

PLATE XXV. Figs. 1 & 2.

THE CROSS AT LLANGAN.

Llangan is a small village lying in the valley between Coychurch and Cowbridge. The church, dedicated to St. Canna, mother of St. Grallo of Coychurch, is small with the chancel distinct, and with a small two-bell gable at the west end. The interior of the church is chiefly remarkable for a doorway in the north wall, closed by an oaken door ornamented with some very excellent florid Gothic tracery leading up through the wall to another door which led to the roodloft (of which no traces remain). The font is plain and circular. Within the rails of the communion table is a sepulchral slab with a cross fleury of a very unusual style, ornamented with small stars, &c. In the churchyard is a tall fifteenth-century cross, the head of which is elaborately carved and in excellent preservation. On the west side is the Crucifixion in high relief, the figures small, with the Virgin and St. John at the sides of the cross. On the east side is the Virgin seated, holding the dead body of Christ. On each of the two other sides is sculptured the single figure of a saint: the top of the cross is ornamented profusely with small pinnacles and figures of single saints in niches of small size.

In the churchyard of Llangan stands, half buried in the ground, the curious stone with the representation of the Crucifixion, here for the first time described and figured. The head of the cross is 38 inches in diameter and 6 inches thick, partially injured on the upper right-hand side, containing in the sunk panel on the front side an evident figure of the Crucified Redeemer, with apparently a conical beard, and with the arms awkwardly extended, wearing a short cloth or kilt round the lower part of the very long body, and with the feet separate and apparently with shoes upon them. At the sides of this principal figure are two much distorted and rude figures, representing the sponge- and spear-bearers, the latter on the left side with the spear broken off and with a long beak-like head. This grotesque, or rather monstrous mode of representing the persecutors of the Saviour was not uncommon in early art, and is especially seen in certain Irish sculptures and metal-objects, of which I have given figures in my work on the 'Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS.' The representation of the Crucifixion with the figures of the sponge- and spear-bearers is of very early date. The introduction of those of the Virgin Mary and St. John at the sides of the cross, as seen on the adjacent churchyard cross, was more generally prevalent at a later period. Below the feet of the Saviour appears a small figure with one arm pointing upwards and the other extended, probably intended for the maker of the cross, but reminding us of the figure beneath the feet of Christ on the great sarcophagus of Junius Bassus in the crypt of St. Peter's at Rome, and of the figure of Abacuc at the foot of the group of the Ascension of Christ in certain ivory carvings described in my 'Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories of the South Kensington Museum,' pp. 144, 450¹.

¹ The strange Eastern tradition that the tree which subsequently became the cross of the Saviour sprang from a seed from the Tree of Life, given to Seth by the Angel of Paradise and placed under the tongue of Adam at his burial, may also have led to the representation of a male figure or skull at the base of the cross seen in various early sculptures of the Crucifixion.

The reverse of the cross bears a Greek cross formed of equal-sized plain bars within a raised circle, the spaces between the arms of the cross forming sunk panels, each enclosing a raised circular boss.

PLATE XXV. FIG. 3.

THE FIGURED STONE AT GNOLL CASTLE, NEAR NEATH.

Adjoining to the Caratinus stone in the wall of the grotto at Gnoll Castle (*ante*, p. 6) is the stone here represented, destitute of inscription, but of considerable interest as an archæological relic. It is of irregular form, about 30 inches high and 20 inches wide in the middle, having its surface nearly occupied by a rudely-designed human figure, with the head round and uncovered, the arms raised, with the hands open and fingers spread out, and with a short apron or kilt reaching from the waist to the middle of the legs. Above the head is a series of short straight spokes or bars, some being longer than the rest and bent at right angles, forming a kind of canopy over the figure, which is raised, or rather the surface of the stone is cut away, leaving the figure itself in relief. The surface of the face is also cut away, leaving the sides of the cheeks, with the eye-brows, eyes, nose, and mouth also in relief. The kilt is formed of a series of longitudinal strips radiating from a waistband, and giving the appearance of a short and very thickly quilted petticoat, just as in several of the Irish figures on the shrine of St. Manchan.

Such representations of the ancient Britons on the sculptured stones of Wales are extremely rare, differing in this respect from those of Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man. With the exception of the stone at Llandevailog, Brecknockshire, in which an uncovered figure holds a short club in each hand, and who appears to be clothed in a similar short kilt (figured in *Arch. Camb.*, 1858, p. 306, and *post*, pl. XXXIII. fig. 2), the small stone at Llanfrynach near Brecon, on which is sculptured a diminutive figure with uplifted arms and outspread hands (also figured by me in *Arch. Camb.*, 1856, p. 141, and *post*, pl. XXXIX), and the Llanhamlech stone (*post*, pl. XXXVIII. fig. 3), I recollect no other single figure of an ancient Briton represented on a stone monument. Much space might be occupied in discussing the two peculiarities observable in these figures, namely, the upraised hands and the dress. I shall only observe, however, that the attitude of this and the other figures agrees with that which is found repeatedly in the Catacombs of Rome, and which is generally interpreted as representing the act of prayer or worship, and which seems especially suitable for the tomb of a Christian, whilst the peculiar character of the dress seems especially Celtic, as it is seen in many of the early sculptured remains in other parts of the kingdom, as well as in early Irish metal-work, as in the small full-length figures of the shrine of St. Manchan, above referred to.