

ART. XXXIV.—*Cross Fragment at St. Michael's Church, Workington.* By Rev. W. S. CALVERLEY, F.S.A., Vicar of Aspatria.

*Read at Kirkby Stephen, July 7th, 1887.*

ON January 24th of this year Mr. W. L. Fletcher of Stoneleigh, Workington, went down to the parish church of St. Michael to examine the walls and débris after the havoc made by the fire which had destroyed all the church, save the tower. On the north side of the arched eastern entrance, leading from the nave into the tower, and three and a half feet above the ground, Mr. Fletcher discovered a sculptured stone which he rightly judged to be a portion of an old cross shaft. On February 8th, in company with Mr. Fletcher, I visited the relic; we removed the plaster from the face of the stone and took a rubbing and a photograph of the precious treasure.\*

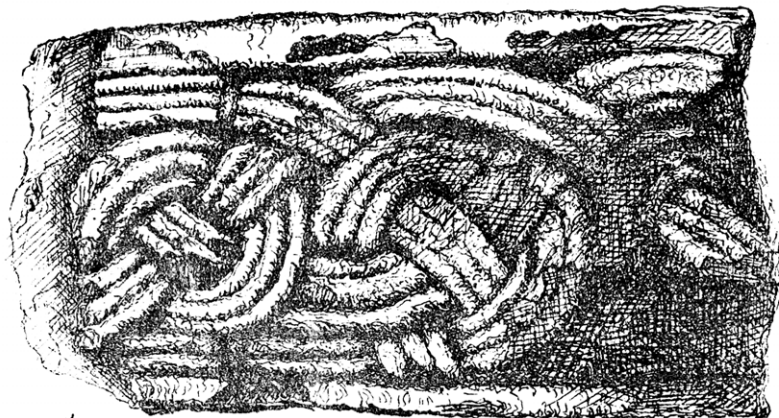
The presence of this cross fragment, used as building material in the old tower, connects St. Michael's church of the present day with that early British church which spread Christianity amongst the mixed peoples who inhabited this district in the seventh century, and which succeeded even earlier missionary labour than even that of the age of Holy Cuthbert himself.

The type of cross is not the very earliest, but suggests its erection between the seventh and the end of the ninth centuries, and before the Norsemen or Danes had greatly devastated these coasts or firmly planted themselves here. It is very probable that other fragments of crosses are hid

---

\* My drawing is from this photograph kindly taken for the purpose by my friend Mr. Fletcher, for whose invaluable assistance I am truly grateful, and to whom this Society is greatly indebted, as my other drawings in this volume could hardly have been produced without his industrious co-operation.

within



W.C.

ST. MICHAEL. WORKINGTON. 17 IN. X 9 IN.

within the masonry of the old tower, or in the walls of the church itself. If such should be uncovered during the rebuilding it is to be hoped that careful examinations and reproductions will be made in order that anything of historic value may be saved from destruction, as there is reason to believe that a large number of early crosses were broken up and used as building material for the several churches which have stood on the same site.

The fragment is 17 in. long by 9 in. broad at the broadest part, rudely worked with a broad chisel into *triple* bands forming most graceful curves and reminding one very forcibly of delicate basket work; a *single* band appears in two places to hold back the triple withes.

The part of the tower in which this carved sandstone block is built is, I believe, of late Norman date, and the stone itself had become damaged by long (centuries) exposure before it was built into the tower wall and henceforward sheltered from the weather. A crumbling away, the work of ages, may be noticed beneath the lime when removed.

I should assign this cross to the period of the Cuthbert pilgrimage, and take it as a witness to the presence of the later Lindisfarne brethren who would be welcome at Brigham, Bridekirk, Plumbland, Aspatia, Dearham, Crosscanonby, &c., where the old Christian inhabitants remained who had traditions then of more than two hundred years concerning Bishop Kentigern, and still older traditions of St. Ninian and St. Patrick, for each of these places had at that date been an old mission centre and at each there still remain fragments of the very earliest type of white sandstone cross.

In the year 883 the bearers of the body of St. Cuthbert arrived at Chester-le-street, and St. Cuthbert's body rested there 113 years. At the last restoration of the chancel of the church at Chester-le-street a portion of a sculptured cross, bearing work of a similar character with this now  
found

found at Workington, was taken out of the wall. The Chester-le-street cross, like the one erected at Derwent mouth, having been used by the masons of a later age as merely building stone.

I find that Professor Stephens assigns this Chester-le-street cross to the eighth century.

