

2. CUP-MARKINGS IN NORTH DRYMEN, STIRLINGSHIRE

IN the spring of 1927 I was driving southward over the Glasgow Corporation Water Department road from Loch Ard to Douchlage on the Glasgow-Aberfoyle highway (now A. 81). Four miles S. of the loch, a little beyond the point where the private road changes direction to south-easterly, I stopped just on the 350-ft. contour to admire the expansive scenery of mountains, moor, moss and, beyond, the wide strath towards the Firth of Forth. From this high point at the bend of the road, in the midst of a vast grassy heath, $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the gate at Drymen Road Cottage, a conspicuous rock or boulder, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away to the E. on the flank of a small valley, attracted my attention. On going to look at it I was interested to see that part of its surface bore cup-markings. Not having with me the means of making a proper record of the sculpturings I determined to return later with what was necessary, but it was not until September 1963 that I realised my desire. As a result of the special journey undertaken then to re-examine the rock I submit the following in the belief that a note on these prehistoric carvings may interest the Society, particularly since, so far as I know, nothing of the kind has been reported from this remote locality on the south central Highlands borders. Actually, the nearest prehistoric remains are a small stone circle, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles NNE., between Kirkton and Balleich, near Aberfoyle.

I found that during the interval of thirty-six years great tracts of the ground to the SE., W. and SW. had been planted by H.M. Forestry Commission and were clad with pine-woods. Hence, if in these young forests there exist any monuments, such as cairns and standing-stones, or other sculpturings on rocks and boulders, they must long remain completely obscured. However, the great stone, with its sculptured surface observed years ago, is still in the open, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile SW. (NS 491951) of the farm called Corrie or Gartnabrodnaig, in the northern part of Drymen parish, Stirlingshire. Situated near the left bank of a small hill-stream, it lies on the 300-ft. contour about midway between the farm buildings and the Glasgow Corporation road (Pl. LVII).

With its long axis lying mainly E.-W., the sculptured sandstone rock appears to have been ice-carried. As such, it is aligned very similarly to other boulders that lie scattered hereabouts. Its overall length is 17 ft. 10 in. (5 m. 45) and its maximum width 7 ft. 6 in. (2 m. 30) about the middle. Eastward it diminishes to 5 ft. 10 in. (1 m. 80). The top is

¹ *Matériaux pour l'Histoire primitive et naturelle de l'Homme, 2ème série, IV* (1873), 303-4.

very rugged, attaining some 2 ft. 8 in. (85 cm.) in height by a series of irregular steps. The westernmost of these is about 13 ft. (4 m.) from the opposite end, with its surface nearly 2 ft. (about 60 cm.) from the grass. This last, formed by the horizontal splitting of the rock, presents a smooth surface measuring 4 ft. 9 in. (1 m. 45) in length and width. Here, however, the rock is riven across into four triangular pieces, three large and nearly of the same size, and one quite small. In each of the large pieces there are cup-markings, most of which are well-preserved. In common with so many of the kind, the cups present themselves in groups. Altogether twenty-three pittings occur, six appearing in the northern part, four in the southern and thirteen in the western. These follow the general run of such sculp-

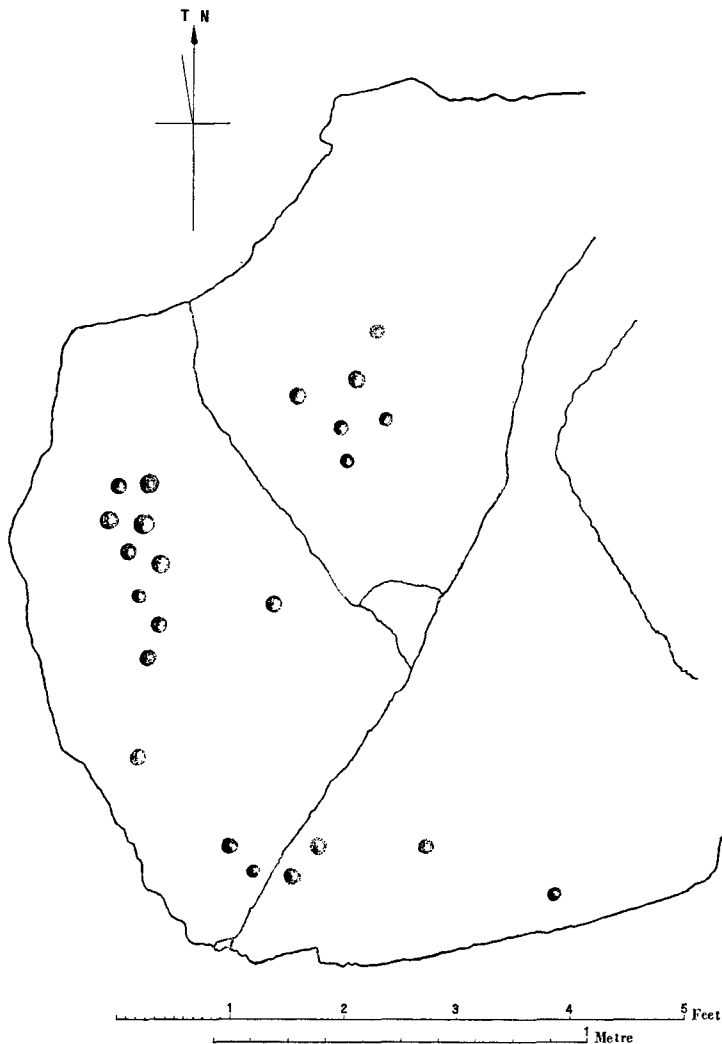


FIG. 1. Cup-marked boulder at Gartnabrodnaig, Drymen

turings, from 2 in. (o m. 051) to $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. (o m. 032) in diameter, but of depths varying from a little over 1 in. (o m. 025) to mere depressions. Originally shallow, these of course show more than their more deeply executed companions the effect of the weathering of centuries since the Middle Bronze Age, to which I believe the carvings can be assigned. The best preserved, and even the imperfectly circular and poorly concave, suggest that the artificial hollows were pecked out with a stone, rather than that they were ground by means of an implement used like a pestle. These vestigial cup-marks, however, are quite distinct from a few irregular and uncertain pits here, which are due to nature, such as the dislodgment of small nodules followed by weathering with lipping and undercutting.

The assemblage is of course composed only of the primary constituents of groups of this kind, since none of the cup-markings is accompanied by rings or other figures, the presence of which would make the discovery more spectacular. The drawing (fig. 1), reproduced from a rubbing, shows the complete pattern of artificial hollows. In their simplicity the unadorned cup-markings at Gartnabrodnaig match the constituents of groups that are most commonly encountered in the Highlands. Yet an exact parallel of the Gartnabrodnaig group cannot be adduced because no two assemblages of this kind are identical, although a general resemblance is discernible in each facies of prehistoric scribings on stone. This will be seen clearly if one scans the careful drawings produced between a hundred and eighty years ago for the *Proceedings* of this Society by such painstaking antiquaries as Sir James Young Simpson,¹ J. Romilly Allen² and William Jolly.³ Like all series of cup-marks, whether accompanied or not by rings or gutters, noted by these enquirers on stone surfaces, and sometimes in connection with burials, the set to which I direct attention apparently belongs to a late order of sculpturings. For they seem to be in accord with the Galician tradition rather than the earlier mode characterised in the art of the Passage Graves with its boldly incised linear patterns.

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1. Cup-marked boulder at Gartnabrodnaig, Drymen, from the W.



2. Main group of markings (chalked arrow points to magnetic north)



3. N. and W. group of markings (chalked arrow points to magnetic north. Scales: upper in divisions of feet; lower in divisions of 20 cm.)