

IV.

NOTICE OF CUP-MARKED STONES NEAR ABERFELDY. BY THE REV.
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Few districts in Britain have more numerous examples of prehistoric sculpture than that which is comprised within a radius of 4 or 5 miles around the village of Aberfeldy, in the Highlands of Perthshire. Upwards of twenty well-marked specimens occur in this district; and though they do not diverge much from the common type, yet they exhibit individual peculiarities which make each of them well worthy of a visit. The beautiful scenery and the interesting associations of the spots in which they are found lend to them an additional charm. Above the highest waterfall of Moness, the well-known Birks of Aberfeldy, which Burns has immortalised in song, there is an upland hamlet called Urlar. It has been inhabited from time immemorial; but the old houses have disappeared, and only a modern shooting-lodge now remains. It is a lonely spot, surrounded by an oasis of cultivated verdure in the midst of brown heath-covered moorlands. A little beyond the shooting-lodge there is a mound left untilled in the midst of a grassy field, on the top of which there are obscure traces of a cairn. On the lower side of this mound a small ridge of rock projects a few inches above the side, and on its outer exposed edge there are thirty-two well-executed cups (fig. 1), from two to three inches in diameter, and about an inch in depth. The turf has encroached upon the rock, but by means of a shovel I removed a considerable portion of it, disclosing several additional cups. The rock is of hard mica slate, the prevailing rock of the district, and has been considerably weathered. But the cups, protected by grey crustaceous lichens, have sustained very little injury by their long exposure. One part of the rock has on it a group of four larger and deeper cups than the others, connected with one another by means of intermediate grooves. One of the grooves opens out upon the edge of the rock, indicating that it was meant to be the outlet of the others. The position of this remarkable sculptured rock is due east, and commands a

magnificent view of the deep richly wooded dell of the Birks, and of the highly cultivated valley of Strathtay, bounded in the distance by the mountain ranges of Ben Vrackie and Ben-y-ghloe, in Athole. Like the monks of old, who chose the most beautiful places for the sites of their monasteries and abbeys, the prehistoric people seem also to have selected for their rude stone monuments the most prominent positions, from whence the grandest and most extensive views of the surrounding country might be obtained. Especially was this the case with regard to cup-marked rocks, whose localities are more restricted in area than cup-marked boulders, which are found in all kinds of situations almost indiscriminately. Only one other cup-marked rock has been found in



Fig. 1. Edge of Rock with Cup-Marks at Urlar, Aberfeldy.

this part of Perthshire, the splendid example of *Craggan-tol*, or the *Rock-of-Holes*, at the foot of Ben Lawers, about 14 miles distant; and it too, like the Urlar rock, occupies a prominent position commanding a magnificent view. The examples of rock sculpture on Ilkley Moor in Yorkshire, near Wooler in Northumberland, and at Crinan in Argyllshire, have all the same peculiarity.

A short distance above the village of Aberfeldy, where General Wade's old road emerges from the houses, a huge stone, called the *Clach Mhor*, lies on the left-hand side in a slanting position half erect, as if supported by the garden wall of which it forms a part. It is formed of hard mica slate interspersed with veins of quartz. In all likelihood it originally stood erect, and formed one of a group of similar stones, its companions

having been broken up in the formation of the road. I am led to form this conjecture from the fact that the name of the eminence on the slope of which it stands is the "Tullich," which means a tumulus, and must have been at one time associated with sepulture or religious worship. On the upper face there are some small cup-markings, not quite so well-formed as usual, owing to the hardness of the material. There is a tradition that those marks were made to receive the grappling irons of General Wade's sappers and miners in their efforts to raise and remove the stone away from the road. But this tradition is obviously an after supposition to account for markings, the true nature and use of which had for ages been forgotten. Their own peculiarities, and the fact that they occur on only one side of the stone, and are scattered indiscriminately all over its surface, are sufficient to convince any one who is skilled in the subject that they are genuine specimens of prehistoric sculpture.

Following this road farther up, some obscure cup-marks may be seen on a huge stone lying beside others equally large, behind the gardens of a rude hamlet called Tigh-an-leachan. This Gaelic name has a twofold signification. It may mean either the House of the Stones, or the House of the Hill Pasture. It is probable that a wild common was called *Leachan*, from the fact that it was always rough with boulders, in contradistinction to the fields around the homestead, which were cleared of stones, and covered uniformly with smooth grass. In this sense, the name of the place is not now appropriate; but I remember in my boyhood that this hamlet marked the limit of cultivation in this direction, and that beyond it, up the hill, stretched wild, marshy boulder-strewn pasturage for the cows of the village, which had never been broken up by spade or plough.

About half a mile beyond Tigh-an-leachan, is Pitilie, the residence of my friend the Rev. John Maclean, who has made a special study of the cup-marked stones of the district; most of which he has himself discovered. I had the benefit of his company in visiting the different examples; and to him I am indebted for much of the information contained in this report. In the farm-yard beside his house, among a number of old querns, mill-stones, and stone lamps, is preserved, for greater security, a slab of micaceous schist which was originally found at

Gatehouse, on General Wade's old road, and was, about to be broken up into building material. It has on one side, obviously the under side, seventeen cups rudely formed, one of which has a well-defined ring round it; and may have been used as a cover for a cist, which was probably destroyed while the road was being made. In a field at a little distance off, among others protruding above the soil, there is a flat stone almost covered with the grassy sod, on which, when I removed the turf, I exposed nine shallow cups of unusually small size, which had been almost obliterated by weathering. On Murthly Farm, about 300 yards farther east, there is an extensive mound with large boulders laid along its sides, in somewhat regular lines, as if forming the foundation of some primitive fortification. Many of the boulders have been broken to pieces by gunpowder and partially removed. In this way, I have no doubt, some interesting prehistoric objects have been destroyed. But there are no less than seven cup-marked stones still remaining on the spot. The most remarkable is a large mass weighing about 14 tons, of greenish grey, coarsely crystalline granular diorite, rounded and rubbed smoothly on the surface by glacial action, and marked by deep, straight artificial-looking furrows. This boulder (fig. 2) was evidently transported from a mountain range to the north-east of Glenlochay, 40 miles distant, where intrusive sheets and dykes of this mineral of considerable extent may be found *in situ* among the crystalline schists. On the highest part of this boulder there are ten cups more or less distinct, one of which has a ring round it, and another is of an oval shape, 6 inches long and 4 inches wide, with a small cup by its side connected with it by a very short groove. This is by far the largest cup in the Aberfeldy district. There is one double the size at Killin; and at Tirarthur, near that place, there are five cups almost as large as the Murthly one, cut out on a vein of primitive limestone, protruding above the mica schist of the hillside. This strange variation in the size of the cups is a mystery upon which no light as yet has been thrown. The large cup on the Murthly boulder has had its sides injured of late by some persons trying to make it larger and deeper. The difference between the ancient and the modern work is at once perceptible. On the slope of the stone there is a smooth slide, which has long been used by the children of the neighbouring farm who

come here to play. Boulders of this peculiar mineral substance seemed to have formed the favourite tablets of the prehistoric sculptors of the locality; for most of the examples of cup-marking in the neighbourhood are found on these. Such boulders are abundant, scattered singly or in groups, on the gently sloping side of a hill to the south-east of Aberfeldy, called Stron a Ghamhuin. They are conspicuously different from the other stones beside them; and their smooth polished surfaces and hard crystalline substance, on which impressions once made would be long retained, led naturally to their being selected for sculpturing purposes in preference to all others.

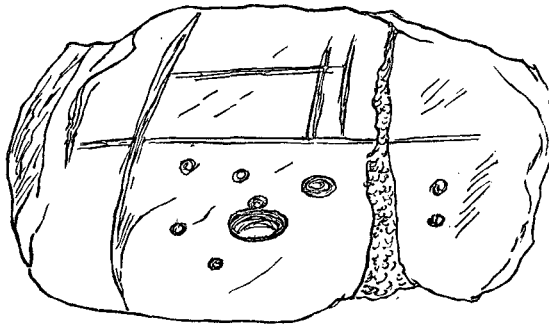


Fig. 2. Diorite Boulder with Cup-marks at Murthly Farm, Aberfeldy.

Near the boulder in question is a confused mass of other large flat boulders, most of them of mica slate. One has thirty-six cups at one end of it, so closely grouped together that this part of the stone is honey-combed with them. Another of the same material, with a good deal of iron in its composition staining it of a dark colour, lying horizontally, has thirty-two cups gathered together about the centre of the stone, one of which is surrounded by a single ring, and another by a double ring; while, in three instances, two cups are connected together by means of short intermediate grooves. The workmanship on this stone is therefore more elaborate than on all the others, and indicates either greater skill on the part of the sculptor, or a greater development of the primitive

symbolism. A third stone is partly buried in the ground and covered with moss; but on the exposed surfaces there are three distinct cups, and one much larger and shallower, with grooves leading from it and disappearing in a fissure. A fourth is a comparatively thin slab of micaceous schist that has been shattered to pieces by gunpowder, for a part of the blasting hole is still seen on it. On the portion that remains there are three cups about two inches deep, one larger and shallower, and one with a circle only, without a depression in its centre, which is an interesting peculiarity. A large flat smooth mass of diorite lying apart in the field has one faint cup on the top of it; another micaceous boulder near at hand has also one cup; while a third stone much larger by its side, and covered with moss, has three distinct cups. The name of the mound on which this remarkable group of cup-marked stones occurs is Tom-an-Eilbh, which is capable of receiving several interpretations. It is supposed by some to be derived from a peculiar kind of ploughing, turning over the soil in alternate furrows. This is not satisfactory, for the name must obviously be older than any agricultural operation. It has been suggested that the spot originally abounded in *Ealbhuidh*, the Gaelic name for the St John's wort, from which circumstance it obtained its name. A more probable derivation, however, is from *Dealbh* or *Deilbhin*, a little image or picture. There may have been here in primitive times some image or sculptured figure held sacred by the inhabitants of the place. Within the last thirty years a hamlet stood on the site, and a smith's forge; and the explanation which the people of the neighbourhood gave of the cup-marks which they had noticed on the stones, was that they had been produced by the smith when testing the temper of his boring tools—an explanation which is interesting as showing how myths may arise in modern times, even where there are ample means of ascertaining the exact truth. The houses of the hamlet have been cleared away; not a single stone of their structure remains; but the large boulders of the primitive construction, owing to the great difficulty involved in removing them, have fortunately been left where they stood.

About half a mile below this mound there is another tree-covered height called Tom-a-Caletuinn, or the mound of hazels, overhanging the

high road. At the back of this eminence there is a heap of large boulders, one of which, almost square in shape, of the peculiar diorite already referred to, has numerous distinct cup-markings on its level upper surface. The boulder slopes to the west, and is placed at a point which commands one of the finest views in the district, including the magnificent plains through which the Tay flows, bounded by the lofty range of Ben Lawers and the Glenlyon mountains. Ascending the long gentle declivity of the hill to the south-east of Pitilie, the visitor finds several hamlets and farm-houses, surrounded by cultivated fields in the midst of the waste pasturages. These places were once densely peopled; but only a solitary family is now left, where scores formerly lived in rude comfort. Frequent ruins and deserted sites remind one sadly of the vanished population. At the

first hamlet one comes to there are numerous boulders of diorite, which show some proofs of design in their arrangement; and on these cup-markings occur in greater or less abundance and distinctness. One huge boulder especially (fig. 3), of a very rough and hard diorite, forming part of a megalithic circle, has sixteen well-executed cups carved on it, one of which larger than the others has a fine ring round it, and other two are linked together by means of an intermediate groove. Among the cups some rustic has recently carved the letters DM; so feebly, however, that the weather will soon indignantly wipe it away, leaving the more substantial work of the prehistoric sculptor to endure through the ages. The contrast is most striking and suggestive! The name of the hamlet where this specimen occurs is Braes of Cuiltalich; this word meaning a small mound or tumulus, in contradistinction to Grantully, which means a large mound or

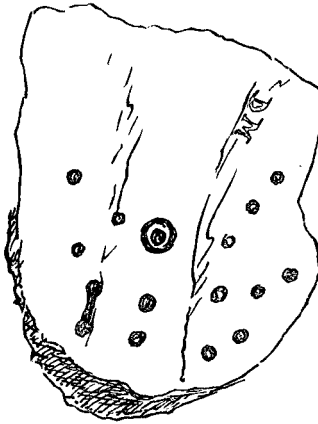


Fig. 3. Cup-Stone at Braes of Cuiltalich.

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tumulus, and is the general name of the district. The name suggests that this place must once have been used for sepulture; and it is probable that the modern hamlets bearing the same name occupy the sites of forgotten burying-grounds. This circumstance would explain the abundance of cup-marked stones in the neighbourhood; for we have reason to believe that these symbols were frequently connected with sepulchral remains.

On the same farm, belonging to Mr Scrimgeour, there is a flat square stone of micaceous schist which has ten good cup-marks on it; and in the farm-yard, projecting from the wall of the garden and half-concealed by turf and masonry, there is a still finer example of prehistoric sculpture (fig. 4). We got the farmer and his son to remove as much of the

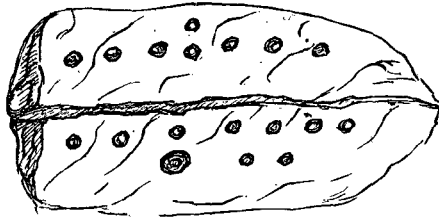


Fig. 4. Cup-Stone at Braes of Cultallich.

turf and masonry as possible, and we found the stone to be a long-shaped diorite boulder, half-split through the middle, evidently long after the sculptures were made, containing on either side of the cleavage, arranged in three almost parallel rows along the whole length of the stone, eighteen cups, the smallest of which was three inches in diameter and about two inches deep, remarkably well-executed and well-defined. One cup larger than the others had a circle round it. I have seldom seen cups so admirably carved as these, showing that they were made with great care and toil, or with the aid of superior tools. The arrangement in parallel rows marks a new and uncommon departure from the familiar type. We noticed beside this prehistoric stone two rough stone-mortars or "knocking-stones" of the same material, which until a

recent period had been used for the manufacture of pot-barley. It is an interesting circumstance that cup-marks are not unfrequently found associated with large cavities or basins executed beside them in the same stone, which have been used as mortars within the last century. On the shooting range behind the village of Killin there is a good example of this kind on the site of an old hamlet, and one of the inhabitants of the village told me that her mother, who was born in that hamlet, remembered this basin being used for the manufacture of pot-barley in her youth. It is eight inches in diameter and six inches deep; and around it are grouped eight somewhat obscure cups, from an inch and a half to three inches in diameter. At Balvarron, near Kirkmichael, the birthplace of General Reid, the composer of the tune, "The Garb of Old Gaul," of well-known concert fame in Edinburgh, there is a large flattish stone in a field, with four very large basins, a foot in diameter and 8 inches deep, scooped out on its surface (fig. 5). These, however, are not associated with smaller cups. Conjunctions of large basins and common cups are found in other parts of the country, especially in Inverness-shire. They may have a common or related origin; but the question may at least be suggested, whether the large basins were not ancient corn-grinders or rubbers in use before the quern was known. In remote parts of North America and in California, near the old village sites inhabited by the more stationary Indian tribes, huge boulders and rocks are often found with one or more

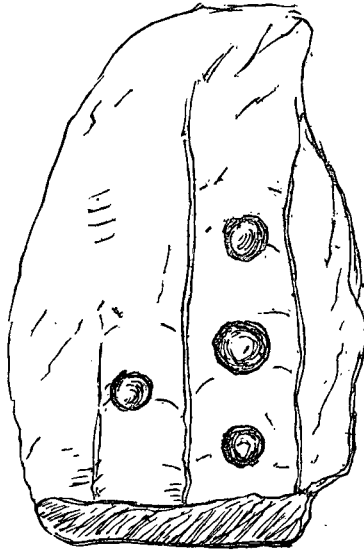


Fig. 5. Cup-Stone at Balvarron, near Kirkmichael, Perthshire.

large circular cavities hollowed out of them by stone implements, and serving as stationary mortars for the trituration of grain, the possession of the whole tribe. The average width of such cavities is a little over 13 inches and the depth two or three inches less,—the dimensions of the Kirkmichael basins. In one instance, wide grooves are cut between two of these cavities; one being used probably for pulverising the grain, and the other as a receptacle for the meal. By the French, such stones, which also occur on the Continent of Europe, are called *pierres a basins*, and by the Germans *Muldensteine*. Reasoning from the analogy of similar examples in use within the last century by the North American savages, it admits of being suggested that the large basins so often connected with cup-markings in our country, have a different origin and use from these cup-markings, and were in part at least the mortars in which the prehistoric people pounded their fruits or cereals. In the Western Islands of Scotland are cup-markings, indiscriminately called *crotagan*, a word which means little mortars.

Another farm higher up, belonging to Mrs Robert Stewart, is called the Upper Braes of Cultallich; and at this place a fine stone may be seen with twenty good cups on it, two of which are connected together by a long semicircular groove. In the immediate neighbourhood of this stone are the foundations of an ancient Celtic church, which may be distinctly traced on a high green mound overhanging a picturesque moorland burn. Nothing but the name of the mound *Knoc-na-Eaglais*, the mound of the church, has survived of the traditions that may have been connected with it. Numerous traces of old Celtic churches exist in the district. There is a Croft of the Church—as it is called in Gaelic—in the wood at the western entrance of the Falls of Moness. Aberfeldy is supposed to have derived its name from *St Palladius* or *Paldy*; and a curious local myth regarding a mysterious brownie or anchorite who haunted the recesses of the “Birks,” and seems to have been especially kind to the people of the village, is identified with this famous saint. *St Cuthbert* had his hermitage in the *Rock of Weem*, where his cross and holy well may still be seen. *Adamnan* too is connected with *Dull*; and the rude old crosses associated with his name are standing at the present day in the market-place of this village, after having afforded sanctuary for many generations.

Following the old peat road to the south-east, beyond the highest farms into the moorland, you come upon a large flattish stone (fig. 6) of micaceous schist, on a green mound among the heather beside the path. It was slightly tilted to the north-east; and half of it had been split off by frost within comparatively recent times, and had slipped down, leaving the upper cloven part covered partially with turf. This stone is the finest of all the examples in the district. There are thirty-seven cups carved deeply and distinctly all over its surface; one of which is much larger than usual, and has a splendid ring around it—another half a ring, and no less than four groups of two cups each are connected together by long grooves. This stone was long familiar to the old people of the district, who passed it often on their way to and from the peat-bogs in the hill during the summer. But since the universal use of coal has banished this industry, the path has very nearly disappeared, being covered with a dense growth of heather, like the rest of the moorland. The stone is therefore rarely visited now, and the recollection of it has almost passed away. In the immediate neighbourhood there is a mound called Tom-na-Tibbert, so called from a well which in all likelihood in primitive times had sacred virtues imputed to it; and all around there are traces of cairns and ancient cultivation, indicating that this region was once largely inhabited, while the lower parts of the strath were covered with impenetrable forests and swamps, the haunts of wild beasts.

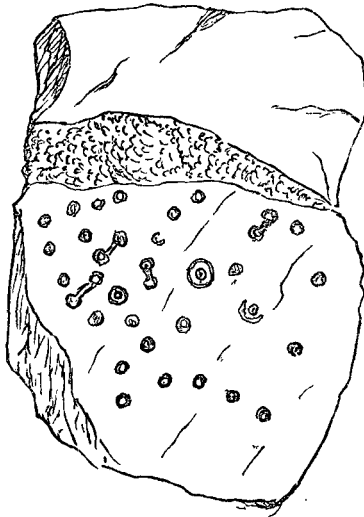


Fig. 6. Cup-Stone beside peat road on Grantully Hill, above Upper Cullallich.

At the farm-house of Laidneskea, Grantully, about two miles north-east, there is a large square boulder of diorite (fig. 7), standing upright,

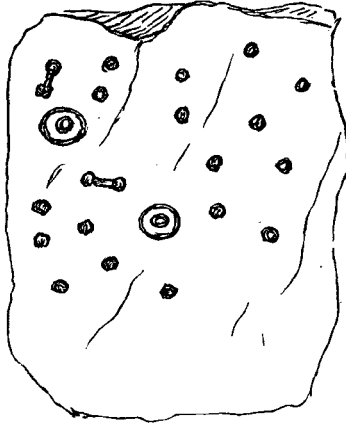


Fig. 7. Diorite Stone at Laidneskea, Grantully.

and forming part of a retaining wall by the side of a county road leading to the farm. It is a fine specimen, covered with twenty-three large well-executed cups, two of which are larger than the others, and have rings around them, and other two groups of two each are connected by means of intermediate grooves. This stone must have been originally horizontal; for it is the peculiarity of this district that, with the solitary exception of the Clach Mhor at Aberfeldy, cup-marks are not found on upright stones as in other localities, but are confined to stones lying on the ground, or

slightly tilted over. Between the old church of Grantully and the high road, by the side of a footpath which from a remote period has connected the two, and is still used, there is a rough mound covered with boulders, and marked by tall upright stones, left in a wild state among the cultivated fields. It is clothed with a tangled vegetation of brambles, sloes, and hazel bushes. This mound is called "Na Carr'n," or the cairns. Rows of large cairns exist in the place; and in the ploughed field there is a rude hollowed stone which was either a font of the old church or a primitive mortar. Several cup-marked stones were once found here; but they have got covered over with turf, and disappeared from view. Two good specimens still remain above ground, however. One has five cups, without any peculiarity; and the other, lying flat, is quite covered with unusually large and deep cups well formed. A herd-boy used to notice that these cups were always filled with water after rain when the ground around was dried

up. He sought them, therefore, when thirsty ; and this circumstance led to the stone being talked about in the district.

The neighbourhood of this place is especially interesting to the antiquarian. A large mound of fine white sand a little way off, was used as a place of prehistoric sepulture. It is supposed to be the mound or tumulus from which Grantully takes its name. Twenty-seven years ago, I noticed all over the ridge of this mound stones sunk at regular intervals in the turf. I dug up one of the spaces between the stones, and found, about two feet below the surface, a rude cist of rough undressed slabs of mica schist, containing a quantity of black mould, and a complete skull and skeleton, lying in the contracted posture, characteristic of the burials of the Stone and Bronze Ages. The skull, that of an adult, though very friable, was well preserved, and had remarkably white and perfect teeth. It is still in existence, but the other bones speedily mouldered away. Since then most of the ridge has been excavated, in order to obtain sand for building purposes, and the graves and their contents destroyed. A few, however, still remain unopened ; but they are destined soon, with the extension of the sand pit, to be destroyed also. This ancient British grave-yard is especially interesting, as in all likelihood the cup-markings on the stones in the neighbourhood were made by the occupants of these cists. There are several wells not far off, that were dedicated to St Adamnan, the biographer of St Columba, who seems to have visited this part of Perthshire, and under the name of St Eonan, to have left a very fragrant memory behind him ; while the old church of Grantully, which is nigh three hundred years old, of the same age as Grantully Castle, supposed to be the Tully-veolan of Sir Walter Scott, is an extremely interesting building in its deserted and half-ruinous condition, with the graves of the dead around and within it. Part of the roof in the interior is intact, arched over with mouldering boards of wood, on which in once gaudy, but now dim and faded, colours are rudely represented the Scripture scenes of the creation and judgment, with angels and cherubim figuring largely. I remember well, when a boy, my father taking me to this church, and how the study of these wonderful and mysterious paintings used to beguile the tedium of many a long sermon.

We have thus preserved in this locality a most interesting and instructive series of antiquities, from the pagan cup-marks to the angelic frescoes of the Christian Church.

About four miles west from Aberfeldy, and a mile and a half from Kenmore, at a place called Croftmoraig, there is probably the largest and most complete stone circle on the mainland of Scotland. The massive stones of the circle have no marks upon them; but on a long flat stone, differing in mineral structure from the others, lying half-buried in the sod, the sharp eyes of my little boy, who was with me during my recent visit, discovered twenty-three small and shallow but well-formed cups. The position of this different cup-marked stone is a little outside of the enclosure, like that of the "foreign stone," on the north-eastern side near the first great trilithon of Stonehenge, which has two cup-marks on it. On the opposite side of the Tay is the Appin or Abthanery of Dull, which Crinan the warrior abbot of Dunkeld once held. In the manse glebe to the west of the ancient village of Dull, with its hoary crosses and memories of Adamnan, there is a stone with several good cup-marks on it; and below the high road to this place, there are one or two smaller stones with a few cups on them. Within sight to the westward, near the junction of the Tay and the Lyon, three round apparently artificial mounds, covered with trees, rise conspicuously on the plain, and form a quadrant of a circle. They are called Moot-hills; and their presence in the neighbourhood of these cup-marked stones, which must at one time have been far more numerous, shows the connection that formerly existed between them; the religious sanctuary being, in primitive society, the assembly-place of the people, the court of justice, and the burying-place of the dead. Open-air courts and assemblies of the people were held in our own and other countries at stones, or great circles of stones. We read of this custom among all the nations of antiquity. In the Bible it is frequently noticed, as at the election of Abimelech to be king by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem; and the sacrifice of Adonijah when he summoned the people to meet him at the stone of Zoheleth, which is by Enrogel. The connection of the moot or open-air court with cup-stones is shown in a striking manner by a survival of the old custom which still exists at

Stone in Somersetshire. The court of the hundred is held very early in the morning at a standing stone on a hill in the neighbourhood. In this stone is a hollow, into which, when the court is opened, a bottle of port wine is poured, which may be a relic of the old religious libations offered probably to the rising sun on the spot.

Mr Haggart of Killin found this summer at Keltny Burn, his native place, about two miles west from Dull, an interesting cup-marked stone, about 2 feet square, projecting above the ground, into which it appears to go well down. It has twelve cups on it, very distinct although not large. The place in which it was found is known in the neighbourhood as "The Island," recently formed by leading the waters of the burn through a field to a farina mill. Several stone coffins, within the last thirty years, were found while trenching the ground in two different places. And it is an interesting association that the Fortingal ministers used to hold their open-air services for the east end of their parish on this spot. The local association of the cup-marks with the stone coffins is undoubted; and possibly the selection of the spot as a suitable place for open-air meetings by the Presbyterian minister, may be but a continuance of the traditional sanctity of the place. On the hill to the east of the wooded craig of Dull, there is a much finer specimen with larger and more numerous cups. On the same hill, two miles further east, above Weem Rock, there is still another cup-marked stone lying beside the path, which looks not like a boulder, but a fragment of rock recently broken off by human hands. If there is a sculptured rock in the vicinity of which this has formed a part, its discovery will add another to the number of the interesting and comparatively rare monuments, for which such commanding positions were always chosen. There is a cup-marked stone on the moorland to the east of the upland hamlet of Glassie; another below it, and a third at Cloichfoldich, about three miles east from Aberfeldy, which is particularly good, and from which the place in all probability got its name. The number of the stones on this side of the river, however, is not so great, nor are the stones themselves so remarkable, as those found on the south side of the Tay.

I must not forget to notice here another very remarkable cup-stone which I went to see last September (fig. 8). It was found two summers

ago on the farm of Mr M'Nab, at Bleaton Hallet, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kirkmichael, by a cross road in the Persie district. Below the farmhouse there is an undulating field, with a gently swelling mound in it. On this mound the stone lay so near the surface that the plough always grated on it. The farmer, therefore, was induced to remove it as an obstruction. With great labour he succeeded in raising it, and exposing the underside, on which curious markings were noticed. Regardless of these, he was about to break it in pieces, and use it as material for the building of a new bridge across the river, when some feeling unaccountable even to himself dissuaded him from his purpose. He carried

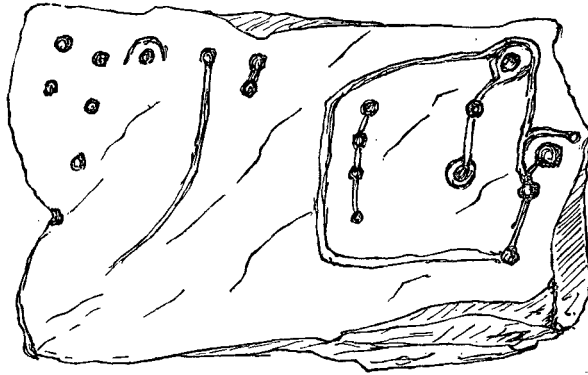


Fig. 8. Cup-Stone at Bleaton Hallet, Persie, Blairgowrie.

it instead to his yard, and set it up against a wall, where it may now be seen. The farmer has had instilled into his mind some glimmering idea of its value and significance, and takes great pleasure in showing it to visitors. There is no danger, therefore, of its being injured or destroyed so long as he holds possession of the farm. I first heard of the stone from Dr Rattray of Blairgowrie. What specially characterises it, is the variety of the sculpture. Besides the ordinary plain cups, there are no less than four with rings; there is one instance in which two cups are united by a connecting groove; another, in which a cup has a groove of unusual length, traversing almost the whole breadth of the stone, and

instead of linking it with another cup, gradually shallowing to the surface, and at length disappearing indefinitely. But the most curious feature is the almost square figure, occupying nearly one half of the stone, formed by a long groove connecting several cups together, and enclosing two others linked to each other in a similar manner. This groove is wonderfully distinct throughout its whole course; while the large ring round the principal cup which the groove comprehends, instead of being incised as usual, forms a raised ridge on the stone. This peculiar arrangement of cups and grooves has not been noticed, so far as I am aware, on any other stone. There is every reason to believe that the stone, which is a rough slab of coarse reddish-brown micaceous schist, formed the cover of a cist; for in a cavity underneath it there was found some black mould, but there was no urn or bones. The locality has numerous traces of prehistoric man.

Several tall stones, called locally Clachan Sleuchdaidh, or stones of worship, are in the immediate neighbourhood, with hundreds of cairns and rude cup-marks of a simple character on many of the rocky ridges crowning the rising points among the heather; while for miles along the high road, especially on the upper side, may be seen every few yards hollows of various sizes in the dry moorland, and on every mound, indicating the sites of primitive dwellings. A large population must have resided in the far-off ages in this glen. The whole region has still large spaces of uncultivated land left very much in its original state, covered with rough boulders and brown heather, and will doubtless yield rich results to the zealous antiquarian student who will explore it thoroughly.

I may mention that on the hill to the north-east of Kirkmichael, not far from the village, there is a very curious rock. It is a portion of a limestone vein, protruding here above the soil, and sloping to the south-west. It is covered with very deep grooves, arranged on either side in almost symmetrical order, like a herring-bone pattern. These grooves end in roundish closed cavities or slope off freely to the edge. There can scarcely be a doubt that these extraordinary grooves were made by the action of water, though how or in what manner it would be extremely difficult to say, for I have never seen anything at all like it elsewhere, and I have seen very remarkable specimens of the eroding

power of water. I refer to the phenomenon, which might otherwise concern the geologist alone, because it seems to me that the primitive inhabitants of the strath took advantage of these grooves and cavities made thus by nature to their hand, and employed them in the same way as they used the cup-marks which they themselves had carved. I ground this supposition on the fact that the grooves and cavities are always, even in the driest weather, more or less full of water, presenting a glistening appearance in the distance when the sun is shining upon them; and that the people of the locality are still in the habit every year of going to them on the first day of May, to wash their faces with the contained liquid, to which they impute special properties of healing and blessing—a custom which is probably a survival of a pagan one. When making inquiries for cup-marked stones from the people in the neighbourhood, I was directed by several persons to this rock, and told its curious history.

I have thus described the most prominent of the cup-marked stones that up to this date have been discovered in this district. It is highly probable that more will yet be found, as the number of observers increases, and public attention is directed to the subject. Large as is the number now known, it can bear but a small porportion to the number that must have been destroyed within the life-time of the present generation. Waste lands in the neighbourhood have been extensively brought into cultivation within the last forty years; and many fields which I remember in my early days to have seen as wild pasture, or brown moorland, covered with boulders, are now rich fields of corn or clover. These agricultural improvements have undoubtedly involved the destruction of many of the old stone monuments, which were condemned indiscriminately along with their associated boulders, as cumberers of the ground, and their fragments worked up into dykes and farm buildings. The superstitious feeling that once guarded the stones of worship of our ancestors has passed away in this utilitarian age, which prefers the cultivation of turnips to that of sentiment; and even where it still exists, it does not seem to apply to cup-marked stones, for all traditions connected with their purpose have long ago vanished from the recollection of the people, and no definite ideas are now associated with

them; a presumption among many others of their remote antiquity. In not a few cases we find the fatal blasting hole bored among the cups in a stone, but the hand of the destroyer has been stayed by some mysterious feeling that the unknown marks were *uncanny*, and might bode no good to any one who meddled with them. Would that this panic, which in such a case is a very appropriate feeling, could seize all such agricultural Vandals, and lead to the preservation of monuments which we cannot put into a museum for safety, but which on that account ought to be watched over with even more zealous care, as a valuable legacy to us from a dumb and almost forgotten past, which we are bound to transmit uninjured to the future, for its instruction as for ours.

Numberless conjectures arise in the mind regarding these mysterious cup-markings; but I shall only hazard the general remark, in conclusion, regarding the cup-markings in the Aberfeldy district, that they appear to me to indicate a higher stage of culture than those found in many other places in Scotland. When compared with those in the Killin district, for instance, they show a manifest superiority of execution. I do not know a single example of a concentric ring round a cup on the stones found on the shores of Loch Tay or in Glendochart or Glen Lochay, and examples of connecting grooves are extremely rare; whereas in the Aberfeldy district there is hardly a stone found that does not exhibit both these characteristics. The cups farther north and west are also comparatively small and shallow, so that they are often almost obliterated by exposure to the weather; they are exceedingly rude too, as a rule, as if those who executed them had inferior tools, or lacked skill or leisure; and they are carved almost exclusively on slabs and boulders of soft micaceous schist which could be most easily impressed. The reverse is the case with those of the Aberfeldy district. The majority of cup-marks are carved on hard crystalline diorite, the hardest and most enduring stone that could be found; they are made deep and large and distinct, with sharp clear edges, against which no weathering seems to prevail, as if the sculptors had good tools, knew how to use them, and had plenty of leisure to carry out their purpose properly. And what we thus actually find, is that which we should antecedently have expected. Strathtay, a rich region, with fertile soil and genial

climate, and a magnificent river with all its ameliorating influences flowing through it, must in these early days have afforded more comfortable conditions of human existence than the subalpine regions farther to the west and north, with their colder climate and their less productive soil. The struggle for existence in the one case would be far less severe than in the other, allowing more leisure for the cultivation of the arts of life.