

## II.

NOTICE OF CUP-MARKED STONES AND CURING WELL ON THE  
ESTATE OF GARTH, FORTINGALL, PERTHSHIRE. WITH DRAWINGS.  
By JAMES MACKINTOSH GOW, F.S.A. Scot.

The area embraced in the following notice is from the hamlet of Drumcharry on the west, to the Keltney Burn on the east (2 miles), the river Lyon on the south, and about 2 miles north from where the Keltney Burn joins the Lyon.

At the beginning of my holiday in September last, on making inquiry of the older people of the district, I could get no information regarding cup-marked stones; they had never heard of such things in the neighbourhood, and for some time I had given up hope of making any discovery, until one day, when fishing, I came on five well-defined cups on the rock which forms the bed of the Lyon, a few yards west from the lime-kiln belonging to the farm of Tynadalloch. The rock is of the mica schist, which prevails over the whole district, and is near the grass bank of the river; it is submerged when the river is in flood, but as it rises at an angle, the higher cups are deeper and more clearly marked than the lower, which are very shallow (no doubt caused by the action of the water). It is remarkable that the whole five, however, are perfectly distinct and unmistakable, and I am not aware that any cups have been previously noticed on the rock *in situ* and that in the bed of a river. There are large surfaces of exposed rock of the same formation adjoining, but without marks. I further examined all the rocks and boulders as far west as Drumcharry without any trace of markings, but in the village itself there is a large boulder 7 feet long, of mica-schist, with thick veins of quartz, in front of one of the cottage doors, with a large well-formed cup near its west end; the cup is over 4 inches in diameter, and nearly 1 inch deep. This is the largest cup I have seen in the district, and may have been used as a mortar, but it is not large enough to have been used in making pot barley, like the knocking-stones, of which there are many examples still lying about the village; and although they are not used for that purpose now, all the people above

fifty years of age had either prepared the barley in these stones themselves or had seen it done. A stone, 2 feet 9 inches long by 18 inches broad, was pointed out to me forming a sort of pavement in front of a barn door, also in the village, with three well-executed cups of a good size on the top. This was evidently a fragment of a larger stone which had at some time been broken up, and on which perhaps more cups were made, but no trace of the remainder could be seen.

A little west from Drumcharry, and above the farm-house of Balnacraig, there is a remarkable oblong hill surmounted with the remains of an important Pictish fort, or Casteil-na-Feinne, and on the slope east

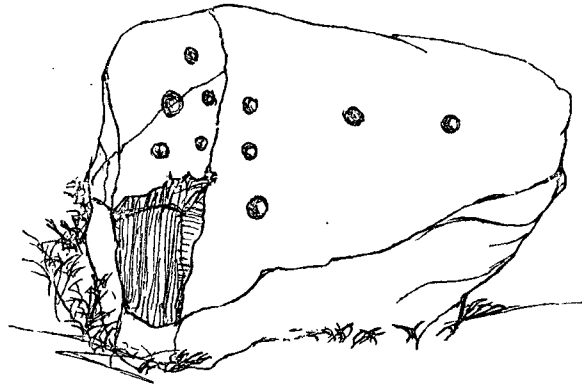


Fig. 1. On Hillside above Wester Litigan.

from this fort there are several large boulders of a coarse schist rock, on one of which I found a cup-mark about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. The stone is about 5 feet long by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad, and stands nearly 3 feet above ground. Farther east, in the glen of the Keltney Burn, and on the hillside 500 yards above the farm-house of Wester Litigan, and about the same distance south-west from the old castle of Garth, one of the strongholds of the Wolf of Badenoch, there is a large harp-shaped boulder of mica-schist (fig. 1), 8 or 9 feet long by 6 or 7 feet broad, and 4 feet above ground. In making recent additions to farm buildings in the neighbourhood, many stones have been broken up and

removed, and this one has had a large piece taken from its top. I found two fragments, however, close at hand, and on putting them together, they contained five cup marks, which, with five on the large stone, made ten in all; and as another piece of the stone, about 3 feet long, had been taken away, more marks may have been on it. The fragments were too large for one single-handed to place in their original position; but I wrote to the proprietor, Sir Donald Currie, who promised that this would be done, and steps taken to prevent further damage to this interesting specimen. The stone when restored would appear like the sketch.

About 600 yards due north from the ruin of Garth Castle there is a heather-covered conical hillock—a "sithean" or fairy knowe—and on the very top is placed an irregular shaped stone (fig. 2), about 4 feet

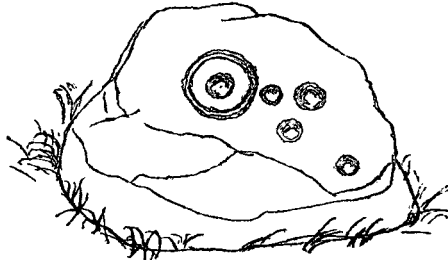


Fig. 2. On top of Conical Hillock to north of Garth Castle.

long by 3 feet broad, and 2 feet above ground, on which there are five cup-marks. One is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, one 3 inches, and three about 2 inches; while round the second largest one there is a grooved ring, 6 inches in diameter. This is a most interesting specimen, and the only one I saw in the district with a ringed cup.

Coming down the glen there are many of these "sitheans," round and oval; and on the highest point of one of the latter 500 yards south-east from the farm-house of West Litigan, there is a water-worn mica-schist boulder, 3 feet long and about the same breadth, with one cup-mark; and not far from the same spot there is a cluster of rocks, one large portion having been rent, in long past ages, into four parts, each separate part having on it a single cup-mark, one of these being of an extra large size.

Near this, and up the hill between the farm-houses of Easter and Wester Litigan, there are the remains of a circular Pictish fort, formed of large boulders, but not so extensive in size as the one already mentioned above Balnacraig. A former tenant had, it appears, succeeded in removing a considerable portion of it, to enlarge the field where it stands, when he was stopped by the then proprietor; and I was surprised to find that grown-up people, who had lived all their days within a mile of the fort, had never heard of its existence.

Further down, between the farm-houses of Upper Blarish and Balnacroick, I was struck with the prominent appearance of a large weather-worn mass of mica schist rock (fig. 3), with veins of quartz, standing

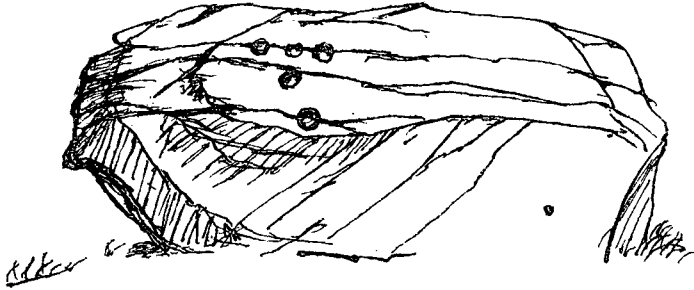


Fig. 3. Above the Farm of Balnacroick, Keltney Burn.

with the worn furrows of the strata on the top, and covered with moss and lichen nearly an inch thick. On removing the moss, I was rewarded by finding five cup-marks lying across the weather-worn grooves of the rock, which, when the cups were sculptured, was no doubt a smooth surface. This rock appeared to be a part of the hillside, and had not travelled; it is about 8 feet long by 4 feet broad, and 3 feet above ground.

At the interesting village of Nether Blarish, which, like Drumcharry, is in nearly the same condition as it was two or three hundred years ago, and is now however occupied by only a few families of Macdougalls, no one had ever seen anything of cup-marked stones; but while taking leave of the place and the kind people, I noticed a stone from a broken-

down dike, with two capital cup-marks; and as it would likely very soon form a part of the road metal, I secured the upper part of it, which unfortunately broke into two pieces, with a cup on each; and for the information of those interested, and as a specimen of the stones of the district, I now present one of these to the Society.

The peculiarities to be remarked on the stones noticed in this paper are, that so many of them had only one cup; while in three cases five was the number of cups recorded on each rock or stone. It is a most interesting district, and as many of the people now know what cup-marks really are like, I have no doubt many more specimens may be found, and perhaps greater care taken to preserve them when a new dike or a byre has to be built.

Referring to the notice by Dr Macmillan (see *Proceedings*, vol. vi. p. 123) of a cup-marked stone on "the island" at Keltney Mill (fig. 4), I

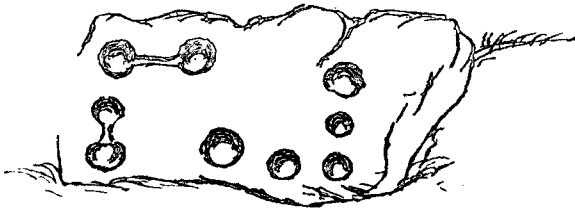


Fig. 4. At the Island, Keltney Burn Mill.

examined it with Mr Duncan Haggart, who first noticed it (a brother of Mr Donald Haggart, Killin), and he assured me that three of the marks on the stone were made by him when a boy, so that there are really only nine original cups instead of twelve, as mentioned in the notice; and as these three recent marks are feeble and quite shallow, no one would be more ready to admit on examination that they are new than Dr Macmillan. I have made a sketch of the stone to supplement his notice. The stone is  $25\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by  $18\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad, and about 6 inches above ground; and two pairs of the cups are connected with a groove; the largest pair are about 3 inches in diameter, while the others

vary down to half that size. It is on Sir Robert Menzies's property, and would make a valuable addition to the Society's collection, if that could be arranged.

On the hillside, a few hundred yards south-west of the old Castle of Garth, there is a well or spring called "Fuaran n' Gruarach," and also "Fuaran n' Druibh Chasad," being *Well of the Measles*, or *Well of the Whooping-Cough*. It was famous in the district for the cure of these infantile diseases, and nearly all I spoke to on the subject had themselves been taken to the well, or had taken their own children, to drink the water; and when an epidemic of the maladies occurred, my informant remarked on the curious and amusing spectacle the scene presented on a summer morning, when groups of children, with their mothers, went up the hill in procession, and the whooping chorus by which they were accompanied. The last epidemic of whooping-cough occurred in 1882, when all the children of the neighbourhood were taken to the well. The well springs in considerable quantity from the hill, and a few stones suffice to make a small pool, where it gathers. It is said never to run dry, even in the hottest summer; is as clear as crystal, and always delightfully cold. At a distance of forty-six paces up the hill there is a water-worn mica-schist boulder, 5 feet long by 4 feet broad, and standing nearly 3 feet above ground. It has sweeping curves and deep furrows on its sides; and on the east side there are two natural cavities, one much larger than the other. This larger cavity would admit an ordinary-sized hand, is of an oval form, and about 6 or 7 inches deep, the mouth being  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches long by  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches broad. It generally contains rain-water; its capacity up to the under part of its lip, where it overflows, being nearly a quart.

It was the custom to carry the water from the well (perhaps the well was at one time at the foot of the stone), and place it in the cavity, and then give the patients as much as they could take, the water being administered with a spoon made from the horn of a living cow, called a "beadharc," or living horn, this, it appears, being essential to effect a cure.

Shortly after, I had occasion to visit Athole, and had a spoon given to

me, which had been used for this purpose thirty years ago by the person who gave it, and who had herself taken the horn to the tinker to be made into the spoon. The well at which she had used it, however, was near Kindrochit of Struan, and my time would not permit an inspection of it.