Remarks on some Ancient Sculptured Stones

STILL PRESERVED IN THIS ISLAND, AND ON OTHERS ONCE KNOWN TO EXIST, PARTICULARLY THOSE RECORDED TO HAVE STOOD IN THE CEMETERY OF THE ABBEY AT GLASTONBURY.

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THE subject of ancient sculptured stones has of late attracted considerable attention; elaborate engravings of them have been published, and the inscriptions, where still preserved, carefully recorded, and many conjectures hazarded as to the origin of the ornaments which cover their surfaces.

The Spalding Club published in 1856 a very remarkable collection of drawings of sculptured stones found in Scotland; and these, ranging from early ages to mediæval times, afford a rich field for investigation, and in the course of time may lead to some very valuable results, when the attention of antiquaries shall have been more particularly bestowed on them. The stone crosses of the Isle of Man have also been treated of by the Rev. J. G. Cumming, and

engravings given, by which comparison may be made of Manx crosses with those of other places.* Mr. Petrie in his work on the round towers of Ireland gives information also of the crosses existing in that island, and the various careful engravings and notices in the *Journal of the Archæological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, and other similar publications, not to mention the abundant materials in the *Archæologia*, especially the late Mr. Kemble's valuable papers (vols. xxviii and xxix) and his comparison of Runic alphabets, all afford facility for elucidating a class of monuments, of which less notice has been taken than they deserve, and many of which have been destroyed for want of sufficient knowledge of their value. Moreover, from time to time portions of these crosses are brought to light, in digging graves in church-yards, enlarging the foundation of churches, or building schools, which are often overlooked, and suffered to be broken up, because their historical value is not known. A very remarkable instance of this kind came to my knowledge not long ago, but happily a fragment of the original has been saved from destruction, but the inscription which in all probability was upon the upright pillar has been destroyed.

I cannot help joining in the wish expressed by the writer of an able and very interesting article in the *Journal of the Archæological Association* for March, 1859, "On Ancient Sculptured Stones," that the different sculptured stones of England and Wales which have been separately engraved, and are now to be sought for in a variety of publications, could be brought together in a well-edited volume, since a careful comparison of their details would prove an immense assistance to antiquaries. There are,

* *Runic and other Monumental Remains of the Isle of Man*, by the Rev. J. G. Cumming, M.A. London, Bell and Daldy.

however, some stones of the highest interest which have not yet been accurately engraved, and the value of the inscriptions preserved in them not fully appreciated.*

Much is due to the labour of Mr. Haigh, who has lately directed attention to the very curious shaft of a cross preserved in the chancel of Hackness Church, near Scarbro', Yorkshire. In 1854, when I first saw this relique, and could distinguish inscriptions in three different characters —besides the Latin, which could be read without much difficulty—I found that little had been done to elucidate the monument. The Scarbro' guide had given a notice of it, with an imperfect engraving. The author of "Church Rides in the neighbourhood of Scarbro'" in treating of St. Peter's Church, Hackness, had described it as *St. Hilda's Monument*, considering it to be (in accordance with the opinion of the late Rev. Canon Harcourt) "a monumental stone erected to the *memory of the Lady St. Hilda.*" The care, however, bestowed by Mr. Haigh upon these curious inscriptions has shewn that this is not the case, and that the fragments of stone are portions of one or more memorial crosses, erected to commemorate the more dis-

* The fragments of two Saxon crosses are preserved in the Museum of the Literary and Scientific Institution in Bath, which were dug up many years ago. Mr. Westwood directed attention to these, and sent drawings of them to the Archæological Institute, which are engraved in the 3rd vol. of the *Journal*, p. 356. They were preserved among the Roman Sculptures, and had been figured in Carter's *Ancient Architectural Remains of England*, pl. 8, fig. A, and described as "the *fragments of a Roman Temple* at Bath." The style of ornament is by no means Roman, but when compared with those ornaments which distinguish the Saxon crosses which still remain perfect, as well as with the ornaments of early Saxon MSS., leave the matter beyond doubt. These fragments are very interesting as being the only remnant of the Saxon Monastery once existing on the site of the present Abbey Church. See Warner's *History of Bath*, Britton's *Bath Abbey*, &c. "A.D. 676, Osric King of the Huiccii founded a Religious House in Bath, under Bretana, to whom he gave 100 manentes or tenants in the neighbourhood of the city, to assist in erecting the Convent."

tinguished members of the community of Hackness, but that the *name of St. Hilda does not occur.**

Mr. Boutell in his work on *Christian Monuments in England and Wales*, (London 1854) makes mention of this monument, as one of the fine specimens of upright stone memorial crosses, "the known existing remains of which are *very few in number*, while in their character they are generally somewhat uncertain and indefinite."

"Memorials of this class," says he, "almost invariably exhibit the symbol of the cross, accompanied with a profusion of interlaced and knotted carving, and they have some brief legend. A most interesting fragment of such a memorial is preserved in the chancel of Hackness Church, in Yorkshire, and may possibly commemorate St. Hilda herself, the foundress of an abbey at that place." He then refers, for his authority on this point, to the *Churches of Scarbro' and its Neighbourhood*, p. 44, where he says this curious relique is figured and fully described, in what he calls "a model guide book."

We will now examine what information we derive from this stone, and whether these suppositions are well founded; and here I must express the obligation I have been under to Mr. Haigh for his exertions in deciphering the inscriptions. Having called his attention more particularly to this relique, by sending him sketches and impressions in paper, taken on the spot, he afterwards obtained more complete impressions, and through them has been enabled to decipher what remains of three of the inscriptions. The key to the characters of the fourth has, I believe, not yet been found.

"This stone," says he, "is the *remains of a cross*, such

* See *Notes on the History of St. Begu and St. Hild.* Proctor, Hartlepool, 1856.



THE FOUR FACES OF AN ANCIENT SEPULCHRAL STONE,
FOUND AT HACKNESS, YORKSHIRE.

A & B are probably portions of two different Monuments

as was usually in the seventh or following centuries erected to mark the graves of persons of distinction. Many such remain, and we have historical mention of others. This cross commemorates members of the religious community at Hackness, and as such, imperfect as it is, it is very important."

The uppermost stone has on the north side a knot; on the south a scroll; and on the east and west the following inscription :

OEDILBURGA BEATA AD SEMPER TE RECOLANT AMANTES PIE DEPOSCANT REQUIEM VERNANTEM SEMPITERNAM SANCTORUM PIA MATER APOSTOLICA.

Which may be rendered :—"Blessed Œdilburga, may they always remember thee, dutifully loving thee ; may they ask for thee the verdant everlasting rest of the Saints, O Holy Mother, Apostolic."

The word "Apostolica" being separated from what precedes it, may be the commencement of another similar inscription, but this is conjectural, and I am inclined to think that it is only a continuation, as it will be seen that the next inscription ends with MATER AMANTISSIMA—each being epithets suited to the characters commemorated.

2. In the next inscription the stone is broken away, and only a portion of the letters can be made out. These, according to Mr. Haigh, are * * * ETB * * GA which would form part of the name *Huaetburga*, and the inscription be read as follows :

HUAETBURGA SEMPER TE AMENT MEMORES DOMUS TUAE TE MATER AMANTISSIMA.

Rendered thus :—"Huaetburga, may thy houses always love thee, remembering thee, most loving mother."

The latter part of the first inscription is carelessly cut, and therefore very difficult to read, but the reading given

by Mr. Haigh seems borne out by expressions in Bæda's Homilies. In both these inscriptions are several blunders in the cutting of the letters, some omitted or redundant, in some cases wrong letters used.

If, however, anything more can be made out, or any mistake has been committed in the reading, it is likely to be rectified, as the Society of Antiquaries have had drawings of this cross, as well as careful tracings of the inscriptions, submitted to them, so that it is hoped in time full justice may be done to these interesting remains which commemorate ladies of singular piety in a rude and barbarous age.

Of the persons herein commemorated, OEDILBURGA is doubtless the abbess who accompanied Æfled to visit King Aldfrid on his death bed, and who reported to Æddi, St. Wilfred's biographer, what transpired on the occasion, A.D. 705.* This Oedilburga appears to be twice mentioned in the Chronicles of John of Wallingford. Oedilburga, Hwætburga, and Ecgburga were three sisters, daughters of King Aldwulf, King of the East Angles, and successively abbesses of the monastery at Hackness, founded by their great aunt.

The name at the commencement of the second inscription is read by Mr. Haigh, HUÆTBURGA, an abbess of this name occurring in the epistles of St. Boniface. It appears from two letters, one written A.D. 717, the other after A.D. 723, that Huætburga had resigned her charge some time before the first was written, and gone on a pilgrimage to Rome.

It will be remarked that this inscription differs from the others, and seems to imply that she was then living, as there is no prayer for the repose of the departed soul, as in the other inscription.

* See *Notes on the History of St. Begu and St. Hild.*, p. 30.

3. The lowest stone is defaced on the north side. On the south are the lower extremities of two monsters common on Saxon crosses. On the east are inscriptions in characters resembling Irish Oghams, and frequently found on Irish and Scotch monuments. These have been engraved in an essay on *Cryptic Inscriptions on the Cross at Hackness, in Yorkshire*, by the Rev. D. H. Haigh, who observes that it is cut upon the fragment which bears the name of Trecea, and therefore must be of the *eighth century*, and although it differs from Ogham inscriptions in wanting their essential characteristics of the stem line, and the vertical direction of the writing, it agrees with them in having its characters composed of simple strokes, varying in number from one to five, and of the groups thus composed there are five, two characters at its commencement which do not belong to any of these groups being possibly monograms. The intercourse which existed in the seventh century between the monasteries of England and Ireland will readily account for the existence of an Ogham inscription in one of these monasteries in England.

I may here observe with reference to these characters that a stone bearing Irish Oghams has lately been found in Devonshire, and a drawing of it was placed in the Museum of the Archæological Institute at Gloucester, July, 1860.

4. On the west side occurs the following inscription :

TRECEA ORA (PRO EO)
ABBATISSA
OEDILBURGA ORATE PRO

"Trecea pray for him, Abbess Oedilburga pray for"

Amongst the epistles of St. Boniface there is one from Trecea to St. Lul, St. Boniface's successor in the episcopate of Mayence, written about A.D. 756. This is probably the

person commemorated, and this inscription is therefore later than those before mentioned, and the fragment in which it occurs may have belonged to another monument.

And as the name Œdilburga follows Trecea, this is probably a different person from the abbess mentioned in the longer inscription.

5. On the other fragment are two lines of an inscription in Runic characters, much defaced, and carelessly cut, then some lines in a character resembling fir trees, but really a character of which an example has lately been found in the West of England, and then the word "ORA."

6. The other side has above the head of a female figure

BVGGA VIRGO

Two ladies of this name are mentioned in the epistles of S. Boniface, one the daughter of Centwine, King of the West Saxons who built a church within her father's dominions.

There are two letters written by St. Boniface to her, about A.D. 733; and one from Bregowine, Archbishop of Canterbury, to St. Lul, about A.D. 760, records her death. Another lady of this name is mentioned in a letter from the Abbess Cangith to St. Boniface, about A.D. 730. Mr. Haigh conjectures this to be the person whose name occurs in the Hackness monument. We have, therefore, in this interesting monument *three inscriptions in Latin*—one in Ogham characters; one in Runic; one in what appears to be Irish-Ogham; and these contain the following names, though more may be found when the two inscriptions as yet undeciphered shall have been made out:

1. Œdilburga.
2. Huetburga (?).
3. Trecea.
4. Œdilburga.
5. Bugga.

All of which are confirmed by letters of that age, and attesting the rank, worth, and position of the ladies here commemorated.

BEWCASTLE CROSS.

The cross at Bewcastle is 14 ft. 6 in. high, and stands in its original position. The western face has in it a figure of St. John the Baptist, pointing with his right hand to the Lamb of God, whose symbol rests on his left arm. Above this is an imperfect inscription; below it another in two lines, in Runic characters, containing the name of our Blessed Lord:

✠ GESSUS
CRISTTUS

with a majestic figure beneath in an arched recess, holding a scroll in his hand, and giving his blessing with the right, and trampling in Dœmons, represented by swine. Then follows the inscription in Runic, in nine lines, seven only of which are given in the account of it in the *Archæological Journal* (see vol. xi., p. 130, 1854). The reading of the nine lines is thus given by Mr. D. H. Haigh:

✠ THISSIGBEC
UNSETTÆH
WÆTREDEOM
GÆRF(LW)* OLD
UÆFTÆRBARÆ
UMBCYNING
ALCFRIDÆG
ICEGÆDHE
OSUMSAWLUM

* Read also, Æ B.

To be translated thus :

This Beacon of honor
set Hwætred
in the year of the great pestilence*
after the Ruler
after King Alcfrid
Pray for their Souls,

An effigy in profile is beneath in an arched recess, holding a hawk in the left hand. The monument commemorates Alcfrid, eldest son of King Oswin, who reigned in Deira from about A.D. 655 to 664. The inscriptions on the other sides, also in Runic characters, give the name of his father,

Oswic Cyning elt, *i.e.* Oswin King the elder.

Of his brother, Ecgfrid Cyning.

Of his uncle, Oslaac Cyning.

Of his step-mother, Eanflæd Cyningin.

Of his sister, Cyniswid.

And of his friend, Wilfrid, Preaster, elected Bishop of York, A.D. 664.

THE RUTHWELL CROSS,

DUMFRIESSHIRE.†

It is certain that at a very early period the pillar was erected in the church of Ruthwell, where it remained, and was held in veneration till the time of the Reformation, and even after that period was preserved from demolition to the middle of the 17th century. In 1642 an order was passed by the general assembly for the destruction of the ancient monument as idolatrous, dated July 27, at St.

* Read also, "and carved (this) monument."

† See Memoir by Rev. H. Duncan, D.D., Minister of Ruthwell, read to Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 10th Dec., 1832.

Andrews. The order seems to have been but partially and reluctantly obeyed. The column was thrown down and broken in pieces, and some of the emblems, as the crucifixion, were nearly obliterated, but after this it was allowed to lie in the church beside the ancient site of the altar, in the spot where it fell, and served for more than a century as seats to the congregation. In 1772 when seen by Mr. Pennant, it was still lying within the church, but soon after this removed to the church yard. In digging a deep grave a portion was found buried, viz. that containing the image of the Supreme Being, with the "Agnus Dei," and on the reverse a representation of the upper part of two human figures in the act of embracing. On applying this fragment it was found to coincide with the other portions. It had probably been surreptitiously buried along with the body of some votary, and probably for the purpose of concealment. The only fragment of the cross appearing to be irretrievably lost is what contained the *transverse arms* of the cross. The words in Latin still traceable are

INGRESSVS ANGELVS

inscribed on the bar immediately above the heads of the figures. On the left border on the fragment above the wing of the angel

TECVM BE

referring to the Vulgate, Luke I., 28.

"Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit, ave gratia plena! Dominus TECUM; BEnedicta tu in mulieribus."

The next compartment contains two figures, representing Christ in the act of curing a blind man. Legend:

ET PRAETERIENS VIDI * * * * A NATIBITATE,
ET S * * * * B INFIRMIT * * *

The first part a quotation from the Vulgate, John IX., v. 1.

"Et preteriens vidit hominem cæcum a nativitate et sanavit ab infirmitate." B being put for V in the word "nativitate."

Round the compartment containing the figure of the woman washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiping them with her hair the legend runs, (see Vulgate, Luke IX., 37, 38).

Also in another part MARIA ET JO, the rest obliterated, no doubt the flight into Egypt.

Over another compartment SCS PAVLVS; and on the border to the right ET A; and on the left side FREGERVNT PANEM IN DESERTO.

Above the compartment representing our Saviour trampling on the heads of two swine, on the transverse border:

$I\eta\ \Sigma XP\Sigma$

on the right hand margin:

JVDEX ÆQVITATIS SERTO* SALVATOREM MVNDI

and on the left:

BESTIÆ ET DRACONES COGNOVERVNT INDE

"Jesus Christ the Judge of Righteousness, Him assuredly to be the Saviour of the world beasts and dragons knew from thence," alluding to the miracle of the devils (dracones) sent into the herd of swine (bestiæ).

The lower compartment contains the image of the Father standing on two globes or worlds, with the "Agnus Dei" in his bosom. Legend:

DORAMVS—the A being obliterated.

The sides of this cross are covered with Runic characters, and according to Mr. Kemble's explanation in the

* Serto for Certo (?).

Archæologia, vol. XXVIII., p. 349, contain a poem, for the interpretation of which I must refer to his elaborate and erudite paper. We can but deplore the early loss of one so deeply versed in Saxon antiquities, and so painstaking in his researches.

For further particulars concerning the Cross at Ruthwell, on the Scottish border, besides the *Archæol.* vol. 28, p. 349, see Hicke's *Thes. Gram. Isl.*, tab. IV., Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, p. 160, also *Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland Archæol.* part II., 1834, from whence I have taken this account, and which contains accurate and beautiful drawings furnished by the Rev. Mr. Duncan to that Society. "Unhappily," observes Mr. Kemble, "no early copy was made of this, before the Presbyterian Iconoclasts, in 1642, caused the cross to be flung down, and have deprived us probably for ever of the hope of supplying the missing portion of the inscription."

But if this has been the fate of the Ruthwell monument, of which we have these interesting reliques preserved, we can but regret the entire loss of those once known to have stood in the cemetery of the Abbey of Glastonbury. I feel more anxious to call attention to the record that is left of these, because I am not without hope that some remains may yet be discovered; as, like the Ruthwell, the Hackness, and other crosses, portions may have been buried. The Runic cross at Lancaster was found thus, having been buried in the church yard. Fragments of crosses were discovered at Leeds, in 1838, for an account of which, with drawings, I must refer to a paper by the Rev. D. H. Haigh, of Erdington. This cross was found in the old parish church, and the fragments, when put together, present a very perfect monument. Might not some portions of the Glastonbury crosses yet be discovered?

Are no fragments yet traceable in any of the ancient walls of buildings or gate-posts in the neighbourhood? No search has ever yet been made, and no attention called to the subject; but the visits of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society seem to afford a very fitting opportunity to call attention to this subject, in the hope that something may result from it, at all events any inscribed fragments of stone which may in future be found in the neighbourhood should be carefully preserved, and not broken up, as is too often the case, before being shewn to some competent antiquary. Not without hope, I proceed to give an account of what once existed at Glastonbury.

William of Malmsbury gives an account of certain monuments at Glastonbury, thus:—"I would willingly relate what few if any are acquainted with, if I could make it out with certainty, the meaning of those pyramids which stand before the monks' cemetery, some feet from the old church. The tallest and nearest to the church consists of five stories, *i.e.* pannels (tabulatus) and is 28 feet high. This, though ready to fall with age, has some features of antiquity, which may be more easily read than understood. In the upper story (*i.e.* highest pannel) is a figure episcopally habited. In the second, one in the dress of a king, and these letters HER, SEXI, & BLISVVERH. In the third, only names—WEMCHESTE (read also Pencrest), BANTOMP, WINVVEGN (or Pinepegn). In the fourth—HATE (or Bate), WVLFREDE (or Pvlfred), and EANFLEDE. In the fifth and lowest, a figure and this inscription—LOGVVOR (read also Logor and Logpor), WESLIELAS (or Peas Licas), & BREGDENE, SVVELVVES (or Spelpes), HVVINGENDES (or Hipin Gendes), BERNE. The other pyramid is 18 feet high, and has four stories (pannels),

with these inscriptions—CENTWINE, HEDDE EPISCOPUS, & BREGORRED & BEORWALDE." Norgret, Bregorred, Berthwald, were Abbots. "What these mean I cannot positively determine, but I suspect that the bones of those whose names are here inscribed are lodged within in hollow stones (*i.e.* stone coffins). Logwor is certainly the person from whom Logweresbeoh was anciently named, now called Montacute. [Bregwen, from whom Brentacnolle, now Brentamerse.] Beorwalde was abbot after Hemgisel." *

The author describes only one side of each monument, and Mr. Haigh therefore conjectures "that on which there were images, and that, like the Bewcastle cross, they had figures on one side only, and on the other knots and scrolls which the historian did not think necessary to mention." This is the case also with one of the crosses at Hexham, which has scrolls on three sides, and on the fourth the crucifixion, with traces of an inscription beneath.† The inscription on the larger monument was in Anglo-Saxon, and contained Anglo-Saxon names, Wulfred and Eanfled, and others. Two are of historical interest, and enable us to determine the date of the erection of these monuments, viz. the commencement of the eighth century. Centwine was king of the West Saxons from A.D. 676 to A.D. 685, when he became a monk, and lived some years afterwards. St. Aldhelm intimates that he died A.D. 688. Hedde was bishop of Dorchester from A.D. 676 to A.D. 705. Beorn-

* Gough's *Camden*, vol. I., p. 82. See also, *Paper on Fragments of Crosses discovered at Leeds, in* 1838."

† A fine but stiffly carved Saxon cross was lately found among the remains of St. Mary's Church, Hexham. Dilston and Spital also yield such specimens. At Warden is a remarkable Saxon headstone, imitating the front of a Roman altar. See *Gen. Mag.*, Oct. 1860, pp. 401, 402.

wald was abbot of Glastonbury, contemporary with Hedde. Bregored appears to have been one of his predecessors in the abbacy. "Here then," observes Mr. Haigh, "were two of this class of monuments, recognised as sepulchral by William of Malmsbury, and probably erected early in the eighth century."

It cannot but be a source of regret to all lovers of historical remains that no other records of these monuments have been preserved. However, the drawings of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses enable us pretty accurately to judge of the nature of these pyramids as they are called. And here we may observe how very timely and wise is the proposal of the Society of Antiquaries, put forth in 1858, viz. to collect copies of all existing monuments of British subjects, whether at home or abroad, and thus form a record for future ages. It must be apparent how much more enduring than stone or marble is a published account —how much more likely to escape destruction? We should have lost all knowledge of the Glastonbury crosses had it not been for the record of William of Malmsbury.

In conclusion I would offer a remark on these ancient Christian memorials. They are among the few traces left us of Saxon Christianity. Some portions of churches and towers, and a few entire buildings, can be assigned to the Saxon era. The small church at Bradford-on-Avon, now a school, is among the few vestiges of Saxon Christianity in the West of England. The remains of a Saxon cross have lately been discovered in restoring the church at Kelston, near Bath.

That these crosses were very early erected, is plain from history; and that they had their origin in the dedication of pagan memorials to Christian purposes, is also on record, for St. Patrick so dedicated pagan monuments to the service

of the true God.* Adamnan, in his life of St. Columba, has preserved two instances of the erection of stone crosses at Iona. St. Columba, disdaining the luxury of straw, used to lie on a stone, and for a pillow had another stone, "which at present," says Adamnan, "stands for *a title* as a monument at his sepulchre." Simeon of Durham has a chapter, "De Ethelwold Episcopo et cruce lapideo quam fecit." Ethelwold caused his name to be cut on this cross, which was much ornamented by the labour of the workman, as a memorial of himself. When Lindisfarne was ravaged by the Danes, the top of the cross was broken off, but afterwards united together. The cross used to be carried about with the body of St. Cuthbert, being held in reverence by the Northumbrians. In the days of Simeon of Durham, whose history ends A.D. 1096, it stood in the cemetery of Durham cathedral, and is probably referred to by Leland, as standing at the head of a tomb in the church yard on the south side of the minster:—"It is a crosse seven feet long, that hath had an inscription of divers rownes yn it, but the scripture cannot be red. Some say that the crosse was brought out of the holy church yard at Lindisferne." †

This cross was probably the type from whence most of the crosses of Northumbria, as the Hackness cross, took their model. Having first originated out of the blind idolatry with which stones placed upright were worshipped in pagan times, these stones became under Christian training suitable memorials of the departed, and assumed at length the figure of that holy symbol of our faith ever reverenced by Christians. They were suitably inscribed

* See Pinkerton's *Vitæ Sanctorum Sotiæ*, lib. I., c. 46, pp. 93, 94, 180, 181.

† See *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, printed for the Spalding Club, 1856.

and ornamented with figures which the grotesque imaginations of the northern races loved to embody in their works of art, and have become to us memorials by no means inelegant of the piety and devotion of our English forefathers.