

II.

NOTES ON SOME ABERDEENSHIRE SCULPTURED STONES AND CROSSES. BY JAMES RITCHIE, F.E.I.S., CORR. MEM. S.A.SCOT.

The following notes contain information regarding Sculptured Stones at (1) Balhaggardy, (2) Banchory House, (3) Nether Corskie, (4) Park House, (5) Percylieu, (6) Newbigging of Leslie, and (7) Rothiebrisan and Fyvie; and regarding Crosses at (1) Ellon, (2) Mill of Crathes, (3) Banchory Ternan, and (4) Dunecht; and lost Stones at (1) Leys of Dummies and (2) Turriff.

I. SCULPTURED STONES.

1. *Balhaggardy*.—The farm of Balhaggardy is situated nearly two miles from Inverurie, on the site of the battle of Harlaw, about half of the area of the battlefield being included in it. One of the ancestors of the present tenant, Mr Maitland, is said to have fought at the battle, and the farm has been occupied by the same family for a very long time. The village of Harlaw, which stood near the western end of the battlefield, has totally disappeared, though on its site stone whorls, such as were used on spinning-wheels, are occasionally turned up by the plough. Mr Collie, the proprietor of Harlaw House, has a fine collection of these and other objects of antiquity, many of which have been gathered on the battlefield in the immediate neighbourhood of his residence.

Though "Balhaggardy" means "the Priest's Residence," no trace of a chapel or graveyard is now to be seen in the neighbourhood, but a portion of a sculptured stone (fig. 1) is built into the wall at the back of the old farmhouse of East Balhaggardy. The stone has been cut by the builders in order to be used as a lintel over the back door of the house. It is of reddish granite, similar to that found on Bennachie, and measures 5 feet 8 inches long, and 10 inches broad. Its thickness is hidden in the depth of the wall. The figure incised on its surface is incomplete, but appears to be a portion of the double-disc or spectacle ornament with the Z-shaped line crossing it. The disc is formed of three concentric circles, the outer one of which measures 15 inches in diameter. The building has been carefully examined to discover if possible the remaining portion of the sculpturing, but without success. There are, however, several pieces of apparently the same kind of granite built into the walls near the sculptured stone, and very

possibly one of these may have the missing portion of the figure hidden on its inner side. This, of course, cannot be verified until the house is pulled down, and though it is no longer used as a dwelling, but only as a store-house, the walls are substantial, and may yet stand for many a year. The farms of Brandsbutt and Drummies, each of which has a sculptured stone, are both within sight of Balhaggardy, Brandsbutt being about a mile to the south-east, and Drummies nearly the same distance to the south-west.

2. *Banchory House*.—Banchory House stands on the south side of the Dee about one mile west from the Aberdeen tramway terminus at Bridge of Dee. Though it is actually within the county of Kincardine, it is so close to the city of Aberdeen that its sculptured stones may be conveniently included in the present paper. Banchory House is now



Fig. 1. Stone at Balhaggardy.

the residence of Sir David Stewart, but it formerly belonged to Mr Alexander Thomson, a noted antiquary of his day. In May 1858 he read a paper before the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in which he described the sculptured stones which had been found at Dinnacair, an isolated rock close to the shore on the south side of Strathlethan Bay about halfway between Stonehaven and Dunnottar Castle. These stones he afterwards removed to his residence at Banchory House, and after his death they were lost sight of, so that, though they are described and figured in Dr Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, they were regarded as lost when *Early Christian Monuments* was published by the Society. Fortunately they have not really been lost. A survey of the antiquities of the valley of the Dee has for some time back been carried on for the Aberdeen Natural History and Antiquarian Society, and, while assisting in carrying out the survey, Miss A. M. Davidson, Beaconsfield Place, Aberdeen, ascertained that the stones are still at Banchory House. Four of them (fig. 2) are built into the inner side of the eastern wall of the fruit-garden, and were

during the summer almost completely hidden by a plum tree which was trained against the wall. The fifth stands in the middle of a plot in the flower-garden close to the south side of the house.

No. 1, the upper stone in the wall, has inscribed on it two figures: the fish symbol, and, just above its head, a triangle with a central dot. These are plainly figured in Dr Stuart's *Sculptured Stones*, but now, through the action of the weather, they are very faint, many of the details of the fish being indistinct and the triangle having almost



Fig. 2. Sculptured Stones built into the Garden Wall at Banchory House.

completely disappeared. Directly underneath is placed a slightly larger stone (No. 2) with the double-disc or spectacle symbol and the Z-shaped rod incised upon it. The incisions are deeply cut, and the figures on this stone are quite distinct. The Z-shaped rod is of a peculiar form, the ends being ornamented by elaborate carving not placed so symmetrically on each side as is usual. The lines joining the two discs also curve outwards instead of bending towards each other in the centre as in the ordinary form of the symbol. The whole figure appears to be rather carelessly drawn. No. 3 is placed on the left of the double-disc stone. It is a smaller stone and has incised on it a triangle with a crescent placed across it. The lines of the figure are carefully drawn, though the incisions are narrow and

shallow. The upper line of the crescent rests upon the apex of the triangle. No other figure exactly similar to this is known, though the Golspie ogham-inscribed stone, now in Dunrobin Museum, has on the back a crescent crossed by a triangle whose apex, however, points downwards, instead of upwards as in the Banchory House example. Stone No. 4 is at the right-hand side of the centre stone. It is a small reddish-coloured block on which is incised a small figure consisting of two rudely drawn circles touching each other. A hollow dot occupies the centre of each circle. The figure appears to be an elementary form of the double-disc symbol without the Z-shaped rod.



Fig. 3. Sculptured Stone (No. 5) at Banchory House.

These are all the stones which are built into the garden wall, but there is another stone (No. 5) close to the south side of the house. It has on the front the double-disc symbol crossed by the Z-shaped rod (fig. 3). The discs are each formed of two concentric circles with a hollow dot in the centre. The end of the rod in the figure given in Dr Stuart's *Sculptured Stones* has several elaborate flourishes on it. It is doubtful, however, if all these really belong to the rod. There are several marks on this part of the stone caused apparently by the tools of the masons who had cut down the stone for building purposes, and it is difficult to distinguish the original design from the newer lines. Dr Stuart does not seem to have observed the symbols on the back of this stone (fig. 4), probably because they are very faint and incomplete. They are not mentioned either in *Sculptured Stones* or in *Early Christian Monuments*. They are two in number and con-

sist of a portion of the cap or flower symbol and one side of the mirror. The greater parts of these symbols have been cut away, only an indistinct fragment of each remaining. There is also a small cup-mark on this side of the stone.

3. *Nether Corskie*.—At Nether Corskie near Waterton of Echt, about twelve miles west of Aberdeen, there are two standing stones which are said to be all that remain of a stone circle which formerly stood there. The western stone has two cup-marks on it: one on the south face, and the other on the west one. These stones have long been known, but only within the last few months has it been discovered



Fig. 4. Symbols on the Back of the Banchory Stone, No. 5.

that the cup-marked stone is also a symbol-bearing one. The origin of this discovery was as follows. The stones were for long thickly overgrown with lichen, and the symbols, being very slightly incised, were quite hidden by the growth. But some nine years ago the farmer on whose ground the stones stand chanced to have a horse which had contracted mange, an infectious skin disease. To keep it apart from the other animals on the farm, it was put into the standing-stones field, where it naturally used the stones as rubbing-posts. After it had recovered, the farmer whitewashed the stones fully halfway up with hot lime to destroy any traces of infection which might cling to them. The hot lime destroyed the lichen on the portion of the stones which had been painted with it, and was in course of time itself washed off by the winter rains. Last autumn Miss Davidson visited

the stones and noticed the symbols, and to her belongs the credit of having added a new symbol-bearing stone to our lists. How improbable it seems that the taking of mangle by a farmer's horse could have any effect in increasing our knowledge of antiquity! and



Fig. 5. Stone at Nether Corskie.

yet it has resulted in the discovery of a symbol-bearing monument dating from early Christian times.

The stone (fig. 5) is of grey granite with a very rough surface, the harder crystals of the stone standing prominently forward. The symbols appear to have been only slightly incised and have suffered much from exposure to the weather, so that they are now rather faint and require a strong side light to render them at all distinct. As the stone faces south-east, the carvings are best seen in strong sunlight

shortly before eight o'clock in the morning and about four in the afternoon. The symbols are two in number, the mirror and comb to the right and the mirror-case to the left, and both are placed side by side and about halfway up the southern face of the stone. The mirror is formed of two concentric circles half an inch apart, the inner one faint and in some parts incomplete. The outer one measures 11 inches in diameter, and the inner one 10 inches. The handle is of a common form, consisting of two circles joined by a double line, the upper circle being attached to the body of the mirror. The whole figure measures 17 inches from top to bottom. The comb is placed to the right of the body of the mirror and is formed of three lines joined together at the ends, the upper one being bent slightly upwards near the centre. The comb measures 6 inches long by 3 inches broad. The mirror-case is at the left side of the mirror. It is also formed of two circles, but they are not concentric, being further apart at the top than at the bottom, and the inner one is also imperfect. The outer circle is of the same size as the mirror, 11 inches in diameter, but the inner one is only $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The projecting part at the bottom of the figure is formed of single lines and is 6 inches wide at the base, the sides being slightly curved. The whole figure is 15 inches in length from top to bottom.

4. *Park House*.—In the grounds of Park House, some eleven miles west of Aberdeen and nearly two miles from Park Station on the Deeside Railway, there stands a sculptured stone (fig. 6) which has several times been somewhat incorrectly figured. It is placed on a pedestal, on the front of which a copy of the symbols has been so incorrectly carved as to bear only a general resemblance to the original. Neither are the figures in *Sculptured Stones*, vol. i., plate 12, and *Early Christian Monuments*, Part III. p. 180, quite satisfactory. This doubtless arises from the faint character of the incised lines and the shady place where the stone has been erected. It stands in a wood on the north side of one of the walks in the grounds of Park House and between the walk and the railway. Several attempts were made to photograph it, but these were rendered unsatisfactory by the shadow of a tree which fell on the surface of the stone and hid the carving just at the time of day when it should have been most clearly seen. It was only by returning to the place in mid-winter, when the trees were bare of leaves, that a satisfactory photograph was at last obtained. This shows that the upper symbol on the stone is not "the two-legged rectangle crossed by the Z-shaped rod," as suggested in *Early Christian Monuments*, but rather that symbol which has been variously taken to represent either a flower or an ornamented cap. The comb on the lower part

of the stone shows some traces of teeth which are not represented on either of the drawings to which reference has been made.

5. "*Percylieu*" Stone.—In vol. xlv. of the *Proceedings* for 1909-10, pp. 209-12, the wanderings of the Percylieu sculptured stone were described—from its original site at Hillhead of Clatt to Percylieu,



Fig. 6. Sculptured Stone at Park House.

thence to Cransmill at the head of the Kirkney Burn, and from that to Mytice near Gartly. But its wanderings were not then ended, and it is now my duty to chronicle another removal. The fact of its having been removed from its original site without the consent of the owner of the estate was brought to the notice of the present proprietor, Mr C. E. N. Leith Hay of Leith Hall. To prevent its ultimate loss, he laid claim to it, and after some delay his claim was

acknowledged, and he was enabled to remove it to his residence at Leith Hall, near Kennethmont Station on the Great North of Scotland Railway, where it now lies.

6. *Newbigging of Leslie*.—For many years there stood in the garden beside the farmhouse of Newbigging of Leslie a small sculptured stone (fig. 7) having incised on its face the figure of a hound or wolf and a mirror and comb along with a rectangular symbol which has been taken to represent a case for holding a book or a manuscript. This interesting stone is no longer to be found at Newbigging. On the

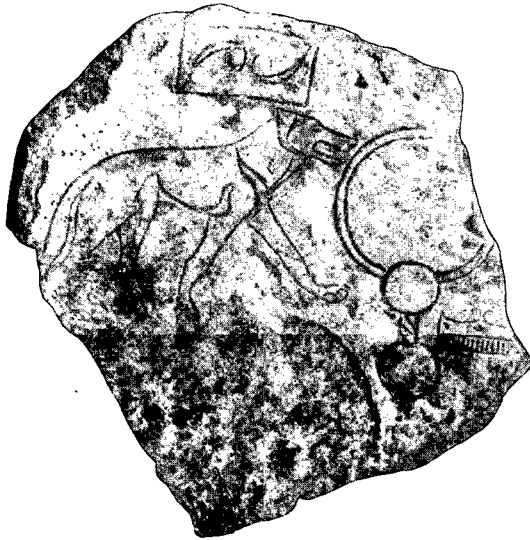


Fig. 7. Sculptured Stone, formerly at Newbigging of Leslie, now removed to Leith Hall.

removal of the last tenant, the proprietor, Mr Leith Hay, had it taken to Leith Hall, where it now stands at the side of one of the walks in the garden. These two stones, Percylieu and Newbigging, are now in safety, but they are exposed to the weather, which in time will doubtless damage, if not destroy, the symbols carved on them. Surely it is therefore permissible to hope that their wanderings may not yet be quite ended, but that they may have a final removal to some suitable museum, either the national one in Edinburgh or the local one in Aberdeen, where they would be carefully preserved, and be available for inspection by those interested in them.

7. *Rothiebrisbane and Fyvie*.—There formerly stood in the garden at Rothiebrisbane, near Fyvie, a sculptured stone which was originally

found covering a drain in the neighbourhood and was rescued from its lowly position by Mr Hay Chalmers, a well-known local antiquary. It



Fig. 8. Sculptured Stones built into the Wall of the New Gable of the Parish Church at Fyvie.

has on its face two symbols, the upper one being the horseshoe and the lower one a symbol consisting of three small circles within a larger one. If these be Christian symbols, as is generally believed, this latter one seems to suggest the Trinity.

Another sculptured stone formerly occupied a position in the front wall of what in former times was the schoolhouse in Fyvie, but which was latterly used as a shop. It had on the upper portion a part of the crescent symbol crossed by the V-shaped rod, and below this the long-jawed animal or "elephant" symbol with a mirror in front of its head. It is thus in construction somewhat similar to the Newbigging stone, the "elephant" taking the place of the hound or wolf and apparently looking into the mirror. This, however, may not be intended, but may simply arise from the symbols being placed together. Though these two stones are no longer to be found in their former places, they have not been removed from the district. When the parish church of Fyvie was enlarged a number of years ago the gable had to be rebuilt, and the two sculptured stones which were built into it had therefore to be removed.

One of these stones contained on the upper portion half of the double-disc or "spectacle" symbol, below which was an eagle with both head and tail broken off. The other stone was ornamented with triangular interlaced work within a square, and an oblong containing a somewhat irregularly drawn key pattern, and perhaps it may have originally formed part of the shaft of a cross.

When the new gable was erected, Dr Milne, the parish minister, seized the opportunity to gather together the sculptured stones of the parish and have them built into it (fig. 8). The oblong stone now stands in the centre, with the Rothiebrisdane stone above it, the eagle stone on the right, and the stone from the old schoolhouse on the left. While these stones are doubtless in a safer position than formerly, it cannot be said that their situation is yet altogether satisfactory. They are exposed to the weather, and, as ivy has been planted along the base of the gable, there is the danger that at some future time they may be overgrown and hidden. They should be placed under cover in some easily accessible museum, say at Edinburgh or Aberdeen.

II. CROSSES.

1. *Ellon*.—At the outside of the north-east window of the parish church of Ellon on the right-hand side just above the window-sill and close to the stair leading down to the cellars underneath the church, there is a carved stone (fig. 9). It is of reddish granite, and measures 30 inches in length, 12 inches in breadth, and 8 inches in thickness up to the woodwork of the window, which prevents the full thickness of the stone from being measured. It has been trimmed to fit its position in the window, and in so doing a considerable portion

of the design has been cut away. It is thus somewhat difficult to say exactly what it looked like when complete, but it seems to be a portion of a cross the arms of which were themselves crosslets.



Fig. 9. Sculptured Stone at Ellon.

2. *Mill of Crathes*.—In the walls of the farm-steading of Mill of Crathes, about half a mile west of Crathes railway station, two small crosses

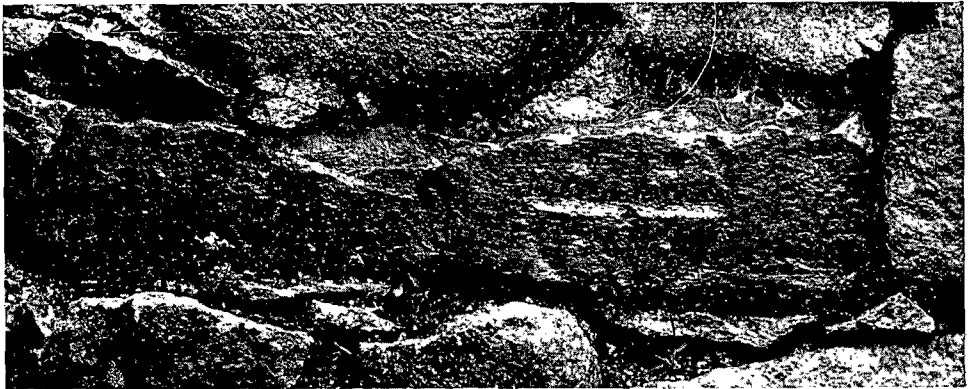


Fig. 10. Sculptured Cross in Wall at Mill of Crathes.

have recently been discovered. No. 1 (fig. 10) is built into a low wall directly opposite the door of the poultry-house. The stone on which it is cut is a hard diorite (or "blue heathen," as it is locally termed),

and measures 3 feet 1 inch long and 5 inches broad at one end, tapering to 4 inches at the other. The cross itself is an equal-armed one, drawn within a circle 6 inches in diameter, and the arms of the cross are formed by two diameters of the circle crossing each other at right angles. The area of the circle is thus divided into four equal portions, and in the centre of each there is a small circular dot or hollow, half an inch in diameter. The incised lines forming the cross and its enclosing circle are also half an inch in width. The cross has no shaft attached to it. In size and appearance it is not unlike the head of



Fig. 11. Stone with Cross built into the Wall of the Farm-steading at Mill of Crathes.

the cross on the Tofthills cup-marked stone described in vol. xlv. of the *Proceedings*, p. 212. It is also very similar in design to the cross on the pavement below the tower of the Parish Church of Monymusk, described and figured in vol. xlv. of the *Proceedings*, p. 348. The Monymusk Cross, however, is somewhat larger in size, and lacks the four rounded hollows which are present on the Mill of Crathes one. This cross is said to have originally stood near Cannieshill at the side of an old drove road leading down to a ford over the Dee, and about half a mile distant from its present site at Mill of Crathes. It is traditionally said to have been a "dead mark" or "death mark," and may thus have been originally erected to mark the spot where some traveller on the old drove road came to a sudden or violent end.

No. 2 (fig. 11) is built into the outside of the east wall of the farm-

steading close to the level of the ground. The stone is of grey granite, 14 inches long and 12 inches broad, and the cross occupies the full length and breadth of the stone. The arms of the cross are 5 inches wide, and the incised lines by which they are bounded are 1 inch wide. This stone, like many others, has unfortunately been trimmed for building purposes by the masons, so that the original size of the cross and whether or not it had a shaft cannot now be ascertained. Where it originally came from is not known, and as there is no old

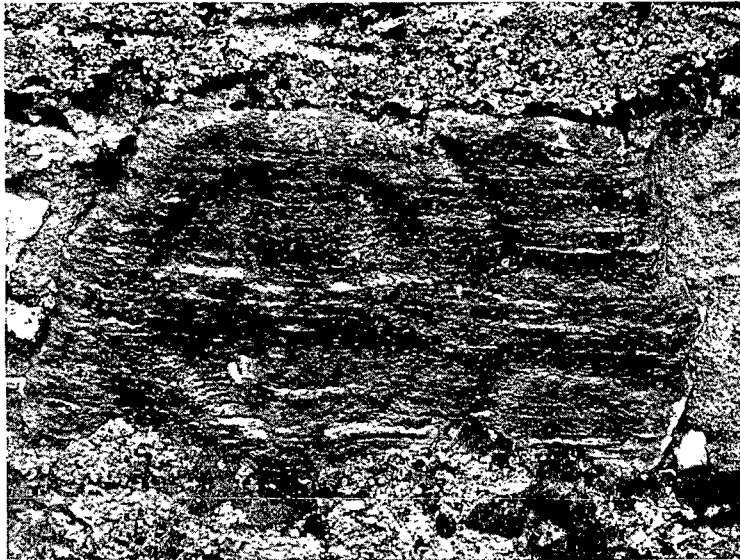


Fig. 12. Sculptured Cross at Banchory Ternan.

chapel or graveyard in the neighbourhood from which it is likely to have been taken, a probable suggestion is that it may have marked the solitary burial-place of someone who had been drowned in attempting to cross the neighbouring ford over the Dee.

3. *Banchory Ternan*.—In the north wall of the manse garden at Banchory Ternan, facing the Aberdeen turnpike road, there is a small stone on which is carved the head and a portion of the shaft of an ancient wheel cross (fig. 12). The stone is a small block of gneiss, measuring $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 10 inches broad, and the cross has been formed by cutting away the stone surrounding it so as to leave the figure slightly raised. The stone has evidently been long exposed to the weather, and the outline of the cross is therefore somewhat

indistinct. It is thus rather difficult to find, but fortunately on the other side of the road directly opposite the cross there are two large stones built into the dyke, which thus serve to locate it. These large stones are traditionally reported to be the remains of a stone circle which formerly stood on the spot. They have more the appearance, however, of cist stones than of pillar stones, though of course a cist may have been connected with the circle. Another way of finding the cross is to measure a distance of 27 feet 3 inches westwards from the edge of the back door leading into the manse garden, at about 1 foot above the level of the footpath. This will lead to the centre of the cross. The stone on which it is carved is built into the wall in such a way that the cross lies on its side with the head pointing to the east. The arms of the cross are $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth except at the points of intersection, where they are narrowed by semicircular hollows $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter. The circle surrounding the cross is also $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, and its diameter is 10 inches, so that it just touches the edges of the stone. The shaft is 2 inches broad, but only $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches of its length are left. My attention was first drawn to this cross and to those at Mill of Crathes by Mr A. Macdonald, M.A., Crossroads, Durris, who takes a great and intelligent interest in antiquarian matters, and whose knowledge of the local antiquities is extensive and accurate. It is doubtless this cross that is referred to by Mr Jervise in his *Epitaphs and Inscriptions*, vol. i. p. 6, as "the fragment of a coffin slab which exhibits the top of a wheel cross built into a dyke near the manse" (of Banchory Ternan).

4. *Dunecht*.—Dunecht House stands fully twelve miles west of Aberdeen. To the west of it about a mile distant there rises a cone-shaped hill known as the Barmekyn of Echt, on the top of which is an ancient fort defended by five ramparts which surround the hill. It is one of the most interesting hill forts in the district, and would be well worth proper investigation, which it is to be hoped it will get at no distant date. About eighty years ago, when some of the ground on the slope of the hill was being trenched, a carved stone was found which was afterwards built into a dyke on the farm of Upper Mains of Echt. There it remained for about a quarter of a century, when it was taken out of the dyke and removed to Dunecht House. The estate changed hands more than once, and the stone (fig. 13) was lost sight of for a time, but has now been recovered. At present it lies, almost hidden, flat on the ground under a beech tree to the north-west of the lawn-tennis court, which is a little to the south and directly in front of Dunecht House. It is of grey granite, somewhat irregular in shape, and measures 3 feet 2 inches at greatest length, and 2 feet 3 inches at

greatest breadth. Inscribed on its surface is a small cross with slightly expanded ends, surrounded by a circle 1 foot 10 inches in diameter, the incised line of which it is formed being $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and 1 inch deep. The cross within the circle is 7 inches long and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad, formed of incised lines $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide and about half an inch deep. The cross itself is in form very like that in the churchyard of Monymusk (figured on the upper half of p. 348 of vol. xlv. of the *Proceedings*), which, however, has no circle surrounding it. A drawing of the Dunecht stone appears in *Sculptured Stones*, but it had apparently been lost when *Early Christian Monuments* was published, for it is not figured in that work, which makes only a slight reference to it.



Fig. 13. Sculptured Stone at Dunecht.

On the east side of Upper Mains, near which the stone was originally found, lies the land of Meanecht or Monecht, formerly called Monks' Echt, which in the early half of the thirteenth century came into the possession of the Abbey of Scone. This in all likelihood accounts for the presence of the Cross stone in the neighbourhood.

III. SCULPTURED STONES NOW LOST.

1. *Leys of Dummuies*.—One would naturally suppose that after the diligent search for sculptured stones that has been going on for many years and the large number that have been discovered, there would be very few unfound. This is probably the case, and those that are still unknown are more likely to be small fragments than large stones. One lost stone will be found some day at Leys of Dummuies, a farm about two miles south-east of Huntly on the road leading to Inch

through the Glens of Foudland. A fragment of a sculptured stone from this place is now preserved in the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh; the other portion lies buried somewhere in the field behind the farm-steading, where the stone originally stood. But the late Mr George Smith, the farmer in whose time the stones were removed, told me that another stone with carving on it was used as a foundation stone in the building towards the west of the steading. Unfortunately he was unable to describe the carving, and it is now completely hidden, but the recording of its burial here may perhaps at some future time, when the steading is again rebuilt, lead to its recovery.

2. *Turriff*.—A small stone containing a portion of the crescent with V-shaped rod is built into the outside of the wall at the manse garden of Turriff. It is figured and described on p. 187 of *Early Christian Monuments*. But another inscribed stone is said to lie under one of the piers of the bridge over the burn between the town of Turriff and the railway station. There was a faint tradition that a large pillar stone with an inscription on its face had been removed from its site on a neighbouring estate and utilised in the building of the earlier bridge. This seems to have been forgotten when the bridge was being rebuilt some years ago, for no one made search for it. The workmen, however, noticed the stone, but unfortunately did not draw the attention of anyone interested in such matters to their discovery until the building was too far advanced to allow of anything being done for its inspection or recovery.

It seems to be abundantly clear from the vicissitudes to which many of the stones mentioned in this paper have been subjected, that there is a real danger of some of them going astray and becoming lost—a fate which has overtaken many others. And even at the best they are exposed to the weather and the inevitable decay which that causes. It seems a pity that this should be so, and that monuments, many of which are peculiar to Scotland, should not be better looked after and preserved as a precious heritage. But public interest in these monuments is gradually extending, and the Commission on Ancient Monuments in Scotland, at present sitting, will doubtless be able to do something to preserve them intact for posterity.