

11. A SYMBOL STONE AT KINBLETHMONT, ANGUS.

On 14 May 1952 a symbol stone was discovered about 300 yards north of Kinblethmont House, near Arbroath. The spot where it was found (Nat. Grid Ref. NO. 638473) is accurately plotted on the location map (fig. 13). A tractor-drawn plough revealed the stone which lay face downwards about four inches below the modern surface of the ground. It was at once removed to a small copse adjoining the field, and I saw it on 18 May when I visited the site with Mr D. A. Gardner and Mr F. W. A. Thornton.

The stone itself is a large sandstone boulder. It now measures 32 in. × 27 in. × 9 in. and weighs $397\frac{1}{4}$ lb., but one end has been broken off and is missing. On the surviving stone are cut a crescent and V-rod, an "elephant symbol" and the top of a mirror and comb (Pl. XIX, 2). It is possible that the complete stone carried other symbols, but it is more likely that the missing fragment bears only the lower parts of the mutilated mirror and comb and one of the scroll-feet of the "elephant".

The boulder is unhewn and undressed, and the symbols are incised. Therefore this new stone must be assigned to the earliest of the recognized groups into which symbol stones are traditionally divided. The crescent and V-rod, the "elephant", and the mirror and comb are among the most common of symbols found, and stones bearing these three symbols, arranged differently, however, and apparently without the comb, have been recorded at Fyvie and at Rhynie in Aberdeenshire.

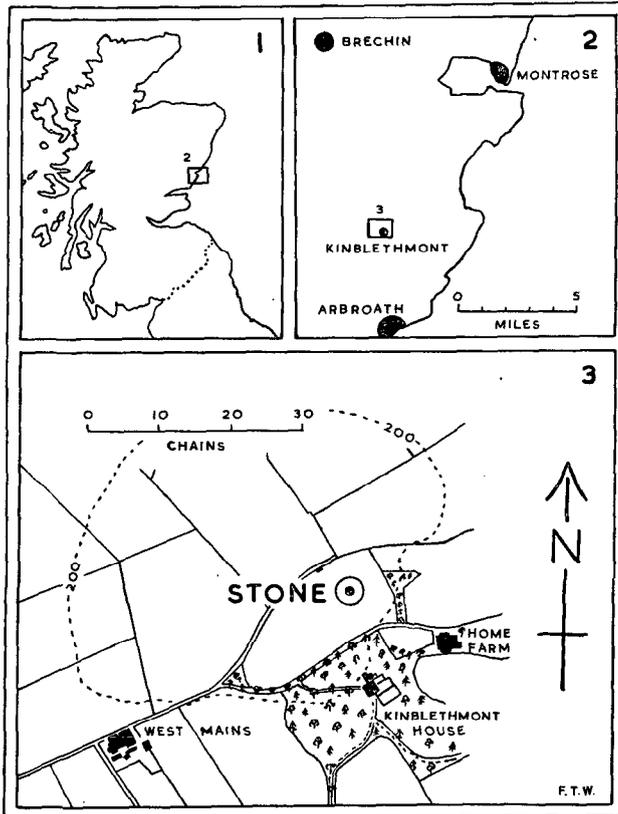


Fig. 13. Location map of symbol stone found at Kinblethmont, Inverkeilor Parish, Angus.

The general appearance of the Kinblethmont stone, in particular the firmness of its incised lines and the marked absence of weathering, suggests that it has lain for many centuries beneath its protective covering of soil. A small excavation was designed to recover, if possible, the missing fragment(s) and to examine the site thoroughly before it was ploughed away. An area of 100 square feet was stripped to the underlying rock, but nothing was found, neither burial nor missing fragment, nothing, that is, except the hole in which the stone had once stood. This was unmistakable. It was a hollow, slightly larger than the bottom of the boulder, chipped ten inches deep into the decomposed surface of the rock, which at this point is only a foot below the present ground-level.

It is certain, therefore, that the stone once stood erect in this field at Kinblethmont. The site, as shown on the location map, is on the gentle southeastern slope of a small area of higher ground, the only area in the immediate vicinity that rises above the 200-foot contour line. It is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that this is its original site and that the lost lower fragment has been removed. It is much more likely that the whole stone was originally erected elsewhere, and that the stone as we have it (*i.e.* with the lower end already broken) was moved from its original site and re-erected in the hollow revealed by excavation. Later, of course, it fell over and lay buried until 14 May 1952. If this is what happened, then the original site is still unknown. It is probably not far away, perhaps not more than a few yards, and the lower part of the stone may still be buried there.

I am greatly indebted to the Hon. Mrs Lindsay Carnegie of Kinblethmont House and to Mr R. O. Ramsay for facilities kindly provided, and I am grateful to Mr Gardner and Mr Thornton for valuable assistance and co-operation. The stone is at present safely stored in Kinblethmont House.

F. T. WAINWRIGHT.

