

14. NOTES ON UNRECORDED STONES IN THE TAY VALLEY, NEAR ABERFELDY.

I.

On the hill behind the farmhouse and steading of Glassie about a mile, as the crow flies, due north of Aberfeldy and just above the 1000-foot contour there is a stone bearing cup, ring, and other markings of a somewhat unusual character. Though I have lived almost seventy years in the locality I was unaware of its existence until about a year ago when, in the course of a hill ramble, I chanced upon it and, as it does not appear to have been reported in the *Proceedings* of the Society, I feel that the following account may be of interest.

Photograph I (Pl. LVI, 1a) shows the stone as I first saw it—a three-sided pyramid with a small, almost vertical, south-westerly face devoid of markings, a northerly face the markings on which are well brought out by the midday sun, and a south-easterly face on which they show up best in the afternoon light.

On the occasion of subsequent visits in the company of Mrs Alison Young, F.S.A.Scot., and her sister, Miss Richmond, excavation was undertaken and the buried "tail" of the stone exposed. Unlike the previously exposed surfaces the freshly uncovered portion showed little sign of weathering, the cups being in excellent condition and the rock appearing as though recently smoothed and stippled.

At the apex of the pyramid is a group of six cups the largest of which, the largest on the whole stone, measures 4 inches by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and 2 inches deep. Round this group and swinging back and up from their origin at the junction of the northerly and south-westerly faces three concentric arc-shaped channels reach the dorsal ridge of the stone, which the two outer channels cross to pass downwards and forwards on the south-easterly face where, after the middle arc has joined the outer, they fade out before reaching the junction of the south-easterly and south-westerly faces. At the point where these arcs cross the ridge the two faces of the stone enclose an angle of 110° . The other arc, the innermost, is confined to the northerly face.

On the south-easterly face, in addition to the two arcs mentioned, are about a dozen cups, several large but none particularly deep. Excavation failed to add to the number, but we were rewarded by the discovery of what resembles the imprint, apparently artificial in origin, of the fingers and thumb of a gigantic (left) hand measuring 12 inches across (partly shown in Pl. LVI, 1b about halfway along the left side of the stone just below the crack).

Apart from the group of cups at the apex and those on the south-easterly face, two, well marked, were noted at the tail of the spine but on excavation further in this direction a beautiful picture was revealed. Six cups were added to the number already noted, three well marked, two of these particularly so and standing in inverted relief. Three of the six have ring markings (single) and a fourth shows, in addition to a narrow ring, a considerable arc of a second ring with a radius of 6 inches. As already noted this part of the rock has the appearance of having been smoothed and stippled—*i.e.*, prepared.

A very good impression of the whole south-easterly face and flattened-out tail of the stone is obtained from the accompanying excellent sketch by Mrs Young (fig. 6).

On the south-westerly face, as stated, there are no markings. The almost vertical setting of this face gave us the impression that, at some time or another, a piece had been broken away, and a search was made among the one or two stones

lying near by. On one of these, about 14 feet N.-N.W., a small stone roughly 2 feet square and projecting about a foot from the ground, Mrs Young found two shallow cups, one about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and the other smaller and less well defined.

The site, which commands a fairly extensive view of the valley east and west and of the hills beyond, is easily located if one follows the road to Glassie to the point where it ceases to climb and turns at right angles to proceed eastwards along the level, and then, instead of holding to it, continues up the hill by the

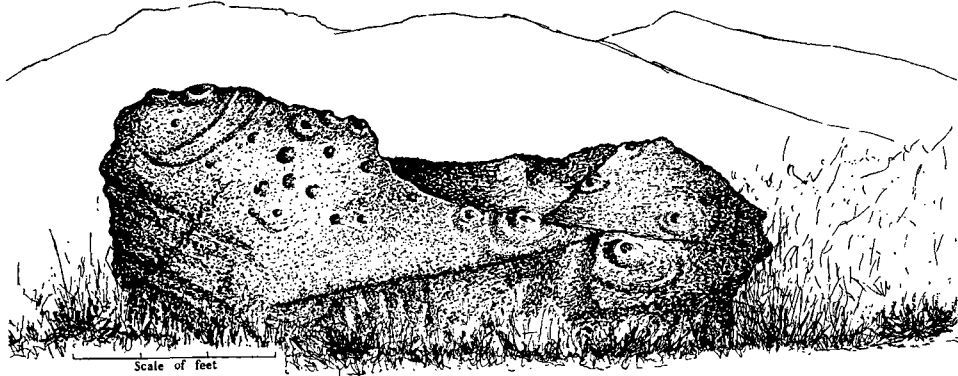


Fig. 6. Sketch of Glassie stone, near Aberfeldy.

wall at this part for about 300 paces to the first gate beyond. From this gate a line (compass bearing 55° east of north) to the N.W. angle of a small plantation above Glassie cuts right through the stone. From the gate to the stone is about 480 paces. From the stone Glassie (Normal National Grid No. 27/856509) lies distant about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the S.E.

From Aberfeldy Glassie can be seen immediately below the skyline, due north, and from the higher parts of the town the site of the stone is just visible.

Mrs Young agreed with me that the stone is part of the living rock of the hill—*i.e.*, not a boulder. A chip was submitted to Dr K. C. Dunham, Geological Survey and Museum, South Kensington, London, who reported it to be “a coarse, somewhat schistose epidiorite composed of oligoclase, augite, chlorite, biotite and magnetite.”

Apart from the fact that the markings occur on both sides of it the features which would appear to be of peculiar interest in connection with this stone are:—

- 1st. The arc-like channels which commence on the northerly face are carried over the ridge at an angle of 110° and are continued downwards on the south-easterly face.
- 2nd. A number of the cups are truly “cups” as distinct from the usual saucer-like “depressions” and stand above the surrounding surface of the rock with definite, though thick, “rims.”
- 3rd. The odd “finger-and-thumb” markings low down on the south-easterly face.

About 80 yards east of the cup- and ring-marked stone there is another stone, rather more conspicuous and of the same pyramidal shape and with the same compass orientation, but it shows no markings.

II.

This stone, like the foregoing, has not so far as I am aware been recorded. It is a large granite boulder, somewhat pillow-shaped in form, occupying a site a few yards off and to the west of the road up from the main Aberfeldy-Grantully road to the farm steading of Laidnaskea (Aberfeldy $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles), and my attention was drawn to it by Mrs Young, who discovered it when on a visit to the Laidnaskee stone described by Dr Hugh Macmillan (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. 1883-4, p. 120).

In an interview with Mr Stewart, jun., who with his father farms the lands of Laidnaskea, Mrs Young learned that the stone was removed by him about two years ago from the neighbouring field where it lay submerged but sufficiently near the surface to interfere with ploughing, and he obligingly rolled it over to enable her to make a more thorough inspection but unfortunately too quickly for her to be certain that there are no markings on the side now undermost.

In its present position the stone shows two very large well-marked cups, one on the side fronting south which measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep, and another on the side fronting north $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep. There is a third cup, also on the north face, shallow and perhaps a little doubtful, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

These cups struck me as having less appearance of "age" than is shown by the cups on the other cup-marked stones in the district. This may be due in part to the facts that the stone is of granite and that it has not been exposed to the effects of weathering.

The over-all measurements of the boulder are: girth round the middle, about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet; girth round the ends, 10 or $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet; weight (as estimated by Mr Stewart), about 30 cwt.

The site from which Mr Stewart removed the stone is about 100 yards to the south-west (so far as he can remember), but there is nothing distinctive about it to mark it out from the surface of the ground round about.

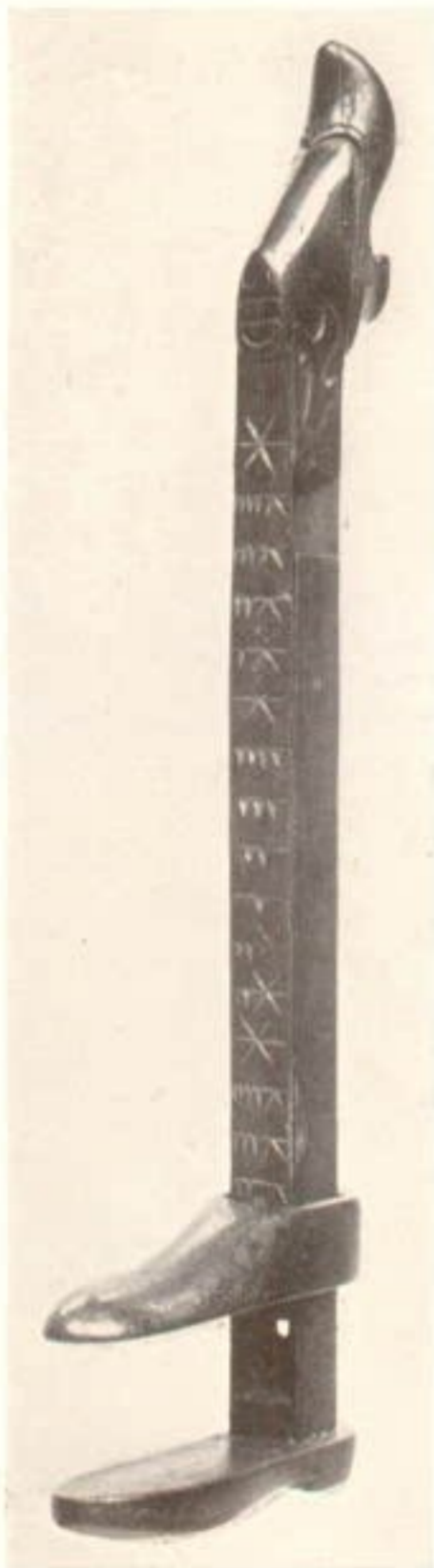
N. D. MACKAY.



(a)

(b)

1. Cup-marked stone at Glassie, near Aberfeldy: (a) northerly face; (b) south-easterly face.



2. Shoemaker's measuring rod, 1788 (½).



3. Gold-mounted tortoise-shell snuff-box with miniature of Prince Charles Edward Stuart (¼).

N. D. MACKAY AND R. B. K. STEVENSON.