

III.

THE BALVARRAN CUPPED STONE, THE "BLOODY STONE" OF DUNFALLANDY, AND A CUP-MARKED STONE IN GLEN BRERACHAN.
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THE BALVARRAN CUPPED STONE.

This remarkable stone is on the estate of Lady Stormonth Darling, in a small field behind the keeper's house, at a distance of about 200 yards to the north of the mansion house of Balvarran in the parish of Kirk-michael, Perthshire.

It is a mass of micaceous schist, the prevailing rock of the locality, and is embedded in the soil, the part above ground rounded by glacial action.

The photograph reproduced (fig. 1) shows the stone and its four large cups. Roughly, the stone is 11 feet long by $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and rises 15 to 18 inches above the present surface of the ground.

The four cups are nearly equi-distant, the three larger ones in a row; the fourth, which is somewhat smaller, may be said to mark the apex of an almost equilateral triangle, of which two of the other cups define the base. The larger cups are respectively $9\frac{1}{2}$, 9, and 9 inches in diameter and $4\frac{1}{2}$, $5\frac{1}{2}$, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth. The smaller cup is 7 inches wide and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep.

The surface of the stone has been disintegrated by the various agencies of the weather during thousands of years, so that the hardest veins and crusts of rock, and many of the garnets that abound in it, have in course of time come to project as irregular protuberances all over the now rough and uneven surface. These effects of weathering can be distinctly seen in the photograph, though the garnets are mostly too small to appear in it. Such weathering carries us back to a remote period.

But the weathering is not confined to the surface of the stone; the most casual inspection of the cups reveals the impressive fact that the same disintegrating forces have done their work throughout the interior of each of the four cups just as on the surrounding surface of the stone. The garnets and other rough excrescences project inside the cups, though naturally (being less exposed) not quite to the same extent as on other parts of the stone. The inference is irresistible: the cups must have been formed in remote prehistoric times. It is almost unnecessary to say that no marks of the chisel or other tool can be detected in the cups, nor can they have been put to any frequent use in modern times, else

they must have been worn smooth and the protuberances more or less rubbed down.

It has been suggested that the cups might possibly have been "cressets" to light monks to their midnight devotions. Apart from the fact that the cups manifestly date back to a period long anterior to the Christian era, this suggestion has no backing in the presence of any ecclesiastical cell or establishment at Balvarran.

Strong local tradition says that the cups were formed and used for



Fig. 1. The Balvarran Cupped Stone.

the christening of successive Barons of Balvarran, until, the last of the line having been baptised in the house, the family died out. (Balvarran is Gaelic for "the homestead of the baron.") The story goes that one of the Robertsons called Red, or Reid, whilst attending the King at a hunt between Atholl and Braemar, discovered a conspiracy against the life of the monarch, and lost his own life at the hands of the conspirators. The King sent for the son of the deceased, and conferred on the boy certain lands including Balvarran. The first charter extant was granted at a subsequent date by King James II. It is dated 4th August 1451. A long succession of Lairds were Barons Reid, *alias* Robertson. The last was General John Reid, who is described as the fifteenth of the Barons Robertson, *alias* Reid. He used the name of Reid only. He died on 6th February 1807, in the 86th year of his age. He composed the music to "The Garb of Old Gaul," and by his will bequeathed funds, ultimately

amounting to £80,000, to provide for an annual concert at which "The Garb of Old Gaul" was to be one of the pieces performed. For many years the "Reid Concert" was held annually in Edinburgh. The funds have since been applied in founding the Chair of Music in Edinburgh University.

It is commonly said that all the heirs of Balvarran were christened at the stone, a new cup or basin being made for each infant, but that General Reid was not so christened: at his baptism in the house a silver bowl was used, with the disastrous result that there were no more male heirs and the family died out. However, it is of course impossible that the cups were formed for the purpose of being used as baptismal fonts.

The writer is much indebted to Lady Stormonth Darling and her brother, Mr K. O. B. Young, for valuable information and assistance in the preparation of these notes.

THE "BLOODY STONE" OF DUNFALLANDY.

Dunfallandy is on the south-west side of the Tummel (Perthshire) a mile and a quarter below Pitlochry, and is the ancestral estate of the Fergusons of Dunfallandy, the head of that branch of the ancient Ferguson clan, who claim the chieftainship of the whole clan and spell their name with one "s".

Near Dunfallandy House is the modern mausoleum of the family, on the site of an ancient church or chapel. Outside the enclosure is a remarkably fine early Christian sculptured stone, figured and described in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pp. 286-289, where, however, there is an erroneous statement about the name of the stone. It is not locally called the "Priest's Stone."

The road on that side of the Tummel formerly passed near the old chapel, and parts of it may still be traced. About 350 yards to the south-east of the mausoleum all vestiges of the road cease. Here is the "Bloody Stone" (fig. 2), a partly sunken boulder, the portion above ground measuring about 7 feet in length, 3 feet 7 inches in width, and 2 feet 4 inches in height, but parts of the stone have been broken away (apparently long ago), and it is difficult to give accurate measurements. At the west end of the stone is a cup also partly broken away and therefore difficult to measure, but approximately it is 6 inches in depth and has a diameter of 8 to 9 inches. The cup is weathered internally to such an extent that it cannot be of modern origin.

The stone is called the "Bloody Stone" from a story connected with it. The following brief outline of the popular version of the story is given in order that it may be quite clear that it has no bearing whatever on the origin or purpose of the cup.

Once upon a time (it was after the introduction of gunpowder) a young laird on the other side of the Tummel courted the young lady who was then proprietrix of Dunfallandy. They had walked out together for a long time, but the gentleman's extraordinary constitutional bashfulness always prevented his "popping the question"! A friend of his, inquiring how he was getting on, elicited a confession of the difficulty. The lover begged his friend to act as his deputy in proposing marriage to the girl. The friend consented. They went to Dunfallandy.

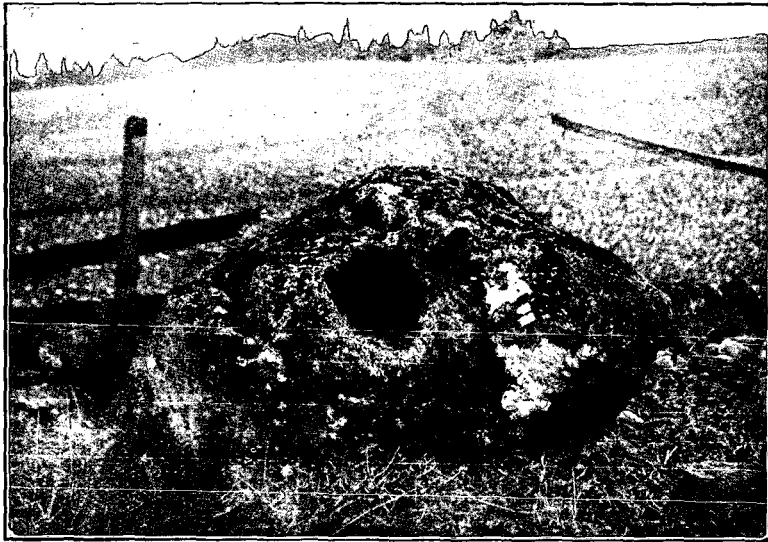


Fig. 2. The "Bloody Stone" of Dunfallandy.

The friend was admitted. The lover waited at a convenient distance. After a long interview the friend rejoined him, and explained that he had been unable to do the business because the young lady was such an inveterate talker that he could not get a word in. Several subsequent visits had similar results. At last the friend, after an unusually lengthy call, informed the lover that he (the friend) had just been married to the lady. The lover departed in furious wrath. He kept a keen lookout, and soon discovered that the young couple strolled together every evening along the road. He loaded his gun and concealed himself behind the "Bloody Stone." When the pair came to the stone he rose up and shot the husband dead. The lover married the Lady of Dunfallandy that very evening, and they lived happily together ever after. The law did not run in the Highlands three or four centuries ago.

CUP-MARKED STONE IN GLEN BRERACHAN.

Glen Brerachan has a devious course to the east of the Ben Vrackie range in the parish of Moulin, Perthshire. The road from Pitlochry to Kirkmichael approaches the Brerachan burn near Dalnacarn farmhouse, nearly six miles from Pitlochry. The road runs on the south-east side of the burn for a quarter of a mile further, where it crosses the stream by a bridge. A roadman's house, called Dalnavaid, is passed on the right, about 100 yards before the bridge is reached. About 200 yards due



Fig. 3. Cup-marked Stone in Glen Brerachan.

east of the house a ridge or spit of land juts out from the adjoining hillside on to an almost level field. The ridge has sloping sides, and the nearly flat top is 10 or 12 feet above the general surface of the field. Near the end of the ridge stands the cup-marked stone (fig. 3).

The dimensions of the stone are:—length 4 feet 8 inches; width 3 feet; height from 1 foot 11 inches to 2 feet 4 inches. The cups are all near the north-east side of the upper surface of the stone, and are more or less in rows. Some are large, with a diameter of 3 inches and a depth of nearly 1 inch; others are much weathered, and vary from small, scarcely measurable, hollows, to cups 2 inches in diameter and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. The hollows are no doubt cups almost obliterated by ages of weathering. Reckoning them so, there are in all thirty or thirty-one cups. All are of the plain type, without rings or connecting grooves.

The commanding position of this stone on the top of the ridge is very striking.