

The cup and ring marked stone at Newbigging Farm, Perth and Kinross District, Tayside Region

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In 1981 it was noticed that the Newbigging (or Gladsfield) stone, a scheduled ancient monument, had slipped from its erect position to an angle of about 45 degrees from vertical. A small excavation was carried out by the Central Excavation Unit of SDD (Ancient Monuments) to establish whether the stone should be re-erected or moved to the side of the field in which it stood, this being the wish of the farmer.

An area 4.4 m square was opened round the stone, which was found to sit on a plinth of small stones. The recent history of the stone is well documented and it seemed certain that the plinth was of recent origin. No trace of any other setting was found.

The stone was first recognized as an antiquity in the mid-19th century by a Mr Fergusson, then schoolmaster at Cargill (Simpson 1866). Since its discovery three illustrated accounts of the

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stone have appeared in these Proceedings (Simpson 1866, 60, pl iv, fig v; Coles 1909, 124, fig 25; Young 1938, 46, fig 5) but these reports do not entirely agree in the description of the stone's discovery, its recent history and its decoration.

The 1866 reference spoke seemingly literally of Mr Fergusson 'disinterring' this and other stones, presumably earthfast boulders or stones buried by farmers or religious zealots but showed the stone set on end. If the stone was recumbent when found by Mr Fergusson it must have been erected before the drawing reproduced in Simpson's paper was made. Coles (1909) stated that the stone was recumbent until set up by Mr McGregor, the then tenant, in the mid-1890s: the stone presumably having fallen after 1866. Young (1938) suggested only that the stone had probably been moved. The stone has been referred to on occasion by the name of the neighbouring farm (Gladfield) but there is no evidence that it ever lay there. Although the 1866 drawing showed the stone standing there is no clear statement to indicate that it was thus found, while the lie of the cup and ring marks suggest that it was originally recumbent, at least when decorated.

It was decided to move the stone from its previous position (NO 1522 3520) to just beyond the edge of the field nearest Newbigging farmhouse, immediately beside one of the gates, where it has been placed in a recumbent position, better to allow the cup and ring marks to be seen (NO 1558 3521). The stone had fallen at least once in the 19th century and even if re-erected would probably have fallen again. The distribution of the cup and ring marks from extreme end to end of the stone would have prevented the use of a concrete plinth to stabilize the stone if re-erected *in situ*. Further, excavation demonstrated that no trace of any prehistoric setting survived in the vicinity of the stone. In its new position the stone is more accessible and better protected.

Shortly after the stone was moved a rubbing was taken of its decoration (fig 1). Despite the erosion of the surface which seems to have slightly blurred the decoration of the stone since the

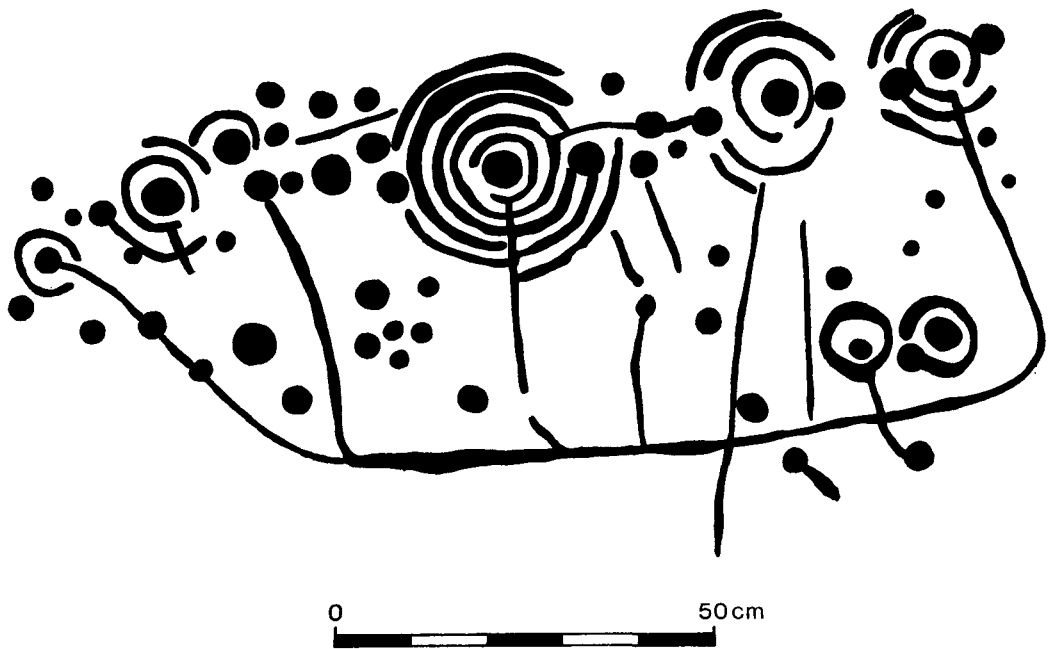


FIG 1 Diagrammatic representation of the cup and ring marks and grooves

1860s, rubbing revealed more marks than had been seen by any earlier observer. Two prints, one of the stone immediately prior to excavation, the other in its new location are appended (pl 38).

The excavators would like to acknowledge the co-operation of Mr G Croal of Newbigging and the assistance of their colleagues in the Ancient Monuments Branch, especially Dr D J Breeze who read and commented on the manuscript.

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*The Society is indebted to the Scottish Development Department (Ancient Monuments)
for a grant towards the cost of publishing this note*



a The stone prior to excavation



b The stone after re-siting