

## ON OGHAM INSCRIPTIONS.

BY T. J. PETTIGREW, ESQ., F.R.S., F.S.A., V.P. AND TREASURER.

A SHORT time since, Mr. John Barrow, F.R.S., communicated to us a rough pencil sketch of a stone monument upon which are inscribed Ogham or Beithluisnion characters. The stone, known by the name of the Fardel or Fardle Stone, he says, "formerly lay across a little rivulet, but now stands as a support for the ring-post of a shed in the courtyard of Fardel Manor House, near Ivy bridge, South Devon." It has recently been sent to the British Museum, the lord of the manor, capt. Pode of Slade having consented to its removal, and is now to be seen in the gallery of antiquities. I have had it carefully drawn, and it is represented on plate 29. It is six feet three inches in length, two feet ten inches in breadth, and seven inches in thickness. Its surface is tolerably even. On one side, and at the edge, are the Ogham lines, together with Roman characters; and on the reverse, Roman characters only. Fardel Hall was anciently the seat of the Raleighs. The old house has suffered much from modern alterations: one room, however, remains as in sir Walter Raleigh's time. The chapel has fallen into decay. There is a tradition that Raleigh on his way to London, after his return from his unfortunate expedition, halted at Fardel; and, anticipating depending troubles, buried in a field attached to the manor some treasure. Evil spirits, of course, took this field under their protection; and it is distinctly asserted to this day that a certain piece of ground on the estate cannot be ploughed or broken up in any way. Cattle refuse to draw the plough across it; and if it be threatened with either spade, mattock, etc., the offended spirits express their displeasure by angry noises, to the great terror of the occupants of the manor house! The following is the traditional interpretation of the inscription on the stone:

"Between this stone and Fardel Hall  
There lies more money than the devil can haul."

Ogham<sup>1</sup> writing, called also “Beithluisnion” (from the first two letters, *beith* and *luis*), simply consists of scores placed either above, or below, or passing through a centre or medial line, varying in their lengths. They are mostly vertical,<sup>2</sup> but occasionally oblique, and also crossing each other. As no particular rule yet appears to have been discovered in regard to the application of these, and as vowels and consonants are alike denoted by lines placed either obliquely or vertically, it would seem that they may be varied at pleasure, and translated according to the key upon which they have been formed. Ogham, agreeably to this view, would be a cipher, or secret language; and we know that Charles I. corresponded with the earl of Glamorgan, when in Ireland, in the Ogham character.<sup>3</sup> The occurrence of Irish Ogham writing on monuments found also in Wales, in Scotland, and now in England, would seem to establish the fact of communications, if not even of settlements, of the indivi-

<sup>1</sup> *Ogham Craobh*, virgular Ogham, or branching type,—so called from its resemblance to the branches of a tree, which these inscriptions carry. The names of trees, plants, and fruits, as applied to the letters of the Irish alphabet have been employed in the Oghams. The ancient Irish alphabet is in agreement with Dr. O’Donovan’s Ogham alphabet, and is as follows :

- |   |                                     |                               |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. B.— <i>Beith</i> , birch.            | 7. D.— <i>Duir</i> , oak.           | 13. R.— <i>Ruis</i> , elder.  |
| 2. L.— <i>Luis</i> , mountain ash.      | 8. T.— <i>Teine</i> , holly.        | 14. A.— <i>Ailm</i> , fir.    |
| 3. F.— <i>Fearn</i> , alder.            | 9. C.— <i>Coll</i> , hazel.         | 15. O.— <i>Onn</i> , broom.   |
| 4. S.— <i>Sail</i> , willow.            | 10. M.— <i>Muin</i> , vine.         | 16. U.— <i>Ur</i> , heath.    |
| 5. N.— <i>Nion</i> or <i>nin</i> , ash. | 11. G.— <i>Gort</i> , ivy.          | 17. E.— <i>Eadhá</i> , aspen. |
| 6. H.— <i>Huath</i> , whitethorn.       | 12. P.— <i>Peth</i> (not explained) | 18. I.— <i>Iagha</i> , yew.   |

The order is now changed, and brought more in accordance with the Roman; but the H, which now stands the last in order, is frequently omitted, thus reducing it to seventeen letters, the number in agreement with the Oghams. Mr. J. Windele (*Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, i, 43) makes the alphabet to consist of sixteen primitive characters and eight diphthongs, besides the P and H, the antiquity of which is uncertain. Dr. O’Conor also thought the Ogham alphabet originally consisted of only sixteen letters. There is, however, good reason to believe the alphabet to consist of not less than twenty-five letters, simple and compound. One diphthong only has as yet been found on ancient monuments,—it is that of *eo*, which consists of a cross with a line running horizontally through its centre. The rev. D. H. Haigh, in vol. I of the new series of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society’s *Transactions*, records the following alterations and additions to the alphabet given above, as obtained from Irish grammarians:—Q, *queirt*, apple; NG, *ngedal*, brown; ST, *straf*, blackthorn; O, *onn*, translated “gorse”; E, *eadhad*, aspen; I, *idud*, yew; EA, *eabhad*, aspen; OI, *oir*, spindle tree; UI, *uillean*, woodbine; IA, *ijn*, gooseberry; AE—

<sup>2</sup> Oghams are written vertically, from the bottom to the top. Runes horizontally, almost always from the left to the right. For varieties in Oghams consult plate xxxi, p. 178, of Astle’s *Origin and Progress of Writing*.

<sup>3</sup> See Royal Letters in the Harleian Collection, Nos. 118, 119, etc.; and specimen given by Astle on pl. xxxi, p. 180.

duals of the country; and they might have served as channels of information, or as memorials to commemorate events. The subject has received its greatest elucidation from the labours of the rev. Dr. Charles Graves<sup>1</sup> of Trinity College, Dublin; but it is yet far from being perfectly comprehended, and is deserving of continued attention.<sup>2</sup> General Vallancey, Halliday, O'Brien, O'Donovan, Dr. C. Graves, and others, have endeavoured to construct alphabets of these characters. Those of O'Donovan and Graves are nearly the same. In that of the latter, the oblique lines crossing the stem represent the five vowels, and the rectangular lines crossing it represent the series *m*, *g*, *ng*, *st*, or *sd*, and *r*. (See plate 29.)

One peculiarity in Ogham writing is remarkable: the characters are equidistant, and written continuously; in this respect offering a resemblance to some ancient classical manuscripts.

According to the Ogham tract in the *Book of Ballymote*, whence recent researches appear to have sprung, though inefficient to enable us to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion, we learn that there are not less than eighty different forms of the alphabet, varying from an original form given in the rev. Dr. C. Graves's paper read before the Royal Irish Academy in 1847. His opinion in regard to the origin of the character is, that it was framed by persons acquainted with the later and developed Runic alphabets, such as were used by the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Graves regards the Ogham alphabet as the work of a grammarian, and not a primitive

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. iv, pp. 70, 356.

<sup>2</sup> It may be useful to refer to the notices in regard to these lapidary inscriptions, which are to be found in *Archeologia Cambrensis*, vol. i, pp. 182, 290; third series, i, 9; vi, 128, 314; vii, 44, 137. *Archeological Journal*, ix, 116; xii, 275; xiii, 311. *Notes and Queries*, xi, 181, 285; *Ulster Journal of Archeology*, i, 43, 102; ii, 60; iii, 9, 150. *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archeological Society*, i, 305-27, 466; iii, 187, 199, 227, 281, 397, 419; i, New Series, 44, 149, 315, 324; ii, 170, 316. *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, iv, 70, 356. *Archeologia Aethiana*, iv, 150. *Archeologia*, vii, 276. *Petrie on the Round Towers of Ireland*, pp. 80, 135. *Ware's Antiq. of Ireland*, ii, 20. *Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, plates 1, 3, 34, 94, 95.

<sup>3</sup> "The assertion that the Anglo-Saxon Runic alphabet was invented by persons acquainted with the Roman letters," Mr. Haigh says, "ought not to have been made without some examination of the evidence of its antiquity. The number of its letters, and their order, claim for it a primitive and distinct origin; and their names shew that this origin must be sought in the ages of pagan antiquity. Three only of the Runic letters, B, R, and I, resemble their Latin equivalents; and the S is of a form which sometimes occurs in the older Oscan, and in very ancient Greek; but all the rest are wholly unlike the characters of any of the ancient alphabets."—*Kilkenny Trans.*, N. S., ii, 192.

alphabet, from the separation of the letters into vowels and consonants. The vowels also, he says, are arranged according to the method of the Irish grammarians, who have divided them into two classes called the broad and the slender: the broad, *a, o, u*, are placed first; and the slender, *e, i*, last.

Great diversity of opinion has obtained in regard to the origination of the Ogham characters. Their discovery has been esteemed evidence of the very early use of letters in Ireland; and several Irish antiquaries have been disposed to regard the inscriptions as belonging to a date anterior to the Christian æra. Dr. Petrie<sup>1</sup> is unfavourable to so remote an antiquity. "The Druidical origin of Ogham writing," he observes, "is yet to be proved." Mr. D. W. Nash,<sup>2</sup> who has made translations of some Ogham monuments, regards their introduction as of a period posterior to the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. The primitive character of Oghams, however, marks its early origin: nothing can be more simple than the composition of letters by a mere combination of incised scratches.

The *Book of Ballymote* referred to, is a manuscript of the twelfth century. It contains an extract from a grammar of Cenfacla the Learned, who flourished in the seventh century: he was also the reviser of an earlier work, attributed to the first century, known under the designation of *Uraicept Na N-Eigeas* ("grammar of the learned," or "primer of the bards"), composed by Ferceirtne in the reign of Conchobhar Mac Nessa, king of Ulster, at the commencement of the first century.<sup>3</sup> Of this ancient grammar another copy is to be found in the *Book of Lecan*, or *Leacan*, a manuscript deposited in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. Both these MSS. refer to Ogham inscriptions, and a translation of the passage from the Irish has been given:<sup>4</sup> "What is the place, the period, the person, and the cause, which gave origin to the Ogham? It is easily solved. The place (is) the island of Hibernia, which we, the Scoti, inhabit: the period (was) the time of Breas, son of Elatan, king of Ireland: the person (was) Ogma, son of Elatan, brother of Breas; for Breas and Ogma and Dealbh were the three sons of Elatan." Another passage from the same MS. states the alphabet to have been

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Round Towers, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ulster Journal of Archaeology, ii, 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, iii, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*

invented for the special use of the learned, "to the end that the learned might have a language (letters) different from that used by rustics." If these writings are to be admitted as authority, it will carry Ogham writing as far back as the first century.

Mr. John O'Daly is an advocate for the great antiquity of the Ogham writing, and quotes, in support of his opinion, from the introduction to the first volume of the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society* (p. 49), where, in a poem,<sup>1</sup> allusion is made to the death of Cairbre Liffeachair in the battle of Gabhra (Gavinstown, co. Dublin), and the raising of a monumental stone inscribed with Ogham characters over his remains in the battlefield, commencing thus :

"An Ogham in a stone,—a stone over a grave  
In the place where men were wont to pass :  
The son of the king of Eire was there slain  
By a mighty spear out of a white horse's back."

The poem concludes with—

"That Ogham which is in the stone,  
Around which fell the slain :  
Were Finn, the fighter of battles, living,  
Long would he remember the Ogham."

This is to be found in the *Book of Leinster*, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin; and in the opinion of Mr. Curry, who made the transcript for the Ossianic Society, was compiled before the year 1150, though others are of opinion that it is of an earlier date. The battle referred to was fought in A.D. 283; and if the statement is to be credited that Ogham characters were carved upon the monument raised at this period, Ogham writing was certainly in use prior to the introduction of Christianity into Ireland.

Let us now refer to the monument before us. The inscription on the Fardel Stone, as read by Mr. E. Smirke, is thus given: "The stone (or monument) of Fanon Maevirinus," or of "Fanon, son of Virinus." Mr. Nash, in a communication addressed to Mr. Smirke, reads it "Maquirini," or "Maqiqici," in the Ogham character on the right side of the stone; thus repeating the name inscribed in Roman characters on the face of the slab. It is true there are nine letters

<sup>1</sup> Ulster Journ. of Arch., iii, p. 12.

in the Roman character, and eight only in the Ogham. That difference, however, Mr. Nash says, offers no difficulty, as the vowel *u*, which follows *q* in the Latinized form, is very constantly absent in the Ogham. He feels disposed to identify the name with that of an Irish saint, MAC ERC, the founder and first bishop of the church of Donaghmore, in the present diocese of Dromore, who flourished in the fifth century. Mr. Smirke remarks upon the debased form of the characters of the Roman letters, which are placed vertically from top to bottom, reading apparently FANONI MAQUIRINI on one side, whilst on the other we have SAGRANVI, which may probably be of a later date.

On the right border and edges of the stone are various scores or Ogham marks. These, however, belong to that face which presents the name Fanoni Maquirini. On the reverse, having SAGRANVI, there are none to be observed. Mr. Smirke conceives some of the scores on the left edge to be accidental; but they are of a character similar to the others, and it is difficult, therefore, to admit this view entertained of them.

Bilingual inscriptions on the same monument cannot be too highly estimated in regard to the Ogham character and its obscure history. In addition to the one now given from Fardel, Mr. (now professor) Westwood, in 1846, drew attention to a stone standing upon the side of a road between Kenfegge and Margam, in Glamorganshire, having an inscription with the name of a Roman, or Romanized Briton, PUXPEIVS CARANTORIVS, with Ogham characters also on the lateral angles of the face of the stone. Mr. Westwood surmises that the latter may have been inscribed in the sixth or seventh centuries, long after the Roman one; and he illustrates the probability of this by referring to an instance of the Ogham by a Christian Irish scribe in the seventh century, in the case of the duke of Buckingham's little Irish copy of the Latin gospel of St. John; at the end of which the writer has added his name in Ogham characters, as described by Dr. O'Connor in the *Bibliotheca Stowensis*.

Professor Westwood has also given some interesting information in regard to what has been called the Sagramus Stone, found at St. Dogmael's, Pembrokeshire. This has an inscription in the Ogham character, and another in Roman character. Professor Graves looks upon this stone as equi-

valent to the Rosetta stone of the Egyptian hieroglyphical discoveries, because it contains the same inscription in two distinct characters,—one of the Romano-British type, the other of that occult Oghamic class which, he justly says, “has been so much controverted, so much theorized upon, and so little understood.” The rev. Robert Williams, of Rhydygroesau, has also directed his attention to this example, and reads the inscribed name, CVNOTAMVS, as the proper Latinized equivalent of CVNEDDAF, the British king who is esteemed to have flourished in the fourth century. Of the other name, which also occurs on the Fardel Stone, SAGRANVS, nothing, as far as I can learn, has been ascertained. Mr. Williams assigns the date of this monument to be not long after the departure of the Romans, whilst the writing still remained unmodified by a communion either with the Irish or Anglo-Saxon scribes. Professor Westwood, whose skill as a palæographer is well established, and who has examined the inscription upon the stone itself, is disposed to regard it as belonging to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. The Ogham characters are presumed to be contemporaneous with the Romano-British inscription; or, at all events, not long posterior to it. The inscription, in Romano-British characters, is—

SAGRANI

FILI

CVNOTAMI

in Ogham characters, read from the bottom upwards, and from the left to the right, according to the theory of professor Graves,—SAGRAMNI MAQI CVNOTAMI. The Irish translator will read *maq* or *mac*, the equivalent of the Cymric *mab*, for the Latin *filius*. This is a very important verification of professor Graves’s alphabet.<sup>1</sup> It remains to observe that the rev. Mr. Williams identifies Cvnnotamvs with Cunedda Whelig, a distinguished chieftain or prince of the fourth century.

The opinion generally prevalent is, that no Ogham inscriptions are of a period prior to the introduction of Christianity,—certainly many of the monuments are distinguished by having a cross upon them. The crosses are also of an ancient form, and have by many been considered as corre-

<sup>1</sup> An engraving of the stone is given in the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, third series, vol. vi, p. 134.

sponding to a period with that in which the Ogham inscriptions are conceived to have been executed. Several of this description have been found in Ireland, in cemeteries, and in the neighbourhood of cells and oratories, connecting them apparently with religious objects; and some of them are even known by the names of saints, though no name of any known saint has, I believe, been hitherto found upon any Ogham monument. When Latinized, the name appears to have been generally inscribed in the genitive case; and to have been the work of those who were acquainted with the Latin language, as shewn in the Fardel Stone, to which I have now drawn the attention of the Association.

The late Mr. Petrie<sup>1</sup> gives the representation of a pillar-stone having on its face a cross, and on one lateral edge some Ogham characters. It was found with some of the uncemented stone oratories in Kerry, and marks the grave of St. Monachan; but he gives no reading of the inscription. No trace of the name is to be found in the Ogham characters. St. Monachan lived on the spot where the monument was found: it is near to his oratory; and his name may have been cut upon the stone by some one professing Christianity. A pillar-stone at Kilhasaggart has the cross and Ogham characters. The stone has suffered injury, by which much of the Ogham has been destroyed. The inscription was originally one of length, which must increase one's regret at its defacement. The rev. Geo. H. Reade, who makes this communication, views the pillar as originally a pagan erection; the incised cross, as he conceives, having been added at a time when Christianity had been introduced into Ireland. An Ogham stone was found by Mr. Prim in a burial-ground at Tullaherin. It had the appearance of a headstone to a grave.

An Ogham monument was discovered in the ruins of the church of Kihush, which, according to Mr. Williams of Dunraven, stood in a cemetery. The stone had been built into a wall, but is now placed at Kihush. The reading of the inscription by Mr. Williams is given as—

“This Ogham was formed over Guare”;

but who Guare was, is unknown.

Mr. Windele states<sup>2</sup> that he found an Ogham inscription

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Round Towers, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Kilkenny Trans., i, 142.

in the pagan cemetery, another on the ancient pagan *Leacht*, one on the *Dallan*, beside the Holy Well; another in the crypt of the *Lios* and *Rath*, and in the ancient Christian burial-ground.

Mr. Windele has printed a list<sup>1</sup> of Ogham inscriptions, of which he had either collected rubbings or ascertained their position, and he enumerates above one hundred and twenty examples. He has arranged them according to counties,—those of Kerry and Cork furnishing the largest number. Of these, thirty-nine have been found in raths;<sup>2</sup> twenty-four on dallans, or pillar-stones; and fourteen in Christian burial-grounds. Others had been displaced from their original sites; some were in unconsecrated *kiels*, or burial-places for unbaptized infants and suicides: a group of seven were on a sea-side tumulus, two on a funeral *leacht*, and others forming part of ancient *queirts* or circles. Twelve were marked with the Christian emblem.

There are many rubbings of his examples in the possession of the Royal Irish Academy;<sup>3</sup> and Mr. Rd. Hitchcock,<sup>4</sup> of Kerry, states that he and the rev. Dr. Graves have made a collection of more than a hundred and thirty, several of which occur in Mr. Windele's list. Mr. Windele espouses the great antiquity—that of an uncertain period—for their origin, against the opinion of the rev. Dr. C. Graves and others. He describes the monuments in the Cork Institution; and regards the Ogham writing as having been in use in the time of the Irish Druids, long anterior to the Christian æra. The rev. Dr. Graves conceives he has good reasons for connecting the Oghams with persons to whom the Roman and Runic alphabets were familiar; and in support of his opinion he dwells particularly upon a monument, a rubbing of which was communicated by Mr. Windele to the Kilkenny Archæological Society, obtained from Burnfoot, and found in the cave of a rath near Mallow. The Ogham characters on this monument, according to Dr. Graves, read SAGITTARI. No cross accompanied this monument; and the word thus

<sup>1</sup> Ulster Journ. Arch., i, 48.

<sup>2</sup> A rath is an earthwork constructed as a sort of fortification for the residence of the early inhabitants of Ireland, and was prevalent prior to any incursions made by the Danes.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Edw. Clibborn, writing to Mr. Edw. Odell, says that the collection of woodcuts of Ogham stones in the library of the Royal Irish Academy amounts to several hundreds. (*Kilkenny Trans.*, iii, 283.)

<sup>4</sup> Ulster Journ. Arch., i, 104.

given is unquestionably Latin, and therefore, Dr. Graves thinks, fatal to the origin ascribed to it by Mr. Windle.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Windle finds a strenuous supporter in Mr. Williams of Dungarvan, who, among numerous readings from Ogham monuments, gives the one in question, which he renders, “[sacred stone] of an archer or soldier”; and contends that there is no Latin whatever in connexion with it, nor can it be regarded in any Christian point of view.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Edw. Hoare<sup>3</sup> gives an account of a slab with Ogham characters, found at Glaunagloch, at the base of Musheru Mountain, near Macroom, Cork, now preserved in the Cork Royal Institution. There are seventeen letters and seven compounds upon the stone. They are of very simple form, short and straight, never exceeding five to a letter, and distinguished by their position on, above, or under, the medial line. The edge of the stone, in this example, forms the medial line. Mr. Hoare states Ogham characters to have been employed as late as the eleventh century. This inscribed stone has been differently read. Our late esteemed associate and vice-president, sir W. Betham, Ulster king-at-arms, rendered it, *Am coec uga inf*,—*i.e.*, “it was his lot to die by the sea, from a boat”; and the late rev. Mr. Horgan, another celebrated Irish antiquary, read it as *A mac occ uirga arus*,—*i.e.*, “my youthful son lies in this grave.”

The rev. H. Longueville Jones, a zealous Welsh antiquary, gives an account<sup>4</sup> of a stone at Llanvaughan, Cardiganshire, first recorded<sup>5</sup> by our late vice-president, sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, K.H., LL.D., who, however, overlooked the Ogham characters inscribed, and confined his attention to those only in Roman letters, reading—

TRENACATVS  
IC JACET FILIVS  
MAGLAGNI.

Correcting some particulars as detailed by sir S. R. Meyrick, in regard to the height, position, etc., of the stone, Mr. Longueville Jones observes that Ogham characters are upon

<sup>1</sup> To those who may be desirous of making themselves acquainted with the different readings proposed, I would direct their attention to an ingenious philological controversy on the subject, in four papers, inserted in the *Kilkenny Archaeological Transactions*, vol. i, pp. 305-321.

<sup>2</sup> *Kilkenny Trans.*, N. S., i, 338.

<sup>4</sup> *Arch. Camb.*, 3rd series, vii, 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Journal*, ix, 116.

<sup>5</sup> *Hist. of Cardiganshire*, p. 191.



the edges and the top of the stone, and he gives a representation of them in an excellent cut. He describes it as the best preserved inscription of any in Wales; the letters and Ogham characters are as sharp as if but recently executed, the edges of the stone being also quite perfect. From the characters of the inscription, Mr. Jones infers that the monument belongs to a very early period, the same as that of the SAGRAMNVS stone; but the nominative and not the genitive cases of the substantives are here preserved. The Ogham inscription reads, according to the rev. Dr. Graves's theory, from bottom upwards, and from left to right; and is exactly the same as the first three syllables in the first line, only that the letter c is reduplicated, indicating the accent on the penultimate, and therefore affording evidence to the Cymric origin of the name itself. A difficulty, however, occurs in regard to the final part of the Ogham inscription. Two marks correspond to the letters L, o. To what they allude is an enigma. It is to be lamented that the Ogham inscription does not afford the equivalents to the whole of the Latinized inscription.

The valuable work of our associate, the learned secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Mr. John Stuart, on the *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (published by the Spalding Club), commences with an excellent example of a stone<sup>1</sup> having an inscription and also Ogham characters. It consists of a monument erected near to the house of Newton, in a parish remarkable for having a number of circles of stones; one of which was anciently in the centre of the present churchyard, in the district of Garioch, Aberdeenshire, though there is reason to believe that this is not its original position; but that, together with other stones, it has been removed from its original site. Mr. Stuart says he saw it in 1835 in its original position, which was on a spot surrounded by wood, close to the present tollgate of Shevack, about a mile south of the house of Newton; and that from its proximity to the inn and farm of Pitmachie, it has been occasionally called the Pitmachie Stone. The ground near it being trenched, several graves were discovered in a sandy ridge near to the stone, in which there was only a little black mould. The graves were described to Mr. Stuart as having been made in the hard gravel, without any appear-

<sup>1</sup> Sculptured Stones. Plate I, p. 3.

ance of flagstones at the sides or elsewhere. General Valancey read two lines of the inscription as—

GYLF

GOMARRA

or prince Gylf; and he could proceed no further. The late rev. Dr. Mill, professor of divinity in the university of Cambridge, conceived the characters of the inscription to be Phœnician, and intended to commemorate a sacrifice; but his lamented decease deprived the public of the publication of his learned researches on the subject. The Oghams upon this monument are numerous; not confined to the edge of the stone, being also on its surface. The other inscription is arranged in six lines horizontally, placed at the upper part of the stone.

Three other inscriptions in Ogham characters are known in Scotland. They are also given in the *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* by Mr. Stuart. The first, as above mentioned, is at Newton; the second is in the neighbourhood of Newton, at Logie; the third at Golspie in Sutherland; and the fourth at Bressay in Shetland.

The second stone referred to, and figured in plate III of the *Sculptured Stones*, is remarkable as having the Ogham characters arranged round and upon a line which forms a circle. This stone is built into a wall enclosing the plantations of Logie Elphinstone, to which place it was removed from the adjoining moor of Carden.

The stone at Golspie (plate XXXIV of *Sculptured Stones*) is in the churchyard of Craighton. It had lain horizontally, as a grave-stone; but it is a regular cross-stone, inscribed on both sides. On that upon which appears the cross, together with a variety of interlaced ornament, around the edge was cut the name of Robert Gordon, son of Alexander of Sutherland. On the reverse are various figures,—a man, a fish, animals, circles, etc., in the form of several devices; and this presents also the Ogham characters, which are inscribed upon a raised outline extending along the top and continued down one side of the stone, the outer edge of which consists of a scroll-ornament of not inelegant character.

The fourth stone, that at Bressay (plates XCIV and XCV) is also a cross-stone; and was found by a labourer upon digging at a piece of waste land near the ruinous church of Culbinsgarth, which is surrounded by a very old burial-

ground. It was thereupon removed to Gowrdie, and afterwards to the churchyard of Bressay. In 1852 it was, by the desire of Dr. Charlton, conveyed to Newcastle-on-Tyne, to be inspected during the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute; and on this occasion<sup>1</sup> the rev. Dr. Graves examined it, and declared the ornaments sculptured on it to be thoroughly Irish; and the Ogham characters upon the two edges of the monument to read, *Benres meccu droi ann*,—*i.e.*, “Benrhe, or the son of the Druid, lies here”; and *Crosc Nahdfilads datr ann*,—“the cross of Nordred’s daughter is here placed.” Nahdfilad, or Natdodd, is conjectured to have lived in the Faroe Islands, and to have been accidentally the discoverer of Iceland in A.D. 861. His grandson is designated as Benrhe, Benir, or Benres, a descendant of the Druids. The monument is now replaced at Bressay, whence it was removed for this examination.

In the preceding pages I have brought before the Association examples of Ogham writing discovered upon stone monuments in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and England. To Ireland they particularly belong; and in that country they have been found in great abundance. What number may have met with destruction, it would be impossible to say; but it must have been considerable, as marks of such a character are not only likely to be overlooked, but when even seen, to be considered as the result of accident or injury. As to their origin there is great obscurity; and antiquaries are divided in opinion in regard to the question whether they are to be assigned to a period anterior or posterior to the introduction of Christianity. Both the pagan and the Christian advocates have much to advance in support of the view they take of the subject. The former contend that the early antiquity of the Ogham characters compose a distinct alphabet consisting of a certain number of vowels and consonants; that these have all been found upon Irish monuments; and that there exists every probability that their number and arrangement were in use when the Ogham scale was invented for expressing them in writing. Doubts are entertained in regard to the diphthongs, which may have been of a later invention, and added to the scale; as none of the characters which represent the diphthongs have been found on the monuments, with the exception of

<sup>1</sup> Archaeological Journal, xii, 275.

that of *ea* and *oi*, the latter of which is found upon the latest known Ogham monument,—that at Bressay in Shetland, upon which a cross was represented. The rev. D. H. Haigh, indeed, thinks the former can scarcely be a diphthong, since it occurs between the vowels *a* and *i* on monuments at Dunloe and at Whitefield; and he regards the identity between the names of this supposed diphthong and the vowel *e*, to be a sufficient reason for removing it from the series. The same authority suggests that this character may represent the letter *x*, which the ancient glosses found at St. Gall and Wurtzburg, and the formulæ so ingeniously interpreted by Grimm and Pietet, concur to prove was in use in the ancient Irish language.<sup>1</sup>

The mode of writing Ogham is singular: it varies from all other known characters. The letters are named after objects of one peculiar class, and are confined to them. They embrace known trees, all of which are indigenous to Ireland, and seem, therefore, specially to belong to the inhabitants of that country; but being eminently Celtic, must have been the work of that race settling in Ireland as colonists. Mr. Haigh with reason contends that, as the names of the letters are those of Irish trees, and as the alphabet contains nearly a complete list of the trees belonging to Ireland, the trees must have been called after the letters, and not the letters after the trees; for it would have been impossible to find in any country its catalogue of forest trees undesignedly furnished with names the initials of which would give all the sounds necessary to make an alphabet; and equally impossible to induce an unlettered people to give up the names to which they had been accustomed, and adopt a new nomenclature at the bidding of a learned few, supposing these alphabetic characters to be of a later origin.<sup>2</sup> The internal evidence of the alphabet, Mr. Haigh concludes, goes to prove that it must be referred to a race sufficiently numerous to have colonized Ireland, or sufficiently powerful to have taken possession of, and established their own literature in, the country; who came from a southern land, and, holding trees in special veneration, named those of Ireland after the letters of their own alphabet. Such a race, he says, were they to whom the invention of the Ogham has been generally ascribed, the Tuatha de Danann.<sup>3</sup> These are

<sup>1</sup> See *Kilkenny Trans.*, N. S., ii, 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*

also the views of Mr. O'Daly, as expressed in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* prior to Mr. Haigh's lucid statements.

One of the strongest arguments in favour of the early antiquity of the Ogham writing is to be found in the order of the alphabet, which is distinct from that of the Roman and the Teutonic; and the order was maintained by the Irish long after the introduction of Roman letters by the Roman missionaries to Ireland.

The extreme simplicity of the character is another argument in support of its great antiquity. Not only, however, are the letters named from trees, but they are arranged in groups: and in no instance, I believe, are there more than five marks to constitute any letter. The notation of numerals is to this day greatly preserved by, and employed in, counting the fingers; and it is remarkable that the first group of the alphabet, giving *b, l, f, s, n*, corresponds to the thumb and fingers of the left hand; and the second group to the right, being *h, d, t, c, q*. The next group is a combination of the former two, giving *m, y, ug, st*,<sup>1</sup> and *v*; whilst the vowels appear to have been omitted, or suppressed,—of which practice Oriental languages offer many examples to the present day.

It is said that all the Irish annalists received the tradition, and that all ancient writers are agreed that the Ogham was used by the Druids for writing on monuments and on tablets of wood. Those inscribed on stone have in a degree survived the effects of time and the spoliation by man; whilst those on wood have, from its perishable nature, disappeared. One example—and, I believe, a solitary instance of Ogham writing—has been found upon a spherical bead of amber. The rev. James Graves communicated to the Kilkenny Archæological Society this curious discovery. It had been in the family of the O'Connors, in the county Clare, for many generations; and was used as an amulet for the relief of sore eyes, and to assist females in parturition. This singular and interesting antiquity passed into the collection of the late lord Londesborough; and the characters have been read by Mr. Williams,—

“At a woman's delivery.”

The Roman alphabet is generally admitted to have been

<sup>1</sup> In Dr. O'Donovan's alphabet *st* is made to represent the letter *v*.

introduced into Ireland by St. Patrick. The many Lives of the Irish Saints, which do not fail minutely to record their actions, make no mention of their having invented Oghams. St. Patrick is reported to have written no less than three hundred and sixty-five *abecedaria*, and to have in every way laboured to render the Roman character familiar to the natives; and we accordingly find those characters employed in the inscriptions of his age.

In addition to these reasons, it may be alleged that the situations in which Ogham monuments are found, and the purposes to which they appear to have been applied, seem to favour their early origin. They are chiefly in the caves of raths, on pillar-monuments,—*dallans*, as they are called,—and these are of a pagan character. The destruction of these after the introduction of Christianity, is easy to be conceived: hence we find many of the pillar-monuments having the Ogham characters have been broken up, and employed as building materials, and inserted into edifices of a very early date; a remarkable instance of which is that discovered by Mr. Fitzgerald, of Youghal, at Ardmore in the county of Waterford, where is to be seen one of the early stone-roofed oratories so common in Ireland, and which was universally regarded as having been built in the time of St. Declan, who was contemporary with St. Patrick. The oratory subsequently became the tomb of the saint; and in this building a pillar-stone was found inserted into the masonry, having Ogham characters on three of its angles, which have been thus read by Mr. Williams:<sup>1</sup>

“Lughudh [who] died in [the] sea,  
Of [a] day [he] was at fishing,  
Eneaved in grave sacredness”;

which, in modern orthography and idiom, may be read,—

“Lewy, who died in the sea  
On a day he was fishing,  
Is deposited here  
In the sanctuary of the grave.”

This monument offers a remarkable example of the breaking up and employment of the materials for building

<sup>1</sup> *Kilkenny Trans.*, N. S., i, 331. See also for account of the finding of the monument, the *Trans.*, iii, 199, 227.

purposes, indicative of the desire to extinguish the memorials they composed. Although great antiquity can be claimed for Ogham monuments, it is clear from those which have been found presenting Roman as well as Ogham characters, that the practice of writing in Ogham must have continued some time after the introduction of Christianity into Ireland, unless we attribute the Roman inscriptions to the work of a subsequent period. This may have been the case; but it could not have been very far distant; and the examination of these bilingual monuments, if I may be permitted so to designate them, may prove very essential in future researches into this interesting but obscure subject. We have seen how important has been the employment of the Rosetta stone in the British Museum in leading to, and confirming in the most satisfactory manner, the interpretation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and giving to us a key to the literature of that land of marvels; and there are also instances,—one of which, transmitted to me from St. Mark's treasury at Venice, by the learned and ingenious sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, which I had the satisfaction of laying before the first Congress of this Association held at Canterbury in 1845 (my paper on which was subsequently printed by the Society of Antiquaries in the *Archæologia*<sup>1</sup>), of a bilingual inscription in the arrow-headed and the Egyptian hieroglyphical characters, presenting a name of much importance in relation to history, and more so as to the correct interpretation of the arrow-headed alphabet. The example of Ogham, and probably Phœnician, writing on a monument found in Scotland (previously alluded to) may also, in this point of view, be found of considerable importance.

Those who favour the late origin of the Ogham inscriptions, dwell particularly upon the representations of the cross on many of the monuments discovered; and they are pronounced to be of an antique form, conformably to the character of the inscriptions themselves. This is not a matter easily decided; and upon which, indeed, no entirely satisfactory information has as yet been afforded. Those who laboured to introduce Christianity into Ireland may certainly have implanted these crosses upon the previously existing memorials, and thus employed the monuments as a means of establishing their faith and of superseding pagan customs.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xxxi, p. 275.

St. Patrick himself is recorded to have cut the names of our Lord and Saviour in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin, on three pillar-stones raised by pagans at Magh Selga, near Elphin: and Dr. Petrie argues that the saint would also have inserted the cross.

Many other examples might be cited; but it is so well known and admitted that the monuments of paganism, not only in Ireland, but also in other countries, were consecrated by the Christian missionaries by being marked with the cross as the symbol of their faith, that it is unnecessary to dwell longer on this point. The pagan places of worship and the pagan cemeteries were no less appropriated by the followers of Christianity to the ceremonies of their religion. It was unquestionably politic to do so as a means of weaning the people from their superstitions, and the more effectually accomplishing this object by attracting them to the places which they had regarded as sacred,—places used by them for the exercise of their devotions and the performance of their mystic rites.

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The plate accompanying this paper represents, on the front surface of the stone, the inscription in Roman letters, FANONI MACQUIRINI. On its lateral edges, and partly around the top, the Ogham marks are seen; on the back, SAGRANVI occurs without Ogham characters. The alphabet carries its own explanation.