

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL

AND

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The Brailsford Cross.

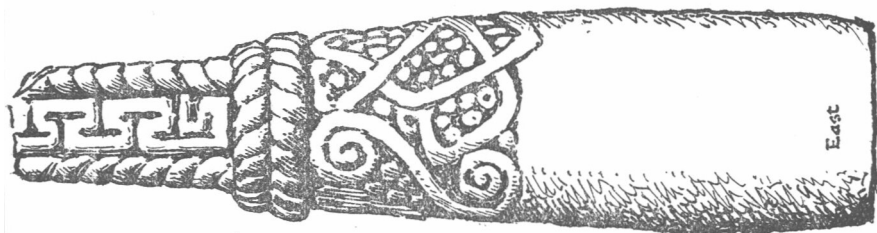
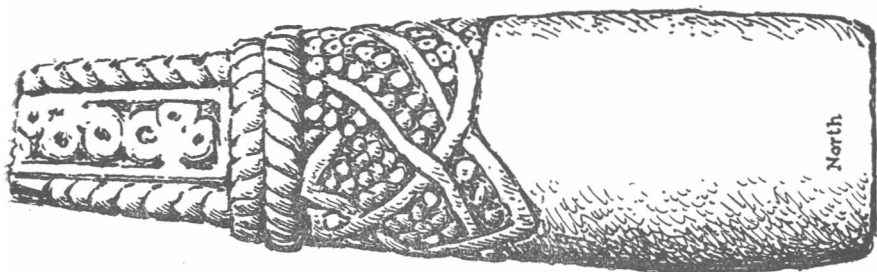
By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

THE find of this interesting relic was made in a very curious way. Mr. Percy H. Currey, to whom I owe the information about the stone, tells me that the late Rector of Brailsford left directions that he should be buried under the base of the mediaeval cross in the churchyard; and when the steps of that monument were taken up, in August, 1919, this early fragment was found buried beneath them. A discovery of this kind was made at Bromfield, Cumberland, in 1888, when Canon Taylor and the late Rev. W. S. Calverley, F.S.A., examined a stepped platform, supposed to have been the base of the churchyard cross, and found twenty-three mediaeval graveslabs and several pre-Norman fragments, which had been used to build up the structure. At Goldsborough, Yorks., the Rev. E. W. Evans found, under a great cylindrical stone which seems to have been the stump of a churchyard cross, an interment and an enamelled bronze plaque of the Viking age. It would almost seem that churchyard cross-bases are worth special investigation; they must always have needed a solid substructure, and

the temptation to throw into them any disused monument is obvious.

The Brailsford stone, now set upon a base in the churchyard, is 4 ft. 5½ ins. in height. The upper 14 ins. are part of a taller shaft, rectangular in section, though the arrises are rounded. In the lower part the section is round, somewhat as in the Goldsborough stone just mentioned. Two bands of cable-moulding, each 2 ins. broad, and with the strands of the cables slanting in opposite directions, mark the division between the two parts of the shaft. The lower part, which appears to be the actual foot of the whole cross, is cylindrical only in intention, for no care has been given to make it true or to chisel it smoothly. Nevertheless, by the analogy of other round-shafted crosses, this part was probably not meant to be sunk in the earth, but to be fixed on a base, much as it can be seen at present. The round shaft has a strong entasis, swelling to 1 ft. 4 ins. in its longest diameter, about 8 ins. above the foot, at which the diameters are 1 ft. 2½ ins. and 1 ft. 0½ ins. These diameters correspond with the greater and smaller diameters of the upper, rectangular part; the whole has been rather rudely shaped, like many pre-Norman crosses, from a roughly rectangular "stope," picked off the land or won from the surface. The cross-carvers of the age to which we shall attribute this monument were far from skilled in mason-work, at least in the North of England, where there was little, if any, architectural building going on at the time. They showed the amateur's haste to get to the detail before they had made out their main forms.

The patterns are seen in the view of the four sides, in the present position of the stone west, south, east and north, going round it withershins so as to follow on with the continuous design under the cable bands. The drawings are from sketches by Mr. Currey, and they force out the detail a little more distinctly than it now appears on the



stone, which no doubt looked crisper when it was newly set up. The scale of the reproduction is about one inch to the foot.

The band round the cylindrical part of the shaft is of random interlacing, with volutes and pellets, which, in some cases at least, are meant for flowers, three to the end of a stalk, and others filling the ground. This is the late Viking Age development of the Anglian vine-scroll, but here showing a strong reminiscence of the Anglian motive. On the south side this band is interrupted by the figure of a warrior, holding a sword of the period in his right hand, and in his left what may be a small round target. There seems to be an attempt to suggest a mail-coat, and the close cap which Viking Age soldiers of the higher class wore; the Winged Hat of stage-Vikings has no historical warrant. Over his right shoulder is a bit of plait-work, the usual filling of a vacant space; a similar filling occurs on the Leeds parish-church cross in the panel of the figure with a sword and a hawk, which figure I take to be, like this, and like the Warrior at Otley, and another at Nunburnholme, an attempt at a portrait of the man to whom the monument was set up. It used to be supposed that none but "sacred" subjects were carved on crosses; but there are too many of these figures, unaccompanied by symbols of saints, to make the belief convincing.

Above the cable-bands the frame-mouldings of the four flat sides are (at least on three arrises, and the fourth is broken) cabled, as shown in the sketch between the south and east sides. The same cabling is seen on the Disley round-shafted cross. The west and south sides bear double-bead plaits; the east has the Viking Age TIT pattern, varied at the foot, and the north has a loop-pattern with bunches of loops set alternately, a late and unusual motive.

It is pretty certain from analogy that this flat-sided part of the shaft continued upwards for about 18 ins., and then

was surmounted by a cross-head, which may have been a wheel-head, for that type was common in Viking Age crosses; though, in a place where the Anglian tradition was strong, as the debased flower-motive shows that it was certainly strong in this case, the head may have been free-armed. The whole monument would then have been about seven feet high from the base—not a very large cross, but interesting both by the quaint figure in its decadent Anglian setting, and by the fact that it adds to the number of round-shafted crosses and may help to elucidate them.

The origin and dating of the series were discussed in 1894 by Mr. Romilly Allen in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Cheshire*, n.s. ix, and more recently by Mr. W. J. Andrew, F.S.A., in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, xxvii, and by Mr. G. Le Blanc Smith in *The Reliquary* for October 1906. But since that time twelve examples can be added to the twenty-seven then named, and the area of the type has widened. We can perhaps learn a little more by comparison with styles that are now fairly datable.

In the next three plates I have sketched a dozen types of round-shafted crosses, preserving their relative sizes and supplying in broken lines as much restoration as is needed to understand the parts now remaining. Such restoration is not merely conjectural, but the result of inferences from analogies, which a series, shown together, brings out so remarkably as to require little comment.

Plate I; CUMBERLAND: fig. 1, the eastern of two crosses at the "Giant's Grave," Penrith churchyard. This is complete except for the tips of the cross-arms. Like the Brailsford cross, it is a mixture of Anglian and Viking motives; the head here is Anglian, the double ring-twist late, connecting with the Galloway series. From its various connexions I venture to date this to the middle of the tenth century.

(2) Gosforth, the famous churchyard cross, still standing

complete, with figure-subjects (on the sides not shown and in the Vidar above the Crucifix) making it fairly certain

that the date must be about A.D. 1000.

(3) Beckermet, St. Bridget's; the back of the shaft with the well-known puzzling inscription. The double scroll is very late and debased Anglian. A companion cross, also round-shafted, has late tenth-century plaits.

Also in Cumberland, at Dacre, but not drawn here because the fragment is hardly enough to restore with certainty, is a stone bearing very fine carving of the early ninth century, and with its arrises split towards the lower part, showing that, if continued, the shaft would develop into a cylinder—either with round-bottomed panels, as at Gosforth and Beckermet, or in the less

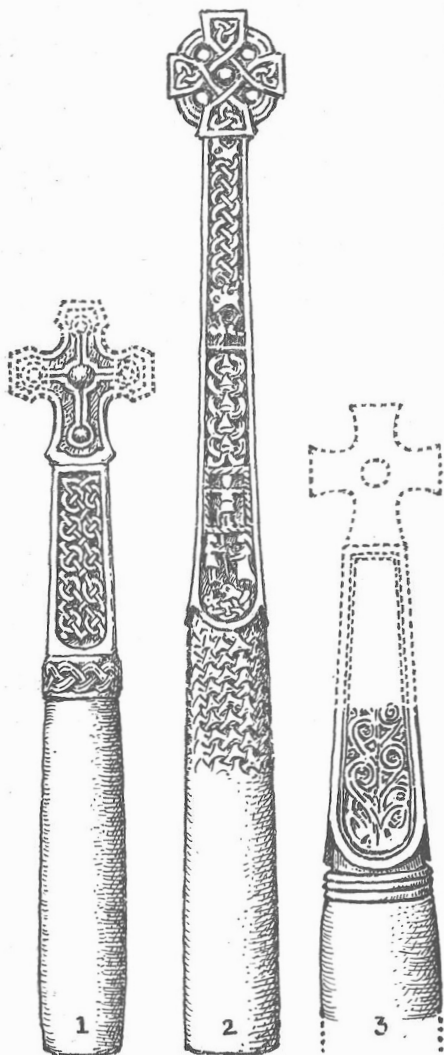


PLATE I.

usual method of junction shown in the next example.

Plate II ; YORKSHIRE : fig. 4, Collingham ; the shaft of the Twelve Apostles. In this the split cable-edging terminates downward in a point, and the curve, that marks the transition from the flat side to the rounded surface, arches upwards. Either this, or the "swag," would make a practicable junction ; but the swag, as at Gosforth, is the more natural and easy method. It will have been noticed that the Penrith shaft is quite inartificially managed ; a broad band, in fact, conceals the join, and (as at Brailsford) the round shaft is not truly cylindrical but only a "stope" with its arrises blunted off, enough to give the effect of roundness. This gives an impression of careless—that is to say, late—work ; the Collingham shaft, which from the style of its figures and scrolls must be ninth century, would probably be more accurately carried out, although the lowest part is lost.

(5) Masham ; the massive, round pillar in the church yard, with figures and animals of distinctly Anglian (early ninth-century) type ; also part of a large cross-head of the same date, preserved in the church—the two being probably parts of one very big cross, of which the upper part of the shaft is lost.

(6) Dewsbury. Six pieces of a great cross are kept in the church, and can be fitted together to form a monument of this round-shafted type. For discussion of the subject see *Handbook 2* of the Tolson Museum, Huddersfield ; but it may be noted that the head is given by the upper arm, the greater part of the upper shaft (missing at Masham) is given by two large fragments, the junction, with its "swag" curve, is given by another, and two tiers of figures in arcades are given by two more fragments. The style of the carving dates the monument to the middle of the ninth century, and it was probably the great Paulinus cross, known to have existed at Dewsbury in the time of Henry VIII.

At Goldsborough, as already mentioned, there seems to

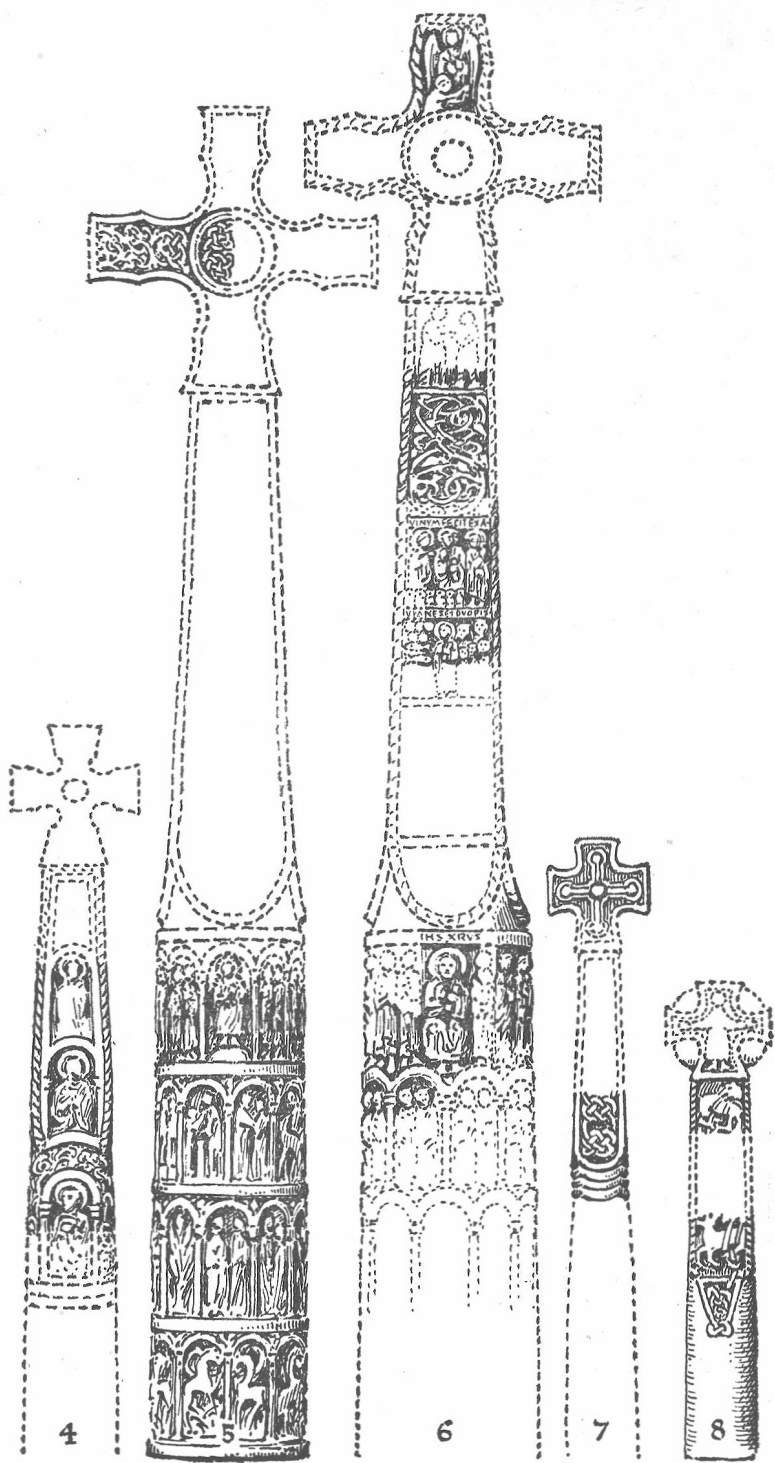


PLATE II.

be the stump of another round-shafted cross. At Bedale is part of a round shaft bearing upright panels of plait in cable-moulded frames and a horizontal plaited band above them.

(7) Gilling West. The junction of a small cross of this character, and a head which might fit it, are preserved in the church. This seems to be late ninth or early tenth-century work.

(8) Stanwick; two considerable pieces remain, giving the complete cross, with a wheel-head and animals of the late tenth century. This has the triangular patch of pattern below the junction, seen also on flat-sided crosses of the late tenth and early eleventh century in Yorkshire, and on the round-shafted cross at Leek.

Plate III, STAFFS. (9) Ilam, complete but for the tips of the cross-arms; and probably the round shaft was taller, for the entasis is not reached in the fragment as it stands. The broad band concealing the junction has a late Anglian leaf-scroll; the TIT on the south side (not seen in the sketch) and the plait of another side are all not earlier than mid-tenth-century. The head has traces of the spine-and-boss ("lorgnette") motive seen in many late ninth and tenth-century crosses, as at Penrith. These taken together suggest a late tenth century date with strong survival of Anglian tradition.

(10) Leek, resembling Penrith, but with knots of much later character, and with the patch of ornament below the belt which we have seen at Stanwick. The date of this cross must be late tenth or early eleventh century.

Other round-shafted crosses have been noted in Staffs. at Cholsey, Stoke and Alstonefield, if the sundial-shaft at the last place has been the stump of one of this series.

CHESHIRE. Eleven examples are known, all of a very simple (and, I think, late) form, except No. 11 in Plate III from Disley. The lateral arms of the cross-head are lost, leaving only the topmost arm, which has been placed on

the shaft (as is done in the cross at Guiseley, Yorks.), and the round shaft is missing from the "swag" which formed the junction. The ornament is very late, probably early eleventh century.

NOTTS. The Stapleford cross (not drawn) is a well-known example. Its ring-twist makes it not earlier than the late tenth century.

WALES. The Pillar of Eliseg, Denbighshire, is the stump of a similar cross with the "swags" remaining. There is no pattern to date it, but it bore a long inscription from which the late Sir John Rhys suggested a ninth-century date, but said that the inscription, inaccurately copied in the eighteenth century and now illegible, was not to be depended upon. The remaining word is in a script which might be of the eleventh century; and typologically this cross seems to be rather of that period than much earlier. Another round shaft at the Court Farm, near Port Talbot, Glamorganshire, has inscribed the word TOME, "of St. Thomas," to whom the ancient chapel at the site was dedicated, and is obviously very late.

DERBYSHIRE. Parts of two round shafts are at Bake-well church. "Robin Hood's Picking Rods" on Ludworth Moor, the Shall cross at Fernilee and another (of which the site is not given) are mentioned by Mr. G. Le Blanc Smith in *The Reliquary*, October, 1906, p. 237. The font at Wilne was thought by Bishop Browne to be made from part of a round shaft.

With these examples before us we get a clearer idea of the original form and the place in the series of the Brailsford cross, restored as No. 12, Plate III. We cannot be certain of the shape of the head, which may have had no wheel; but a wheel is suggested by the Viking Age character of the design. Like Penrith, Stanwick and Ilam (all of the later group) its junction is made by a mere belt of ornament. The partial ornamentation of the round shaft is like Gosforth. The bunches of loops on the

north side suggest a date rather after than before A.D. 1000, but not far into the eleventh century. It is, however, impossible to give a very accurate date from typology alone; the period only is fairly certain, and we

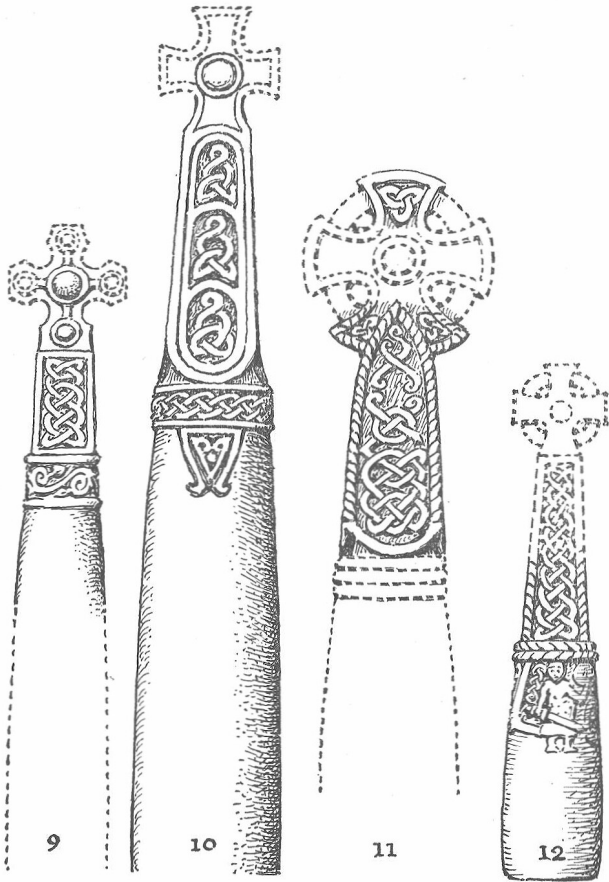


PLATE III.

have already found examples ranging from about A.D. 800 to after A.D. 1000. None are known with ornament that fixes them earlier than the ninth century, and the general tendency of monumental art seems to show that

the earliest monuments were made with much care and thought, while the natural economy of labour, as time went on, produced the less elaborated, or less artistically designed, crosses in later days. It has been sometimes supposed that the simplest things were the earliest, but as the art was derived from previous forms, transplanted into northern England, cross-carving began with a considerable wealth of models for detail, and simplicity came when the further invention of details had been exhausted.

That this type of round-shafted crosses originated in an imitation of a tree-trunk, shaved off into four planes, is very possible ; but we have no links, at present, to connect the earliest examples with such wooden crosses as we read of—at Iona, in Columba's time, at " Crosfeld " in Cumberland when Kentigern was there, at " Heavenfield " when King Oswald set up his cross-standard. Round shafts perhaps always co-existed with the commoner variety, and there may still be discoveries to prove the theory.

One other point, raised by previous writers, and of great interest, is the connexion of these crosses with St. Paulinus, who was in Northumbria from 627 to 633. The Dewsbury cross, erected more than two hundred years later, strengthens the idea of this connexion. It seems to be the monument noted by Leland, Henry VIII's antiquary, as bearing an inscription which named Paulinus, and perhaps it was intended to mark the tradition that Dewsbury possessed the altar-stone from his monastery at Campodonum (Doncaster?). But as his mission was definitely to convert the pagan Angles of Northumbria—the British church being heretical and outside the scope of missionary enterprise as then undertaken—the places where he preached must be sought in the Anglian kingdom as it then existed. Recent opinion (of Professor Ekwall in *Place-names of Lancashire*, 1922, pp. 227-233) inclines to Anglian settlements in Lancashire as early as this. Bede describes Paulinus as travelling from Southwell to

York and Catterick and along the main Roman road into what is now Northumberland ; but Bede does not say (as Baines in *Lancashire* i, 38, suggested) that Paulinus baptized in the Ribble. The traditions that connect him with Whalley, and two crosses in Lancashire, one at Godley Lane near Burnley and the other at Kemple End on Longridge fell, are late, and perhaps only a fancy of some old antiquary taken up by still less trustworthy opinion in the district. At Whalley, indeed, there was an alternative belief attributing the crosses to St. Augustine, and the two others are post-Conquest. And none of these are round-shafted. In Cumberland, Westmorland and North Lancashire there are no dedications to Paulinus, though there are round-shafted crosses in Cumberland. Derbyshire was pretty certainly outside the Anglian area in his time ; so was Wales.

It seems to me unsafe to assume a connexion between the missionary halting-places of St. Paulinus and this type of cross, which was simply a variant of the ordinary shape. All ancient crosses are different from one another ; there were no stock-patterns, although we can see how one cross, or its details, suggested another, and the variety they show is infinite. The Brailsford cross must have been erected three hundred and fifty years after the time of St. Paulinus, in a district he never visited. Its general design was derived, ultimately, from Yorkshire, whence the Mercian carvers learnt their art. It is the gravestone of some local hero, one of the grandsons of the Danes who settled in the land of the Five Boroughs. He played his part, no doubt, in the troubled days of Æthelred the "Unready," but probably did not live to see the disastrous invasion of king Sveinn of the Forked Beard ; for with the period of Sveinn and Knút there came into vogue a more distinctively Viking style of design than this, which carried on some of the old Anglian traditions.