

3. GALICIAN DEER CARVINGS: A SCOTTISH PARALLEL

FREQUENT references to the connections between the rock art of Galicia and similar motifs in the British Isles have been made by several authorities. Eoin MacWhite in a paper dealing with the Irish Bronze Age rock scribings distinguished between the Galician rock art and Passage Grave art.¹ MacWhite suggested that the art of the Galician Group was introduced into southern Ireland from north-west Spain and northern Portugal.

MacWhite also stated that there was, in Ireland at least, an overlap of the Galician and Passage Grave art. He cited the gapped circles on the kerb stones at Knowth as an example of this overlap: but other examples can be seen fairly often in both the Loughcrew cemetery and the Boyne. Besides the Knowth examples Galician type art is evident in Dowth, and very interesting examples have been found at New Grange during Professor

¹ *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXXVI (1946), 59-80.

O'Kelly's recent excavations. In O'Kelly's notes in *Antiquity* he suggested that these new discoveries were apparently contemporary at New Grange with the Passage Grave art.¹

The idea that metal prospectors moving from Galicia to prospect for copper and gold were responsible for the spread of Galician art was suggested by MacWhite on the grounds that the Galician type carvings have a distribution in Ireland that coincides with the areas richest in copper and gold.² A connection in the British Isles between metal prospecting and Galician art is also noted by Professor Childe,³ while Professor Piggott has suggested that the carving of these symbols on rock outcrops and boulders by metal prospectors may have been a form of sympathetic magic.⁴ The dual distribution of Galician art and copper and gold deposits in Strath Tay, Perthshire, has been noted by Dr Margaret Stewart⁵; who also notes the comparable distribution of carvings and copper deposits and evidence of early metal-working in Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire.⁶

The recent publication, by Miss Marion Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Mary Sandeman, of an Archaeological Survey of Mid Argyll⁷ allows a similar dual distribution pattern of Galician art and copper, and possibly gold, deposits, to be drawn for Mid Argyll, with a marked concentration in the Kilmartin-Crinan area, where axehead symbols and Passage Grave art carvings are also found. This Survey includes two cup-and-ring marked rocks, Nos. 230 and 240 in the Survey, which are described as 'having gutters (unconnected with cups) suggesting outline of horned animal (stag? bull?)' (230), and 'joined by meandering gutters suggesting stylised figures' (240).⁸

In the opinion of the writer the channels on No. 240 do not appear to be stylised figures, but those on 230 do, and can be best paralleled with similar figures found in Galician rock art. The figures would appear to be representations of deer, differing slightly from Galician deer carvings by reason of their outline being formed by a single pecked channel, whereas in Galicia the deer are indicated by a double outline. This rock would appear to be the first find in the British Isles of animal carvings associated with cup-and-ring markings in the Galician rock art tradition (Pl. XLIII, 1).

Many examples of the association of deer carvings and cup-and-ring markings and similar motifs in Galicia are illustrated in Dr R. Sobrino Buhigas' corpus of Galician petroglyphs.⁹ In this work over a score of plates show this association and in most cases the deer have been carved around the edge of the other motifs or inserted in such positions as to suggest that the deer are later in date than the other motifs.¹⁰ What interval of time is involved, if any, it is impossible to say. This feature is notable in the Argyll example.

One other deer carving in Argyll is perhaps of interest, a small engraving of a buck, which is carved in double outline on a small boulder in Glen Domhain. This is very similar to Galician deer in design, but the Glen Domhain buck has been incised and not pecked, and could, as has been suggested by several writers,¹¹ be of virtually any date.

If we exclude the Glen Domhain deer we are left with one example in the British Isles of what in Galicia was a common animal motif. In spite of the relatively poor representation it would seem to be a definite link with Galicia, even if the origin of the source of

¹ *Antiquity*, xxxviii (1964), 288 ff. ² Macwhite (1946).

³ *Ancient Mon. Guide*, vi, *Scotland* (1952), 3rd ed. (1959), 28-29.

⁴ Piggott and Henderson, *Scotland before History* (1958), 61.

⁵ *P.S.A.S.*, xcii (1958-59), 80. ⁶ *ibid.*, 80.

⁷ *P.S.A.S.*, xciv (1961-2), 1-125. ⁸ *ibid.*, 32, 34.

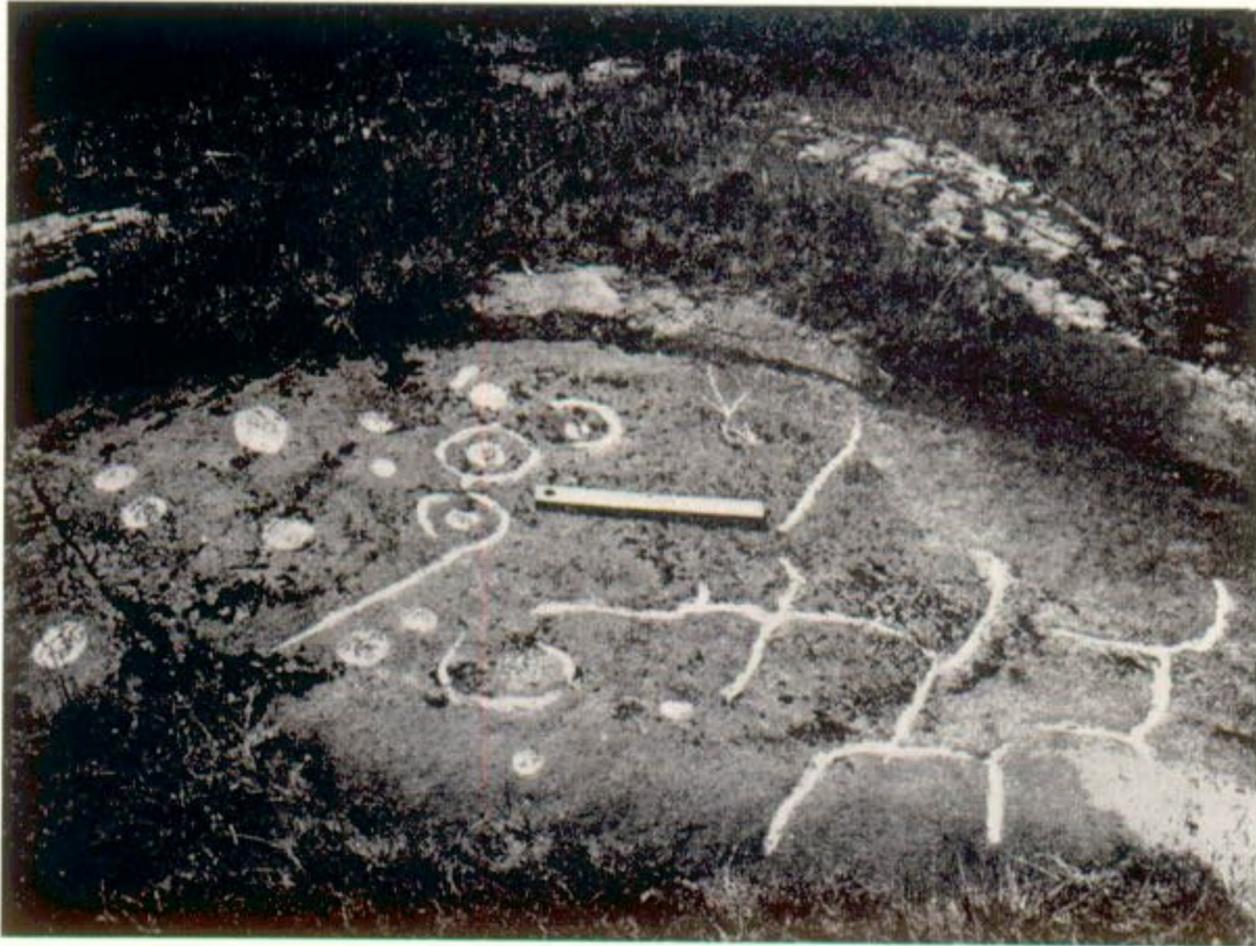
⁹ Sobrino Buhigas, R., *Corpus Petroglyphorum Gallaeciae* (Seminario De Estudos Galegos, 1935).

¹⁰ *ibid.*, figs. 20, 21, 23, 24, 55-59, 61-65, 69-73, 90, 91, 167. Also verbal information from Mr M. J. Walker on personal observations in Galicia.

¹¹ *List of Monuments of Argyll* (Argyll County Council, 1915). Childe, *Antiquity*, xv (1941), 290. Lacaille, *Stone Age in Scotland* (1954), 243 f. *D. & E. Scotland* 1956, 8. *P.S.A.S.*, xciv (1961-2), 37.

inspiration for the deer symbols had become so far removed as to result in a somewhat crude and confused carving by the time it reached Argyll.

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1. Carvings of Galician type representing deer at Ford, Mid Argyll

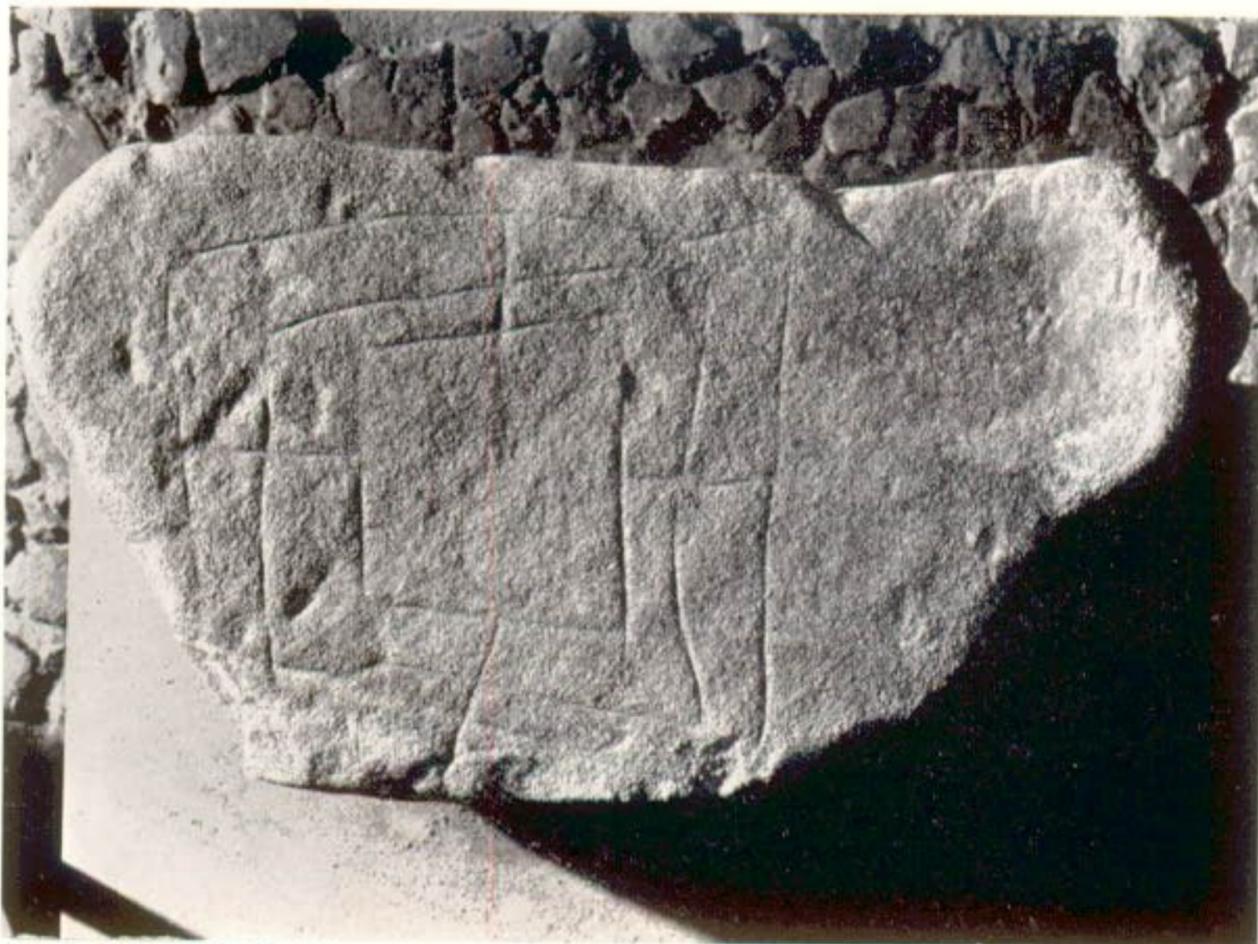


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2. Building stone with incised merelles board from Arbroath Abbey

FEATHER: DEER CARVINGS *and* ROBERTSON: MERELLES IN SCOTLAND