

## VIII.

### CROSS-MARKINGS AND CUP-MARKINGS AT DUNCROISK, GLEN- LOCHAY. BY E. A. CORMACK, M.B., CH.B., F.S.A.ScOT.

#### A.

In August 1949, when discussing the cup-markings in Glenlochay<sup>1</sup> with Mr James Wright, shepherd at Duncroisk, he drew attention to a rock behind the farmhouse on which he had noticed "a cross inside a circle."

The rock is a sloping area of exposed and much weathered schist on the hillside a quarter mile north-east of the entrance to Duncroisk farm (3 miles west from Bridge of Lochay, Killin), beside a small burn running into Alt Dhuin Croisg, Grid Ref. 27/533364, on 650-foot contour. Access is easy, past the farm buildings and by the cattle track, passing a small boulder-

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vols. xxix. p. 92, and xlvi. pp. 270-3.

strewn knoll on which there is a cup-marked stone<sup>1</sup> 100 yards before reaching the inscribed rock face.

Examination of the rough and sloping rock surface revealed an interesting group of inscribed figures, confined to an area of about 8 by 2½ feet, four of which included a cross within a circle. The figures are difficult to discern, except when thrown into relief by early morning sunlight, but are clearly demonstrated on a rubbing (Pl. XIV, 4).

*Description.*—The crosses may be described in three groups.

*Group 1* (Pl. XIV, 1).—(a) Near the upper edge of the rock is a cross within a circle of 8-inch diameter. The vertical axis of the cross is extended below the circle for 4 inches, resting on an ill-defined rectangular base, and upwards for 5 inches to form an arrow-head with 3-inch barbs. At the junction of the shaft of the arrow with the top of the circle is a pair of contiguous rings of about 1-inch diameter. The cross is deeply cut, to about a half-inch depth, with equal arms 4 inches long and 1 inch broad. The left arm of the cross extends beyond the circle, but this may be due to the circle being slightly excentric in relation to the cross. The lower right quadrant of the circle is marred by a natural crevice in the rock, but careful examination shows that the circle does not cut the right arm of the cross.

(b) On each side of this figure is a roughly circular marking, one about 4 inches above and to the left, of 3-inch diameter, and the other 2 inches to the right, of about 5-inch diameter. In each there is an indefinite depression across the centre.

*Group 2* (Pl. XIV, 3).—(a) About a foot below and to the right of Group 1 there is a boldly cut cross within a 7-inch circle. Again the vertical arm of the cross is extended above and below the circle, downwards for 5 inches to a curved arrow-head with 4-inch barbs, and upwards as an equal armed 5-inch crosslet above which is a 4-inch circle with the central axis continued through it. (The junction of this axis through the circle with the top of the small cross is slightly angled.) The main cross and circle are cut to fully half an inch in depth and one inch in breadth, but the upper part of the figure is much less distinct.

(b) About 8 inches to the left of the upper part of the above figure is a very faintly incised cross within a 2½-inch circle. It is difficult to discern on the rock, but can be seen in the photograph and is very clear on the rubbing. It also appears to have an arrow-head above it.

*Group 3* (Pl. XIV, 2).—(a) A foot below and to the right of Group 2 is a clearly cut cross within a 6½-inch circle. A natural cleft in the rock has been used for one axis of the cross, which lies obliquely to the others already described, and this axis terminates in an arrow-head 3 inches below the circle, and another slightly smaller arrow-head is cut 2 inches

<sup>1</sup> See p. 172.

above the circle, in each case the angle formed by the arrow being towards the circle.

(b) Immediately below the last cross is a curious hieroglyph not easy to make out on the rubbing, but clear in the photograph. On an 18-inch vertical axis can be seen from above downwards an arrow-head, an oblique line to the left, a faint 2-inch circle, a transverse stroke, and finally two oblique lines to the right. A natural crevice to the left of the figure rather confuses the picture.

*Orientation.*—In each figure, except Group 3 (a), the main axis points towards the east.

*Discussion as to Origin.*—The discovery on an exposed rock on a hillside in the Highlands of a group of figures, including four encircled crosses of varied and unusual design, is of sufficient interest to arouse some speculation as to their origin. That the inscriptions are of some antiquity is indicated by the degree of weathering beneath the overlay of lichen. The emphasis on the cross symbol suggests a Christian rather than a pagan origin, but the choice of site is not easily accounted for, as there is no evidence of any building or other structure in the immediate vicinity. The rock is, however, a prominent landmark, overlooking the sheltered and fertile fields and pastures of Duncroisk Farm, with Corrycharmaig on the other side of the Lochay. In both these areas there is evidence of population from pre-historic to modern times. Cup-markings near Duncroisk and above Corrycharmaig<sup>1</sup> indicate Bronze Age occupation. Half a mile below Duncroisk, what appears to be a burial site 6 feet beneath the present topsoil was recently exposed by erosion of the sandy river-bank, and preliminary study of this suggests considerable antiquity. Immediately to the north of the present farm buildings is an area strewn with large boulders whose linear placings indicate an extensive man-made structure, no doubt the original Dun, which has been used as a convenient quarry for more modern buildings. An old hill road into Glen Lyon passes a short distance above the inscribed rock, and a quarter of a mile to the west across the ravine of the Dun Croisk Burn is the deserted village of Tirai, where the modern ruins stand on much older foundations, and in the centre of one such group is a standing-stone (damaged by blasting).

Such a centre of population might well attract the attention of early Christian missionaries, and in the absence of a known church site in the vicinity<sup>2</sup> it is suggested that the cross-marked rock may mark an early preaching place. The variety of design and execution of the symbols suggest that they may be the work of more than one person.

There is no evidence by which to date these crosses, and a search of the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> A walled-in spring near Corrycharmaig suggests a possible ecclesiastical site. The derivation of the name is similar to Cil Macharmaig, the early church site at Ardeonaig on the south side of Loch Tay.

published accounts<sup>1</sup> of early Christian monuments in Scotland, Wales and Ireland shows no real parallel. The encircled cross, frequently with a stem and other embellishments, is not uncommon. V. E. Nash-Williams in his recently published *Early Christian Monuments of Wales* includes them in a group which may be dated broadly in the period of the seventh to ninth centuries. The Duncroisk symbols bear some likeness to those included in his fig. 5, Nos. 11-15.

W. Douglas Simpson in *The Celtic Church in Scotland* ascribes to the Brito-Pictish Church of Ninian and Kentigern a number of equal-armed wheel crosses carved on slabs distributed throughout Pictland east of Drumalban, and the Duncroisk symbols may well fall within this category.

These symbols are not mentioned by W. A. Gillies in his comprehensive book *In Famed Breadalbane*, and in the absence of any local legend or religious association their origin remains a matter of speculation.

## B.

The cup-markings on a ridge of rock near the keeper's house at Duncroisk, Glenlochay (Grid. Ref. 27/532358), were first reported by D. Haggart in 1895,<sup>2</sup> and again described, with sketches, in 1911 by C. G. Cash, together with other cup-marked stones in the area.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to those already recorded the following may be noted.

On a smooth rock surface just above the mouth of the small burn running into the Lochay, immediately west of the cup-marked ridge, are two cup- and ring-markings a yard apart. The rings are curiously rough edged, and do not give the same impression of weathering as those on the ridge; possibly they have been silted over shortly after being cut, and exposed again relatively recently.

On the top of a small rock-strewn knoll about 300 yards behind Duncroisk farmhouse is a recumbent boulder, at one corner of which is a group of five fairly deep cup-marks of 2- to 3-inch diameter.

South of Corrycharmaig, a quarter of a mile above the farmhouse and on the east side of the burn, is a 50-yard-long ridge (Grid Ref. 27/528356), where the glacier-smoothed rock is exposed in three areas, on each of which are cup-markings. On the easterly area there are about 70 small cups, roughly one inch in diameter, in groups of ten to twelve. Most are on the flatter rock surface, but some are on the steeper slope facing south, which also bears the marks of deep glacial scorings. On the central area there are about 25 scattered cups, of varying size up to 3- and 4-inch diameter,

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*. C. L. Curle, "The Chronology of the Early Christian Monuments of Scotland," *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiv. pp. 60-115. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*. F. Henry, *La Sculpture Irlandaise*. Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments of Wales*. <sup>2</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxix. p. 92. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xlvi. pp. 270-73.



1. Group 1.



2. Crosses, including Group 3.

Nos. 1-4.  
CROSS-MARKINGS AT DUNCROISK.



3. Group 2.



4. Rubbing. ( $\frac{1}{3\frac{1}{2}}$ )



5. Cup-marked ridge above Corrycharmaig.



6. Cup and ring patterns, Duncroisk.

with one  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cup inside a 6-inch ring. On the westerly exposure there are more than 40 cups up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter and fairly deep, disposed in groups, one line of six cups forming a slight arc (Pl. XIV, 5). Farther west is one isolated larger cup of 4-inch diameter.

There are thus on this ridge well over one hundred cup-marks, mostly small, and giving the impression of being much less sophisticated than the markings on the ridge by the river near the keeper's house, some of which are disposed in very clear patterns, such as that shown in the photograph (Pl. XIV, 6; *cf.* fig. 7 of Cash's sketches).