

THE CROSS OF IRBIC AT LLANDOUGH, GLAMORGANSHIRE.

By J. ROMILLY ALLEN, F.S.A.

THE village of Llandough (pronounced Llandorf) is situated three miles south-west of Cardiff, and must not be confused with the other Llandough near Cowbridge. The nearest railway station is Cogan, on the line from Cardiff to Barry.

The cross at Llandough stands in the churchyard on the south side. It is quite unlike most of the monuments of the same period in Wales,¹ or, indeed, in any other part of Great Britain and Ireland. The architectural features of the design here assume a prominence not to be found elsewhere. The earlier Christian monuments in Great Britain were simply the cross-pages of the Celtic illuminated MSS, transferred to a rectangular slab of stone, and were altogether devoid of architectural features. The upright cross-slabs of the north-eastern district of Scotland afford the best examples of this style of treatment, and it must be noticed that the thickness of the slab is inconsiderable as compared with the width of the face on which the ornamental cross is carved. The later free-standing crosses were no doubt evolved from the upright cross-slabs by gradually cutting away the background of the cross; and this accounts for the fact that the shafts of the free-standing crosses have two broad faces and two narrow faces (like the upright cross-slabs), or, in other words, the cross-section of the shaft is rectangular and not square. The pillar-crosses, with shafts of square or round cross-section, appear to be a later

¹ The cross which most nearly resembles that at Llandough is the one at Pen-yr-Allt, Glamorganshire (Prof. J. O. Westwood's *Lapidarium Walliæ*, pl. 30).

development. In the case of the Llandough cross the section of the shaft is not quite square, although very nearly so, and there are very pronounced roll-mouldings at the four angles.

When the Llandough cross was perfect, the design must have consisted of three parts: namely (1) the head; (2) the shaft; and (3) the pedestal. Constructively it was built up out of five separate stones: namely (1) the head; (2) the shaft; (3) the cap of the pedestal; (4) the body of the pedestal; and (5) the base of the pedestal.

The dimensions are as follows:—

	ft.	ins.
Total height of cross	9	9
Height of shaft	3	0
Height of cap of pedestal	1	5
Height of body of pedestal	3	10
Height of base of pedestal	1	6
Width of shaft	1	1
Thickness of shaft	1	1
Width of cap of pedestal (north face)	1	11
Width of cap of pedestal (west face)	2	3
Width of body of pedestal (north face)	1	5
Width of body of pedestal (west face)	1	8
Width of base of pedestal at top (north face)	1	5
Width of base of pedestal at top (west face)	2	1
Width of base of pedestal at bottom (north face)	1	9
Width of base of pedestal at bottom (west face)	3	0

The different stones of which the cross is constructed are fixed together by mortice and tenon joints. The body of the pedestal has a tenon at both ends, one fitting into a mortice in the base-stone, and the other into a mortice in the cap-stone. The material used in the construction of the cross is magnesian limestone from the quarry at Sutton, on the south coast of Glamorganshire.

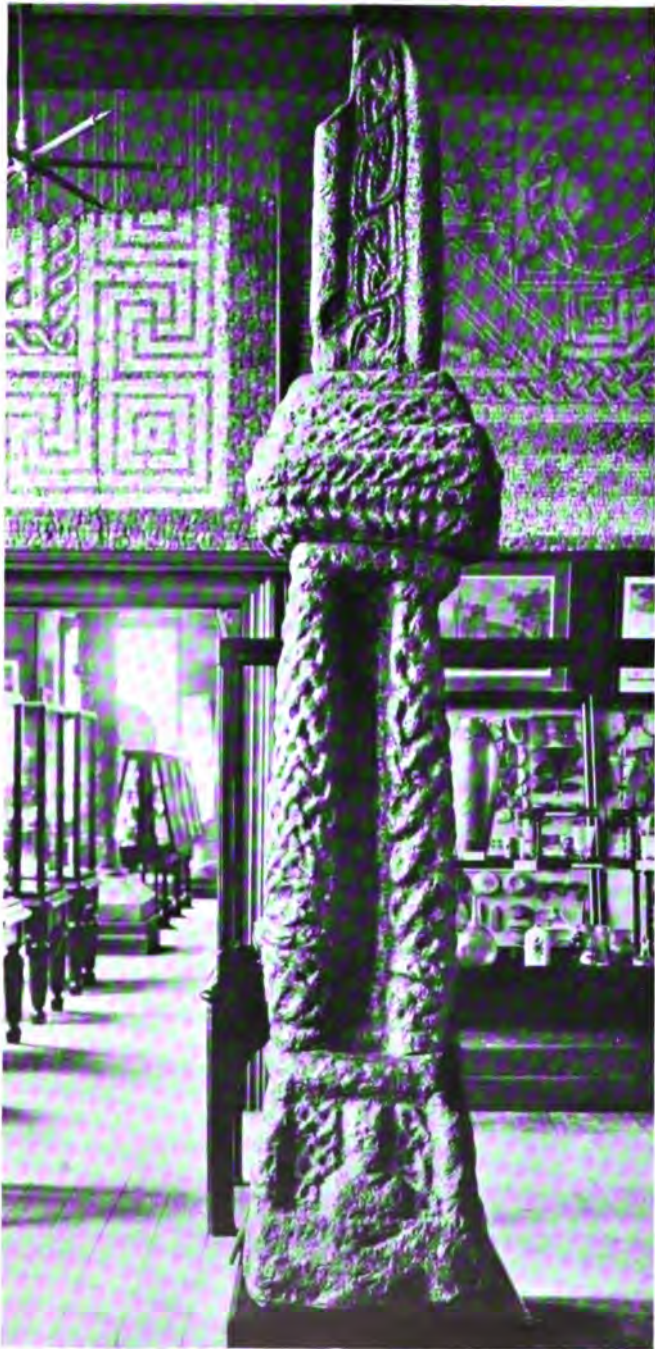
The ornament on the various parts of the cross is as follows:—

On the Shaft—(north face). The S-shaped knot (Fig. 1) repeated four times in a single vertical row, double-beaded; (south face) a diagonal key-pattern, double-beaded; (east face) the Stafford knot



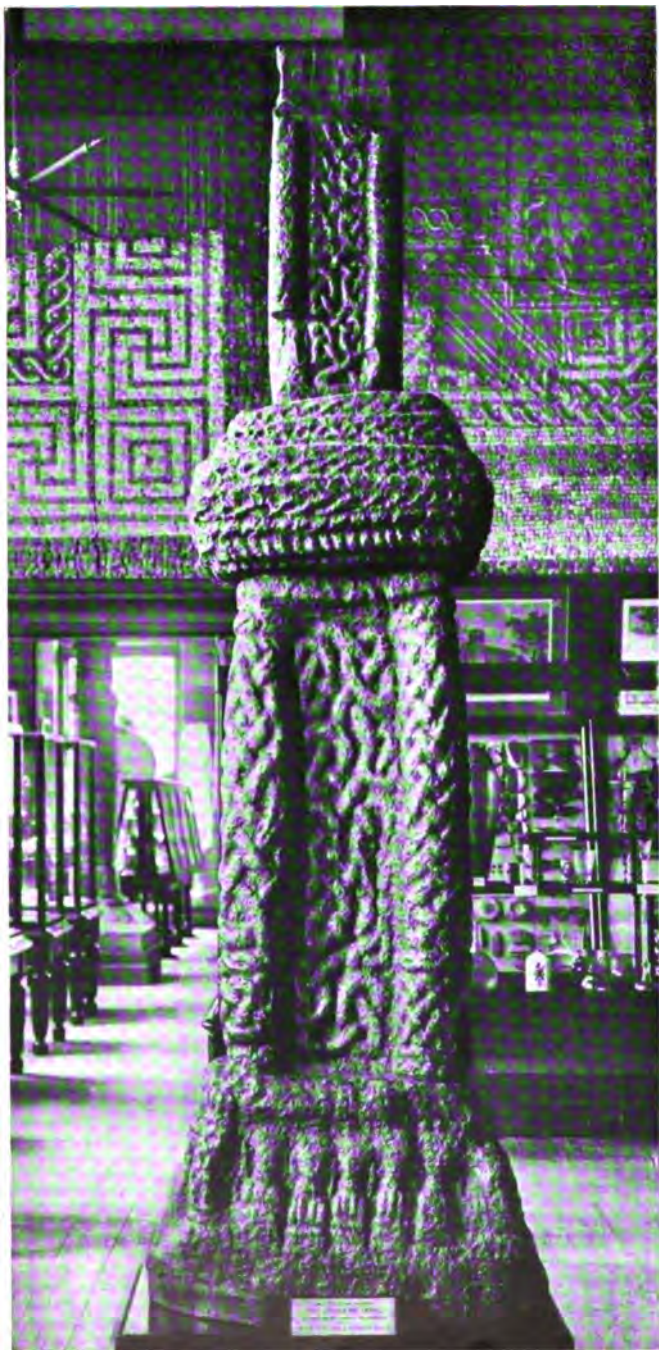
CROSS OF IRBIC AT LLANDOUGH, GLAMORGANSHIRE. NORTH FACE.





CROSS OF IRBIC AT LLANDOUGH, GLANORGANSHIRE. SOUTH FACE.





CROSS OF IRBIC AT LLANDOUGH, GLAMORGANSHIRE. EAST FACE.



CROSS OF IRBIC AT LLANDOUGH, GLAMORGANSHIRE. WEST FACE.

(Fig. 2) repeated in a double vertical row; (west face) the Figure-of-Eight knot (Fig. 3) repeated twice in a vertical row, and terminating in a Stafford knot at top and bottom, double-beaded.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

On the Cap of the Pedestal.—Four horizontal bands running right round all the faces: (1) a twist; (2) a three-cord plait; (3) a twist; and (4) a twist. Below this there is a cable moulding.

On the Body of the Pedestal.—At the four angles are columns treated architecturally with capitals and bases, the whole being ornamented with plaitwork. On the north face the plaitwork on the column on the right side has a border of three loops at the bottom. The north and south faces are narrower than the east and west faces, so that the space between the columns at the angles in the former case is only about 4 ins. or 5 ins. wide, as against 10 ins. or 11 ins. in the latter case. The space between the columns on the north and south faces is therefore left plain for want of room to display the ornament. The space between the columns on the east face has a double row of Stafford knots (Fig. 2) upon it, and on the west face a four-cord plait, with two horizontal breaks bearing a Figure-of-Eight knot in the middle.

On the Base of the Pedestal (north face).—The bust of a man in relief on a background of plaitwork; (south face) a similar bust on a background of twisted bands; (east face) four three-quarter length figures—the one on the right wears a crown with three-points, and the three figures in the middle are carrying crosses; and (west face) a man on horseback on a background of plaitwork. Between the legs of the horse is the not uncommon device of a pair of oval rings, crossed and interlaced. There also appears to have been some ornament on the roll-mouldings round the four panels of the base, but it is now so much weathered that the patterns cannot be properly made out.

It appears from the foregoing description that the ornament on the Llandough cross is of three kinds, namely, (1) interlaced work; (2) key-patterns; and (3) figure subjects.

The knots used in the interlaced work are shown below (figs. 4 to 7).



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.

and also the device formed of two oval rings crossed and interlaced thus :



Fig. 8.

Only one kind of key pattern used, as shown on Fig. 9.



Fig. 9.

The other localities where these patterns occur are given in my Paper on "Early Christian Art in Wales" in the *Archæologia Cambrensis* (5th Ser., vol. xvi, p. 51.)

The figure subjects are confined to the four faces of the base of the pedestal of the cross. There is nothing in the figures themselves or their grouping to give any

clue to their meaning. The man on horseback on the west face is the most remarkable, and the only thing of a similar kind which occurs in Wales is on the base of the great wheel-cross of Conbelin at Margam,¹ Glamorganshire. Both on the cross at Llandough and at Margam, the device, composed of two oval rings crossed and interlaced, is introduced in the background, but whether as a symbol or as mere ornament to fill a vacant space, it is impossible to say. At Margam, this device is repeated twice, and associated with the triquetra, or three-cornered knot.

Dr. H. Colley March, F.S.A., has brought together much curious and interesting information relating to the use of the triquetra and the crossed oval rings (or "duplex," as he terms the device thus formed), in a Paper on "Two Examples of Symbolism," in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club* (vol. xxv, p. 17). In his opinion—if I understand him rightly—the triquetra and duplex were, in the first instance, Pagan sun symbols, associated with the worship of Odin and Frey, and became in Christian times symbols of the Trinity and of Christ. If this view be correct, the horseman on the crosses at Llandough and Margam should be intended for Christ. I am quite prepared to admit that the triquetra and duplex were probably Pagan symbols connected with sun worship. However, the difficulty is to determine whether the Christian artists who adopted these Pagan devices were aware of their primary significance, and gave them a new symbolical meaning; or whether, after being copied over and over again, the devices degenerated into meaningless pieces of decoration. Who can say, indeed, where symbolism ends and ornament begins?

At the top of the middle part of the pedestal of the Llandough cross, just below the projecting cap, is a

¹ *Arch. Camb.*, 5th Ser., vol. xvi, p. 17.

minuscule inscription in one horizontal line, which reads—

irbici

“or (The Cross) of Irbic.”

The Plates illustrating this article are from photographs of the cast in the Cardiff Museum, taken specially by Mr. Alfred Freke, of 12, Duke Street, Cardiff. We have to thank the Museum Committee for permission to have the photographs taken, and Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., the Curator, for superintending the operation.

The Llandough cross has been previously described and illustrated by Prof. J. O. Westwood, in his *Lapidarium Walliæ*, but not in the *Archæologia Cambrensis*. This cross has been taken as a model for the memorial at Haverfordwest to the Pembrokeshire men killed in the South African war. Mr. Arthur G. Langdon, F.S.A., is the architect.
