

ART. XXIV.—*Early Sculptured Cross Shaft at Dearham Church, Cumberland.* By Rev. W. S. CALVERLEY, Vicar of Dearham.

Read at Kirkby Lonsdale, June 27, 1883.

IN 1882 we commenced to restore, improve, and enlarge the parish church of Dearham. On clearing off the plaster and colour-wash from the chancel arch, a strip of plait-work, some four inches wide, running through the arch on the north side, revealed itself.

The arch itself, of no architectural style, ugly and badly built, proved to have taken the place of an earlier arch whose stones had been re-used, together with pieces of ancient grave slabs and stones which came handy to the workmen. This arch had to be pulled down; then the narrow strip of plait-work ornament proved to be one edge of a portion of the shaft of an early cross.

The other edge was similarly sculptured with a plait whose strands (in this case) were double. The *edges* of the stone have not been engraved. The two *faces* have been admirably reproduced (from photographs) by Professor Magnus Petersen of Copenhagen. The engravings are faithful, as may be seen by comparison with the original now in Dearham Church, or with the plaster cast, which has been carefully made by Mr. Robinson and placed in the Carlisle Museum.

A portion of the lower part of this cross is built into the east end of the vicarage garden wall, churchyard side; on it may be seen the key pattern corresponding to the upper border of the left side of the engraved FACE (see plate). This fragment was discovered amidst the building stuff used as a foundation for an old pulpit which stood alongside the south-east wall of the old church, now the nave. It

was

was built into the churchyard wall, together with pieces of old tombstones, part of an early stoup and other relics, for safety, before the part here engraved was discovered.



(A). Face of Cross Shaft.

The *head* of this cross is built into the north wall of the vestry, above a fragment of a Roman altar which fell out of

of the old wall during the work of pulling down. This cross-head is figured No. 1. of the crosses before Art. xviii., p. 153; part I, vol. v., of these Transactions. It was discovered by me, near the east end of the church, on information given me by Mr. Bromfield, of Maryport, who remembered seeing it lying about many years ago.

The Rev. Canon Knowles, St. Bees, assigned it to the times "before the devastations of the Norse heathen." Now that part of its shaft has come to light, let it speak for itself.

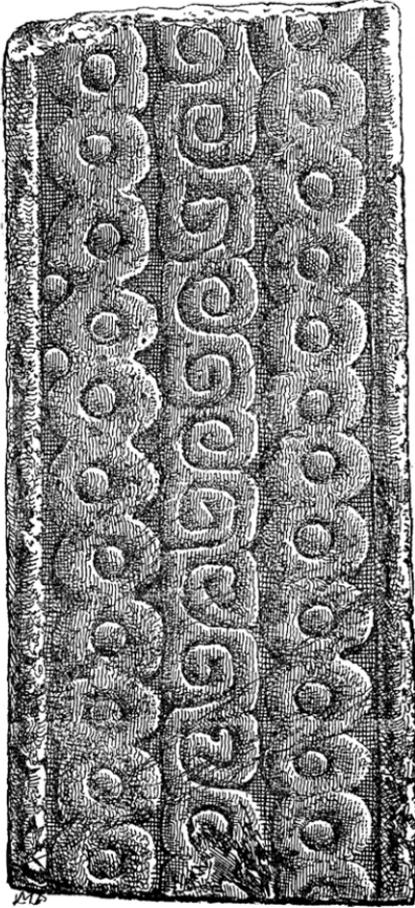
(A.) face: — In upper part is a human figure on horseback, carrying or holding something in front on the horse's shoulders. The whole is surrounded by *spiral* work and little bosses; beneath, a bird with long bill and short tail bears a baby or a bundle in its big claws; in front of the bird a deformed man-figure holds forth a vessel in his right hand; above the man's head appears to gape a pair of jaws, which belong to the double-stemmed spiral wormlike bodies which surround the figures, and curl and twist into every unused space; beneath the bird is twice repeated the ancient symbol of endless existence, the *svastica*, now the cross sign, used in all ages, and passing as it ought to do into every faith, because the truth of which it tells is as old as Paradise, and beneath these again the characteristic spirals of British or Celtic or eastern art.

(B.) — The reverse is very simply and beautifully ornamented with three ribands; the two outer ones being alike, and consisting of two bands folded over and under alternately with a boss in each loop, and the centre one consisting of the easily recognized spiral and key pattern combined.

Have we not here an illustration of art-work design and legend belonging to the old British Church? I am greatly obliged to Mr. T. W. Jackson of Worcester College, Oxford, who was kind enough to make extracts from Capgrave, fol. ccv., for the Rev. T. Lees concerning the Welsh or British

Saint

Saint Kenet (Kenedus), whose story appears to be told on the face of this cross, and to Mr. Lees for his kind assistance.



(B.) Reverse of Cross Shaft.

The real value of these researches lies in the history which may be revealed by them. For the purposes of this Society, I merely give a sketch of the story from Capgrave.

Kenedus was son of the daughter of Diochus, a prince in Letaina, Lesser Britain, born a mile from King Arthur's Palace,

Palace, in the province of Soyr ; he was lame from birth, "crus femoriadherebat." After baptism he was thrown into the river in a coracle and carried to the sea, and by a great storm carried to an island, from which the sea-birds bore him with claws and beaks and placed him on a rock, where they covered him with many layers of feathers, driving *the serpents and worms* from the place. An angel descended, and placed a brazen bell to the mouth of the little one. Each day the bell was replenished with milk from a *deer* or forest doe. A shepherd, who had his house on the sea-shore, found the child in his nest upon the rock, and carried him away from the birds to his own home, but the seagulls gathered in troops, and finally the boy was borne back to his rocky perch. Kynedus grew up—deformed it is true, but a holy hermit, who had learned that of food, the bitterer and sharper and harder—the most pleasing to God, and, like St. David, able to live on roots and herbs. "He lived revered on the storm-beaten rocks of Gower, the associate of seagulls and forest deer."

This sculpture may thus shew a connection between South Wales and our Strathclyde at as early a date as S. Kentigern's day ; S. Keneth, the hermit, being of 6th century at the latest.

The rude and weather-beaten sculpture still shows plainly the seagull with its burden in its claws, the figure with the old-shaped "papped" bell in his right hand, and the worm things which the early saints, no less than the seagulls, are credited with having driven away.

NOTES.

A Saxon form of this British story is found in life of S. Wilfreda (10th century). From later legend a child is found in eagle's nest, taken to the Court of the King Wulfred, King of W. Saxons, and brought up, being called Nesting, and becoming father of the grandfather of Wilfreda.—Baring Gould's *Lives of the Saints*, Sept' 9.

There

There are many more modern stories of children being borne away by birds, *e.g.*, eagle and child.—See *Historic Devices, Badges, &c.*, p. 334, where the eagle's claw, the badge of the Stanley family, is noted.

Also see "Pwyll, Prince of David," in the *Mabinogion*.

Also see "Hagen," p. I. of the "*Hegeling Legend*," p. 308, "*Epics and Romances of the Middle Ages*.—T. L.