

III.

NOTICE OF THE WALLACE STONES, LONGFORGAN. BY ALEXANDER HUTCHESON, F.S.A. Scot., BROUGHTY FERRY.

In the village of Longforgan, Perthshire, there is preserved a relic, which tradition connects with the Scottish Patriot, Sir William Wallace. I understand it is the intention of Mr Charles J. G. Paterson of Castle Huntly, shortly to place this relic for preservation in a public position in the village of Longforgan. A fitting opportunity has therefore offered for a critical notice, which has not hitherto been accorded to the relic in question.

The tradition, which is a purely local one, relates that when Wallace fled from Dundee, after having slain the son of the English Governor, he rested on a stone which stood at the door of a cottage in Longforgan, and there received refreshment at the hands of the occupants, and the stone which served as a seat for the youthful hero has, it is claimed, been preserved to the present day, and is locally known as 'the Wallace Stone.'

The Longforgan incident is not referred to by Blind Harry, although he details the fatal quarrel in Dundee and the flight of Wallace.

The earliest reference I have met with to the Wallace Stone occurs in a MS. in the possession of Mr Paterson of Castle Huntly. This MS., which gives a description of the lordship of Castle Huntly—then called Castle Lyon—is not dated, but from internal evidence appears to have been written about 1760, by one who had apparently discharged the duties of forester or gardener on the estate.¹ The reference to the Wallace Stone is here given entire and *verbatim*.

"Among the curiosities of this Lordship their is on in the Village of Longforgan omitted formerly which I shall mention here, viz. :—In the reign of Edward Longshanks of England Sir William Wallace of Elerslie, Barronet, being a promising youth of 14 years of age was sent from there to his uncle's

¹ The MS. is signed 'A Gardener,' but whether the actual surname of the writer or a *nom de plume* signifying his employment there is nothing to show.

than proprietor of Kilspinde for his Education, who sent him to the School of Dundie—the Mayor of Dundie at that time was a Yorkshire Gentleman of the name of Selbie, who had on only son of 16 years of age was likewise at School their.

On day when all the Schoolars was at play at the west port of that town Young Selbie found fault with Wallace for having a Suit of short Green Clothes with a belt from thence depended a Durk or Skene. This weapon is still pratised in Scotland and is very Dangerous in Close Combat, it serves for manual uses as well as for Defence; it is ten Inches Long in the Blade and two edged with a row of holls up the middle, the handle is five inches Long, it hinges befor on the Belly¹—this Weapon young Selbie wanted from Wallace at anyrate, so that a scuffle insued between the two young Heroes. four times Wallace threw his antagonist on the ground, at the fifth atack Wallace drew his Skene & stobed young Selbie to the Heart and then fled to a house on the Northside of the Overgate of that town² where he was well screened by the female Sex while the English Garishon vended their fury on the inhabitants of the town and would have Laid it in ashes if it had not been for the interposition of Sir John Scringger of Dudup who went to his kness and stopted their fury. As this was the first of our Scots-worthy's Exploits Let us return to him. Wallace being conducted safe out at the West Port fled up the Tayside. The first halt he made was at a house in Longforgan and sat Down at the Door of said house on a stone which serves for a knocking stone and hear the Hospitall Landlady give him an ample repast of Bread and Milk. from there he proceeded to Killspindie, but his Uncle fearing a Search from Dundie sent our young Hero with his wife over the ferry at Lindors on their way to Dunipce in Stirlingshire where he was safe at that time. But to return, that stone at the house in Longforgan still goes by the name of the Wallace Stone, and what is more remarkable ever since the for-mentioned period of Wallace, the name of Smith from father to son hath been Landlords of this House and how long before is not known, only this on thing among all the Revolitions of time they have been very carfull in preserving this stone as a piece of great Antiquity."

The next notice in point of time, I have been able to trace, is contained in the Statistical Account of Sir John Sinclair, which gives the tradition as it existed in 1795. This account agrees with

¹ This by no means correct description of a Scottish dirk was probably drawn from some specimen of a weapon the writer had seen. The Scots or Highland dirk is usually single edged. The double-edged specimens have probably been made from the blade of a sword cut down—at least any that I have seen gave me that impression. The 'row of holls up the middle' would be most unusual. It will be observed that the writer gives the popular Scottish pronunciation "durk."

² An independent tradition in Dundee also assigns the house to a site in the Overgate.

the former; but as it is rather fuller in description, and is moreover apparently the basis of all subsequent references to the Stone, I make no apology for quoting it also entire.

"There is a very respectable man in Longforgan (Perthshire), of the name of Smith, a weaver, and the farmer of a few acres of land, who has in his possession a stone, which is called *Wallace's Stone*. It is what was formerly called in this country a *bear stone*, hollow like a large mortar, and was made use of to unhusk the bear or barley, as a preparation for the pot, with a large wooden mell, long before barley-mills were known.

"Its station was on one side of the door, and covered with a flat stone for a seat, when not otherwise employed. Upon this stone Wallace sat on his way from Dundee, when he fled, after killing the Governor's son, and was fed with bread and milk by the good wife of the house, from whom the man, who now lives there, and is proprietor of the stone, is lineally descended, and here his forbears have lived ever since, in nearly the same station and circumstances for about 500 years." (xix. 516-2.)

The story appears subsequently in much the same form in various publications, and amongst others in the Notes to Jamieson's Edition of *Blind Harry's Wallace*. In a local publication, Myles' *Rambles in Forfarshire and the Borders of Perthshire* (Dundee, 1850), the writer, in giving the tradition, states that he has seen the Stone.¹ No mention is made of the Stone or of the tradition in the Scottish Text Society's Edition of *Wallace*.

Mr Henry Prain, Longforgan, who remembers seeing the stone and hearing the tradition seventy years ago, informs me that the last male representative of the Smith family had been long abroad. When he came home he bought property in Dundee, and he and his sisters removed thither in or about 1860, and nothing is now known of the family. Mr Prain further states that the late Mr George Paterson of Castle Huntly, shortly before Mr Smith left for Dundee, asked for and obtained possession of the Wallace Stone, and from that date until now the relic has been preserved at Castle Huntly.

A short description of the stone or stones is now desirable. The

¹ He also rather inflatedly tells that it is kept as clear and clean as any dish in the house, and is exposed in as favourable a place for view as if it were a splendid piece of family china.

larger of the two stones (fig. 1), which is the only one described or referred to usually in giving the tradition, is what was known amongst country people as a 'knocking-stone'—a stone mortar for husking or preparing barley for cooking purposes. It measures externally about 15 inches across, by about 10 inches in height. The basin or hollow in the stone is 9 inches in diameter at the top, slightly less at the bottom, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth. Apart from the hollow, the stone has not otherwise been shaped or dressed. It is a rudely rhomboidal block, apparently of Kingoodie¹ sandstone, the edges and angles rounded by the weather or attrition.



Fig. 1. The 'Wallace Stones'—a knocking-stone with its cover. ($\frac{1}{15}$.)
(From a photograph by Mr A. Hutcheson.)

The other stone, which accompanies it, and which ought perhaps to be regarded as the real 'Wallace Stone,' since it and not the other formed the seat, is a thin undressed slab of a hard-grained sandstone, not more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, and otherwise of such dimensions as just to cover the lower stone, which was indeed its purpose (fig. 2). The under side of the slab appears to have been painted, and exhibits, when turned up to the light, many lines of circular striation such as would naturally be formed by contact with the lips of the trough when

¹ A quarry in the neighbourhood. The older knocking-stones were like this one, unshaped externally; the more modern examples were squared or octagonal in form.

in the process of being placed as a cover; it was moved round in a circular direction until the position where it fitted the lower stone was reached. That this circular striation is an important testimony to the antiquity of association of the two stones may be judged from the fact that the general under-surface of the upper stone has been so much worn down by this circular movement as to leave one or two small hard pebbles projecting from the semi-polished and striated surface. Another and more forcible argument may be drawn from the association of the two stones, that while, as will after appear, every such knocking-stone in Scotland was provided with a covering stone, in not another instance do I know of the survival of both the associated stones. I have seen scores

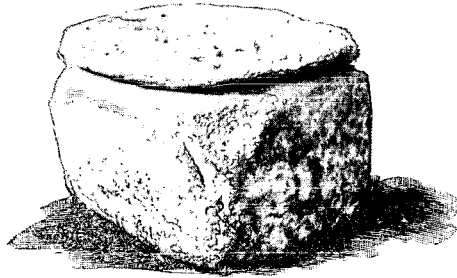


Fig. 2. The 'Wallace Stones'—a knocking-stone with its cover on. (17.)
(From a photograph by Mr A. Hutcheson.)

of knocking-stones, and I have seen one or two slabs which, on a fair presumption, may have been covers, but never associated, except in the present instance.

A 'knocking-stone' was probably at one time a necessary adjunct to every cottage in Scotland. It was in constant use for husking barley for the pot—a process accomplished by knocking, grinding, or rubbing the grains of barley against each other and against the stone with a wooden pestle or mallet. As the process has been long out of use, and soon there will be no one alive who has seen it, it may be well to place a description of it on record. The Rev. John Maclean, Cor. Mem., S.A. Scot., Minister of Grandtully, to whom I

have more than once had to acknowledge my grateful indebtedness for like aid, has favoured me with the following particulars of the process :—

The dry barley grains were put into the stone pot or knocking-stone, sprinkled with a little water to moisten them and to soften the husk, and then beaten with a wooden mallet or mell until the husks were rubbed off. If the day was dry and a wind blowing, the contents of the stone pot would be taken out and laid on a cloth or any little knoll or dry place to get the husks blown away, or sometimes, and especially if it was wet weather or no wind blowing, the barley was put into a 'wecht' (a sheepskin stretched over a hoop) and shaken up and down, the husks meanwhile being vigorously blown away by the breath. This would be repeated until all the husks were blown away. By this primitive method the barley intended for broth was prepared down to as recently as 1850 in some districts in the Highlands.

The wooden mallet was sometimes shaped like a pestle, and in use was simply lifted up and down with pounding motion; more frequently the mallet was fixed in a wood handle axe-wise, and was then used like a hammer. Sometimes the mallet was double headed, having a broad or ball-head at each end of a stem, like a dumb-bell, and having the handle fixed at a right angle to the middle of the stem. The advantage of this arrangement was thought to be that as the ball ends, from being used at intervals alternately, got to be worn to a slightly different superficies, they imparted, when alternated, a sort of rotatory motion to the grains of barley which contributed to unhusking, besides making a better balanced hammer than the one-sided form.¹

In Strathspey, wooden knocking-pots were used instead of stone.² They were usually much deeper than and not so wide at the mouth as the stone ones. The wood was supposed by some to be better than

¹ For description of a knocking-stone and mell of axe-type in the Society's Museum, see *Proceedings*, vol. xii. p. 263.

² There is a wood knocking-block with its wooden mell from Strathspey in the Museum. For description of it, see *Proceedings*, vol. xxiv. p. 278.

stone, inasmuch as the wood did not cut the barley as a hard stone would do, and the greater depth of the wooden pot was supposed to prevent the barley from jumping out in the process of being beaten.

These wooden pots had also covers of wood in the same way as the stone examples, the object of the cover being to keep the interior clean, and to prevent dogs and poultry from getting at the pot. Barley was said to be sweeter when dressed in this way than by modern methods.

The barley stone always stood just within the door, so as to be handy for getting the husks blown away.

Those who have seen the interior of a Highland cottage before the inroad of the modern tourist had made the inhabitants 'sprush up' can well realise that a few barley husks lying about the floor would not raise any feelings of inconvenience to the inmates, and the probability is that in Wallace's time the barley stone stood well inside the house, as this position would give it better protection from the weather, and it might at the same time furnish a seat at a period when we may be sure the cottage homes of Scotland were not overburdened with furniture.

This is not the place to discuss the probabilities of the tradition. It is sufficient to observe that there are distinct points of difference between it and the narrative of Blind Harry, which would seem to indicate the tradition was not due to that work. Further, it may be remarked that the Longforgan tradition does not deal with any of the superhuman feats, the hero-myths current in Scotland, many of which have not yet been recorded, but relates to an incident that has all the colour of probability about it, and I think there is every reason for the careful preservation of a relic so interesting, mainly on account of the story which has linked them with the National hero, but also as relics of an extinct domestic usage in Scotland.