

## VII.

NOTICES OF SOME RECENTLY DISCOVERED INSCRIBED AND SCULPTURED STONES. BY JOSEPH ANDERSON, LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

(1) *Rune-inscribed Cross at Thurso*.—This cross was made known to me by Dr Munro, who had seen it in June last in the Free Library and Museum at Thurso. Recognising the importance of having a monument of such peculiar interest properly placed on record, I wrote to Mr Henry Manson, the Librarian, requesting him to ask the authorities to allow the stone to be forwarded here for this purpose. In reply, I received from Mr Manson the following letter, which tells the circumstances under which the stone was found:—

Public Library, Thurso, 7th July 1896.

DR ANDERSON.

Dear Sir,—In accordance with your request, I duly laid your letter before the Library and Museum Committee, and received instructions to forward the stone to you for examination. I also enclose a sketch showing the position of the stone when found.

The circumstances of its discovery were as follows:—

In the month of April this year some old buildings near the ruins of St Peter's church were taken down, and a kippering-kiln for herrings erected on the site. After the place was built the workmen were excavating for laying down a concrete floor. There being a very considerable fall in the surface of the ground, they had to go down at the end of the building next the street some five feet or more. It was there they came in contact with the graves, in pure sand, all the under soil in that locality being sand. The graves were formed of rough stones set on edge, lying east and west. The stones forming the largest grave were about 3' 6" long, 2' 0" wide, 2' 0" deep, and 1½" thick.

The cross lay on the top of this grave. Part of the head had apparently been broken off in the erection of the former buildings.

The body appeared to have been buried in a contracted position. The bones were considerably decayed. The skull was large, better preserved, and had a number of teeth remaining in it.

The small grave was about the half size of the other, and similarly formed of flat stones, but had no cross on the top. What bones were found in it were very much decayed, and were apparently those of a small body.

HENRY MANSON.

The cross itself (fig. 1) is roughly hewn out of a slab of the Caithness flag-stone, and now measures 2 feet 9 inches in greatest length. The shaft measures 2 feet  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches in breadth at the lower end, and tapers slightly to  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches in breadth at the intersection of the arms. The cross-head measures 8 inches across, the projection of the arms on either side being less than 2 inches, and their width vertically at the ends  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches. The summit of the cross is partially broken away, so that it only rises  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches above the arms, and shows a breadth of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches. The thickness of the slab throughout is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.



Fig. 1. Cross with Runic inscription, from Thurso. (3.)

The inscription is rather irregularly cut along the one side of the obverse of the cross in Runic letters, which vary from 3 to 4 inches in height. There are divisions of three points between the words, but this is not strictly adhered to. The lower part of the shaft of the cross is wanting, and unfortunately this deprives us of the first portion of the inscription, which reads from the bottom upwards. The first letter visible is represented only by part of the crook of an R crossing the fracture, and this is followed by the letters THI. The word thus rendered imperfect ended in RTHI, and the inscription goes on VBIRLAKTHITA : AFT : IKULB : FOTHURSIN. The formula, therefore, is the usual one ending with the statement that the monument was made or placed in commemoration of the father of the person who so made or placed it. This person's name, therefore, ought to be found at the commencement of the inscription

as the subject to its predicate, and the object ought to come between the predicate and the final clause. The word or words which stand immediately before the final clause read RTHI : VBERLAKTHITA :

The latter word is not a verb, but the RTHI which precedes it may be the concluding letters of the verb [GE]RTHI = made, and the word following it would then be resolved into a noun and its qualifying demonstrative pronoun VBERLAK THITA = this overlay. This is grammatically correct, UBERLAK being a neuter noun and THITA a form of the accusative singular neuter of the demonstrative pronoun given by Stephens. The inscription would thus read :—

—[GE]RTHI UBIRLAK THITA AFT IKULB FOTHUR SIN  
— MADE OVERLAY THIS AFTER INGULF FATHER HIS

Regarding the statement of the finders that the cross actually lay along the top of the grave, we may conclude that the expression “made this overlay”—which is different from the formula used where the stone has been erected or set up—really describes what was done, and records that the slender stone cross, which was scarcely fitted for standing upright, was laid flat over the grave, with the inscribed face uppermost.

As to the probable date of the inscription, it is no doubt late, though probably earlier than the formula which requests a prayer for the soul. The alphabet used is the later Scandinavian, and not the earlier Old Northern. The site of the burial is only about a dozen yards to the eastwards of the east end of St Peter's church; and as the present inclosure of the graveyard is brought close up to the east end of the church, there can be little doubt that formerly the graveyard extended further in that direction. The ruined fabric of St Peter's, which ceased to be used as the parish church about 1832, is a cruciform structure, apparently of late sixteenth century work, according to Muir. As there are no remains of the previous church visible, it probably occupies the site of the earlier building. The contracted posture of the burial and the stone-lined grave might, in other circumstances, have been taken as indications of the heathen time, but as the graves are oriented, and were probably included in the consecrated ground, they are presumably Christian. The earldom of Orkney, to which the northern part of Caithness at that time belonged, was christianised by King Olaf Tryggvason in the latter years of the tenth century, the Norse population accepting the faith “because the king was masterful, and they could

not help themselves." The date of these burials is probably not later than between this period and the extinction of the Norse line of the earls of Orkney by the murder of Earl John at Thurso in 1231, after which the extensive territory in the North of Scotland, which the Norse-

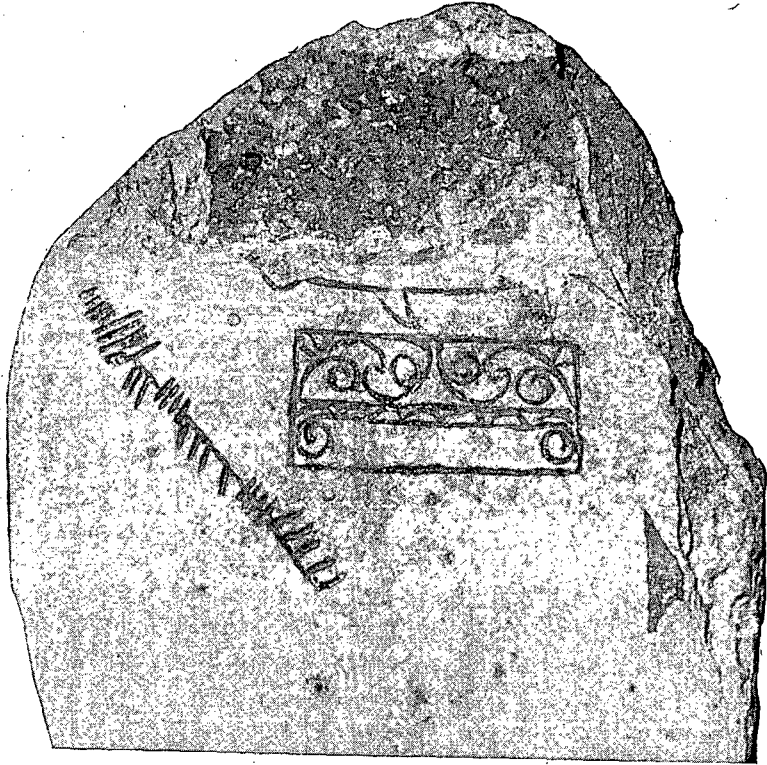


Fig. 2. Stone with symbols and Ogham inscription, from Links of Keiss Bay, Caithness. (†.)

men had gained by conquest and ruled for 350 years, was broken up into the three earldoms of Orkney, Caithness, and Sutherland, the two latter coming again under the Crown of Scotland.

(2) *Stone, with Symbols and Ogham Inscription, at Keiss, Caithness.—*

I saw this stone at Keiss Castle in August last, when on a visit to Mr F. T. Barry, M.P., who has for several years been conducting extensive excavations in a remarkable group of brochs on his estate of Keiss, and has kindly given me the opportunity of examining them. The stone was brought to Mr Barry by Mr John Nicolson, Nybster, who, in addition to his artistic tastes, has a keen eye for anything remarkable in the way of antiquities. He had found it on the links of Keiss Bay, lying exposed in several fragments, and unfortunately a portion of the upper end of the stone, including part of the incised symbol of the fish, and possibly also a portion of the inscription, has not been recovered. It is a slab of the Caithness pavement, about 4 feet in length, 2 in breadth, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in thickness.

On the upper part of its smoother face it bears two of the symbols of the early Sculptured Stones of Scotland—the fish, and the rectangular oblong with curvilinear ornamentation, which occurs ten times on the early class of incised slabs, and only twice on the later class, which are sculptured in relief, and has been variously supposed to represent a book or a book-satchel, etc. The stone is fractured, so that the whole of the upper portion of the fish has scaled off, leaving only the line of the belly, and the pectoral, ventral, and anal fins.

To the left of the symbols, and extending obliquely upwards to the fractured part of the stone, is a well-defined ogham inscription. It is written on a stem-line, and reads apparently from the bottom upwards,


  
 N E H T E T R i

The inscription is broken off at the fracture, and it is uncertain whether it continued further upwards or bent round and was continued across the top of the stone and above the back of the fish.

Rev. Dr Joass, who also saw the stone at Keiss, and the Earl of Southesk, to whom photographs and squeezes were sent by Mr Barry, both agree in the general transliteration of the inscription, with certain differences of detail as alternative suggestions, which do not, however, materially affect the result. The stone has now been presented by Mr Barry to the National Museum.

(3) *Sculptured Slab at Murroes, Forfarshire.*—I heard of the discovery of this fragment of a sculptured slab at Murroes in August last, when Rev. James Nicoll, the minister of Murroes, sent me a rubbing of it, and subsequently forwarded the stone itself for description and exhibition. It was found in the course of levelling a portion of the surface of the churchyard, and had been apparently used to help to firm a modern tombstone.

The stone (fig. 3) is part of a slab of the coarse-grained reddish sandstone of the district, measuring about 14 by 16 inches, and 3 inches in thick-

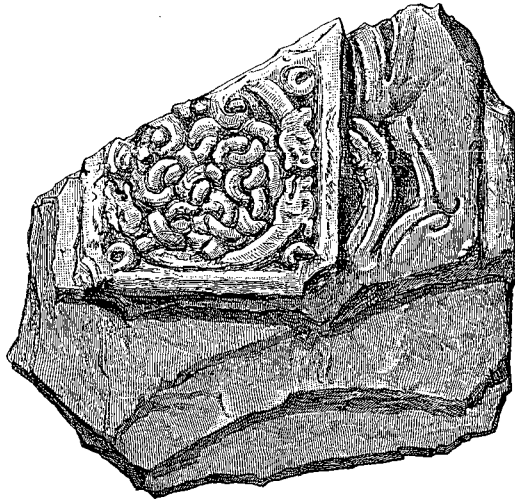


Fig. 3. Portion of sculptured Cross-slab, from Murroes, Forfarshire.

ness at the thickest part, and carved in relief on one face only. The uncarved face is not dressed, but shows the natural bedding of the stone, so that in all probability a part of the original thickness of the slab has been split off, and we may conclude that it may have been carved on both faces. What remains of the one face shows at one side a flattened edging an inch in width; and within that, on the same plane, an oblong panel, broken at both ends, containing the figure of an animal in low relief, in a crouching posture, with its back coming up to

the edging, and its hind leg along the opposite side of the panel. The centre part of the stone is raised so as to project about an inch and a quarter beyond the plane of the side panel. This projecting part has an edging which runs parallel with the edging of the slab on one side. The other side is broken away, but I have no doubt that it finished with a similar edging, and a side panel on the same plane as the panel on the left side. From this it appears that the fragment is part of an upright slab about 20 inches in width, with a projecting cross in the centre, of which the portion here remaining is part of the shaft, flanked on either side by figures of animals.

The portion of the cross-shaft remaining shows a prettily carved piece of knot-work, composed of the bodies of four interlaced serpentine creatures, with crescentic or fish-like tails. Two of the heads escape at one side of the knot-work, and front each other, open-mouthed; and two are similarly arranged at the other side. The tails escape at the corners, and the knot-work thus becomes a circular arrangement within a square panel. A design almost identical with this occurs on the stone at Shandwick, Ross-shire, and an analogous arrangement of four serpentine creatures with fish-like tails is seen on the stone from Canna subsequently described.

(4) *Incised Symbol Stone at Pabbay, Barra Island, Outer Hebrides.*—I first heard of this stone from Rev. Father Allan Macdonald, of Dalibrog, South Uist, who discovered it on one of his visits to Pabbay in 1889. He was good enough to send me a rough tracing of the figures upon it and a few descriptive notes, from which I learned that the stone had been laid bare by the drifting of the sand in the graveyard of Pabbay. As the island is peculiarly inaccessible, and inhabited only by three poor families, no opportunity of obtaining a better representation of the stone presented itself till last season, when Mr Erskine Beveridge, a Fellow of the Society, in the course of a yachting trip to the Outer Hebrides, took Barra Island in his way, with the view of obtaining a rubbing and photo of the symbol stone, and was fortunately successful in both objects.

The stone is an unshaped slab of the dark-coloured schist of the island, about 3 feet 6 inches long and 14 inches broad, with incised sculpturing on one face only. From the annexed diagram of the sculpture, for which I am indebted to Mr J. Romilly Allen, it will be

seen that the lower part of the stone on the sculptured side has scaled off; above this is a well-defined figure of the lily or flower symbol, with its two lotus-like terminals; above that, a very well-defined and characteristic crescent symbol, with V-shaped

sceptre; and above this crescent symbol, and indeed standing upon it, an equally well-defined and incised cross-potent. This remarkable conjunction of an incised cross with these incised symbols is quite unusual, and the suggestion has been made that the cross may be a much later addition to the other sculpturings on the stone. The manner in which it is superposed on the crescent may be thought to give some countenance to the idea; but I am not aware that there is any other reason for the supposition, and this is obviously insufficient.

(5) *Portion of Cross-Shaft, sculptured in relief, from the Island of Canna.*—Mr Beveridge, on his visit to Canna Island for the purpose of making rubbings and photos of the well-known cross there, was informed by Mr Thom, son of the proprietor of the island, that a portion of an undescribed cross had recently been found in a wall not far from the cross figured by Stuart.<sup>1</sup> He has been kind enough to permit me to submit to this meeting rubbings and photos of the sides and edges of this fragment, which is one of exceptional



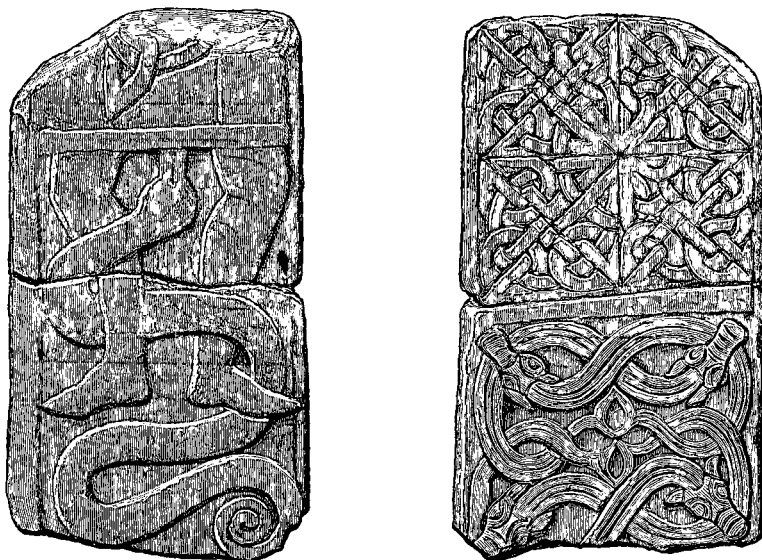
Fig. 4. Diagram of sculpture on the Symbol Stone at Pabbay, Barra Island. ( $\frac{1}{12}$ .)

interest, from the unusual character of its decoration. It is in two pieces, together measuring 2 feet in length by 1 foot in breadth and 3 inches in thickness, and sculptured in relief on both faces and both edges.

<sup>1</sup> *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii. pls. 50 and 51.



The obverse shows the lower part of the figure of a man from the waist to the feet, clad in a tunic reaching nearly to the knees, the legs bare or tightly swathed, the feet shod. On the tunic is a triquetra. Below the feet are the terminal coils of a serpent, the body of which passes behind the man's left foot, in front of the left leg and behind the right leg, coming round to the front at the right knee, with the head



Figs. 5 and 6. Portion of Cross-Shaft recently found at Canna. Obverse and reverse. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

approaching the hem of the tunic. Mr Romilly Allen makes out the head of the serpent to be as seen from above, and not in profile. The sculpture, though in low relief, is executed with singular boldness and freedom.

The reverse shows, on the upper part, a square panel of interlaced work, elaborately arranged in four squares, with diagonal intersections subdividing each of the four smaller squares into four triangles, not unlike the pattern on the cross of five squares at Ulbster, in Caithness. Underneath is a square panel, filled with an interlacing pattern made

of the bodies of four serpents, with crescentic and fish-like tails, bulging heads and long snouts, similar to those on the Murroes Stone. The four tails are brought together in the centre of the panel, two and two opposing, and the bodies curve away right and left to the nearest corner of the panel, interlacing, as they go, the heads, escaping to grasp the body of the interlacing neighbour at the next corner of the panel.

The ornament on the sides of the stone is much defaced. One side seems to have consisted of interlaced work of figure-of-eight knots, and the other partly of Stafford knots and partly of double spirals (fig. 7), con-

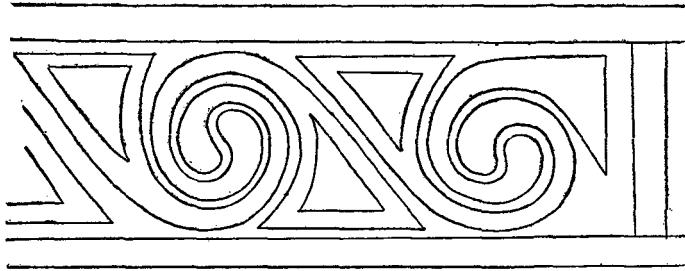


Fig. 7. Diagram of double spiral pattern on one side of the Cross-shaft, Canna.

nected in pairs, but not forming a continuous pattern. One very like it occurs on the circle round the head of the Tuam Cross in Galway, and on the edge of the Cross at Yarm, Yorkshire.

(6) *The Greenloaning Stone*.—This stone was described by Mr A. F. Hutchison, M.A., to the Stirling Society in February 1890, and again, with an illustration, in April 1893.<sup>1</sup> It is a slab of sandstone, showing about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet of its height by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide and a foot in thickness, standing on the edge of a circular mound of earth and stones, planted with trees, in a field on the south side of the road between Dunblane and Blackford, and not far from Greenloaning church. It is much covered with lichen, and bears on one of its broad faces two lines of inscription, one towards the upper part, the other towards the lower part of the stone, and one or two doubtful letters above and below. Mr

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 1889-90, p. 69, and 1892-93, p. 125, and plate xiii.

Hutchison, writing in 1890, says that previous to his visit some person had apparently been trying to make out the inscription by deepening the lines with the point of a nail or some other hard instrument. I visited the stone in the present summer, and found obvious evidence of the use of such an instrument on the part of a much more recent visitor. It is also stated that at the time when the mound was planted with trees, the stone, which had been found prostrate, was set up in this position, and the lettering re-cut.

In the autumn of the present year (and since this paper was read) the stone was removed from its site by the proprietor, Mr Archibald Stirling of Keir, and taken to Keir Mains, where it was buried for some time, to clear the surface of the lichen. It was then sent to the Smith Institute, Stirling, for preservation. I saw it in November 1897 on the grass in front of the institution where it is proposed to set it up. It was then quite clean, and the lettering could be traced without much difficulty. The stone, however, is very much larger than it appeared when at Greenloaning. It is a water-worn block of indurated sandstone, 7 feet 4 inches in length, 3 feet 6 inches in width at the top, and narrowing slightly till about 4 feet from the top it is 3 feet in width; from there it narrows more quickly from one side, till at the bottom it is only 2 feet 6 inches in width, the thickness throughout being about 12 to 14 inches. The inscription is somewhat irregularly placed on the face of the stone in two lines, the letters being from 2 inches to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height. The upper line is about 15 inches below the top of the stone, and seems to read—

BVAHGAHI · DONA†

The fifth letter looks like a G with a peculiar tail, or a Q with one side flattened. The last two letters consist of a small I placed on the top of a T, as is not uncommon in Romano-British inscriptions. The second line of the inscription is about 12 inches below the first, and seems to read—

VURSAMUBONOTVO.

The only letter in this line which is doubtful is the ninth, which looks like an O with the right side flattened, so that it might possibly

be read as a minuscule A. There are faint traces of apparently single letters above the first line and below the second, but they are very faint; and as the surface of the stone has a good many slight fissures, evidently due to natural causes, it is not easy to distinguish between them. Photographs of the stone and of the inscriptions separately have been presented to the Society by Professor T. M. Lindsay, D.D., F.S.A. Scot., but unfortunately the lichens on the surfaces have pre-



Fig. 10. Stone found at Burghead. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

vented reproduction. I had expected to be able to give a reproduction from a photograph of the stone subsequent to the removal of the lichen, but it has not been obtained in time for the present paper.

(7) *Stone at Burghead.*—I saw this stone when on a visit to Mr Young's excavations at Burghead in 1890, and he has been good enough to send a photograph and also a cast of it to the Society. It is a cubical block of the soft red sandstone of the district, measuring 15 inches in length by 12 inches in breadth and 5 inches in thickness. Its larger

faces are both flattish, showing the natural bedding of the rock. On one of these are somewhat deeply and irregularly cut, apparently with a sharp-pointed implement, a series of letters arranged in pairs, the second letter of each pair being apparently a C, as if it were a group of initials of the same family name. Among them is a reversed M, and in the last line a J turned to the right instead of to the left. I stated to Mr Young, when I first saw it, that it had no appearance of being either ancient or important, and that the forms of the letters were distinctly modern, some of them showing signs of having been cut or dug out, as if with the point of a knife. But as there is always an advantage in being able to show a faithful reproduction of anything which is likely to be made the subject of inquiry, I have had the photograph reproduced for the information of the Society.

(8) *Cup-marked Stone at Drumfours, Leochel-Cushnie, Aberdeenshire.*

—I have received the following notice of this stone from Rev. George Williams, F.S.A. Scot., Thornhill:—

“About a mile from Muggarthaugh, in the parish of Leochel-Cushnie, and on the left hand of the road to the parish church, there is in one of the fields of Drumfours a standing stone, measuring 5 feet high, 3 feet broad, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  wide. It is placed on the top of a hillock, which, owing to the rock beneath, has never come under the plough. Twenty-six yards in an easterly direction from the standing stone is an oblong blue boulder (fig. 11) of about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet length, 2 feet in depth, and at its widest part  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad. Its longest axis lies east and west. On its surface there are twenty-seven distinct cups, deeply carved, four of which are connected by a long groove, and one has been almost included in its larger and deeper neighbour.”

“After we had traced the cup-markings and were about to take our departure, our attention was attracted to the scorings on the south-east corner of the boulder, which, at first sight, present some resemblance to an ogham inscription. In order to test its real character, a rubbing of these markings was taken, and arrangements made for procuring a good photograph. This was subsequently obtained, and a copy sent to the Right Hon. the Earl of Southesk, who was good enough to inform me that, assuming the marks to be the remains of an ogham inscription, its

transliteration was rendered very difficult, from want of a clear stem-line, and from its being almost certainly imperfect at the end. The photographer also had chalked or otherwise marked the scores, which, though often done to facilitate matters, is always a mistake. On the whole, from the imperfect materials at command, and assuming the characters to be oghams, the only reasonable reading of the markings would present a close resemblance to that of the Logie Elphinstone inscription."

"It may be added, that the stone has been more than once in danger of being converted into road metal, and has only been saved from this fate.

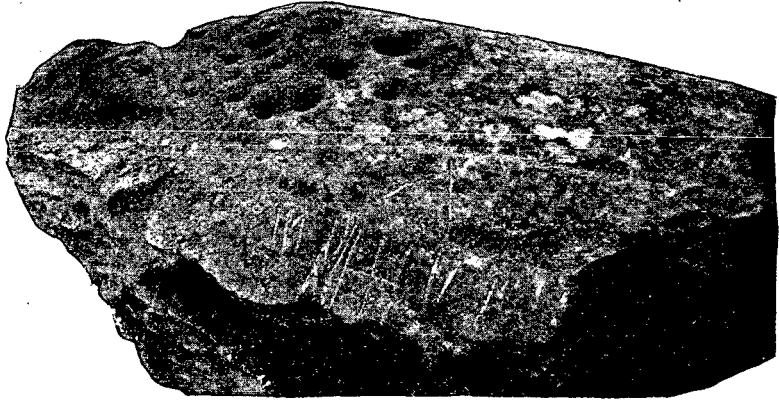


Fig. 11. Cup-marked Stone at Drumfours. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

by the intelligence of a surfaceman, who divined that the markings upon it must have had some meaning. Lord Sempill, on whose property it is, has given instructions for its preservation."

(9, 10) *Stones at Doune Lodge*.—I first heard of these two stones from Mr Adam Winter, gamekeeper at Doune Lodge, in July 1895. They had been seen by Rev. George Williams, F.S.A. Scot., Thornhill; and his attention having been attracted by the markings upon them, he communicated with the Earl of Southesk, by whose instructions photographs of the stones were taken, and copies sent to the Society.

The larger of the stones, as I learn from Mr Winter, was found in the Coillechat Burn, some eight or nine years ago, by the farmer of Drumloist, and subsequently brought to Doune Lodge, where it is now preserved.

It is a slab of close-grained sandstone, 20 inches long by 14 inches broad and 2 inches thick. It has been described by Mr W. B. Nicholson, of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in a letter to the Academy, dated May 11th, 1896.<sup>1</sup> I confess that I am quite unable to recognise upon it either the oghams or the ground plan alluded to by Mr Nicholson. The line of markings which he designates as "a long line of trees or under-



Fig. 12. Stone found in the Coillechat Burn. (†.)

wood" is indeed clearly visible, but the character of these scratchings does not appear to me to supply sufficient evidence of their being distinctly intentional, even if their artificial origin were admitted. I have thought it advisable to lay reproductions of the photographs of these stones before the Society, so that those who are interested in 'Pictish Inscriptions' may judge for themselves.

The smaller stone was found in the Annet Burn, close by Doune Lodge, and not far from the site of the old chapel of Kilmadock, by

<sup>1</sup> Mr Nicholson says:—"It has in one corner a cross followed by the oghams *ahé* . . . The rest of the stone, or a great part of it, contains a ground plan, in which (as well as boundary lines) a long line of trees or underwood is figured, a well (two small concentric circles), and another boundary stone (a cross)."

one of Mr Winter's assistants. It is a fragment of grey whinstone,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, by 6 inches in breadth, and 3 inches in thickness. The markings in this case are much more clearly visible, but I have no hesita-



Fig. 13. Stone found in the Annet Burn. (♠.)

tion in saying that I cannot agree with Mr Nicholson<sup>1</sup> that they form a 'Pictish Inscription,' although I am unable even to conjecture what they may really be.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Nicholson also describes the stone in his letter to the Academy, of May 11th, 1896. He says:—"It is a boundary stone of two tenements belonging to that church (Kilmadock), and lying one behind the other. One side has nothing on it. The inscription on the other would be expressed in our own alphabet as follows:—

YY+  
VCULLÆ  
N  
STUIT  
YY  
AAIHTA

The cross at top means that the church was owner. The two feathered arrows to its left are pointers showing the direction of the first tenement."