

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



FIELD MONUMENTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE									
H N D 1 3 N W 0 0 4									
2 NGR		3 QUAL							
N D 1 0 5 6 3 9 4 0 C E									
6 SITE NAME									
C L A C H N A C I P L I C H									
10 GENERIC TYPE									
CROSS, INCISED STONE									
14 PERIOD/DATE					15 DATING METHOD				
EM = LM					TYP				
18 SHAPE									
19 THREAT AND DATE									

4 DISTR:CT		5 PARISH	
CAITHNESS		HALKIRK	
7 AREA STATUS	8 SITE STATUS	9 REGIONAL STATUS	
3555Z	STANDING STRUCTURE		
11 CONCORDANCE		13 DIMENSIONS	
OS ND 13 NW 4			
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		17 CONDITION	
		INCOMPLETE	

20 LAND USE		21 GEOLOGY	
ROUGH PASTURE			
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF	
		ROUNDED MOORLAND SUMMIT	
		26 ASPECT	27 ALTITUDE
		NW = N = NE	198 = 206m OD

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. RCAHMS:1911:CAITHNESS INVENTORY:HMSO: :p 42, No. 149 (illust)
2. SINCLAIR, T.:1890:THE GUNNS:WICK: :p 188.
3. MYATT, L.:1977:DISCOVERY & EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND:C.B.A. (SCOTLAND): :p 41.
4. ORDNANCE SURVEY:1962:6" MAP.

30 GROUND PLAN NO.		31 GROUND PHOTO NO.	
32 SLIDES NO.		33 HR. AP. NO.	
34 NMR. AP. NO.		35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE	
36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION			
37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY		38 SAMPLES	
39 PALYNOLOGY		40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.	
41 SMALL FINDS			42 MUSEUM/LOCATION
43 OTHER			

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER		45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER	
46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT		47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT	

48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS	
49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE	50 RECORDER: DATE
	AM:20.6.1985
	51 CHECK: DATE
	MAR:20.6.1985

52 TEXT

"'Clach na Ciplich', Cross Slab: About 1 mile S by W of Thulachan, on the highest point of the watershed, 600 ft (183m) OD, is Clach na Ciplich, a thin sandstone slab, measuring 4 ft by 2 ft and 3 ins thick (1.21m X 0.61m X 76mm). It faces NE and SW; on the latter face is incised a crude cross, measuring 2 ft 6 ins (0.76m) in length and 1 ft 2 ins (0.31m) across the arms. The slab is broken in three pieces." (1) (2)

"ND 1056 3940. This cross slab remains as described by the RCAHMS. It has sunk further into the peaty knoll on which it stands, but it can be lifted out." (OSFI:JLD:28.5.1960)

52

"The broken right hand piece of the slab is now missing." (3)

"(ND 1056 3940). Clach na Ciplich. Cross Slab." (4)

"No change."

See attached photo copy.

(OSFI:JM:4.3.1982)

SOME ANTIQUITIES.

In Strathmore, at Tollachan, a standing-stone or monolith has been the cause of chequered speculation. The view of one speculator will be gathered from this passage:—

“In the course of time John Gunn (Robson) died at Braemore, and had the honourable burial due to a chief. His remains were rolled in a deer skin, probably dressed for the purpose. There was no coffin. A great feast was prepared for the men, because the journey was long to Spittal, through the hills by way of Scorriclett, Strathmore. His armour-bearer carried a white banner before the bier, and the late chief's piper played some pibrochs and the lament of the coroner, ‘Weighty, weighty, weighty blow of the Gunns to the Keiths. Revenge, revenge, revenge the blood of the coroner.’ At a place above Tolachan, Strathmore, his brother and his men from Strathy joined the procession. He had this place free. He ordered the remains to be lowered to the ground, and he opened the deer-skin above the face and said, ‘Who would say that death is not strong when he killed Little John, my brother!’ At this place, on the side of the hill, a red slab of freestone was erected. There was engraved on the stone a double cross. This stone, named *Clach-na-Caplich*, or the ‘mournful memory stone,’ stands in the same place to this day. At this time, St. Peter's Church at Spittal was a sanctuary of protection to men pursued by the blood revenger.”

A rather severe critic of the above says:—

“Substituting the name Donald for John, the story of the funeral is fairly correct. The detection of the double cross on the stone above Tolachan is due to the indefatigable efforts of Captain Gunn, Braeshour, who, after finding the stone covered with moss and apparently obliterated, carefully washed and cleaned it with the zeal of a genuine antiquarian, and afterwards traced it in company with an expert in such things.”

Still more of interesting though mixed detail is given in another reference to the monolith:—

“Regarding the stone at Tolachan, it originally stood five feet in height. Forty years ago a Donald Gunn, residing in Snitod, came to the stone with a hammer and knocked two feet off it. The hieroglyphics were safe. Afterwards Captain Gunn, Braeshour, sent a letter to William Gunn, Scorriclett, to go and take the stone down and cover it with turf, and this request was complied with the following day. Two weeks thereafter Captain Gunn and one of the sappers and miners went up to examine the stone, and rebuilt it in the old place. The stone was never covered with fog, the elements of nature having kept it clean. There is something associated with the stone of the religion of the Druids. The hieroglyphic side faced the sun, and the four angles of crosses answer exactly to the four points of the compass.”

Æneas Gunn in his MS. has recounted the tale, and has also made the stone a memorial of the halt; but it was there many centuries before the brothers were in existence; though it may have been a kind of rainbow after the flood. Whether monoliths are Druidic or Norse is another by no means settled question. They are even claimed for the wicked Canaanites, or, in less libellous language, the merchant-trading Phoenicians, long before the Christian era. That such stones were often the chimney-backs of barbarian turf cottages, from which time had swept and washed down the materials, is a realistic theory; the carving executed at later periods on the most natural suggestions of suitability. But as to such conclusions each patient must minister unto himself.

