Hollowed channels like gutters running in various directions; (4) Little pits or small pick marks in the stone. The slab, which is in my possession, was unfortunately broken in three or four pieces by the hammer of the workman, but I have put it together, and when viewed with a certain light when the shadows are deep, the sculpturings

¹ For the engraving of this Redhills Sculptured Stone, see paper by the author, vol. vi. p. 113, *Transactions of Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archæological Society*.

may be well made out, and appear to be arranged as follows :—Near the bottom there is a central cup deeply carved, about 3 inches in diameter ; around this there are two concentric rings somewhat faintly incised, the outermost of which has a diameter of 6 inches. From this central cup proceed two grooves 6 inches long, which bisect the concentric circles, and traverse in a straight line to join a similar cup on each side of the central one. From this line of cups three gutters meander upwards over the surface of the slab ; the main channel takes a direction upwards on the right side of the stone, and receives a number of branches like the tributaries of a river from each side, and terminates on the free margin of the upper part of the stone. On the lowest quarter of the stone to the right there is a large hollow cup 3 inches in diameter, around which also there are two well-executed concentric rings, the largest with a diameter of 6 inches. These rings are cut by a radial groove which joins a gutter in the centre of the stone, and in the opposite direction, at a point in their circumference, they fall into and are subtended by the larger side channel. These are the only two cuttings on the stone which present this annular arrangement ; on the other hand, the simple cup-markings are numerous, in fact, twenty-four may be counted. One of these cups is greatly larger than any of the rest. It is situated in the centre of the upper half of the slab, and on first view forms the most strikingly characteristic feature of the tablet. This cup is 6 inches in diameter, and is carved out to the depth of 3 inches. The chisel marks are distinct and fresh, as if done yesterday ; and there is a smoothness and regularity of execution about it, which evinces that more pains have been taken with it than with some of the other incisions. The other cup-markings vary from 1 inch to 3 inches in measurement. A number of them (about twelve of them may be counted) are associated with the furrowed lines, either forming the beginning of a gutter, or joining or being included in the line of the channel itself. These form the series of the larger cup-markings, and are an inch or more in depth. On the other hand, others of these cups are isolated, and scattered singly, and apparently without regular order over the surface, and unconnected with

the branch-like lines; these for the most part are mere shallow depressions, and with less defined margins. Again, there is another class of markings on the stone; they are very numerous, and are dispersed apparently irregularly over all the surface; these are little pits or pick marks, small irregular holes picked into the stone, evidently done with some pointed tool.

Judging from the examination of the tool-marks, which are quite patent and well expressed in many of the larger excavations, I am of opinion that they have been done with a flat-edged chisel, driven by a mallet or hammer. The indentations succeed each other so regularly, and so much in successive lines, as to suggest the process of hewing or chipping, with the tool resting on the spot, before receiving the stroke, rather than by the irregular action of a pointed pick alone. The hollows certainly have not been excavated by any rubbing process, by a flint or harder stone. But I believe it is quite possible that the instrument used may have been a flint chisel, driven as I have described.

But I will not attempt to debate whether the tool used in cup-marking may have been of stone or of metal, because this will open up the question of the antiquity of this peculiar practice, and I desire on this occasion to confine myself simply to a notice of facts.

If I were to express my impressions relative to the speculative aspect of the inquiry, I would hold by the following conclusions. That these remarkable products of primitive handiwork, of which I have given an example, reach up to the period of the early race of people who preceded the later Celts: to the builders of the chambered tumuli, the cyclopean cromlechs, and megalithic monuments of the archaic type; to a population amid whom the use of metals was not common—to the patient workers with hammers and chisels fashioned from flint, jade, serpentine, and other hard stones—to men whose light hands and nimble fingers may have retained the deftness and cunning of their Eastern prototypes, and on whose minds may still have lingered the traditions of an Eastern symbolism, of which the key is lost to us.