

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS OF GLAMORGANSHIRE.

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THE necessary materials for writing the history of the early Christian monuments of Glamorganshire have already been collected. The work was begun in the seventeenth century by Edward Lhwyd, the Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and the results of what was then known on the subject were published in E. Gibson's edition of *Camden's Britannia* (1695), but to Professor I. O. Westwood must be given the credit of having completed it in his *Lapidarium Walliæ*. Nor must the labours of the late Mr. E. Williams¹ (perhaps better known by his *nom de plume* of Iolo Morganwg) be passed over in silence. His readings of many of the inscriptions are preserved in MS. at Fônmon Castle, and are very valuable in cases where the stones have been subsequently injured by the effects of weathering.

Professor Westwood and his predecessors in this branch of archæological research have made their explorations so thoroughly complete that it is highly improbable there will be many new discoveries in the future.

All, therefore, that now remains to be done is to utilise the stores of information, which have been so laboriously brought together, for the purpose of classifying the monuments, and showing the relation they bear to those of other geographical areas. It is hoped that by doing so a sufficiently intelligent interest will be aroused in the early Christian monuments of Glamorganshire to ensure their effectual preservation from wanton injury, weathering, or destruction.

A photographic survey of the stones has already been set on foot, chiefly owing to the exertions of Mr. John

¹ Edward Williams was born at Penon, in the parish of Llancarvan, on the 10th of March (Old Style) A.D. 1746, and died on the 18th of December 1826. He was a stonemason by trade, and an enthusiastic antiquary. He is buried in Flemingstone Church, near Cowbridge, Glamorganshire.

Ballinger, of the Cardiff Public Free Library, and of Mr. T. Mansell Franklen, Clerk of the Peace for the County. These interesting remains are thus rendered easily accessible to the general public for purposes of study, and the paper upon the series of photographic views recently read before the Cardiff Naturalists' Society by Mr. T. H. Thomas, R.C.A., forms an admirable introduction.

The County Councils should endeavour to become the guardians of the national monuments of Wales, so that the operation of the destructive agencies which threaten to overwhelm them may be brought to a standstill before it is too late.

Perhaps the simplest way of placing the facts before you will be to arrange the monuments in classes, describe a typical example of each class, mentioning where others of the same kind occur, and conclude with any general deductions that are to be made.

The early Christian monuments of Glamorganshire may be classified as follows :—

FIRST PERIOD (A.D. 400 to 700).

Monuments without Ornament.—(a) Inscribed in debased Latin capitals; (b) inscribed in Ogams; (c) inscribed in both Latin capitals and Ogams; (d) uninscribed, but having crosses incised.

SECOND PERIOD (A.D. 700 to 1000).

Monuments with Celtic Ornament.—(a) Inscribed in minuscules; (b) uninscribed.

Monuments without Ornament, but having crosses in relief, or incised.—(a) Inscribed in minuscules; (b) uninscribed.

The monuments belonging to the first period are rude pillar-stones, without dressing of any kind; those of the second period consist of—(a) Upright cross-slabs; (b) wheel crosses; (c) crosses; (d) recumbent coped stones.

As a typical example of a monument without ornament, inscribed in debased Latin capitals, the BODVOC stone on Margam Mountain may be taken. It is an unhewn pillar sandstone, 5 ft. high by 1 ft. 6 in. broad, by 1 ft. thick. The inscription is in four vertical lines, and reads :

BODVOC— HIC IACIT
 FILIVS CVTOTIGIRNI
 PRONEPVS ETERNVLI
 VEDOMVV—

On the nearly horizontal face of the top of the pillar is an incised cross, having equal arms with expanded ends.

The stone is obviously a sepulchral one put up to commemorate Bodvoc, the son of Cototigirn and *pronepos* of Eternalis Vedomavus. The cross, which there is no reason to believe was added subsequently, clearly shows the stone to be Christian.

Six other monuments of this class exist in Glamorgan-shire—at Capel Brithdir, The Gnoll, near Neath, Llan-iltern, Llanmadoc, Merthyr Mawr, and Port Talbot.

None of these, however, have a cross upon them. The one at Port Talbot deserves special notice, as it is on the back of a Roman military stone of the Emperor Maximinus, which formerly stood by the side of the military road from Bovium to Nidum.

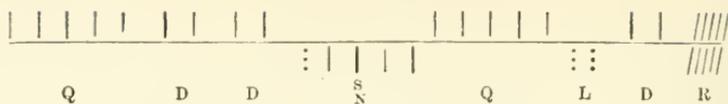
The only example of a monument without ornament, inscribed in Ogams, but not in Latin capitals, stands on the lawn of the rectory garden at Loughor. It is a Roman altar, having on one of the angles the following rather doubtful name in Ogams :

L E V I C

There is only a single instance, also, of a monument without ornament, inscribed both in Ogams and in debased Latin capitals. This is by the side of the road between Kenfig and Margam. It is an approximately rectangular pillar of sandstone, 4 ft. 6 in. high, by 1 ft. 3 in. wide, by 1 ft. 9 in. thick. The Latin inscription is on the narrower face, in two vertical lines, and reads :

PVNPEIVS
 CARANTORIVS

The Ogams are on the right angle, and their meaning is somewhat obscure. They appear to read from the bottom upwards,—



Uninscribed pillar-stones with incised crosses only seem to be rare in Glamorganshire. Professor Westwood figures one in the grounds of Court Herbert, near Neath Abbey, but it would be difficult to fix its age with any degree of certainty.

We now come to the highly-ornamented monuments of the period after A.D. 700, and before the Norman Conquest. The peculiarities of what is variously called Irish, Celtic, Hiberno-Saxon, and sometimes wrongly Runic, ornament have been described elsewhere. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to say that interlaced work and key-patterns form the basis of this species of decoration. In Wales the spiral work, foliage, and zoomorphic ornament, which are common in Ireland and Scotland, are hardly ever seen.

The minuscule or small letters, which are universally used on the stones of this period, are merely modified from the capital letters, so as to be more suitable for being rapidly drawn with a pen, and are the direct forerunners of the small letters used in printed type of the present day. The only reasons why the appearance of the ancient minuscule writing strikes the eye as being so different from the ordinary small printed letters of to-day are because no capitals are introduced at the commencement of a sentence, or as the initial of a proper name; because some of the letters which now extend above the line then extended below it; and because there are one or two archaic forms of letters which have since fallen into disuse.

There are so many fine specimens of highly-ornamented monuments inscribed in minuscules in Glamorganshire that it is somewhat difficult to make a selection of one to stand as a representative of the whole class. Perhaps, however, the cross of Enniaun at Margam is as suitable as any other, for the purpose we have in view, of explaining the leading characteristics of these monuments.

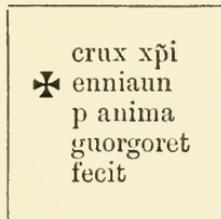
For want of a better name, the term "wheel-cross" has been used to describe the particular shape of the Enniaun stone, and here, perhaps, a few words respecting the relations the different shapes bear to each other,



CROSS OF ENNIAUN AT MARGAM.
From a Photograph by T. M. Franklen, Esq.

when taken in order of development, may not be out of place. The steps by which the more elaborate forms of crosses were evolved appears to be as follows. First we have the upright cross-slab, consisting of a rectangular stone, with a cross enclosed in a circle carved upon one of the broad faces, near the top; next, a rectangular slab, having the two upper corners rounded off to suit the outline of the circular cross; then the wheel-cross, in which the shaft is differentiated from the head by making its breadth less than the diameter of the circular head; and, lastly, the four-holed cross, in which the ends of the arms are made to project beyond the ring, and the hollows between the arms pierced right through the slab.

The cross of Enniaun at Margam is a little over 6 ft. high; the diameter of the circular head is 2 ft. 4 in.; the width of the shaft 2 ft. at the top, and 3 ft. 2 in. at the bottom. The whole of the front face is ornamented with interlaced work and key-patterns, and at the bottom, towards the left side, is a panel containing the following inscription in minuscules, in five horizontal lines—



“(This) cross of Christ ✠ Enniaun made for the soul of Guorgoret.”

The monument is therefore either sepulchral or commemorative, and erected by Enniaun for the benefit of the soul of Guorgoret.

Enniaun is the ancient form of the not uncommon Welsh name Eynon. Possibly the person here mentioned may be Eynon, son of Oweyn, and grandson of Howel Dda, who devastated Gower in A.D. 969 and 977, and was killed in A.D. 982.¹

The name Guorgoret, or Guagorit, occurs in *The Life of St. Cadoc*, together with that of Samson,² Abbot of the

¹ *Annales Cambrie*, Rolls edition.

² Possibly the Samson of the Llantwit crosses.

altar of Illtyd, as witness to a grant of the village of Conguoret to the Abbot of St. Cadoc.¹

Other monuments with Celtic ornament and minuscule inscriptions occur at the following places in Glamorganshire:—

Upright Cross-Slabs.—Baglan (cross of Brancuf), Margam (cross of Ilquici); Margam (cross of Ilci), and Nunery Farm.

Wheel-Crosses.—Llantwit Major (cross of Samson, Samuel, and Ebisar), Llantwit Major (cross of Houelt, son of Res), Margam (cross of Conbelin), and Margam (cross of Euniaun).

Four-holed Crosses.—Coychurch (cross of Ebisar) and Merthyr Mawr.

Cross-Shafts.—Coychurch, Llandough (cross of Irbic), Llantwit Major (cross of Samson, Juthahel, and Artmal), and Merthyr Mawr (cross of Conbelanus).

Recumbent Coped Stone.—Newcastle, near Bridgend.

One of the best instances of a monument with Celtic ornament, but uninscribed, is the cylindrical pillar at Llantwit Major. It is a sandstone monolith, 7 ft. 6 in. high, 1 ft. 6 in. in diameter at the bottom, and 1 ft. 2 in. at the top. A groove of V-shaped section runs vertically down the back. The ornament consists of three panels of broken plaitwork, and one at the base containing a rude chevron pattern.

Other stones of this class, but of different shapes, occur at the following places:

Cross-Slabs.—Margam and Merthyr Mawr.

Wheel Crosses.—Margam; The Gnoll; Llangan; and Mount Gellyonen.

Cross-Shafts.—Llantwit Major and Penyrallt.

Cross-Base.—Llangevelach.

We lastly come to the monuments which have crosses, or minuscule inscriptions, but no ornament. The following examples occur in Glamorganshire:

Unornamented Stones with Incised Crosses (inscribed).—Merthyr Tydfil (stone of Artbeu), Court Isaf (pillar of Tome).

Unornamented Stones with Crosses in Relief (inscribed).

¹ Rees' *Cambro-British Saints*, p. 384.

—Bryn Keffneithan (cross of Gaic), Margam (cross of Grutne).

Stones with Crosses only (incised).—Port Talbot.

Stones with Crosses only (in relief.)—Port Talbot.

In conclusion, I propose to state as concisely as possible the results arrived at from the survey of the early Christian monuments of Glamorganshire we have now made.

Looking first at the geographical distribution of the stones, it will be noticed that they are found exclusively in southern parts of the county near the coast, and that in the mountainous districts occupying the northern half of the county they are entirely absent. The area of the rude pillar-stones of the earlier period corresponds very nearly with that of the highly-decorated crosses of the later period.

Comparing the relative numbers of the stones of the different classes which occur in Glamorganshire with those in other counties of Wales, some most instructive facts are revealed. As regards the number of monuments with Ogam or debased Latin inscriptions, possessed by Glamorganshire, it falls behind both of the neighbouring counties of Carmarthen and Pembroke; but in the crosses with Celtic ornament and minuscule inscriptions it is richer than the whole of the rest of the Principality put together.

It is, therefore, hardly possible to escape from the deduction that the monuments of the earlier period originated in the west (*i.e.*, in Pembrokeshire or Ireland), and spread eastwards to Glamorgan; whereas those of the later period had their beginning in Glamorgan, and the art was subsequently carried westwards.

By far the most remarkable feature in the Glamorganshire crosses is that the large proportion of them are inscribed—a thing that may well excite the national pride of Welshmen, as, except at Clonmacnois in Ireland, no such group of lettered monuments of this early date exist in Great Britain.

Whilst the grey lichen-covered stones of Scotland and most parts of England and Wales maintain an everlasting silence as to their past history, the crosses of Llantwit and Margam speak to us with no uncertain voice across

the thousand years that have elapsed since Juthael was King in Gwent, since Enniaun ravaged Gower, and Samson was Abbot of the altar of St. Illtyd.

Is it too much to expect that we, to whom the guardianship of such priceless possessions has been entrusted, should do our best to hand them down unharmed to posterity by making them national property, and placing them under the control of Government?
