

IV.

DESCRIPTION OF SCULPTURED SYMBOL STONE AT RAYNE AND SMALL CROSS AT CULSALMOND, ABERDEENSHIRE. BY JAMES RITCHIE, F.E.I.S., CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

SCULPTURED SYMBOL STONE AT NEWTON OF LEWESK, RAYNE.

The parish of Rayne lies fully twenty miles north-west of Aberdeen, and can be reached from either Inveramsay or Oyne stations on the main line of the Great North of Scotland Railway, or from Wartle station on the Macduff branch. From an antiquarian point of view it is rather an interesting parish. Lowrin Fair (*i.e.* Lawrence Fair), much frequented in olden times, and still of considerable importance, is held annually in August at the village of Old Rayne. To it people gathered from far and near, and much business was transacted, not only in the sale of horses and cattle, but in that of many other kinds of merchandise. It is recorded that on one occasion, Leslie, the laird of Pitcaple, an estate in the neighbouring parish, bought up all the wine to be had at the Fair, in anticipation of an approaching royal visit. Of the frequent disputes which arose at the Fair, one is commemorated in Tullidaff's Cairn, which marks the spot where Leslie of Wardes slew the laird of Tullidaff.

The old market cross (fig. 1) stands in the centre of the village, and in its shaft are embedded one or two fragments of iron, all that remain of the jougs, an old Scottish instrument of punishment, which, it may be presumed, was in frequent use during the time of the Fair. In the same village, too, there lived John Montgomery, who in 1686 erected the fine Market Cross which still forms so prominent an object in the Castlegate of Aberdeen.

Near the Parish Church lies the Bowman's Stone (fig. 2), where in olden times the men used to assemble to practise shooting with the bow, so that they might be ready to defend their homes when occasion required. John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, and author of *The Bruce*, was parson of Rayne towards the end of the fourteenth century, and the site of the "Bishop's Palace" is still pointed out, close to the public school at Old Rayne.

About a quarter of a mile east of the village of Old Rayne stands the well-known stone circle, still called "The Standing Stones of Rayne," though few of the stones are now standing (fig. 3). Here on the 2nd of May 1349, the King's Justiciar, William, Earl of Ross, was present at

a court held for the settling of a dispute between William of St Michael and the Bishop of Aberdeen. A number of years ago, when

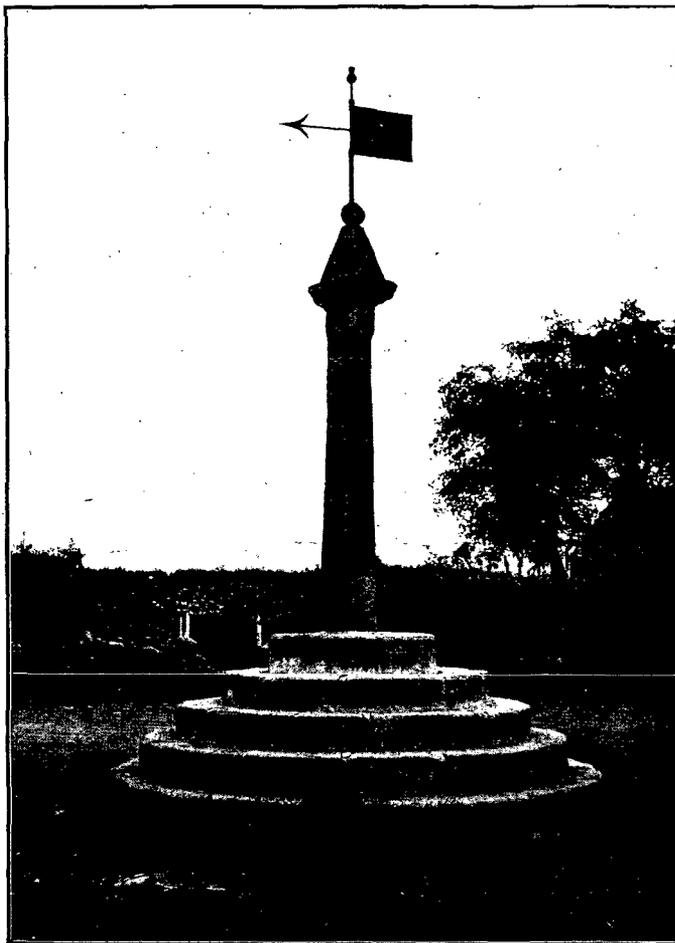


Fig. 1. Ancient Market Cross at Old Rayne. [J. R. photo.]

excavations were carried out within the area of this circle, pieces of burnt bones, urns, and charcoal were found.

It is in this district, then, which already contains so many objects of interest to the antiquary, that the sculptured Symbol Stone now to be described has been recently found. Fully half a mile to the east of the

"Standing Stones of Rayne" lies the farm of Newton of Lewesk, where the stone was discovered. In the autumn of 1914, after the hay had been secured, and just before the corn crop was ready for cutting, Mr James Gordon, the farmer at Newton, took the opportunity to remove a block of stone from one of his fields, because it lay in the way of the plough when the land was being cultivated. The block lay embedded in the



Fig. 2. The Bowman's Stone, near Parish Church, Rayne.

[J. R. photo.]

soil about 300 yards south-west of the farm-steading, and only a few yards distant from the drystone dyke which forms the western boundary of the field, and from its site the "Standing Stones" are visible in the distance. When the stone had been raised, Mr Gordon fortunately happened to notice some curious marks on the under surface which had been hidden in the soil. Interested in the discovery, he carefully removed the stone to the farm-steading, where it could be examined at leisure, and thus secured its preservation. In so acting Mr Gordon has earned the gratitude of all who are interested in our ancient Scottish Symbol Stones.

Underneath the stone lay a quantity of black earth sufficient to fill an ordinary pail, but though Mr Gordon examined it with care he could detect no fragments of bones or any other objects in it. When I visited the spot, several months afterwards, the soil had been so much trodden underfoot by the cattle pasturing in the field that its further examination was rendered impossible. The facts that the stone was lying on its face, and that a quantity of black soil lay underneath it, suggest the inference that, in addition to its original purpose as a Symbol Stone, it had been utilised at a later date as a grave cover.



Fig. 3. The Standing Stones of Rayne.

[J. R. photo.]

The stone itself (fig. 4) is a block of reddish-coloured granite, similar to what is found on Bennachie, and quite common in the district. It measures 2 feet 10 inches long, 1 foot 4 inches broad, and is about 7 inches thick. Centuries of ploughing have scored its back, broken its edges, and damaged portions of the symbols towards the outside of its face, but, on the whole, those portions which remain have been fairly well preserved by the protection of the soil in which the sculptured surface lay buried. The symbols inscribed on it are three in number, viz. the Mirror Case, the Double Crescent, and a Rectangle with rod attached, of which no previous example has been found on any of the Scottish sculptured stones.

The Mirror Case is of not infrequent occurrence. Including the present example, it is found twelve times on the sculptured stones, and

twice on the wall of the cave at Covesea in Elgin or Morayshire. In addition a rather doubtful instance occurs in a cave at East Wemyss in Fife. Seven of the examples are found in Aberdeenshire. There exists also a modified form of what appears to be the same symbol, in which a square-shaped indentation occurs on the lowest part of the figure. Four instances of this form are known, but none of these occur in Aberdeenshire. The circular head of the figure on the Newton of Lewesk stone measures 6 inches in diameter, and is ornamented by three rude arcs overlapping each other within the circle in a manner different from any other known example carved on stone. Forms, somewhat similarly arranged, but much more elaborate in character, with the ends of the rude arcs turned into spirals, are, however, found in the Book of Kells, and in some of the illuminated Gospels.

At the opposite end of the stone the Double Crescent Symbol is incised. It is formed of two narrow crescents placed back to back, a portion of each convex side being omitted near the point of junction, and the vacant space thus left being ornamented by two small semi-circles, placed upright, with their convex sides turned towards the centre of the figure. An ornament formed of a semi-circle supported by curved lines, and having a small hollow dot in the centre, projects from the middle of each concave side of the figure, and another curved line connects the diverging limbs of the crescents at each side. The whole figure, when complete, measured 7 inches in length, but the points of the crescents have been broken off at one end. This Double Crescent Symbol is of rare occurrence, only two previous examples of it being known. One of these is on the stone



[J. R. photo.]

Fig. 4. Newton of Lewesk Sculptured Stone,
now at Logie Elphinstone.

found at the Castlehill of Kintore, and now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh, and the other is on the stone from Ulbster, which now stands within the grounds of Thurso Castle. In each of these cases the ornamentation of the figure differs from that at Newton of Lewesk.

In the centre of the stone is carved the third symbol. It consists of a rectangular figure, with a small square in the centre, and having a rod touching it obliquely on the two longest sides. Each of these sides measures $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. One of the remaining sides is slightly longer than the other, and measures $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, the shorter one being a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch less. Each of the sides of the small square in the centre is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch long. The rod which is attached to the rectangle extends for a distance of 6 inches beyond it on one side, and for a slightly less distance on the other, but as the latter portion is broken off at the end its full length cannot be ascertained. The shorter portion of the rod is crossed at right angles by a line 2 inches long, and there appears to be a portion of a second cross line at the broken edge of the stone. As already remarked, this rod strikes the rectangle obliquely, and though both portions of it are in the same straight line, it does not pass through the figure, as the V- and Z-shaped rods do with the symbol to which they are attached.

No other figure precisely similar to this one has previously been discovered. A rectangular symbol occurs twelve times on the Scottish sculptured stones, but in no instance is it like the present one. In the example from Grantown, now in the National Museum, there is a small spiral attached to each of two of the opposite corners, but it is quite unlike the line attached to the Newton of Lewesk rectangle. There are also nine examples of the notched rectangle having a Z-shaped rod passing through it, but none of these are at all like the Lewesk symbol. The nearest approach to it occurs, not on the sculptured stones, but on the walls of the caves at Covesea in Elgin, and East Wemyss in Fife. On the wall of the Covesea Cave there is a rectangle about 16 inches long and 10 inches broad, enclosing a smaller one 10 inches long and nearly 5 inches broad, but it has no rod attached to it. In the caves along the shore at East Wemyss the rectangle occurs several times, and in a single instance it takes the form of a square with a smaller one inside. In no case, however, does there appear to be a rod attached to any of these cave figures, all of which are very roughly formed.

These three symbols are all the figures which appear on the Newton of Lewesk stone, but there are faint traces of one or two other lines on its surface. It is impossible to tell with certainty, however, whether these lines have been parts of additional symbols, or are merely accidental

scratches on the face of the stone. As they occur near its edges, it seems probable that they have been caused by the point of the plough scraping along its surface during agricultural operations.

Mr Gordon pointed out another large flat stone lying half buried in the same field in which the symbol stone was found. No carving appeared on its exposed surface, but in the hope that something might be found on the hidden side an attempt was made to lift it up. It proved to be too heavy for us to turn completely over, but we managed to raise it sufficiently to enable its under surface to be examined. To our disappointment, however, no trace of carving was discovered on it. I am much indebted to Mr Alex. Smith, M.A., The Schoolhouse, Rayne, for the trouble he took in helping to locate the position of this stone after vague rumours of its discovery had reached me.

Colonel George Milne, on whose estate the Newton of Lewesk stone was found, has recently removed it from the farm where it was discovered, and has placed it, for better preservation, beside the three sculptured stones which already stand in the grounds near his mansion-house of Logie Elphinstone, about a mile from Pitcaple Station on the Great North of Scotland Railway.

SMALL CROSS AT CAIRNHILL QUARRY, CULSALMOND.

About a mile to the east of the Parish Church of Culsalmond, on the north side of the main road, lies Cairnhill Quarry, the stones from which are chiefly used for repairing the roads in the district. At the eastern side of the gateway leading from the road into the quarry stands a large block of stone (fig. 5). It is of diorite, 5 feet in height, with a breadth, at the widest part, of 3 feet 2 inches, and a thickness of about 1 foot 9 inches. On the western face of this stone there is incised a small plain cross, formed of two lines crossing each other at right angles near the centre. The shaft of the cross is 7 inches long, and the arms, from end to end, measure 6 inches. The stone formerly lay, face downwards, almost in its present position, but as it interfered somewhat with the traffic out and in to the quarry, it was raised up a number of years ago, and was set on end at the side of the gateway.

While we were making inquiries about the stone, one of the men working in the quarry mentioned that he had heard there was a deer carved on the back of it, though he himself had never seen the figure. Unfortunately this part of the stone could not be properly examined at the time, as the wall forming the boundary of the turnpike was built up against it. But to set the matter at rest, on a later day, another visit was made to the place, and a workman procured to take down and

rebuild the portion of the wall which hid the stone. After the surface had been washed to remove the soil which clung to it, search was made for the carving, but no trace of a deer or any other figure was found.



[J. R. photo.]

Fig. 5. Standing Stone with Small Incised Cross, at Cairnhill Quarry, Culsalmond.

This block of stone has somewhat the appearance of a standing stone removed from a circle. It is evident that a large stone circle, now destroyed, must in former times have stood somewhere in this neighbourhood, for several large blocks of a similar character have been utilised as gateposts near Freefield House, about a mile to the south. A circle

formerly stood near Tocherford, another at the Kirk of Culsalmond, and two others near Colpy. All these have been destroyed, but it seems unlikely that the heavy blocks of which they were composed would have been removed to any great distance from their sites. The Abbey of Lindores held extensive possessions in this neighbourhood, and it may have been that the cross was put upon this stone to mark the boundary of the ecclesiastical lands. An old road to Aberdeen passed close to the stone, but is not now in use at this point.

MONDAY, 8th May 1916.

THE HON. JOHN ABERCROMBY, LL.D., President,
in the Chair.

A ballot having been taken, the following was duly elected a Fellow:—

JOHN WHITE, 18 Arthur Street, Pilrig, Leith.

The following Donations were announced and thanks voted to the Donors:—

(1) By WILLIAM FORSYTH, F.R.C.S.E., F.S.A. Scot.

Communion Token of the South Free Church, Elgin, 1854.

(2) By DAVID MACRITCHIE, F.S.A. Scot.

Seven fragments of early Stained and Painted Glass from York Minster, obtained prior to the year 1850.

(3) By THOMAS JOHNSON WESTROPP, M.A., the Author.

Prehistoric Remains (Forts and Dolmens) in Burren and its South-Western Border, Co. Clare. Part XII.: North-Western Part. Reprint from the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xlv., Part 4. Pamphlet.

(4) By FR. C. C. HANSEN, M.D., Professor of Anatomy in the University of Copenhagen, the Author.

Outlines of the Geography and History of Greenland. Copenhagen, 1915. Folio.

De Ældste Kongegrave og Bispegrave i Roskilde Domkirke. Copenhagen, 1914. Folio.

(5) By THOMAS MAY, F.E.I.S., F.S.A. Scot., the Author.
The Pottery found at Silchester. Reading, 1916. 8vo.

Purchases for the Library:—

A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Mediæval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library. By Catherine R. Borland, M.A. Edinburgh, 1916. 8vo.

The Stirling Guildry Book. Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Guild of Stirling, A.D. 1592-1846. Edited by W. B. Cook and David B. Morris. Stirling, 1916. 8vo.

The following Communications were read:—