

## The Inver Stone

***“Still onwards through the woods of pine and larch, where the roe may often be seen vanishing amongst the trees, along a road remarkably smooth and level, with the river now concealed from our view, and the hills on either side a little further removed, till reach the inn of Inver.....Here again letters are received, the horses watered, and the thirsty Highlander alights to get a taste of his native mountain dew”***<sup>1</sup>



The celebrated Inver Stone

Painting a picture of the pilgrimage to Inver that has changed only a little in the past 150 years there is something special when reaching that level stretch of road east of Braemar. With the white walled Inver Hotel invariably getting closer, regardless of how many times previously visited, there is always a level of excitement with the prospect of physically coming into contact with one of the most famous of lifting stones.

The Inver Stone is certainly the most celebrated of traditional lifting stones and is well known throughout the entire worldwide strength community. For many, it may be the only known traditional stone perhaps as a consequence of its modern lifting history including a who's who of the world of physical strength and thus historical and physical comparisons have rarely been stated. There are far older stones than that of the Inver and indeed there are also stones that are far heavier but yet the Inver still retains an aura of mysticism that draws many to make that particular pilgrimage and to test their mettle against this severe challenge

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<sup>1</sup> Page 89 Braemar, Rev James Crombie (1865)

in strength. As a consequence of so many lifts, by those whose culture is foreign, the cultural assertions regarding a lift of the Inver stone have on occasion attached the absurd to it. With ease, the stone is instantly linked to Highland clansmen proving their manhood in lifting the stone into the lap or fold adding a sense of romanticism to a lift so it is perhaps time to put a proper perspective on this traditional stone.

To properly assess the Inver Stone with any cultural attachments to it and as such, the manner it was lifted, we have to put an age to the stone. This is indeed no easy matter but without being able to put the stone into a time frame any assertions as to culture are simply fabrications and suppositions which for many, can far too easily become fact. Of course for many in the world of strength, physically lifting the Inver stone is of far more importance than the history of it yet, if devoid entirely of its history would the lifter be there in the first instance?

The history of the Inver Stone is practically non-existent and unlike many other traditional lifting stones, it is totally devoid of a Gaelic name which certainly points to it being far from being of ancient order. The name of a lifting stone can sometimes give us an indication how the stone was lifted and indeed with the likes of the Puterach, we can ascribe a time frame when the stone was lifted.

The Inver Stone is hardly a clue by virtue of its nomenclature and which by resort to the English belies the fact that at one time it most probably had a proper Gaelic name. This is sadly a detracting feature of the stone. Most who have written about the Inver stone have ascribed the “manhood” facet of Gaelic culture to it in that lifting the stone was a rite of passage, welcomed into manhood etc forgetting, or perhaps ignorantly neglecting the fact that stone lifting as a trial of strength to prove worth at puberty was simply a test to prove an adequacy in strength to commence training in weaponry. After the battle of Culloden in 1746, this requirement no longer took place as law forbade the Highlander in the first place to possess arms. The culture simply died but what this means is the “Inver Manhood Stone” would have to be placed into a time frame before 1746 and also more than likely, have some Clan association.

Every traditional lifting stone exists at a specific location for a reason and fortunately sufficient numbers of known stones can point to distinct patterns and indeed reasons for them to be located where they are. In addition, the stone itself can also provide clues to its age and its use and in this respect the Inver Stone has left us with a few tantalising clues as to its age.

Firstly name; although Inver is perhaps the modern anglicised of the Gaelic, it is indeed a shortened name as the hamlet was once known as Inverardar.<sup>2</sup> This of course means nothing for the lifting stone other than an emphasis that there are many factors which can change for no reason, in this case the name of the hamlet itself.

The Inver Stone seems to be in some way intrinsically linked to the history of the Inver Hotel. It has been suggested that the stone had been used at the Inver Hotel as a means for tethering horses or alternatively as some form of weight used in the scaffolding in the construction of the Inn. The stone shows evidence of its former use with the obvious hole in its base where it has been supposed that at one time a metal ring had been attached. It

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<sup>2</sup> Page 302, *The Place-names of Aberdeenshire*, William M Alexander (1952)

would appear at first glance that would be as far back as the story goes, but this is not the case.

After the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 the British Government instructed General Wade amongst others to begin constructing Military roads within the Highland region. In 1749 the road from Blairgowrie through Braemar to Crathie was completed and at Crathie the road joined with the Dee road creating a direct link from Aberdeen to Braemar. The modern A93 road from Blairgowrie to Crathie follows the course of this military road which obviously intersected the hamlet of Inver.

The Inver Hotel was constructed in 1760 as a coach house on the Aberdeen/Braemar coaching road. The stables for the horses were situated exactly across the road, where the stone presently stands and it would be a reasonable assumption that the stables were built at the same time.

What is not commonly known is that firstly, The Inver Hotel was known initially as the Invercauld Arms<sup>3</sup> however from another reference it was called The Invercauld Inn<sup>4</sup>. The Inn was built, obviously as there was a new road suitable for a horse and carriage but doesn't take into account that prior to the building of the military road and the Hotel, that Inver was still an important link in local communication.

Prior to the military road, there was still a rough pony track that allowed communication between Braemar and Inver which already had an Inn. The Inver Inn, probably extremely Spartan in comfort, was actually situated on the opposite side of the road from the present hotel. In a matter of 300 years, the ground hosted an Inn, a stables (probably built from the remnants of the original Inn and is now home to Inver Cottage.

In the early 1700's and most probably before, The Inver Inn would have been a local drinking "den" known in Scots as a "Shebeen" and the area did have a fair reputation for the distillation of illicit whisky. Here whisky would have been consumed and there would also be much merriment. As a local meeting centre, there is a likely hood that the stone was used as a test of strength between the local men.

It is known that on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1715, the Earl of Mar (John Erskine "Bobbin John") wrote from Braemar asking the Kildrummy men to meet at the Inn at Inver the following Monday.<sup>5</sup>

So in all probability the inn existed as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and as a stop- over for Highland Drovers and Whisky Smugglers. Inver would share with other places with Inn's such as Dalwhinnie and Glen Roy, a stone of strength tackled in ad-hoc competition with such stones being known as **Clach Thogalaich** indeed local historian, Ian Murray having interviewed many of those who possessed the Deeside Gaelic dialect, confirms that all stones in this area were so named by the local Gaelic speakers.

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<sup>3</sup> Page 78, *A Pictorial and Descriptive to Aberdeen, Deeside etc*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Note that the Invercauld Arms Hotel is now situated in Braemar.

<sup>4</sup> Page 239, *The Highlands Of Scotland*, Mountford John Baddely (1883).

<sup>5</sup> Page 58, *The Royal Dee*, Alex McConnachie (1898)



The stables at Inver now Inver Cottage

The culture of this illicit drinking den in the days of the Highlander in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century was most certainly one that respected strength and there is no doubt that alongside the lifting stone, stone putting and other Gaelic strength activities would have taken place.

Correspondingly, the hamlet of Inver has never in its history sustained a population to any extent that the Inver Stone would have been lifted by the men of a community. There was no community at Inver with its importance solely due to being an important stop on an established Highland route.

If the lifting stone at Inver owes its existence due this important stop on an ancient track as I suspect most likely, the lifting requirements for competitive Highland stone lifting would have been a simple best lift wins. Forget any notion of cultural reasons for lifting the stone as there was no local community and as such no specific requirements for a lift as none existed.

Some two miles north-east of Inver, in Glen Feardar is where the majority of the local people at one time resided. The road, just prior to Crathie strikes northwards into a community that once had a church and school with a substantial Highland population with some 70 individual dwellings <sup>6</sup> in comparison with the 20 dwellings at Crathie.<sup>7</sup> With a well established

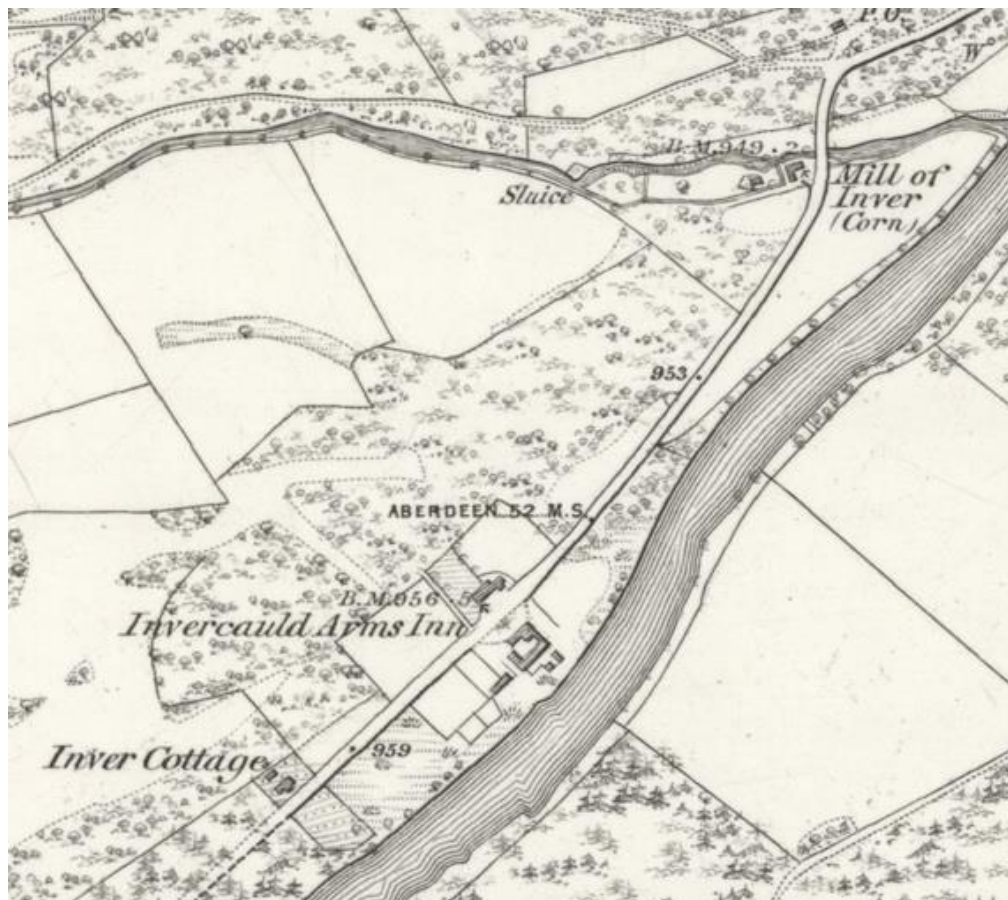
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<sup>6</sup> Page , *In the Shadow of Lochnagar*, Ian Murray, (1992)



community there every likelihood that Glen Feardar possessed its own stone of strength with an almost certainty that the stone at Inver would not have been seen as part of the culture of this community. Not surprisingly, being located far higher in the slopes of the Cairngorm foothills and having an expansive view which took in the construction of Queen Victoria's Balmoral Castle home it is of no surprise that the community was cleared making it very doubtful that former inhabitants would be part of a Union Jack waving crowd at the Braemar Highland Games.

Now as much as the existence of an ancient track and location and a shebeen would tend to prove the existence of the Inver Stone, there is other evidence available which perhaps either contradicts or substantiates the existence of the Inver Stone as being a 17<sup>th</sup> Century testing stone.



OS 1892- 1905 six inches to one mile map of Inver & surrounding area

The Victorian map above interestingly shows the Invercauld Arms Inn (Inver Hotel) with stable complex opposite. Inver Cottage is seen to be a completely separate dwelling far from its present location but attention should be drawn to the Mill of Inver. How the Mill fits into the history of the Inver Stone may well be marked on the stone itself. Many theories have been put down with regards to the underside of the Inver Stone which has an obvious indentation on its underside most likely man made with a small hole in its centre. These theories apply

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<sup>7</sup> Page 345, *Picturesque Tourist of Scotland*, Adam & Charles Black, (1861)

the use of an iron ring attached to the stone for either tethering horses or used as a weight to tie in scaffolding during construction of the hotel itself. All very well but tethering stones outside Inns located in Scotland were far larger as shown below.



Tethering stone at Rowardenan Inn, Loch Lomond

As anyone who has lifted the Inver Stone will testify, its ability to move and wobble in addition to its lack of weight for purpose, would discount its use as a scaffolding tie.

There is however no doubt that there was a purpose for this stone which is corroborated by the curious 265lb marking on the stone.

The true weight of the stone indeed is 268 pounds of solid granite having been weighed by the Spartan Club of Aberdeen during the 1960's and although some erroneous writings have alluded to the stone being heavier, 268 lbs it is.

The question has to be asked is why the true weight of the stone is different from that "marked on the tin" so to speak and is there any relevance to that difference in weight?

The answer to this is tied to that obvious indentation where a metal ring could have been attached and it is also linked with the rather curious and appreciatively complex weight measurement standards that were applied in Aberdeenshire and indeed the rest of Scotland in the early Victorian period and for some considerable time before. It was because of this nationwide lack of standards that the imperial weight measurement system was introduced and enforced in 1820.

This leads to the obvious conclusion that whoever inscribed the 265lb mark on the stone did so after 1820 although we know that the stone was some 3lbs heavier. The answer to this is the Corn Mill.



Mill of Inver circa 1898

Emphasising Inver as an important location on an established trade route, naturally grain would be delivered to the Inn requiring some form of measurement in weight. Weighing standards in Aberdeenshire prior to 1820 were extremely fickle with a stone weight of cheese in one area being up to 5lbs heavier in another. This was the primary reason for an introduction of the imperial weight measurement, trade and barter was confusing as people quite simply did not know what volume or weight they were buying. The principle larger weight measurement was the **Aberdeenshire Boll**.

***“The Boll of it seldom exceeds 17 stones when correctly measured by an Aberdeen firloot; which is about 15 stones and a quarter to the Linlthgow Boll. It was seldom so light as 18 stones 30 years ago. In the year 1782 the stipend bear paid to the reporter was above 19 stones.....in 1779 this stipend bear was 19½ stones.”***<sup>8</sup>

It has to be understood that the weights of the period were subject to much fluctuation but it is certain that the Mill of Inver worked on the same rather confusing dictates' of measurement and with the Inver Stone certainly within the parameters of what could be considered an Aberdeenshire Boll, everything seems to point at the stone being used as weight for the purchase of corn. The indented section at the bottom of the stone, with the probability of an iron ring attachment would certainly tend to corroborate this however remember there is also a difference of 3 lbs (in addition to the weight of the ring handle) to account for.

Sharp practices were to the fore in the days before and indeed after the introduction of the imperial weight measurement system. The best examples of this are the numerous written reports of Excise men making unannounced visits to check standard 56lb weights only to find standards not being adhered to with weight being either attached or taken away from the standard. This of course depends whether or not if you are buying or selling and in the case of buying corn at Inver, an additional 3lbs plus weight of handle would over sometime be more financially beneficial to the miller at Inver.

To make the subject more confusing due to lack of standards it should be noted that there was an abortive attempt to incorporate a standard weighing system throughout Great Britain after the Act of Union in 1706. From this there are different weights of imperial pounds relative to the Aberdeenshire Boll and the following text relates to the weight measurement in use on that very same track where the Inver Stone sits and is dated early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

***“They had division into stages where refreshment could be got for man and beast at “Change Houses” (Shebeens), as they were called. Bawbee Ale was brewed, that is ale sold at ½ d a bottle, but they brewed also penny ale, and at most of them a glass of smuggled gin could be got. The great goods traffic from the north was carried on horses and panniers. The load was equal to two bolls of meal or 256lbs.”***<sup>9</sup>

So in two completely different time frames, the corresponding weight of the Inver Stone is extremely close to the localised weight measurements although realistically, don't expect them be too exact. All evidence certainly points to the stone being used in this fashion, a weight to measure corn but as stated, this probably occurred more likely over a shorter period of the stones history.

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<sup>8</sup> Page 249 A General View of the Agriculture of Aberdeenshire. George Keith (1811)

<sup>9</sup> Page 181 Old Highland Roads. The Transaction of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 14.(1888)

Of course the Inver Stone by virtue of its beautifully symmetric shape was fashioned by the work of the nearby River Dee and it would be churlish to think that such a stone was searched for and when found, simply removed from the waters to provide a local standard in weight for the purchase of corn. In all probability, the stone was so removed as a test of strength with its use as an agricultural weight occurring far later in its history.

Although the history of the stone is rather indirect and circumstantial in nature, it is all underpinned by the three major factors of Inver itself, ancient track, Inn and Mill because that's just about sums up the locale. There wasn't anything else in the surrounding area that would contribute to the location of a testing stone at Inver.

Where this all leads to is a simple dating of the stone as being circa 17<sup>th</sup> Century or before.

It is exceedingly difficult to view the history of a lifting stone in different time frames and it is obvious that for a period, the Inver stone did well have some form of commercial use as weight measurement but yet it is a lifting stone and always has been. It's lifting during the Victorian period is well known but rest assured it was only lifted then as a consequence of being a traditional lifting stone of age.

Yes indeed there is an assumption that the stone was used as a testing stone before its commercial use perhaps best explained in the following table

<b><i>Time Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>	<b><i>Use</i></b>	<b><i>Communication</i></b>
20 <sup>th</sup> Century till present	Outside Inver Cottage	Lifting Stone	Motor Road
1820 to beginning of 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	Outside Stables of Inver Inn	No longer a weight measurement – lifting stone	Track for Horse & Carriage (improved)
1760 to 1820	Outside Stables of Inver Inn	Used to measure Boll of meal *	Track for Horse & Carriage (Military standard)
Up to 1715	Outside ancient shebeen	Lifting Stone and weight measurement	Highland Track - rough
Before 1715 and far earlier	Outside ancient shebeen	Lifting Stone with possible Clan association	Highland Track - rough

*\* In this time frame Gaelic culture was severely restricted and oppressed due to the consequences of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and the aftermath of the battle of Culloden in 1746. Stone lifting would not have been as practiced in anyway like the extent it was prior to 1746 if at all.*

As the probable history of the Inver Stone reaches further into history, we have to assess the local Clan and its history.

The controlling interest in this area of Deeside has always been, and to this very day still is Clan Farquharson, an offshoot of the Shaw's of Rothiemurchus. Invercauld is the ancient seat of the Clan but not too far away from both Inver and the Mill of Inver is a curious pile of stones known as ***Carn na Cuimhne*** or the ***cairn of remembrance***. This was the gathering place of the men of Clan Farquharson who each was required to lay down a stone prior to a battle and when returning would remove their individual stone. It was by this manner that the Clan Chief could account for the loss of men in battle.



It is the proximity of Inver to both Invercauld and the Carn na Cuimhne that could give the Inver Stone some Clan association and with that, all the cultural practices associated with Gaelic strength be it a test to prove manhood or a test to become Buanachean, the strength elite and functional killers of each Clan.

Indeed the celebrated Inver Stone is most certainly a conundrum of history but it is the type that can be placed or linked factually to the stone itself. Based on the knowledge of quite a number of traditional stones, I see it most likely that the history of the stone has progressed through different time frames but underpinning it all is that the stone is a lifting stone. When its first modern lifts were being made in the Victorian era, it is more than likely that it was lifted not because it was a heavy weight used for measurement but it was a lifting stone of considerable age.

Moving on to the modern lifts of the stone.

October 24	Mr McHardy minister	2	2		"	4	"	Oct
	William Farguharson of Monaltrie	7	6	1	"	12	"	
	Jas Farguharson of Invercauld	6	4	2	"	8	"	
	Lord Tyte Maer Lodge	2	2		"	4	"	
	Capt Gordon of Aberfeldie	4	4		"	8	"	
	William Cummin Auchindrains	1	1		"	2	"	
	Mr Jas Stewart Allanquich	2	2		"	4	"	
	Chas McHardy (Dellavore)	4	2	2	"	4	"	
	Duncan Cummin Castletown	2	2		"	4	"	
	John Watson d	2	2		"	4	"	
	John Pattanich Killoch	2	2		"	4	"	
	<u>Findlay McHardy Inver</u>	2	1	1	"	2	"	
	Alex Davidson Mill of d	2	1	1	"	2	"	
	Mordach Symond Mains Monaltrie	3	2	1	"	4	"	
	Peter Duncan Tennabaich	3	1	2	"	2	"	

Farm Horse Tax Register for Crathie 1797/1798

The Farm Horse Tax Register document as above features two well known surnames of Aberdeenshire strength namely McHardy and Davidson. Alex Davidson was the miller of Inver however his son Sandy became somewhat of a local celebrity but more importantly apart from taking on the mill after his father's death, he was also a very good friend to Robert Dinnie.

***“Robert Dinnie, the father of the great athlete, Donald Dinnie, told the writer that he and Davidson measured legs, and that each was 18 inches round the calf”<sup>10</sup>***

Being extremely good friends certainly puts a degree of suspicion on Robert Dinnie (stone-mason) and Sandy Davidson (miller) having the necessary skills and reasons for inscribing a mark of weight on the stone which is lighter than it is and indeed both can be placed at Inver after 1820. It is from this time period that we learn of the stone being lifted.

The folklore attached to the famous Donald Dinnie infers that his Christian name was taken after Robert Dinnie being so impressed with a Skye man called **Donald MacDonald** lifting the Inver Stone that he would call his first born male after him. Whether true or not, it cannot be discounted as indeed Robert Dinnie was a frequent visitor to the area. One must remember that the entire population of the Parish of Crathie which includes the village of Braemar numbered just 1500 souls. Most people resident in the parish would know of one another and some oldies would have been able to state substantial family histories. One extremely well known family in the parish were the McHardy's.

***“William was modestly described as “a great man for heavy lifts”. Indeed, on one occasion when John Lamont the carrier was temporarily absent, he quietly and as a joke put the 268lb Inver lifting stone into his cart.”<sup>11</sup>***

William McHardy was born in 1804 and this particular lift is perhaps the oldest recorded of the Inver Stone and although William's younger brother John was considered far stronger, as he was indeed more successful in competition at the Braemar Games, the horse tax register shows Inver as being a McHardy stronghold. I think that there is absolutely no doubt that in this period the likes of Sandy Davidson, Robert Dinnie and a multitude of the McHardy family were lifting the Inver stone on a regular basis.

Like the Stones of Dee the Inver has a great association with David Webster and the Spartan Club of Aberdeen. To promote the Inver Stone and Scottish Stone Lifting the Inver was taken to Glasgow for a promotion. In the early 1960's I sat in the audience at the Kelvin Hall Circus when I must have been 3 or 4 years old and I enjoyed this special treat however the interest of my father was heightened when this large oval stone was brought into the ring and introduced. Some of the best Highland Games athletes of the day were in attendance and the challenge went out to lift it. From that point the art of stone lifting became a focus for P B Martin which later resulted in the release of “Of Stones and Strength”.

Now having been brought up with the knowledge of the Inver Stone from a very young age it was not until 1993 that I again physically saw the Inver Stone. In the summer of that year and after a climb of seven munros (Scottish Mountains over 3000ft in height) with my father which involved a rough walk of about 16 miles, tired and exhausted we returned to the car parked at Glen Shee. We had a good day on the hill and with time to spare decided on a visit to Inver to say hello to a good friend. We met up with Jim Richards and learned some more history of the stone. The old man straddled the stone, placed his hands under it and began his lift. Bringing it up to waist height he had to release it. The exertion of 9 hours in the mountains had taken its toll but to me it was still a good lift.

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<sup>10</sup> Page 138 *The Romance of Poaching*. William McCombie Smith

<sup>11</sup> “The McHardy Boys” *The Scots Magazine*, August, 1998.



Big Jock McColl lifting the Inver Stone at the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. – The author was in the audience

(Photo courtesy of DP Webster)

In the autumn of 2006 we again returned to Inver. By this time Peter was ravaged with cancer and was feeling extremely negative due to the finality of his illness. We were greeted by Mrs Richards and shared tea with her in the area she puts aside for the records of visits to the stone. Beside the record logs was a copy of “Of Stones and Strength” and she asked the old man to autograph the copy. I could see elation in his face and I knew that he felt that in some way, he had become a significant part of the history of the Inver Stone.

Bidding farewell to Mrs Richards the sun was shining and Peter walked up to the stone and placed hands on it. It was the last time he was to touch a stone of strength having succumbed to the scourge some 7 months later. I do recall an air of disappointment when an attempt to lift the stone, discouraged of course, failed to put the wind underneath the stone but I suppose that this is the mindset of all stone lifters. Regardless of circumstances, even with the onset of death, failure is fickle mistress which disappoints regardless.

One particular alleged lift in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century seems to have spawned a number of repeats which should be mentioned. Celebrated strength historian David Webster has mentioned that the famous Highland Games athlete – AA Cameron was the first to put the Inver Stone overhead. Of course this cannot be substantiated but Cameron was a Gael and the ultimate expression of strength in relation to stone lifting in Gaelic culture was the lift and throw and lift and carry, two particular styles of lifting discussed at length in Chapter Four – What determines a lift of a traditional stone.

Cameron was well known to have exhibited in his lifts, traditional styles of lifting. He was known to have carried out a **lift and throw** of a traditional stone in Highland Perthshire and



a local newspaper reported on his **lift and carry** of the Dalwhinnie Stone where he decided to carry the stone and place it on the bar counter of the Loch Ericht Hotel. I suspect that if indeed he did lift the Inver stone, that the myth surrounding a free pint being offered at the Inn if the stone is carried and placed on the bar counter was spawned from the illustrious Cameron.

It is to the modern that we have to look for the Inver Stone being put overhead. Personally I prefer the use of “**put overhead**” rather than the use of “**overhead press**” as quite simply applying stringent weightlifting regulations to the culture of stone lifting detracts from the very essence of a Gaelic strength culture that had no place for lifting a stone overhead. This said, modern comparisons are necessary but at least the feat of putting a heavy stone overhead should be easy to determine. Either the stone is above head height or it is not.....full arm lockout is solely for weightlifting and Strongman.

The current list of those who have put the Inver Stone overhead is an array of worldwide strength with every single lift a substantial name in strength.

1. **Bill Kazmaier** (USA)
2. **Hamish Davidson** (Sco)
3. **Francis Brebner** (Sco)
4. **Laine Snook** (Eng)
5. **Sebastian Wenta** (Pol)
6. **Andy Cairney** (Sco)
7. **Matt Vincent** (USA)

There could well be another overhead lift of the famous Inver Stone.

***“Capes added to his days triumph, winning all but three of the eight events by becoming the first Englishman to have the lifted the 265lb Inver Stone above his head. He is only the second Briton to have achieved this feat of strength, the first being yesterdays Scotland captain, Hamish Davidson.”***<sup>12</sup>

As ever stone lifting history is steeped in the controversy of what men have done and what they haven't in relation to strength. The alleged lift by Geoff Capes took place at an England versus Scotland Highland Games at Aviemore in 1983 and being reported about in a reputable Scottish broadsheet of the time, the lift certainly appears to be genuine but still remains unconfirmed.

Now a word on actual lifts, the Inver Stone has perhaps been a victim of its own notoriety and having been so well known and lifted by many from various strength backgrounds and disciplines, what constitutes a lift has been deeply set as lift into the chest as being the absolute minimum of success. Again it has to be emphasised that in Gaelic strength culture a lift to the extent of putting the wind underneath the stone was wholly acceptable. Any better lifts are simply that, better lifts and regardless of what anyone states, there are no known cultural applications of strength known to the Inver Stone. It was never known to have been lifted to prove manhood at puberty nor was it a lift associated with becoming

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<sup>12</sup> *The Glasgow Herald 1983*



Bunnachean of a particular Clan. In the absence of this there are no specifics for lifting the stone.

This has resulted in a rather misconstrued attitude to the Inver Stone Visitor Book. The visitors book was placed at Inver Cottage in 2004 by Phil who took perhaps the most relevant of statements made about stone lifting from “Of Stones and Strength” which were entered as a reminder to the attendant lifter.

***“Strength has a limit. It is easily measured by the kilo.***

***Character understands that limit is a choice. It is measured in the attempt to hoist again the stone, to try once more.***

***Character is measured on the return.”***<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps many who attend at Inver to attempt to hoist this most famous of testing stones should read and disseminate its cultural meaning. It is not a statement of defeat but a statement of character yet there are many, estimated to be some 80% of visitors that fail to record their attempts. Whether it is a simple case of putting the wind under the stone or lifting it overhead, in true Gaelic culture a lift is a lift. It is a simple case that some lifts are better than others but where the true character lies is to record the extent of the lift and return and better it.

As simple as this may sound, there are many hemmed by attitudes of failure which are modern and are entrenched in the specifics of standards set by modern strength. Stone lifting and by its obvious inclusion, the Inver Stone are not subject to these modern specifics.

The visitor’s book at Inver is a curious testament to attitudes towards stone lifting. Most entries highlight success in lifting the stone however, and perhaps holding true to the ethos of stone lifting highlighted in “Of Stones and Strength” a few actually detail their progression to achieving their desired goal in lifting the stone.

Commencing from 2004 the list contains many names who could easily be considered the good and the great of worldwide strength but let us not forget those lifters who have went before and are not formally recorded.

In particular the lifts of **Steve Jeck** (USA) in the mid 1990’s which ignited the interest in traditional Gaelic stone lifting to the extent that the likes of the Inver Stone was hoisted to a level that sparked an international pilgrimage just to lift this unique lump of oval granite. Lifts by such as **Dr Terry Todd** (USA) and **Dr Randall Strossen** (USA), esteemed names in worldwide strength who in their own individual ways have done so much to promote and encourage the lifting of Scottish Stones should also not go unmentioned.

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<sup>13</sup> *Of Stones and Strength, Steve Jeck & Peter Martin (1996)*

Date	Name	Country	Remarks
<b>2004</b>			
4 <sup>th</sup> April	Tony Aitchison	Scotland	Pulled it to mid thigh, this the "Daddy", next time?
4 <sup>th</sup> April	Blyth Stevenson	Scotland	Couldn't budge it, yet!
4 <sup>th</sup> April	Tam Love	Scotland	Lifted 4" from the ground
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Tony Aitchison	Scotland	Chest high three times
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Blyth Stevenson	Scotland	Chest high three times
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Tam Love	Scotland	Chest high once, off the ground twice
14 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Paul Swinton	Scotland	
4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Noel Green	Scotland	Easy x 3 On the shoulders easy High up on chest, a difficult stone for its weight - Fantastic
<b>2005</b>			
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Andy Kirkham	England	High up on chest, a difficult stone for its weight Shouldered stone and walked easy, can't press yet
10 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Bill Crawford	USA	Shouldered 3 times, Dream come true. New England Strength Athletes Scotland Stone Lifting Tour 2005.
10 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Erik Sauve	USA	Shouldered Stone, lifted many times, Great place and great host
10 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Danna Florence	USA	Shouldered first attempt & fourth. Thanks for the best time of my life
25 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Dave Eastwood	Scotland	Shouldered stone and walked easy, can't press yet Hoisted stone onto chest, Very deceiving stone, a pleasure to lift
17 <sup>th</sup> May	George MacEachern	USA	Hoisted stone onto chest, Very deceiving stone, a pleasure to lift such an important stone of strength. Great piece of history
24 <sup>th</sup> July	Jeff Armstrong	USA	Waist high –BRUTAL. Next time? She definitely got the best of me
29 <sup>th</sup> July	Al Myers	USA	Lifted up to lap – very difficult
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	Greg Bell	USA	Up to shoulder not quite set, 2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt stomach
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	Noel Green	USA	To shoulder three times again
<b>2006</b>			
7 <sup>th</sup> May	Kenneth Nowicki	Scotland	To chest, shoulder next time
7 <sup>th</sup> May	Alec McDonald	Scotland	
7 <sup>th</sup> July	John O'Brien	USA	To chest, missed at shoulder, thanks
26 <sup>th</sup> July	Mark Brear	England	To just up to my chest best day of my life, so happy
27 <sup>th</sup> July	Thomas E Van Vleck	USA	This was the highlight of my trip, Thank you
27 <sup>th</sup> July	Jim Spalding	USA	To chest what fun
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Blyth Stevenson	Scotland	Shouldered once, press position once – not pressing yet!!
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Tam Coves	Scotland	High on chest x 2
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Tony Aitchison	Scotland	Chest high but pulled Dinnies four times earlier – barehanded
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Stan Pike	England	Three at chest height after Dinnie stones
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Steve Angel	England	Lifted to chest height after 4 reps on Dinnie Stones
<b>2007</b>			
13 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Mick Cottrell	New Zealand	3 x to chest, one just off
13 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Craig Reid	Australia	4 reps and shouldered stone, attempted press unsuccessful

15 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Joe Maccarrone	USA	To shoulder, thank you
8 <sup>th</sup> June	Michael Pockoski	USA	Shoulder – Great Stone!
8 <sup>th</sup> June	Daniel McKim	USA	Chested, shoulder high, fun
8 <sup>th</sup> June	Bert Sorin	USA	Shoulder high. A wonderful stone and country
12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Roger Davis	England	Humbled 10 years ago, victorious today, the stone hasn't changed – I have.
14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Ben Voights	USA	Lifted to the chest twice. Fantastic experience, thanks to Mrs Richards for the opportunity.
14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Gordon Wolcott	USA	Lifted to the chest. Held and walked 10 feet – incredible experience
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	David Webster	Scotland	Watched Bill Crawford lift the very stone to chest high several times
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Bill Crawford	USA	My old friend is well. The Inver stone lives. Thank you June.
13 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Mathew Waldron -Moir	Australia	X 2 lifts – “Steve Jeck says hello”
<b>2008</b>			
24 <sup>th</sup> May	Laine Snook	England	Overhead x 4
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Sebastian Went	Poland	
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Gregor Edmunds	Scotland	Lifted with Went, he got overhead in rain, very slippery but VG
19 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Bob Russell	England	Lifted to chest
22 <sup>nd</sup> Sep	Francis Brebner	Scotland	First time lifted the stone chest height age 19, overhead 1989 3 times
18 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Laine Snook	England	Overhead x 2 , pleased to see the Inver stone again
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Laine Snook	England	To chest
<b>2009</b>			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	Lance Holland - Keen	Australia	First time lift. Like picking up a ball of ice. To chest just the once.
4 <sup>th</sup> July	David Fitzgerald	USA	
20 <sup>th</sup> July	Sam Grammer	USA	Shouldered the stone, worth the trip to Scotland, thank you
20 <sup>th</sup> July	Dhani Jones	USA	I shouldered the stone across the street. Gregor Edmunds afraid spotted the lorry. The quest for the pint. How to return to get it. 1 <sup>st</sup> NFL African American to carry across the street. “Dhani tackled the Inver Stone.....thanks for the pint. I had to lift it 5x in one day, it's a pebble”
20 <sup>th</sup> July	Gregor Edmunds	Scotland	
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Andrew Cairney	Scotland	4 <sup>th</sup> man in history to press the stone. Witnessed, photo and film by Stevie “Stainless” Murray
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Stephen Murray	Scotland	Lifted to the shoulder and filmed (what a day fantastic)
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Kenneth Nowicki	Scotland	2 <sup>nd</sup> time lifting the Inver, 1 <sup>st</sup> on 7.5.09. Up to shoulder this time.
29 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Alan Wynne	Scotland	Lifted on 2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt
5 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Robert Troupe	USA	Two lifts to shoulder, a great stone
23 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	Conrad Snook	England	Lifted to chest
<b>2010</b>			
9 <sup>th</sup> April	Dirk Mertins	Germany	Lifted to chest first try, wasn't easy, I'll be back
9 <sup>th</sup> April	Thomas Becker	Germany	Nice land to lift stones
25 <sup>th</sup> June	Stan Pike	England	Beautiful stone, lovely people, lift 5 times 58 years old.
25 <sup>th</sup> June	Steve Angell	England	3 lifts to chest. Love this stone. Dinnies next
25 <sup>th</sup> June	Barry Gibson	England	Lovely people, very deceiving stone. 5 attempts, 1 decent lift
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	James Grahame	Scotland	Lapped once then 2 stand ups followed by another lap and stand up

<b>2011</b>			
5 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Brandon Verret	USA	Lifted to chest on 2 <sup>nd</sup> try
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Sam Grammer	USA	3 missed presses, next time
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Kate Grammer	USA	Just barely got it to leave the ground. But will give it a try next time.
24 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Rusty Price	USA	Great day to pick up stones
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Martin Jancsics	Scotland	Peter Martin saw me shoulder the stone twice
21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Ryan Brule	USA	Pressed to chest first try – loved it
<b>2012</b>			
28 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Marc Wells	Australia	Awesome!! Wanted to press overhead, quite awkward.
1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	Gordon Wolcott	USA	Lifted twice, wanted to shoulder – not this time, thank you
4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Timo Lauttamus	Finland	Carrying 75ft
4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Mark Haydock	England	Carried 80ft after doing 25 reps of the Dinnies
<b>2013</b>			
27 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Alex Roberts	England	Lifted to chest very pleased
1 <sup>st</sup> May	Eric Suave	USA	Lifted twice....seems heavier than in 2005. Thanks.
19 <sup>th</sup> May	Todd Seiple	USA	Lifted to chest once, lifted to shoulder once. Thank you
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Chad Ullom	USA	Lifted to chest 4 times, lifted again and walked 37ft for Stones of Strength
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Joshua Haydock	England	Lifted to chest on first attempt, 12 st bodyweight, 23, HEAVY STONE
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Kiss Tibor	Hungary	Unreadable
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Istvan Sarai	Hungary	Nagyon boldog vagyok, ...unreadable
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Peter Puzser	Slovakia	Boldog vagyok, de sajnos most nemsikerict, de visszaterer !!!
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Mark Haydock	England	Lifted to chest 4 times, twice to the knees. Walked 69 feet to finish! Last visit was Nov 12
24 <sup>th</sup> June	Stevan Falk	USA	Lifted to chest, first visit, it was very heavy, it will be lighter next time.
17 <sup>th</sup> July	James Grahame	Australia	On the shoulder delighted
21 <sup>st</sup> July	Aaron Monks	Australia	On the shoulder twice very very happy
26 <sup>th</sup> July	Robert Spindler	Austria	Many thanks to Mrs Richards
19 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Matthew Vincent	USA	Successful Press Overhead!
8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	John Mahon	Australia	Lifted to waist
8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Sam Trew	Australia	Lifted to waist
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Brandon Verret	USA	2 <sup>nd</sup> time I lifted it. Thank you for letting me lift it. Thank you Peter Martin
<b>2014</b>			
16 <sup>th</sup> June	Norman Little	Canada	First try lifted to knees thank you
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Daniel Napier	USA	????????
3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	Travis Gardner	USA	USA Team Newtonmore, Scotland
3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	David A Robinson	USA	-----ditto-----
3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	Adam Brezina	USA	-----ditto-----
3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	Nathan Parker	USA	USA Team Newtonmore, Scotland
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Peter Robert Jensen	Denmark	Was very heavy from ground to thighs
24 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Craig Reid	Australia	Lifted in 2007 very happy to have been successful to lift again in 2014
6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Martin Jancsics	Scotland	Shouldered the great Inver Stone. Thank you
6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	David Ronald	Scotland	Just lifted off ground- air underneath. Will be back again thank you
16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Terry McKay	Canada	To the shoulder and thanks for the opportunity
16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Rick Kramer	USA	To the chest. Thanks for the incredible opportunity



Please remember, the lifting log book at Inver Cottage is and should always be a record of all attempts, not just the successful lifts.

***Directions*** - The hamlet of Inver is situated a short distance east of Braemar which is well sign posted from all points on the A93 Perth/Aberdeen Road. Inver cottage is situated directly opposite the Inver Hotel and the stone is clearly seen sitting in the front garden.

*Please always ask for permission to lift.*