

**THE CAT-STANE, EDINBURGSHIRE:  
IS IT NOT THE TOMBSTONE OF  
THE GRANDFATHER OF HENGIFT  
AND HORFA?**

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by J. Y. Simpson

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**J. Y. SIMPSON**

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147c *The Lady Blanche Dalfoin  
with the Author's copy*

# THE CAT-STANE,

EDINBURGHSHIRE :

IS IT NOT

*The Tombstone of the Grandfather of  
Hengist and Horsa ?*

By J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D., F.R.S.E.,

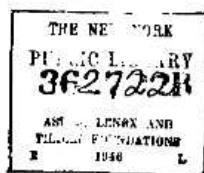
KNIGHT OF THE ROYAL ORDER OF ST OLAV OF NORWAY,  
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MEMBER OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES OF ATHENS, NASSAU, COPENHAGEN, ETC.,  
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INSCRIBED

WITH FEELINGS OF THE MOST SINCERE ESTEEM

TO

MRS PENDER,

CRUMPSALL HOUSE, MANCHESTER.







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ON THE CAT-STANE,  
KIRKLISTON.

**T**HE Mediæval Archaeology of Scotland is confessedly sadly deficient in *written* documents. From the decline of Roman records and rule, onward through the next six or eight centuries, we have very few, or almost no written data to guide us in Scottish historical or antiquarian inquiries. Nor have we any numismatic evidence whatever to appeal to. In consequence of this literary dearth, the roughest lapidary inscriptions, belonging to these dark periods of our history, come to be invested with an interest much beyond their mere intrinsic value. The very want of other contemporaneous lettered documents and data imparts importance to the rudest legends cut on our ancient lettered stones. For even brief and meagre tombstone inscriptions rise into matters of historical significance, when all the other literary chronicles and annals of the men and of the times to which these inscriptions belong have, in the lapse of ages, been destroyed and lost.

H V P L

It is needless to dwell here on the well-known fact, that in England and Scotland there have been left, by the Roman soldiers and colonists who occupied our island during the first four centuries of the Christian era, great numbers of inscribed stones. British antiquarian and topographical works abound with descriptions and drawings of these Roman lapidary writings. But of late years another class or series of lapidary records has been particularly attracting the attention of British antiquaries,—viz., inscribed stones of a late-Roman or post-Roman period. The inscriptions on this latter class of stones are almost always, if not always, sepulchral. The characteristically rude letters in which they are written consist—in the earliest stones—of debased Roman capitals; and—in the latest—of the uncial or minuscule forms of letters which are used in the oldest English and Irish manuscripts. Some stones show an intermixture of both alphabetical characters. These “Romano-British” inscribed stones, as they have been usually termed, have hitherto been found principally in Wales, in Cornwall, and in West Devon. In the different parts of the Welsh Principality, nearly one hundred, I believe, have already been discovered. In Scotland, which is so extremely rich in ancient Sculptured Stones, very few Inscribed Stones are as yet known; but if a due and diligent search be instituted, others, no doubt, will betimes be brought to light.

An inscribed Scottish stone of the class I allude to is situated in the county of Edinburgh, and has been long known under the name of the Cat-stane or Battle-stone. Of its analogy with the earliest class of Romano-British inscribed stones found in Wales, I was not fully aware till I had an opportunity of examining last year, at the meeting of the Cambrian Archaeological Society, a valuable collection of rubbings and drawings of these Welsh stones, brought forward by that excellent antiquary, Mr Longueville Jones; and afterwards, *in situ*, one or two of the stones themselves. I venture, in the following remarks, to direct the attention of the Society to the Cat-stane, partly in consequence of this belief in its analogy with the earliest Welsh inscribed stones; partly, also, in order to adduce an old and almost unknown description of the Cat-stane, made in the last years of the seventeenth century, by a gentleman who was perhaps the greatest antiquary of his day; and partly because I have a new conjecture to offer as to the historical per-

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sonage commemorated in the inscription, and, consequently, as to the probable age of the inscription itself.

*Site and Description of the Stone.*

The Cat-stane stands in the parish of Kirkliston, on the farm of Briggs,<sup>1</sup> in a field on the north side of the road to Linlithgow, and between the sixth and seventh milestone from Edinburgh. It is placed within a hundred yards of the south bank of the Almond; nearly half a mile below the Boathouse Bridge; and about three miles above the entrance of the stream into the Frith of Forth, at the old Roman station of Cramond, or Caer Amoud. The monument is located in nearly the middle of the base of a triangular fork of ground formed by the meeting of the Gogar Water with the River Almond. The Gogar flows into the Almond about six or seven hundred yards below the site of the Cat-stane.<sup>2</sup> The ground on which the Cat-stane stands is the beginning of a ridge slightly elevated above the general level of the neighbouring fields. The stone itself consists of a massive unhewn block of the secondary greenstone-trap of the district, many large boulders of which lie in the bed of the neighbouring river. In form it is somewhat prismatic, or irregularly triangular, with its angles very rounded. This large monolith is nearly twelve feet in circumference, about four feet five inches in width, and three feet three inches in thickness. Its height above ground is about four feet and a-half. The Honourable Mrs Ramsay of Barnton, upon whose son's property the monument stands, very kindly granted liberty last year for an examination by digging beneath and around the stone. The accom-

<sup>1</sup> The farm is called "Briggs, or Colstane" (Catstane), in a plan belonging to Mr Hutchison, of his estate of Caerlowrie, drawn up in 1797. In this plan the bridge (brigg) over the Almond, at the boathouse, is laid down. But in another older plan which Mr H. has of the property, dated 1748, there is no bridge, and in its stead there is a representation of the ferry-boat crossing the river.

<sup>2</sup> In this strategetic angular fork or tongue of ground, formed by the confluence of these two rivers, Queen Mary and her suite were, according to Mr Robert Chambers, caught when she was carried off by Bothwell on the 24th of April 1567. (See his interesting remarks "On the Locality of the Abduction of Queen Mary" in the Proceedings of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries, vol. ii. p. 381.)