

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THOMAS ROSS

Part 8: The Haddington Bowl

DENNIS COWAN

This sundial was hard to find. It was described by Thomas Ross in volume 5 of *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*¹ of 1892 as follows:



Fig. 1. Sketch of the Haddington Bowl by Thomas Ross.

“This dial [Fig. 1] in its general conception is unique, although its parts are to be found in many others; but from its general idea it may be classed as a facet-headed dial. The cup-hollows on each of its octagonal faces are not unlike those found on the horizontal dial at Pinkie; and in the same way as at Pinkie, Newbattle, and other places, certain of the hollows have faces acting as gnomons. Between each of the hollows there is a mask. The peculiarity of this dial consists in its vase form, being hollowed out in the

inside, and lineated so as to form a horizontal hollow dial. There is a hole at the bottom of the vase to allow the rain to escape.



Fig. 2. The dial now, in its damaged and repaired state.

But where was it today? All of my investigations were fruitless until a chance e-mail from David Anderson of East Lothian Museums (Haddington is the main town in East Lothian) with a query relating to Scottish sundials. In my response to him, I took the opportunity to ask if he was aware of the Haddington Bowl or Vase. To my surprise, he advised that it was in the museum’s storage facility in Haddington! It certainly hadn’t travelled far since Ross’s day.

He gave me contact details for Claire Pannell, the museum’s Collections Officer and a few weeks later I visited the store. And there it was, on the bottom shelf surrounded by old curling stones and several pieces of old architectural stonework.



Fig. 3. The west facing scaphe

Claire appeared with a fork lift and she moved several of the pallets out of the way whilst I shuffled the dial to a position more suitable for photography. It was certainly far too heavy to lift.

It was still as Ross described it, but at some point since Ross's day, it had been severely damaged and very poorly restored (Fig. 2), but it was still a fine unusual decorative dial. Two of the cup hollows have faces acting as gnomons as described by Ross (Figs. 3 and 4) whilst two of the other six cup hollows have considerable damage. Fig. 5 shows the internal markings of the bowl.

I have never seen an old sundial in this form and I'm sure that it is unique in Scotland at least, and I'm mighty pleased that I was eventually able to locate it.



Fig. 4. The east facing scaphe



Fig. 5. The markings on the inside of the bowl.

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REFERENCES

1. D. MacGibbon and T. Ross: *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, David Douglas, Edinburgh (1892)

dennis.cowan@btinternet.com