

## IX.

### THE CUP-MARKED STONES OF NORTH UIST AND BENBECULA. BY J. D. LYFORD-PIKE, M.A.

(*Chalmers-Jervise Prize Essay for 1931.*)

#### INTRODUCTION.

Known to the natives simply as "The Long Island," and regarded by geologists as "the oldest known fragment of Europe,"<sup>1</sup> the Outer Isles stretch in a continuous chain from Barra Head to the Butt of Lewis. Occupying a central position in these comparatively remote regions is North Uist, a bleak expanse of gentle undulating country, which is bounded on the west and north-west by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north and north-east by the Sound of Harris, on the east by the Little Minch, here about 15 miles wide, and upon the south by the treacherous North Ford, separating it from Benbecula. As far as rock-markings are concerned, the small islands which lie scattered round the "mainland" of North Uist are of special importance, for upon one of them is the largest cup-mark and upon another the largest cup-marked group noted throughout the whole of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Geikie, *The Scenery of Scotland*, p. 125.

## GENERAL SURVEY.

Throughout this list a strict geographical sequence is adopted, commencing at the mid-north of the island (fig. 1), and thence proceeding anti-sunwise by the west and south to the east.

1. From the centre of the north coast of North Uist there stretches into the Sound of Harris a narrow sandy peninsula covered with bent over two and a half miles long, ending in a short promontory called Ard a' Bhorain (the "Row Ardineen" of Blaeu, 1654), terminating within a mile of the island of Boreray. This island is a mile and a half long, and towards its south-east corner is a small knoll about 6 feet high and 26 feet in diameter; outcropping slightly through its sides are four small cup-marked faces of rock. Three of the outcrops slope slightly towards the top of the knoll, their surfaces being comparatively smooth and slightly convex, and on each of them there is only one cup-mark. On the fourth rock there are three very clearly defined examples and two others less noticeable (Pl. XXXI, 1). When standing at the centre of the knoll this group is seen in a west-south-west direction, and the isolated single cups lie to the south-west, the south-south-west, and the north-north-east; all the markings being within 8 to 13 feet of the top of the hillock. The cup-markings lying to the west-south-west are situated on a nearly level surface measuring 4 feet long by 3 feet broad, which, although fairly smooth, is traversed by long parallel cracks, two of which nearly cross the whole outcrop (fig. 2). The largest cup in this group, and indeed in any on North Uist, is placed near the middle of the stone and measures  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide by  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches deep. The other two striking examples both measure 4 inches by  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch; the dimensions of the less obvious examples being  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches by  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch. The single cup-markings on the outcrops lying to the south-west, the south-south west, and the north-north-east measure  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch respectively. It is possible that these latter are all natural, but it is much more probable that they are artificial, especially as the undoubted examples of cup-markings lie in such close proximity to them.

2. At Obán Skibinish, three-quarters of a mile from Grenetote, on the east side and towards the mouth of an inlet half a mile long, is a small islet lying 100 yards south-east of a rocky island called Eilean Holsta. Surrounded by water at half-tide, though never cut off from the shore by a channel more than 25 feet wide, the nameless islet bears no obvious traces of any ancient structural remains. However, upon its grassy summit, at the east end of a comparatively modern ruin, is a thick slab of stone embedded on end, bearing on its irregular upper surface three cup-markings, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep, which are most probably artificial.

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3. On the shore below high-water mark, 200 yards west of the burial-ground at Ard a' Bhorain and barely  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-north-east of Grenetote,

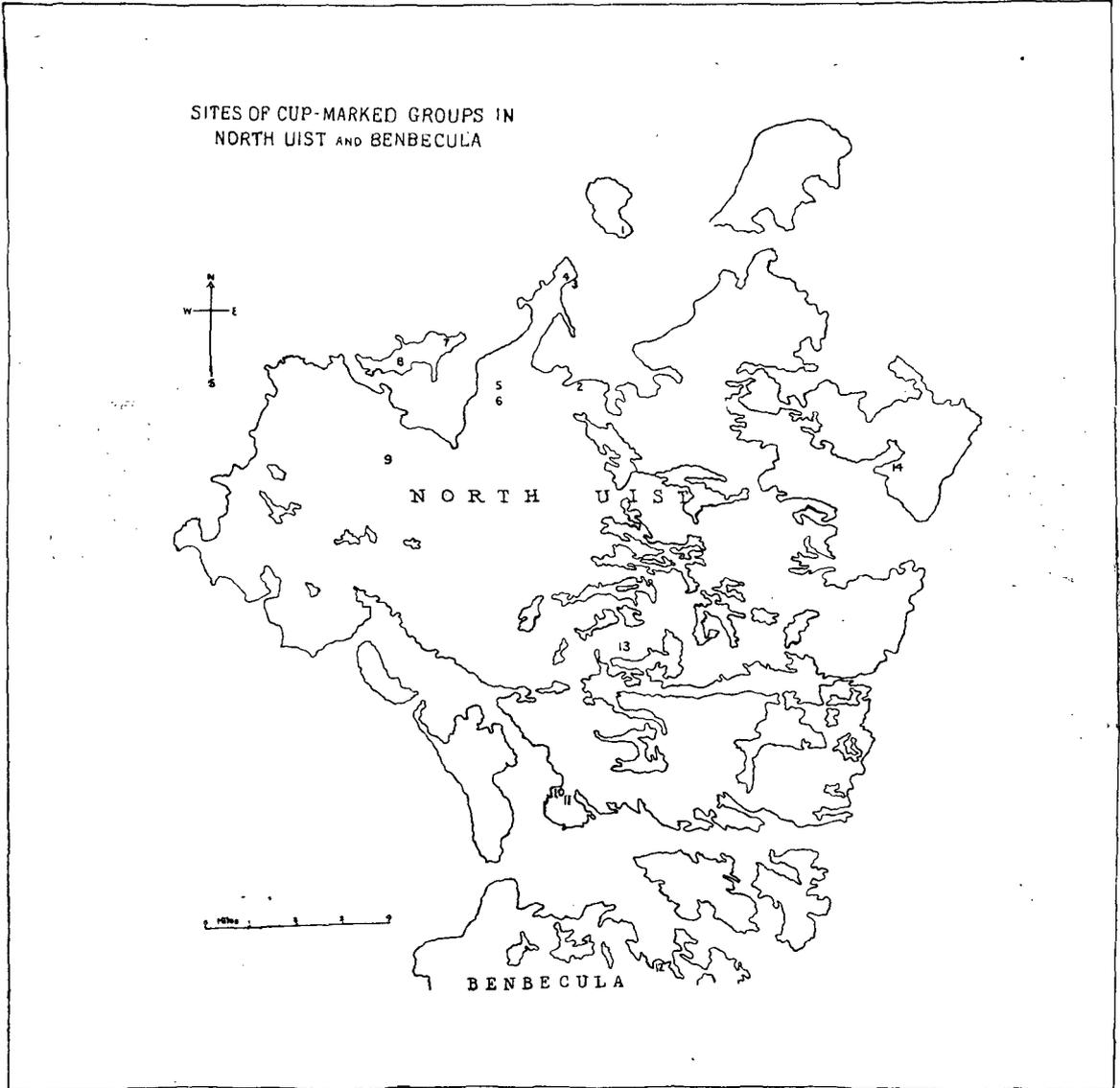


Fig. 1. Map. Sites of cup-marked groups are numbered; No. 12 appears in Benbecula.

is the site of a cup-marked rock known to have been plainly visible from 1880 till 1914, but now entirely covered with pebbles; the level of the  
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beach here having risen over a foot. The spring of fresh water, appropriately called "The Well of the Cups" (which bubbled up near the base of a massive rock washed by the waves at high tide and having on its flat vertical surface an incised Latin cross potent still partially visible) has also been completely buried.

The three following extracts give most detailed and only very slightly

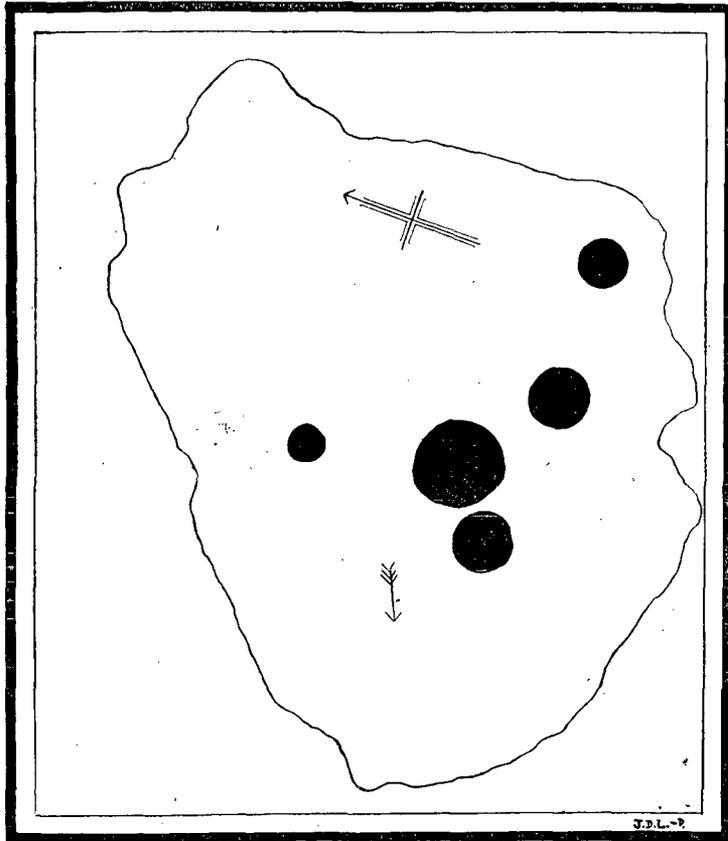


Fig. 2. Main group of cup-marks on Boreray. *N.B.*—On this and subsequent plans a feathered arrow denotes direction of slope.

overlapping accounts of the cup-marked rock, and are especially valuable as they contain all the matter that can, short of excavation, be obtained upon the subject (Pl. XXXII). The late Dr Erskine Beveridge states that there "are 24 cup-marks arranged along the twin narrow and parallel ridges of a boulder embedded within the pebbly beach, above which it slightly protrudes. Upon the southmost edge, these cups are arranged nearly in line east and west; while upon the other, six are in line and

four in a group near the east end. All are shallow and measure 2 to 3 inches in diameter, half of the total number being very well defined and the remainder more or less indistinct.”<sup>1</sup> *The Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*<sup>2</sup> gives this description of the rock as noted on the 17th of August 1914: “Some 28 feet south-east of the cross . . . are two impinging parallel ridges of rock outcropping through the shingle, showing a length of 3 feet 2 inches and 4 feet 2 inches and a breadth of about a foot. On the western shorter ridge are at least eight cup-marks, four in an irregular line near the apex of the rock and four placed lozengewise at the northern end, while about a dozen occupy the line of the ridge of the parallel rock. The cups vary from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in depth.” William Jolly, writing in 1881, says that “Not only is the face of the rock on which the cross is incised cupped, but also its top above the well, and most of the stones round the well are more or less carved with well-formed cups, cut in a dark blue or black hornblendic rock. At the other side of a rocky cape, on the north side of the well, they also occur on various stones, and notably on the top of a high angular slab resting like a “cromlech” on others, the surface of the slab being far above the height of a passer-by and only reached by climbing. Altogether, the whole forms as remarkable a gathering of cupped stones as I have yet seen.”<sup>3</sup> This last statement is not to be considered lightly, coming as it does after a minute description of over eighty cupped surfaces in the neighbourhood of Inverness. It is surprising that of the many groups of cup-markings distinctly alluded to by W. Jolly, only one—containing some twenty-four cups, now no longer visible—has afterwards been identified. Neither Dr Erskine Beveridge<sup>4</sup> nor Dr J. Graham Callander were able to discover any of these mysterious cup-marks, and, where their searches have proved unsuccessful, it is superfluous to mention the failure of mine.

4. The cup-marked stone which was formerly in the garden at Balelone is now at Scolpaig House, and is in the possession of Dr Mackenzie who is keenly interested in local antiquities. This stone was found near the cup-marked rock at Ard a' Bhorain, and may possibly when in its original position have been noted by William Jolly in 1881.<sup>5</sup> It measures about 18 inches long by 14 inches broad. Five cup-marks are plainly visible on the rounded top of this boulder, the largest being  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep, while the smallest is  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in depth. Four of the cups are placed so as to form a rough-shaped diamond, towards the centre of which lies the fifth.

<sup>1</sup> *North Uist, its Archaeology and Topography*, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> P. 86, No. 265.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xvi. pp. 400-1.

<sup>4</sup> *North Uist.*, etc., p. 300, note. Only “a ‘bait-basin’ on the top of a rock close to the sea” was noted by the writer of that work.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide* previous account of cup-marked rock at Ard a' Bhorain.

5. In the township of Middlequarter (situated between Malaclett and Sollas and about a mile south-west of Grenetote), nearly 700 yards north-west of the school, are the foundations of a crofter's house formerly known as Tigh na Croise. Immediately to the north is a large outcrop of rock with vertical sides and a flattish top, having its longest axis pointing west-north-west and east-south-east and measuring 4 feet in height, 12 feet in length, and 7 feet in breadth (Pl. XXXIV, 1). It is called Clach na Croise ("stone of the cross"), for "at one time it is said an incised cross could be traced on the north-western face of this rock,"<sup>1</sup> which has since disappeared. There is a large crack dividing this much weathered rock into two almost equal parts, the most horizontal surface of the northern half containing six, probably nine, cup-marks (fig. 3). The four most pronounced and the three probable examples are grouped together towards the north-west corner, the cups measuring from 4 inches in diameter and  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in depth to 2 inches in diameter and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an inch deep. The other two undoubted specimens lie  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches and 29 inches east of the most easterly cup of the large group. On a lower outcrop to the south of the larger rock, and touching it at its base, is another group of cup-marks (fig. 4). This outcrop is also divided by a crack (running north-east and south-west) into two halves; there being on the western segment one doubtful cup, and on the eastern two certain and six probable examples. The doubtful single cup is 3 inches in diameter and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in depth. The two well-defined cups are roughly in line on the top of a ridge and measure  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches by 3 inches in diameter and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep, and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch deep. Of the six probable examples, three lie on each of the two sloping surfaces on either side of the ridge; those to the south-west varying from 2 to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch in depth, and those to the north-east from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches to  $2\frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter and from  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch to  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in depth. At the east end of the vertical north side of the large rock are two cups, 10 inches apart and measuring  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches and 2 inches in diameter, and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch in depth respectively, which I believe have not previously been recorded. They occur close to three incised markings, two circular and one kidney shaped, which, it is stated in the *Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Isles, Skye and the Small Isles*, "may be natural."<sup>2</sup> Some 11 yards to the south of the lower outcrop above mentioned, on the east face of a small rock, is a large weathered cup  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and 2 inches deep—easily distinguishable from the other cups in the vicinity on account of its rough irregular appearance—which is almost certainly natural, for beside it is a small piece of undercut rock which when weathered away will im-

<sup>1</sup> *Inventory of the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*, p. 86, No. 264.

<sup>2</sup> P. 86, No. 264.

mediately allow two hollows behind it to take on the shape of cups similar to the one already formed.

6. Within a few feet of the east wall of Sollas Post Office, on an outcrop

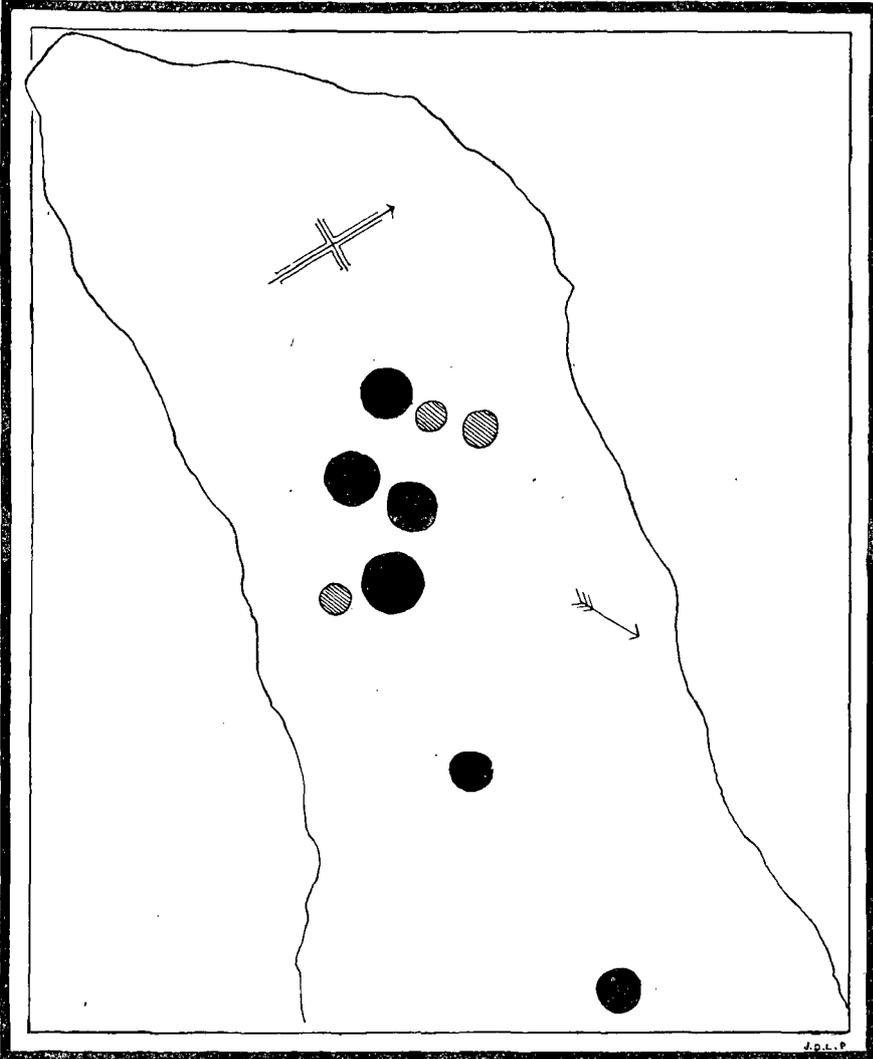


Fig. 3. Clach na Croise, Middlequarter. *N.B.*—On this and subsequent plans cups, which may be natural, are shaded.

of rock about 12 feet in length and breadth, I discovered in August 1931 one almost certain cup-mark (which was slightly weathered on its west side and measured  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch deep) and at least 2 possible examples.

7. At the north-east corner of North Uist, opposite Griminish, lies the sandy island of Vallay, which measures about 2 miles in length by an average of  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile in width and is very regularly accessible up to half-tide by a ford of nearly 2 miles across firm sands from either Malaclett or Claddach-Vallay. At Ceann Uadhdarach, not far from Bachda Mora,

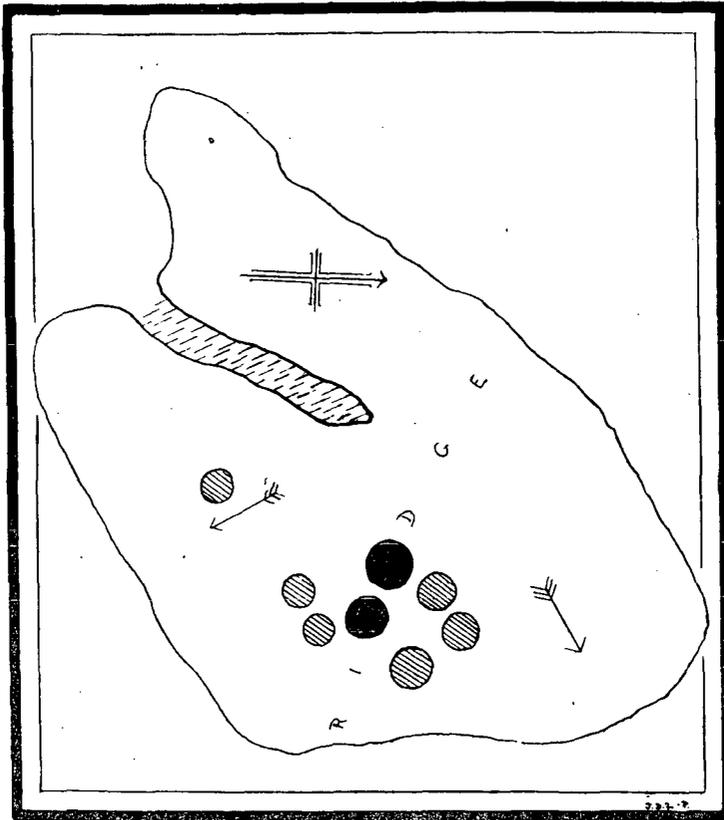


Fig. 4. Lesser outcrop, Tigh na Croise, Middlequarter.

about a mile east-north-east of Vallay House and 600 yards north-east of the modern square burial enclosure near the ruins of Teampull Muir, is the most remarkable group of cup-marked rocks yet found in North Uist.

The site was discovered in April 1925 by Mr George Beveridge of Vallay, who noticed fully forty cups on an outcrop of rock, which must have recently been exposed by the sandhills here having begun to blow, owing to the burrowing of rabbits. When I visited the spot in August 1931, I found about seventy additional undoubted cups and forty probable examples on this rock and on five other outcrops in the vicinity. None

of the cup-markings on this site have, I believe, been recorded, and the great majority not previously discovered, a large proportion of the area of the cup-marked outcrops having been exposed only a short time before my visit.

The majority of the cups lie on an outcrop running roughly south-east and north-west, 18 feet long and nowhere more than 5 feet broad or 2 feet high, which, however, is divided by wide clefts into three, at first, apparently entirely separate sections. On the almost horizontal surface of the one lying to the north-west, whose length and breadth are traversed by more than half a dozen cracks over an inch deep, are fifty-two undoubted and nineteen probable cup-marks scattered irregularly within a few inches of one another, over a large percentage of the level portion of the rock (Pl. XXXIII, 1). The largest of these cups is 4 inches wide and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep, while the probable examples are frequently well defined on one side, but almost completely weathered away on the other. Attached to this outcrop and 9 inches below its highest point, is a projecting column of rock, whose elliptical horizontal surface is 1 foot long and 8 inches broad, and contains a cup—the largest on this island—of oval shape, measuring  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches by 6 inches in diameter and 2 inches deep. The lower half of this cup is considerably more circular in cross-section, for at an inch from the bottom its extreme transverse measurements (namely  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches and 3 inches) only differ by half an inch; hence it is possible that it may originally have been made oval in form and slightly lipped at one end, but it is equally probable that its present shape is merely due to weathering. A minute description has been given of this cupped piece of rock because, from its form and position, it is apparent that particular significance was almost certainly attached to it.

On the uneven but roughly horizontal surface of the middle section of the long outcrop are twenty certain and eight likely cups, of which the largest is  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $1\frac{2}{8}$  inch deep. The south-east section of the large outcrop is divided into two rocks, the smaller of which lies to the south, and, presumably on account of its unlevel surface, does not contain any cup-marks. Running along the whole length of the comparatively smooth horizontal surface of the large rock is a wide crack, and on either side of this are scattered twenty-two well-defined and five probable cups, the largest of which is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch deep (Pl. XXXIII, 2). On the south-west end of this rock, over half a dozen of these cups are placed so close together that a sixpenny piece could here not be laid down without touching one of them. Some 30 feet east-north-east from this rock is another outcrop,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet long by 9 feet broad and 1 foot high. At its south corner are three cups forming an isosceles triangle, with sides  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches long and a base 6 inches broad. The largest of these cups is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep. At the east corner

of this outcrop on a projecting piece of rock are two well-defined cups and one doubtful example, the largest measuring  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch in depth, which are roughly placed in a straight line, and lie on a small ridge between two parallel cracks. Situated on the north-east side of the main portion of the rock is a group of certainly four, probably five cups, the largest of which is  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch deep.

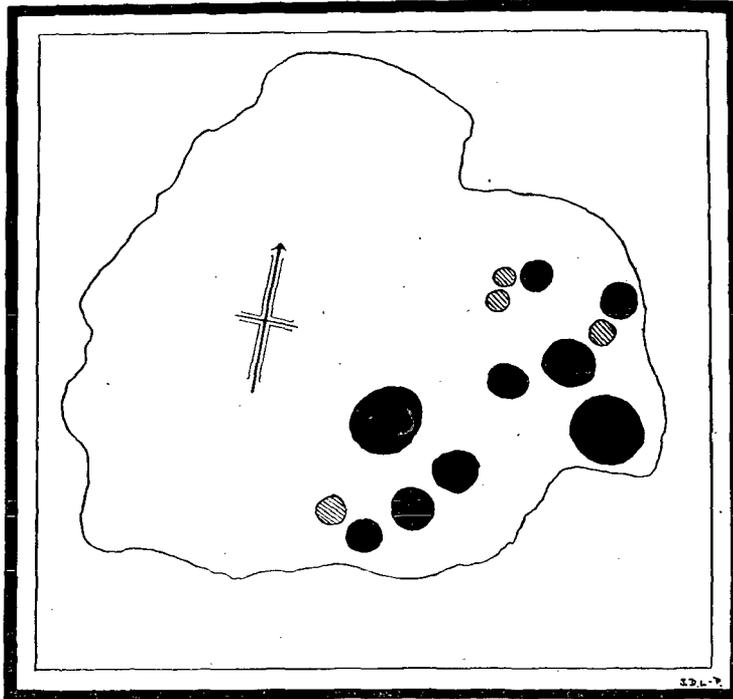


Fig. 5. Rock surface near Bochin and Bachin, Vallay.

Some 30 feet north-north-east of the most northerly point of the long outcrop first mentioned on this site, and 17 feet north-west of the rock just described, is a third outcrop 11 feet long, 6 feet broad, and nowhere more than 9 inches high. At its northern end are certainly eight and probably nine cups, the largest of these being  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep (Pl. XXXI, 2). On a small piece of rock at the north-west corner of this outcrop, and separated from it by a wide crack, are five very shallow depressions, possibly much weathered cups.

On the whole of this site, one hundred and eleven undoubted cups, forty probable examples, and five depressions, possibly artificial, were noted.

8. About 400 yards west-north-west of Vallay House and not far to



[Photos J. D. L.-P.  
2. The most northerly outcrop, Ceann Uadhdarach, Vallay.



1. Main group of Cup-marks on Boreray.



[*Photo Erskine Beveridge.*

Rock (now covered with pebbles), Ard a' Bhorain.



[Photo J. D. L.-P.]

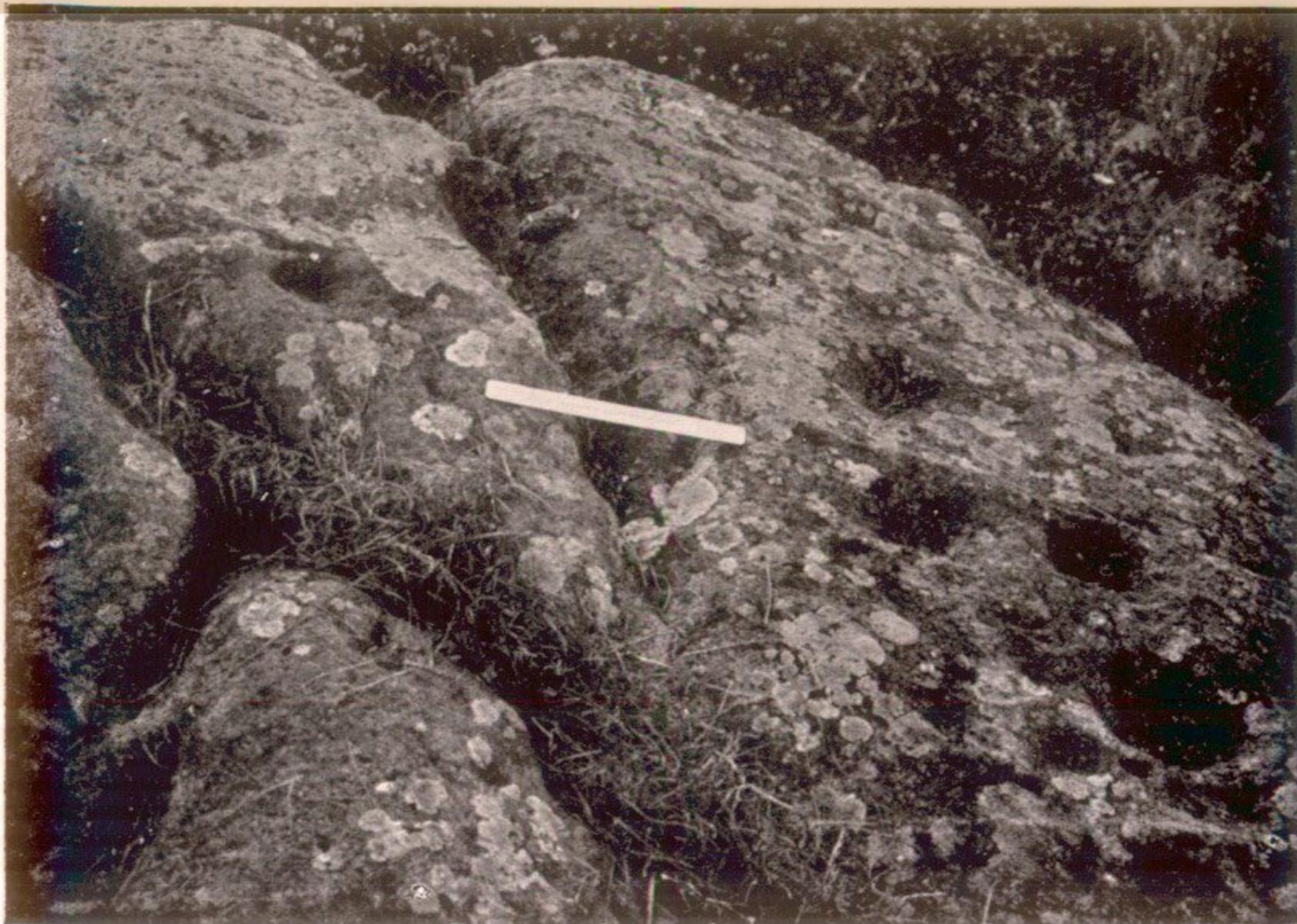
1. The two north-westerly sections of the large outcrop, Ceann Uadhdarach, Vallay.



[Photo J. D. L.-P.]

2. The south-easterly section of the large outcrop, from the north-east, Ceann Uadhdarach, Vallay.

J. D. LYFORD-PIKE.



1. Clach na Croise, Middlequarter.

[Photo J. D. L.-P.]



2. Rock surface near Bochin and Bachin, Vallay.

[Photo J. D. L.-P.]

the north-north-west of two large and shapeless boulders, locally referred to by the individual names of *Bochin* and *Bachin*, is a small grass-covered knoll rising about 3 feet above the frequently cultivated surrounding land of this, the westmost walled field of the island. On a flat much weathered outcrop of rock, just appearing above the ground on the top of this knoll and measuring, as far as at present exposed,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, 3 feet 3 inches broad, and 6 inches high, is a group of nine undoubted and four probable cup-marks (Pl. XXXIV, 2). These cups all lie on the south-east half of this outcrop, which runs roughly east and west (fig. 5). The two largest of the well-defined cup-marks are at the most westerly and the most easterly points of the group, and, being slightly oval in shape, measure respectively  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches by  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep, and  $4\frac{7}{8}$  inches by  $4\frac{3}{8}$  inches in diameter and  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches deep. The smallest of the probable examples is  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch deep, and lies at the north-west corner of the group. Situated on the line of a crack are two depressions, as large as the average of the undoubted cups, which, owing to their rather rough shape, have not been included as cup-marks, but it is quite possible that they once were semi-spherical and have later been made irregular by small flakes having weathered away. The late Dr Erskine Beveridge noted fifteen cups on this site, so it is obvious that he classified these two depressions as cup-marks. He adds that the rock on which they appear "lies 100 yards from the shore, and can therefore bear no relation to another quite separate type of 'shell-bait basin.'" <sup>1</sup>

9. Half a mile south of Loch nan Clachan and about the same distance south-west of Claddach Vallay, at about 200 feet above sea-level, is a large grass-covered knoll, *Buaille Risary*, the site of a dun about half a mile north of Ben Risary. Lying in the steep northern side of this mound, towards its east end, is a large irregular shaped stone slab, its major axis running in a line pointing north-north-west and south-south-east, whose eastern and southern sides are level with the surrounding ground, while fully 9 inches of its western side is exposed. The fairly smooth, though much weathered surface of this stone, which slants slightly to the north-west, is roughly pear shaped and measures 4 feet 5 inches long and nowhere more than 2 feet 4 inches broad (fig. 6). Towards its north corner is a group of six well-defined and three probable cup-marks, the largest of which is slightly oval in shape and measures  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches by 3 inches in diameter and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep. The three probable examples are all  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch in diameter and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch deep, and form a triangle whose sides measure  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches,  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches, and 4 inches in length. Three of the certain cups are touching each other, and lie in a line running roughly north-north-east and south-south-west.

10. At the top of a knoll about 20 yards north of Teampull Clann

<sup>1</sup> *North Uist, etc.*, p. 275.

a' Phiocair at Carinish (a township situated on a peninsula jutting out from the south-west corner of North Uist) is a small flat outcrop of rock or possibly a boulder, on which are cut, 8 inches apart, two cup-marks 4 inches in diameter, and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch and  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch deep respectively. One of the cups is at the edge of the area of rock at present exposed, and

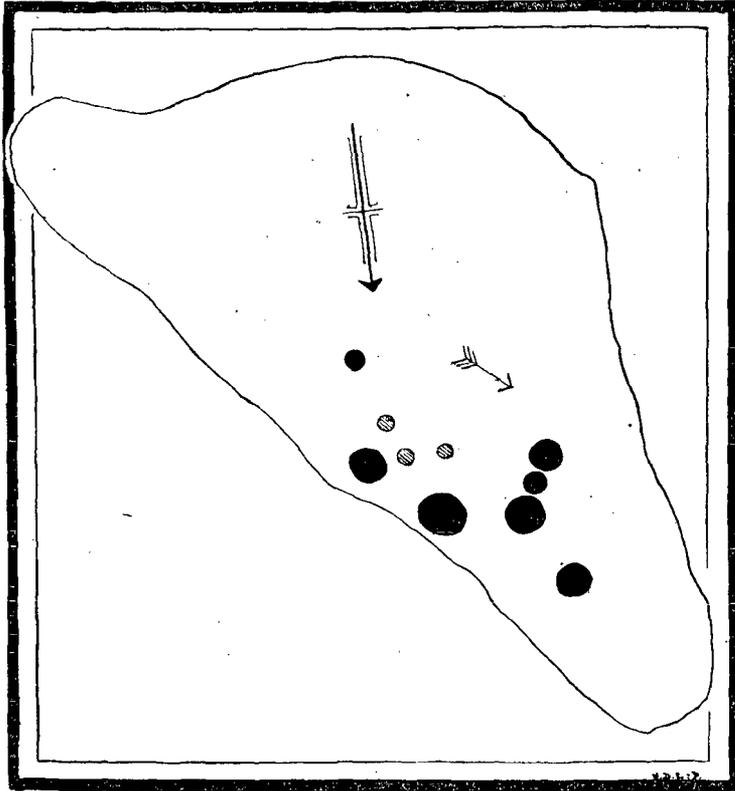


Fig. 6. Stone slab, Buale Risary.

periodically becomes covered over with turf, while the other cup lies roughly in the centre of the smooth surface of the outcrop. It is stated in the *Inventory of Monuments, and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*<sup>1</sup> that these two cups lie "in a line running almost due north and south ( $17\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  mag.)," and it is not improbable that some special significance may be attached to this fact. Nowhere else in North Uist did I notice any other cups so well formed which were, despite their unusual width, so relatively shallow.

11. On a level and comparatively smooth outcrop,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, 3 feet

<sup>1</sup> P. 85, No. 260.

10 inches wide, and not more than 2 inches high, which lies some 150 yards south-south-east of Teampull na Trionaid (connected by a vaulted passage with Teampull Clann a' Phiochair) and 30 yards west-north-west of the crofter's house nearest the "Temple," is one large cup measuring  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches deep. This cup has not to my knowledge been previously recorded, and is of special interest because of its proximity to the two cups last mentioned, which are of such similar shape. This one cup and its two neighbours, lying a little over 30 feet away, are the only known examples on North Uist which are entirely isolated on their respective outcrops, and not bordered by other cup-markings.

12. Benbecula may for the purposes of this paper be regarded as a large tidal island separated from the south coast of North Uist by a shallow but wide and complicated strait called the North Ford, which is studded with islets, and can in fine weather be crossed at low water with comparative ease. On the north shore of Benbecula, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles as the crow flies south-east of the Gramisdale Temperance Hotel situated at the south end of the North Ford, is a high rocky knoll called Hacklett, lying on the east side of an inlet forming part of the Sound of Flodday. On the summit of this knoll, which is some 400 yards north of Loch an Tairbh, at an elevation of 50 feet above sea-level, is a large slab of grey gneiss, lying almost exactly south-west and north-east and measuring 10 feet 2 inches in length,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet in breadth, and varying from 8 inches to 1 foot in thickness. As the level of the soil below this stone appears to have changed during the last sixty years, it may not be out of place to give extracts from the accounts written by A. A. Carmichael in 1870 and William Jolly in 1881. The former, who in 1867 discovered this, the first cup-marked stone found in the Outer Hebrides and strangely enough the only one yet noted in Benbecula, says its "under side is perfectly level, with a granular surface. The upper side is nearly but not quite level, and smooth and weather-beaten on the surface." (By "level" it is not here meant that the surface of the slab was horizontal, but rather that it was all in one plane.) "This granite slab rests upon the edge of a low bank. A passage runs under the slab, and the first time I saw it the slab formed the roof of a piggery. The slab slopes towards one side and one end. On the upper edge it rests on the ground about the centre, both ends being free; and on the lower edge it rests upon the ground from the centre to the end. This is the edge and end towards which the slab inclines, and upon which it mainly rests."<sup>1</sup> William Jolly appears to have noted the stone under similar conditions, for he states that it was "supported on others like a 'cromlech.'"<sup>2</sup> Although this stone still occupies its position as described by A. A. Carmichael, there is now no passage running under it, and the ground has so silted up that it was only with difficulty that the several

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. viii. p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xvi. p. 400.

large blocks on which it rested were identified. *The Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*<sup>1</sup>

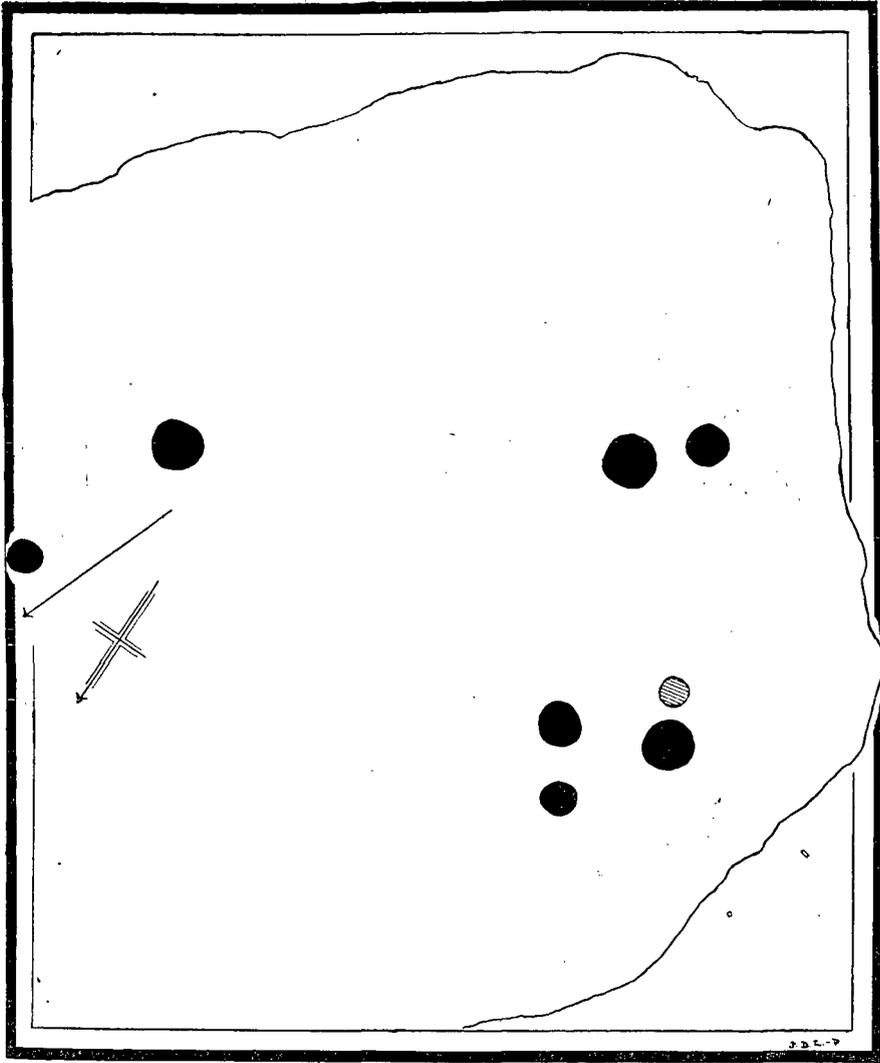


Fig. 7. Stone slab, Hacklett, Benbecula. *N.B.*—Long arrow indicates the position of an outlying cup 5' 7" from the centre of cup near point of arrow.

mentions that the slab is "apparently a standing stone which has been overthrown," and its present position certainly is most suggestive of this. However, if some slight excavations were carried out, it is very possible

<sup>1</sup> P. 104, No. 355.

that the puzzling question as to whether this slab forms part of a cromlech or is an overthrown standing stone would be solved.

On the upper half of this stone, on its present superior surface, are nine hollows, of which eight are almost certainly cup-marks (fig. 7). The two largest cups are slightly oval in form and both measure  $3\frac{3}{8}$  inches by 3 inches in diameter and  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch deep; while the probable example is 2 inches by  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in depth. The incised circle—the only one so far seen in the Outer Hebrides in connection with cup-markings, with the possible exception of the incisions on “Clach na Croise” at Middlequarter—noted by A. A. Carmichael and William Jolly as being “carved at one end, evidently made subsequently to the cups,”<sup>1</sup> could not be discovered, although with a more favourable light and the surface of the stone slightly wet it is quite possible that it could still be seen. However, lying at the extremity of the north corner of the stone and 5 feet 7 inches from the nearest cup of the main group, an isolated cup was discovered, previously I believe unrecorded, which was 2 inches in diameter and  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch deep.

A. A. Carmichael states that “on one side of the slab, the knoll is seemingly composed of stones and earth, and I fancy there are some passages, while on the other side, at the end of the slab, the mound is cut away to the level of the surrounding ground for the site of a house, the walls of which are still standing.”<sup>2</sup> However, it can now only be said in the words of the *Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*,<sup>3</sup> that “it is quite impossible to determine the character of the original structure which doubtless occupied this site, as it has been despoiled to build the house and enclosures on the eastern slopes of the knoll.” It is striking that the position occupied by the cup-marked slab commands an extensive view in every direction, especially towards the North Ford with its varied, picturesque shores.

13. On the south-east slope of Beinn Langass, about 250 yards from its summit, is a megalithic site, marked upon Wm. Johnson’s map of 1822<sup>4</sup> (of which this Society is fortunate enough to possess a copy) under the name of “Baishunes Grave.”<sup>5</sup> Here are to be seen two large thin slabs lying one on top of the other, and separated towards the west by a third and smaller stone fixed between them. The smooth upper slab measures 8 feet 4 inches by 4 feet, with a thickness of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, while the large one upon which it chiefly rests has a length of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet, a width of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and a thickness of about 1 foot 3 inches. These large slabs lie over a hollow and seem to be supported at both ends by some lesser stones. The cup-marks which the late Dr Erskine Beveridge noted as being on these

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xvi. p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. viii. p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> P. 104, No. 355.

<sup>4</sup> Edinburgh, published by John Thomson & Co.

<sup>5</sup> “The name ‘Baishune’ has given some difficulty, but we are told that Baistain represents a still common Uist form of ‘Archibald,’” *North Uist*, etc., p. 257.

slabs were apparently later not visible, for there is no mention of them in the *Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*. However, when I visited the site in August 1931, I luckily noticed half of one of these cups showing through a thick growth of coarse grass and moss. On this accumulation of many years being stripped off, the cups, of which so admirable an account is given in *North Uist, its Archæology and Topography*,<sup>1</sup> were laid bare. There is a cup-mark on each of the west corners of the upper slab, from the more southerly of which a groove—an inch deep at its commencement but gradually tailing off—leads for a distance of 3 feet to almost the opposite edge of the slab. The lowest and also the smallest slab have each a single cup-mark on their south-west corners. Of all the cup-marked sites in North Uist, this provides one of the few examples of what may be called symmetrical arrangement of the cup-markings, and also the only instance recorded of a channel radiating from a cup.

14. On the whole east coast of North Uist only one group of cup-markings is to be recorded. As the present writer was unable to visit this site, the following description by the late Dr Erskine Beveridge is given: "As a doubtfully reported Barp, although without any apparent claim to the title, a site in the Portain district has been noted as more probably that of a cist. At the east base of a cliff, amidst many fallen rocks, is one slab which bears a row of four cup-marks along its edge and is supported by other stones which seem to have been artificially placed."<sup>2</sup> This writer further adds: "At Portain, upon the covering slab of a supposed cist west of Loch Grota, are four cup-marks, three of them in a row near its edge, the other being smaller and out of line."<sup>3</sup> Portain, one of the least frequented districts of North Uist, lies immediately north of Lochmaddy Bay and covers an area of about 8 square miles. Loch Grota is situated directly south of Loch Hacklett, being joined to the latter by a stream not 100 yards long. This cup-marked stone is not, I believe, mentioned by any antiquarian besides the late Dr Erskine Beveridge; the scanty account of the situation given by him not having allowed His Majesty's Commissioners to locate the site.

#### CONCLUSION.

Seventy-five years ago not a single cup-marking was noted in the whole of the Outer Hebrides, while until thirty years ago only two sites, one in North Uist and one in Benbecula, had, I believe, been recorded. It was almost entirely due to the energies of the late Dr Erskine Beveridge and His Majesty's Royal Commissioners for Ancient Monuments that by 1915 twelve groups, comprising over eighty cups, had been discovered. Although only three groups of cup-markings, which do not lie in the vicinity

<sup>1</sup> P. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *North Uist, etc.*, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

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of previously discovered sites, are described for the first time in the present survey, many additional cups have been noted either on rock faces already known to contain these markings or on outcrops immediately adjoining them. However, one of the three groups mentioned as an addition to the list contains many more cup-markings than are even now recorded throughout the whole of the rest of North Uist. As a tabular summary has been annexed, only a brief statement is here given of the number of cup-marks found up to the present in that portion of the Outer Hebrides which lies south of the Sound of Harris.

Specimens of cup-marked groups have been chronicled in thirteen different localities in North Uist, while one only is recorded in Benbecula. In all, one hundred and eighty-five certain cups, sixty-two probable, and seven doubtful examples have been noted in North Uist, and there is every reason to believe that this number could be doubled without exhausting all the cup-markings still existing on this island. The fact that only one cup-marked group has been found in Benbecula, far from being valuable as negative evidence, points merely to the total absence of any systematic and exhaustive investigation.

My sincere gratitude is due to the representatives of the late Dr Erskine Beveridge, who have most kindly allowed the reproduction of a photograph of cup-marks now no longer visible.

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF CUP-MARKS NOTED ON EACH SITE.

Locality of Cup-marked Groups.	Number of Cups at present Recorded.			Number of Cups noted by the late Dr Erskine Beveridge.	Number of Cups noted by His Majesty's Royal Commissioners.	
	Certain.	Probable.	Doubtful.	Certain.	Certain.	Probable.
1. South end of Boreray . . .	5	3	..	3	4	
2. Oban Skibinish, Grenetote . .	3	..	..	3	..	3
3. East shore of Ard a' Bhorain . .	24	..	..	24	20	
4. Scolpaig House, Scolpaig . . .	5	..	..	..	5	
5. Tigh na Croise, Middlequarter . .	10	10	..	..	6	3
6. Post Office, Sollas . . . . .	1	2	..	..	..	..
7. Ceann Uadharaich, Vallay . . .	111	40	5	..	..	..
8. Bochin and Bachin, Vallay . . .	9	4	2	15	10	
9. Northern slope of Buaile Risary . .	6	3	..	4	7	
10. Clann a' Phiocair, Carinish . . .	2	..	..	2	2	
11. Teampull na Trionaid, Carinish . .	1	..	..	..	..	..
13. Baishune's Grave, Beinn Langass . .	4	..	..	4	..	..
14. Loch Grotta, Portain . . . . .	4	..	..	4	..	..
Total for North Uist. . . . .	185	62	7	59	54	6
12. Hacklett, Benbecula . . . . .	9	1	..	Not within scope of this book.	5	3
Total for all of the Outer Isles south of the Sound of Harris.	194	63	7	..	59	9

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY, 1940-41.

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF CUPS AND CUP-MARKED GROUPS, WHICH HAD BEEN NOTED BY THE END OF FIVE DIFFERENT PERIODS.

Year.	No. of Groups Recorded.	No. of Certain Cups.	Probable.	Doubtful.
1866	0	Not stated. " 59 "		
1867	1			
1881	2			
1911	8			
1915	11		79	9
1931	14	194	63	7