

V.

THE OLD-CELTIC INSCRIBED AND SCULPTURED STONE AT AUQUHOLLIE, KINCARDINESHIRE, AND OGAM IN SCOTLAND. BY FRANCIS C. DIACK, M.A., ABERDEEN.

This monument, locally known as the Lang Steen, is situated at the side of a farm-road between the farms of Easter and Nether Auquhollie,



Fig. 1. Standing Stone bearing an Ogam Inscription and Symbols at Auquhollie, Kincardineshire.

in the parish of Fetteresso, Kincardineshire, about 5 miles north-west of Stonehaven. It is a large, unshaped monolith of quartzose gneiss, of a rude but impressive appearance, 8 feet 6 inches high and of an irregularly rectangular form. The girth is roughly about 7 feet. It is the only inscribed monument of the earliest period, north of the Forth,

which still stands undisturbed where it was originally placed; for it is safe to say that there would have been no motive in later times to change its position, or that, if it had once fallen down, anyone would have taken the trouble of re-erecting such a mass (fig. 1). According to the Earl of Southesk, whose notice was written some forty years ago, it is "said to have formed part of a circle recently removed." I have not been able to verify this. There was, it seems, a circle of stones not far off, whence the local name, Langstanes, of a former holding now absorbed in Nether Auquhollie, but I could find no proof that this stone belonged to that circle, and all experience is against it, since alphabetic writing has never been found on such circles.

In the *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, p. xx, the stone is described as belonging to the early class of monuments "with nothing but the inscriptions incised upon them." This is an oversight, for on the north-east face there can be seen certain sculpturings, to be referred to below, which are elsewhere well known and in virtue of which the stone is to be included among our early inscribed and sculptured monuments.

I.

1. It was not till 1886 that the existence of ogam lettering was first pointed out by the late Rev. J. G. Michie, minister of Dinnet, Aberdeenshire. Since then readings have appeared by the Earl of Southesk,¹ Rhys,² Nicholson,³ and Romilly Allen.⁴ The inscription is on the south-east angle and extends over a length of 52 inches (fig. 2). In contrast with those on many early stones, it is not only quite complete, but it has not suffered material damage at any point. The deterioration that it, or indeed the surface of the stone

Fig. 2. Ogam Inscription at Auquhollie, Kincardineshire.

in general, exhibits is due practically to gradual weathering only. The weathering is in parts rather severe, though never, in my opinion, to the extent of raising serious difficulty; and on the whole the inscription can be described as quite legible when studied with care, though somewhat faded in parts.⁵ The angle of the stone, which except near the

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xx. p. 37.

² *Ibid.*, vols. xxvi. p. 270, and xxxii. p. 348.

³ *Vernacular Inscriptions of Alban*, p. 4.

⁴ *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. iii. p. 203.

⁵ "I think that the stone might be read with certainty if it could be cleared of the lichen," Rhys in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxvi. p. 271.

beginning forms a nearly straight edge, is used as the stem-line, and the vowels are circular notches cut in it. The consonant scores are on the average from 2 to 3 inches in length; they come up close to, but are not meant quite to reach, the edge, which is reserved for the vowels alone. They are carefully spaced, parallel to each other, and had been originally deeply cut.

The inscription begins at about 20 inches from the ground and reads upwards. As usual there is no division of words and no punctuation. The first consonant is *v*, and most readings begin with it, but before it there is an *a*. Rhys saw this letter ("It is possible that before the *v* there was an *a*") but could not make up his mind to read it. I think it is clearly there, followed by *vuo*, all quite clear. The spacing of the group *u* is not perfectly regular, the first notch being separated from the second by a slightly greater space than the second is from the third, so that taken by itself this group might be held to read *ao*; but on the other hand, when the rest of the inscription is looked at, the division between the *a* and the *o* is too small to be meant for a space separating vowels. After *avuo*, the edge turns sharply to the left and the inscriber follows it. Just before the *n* there is a deeply cut *a* which has hitherto been missed. It is as clear as any character in the inscription, and though it is rather broader than usual, it can only be a vowel from its position and from the context, that is to say the vowel *a*. The following *n* calls for no comment, being certain, but there is room for difference of opinion regarding the next vowel. Two unmistakable notches follow the *n*, and then there is a space between the second of these and the first score of the next *n*. Rhys and Romilly Allen read *o*, neglecting this apparently blank space. But, in the first place, uninscribed blanks in a position like this are against ogam usage; even were there no trace of a vowel notch here it would be legitimate to postulate its having existed, as is often done with convincing results in such circumstances. But secondly, the third notch though very faint has not quite vanished, I think. If the space is examined in profile against the sky from the left, the letter can be seen to consist of a group of three notches, that is, *u*. Another clear *n* follows. Between the last score of it and the first of the next consonant *t* there is a distance of 8 inches occupied by vowels. Rhys reads *i*, *i.e.* five notches, and Allen tentatively the same. But if we use as modulus the space occupied by the two *e*'s further on, the space necessary for an *i* would be only 4 inches instead of the 8 we have. It is, however, unnecessary to resort to this indirect argument, seeing that the vowel notches are there to be counted and read. There are eight of them altogether, arranged in

groups.¹ After the last score of *n* we have a group of four, that is, *e*. I am not sure, however, that this is what the inscriber cut. If we read the four, the first three are too crowded and the fourth too far away and yet not far enough away to belong to a different group. This tempts one to regard the second of the four as not part of the letter but due to some accident or weathering, and to read two vowels, viz. *ao*, giving a more regular spacing. After this there is a short uninscribed space followed by a group of three notches, and that in turn followed by a similar uninscribed distance and then a single notch, *a*. The whole series, therefore, between *n* and *t* is either *eua* or (more probably) *aoua*. Thereafter come the letters *tedov*, agreed on by all. At this point Rhys closes the legend but quotes Romilly Allen as suggesting after the *v* "a gap followed by four notches." Three letters can be read after *v*. First a group of four vowel notches. These are best seen from the left. The first is faint, the second and third clearer, while the fourth, barely visible, can be supplied from its position in front of a group of five consonant scores. This *n* is very much weathered, especially the ends of the scores. Their beginnings are clearer, and Romilly Allen's "four notches" are doubtless four of them. This letter is best seen when the sun is just passing off that face. By this point the angle has almost disappeared and the succeeding vowel is cut on what is nearly a flat surface. It consists of five notches, all of them faint but visible, especially when looked at against the sky from the north-east. The hollows too can all be felt. There is no sign of any scores or notches beyond this, and the inscription ends here. It fills the inscribable space so exactly that the craftsman must have drawn it out in some coloured material before beginning to cut the letters, a practice which we must suppose was the usual rule with inscriptions on stone.

The complete legend therefore runs *avuoanunaouatedoveni*, or possibly with *e* instead of *ao*. The verbatum of this can be arrived at without much difficulty. *Doveni* at the end is a known word and also *uate* in front of it, while the remainder divides naturally into *Avuo* and *Anunao*. Divided into its separate words the inscription thus stands

AVUO ANUNAO UATE DOVENI

¹ Rhys says, "I could not decide whether to count four considerable depressions or exactly twice the number by including less perceptible ones." I cannot follow him here, as the notches are identical, allowing for slight inequalities in weathering. Besides, as remarked above, the allowing of only four notches to a length of 8 inches is forbidden by the rest of the inscription. In deciphering ogam inscriptions this principle must always be kept in mind, for it is obvious that the inscriber was bound to keep his spacing consistent if his work was to be readily legible. Many current readings of ogam inscriptions can be rejected immediately for their neglect of this constantly observed rule.

where the first two and the last words are proper names, and the translation thus "Avuo Anunao soothsayer of Dovenio."

Most of the sepulchral monuments, to which class this evidently belongs, contain nothing in the epitaphs but proper names. The formula here gives information as to what the deceased was—an interesting addition. It can be paralleled on two Irish stones and on three Scottish. *Alatto celi Battigni*, at Whitefield, Co. Kerry, is "(the grave of) A., vassal of Battignos," and at Drumloghan, Co. Waterford, an inscription ends *celi Ave Qvecea*, "the vassal of A."¹ The ogam from Lunnasting, Shetland, ends *hccvvevv Nehhtonn*, "the vassal of Nehtonn," where a different word for "vassal" appears, and that from Burrian, Orkney, *cevv Cerroccs*, "the vassal of Ceroc."² Another instance where the name of the person commemorated is followed by a designation is found on the Bressay stone, where one of the legends ends *dattvr Anna*, "foster-father of A."

In Strabo, writing in the beginning of the first century or a little earlier, we find mentioned as the three classes among the Celts enjoying special honours, the *bardois*, the *ouateis* and the *druidai*—bards, prophets and druids. The words are still existent in modern Gaelic, *bàrd*, *fàidh*, *draoi*. In Scotland, owing to the want of early documents, we are unable to draw on native sources for information regarding the position and functions of these classes in pagan times, though there is some in Adamnan's *Life of Columba*. But there is sufficient material in Ireland, and there can be no doubt that the picture presented of the druids and prophets among the Gaels of Ireland would be essentially the same among the kindred Gaels of Caledonia.³

The *uates* belonged in a general way to the druid class, who may be described as the men of learning and teachers of the time, but who probably were as much valued for the various kinds of magical

¹ MacNeill, *The Irish Ogham Inscriptions*, 1909, p. 369.

² The spelling *hccvvevv* looks uncouth, but it is so only in the same way as foreigners speaking their own language are described as "jabbering" by those unfamiliar with it. The orthographical practice in late ogams in Scotland is usually to write all consonants double, whether historically double or not, except when beginning a word and except *m* and *s*. Aspiration is sometimes indicated by writing *h* before the aspirated consonant, not after it as in the later texts and to-day. We write the word here, therefore, in unaspirated form, *cvev*, which stands for older *qvev* or *gev* according to the orthography employed (usually in the inscriptions the labialised *q* is written merely *g*, not *qv*). The word *gev*, "vassal, servant," occurs so spelt in an unpublished ogam from northern Scotland, of date before A.D. 600. The modern Gaelic, descending from *qēv* by regular phonetic law, is *cé*, "companion, spouse," the same semantic development as is seen in *celi* above, which gives to-day *céile*, of the same meaning. It may be remarked in passing that this Old Gaelic inscription of Lunnasting was specially selected by Rhys to "challenge" the possibility of its being explained by "any Aryan language" (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxii, p. 325).

³ See Joyce, *Social History of Ancient Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 218 ff., and O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, lectures ix. and x.

power and supernatural knowledge they were considered to possess. The special branch of this department to which the *uates* or prophet devoted himself was the art of divination or foretelling future events. It was an important rôle that he played in the life of the time, seeing that it was considered unsafe to undertake any business of importance without previous consultation of the prophet. They drew auguries from observation of the clouds, from astrology or observation of the stars, from some magical use of a wheel, called "wheel divination," from the voices of birds and other omens. A king or chief had his prophet attached to himself, on whose skill he relied for guidance in his enterprises. This is the meaning of the phrase "Dovenio's prophet" here. We can justly infer that Dovenio was at least some local chief, and also that it was probably he himself who caused this monument to be set up over his soothsayer.¹

2. Besides the inscription there are, as mentioned above, other markings of an artificial character. On the north-east face, at the height of the last *n*, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the top of the stone, there are two small circles connected by two bars. Their diameter is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch and the extreme breadth of the whole is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This figure can be at once identified as one of the so-called "Pictish symbols"—the double-disc connected by a cross-bar. Its form here corresponds exactly with several examples in the Fife caves, to be found figured in the *Early Christian Monuments*, pt. iii. pp. 371-72. Below this symbol there are traces of, at least, another, but only parts are properly visible, and I am unable to say more than that it seems to be one of the symbols involving circles or parts of circles.

The presence of these symbols on a stone that falls within the pagan period does not prove that they had a religious significance. On the contrary, their occurrence on objects and monuments both before the introduction of Christianity and after it rather shows that their meaning and purpose are not to be found in the circle of religious ideas—whether pagan or Christian—at all. This, however, belongs to a different question which cannot be entered on here. It must suffice to remark that the establishment of the occurrence of this

¹ As an illustration of the *uates* at work, I may extract the following passage from Joyce, *o.c.*, i. p. 229: "On the eve of a certain *Samain* (first of November), Dathi, King of Ireland (A.D. 405 to 428), who happened at the time to be at Cnoc-nan-druad (the druids' hill), where there was then a royal residence, ordered his druid to forecast for him the events of his reign from that till the next *Samain*. The druid went to the summit of the hill, where he remained all night, and, returning at sunrise, addressed the King somewhat as the witches addressed Macbeth: 'Art thou asleep, O King of Erin and Alban (Scotland)?' 'Why the addition to my title?' asked the King, 'I am not King of Alban.' And the druid answered that he had consulted the clouds of the men of Erin, by which he found out that the king would make a conquering expedition to Alban, Britain and Gaul. Which he accordingly did soon afterwards."

particular double-disc symbol on a stone commemorating a *uates* provides a fact that may prove helpful in the elucidation of these curious and obscure figures.

II.

The language in which the inscription is written is commonly called Old Celtic, that is, Celtic earlier than about A.D. 600, known to us, so far as it is known, from inscriptions (mostly proper names) of the Continent and the British Isles and from the reconstructions of modern philology. Whether it is Old Celtic of the Goidelic (Gaelic) branch of the Celts or of the Brythonic (Welsh) will be referred to presently.

The orthography contains two points calling for remark. The character TTT occurs twice, and both times its value is *b*. The usual value of this sign is *v* in the ogams generally, that is, the semi-vowel *u*, as in Latin *uolare*, English *dwell*. In intervocative position this sound afterwards disappears; thus ogam *Lugurvecca* = Old Irish *Lugach*. But it also occurs with the value of *b*, as is proved by such equations as ogam *Dovatuçi* = later *Dubthoch* (nom.), *Lugurve* = *Lugbe*, *Anavlamattias* = *Anblomaid* (nom.).¹ On the other hand, the semi-vowel *u* is here represented by the sign for the ordinary vowel *u* (three notches) in *Avuo* and *uate*. A possible explanation of this ambiguity in these characters, TTT representing *u* and *b* and +++ *u* and *u*, may lie in the fact that ogam was founded on the Latin alphabet and that in the vulgar Latin at the time of its invention there was confusion in the orthography of the sounds in question. Thus in inscriptions we find *bakiat* for *valeat*, *bixit* for *vixit*, *inbicta* for *invicta*, etc., and conversely *iuvente* for *iubente*, *uene* for *bene*, etc.

Avuo.—A noun of the *o*- declension, nominative singular, for older **Avuos*; cp. the *o*- declension in Latin and Greek, *equus* from *equos*, *ἵππος*. *Avuo* would give in the later language *abh*, which we find in the early Irish *abhcán*, "dwarf, mannikin,"² and as a personal name in Irish saga.³ In *abhcán* the diminutive suffix-group *-cán* is added to the stem.

Anunao.—Also a nominative of the *o*- declension and an epithet in opposition to *Avuo*. Such double names are common, the epithet being sometimes descriptive of some bodily feature or peculiarity, e.g. *Coirpre Catchenn*, "cat-head," *Feradach Lamfota*, "long arm," *Maine Mathramail*, M. "like his mother." If the reading is *Anune* the word is the nominative of an *i*- (*e*-) stem, or of a consonantal stem with final *s* fallen.

Uate.—A nominative of the *i*- (*e*-) declension, standing for older

¹ MacNeill, *o.c.*, p. 345.

² Meyer, *Contributions to Irish Lexicography*.

³ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 490.

uates. The vowel *a* is long, and the Old and Modern Gaelic is by regular development, *fàith*, *fàidh*, "prophet." The Latin *uates*, of the same meaning, formerly considered to be cognate with the Celtic, is now held to be a loan-word taken over by the Latins from the Celtic.¹ The word has hitherto been known only through the Latin and Strabo's *ováreis*; hence the interest of seeing the original here direct from Celtic speech.

The *i*- stems of the Celtic grammars, it may be noticed, appear as *e*- stems in the Old Celtic of Scotland: in this word and in the next Dove-ni, in Vrobbaccenne-vv of the Aboyne ogam, and probably Ette of the Newton stone. In the Irish ogams the form is *i*.²

Doveni.—Genitive singular of a nominative *Dovenio(s)*. In ogam and also in the early inscriptions in Roman the genitive of *-ios* stems is written *i*, though phonetically it was *ii* (like English "ye"). This can be established from known words because of the law whereby Old Celtic *-ios*, *-ia*, etc. in final syllables was not dropped but remains in part in the modern language. Thus Old Celtic final *-i* disappears but not final *-ii* (written *-i*). Hence *Barrovadi* (genitive) of the Whithorn, Wigtownshire, stone, "long head,"³ is seen to be *Barrovadii* because of modern *fada*, "long." Examples are plentiful in the Irish ogams.⁴ *Doveni* is a case in point. From it comes *Dubni*, in modern orthography *Duibhne*. The name was extant in the Gaelic of Aberdeenshire in the twelfth century, as *Dubni*, man's name, in the Book of Deer shows. The eponymus of the clan Campbell is *Duibhne*, whence their name *Clann Duibhne*. The word also belongs to Ireland, e.g. *Doviniás* *Dovinia* of the ogams, genitive of a nominative **Doviniā*, a mythological personage and possibly a feminine noun.

The question which branch of Old Celtic this inscription belongs to, whether it is to be taken as Old Gaelic or Old Welsh, cannot be definitely settled from any of its four words; they might belong to either branch, as the languages stood at that date.⁵ The question, therefore, has to be considered in the light of the other early inscriptions of the country which happen to contain the words or forms by which a decision can be reached, and practically all of them do, in my opinion. I think they can be shown to be Goidelic both south and north of Forth and whether written in Roman or ogam. Auquhollie, therefore,

¹ Walde, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v.

² MacNeill, *o.c.*, p. 352.

³ *Early Christian Monuments*, iii. p. 497.

⁴ MacNeill, *o.c.*, pp. 356-57.

⁵ Though *uate* as to form might be either Goidelic or Brythonic, as a matter of fact it does not seem to exist in Welsh, if Rhys is right. He says, "Irish had . . . *fàith*, a prophet or poet, to which the Welsh has no etymological equivalent" (*Celtic Heathendom*, pp. 277-78, note).

as it contains nothing that is non-Goidelic, is to be classed as an old Gaelic inscription like the others which can be proved to be that.

III.

For determining the date of this monument evidence is available from more than one direction. In the first place, the matter of the inscription assigns it to pre-Christian times. It would be unsafe to argue from the absence of the cross or other Christian symbols, though their absence is significant, but a monument to a soothsayer as soothsayer cannot have been executed after the Christianisation of the district. We are here in a pagan atmosphere among pagan practices. The class to which Avuo belonged were the chief opponents of the new faith. The allusions to the druids and prophets in the early hagiographic literature, such as the lives of Patrick and Columba, are clear on that and equally so on the proper Christian attitude towards them, viz. that their arts and influence were execrable and blasphemous and had to be met and countered wherever they showed face. No Christian Dovenio, we may conclude, could thus have signified his appreciation of his soothsayer. This fixes a lower limit for the date of the stone, but depending on what date can be assigned to the introduction of Christianity. I should put it as certainly prior to A.D. 600, possibly more than a hundred years earlier, reasoning from the language of the inscriptions on the Christian stones of Fordun (two inscriptions) and Aboyne, and from the considerable period demanded for the development of the native Christian art which these and similar monuments show.

The general appearance of the monument is primitive. The double-disc symbol is devoid of ornamentation or elaboration of any kind.

The linguistic evidence is in agreement, and is of itself sufficient to provide an approximate date. Original final syllables are all preserved; thus Avu-o Anuna-o Uat-e, There is general agreement that the loss of end syllables in Goidelic took place in the course of the sixth century.¹ In Scotland the earliest inscriptions both in Roman and ogam are prior to the working of this law, and the evidence points to its having operated here in the same century as in Ireland.² In our later ogams the change has taken place, but some of these can be put by other tests to a date not later than the middle of the sixth century.³

¹ Pedersen, *Vergleich. Gramm. d. keltischen Sprachen*, i. p. 243.

² Original final syllables are still present in the following inscriptions: Yarrow, Kirkliston, Greenloaning, Gigha, Newton (Roman), Brandsbutt.

³ The tendency has been to place the "late ogams" of Scotland much too late. The loss of final syllables in Goidelic was followed by the second great sound-law, viz. the syncope of the second syllable in words of three or more syllables; thus *Doveni* becomes *Dubni*. This

The upper limit of date is not so easy to fix. If we knew when the final *s* disappeared in nominatives like *Avuos*, *Anunaos*, *uates*, we should have a fixed point, but there is uncertainty about that.

In the Gaulish inscriptions it is normally present, though there are also examples where it is not.¹ From the form of the words of Auquhollie as they stand there is probably nothing to prevent the inscription being put even earlier than A.D. 300, but on the other hand it is to be remembered that the first alphabet which the Caledonians used was the Roman and that the ogam is subsequent to that. This inscription may therefore, I think, reasonably be referred to some time within the hundred or hundred and fifty years after about A.D. 300.

IV.

This stone and inscription have been treated in the foregoing as the work of the native Caledonians or Picts of the district, and naturally so. At the same time the view is to be met with in the literature of the subject that the mere fact that an inscription is in the ogam character suggests an Irish origin. Professor R. A. S. Macalister, for example, includes the Gigha, Argyll, ogam stone in his *Irish Epigraphy*, tacitly assuming that it is Irish, and ignoring the possibility that it may be older than the invasion of the Dalriadic Scots.² He also refers to the other Scottish ogams by the curious phrase that they were "cut under Pictish influence," which is as if one were to say that the Latin inscriptions of Italy were cut under Roman influence or those of Greece under Greek influence. The latent assumption in this way of regarding ogam is simply this, that this alphabet was Irish and that wherever it is found in epigraphy it is the work of Irishmen. In support of this view it can be pointed out that Wales, Cornwall, and Devon possess some twenty ogam-inscribed stones of about the same date as the early Irish examples, and bearing Goidelic legends. It is thus clear that this is not a case merely of the spread of an alphabet, but that Goidelic-speaking Celts must have been present

law has already been fully carried out in the earliest manuscript material of Ireland, round about A.D. 700, and also in Scotland, as the personal and place names in Adamnan's *Life of Columba* bear witness; compare also the place name *Peanfahel* on the Forth, which Bede writing soon after 700 gives as a Pictish word and which is for older **Pigno-bal*-, the second syllable being thus syncopated. Now the "late" ogams, where they contain relevant words, are at the stage when, though the original end-syllables are lost, the second syllable is still unsyncopated. On this and on other linguistic grounds the dating of these, in the *Early Christian Monuments*, i. pp. 22-23 and other works, as late as the ninth century is quite at sea.

¹ Dottin, *La langue gauloise*, p. 66, and Pedersen, *Vergleich. Gramm. d. kelt. Sprachen*, i. p. 245.

² This is the true date, I believe, the late *maq* of Professor Macalister's reading not being on the stone. The legend consists of two words only.

in this Brythonic country. The same explanation is offered for the Goidelic ogams of Scotland, that they are done by Irish immigrants. But the two have nothing in common. In the third century and onwards Wales was invaded by Irish from the south of Ireland and great parts of it were conquered and held for a considerable period. It is to these invaders that the Goidelic inscriptions are owing, and, after their overthrow and expulsion by the Brythons, ogam and Goidelic alike disappear. In Scotland, on the other hand, the only invasion from Ireland that is known of is that of the Dalriadic Scots who established a footing in Argyll only in the beginning of the sixth century. Their territory relatively to the rest of Scotland was remote and of little account, and during the time that the later ogam inscriptions were being written in Scotland the part played by these Dalriads in Scottish history was extremely insignificant; they did little more than maintain their hold on their remote corner,¹ to say nothing of the fact that the Caledonians (or Picts) were writing ogam before the Dalriads set foot in Scotland at all. On general historical grounds, therefore, there is no more reason to doubt that the Celtic inscriptions of Scotland, in whatever alphabet, were done by the natives than there is to doubt that the "Duenos" inscription, for example, in Rome was done by Latins, and the onus of proof lies on those who doubt them.²

This being so, the use of the ogam alphabet by the Scottish Celts can only have originated in one of two ways. They either invented it themselves or they acquired a knowledge of it from their neighbours. Either alternative is equally possible. There is no reason why the invention should not have been theirs, and none why they should not have learnt it from others, as the history of the spread of alphabetic writing shows. But the question which alternative is correct has not really been considered hitherto. For that, various reasons might be suggested, but one is enough, that owing to the numerical preponderance of ogams in Ireland it has been taken for granted that this is the place of origin. Nevertheless it is doubtful if the argument from numbers is conclusive by itself. An invention does not necessarily reach its maximum of use in the place where it originated, as witness

¹ Quiggin rightly points out this in refusing to accept the mighty bouleversement of the original language of Scotland often ascribed to this small tribe. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1910, vol. v. p. 622, and W. F. Skene before in *Celtic Scotland*.

² Features in which the Auquhollie legend differs from Irish, though it is equally Goidelic, may be mentioned: (1) The man's name is in the nominative case. Very rare in Ireland; indeed there seems to be no certain example. The nominative case is invariable in Scotland. (2) Dove-ni as against Irish Dovi-nia. (3) The semi-vowel preserved in Avuo. No instance, I think, in Irish. The Greenloaning stone also has it. (4) O-stems are in -o, in Irish in -a Avuo, Anunao. So also in all Scottish inscriptions from Barrovadi of Whithorn to Nehhtonn of Lunnasting, from *Nikt-o-gni.

the statistics of motor cars to-day; there may be factors at work upsetting this. The fashion of inscribing epitaphs on stones in the south of Ireland more than elsewhere may be due to causes of which we are ignorant to-day. It does not necessarily follow that ogam was more current there or had been invented there, for it has to be remembered that it was not confined to lapidary work (though that only has survived) but was used for all purposes that are served by any alphabet.

The starting point in any investigation of its history is the fact that ogam is founded on the Latin alphabet.¹ Quiggin says, "It was probably invented by some person from the south of Ireland who received his knowledge of the Roman letters from traders from the mouth of the Loire."² Rhys's opinion is that "the most probable theory is that which regards it as invented during the Roman occupation of Britain, by a Goidelic grammarian who had seen the Brythons of the Roman province making use of Latin letters."³ The vagueness of these hypotheses is sufficiently obvious, and the reason is that no proof can be offered that the Irish had any knowledge of the Roman alphabet at the time that ogam was invented. It is, of course, possible to say that the ogam alphabet itself proves this knowledge, but this is a precarious argument if it can be shown that there were other Goidelic Celts (for ogam is a Goidelic contrivance), not Irish, who *did* know the Roman alphabet and used it at the time required and *did* afterwards use ogam. The possibility that ogam is of Scottish origin has to be taken into account, and the following facts can be offered as presenting a case for examination.

1. From the end of the first century onwards the Celts of Scotland north of Forth were in close touch with the Romans in a way that the Irish were not, and had good opportunity of becoming acquainted with their alphabet. That they did is attested by several inscriptions, one at Newton, Aberdeenshire,⁴ mostly in Roman cursives, and another in Roman capitals from Greenloaning, Perthshire. A third, recently discovered but not yet published, is of very early date, and is non-sepulchral. These three are in Goidelic vernacular and contain no Latin. A small stone from a Celtic fort at Burghead, Morayshire, contains Roman capitals of the early centuries A.D.; it is apparently some magic formula, of which only the initial letters are given.

2. The existence of ogam in Scotland as early as in Ireland is attested by the Auquhollie and Gigha stones.

¹ "Dies Alphabet, das gewiss nichts als eine Umbildung des lateinischen Alphabets, . . ." (Pedersen, *o.c.*, i. p. 4). "The Ogham alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet" (MacNeill, *o.c.*, p. 334).

² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1910, v. p. 623.

³ *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, 1891, vii. p. 583.

⁴ Diack, *The Newton Stone*, 1922.

3. As MacNeill points out, "the orthographical system of ogam and the orthographical system of early manuscript Irish are as distinct and separate as if they belonged to two unrelated languages." In particular the consonants *c, t, p,* and *g, d, b* are differently treated in the two. As regards these, the orthography of Old Irish is based on the Brythonic pronunciation of Latin which the Irish received from the Brythonic missionaries. There is no trace of this in the ogam orthography.¹ Now the Caledonian Gael was quite removed from British influence before about 400, when British missionaries began to penetrate the country. He learnt the alphabet direct from Roman sources, or, what is perhaps more probable, from the more or less Romanised fellow-Celts of southern Scotland who regained their independence on the withdrawal of the Romans south of the Cheviots and the Solway early in the reign of Commodus.² The place-names of this district, and the Yarrow and Whithorn inscriptions, prove that these Celts were Goidels like himself.

4. The forms of the ogam letters are so utterly unlike those of the Roman alphabet that the question naturally presents itself, what could have suggested such a curious and cumbrous device? Some archæological matter can be pointed to which points to an answer. The essential features of the alphabet are a centre or stem line, at right angles to which are groups of scores, some of which intersect the stem line. Now there can be seen in the Fife caves, among other "scribings" whose significance is unknown, figures bearing an essential resemblance to the ogam alphabetic device. Others occur in a cave in Arran, I understand. A small disc from a kitchen-midden in Caithness, now in the National Museum, which is probably an amulet, contains a figure closely resembling ogam; and I have lately seen a stone in the parish of Rayne, Aberdeenshire, inscribed with similar sculpturings.³ This pre-alphabetic "ogam," as we may call it, can be conjectured to have some symbolical value. It probably bore the name of ogam and was connected with the worship of *Ogma*, the god of language and eloquence. At all events, the occurrence of these figures in Scotland shows that, if alphabetic ogam was invented there, it had not to be constructed out of the vague. We can see whence the inventor drew the suggestion. We can see also why the ogam alphabet should have been preferred to the Roman; it doubtless took over the old native religious associations connected with the earlier symbolism.

¹ MacNeill, *o.c.*, pp. 336-39, and cp. Thurneysen, *Handbuch des Altirischen*, § 906.

² Macdonald, *The Roman Wall in Scotland*, p. 407.

³ Owing to its position in a dyke, only one face of this large stone was visible when I saw it, but the markings are evidently continued on another or others. Arrangements will be made to have it taken out and properly examined.