

III.

NOTES ON THE DISCOVERY OF A ROCK-SCULPTURE AT GALLOWES OUTON, WHITHORN, WIGTOWNSHIRE. BY THE REV. R. S. G. ANDERSON, B.D., F.S.A.Scot.

In the *Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Wigtownshire*, No. 508 refers to certain rock-sculptures once known at Gallows Outon, a farm about a mile to the north of the burgh of Whithorn, but which had again been lost. From an old farm-worker I learned that forty years ago he had exposed a rock with three "cup-and-ring" marks while ploughing on this farm. An examination of the locality along with the ploughman proved futile, as top-dressing had been liberally applied and the contours considerably changed. In conversation with the farmer, later, I learned that he also had exposed some carvings, about ten years before, near the same place. These had lain exposed for some time, visited by one or two in the district who were interested; but when the interest waned he had top-dressed the ridge with road-scrappings, and the markings were soon forgotten and lost. The farmer, Mr Rae, to whose interest and efforts I am greatly indebted, kindly volunteered to make a search for them. He was fortunately successful. On visiting the site, it was at once evident that there must be two sets of sculptures on the range of rock, as the one now disclosed was quite different from that described by the ploughman. Its position was much further west on the ridge and much lower, and instead of cups and rings the figure was that of a single returning spiral (fig. 1). The chief interest of this discovery is that this is the second spiral to be recorded in Wigtownshire, the other occurring at North Balfern, near Kirkcubbin.

Its site is in the northern corner of the first field on the right hand after crossing the railway by the cart-track that leads from the public road to the Gallows Outon farmhouse. It lies towards the lower end of a rough, largely uncultivated piece of ground, where the underlying rock has begun to heave itself up into a low, mostly grass-covered ridge. The spiral may be found at the point where a line, 64 feet long, drawn at a right angle to the road-dyke, intersects a line, 371 feet long, drawn from the top field-dyke at a point 90 feet from the corner. The rock on which it is cut is just below the turf, and is flat and smooth. The figure is set in a small parallelogram, 21 inches by 11½ inches, formed at the one end by a natural fissure and at the other by a sharp edge of the rock, whilst the two sides are formed by broad

grooves that look as if they might have been artificially worked. The spiral lies practically parallel to these grooves. Their direction is exactly north-east by east, and the larger of the two members of the figure is the more easterly.

In length the returning spiral measures over all $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Its larger member is 7 inches in diameter; the smaller, 4 inches. There are three full turns in the former and two in the latter. The figures have been very neatly and accurately cut in their curves and proportions,

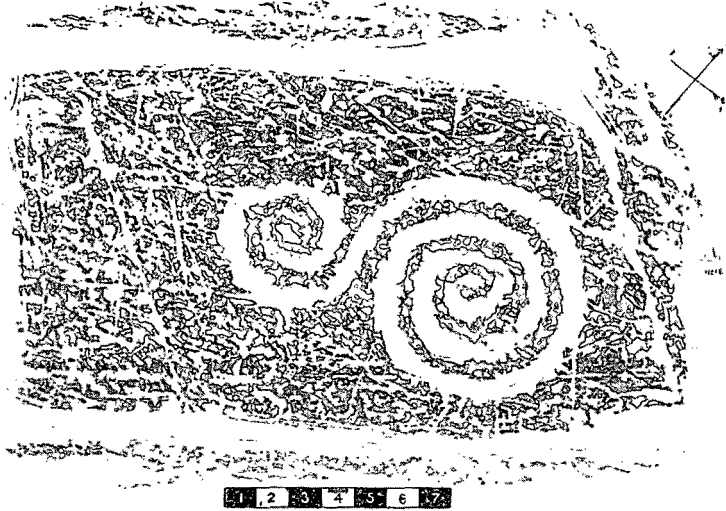


Fig. 1. Rubbing of Spiral incised on rock at Gallows Outon, Whithorn.

but there has evidently been no attempt to smooth the bottom of the grooves of the spirals, where the pick-marks still show clearly. The tool has probably been blunt-pointed, and the point of no great diameter. The bearings shown in the illustration are magnetic.

No sepulchral relics have been definitely recorded as found in the immediate vicinity; but an older contemporary (now dead) of the farm-worker of whom I have spoken had told him of exposing by the plough a small hole somewhere near this corner of the field. He had inserted his "pattle," as usual thinking it might be a rabbit-hole, only to find that it was a small stone-lined chamber, about the length of the stick. There his interest ceased, except to express casually his disappointment to his companion afterwards. Many white shells have been turned up by the plough near at hand. So that fresh discoveries may yet remain to be made here.