

II.

CUP-MARKED STONES IN STRATHTAY, PERTHSHIRE.

BY JOHN H. DIXON, F.S.A. Scot.

The stones hereafter described are in Strathtay. Visitors are apt to confuse the terms Strathtay and Grandtully. It seems therefore necessary to define them.

Strathtay is the part of the Tay valley in Perthshire between the village of Logierait on the east and Clunie Rock on the west, about 6 miles in length as the crow flies, half a mile more by the road. Both Logierait and Clunie Rock are on the north bank of the river Tay, but of course Strathtay includes the *ex adverso* territory south of the river.

Except the 3-mile length at the east end south of the Tay, which is in the parish of Little Dunkeld, and the 1-mile length at the west end north of the Tay, which is in the parish of Weem, the whole of Strathtay is in the civil parish of Logierait.

The part of Logierait parish south of the Tay constitutes the *quoad sacra* parish of Grandtully. The Strathtay station on the branch line of railway to Aberfeldy is called Grandtully Station, and the little village on the south side of the Tay, including the station, hotel, school, stores, institute, etc., is called Grandtully. But Grandtully is in Strathtay.

Strathtay teems with prehistoric remains, to many of which the writer has been introduced by Mr W. L. Macnaughton, Bailaness, Grandtully, who knows more of the subject than any other resident, having made a hobby of the archæology of his native strath. These notes are mainly due to his information and co-operation.

TOBAIRANDONAICH CUP-MARKED STONE.

This stone is a comparatively recent discovery. Face downward it formed the doorstep of an old stable, and the cups became visible only when it had to be lifted in order that a drain below the stable might be cleared. The Gaelic name of the place means "Sunday Well." There is a holy well 30 yards to the south. Tobairandonaich, or, to be exact, Easter Tobairandonaich, is a ruined village with the remains of two farm-steadings and many dwellings on the hillside above the mansion-house of Derculich on the north side of the Tay in the parish of Weem. The ruins are about 800 feet above sea-level. The distance from Grandtully Station to Derculich House is nearly 2 miles. It is a

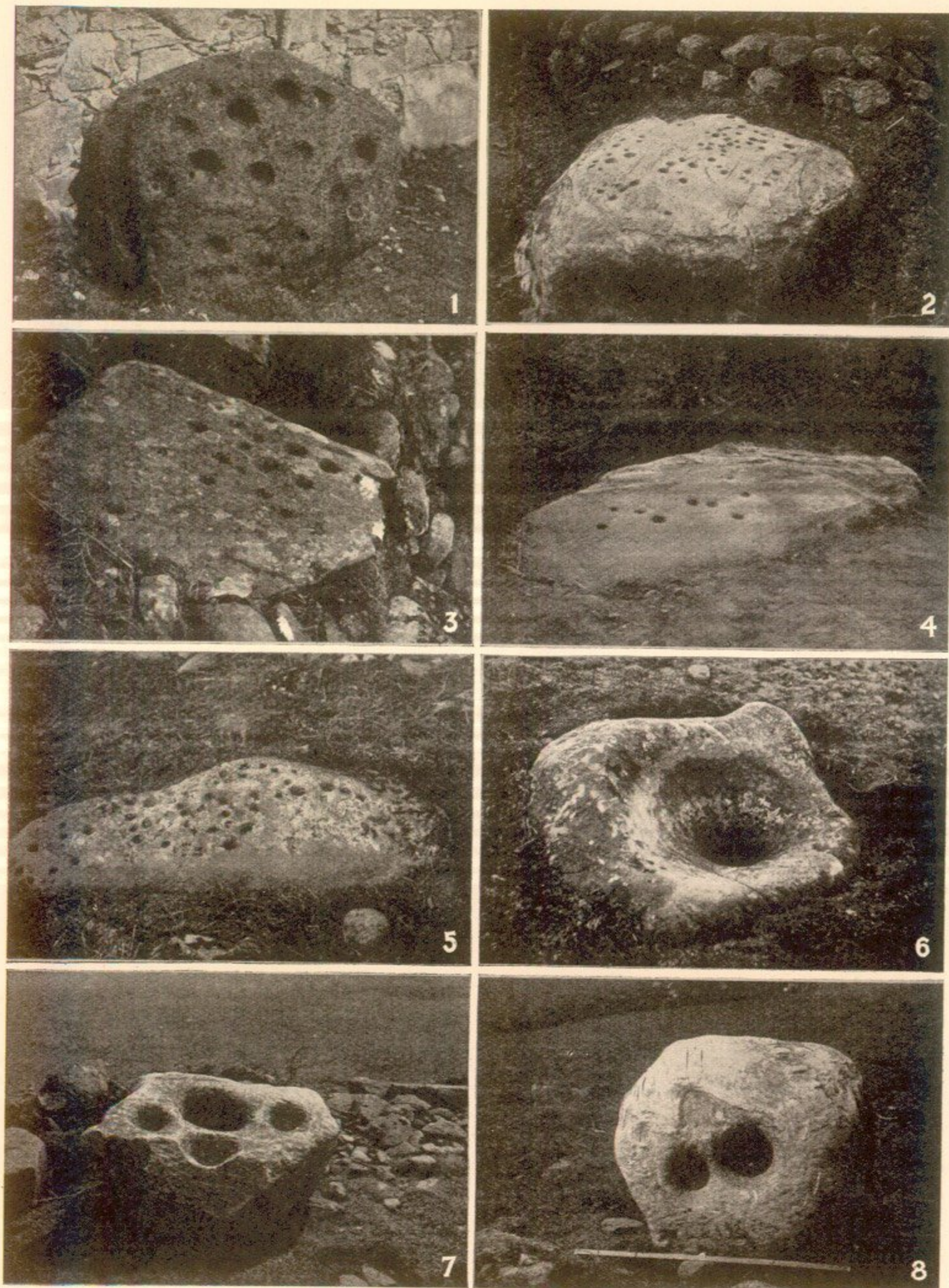


Fig. 1. Cup-marked Stones in Strathtay.

stiff ascent to Tobairandonaich. The ruin of the place is complete— not a roof remains. It must have been deserted many years ago. The great size of many stones in the ruins is noticeable.

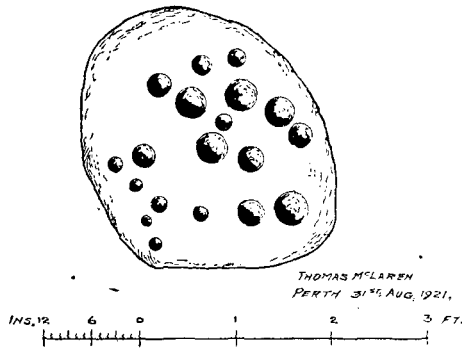


Fig. 2. Cup-marked Stone at Tobairandonaich.

The stone (fig. 1, No. 1; and fig. 2) has nineteen cups all on the same face. The largest cup is $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and 2 inches deep. The next largest has the same diameter, but is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. Other five of the cups are very nearly the same size. The smallest cup is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, but weathering has effected much towards almost obliterating some of the smaller cups.

The stone is of whinstone with slight veins of quartz. It is oval in form and varies in thickness from $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 4 inches. Its greatest diameter is 3 feet 2 inches, and its least diameter 2 feet 8 inches.

BAILANDUN CUP-MARKED STONE.

This fine example of a cup-marked stone (figs. 3 and 4) is on the side of and partly embedded in what appears to be a burial mound, locally called "The Dun." It is on the hillside above Cloichfoldich, about 150 yards north of the mansion-house of that name on the north side of the Tay, and is a full mile north-west of Grandtully Station. The Dun is a circular mound in perfect condition standing on an artificial terrace 6 feet to 8 feet wide, which is on a uniform level to the south but somewhat higher in other directions where it is carved out of the hillside. The Dun stands 10 feet to 12 feet high above the terrace, and its circumference is 65 yards. It is slightly over 500 feet above sea-level.

The cup-marked stone is on the south-east side of the Dun, nearly a yard above the terrace. The end (to the north-north-west) and some other parts of it are so buried in the Dun that it cannot be quite accurately measured, but approximately the stone is 5 feet 2 inches in length, 3 feet 4 inches in width, and 1 foot 8 inches in thickness. The cups in sight number, at least, seventy, and possibly there may be eight more. The three largest are $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in depth. The others are smaller, dwindling where much weathered to a scarcely measurable size. Around two of the largest cups are traces of circular rings $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch broad, in which the surface is slightly lower than in the adjoining part of the stone. The longest axis of the stone runs north-

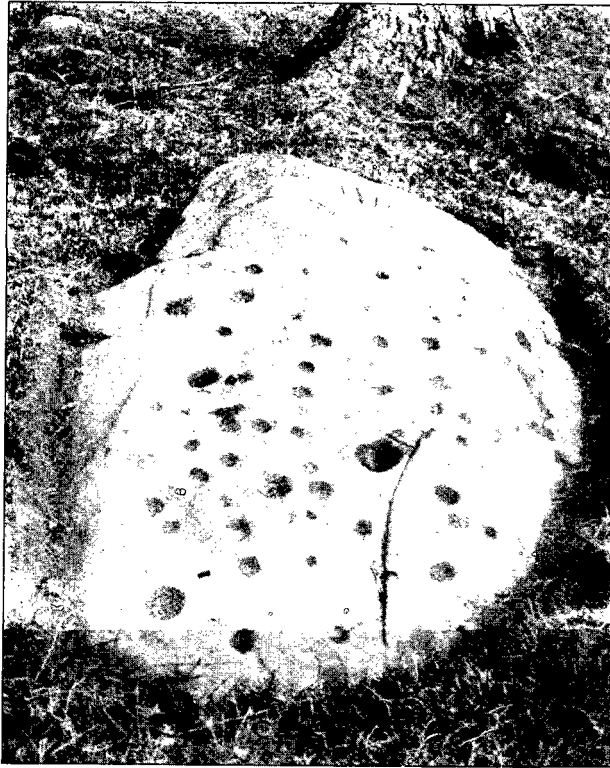


Fig. 3. Cup-marked Stone at Bailandun.

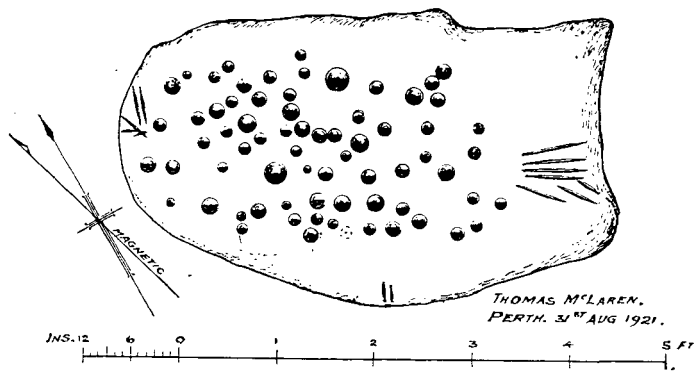


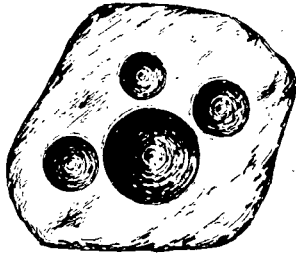
Fig. 4. Cup-marked Stone at Bailandun.

north-west and south-south-east. It is a rounded block of whinstone. The photograph (fig. 3) is much foreshortened. Three groups of well-cut grooves, one at each end and one on the west side, should be noted.

CLACH NA BUIDSEACH, OR THE WITCHCRAFT STONE.

The stone now to be described bears the Gaelic name of Clach na Buidseach, which means the Witchcraft Stone. It is a modern name devoid of any significance as to the origin or purpose of the cups on the stone. It is on the farm of Tullypowrie, nearly 300 yards from the steading, a mile due north from Grandtully Bridge, and 800 feet above sea-level. When the writer first saw the stone some years ago

it was built into the dry-stone wall, close to which it now lies. Since then it has been removed, but is now restored to its original site. Its removal revealed the presence of two large cups on the side previously hidden by the wall. It lies prone on the ground, but by lifting it on edge (a difficult job, owing to its weight) both sides can be photographed.



THOMAS MCLAREN.
PERTH, 27TH AUG. 1920.

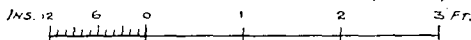


Fig. 5. Clach na Buidseach, or Witchcraft Stone, at Tullypowrie.

It is a slab of the local whinstone measuring across the largest cups on the front (the side originally exposed) 34 inches, and in a line at right angles to that 29 inches—its extreme width being 38 inches and its mean thickness 13 inches.

Fig. 1, No. 7, is from a photograph of the front of this stone, and fig. 5 is taken from a rubbing. The following are the measurements of the four cups; they are very nearly circular in form. The first is 11 inches by 10 inches in diameter and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth; the second $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 inches; the third $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 inches; and the fourth $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 inches. A portion of the stone adjoining cup No. 2 has been broken off at some remote time. Fig. 1, No. 8, is from a photograph of the back of the stone showing its two circular cups, the larger about 9 inches in diameter and 4 inches in depth, the smaller about $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and 3 inches in depth. There is a triangular depression above the two cups. At a first glance it seems artificial, but close examination produces the impression that it is due to the accidental detachment of a flake from the stone's surface, possibly during the forming of the cups.

Both sides of the stone and the interiors of all the cups exhibit effects of weathering that indicate prehistoric antiquity.

The opinion has been locally expressed with much assurance (though it is not generally held) that the cups were formed and used as cressets or lamps to light monks attending midnight services, and the proximity of an Early Christian church is put forward in support of the view. Against it is the appearance of greater antiquity conveyed by the weathering of the cups, the arrangement of the cups, which is quite different from that on cressets, and also the occurrence of cups on both sides of the stone. It is certainly not a cresset.

BALNABEGGAN CUP-MARKED STONE.

On the farm of Balnabeggan, in a natural birch wood on the hillside a mile south of Grandtully Station and about 500 feet above

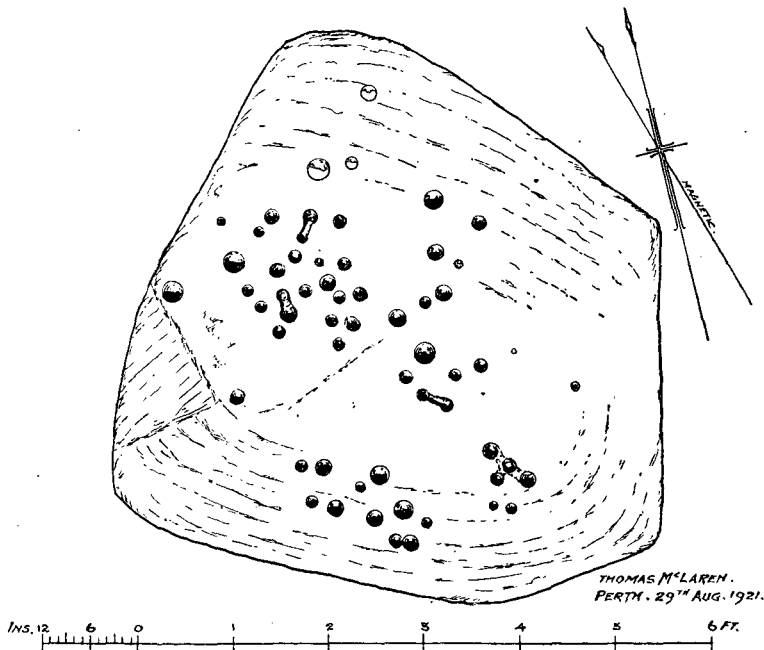


Fig. 6. Cup-marked Stone at Balnabeggan.

sea-level, is a boulder of whinstone veined with quartz (fig. 1, No. 2; and fig. 6). It is roughly hexagonal in shape, but one side is partly hidden by an old dry-stone wall built above it. The greatest width is 7 feet, whilst a diameter at right angles measures 6 feet. The

thickness or depth of the stone is at least 2 feet, but it may be more underneath, as the stone stands in a wet place in which it may have settled down.

On the upper surface of the stone are fifty-nine cups of various sizes, the largest measuring $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and from 1 inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, or less, in depth. A special feature is that four equidistant cups (three in a row and the fourth at a right angle to the centre of the row) are connected by grooves slightly less broad and deep than the cups. Three pairs of cups are also similarly connected.

The cups connected as described are discernible, but the group of four cups on the low left side of the stone does not appear in the photograph to have its fourth cup (the lowest) connected, as it really is, with the central cup of the group.

This stone and the others to be described are on the south side of the river Tay.

LETNASKEA CUP-MARKED STONE.

This stone (fig. 1, No. 3; and fig. 7) is built into a rough dry-stone wall on the farm of Letnaskea, a mile and three quarters west of Grandtully Station. It is on the side of the farm-road, 120 yards south of

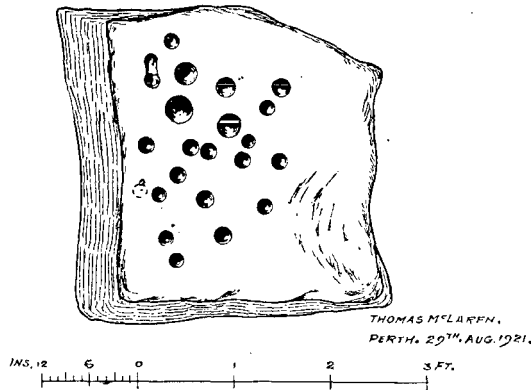


Fig. 7. Cup-marked Stone at Letnaskea.

its junction with the highroad to Aberfeldy. It is about 300 feet above sea-level. The height of the stone is 3 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the breadth 3 feet 3 inches.

Some of the cups are much weathered, but twenty-three can be counted. The largest are $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch in depth. The smallest are $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in depth. One pair appear to be connected by a groove, but it is not distinct.

LUNDIN CUP-MARKED STONE NO. 1.

The road to Lundin farm, in the south-western extremity of Strathtay, leaves the highroad on the south side of the Tay about two miles from Aberfeldy. Running parallel to the railway, it soon reaches the ruins of the disused Grandtully Distillery, where it turns sharply to the south.

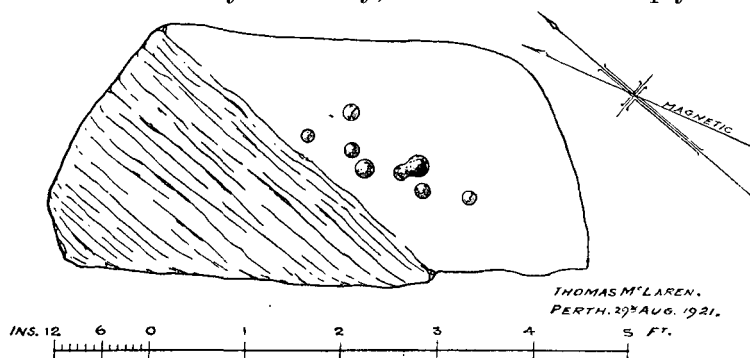


Fig. 8. Cup-marked Stone No. 1, at Lundin.

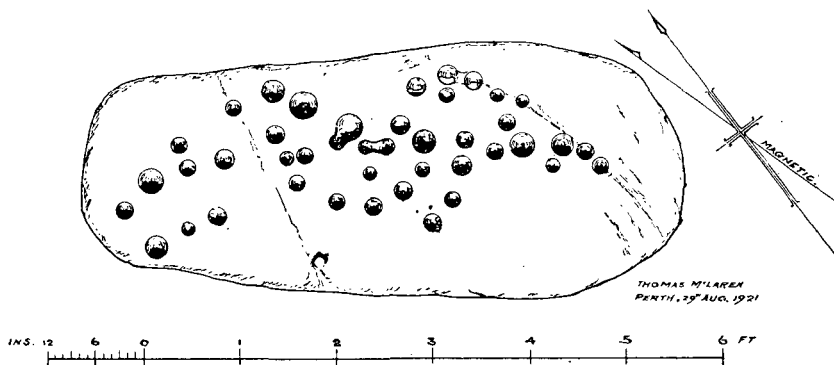


Fig. 9. Cup-marked Stone No. 2, at Lundin.

Twenty yards from the ruins are two smallish standing-stones, one on either side of the road, and between them on the very edge of the road is the Lundin cup-marked stone No. 1 (fig. 1, No. 4; and fig. 8). It does not rise more than 3 inches above the surface of the road. Its length is 6 feet 6 inches and its breadth 2 feet 7 inches as far as it is visible. It has eight or nine cups, varying in diameter from $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and in depth from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch or less. It is about 300 feet above sea-level.

LUNDIN CUP-MARKED STONE NO. 2.

A hundred yards or more south of the last-described stone is the well-known Lundin circle of standing-stones on the east side of the

ascending road to the Lundin farm-steading, and separated from the road by the Lundin burn. A few yards to the south-east of the circle is the cup-marked stone No. 2 (fig. 1, No. 5; and fig. 9). It is a rounded boulder of whinstone resembling in outline, when viewed from the west, the impression of a giant human foot. It is partly buried in the ground on the side of a bank terminating in the circle. So far as visible it measures 6 feet 8 inches in length and 2 feet 11 inches in breadth at its widest. There are forty-four, possibly forty-five, cups of various sizes in sight. The largest measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in depth, the next largest $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in depth, and the smallest $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in depth. There are traces of connecting grooves between three pairs of the cups, but they are indistinct.

THE PRIEST'S BASIN, LUNDIN.

In a report by Mr Fred R. Coles on stone circles surveyed in Perthshire, which appeared in vol. xlii. of the *Proceedings Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, this stone is referred to in footnote 1 on page 135 as "a curiously water-worn stone locally called 'The Priest's Bath.'" Other local names are "The Priest's Basin" (as above), and "The Priest's Punch Bowl." The stone (fig. 1, No. 6) lies embedded in the large field on the Lundin farm, on the western edge of which stand the Lundin stone circle and the cup-marked stone No. 2, and it is about 250 yards due east of them. The stone, so far as above ground, measures 2 feet 10 inches each way. Its single cup, after being cleared of the soil and rubbish that nearly filled it, was found to be 9 inches deep. Its greatest width is 2 feet 2 inches, and a measurement at right angles gives 1 foot 10 inches. When completely emptied the cup has no appearance of being water-worn. Its interior may be described as resembling an inverted cone widened at its base, *i.e.* at the upper part of the cup.

The clean-cut appearance of the interior of the cup, especially in its deepest part, suggests that the popular theory of an Early Christian origin of the cup, as indicated by the local names given to it, may be well worthy of credence, or, at least, of consideration.

Last year I described before the Society (*Proceedings Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. lv. pp. 95 and 99) two cup-marked stones, one in Glen Brerachan in the parish of Moulin, and the other at Balvarran in the parish of Kirkmichael. Although I was able to reproduce photographs of the sculpturings, I was unable to obtain rubbings. This omission is now rectified, and in figs. 10 and 11 are reproductions of the latter. It will be noted that the stone at Balvarran (fig. 11) bears a resemblance

to Clach na Buidseach in the number of the cups carved on its upper surface and in the large size of the hollows. In the Balvarran stone

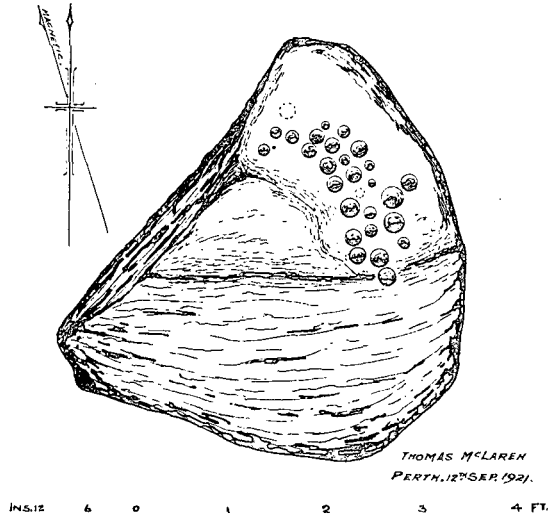


Fig. 10. Cup-marked Stone in Glen Brerachan.

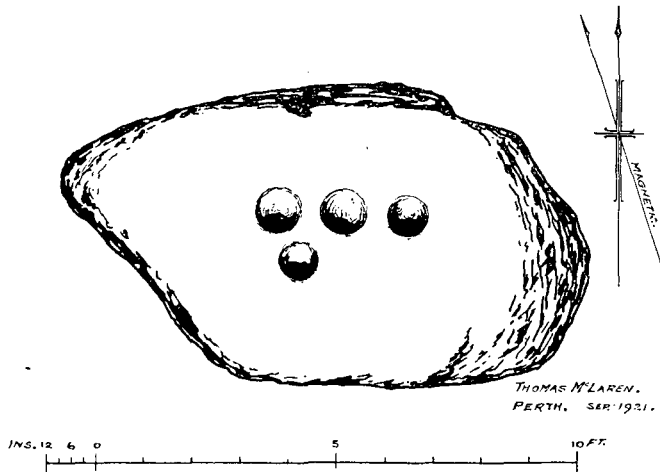


Fig. 11. Cup-marked Stone at Balvarran.

they vary from 7 inches to $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and from $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth.

I am indebted to Mr Thomas M'Laren, Burgh Surveyor, Perth, for so kindly making rubbings of the stones and for making reduced drawings therefrom.