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SCULPTURED ROCK; HOLY-WATER STOUP; AND SARCOPHAGUS AT LUSS. BY A. D. LACAILLE, F.S.A.Scot.

SCULPTURED ROCK NEAR SHEGARTAN.

In June 1934, while working in Luss Kirkyard upon a monument described later in this communication, I had recourse to the assistance of Mr William Robb, mason on the Colquhoun estates, who told me of a rock



Fig. 1. Sculptured Rock near Shegartan Farm. From the north-east.



Fig. 2. Sculptured Rock near Shegartan Farm. From the south.

in Glenfinlas near Luss, whose surface, he believed, bore carvings. Under Mr Robb's conduct I visited the place, and found there an outcrop of schist, roughly dome-shaped, with veins and nodules of quartz, measuring 7 feet from north to south and the same dimension from east to west, rising to a maximum height of 18 inches. The rock is situated approximately on the 150-ft. contour inside a wood some 30 yards from the

north-west corner of the dyke bounding the plantation on the west and north,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile south of Shegartan Farm and 3 furlongs north-west of Rossdhu mid-lodge (figs. 1 and 2).

At first sight the sculpturings appeared to consist only of a deep and slightly weathered cup-shaped hollow, 4 inches in diameter, cut in the

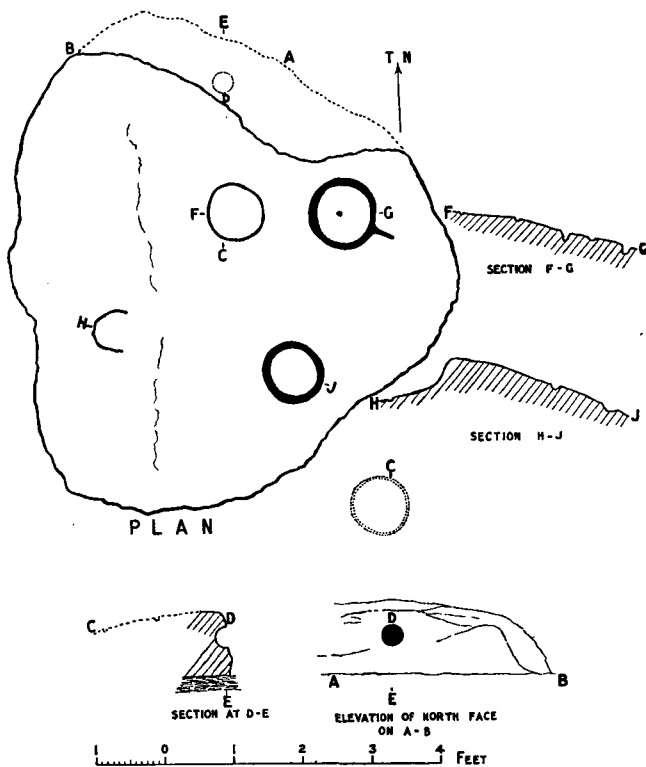


Fig. 3. Sculptured Rock near Shegartan Farm: Key.

north perpendicular face, here 11 inches high, and on the sloping surface to the east a small but deep circular cavity surrounded by a very deeply incised ring from which issues a shallow duct on the east. As other markings seemed to exist, the heavy growth of moss and lichen was removed later, when a curious assemblage was revealed. Altogether this comprises the cup and ring mentioned, one large, shallow and wide ring on the sloping surface to the south, a narrower ring close to the northern edge above the cup, and a narrowly incised sculpturing resembling the outline of a horse-shoe.

The natural irregularities and sloping surface of the rock have been the occasion of injury to the carvings by the facilities afforded rain-water through the centuries. There is a possibility that the very deeply cut-out ring owes its present condition to the unfinished labour of someone, who, long ago, attacked the sculptured work with a chisel, for some purpose which cannot now be determined. Nothing indicates with certainty that the hollow in the middle of this large ring is older than the late chiselling expended upon the surrounding circular figure. Fortunately the projecting duct is unimpaired save for the wear of age and weather.

In the illustration (fig. 3) the line drawing, reproduced from a rubbing, shows the disposition of the sculpturings.

Compared with other groups of Scottish rock-markings assignable to prehistoric times, the Luss assemblage is remarkable by the paucity of cup-like hollows, which elsewhere usually predominate.

#### HOLY-WATER STOUP FOUND IN GLENFRUIN.

Thanks also to Mr Robb I am able to record an ecclesiastical antiquity from Loch Lomondside. Mr William Nimmo, William Robb's predecessor, residing at Polnaberoch, Luss, had in his possession what my informer described as a stone vessel, which was found by Nimmo twenty-five years ago near Highfields, Glenfruin,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Arden. It lay among a heap of stones which had been brought down the glen to serve as material for dyke-building upon which he was engaged.



Fig. 4. Holy-Water Stoup from Glenfruin.

This relic proves to be a small, extremely well-executed holy-water stoup, octagonal in plan at the top, of grey sandstone now weathered and injured. It is of the well-known type intended to be placed in a church near the entrance, and probably housed in a small niche. The edges and the base have suffered most, but despite damage the characteristics of the vessel survive. Beneath the vertical edges the stoup is circular, tapering downward to the now missing base, and mouldings ornament the body (fig. 4).

In height the stoup stands  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches, but the base is missing. This was probably low and straight-sided, matching the top in outline although

of smaller dimensions. Each of the eight sides is  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches long and  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch high. The full width across the stoup is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and the cavity practised in the stone is parabolic and  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inch deep and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide, giving a wall thickness of  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch maintained downward.

It may be that this stoup was gathered up with stones from the neighbourhood of the site of St Bride's Chapel at Glenfruin Schoolhouse, near Kilbride, a little over a mile to the west of Highfields. In describing cross-slabs from Glenfruin to our Society I referred to St Bride's, supposed to have occupied the site of a large round cairn.<sup>1</sup> All trace of a structure here has been obliterated: still, I was told that within living memory the outline of some building was discernible near the schoolhouse. In view of the circumstances of finding it is difficult to conjecture from what other place the stoup could have come, for, although there are other ecclesiastical sites in the district, none but St Bride's in Glenfruin is within anything like easy distance of Highfields.

#### SARCOPHAGUS IN LUSS KIRKYARD.

Plain slabs or coped stones, possibly once lids of stone coffins, are not uncommon in Scotland, nor can it be said that coffins made of stone are rare, but I believe examples of sarcophagi, complete with their covers, are not numerous.

*The New Statistical Account (Dumbartonshire)*, p. 161, mentions the presence of stone coffins in the kirkyard of Luss, but only one actually exists in this cemetery so rich in mediæval monuments. There are, however, several large pre-Reformation coped stones, a few having possibly served as coffin-lids, some of which, in the eighteenth century and even earlier, have been utilised as memorials to the dead. Many bear ornamentation, but so weathered are the carvings that, save in the instances recorded in our *Proceedings*,<sup>2</sup> there is little of moment in the low coped stones, although they are interesting in providing material for study of types, and, perhaps, evolution of this category of sepulchral monuments in Scotland.

The one complete mediæval example, comprising lid and coffin, I had long ago purposed recording in all its details, especially as I knew the erroneous and inadequate reference to it which appeared over thirty years ago,<sup>3</sup> but the monument could not be inspected with the attention it merited until raised and cleaned. Opportunity to effect this did not

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lviii. pp. 128-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. lxii. pp. 88-95.

<sup>3</sup> *Trans. Glas. Arch. Soc. (N.S.)*, vol. v. pt. i. p. 26, and fig. 4.

offer until the early summer of 1934, but the delay and labour finally involved have been amply repaid by the revelation of features, which accord well with a monument of such proportions and external ornamentation.

For as long as can be remembered only the huge lid was visible, with but the merest outline of the injured receptacle or coffin underneath exposed by a break in the covering near the eastern end of the north side (fig. 5). The lengths of both lid and coffin are the same, namely, 6 feet 11 inches. The lid is steeply coped, measuring 1 foot 2 inches in height at the western end, but it rises and becomes narrower towards the other extremity, which is 1 foot 3 inches high. At the western end the width is 2 feet, and at the eastern it was originally  $16\frac{1}{4}$  inches but the sides are

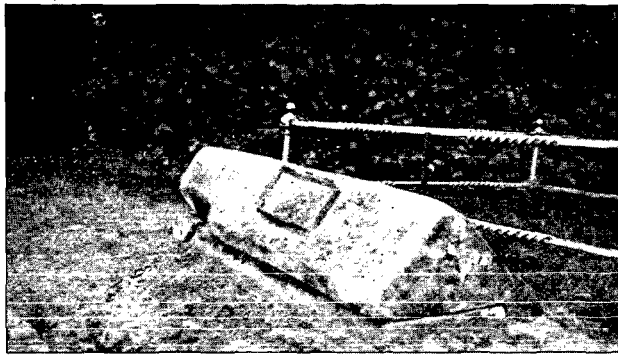


Fig. 5. Sarcophagus at Luss: North side.

now broken. Each end of the lid overlaps the underlying coffin by 2 inches on either side. For a little more than 3 inches the sides are perpendicular, above which they incline steeply towards the rounded ridge.

On the dexter or south side of the cover the representation of a chalice is carved in the high relief of one inch at a distance of 2 feet 2 inches from the west end (fig. 6). This chalice, perfectly plain and of archaic type,  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches high, measures  $5\frac{3}{8}$  inches across its top and 5 inches across the base. A certain degree of emphasis has been imparted to the sculptured symbol as roundness is apparent in the cup, its base, and central portion or knob. The quadrilateral forming the northern side is also ornamented, the symbol here taking the form of an open book represented by an oblong  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches standing out one inch from the body of the monument at 1 foot  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the western end. These symbols, of course, point to the fact that the sarcophagus had contained

the remains of one in major Orders.<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that so elaborate a monument was fashioned to hold the body of one inferior in rank to a priest.

In the centre of each of the two ends is carved a raised cross of simple but pleasing appearance despite absence of symmetry in treatment. At the west the cross, measuring  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height and  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches across, expands uniformly from the middle towards its four extremities. The foot or eastern end bears a cross of Latin type but expanded at the ends like its opposite and measuring 10 inches by 7 inches.

When the lid was raised, the nether surface was found to be hollowed to fit over a human body. Along the sides and foot the thickness of



Fig. 6. Sarcophagus at Luss: South side.

stone is from 3 to 4 inches, providing close adjustment with the underlying coffin. The cavity has been most carefully hewn, the part intended to receive the head being rounded, as are the corners made for the shoulders. This portion is slightly staggered. The hollow, 6 inches deep, formed to hold the body is rounded where the perpendicular sides meet the flat top, but the foot is chiselled to an angle. The elliptical receptacle for the head is 4 inches in depth where it joins the undercutting at the commencement of the upper part of the main cavity.

Unfortunately, part of the wall of the lid is missing, but the break permitted of a preliminary examination of the interior of the cover and

<sup>1</sup> On ordination the subdeacon receives symbolically the chalice and Book of Epistles, signifying that he is permitted to handle the sacred cup when assisting the celebrant at High Mass, at which he reads the epistle of the day. The conferring of the diaconate includes the porrection of the Book of Gospels to the ordinand, thus testifying to his privilege as deacon of singing the gospel at High Mass. The priestly order, with the power of celebrating Mass, of course embraces the two lower ones, and logically its true symbols should be a chalice and a host or wafer. On sepulchral monuments commemorating priests the host is a most common symbol, and usually it is associated with a chalice, but many examples can be cited where chalice and book alone are represented.

coffin proper. This first inspection showed that the monument was of such interest that I was led eventually to make a complete investigation by digging round the sarcophagus and separating the upper and lower compartments. This work brought to light certain features, and on cleaning and finally raising the lower part, it was seen that the latter also possessed peculiarities which, I believe, have no parallel in Scotland.

Pieces of the wall of the coffin are wanting on one side, and the foot is cracked obliquely across, all the damage having, no doubt, been inflicted when the monument was rifled on being moved. Its removal from its original situation is indicated by the fact that the stone coffin has served as a post-Reformation memorial. Evidence of this is furnished by the deeply carved initials "R. McF." in the style of the eighteenth century near the chalice, cut possibly about 1771 when the pre-Reformation kirk was taken down.

The coffin, like the lid, is wrought from a single block of grey sandstone. Its length of 6 feet 11 inches has already been stated, but it is not so wide as the covering, being 1 foot  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the top and tapering to  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the foot. The entasis is more accentuated on the sinister. The thickness is consistently one of 2 inches for the sides and foot. For reception of the corpse the cavity has been made 8 inches deep, so that, with the space provided above by the hollowed lid, ample room was afforded even for a heavily shrouded body. Near the middle of the cavity the thickness of the bottom (4 inches) is pierced by a circular hole ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter) to provide an outlet for any exudation.

From the twelfth century until the end of the Middle Ages a feature frequently observed in sarcophagi is a hollow specially made for receiving the head. Sometimes lateral supports are provided where the coffin is otherwise devoid of the small compartment. In the Luss example a cavity is present and with it the unique addition of a rest for the neck (fig. 6). The hollow, instead of being of the ordinary sort with flat base on the same plane as the bottom of the coffin proper, is concave and on a higher level than the larger compartment from which it is separated by the neck-rest. This support, 3 inches thick at its base, has a carefully rounded ridge. Through it, and slightly to the left of the centre, is a narrow channel out of line with the longitudinal axes of coffin and sides. From the smoothness of the groove it seems that this is an intentionally made cutting. Neither in Scotland nor in other countries can I locate any sarcophagus with a neck-rest resembling the support with which is fitted the Luss example. If cognate cases be eventually found in Scotland, may not such discoveries point to this particular type of rest as a Scottish feature? Fig. 7 shows all details of the sarcophagus.

A remark may be made concerning the age of the monument figured. Sarcophagi, as successors of similar pre-Christian mode of entombment and commemoration of the dead, were used in the early centuries of the

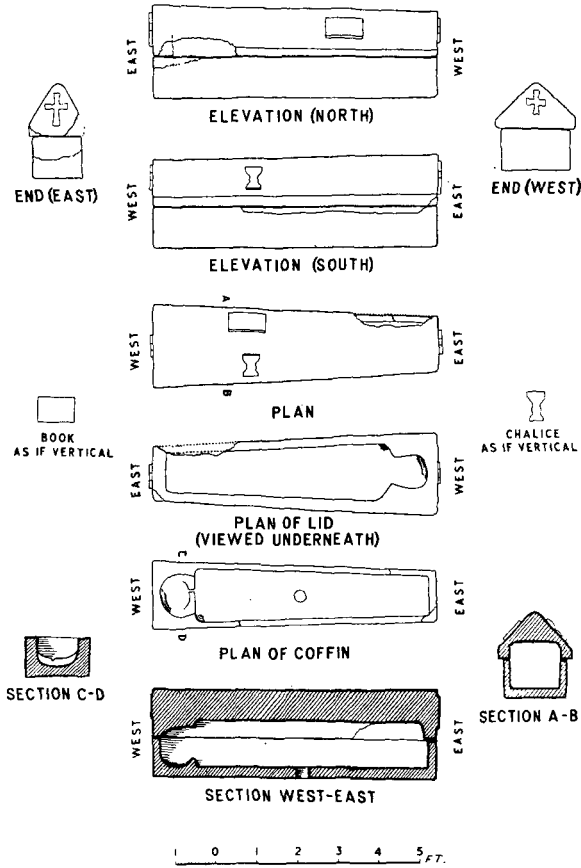


Fig. 7. Sarcophagus at Luss: Key.

present era, Scotland itself offering instances, to quote only the monuments in Govan. Our Honorary Fellow, M. Léon Coutil, in his *Art Mérovingien et Carolingien* has illustrated several French and other examples provided with various forms of compartments or supports for the head.<sup>1</sup> M. Coutil considers that this category belongs to the eleventh or twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> This opinion can often be supported by such

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 54 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to author, dated Les Andelys (Eure), 18th December 1934.



conclusive evidence as the identity of the deceased for whose sepulture the monuments were fashioned. But the Luss specimen, agreeing closely in details with these Continental sarcophagi, is probably later by a century at least, because the ecclesiastical emblems of chalice and book indicate an advance in ornamentation despite the crosses of archaic pattern at the ends. Various types of crosses occur on the older monuments, as do other symbols of recondite nature testifying to great antiquity. In England, as in France, the definitely sacerdotal, social or heraldic, and occupational symbols as additions to the cross appear to have been introduced later. In this respect, therefore, it is unlikely that monumental art in Scotland should present much difference, considering that this class of stone coffin was widely distributed.