

III.

NOTICE OF A SCULPTURED STONE AT STRATHMARTINE, NEAR DUNDEE. By A. H. MILLAR, F.S.A. Scot.

The sculptured stone at Strathmartine to which I wish especially to refer, is figured in the first volume of Dr Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, plate lxxvii. As the representation there given is not very accurate, and the *locale*, as described by Dr Stuart, has been altered, I have thought it advisable to have an exact sketch made of this interesting stone, and would now place on record its present situation for the guidance of future inquirers.

Writing in 1856, Dr Stuart thus refers to the Strathmartine Stone:—"The fragment at Strathmartine stands by the side of the public road, opposite to the gate of the old churchyard of St Martin."

As the wall against which the stone was laid had to be reconstructed some years ago, this relic was carefully conveyed by the proprietor, John Grant, Esq. of Craig Mills, to a place of safety within the gate leading to his grounds. Here it has been erected in an upright position, and securely bolted to the wall, so as to prevent two weather cracks from spreading and destroying the whole stone.

From the sketch (see woodcut) made by Mr David Small of Glasgow, the style of ornamentation will be readily seen. The two serpents, carved in high relief in the centre of the panel, are placed in a position quite unique, so far as I can discover, and seem to be rather decorative



Sculptured Stone at Strathmartine
(4 feet 3 inches in length).

than symbolical. The upper portion of the border-carving shows the same reptile introduced in a manner which favours the supposition that it is merely utilised ornamentally.

The height of the stone at present is 51 inches. If the lower portion, now destroyed, was ever completed so as to form an oblong panel, its total height must have been about 60 inches. The carved face of the stone measures 20 inches at the base, and tapers to 9 inches at the top. The back is perfectly plain and vertical; but the thickness from back to front varies from $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the base to 6 inches. The width of the stone at the back is 21 inches; the difference between back and front being caused by an ovolo moulding which now remains upon one side only. A section shows that the border ornamental band differs in width, as it measures $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches on one side, and $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches on the other. The space occupied by the sunk panel where the serpents are carved is 9 inches wide in the centre.

There is one peculiarity about this stone which I do not remember having seen recorded of any other. Whilst the front and two sides are tapered towards the top, the back is plumb upright; that is to say, the figure of the stone presents the appearance of a bisected, truncated pyramid, of which the back forms the bisecting line. The form seems to suggest that this monument belongs to a later period than other sculptured slabs in the neighbourhood, and that it has been intended for a recumbent slab, similar to that at St Vigean, figured in the *Proceedings*, vol. iv. (New Series) p. 411.

I would take the liberty of suggesting to the Society, that it is desirable to have an amended record of the present locations of such of the Sculptured Stones of Scotland as have been removed since Dr Stuart's work was written. In many cases these will have passed through serious vicissitudes in the intervening years; and some of them have gone quite astray, and are now probably lost until they happen to be rediscovered. Such is the case with the second Strathmartine stone, (vol. ii. plate ci.), of which I can find no trace in the locality; and a stone described by Dr Stuart as being in Dundee is either hidden in undesirable obscurity, or has been annexed by some unknown antiquary to grace his private archæological collection.