

IV.

NOTE ON A CRESSET FOUND NEAR HAWICK. BY CAPTAIN ANGUS GRAHAM, F.S.A. SCOT.

I venture to draw the attention of the Society to the discovery of an interesting relic at Teviot Bank, 4 miles north-east of Hawick. The object in question is a block of stone roughly squared, and bearing on one face circular cups disposed like the pips of a five of hearts. The general shape of the stone and appearance of the cups may be estimated from the illustration (fig. 1).

As will be seen, the block is, unfortunately, not entire. It has been split in halves lengthways, one half has again been broken across, and one of the resulting quarters—which we may presume to have borne a fifth cup—has disappeared entirely. The existing pieces, however, can be fitted together with accuracy, so that fairly satisfactory measurements can be made.

The greatest length, along the fracture, is 15·3 inches, the greatest breadth, across the middle, 11·7 inches; the damaged edges are rather shorter, being 14·7 inches and 10·7 inches respectively. The larger fragment is 7·7 inches in breadth, and the smaller one 4 inches in breadth, respectively, at the broadest points. The depth of the block varies from 6 inches to 7 inches according to the irregularities of the under surface, which is much broken. The several faces of the block have been finished off with different degrees of care: that which bears the cups has been quite well squared and smoothed, though it has suffered hard usage; the two incomplete side-faces and the longer complete side-face are likewise well executed and are still fairly smooth; but the shorter complete side-face, being very rough and irregular, does not appear to have been nearly so carefully finished, and the corner at one end of it is not rectangular. The under surface has been so much split and broken that it is impossible to say whether or no the block originally stood on any kind of a base or pedestal.

The cups, as will be seen, are not quite uniform in shape or size; the central one is the largest and is approximately circular, being 4·5 inches in diameter and 2·1 inches deep. Of the remainder, that in the lower left-hand corner is also circular, being 3·8 inches in diameter and 1·6 inch deep; that in the upper right-hand corner measures 3·8 inches by 4·1 inches by 1·7 inch deep; and that in the lower right-hand corner measures 4 inches by 3·6 inches by 1·7 inch deep. (To follow this description the stone must be thought of as being so placed that the missing portion becomes the upper left-hand corner.) These cups appear to have been cut

and not ground into the stone, as the marks of a tool can be seen inside them. The capacity of the smallest was found to be the same as that of an ordinary tea-cup. There is also a small depression to the right of the central cup—1 inch across and '3 inch in depth—which may be the result of weathering, as a large flaking-away, below and to the right of it, certainly is.

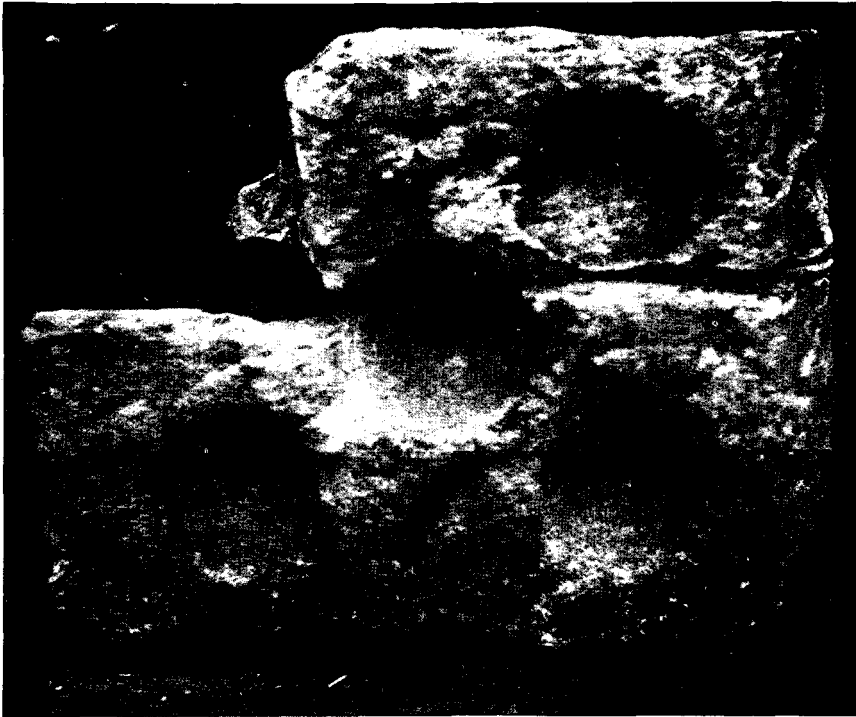


Fig. 1. Cresset : found at Teviot Bank, Hawick.

This being a general description of the object in question, I should like to make one or two observations on its probable origin and use.

A preliminary guess as to its origin may be made with some confidence. The rock-garden in which it was discovered is largely composed of fragments of dressed and carved stone—the remains of window-sills, capitals of pillars, and ornamental mouldings. These fragments are known to have come from the old church of Hassendean,¹ which used to stand by

¹ Hassendean Church is described in *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Roxburghshire*, by Alexander Jeffrey, pp. 280 and 281. It is mentioned in a charter as early as 1180 A.D., and appears from an old print to have possessed rather a fine Norman doorway. It was washed away by a flood of the Teviot in 1796 A.D.

the side of the Teviot, not more than 300 yards away: they were collected many years ago, and until they were used to make the rock-garden they used to lie about in the farmyard. During this time the cupped stone lay about with them—it has always been broken and incomplete as far as is remembered. We are safe in assuming, therefore, that it came, with the other fragments, from Hassendean Church, and that it served some ecclesiastical purpose there in mediæval times. As regards its use, the only probable suggestion that has been made is that it was a lamp-stand of that primitive kind which is properly known as a "cresset." These cressets—blocks of stone with cups worked into them—have been found in a certain number of ecclesiastical buildings in England and abroad, and are known to have been used for illumination. The whole subject is discussed by the Rev. T. Lees, M.A., in a paper read before the Royal Archæological Institute in 1882 (*Archæological Journal*, vol. xxxix.), and notice of the discovery of another example is given in the *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, part xciv., of 1916. From these two sources I gather that ten examples are known in England and others in Sweden, and all are from ecclesiastical sites. The number of cups in the several cases varies from one to sixteen: the cups are disposed in various patterns; that most like the present example having been found at Furness Abbey. In all cases the cups are similar in size to those in the Hassendean stone, but some are different in having flat bottoms. In some cases the cups are discoloured by fire.

The Rev. T. Lees further makes two quotations from the *Rites of Durham* (published by the Surtees Society), which place the use of these cupped stones as lamps beyond the reach of doubt. One of these quotations tells us that "there was in the church a four-square stone, which had 12 cressets wrought in that stone, which was filled with tallow, and every night one of them was lighted, when the day was gone, and did burne to give light to the monkes at midnight when they came to mattens." And the other says of the dorter—"In either end of the same Dortor there was a four-square stone, wherein was a dozen cressets wrought in either stone, being ever filled and supplied with the cooke as they needed, to give light to the monkes and novices when they rose to their mattens at midnight, and for their other necessary uses."

I have ventured to discuss this stone at some length, as it appears to be the only example of the cresset that has been found in Scotland up till now. The only other possible example is an object from Jedburgh described in the *Proceedings*, vol. xxxix. p. 54. However, as the latter bears a row of small cups as well as a number of others that are of a suitable size for use as lamps, the surmise made by the author, that it

was a mould for casting bullets and cannon-balls, may perhaps be preferable.

It may be worth while to record here the fact that many fragments of carved stonework from the old church of Hassendean still exist here and there in the neighbourhood. Notably, part of a carved tombstone has been built into the garden wall at Minto Manse.

MONDAY, 11th March 1918.

THE RIGHT HON. LORD ABERCROMBY, LL.D., President,
in the Chair.

A Ballot having been taken, there was elected a Fellow :—

HUGH ALEXANDER FRASER, M.A., Mayfield, Dingwall.

There was exhibited through Dr Hay Fleming a cast-iron Crusie belonging to Mr D. Cargill of the Crosskeys Hôtel, St Andrews (see subsequent note, p. 129).

Miss Christie of Cowden, F.S.A.Scot., exhibited a small oval Lamp of steatite, showing four diminutive cup-and-ring markings on the back, and another cast in metal, a mixture of zinc and antimony with a small addition of arsenic, both from Samarkand.

There was also exhibited by Dr W. G. Aitchison Robertson, F.S.A.Scot., a Crusie of cast iron, in the form of a circular basin, from the centre of which rises an iron pillar supporting a small cup-shaped vessel.

The following Donations were intimated, and thanks voted to the Donor :—

By Miss CHRISTIE of Cowden, F.S.A.Scot.

Three Church Tokens—Glendevon, 1817; and two of Muckhart, undated, but previous to 1800.

The following Communications were read :—