

CAYO.—Roman tiles were found here in 1831, with many other Roman remains, and said, no doubt erroneously, to bear the inscriptions H MI and I. VV. (Lewis, Top. Dict. Wales, ed. 1850, art. Cayo; and Journ. Arch. Institute, xxx. p. 269.)

LLANFIHANGEL ABER COWIN.—In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1837 (vol. viii. N. S. p. 575, and vol. xi. p. 114) three remarkable coffin-lid slabs are described as Pilgrim stones bearing semi-effigies of a remarkable character and crosses apparently of the thirteenth century.

P E M B R O K E S H I R E .

PLATE LXII.

THE GREAT CROSS IN NEVERN CHURCHYARD.

THIS beautifully carved and inscribed cross is equalled only by two other crosses in Wales, namely, that at Carew, in Pembrokeshire, and the Maen Achwynfan, near Newmarket, in Flintshire, all of the three exhibiting the same general form and features.

My first acquaintance with this cross, which stands near the south side of the church, extends back to the incumbency of the Rev. J. Jones (Tegid), my visit to whom recalled scenes of former Oxford days, and who subsequently furnished me with the following admeasurements of the cross. Height from the surface of the ground to the top of the shaft, 10 feet; narrowed top of the shaft, 10 inches; height of the cross, 2 feet and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch; breadth of the shaft at the base, 2 feet 3 inches; in the middle, 2 feet; at the top, 22 inches; width of the cross, 2 feet and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch. The shaft is formed of a squared block of stone, the base having a slightly widened portion, and the top narrowed obliquely on the west face; the north and south sides are not quite so wide as the east and west faces.

Partial representations of this cross having only been published¹, its four sides were for the first time given to the public by myself, reduced by the camera from careful rubbings made with the assistance of Tegid himself. It will be seen that each of the two principal faces, east and west, has a narrow space above the two lower ornamental compartments inscribed with letters, easily decipherable, but not so easily intelligible. That on the east side has the letters

h . α . e . h

thus arranged; whilst that on the west is inscribed—

d n f

¹ Gentleman's Magazine, vol. iii; Journal of Archæological Association, vol. i. p. 145; Journal of Archæological Institute, vol. iii. p. 71.

I must admit my inability to explain the meaning of these letters, which are represented, not in Roman capitals nor in the minuscule form, but in that peculiar alphabet which is found in all the earliest Christian British inscriptions at Llantwit, &c., and which agree with the letters in the Gospels of St. Chad, Mac Regol, Lindisfarne, and in the grandest Irish manuscripts, such as the Book of Kells. The inscriptions have also been given in Bishop Gibson and Gough's editions of Camden's *Britannia* without any attempt to explain them.

The ornamentation of the four sides of this cross is of that kind to which the term Runic knots and circles has been perpetually misapplied. It is however not of Scandinavian but of Celtic origin, and is found in all the earliest Christian British and Irish monuments, both of stone and metal, as well as in MSS. That it does occur indeed on some stone monuments with Runic inscriptions in the Isle of Man and elsewhere is true, but it nowhere occurs in Scandinavia, nor in Teutonic countries, and therefore, as indeed historic records prove, its occurrence with Runic inscriptions is due to Scandinavian visitors adopting the ornamentation with the religion of the country they resorted to.

It will be seen from the engraving that the shaft of the cross consists on each side of a series of compartments, each containing a differently arranged interlaced ribbon or other characteristic pattern; thus resembling the ornamented shaft of some of the gigantic initial letters in the early MSS. of the Gospels above alluded to, which may indeed be said almost truly to represent the shafts of these great crosses reduced to the size of a miniature, thus proving the identity of the workmanship as well as of the workmen by whom both classes of monuments were executed.

Taking the representations of the Nevern cross as they occur in the accompanying plate, it will be seen that in addition to the endless variety of the interlaced ribbon patterns (each ribbon having an incised line running along its centre), the south side has at its base a raised pattern of classical design resembling the Grecian fret, of which a better specimen occurs at the top of the west side. Above this fret on the south side is a curious diagonal pattern formed of narrow raised and angulated lines, the general effect produced being that of a St. Andrew's cross with the spaces between the arms filled in with four pairs of incised T's placed obliquely, with the tops of each pair placed in opposition to each other. This is also the character of the bottom compartment on the east side, except that here only one-fourth of the pattern is represented, and consequently there is only one pair of T's similarly placed, with raised knobs in the open spaces. It will be seen that if the pattern on the south side were to be doubled or quadrupled the oblique T's would form a series of X's, giving somewhat of the character of the curious pattern in the compartment on the east side above the inscription¹. These diagonal patterns have very much of a Chinese character about them, as is also especially the case with the compartment above the inscription on the west side, and that at the bottom of the north side, where four T's are so arranged as to form a series of steps in the spaces between the letters. The pattern at the bottom of the west side is

¹ A curious error of the sculptor in this pattern will be noticed, the upper fil-fot cross having the angulated end of its left upper arm reversed. The ingenious manner in which the adjoining ornament has been modified will be observed.

another modification of these diagonal designs, and is of common occurrence on the Llantwit and other early decorated stones.

The head of the cross is of elegant proportions, the four arms of equal size, short, widened at the ends, with the spaces between the arms sunk, the depressed parts with a raised boss in the centre of each, as is also the case with the centre of the cross itself, which is ornamented with an interlaced ribbon pattern, as is also the narrowed space at the base of the cross.

With reference to the date of this cross, it is difficult in the absence of direct evidence to arrive at anything like a precise idea. I have stated that both in its palæographic and ornamental characters it agrees with the Llantwit stones and MSS. of the seventh and eighth centuries, but its general form agrees rather with that of the later Irish crosses; and as in such outlying districts as Nevern it is likely that little change was made until the Norman period led to the introduction of Gothic art, it is not impossible that this cross may be as recent as the tenth, eleventh, or early part of the twelfth century. I do not think a more modern date can be assigned to it than the latter of these periods, but would rather refer it to the former.

'The church of Nevern,' as we learn from Fenton's 'Pembrokeshire,' 'is dedicated, as are most of the churches in this district, to St. Byrnach, who flourished in the sixth century, and was a contemporary of St. David. He is reported to have lived an eremetical life in the neighbourhood of a certain mountain¹ of Cemaes, where legend says he was often visited by angels, who spiritually ministered to him, and that the place was thence denominated "Mons Angelorum," which could be no other than that which is now called Carn Engylion, or as it is corrupted Carn Englyn, overhanging the principal church of all those consecrated to him, and which in compliment was founded near the palace of the Regulus of the country, probably Meurig, one of Arthur's courtiers, who is said to have held his sanctity in such veneration, that he gave him all his lands free to endow his churches with.' (p. 542.)

Fenton adds the following notice of a legend respecting this cross:—'George Owen has a whimsical reference to this stone, when talking of the patron day of this parish, the 7th of April, on which day the cuckoo is said to begin his note, saying—"I might well here omit an old report as yet fresh, of this odious bird, that, in the old world, the parish priest of this church would not begin mass until this bird, called the 'citizen's ambassador,' had first appeared and began her note on a stone called St. Byrnach's Stone, being curiously wrought with sundry sorts of knots, standing upright in the churchyard of this parish: and one year staying very long, and the priest and the people expecting her accustomed coming (for I account this bird of the feminine gender), came at last, lighting on the said stone, her accustomed preaching-place, and being scarce able once to sound the note, presently fell dead. This vulgar tale, although it concern in some sort church matters, you may either believe or not without peril of damnation.'" (p. 542.)

¹ 'The chief resort of the hermit-saint is supposed to have been at a place above Cerni Meibion Owen, in the mountain by the road side, where there is a well compassed round with a curtiledge of stone wall five or six feet thick, called Buarth Byrnach, Byrnach's fold.'

The west side of the Nevern cross was very inaccurately figured in the *Journal of the British Archæological Association*, vol. i. p. 145. The west side was first figured by myself in *Journ. Arch. Institute*, 1846, p. 71, vol. iii, and *Proceed. Oxford Archit. Society*, May 15, 1861, and all the sides in my memoir in *Arch. Cambrensis*, 1860, p. 48. It is formed of a single stone, except the cross at the top, which had formerly been fixed with an iron spike. The shaft is 10 feet long, but, according to the parish clerk, it is buried six feet in the earth; the cross at the top is 2 feet 10½ inches high. In the first-mentioned work, vol. i. p. 320, the Rev. J. Jones (Tegid) published drawings of the two inscriptions.

PLATE LI. FIG. 2.

THE LOST WHEEL-CROSS AT NEVERN.

In Gibson's *Camden*, p. 639, and Gough's *Camden*, ii. p. 521 (ed. 2. vol. iii. p. 151), mention is made of a stone said to be pitched on end in Nevern Church, 2 feet high, round at the top, with a series of letters round the top of a form unlike that of any of the other early inscriptions, and what might at first be mistaken for Runic or Bardic letters. These are represented in my plate as given by Gibson. It is No. 105 in Prof. Hübner's work, p. 37, in the Appendix to which, p. 90, he ingeniously suggests the reading

f/OIIIANNE

i. e. S(anctus) Io(h)anne(s). In company with Tegid I searched in vain for this stone.

PLATE LI. FIG. 8.

THE VITALIANUS STONE.

In Gibson's *Camden*, p. 638 (Gough's *Camden*, ii. p. 521; ed. 2. vol. iii. p. 151), a stone is described as standing on the north side of the church of Nevern, 2 yards high, triquetrous in form, and inscribed in Roman capital letters

VITALIANI
EMERET

the A and L in the upper line being conjoined and the N reversed. Tegid and I searched in vain for this stone as stated in the *Archæologia Cambrensis* (1860, p. 52), where it was added that some years previously a cross (possibly one of two described above) had been moved from Nevern to Cwm Glöyn, a farm two miles distant, by Mr. Owen. Here ten years later it was discovered by Prof. Rhys, who has placed in my hands the rubbing from which my figure is drawn, the letters being between 3 and 4 inches high and occupying 17 inches along the front of the stone.