

ART. XIX.—*Pre-Norman Cross Fragments at Aspatria, Workington, Distington, Bridekirk, Gilcrux, Plumbland, and Isell.* By REV. W. S. CALVERLEY, F.S.A., Vicar of Aspatria.

Communicated at Penrith, July 4th, and Ambleside, Sept. 6th, 1889.

HEREWITH I give ten pages of drawings, all from photographs taken for me by our member, Mr. W. L. Fletcher, of Stoneleigh, Workington, to whom I desire to express my gratitude and the thanks of the Society.

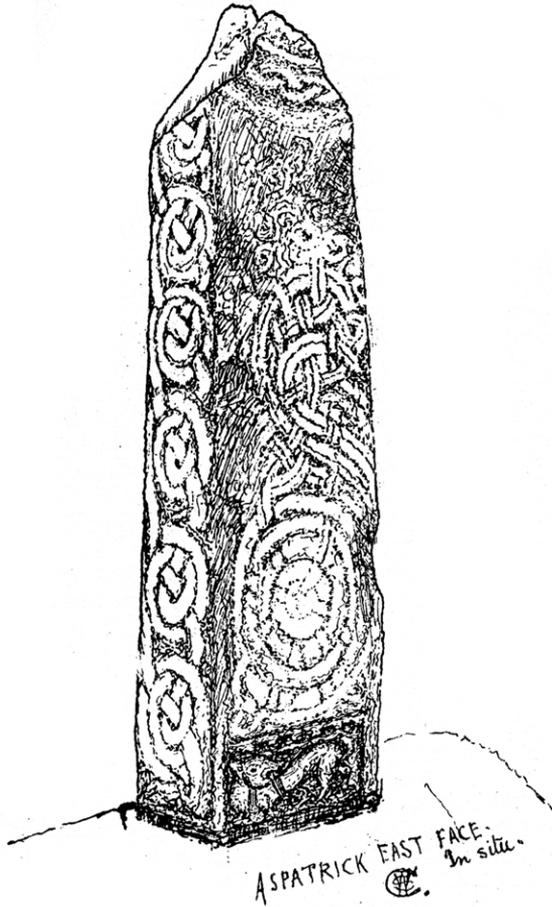
Dimensions.—I., II., III., shew Aspatria cross, still standing in its own socket stone measuring 30 ins. by 26 ins., level with the ground surface in the churchyard, forty yards to the south of the church. Height 4 ft. 6 inches, width at top beneath the curve of the circular head which has been destroyed, $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches, width at bottom where the shaft enters the socket, 18 inches, thickness at top $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, at bottom $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Red sandstone.

IV.—Shews the face and reverse of a fragment of a cross shaft 12 in. by 12 in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, with a smaller fragment of one of the arms of the same or of a similar cross, 7 in. by 4 in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Light coloured sandstone. I refer to the upper drawing as shewing the Distington Triskele fragment, the sign appearing to the right.

V.—Gives the greater part of a cross head having arms and central boss with raised ring, 16 in. by 14 in. by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Also a part of a cross head, which has been knocked off square by the builders for walling purposes when it was bedded into the old church wall. The lime mortar obscures the ancient carving, but the boss, raised ring, and the meandering spiral work in relief are sufficiently clear to fix the type, 9 in. by $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 5 in. thick. Light coloured sandstone. Distington.

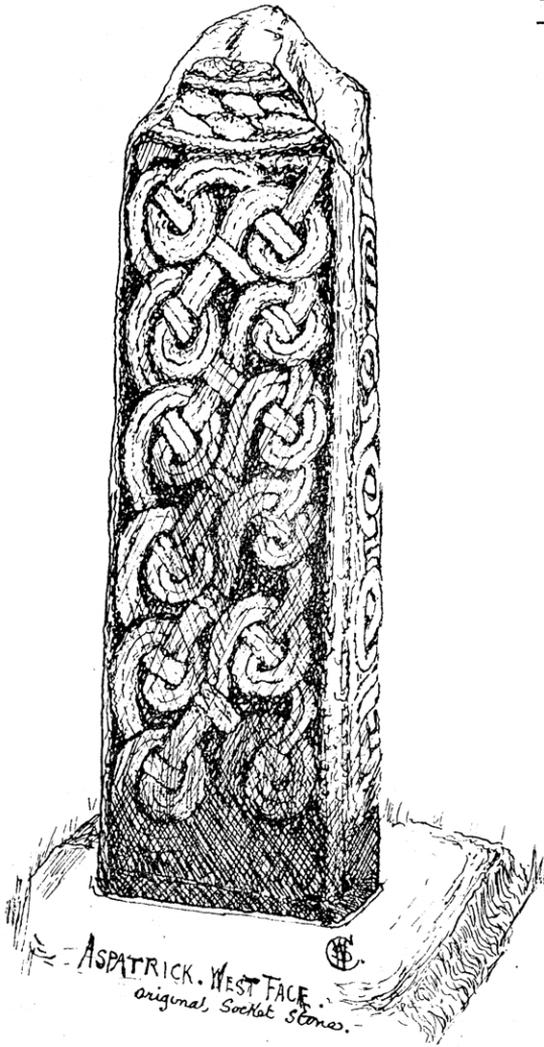
VI.

No 1.



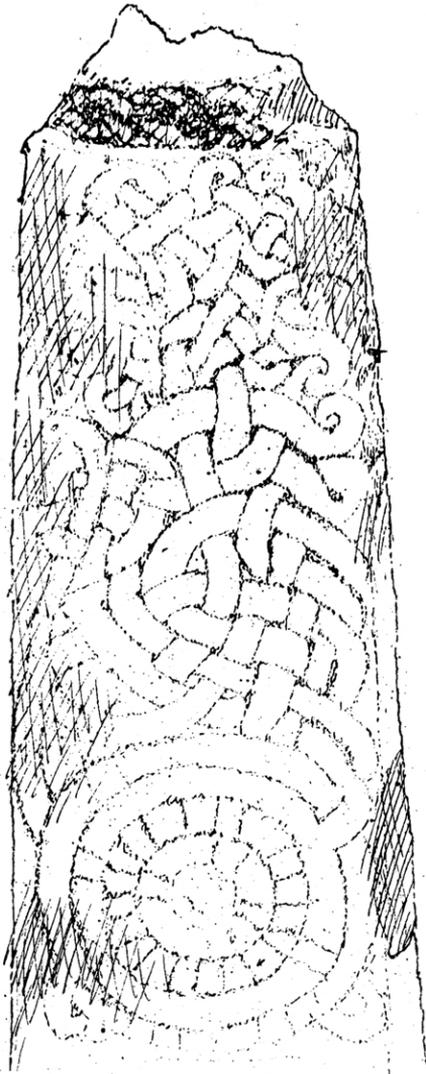
ASPATRICK EAST FACE:
In situ.

No. II



ASPATRICK. WEST FACE.
original, Socket Stones.

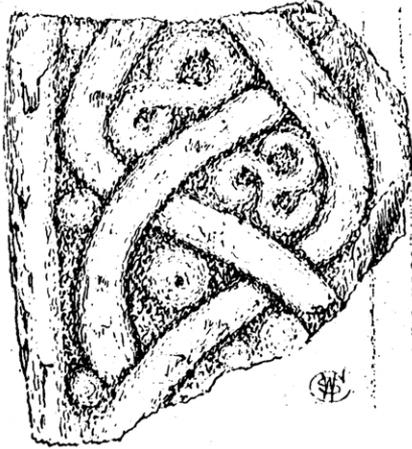
No. III



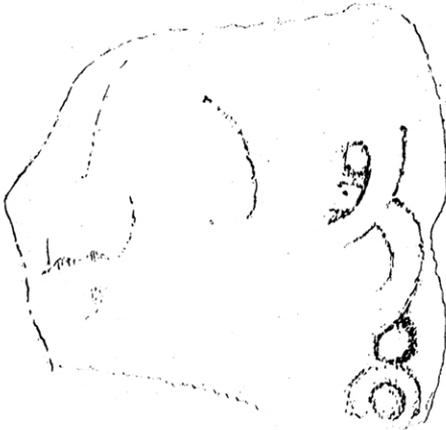
EAST FACE. outline of Design as seen.



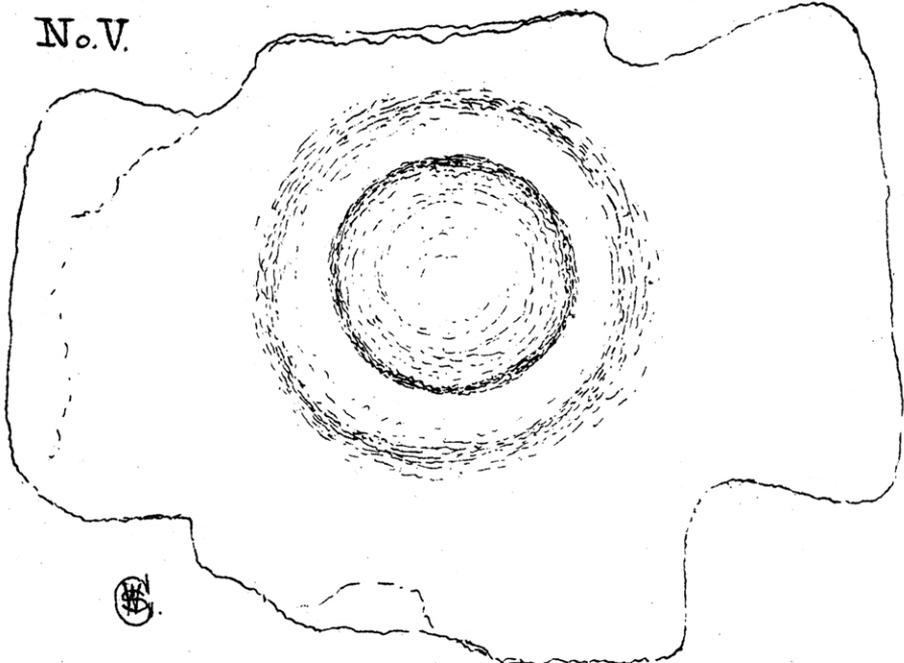
No. IV.



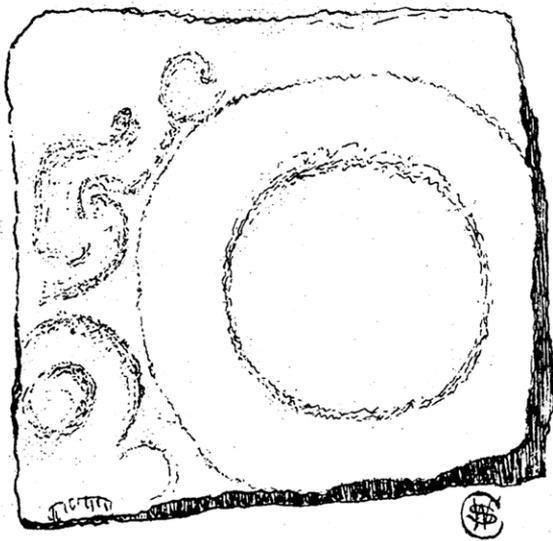
CROSS FRAGMENTS, DISTINGTON.



No. V.

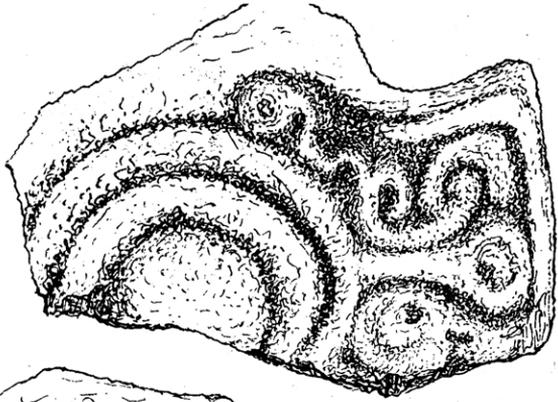


FRAGMENTS OF HEADS OF CROSSES.
DISTINGTON

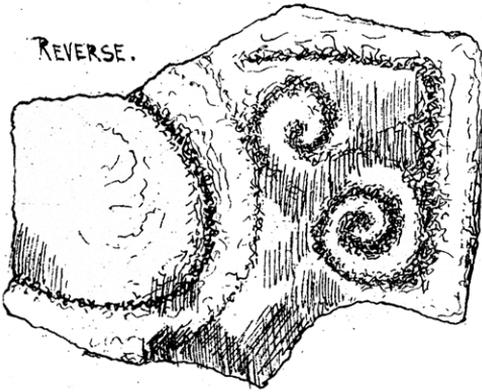


VII.

FACE.



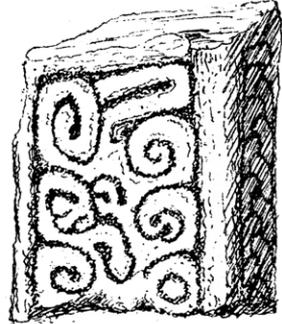
REVERSE.



FRAGMENT OF CROSS-
-HEAD AT
BRIDE KIRK.



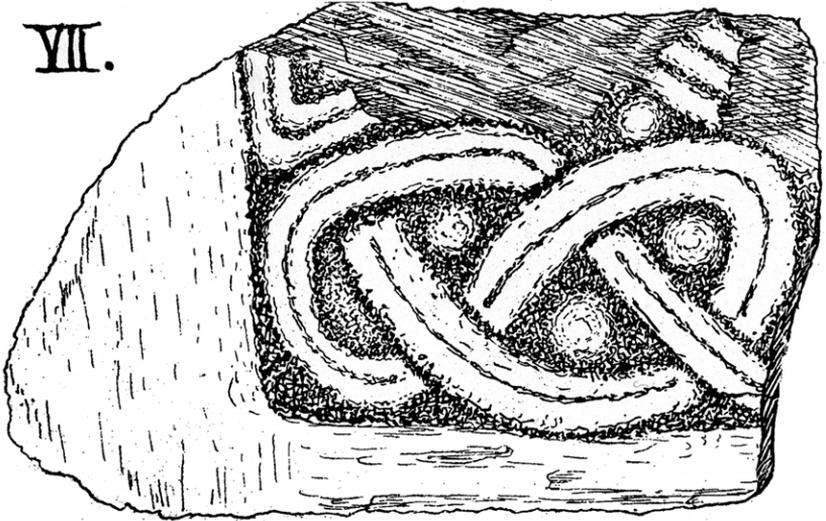
CROSS-
CANONBY



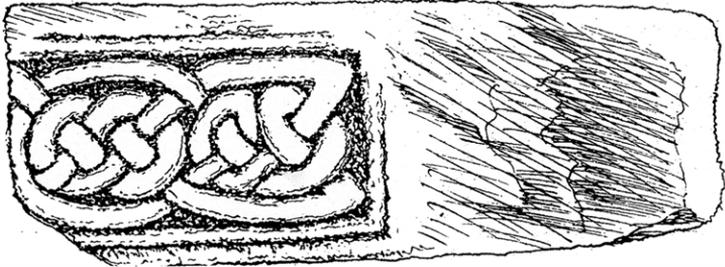
FRAGMENT OF CROSS SHAFT. two sides.

ISELL

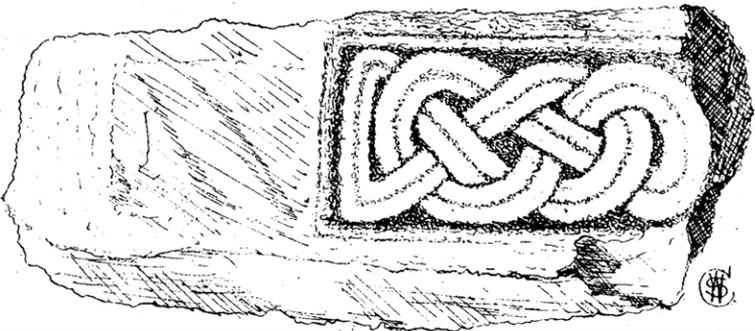
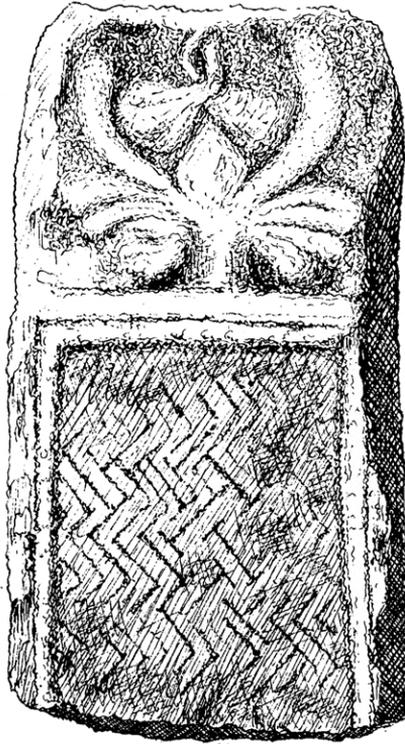
VII.



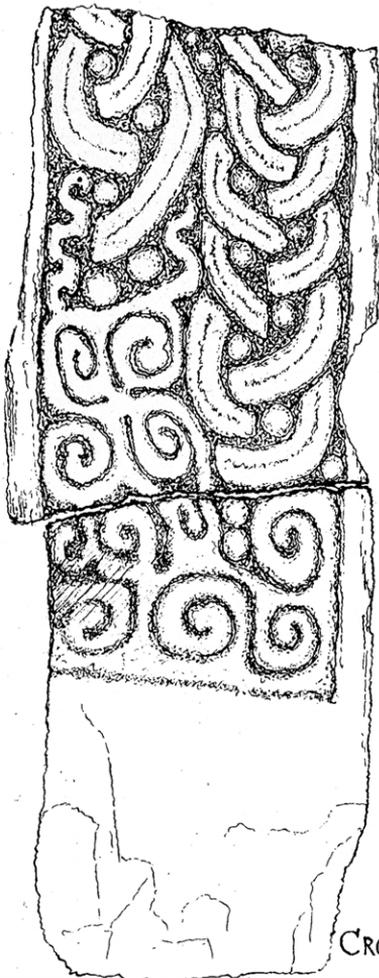
Workington
Parish Church.



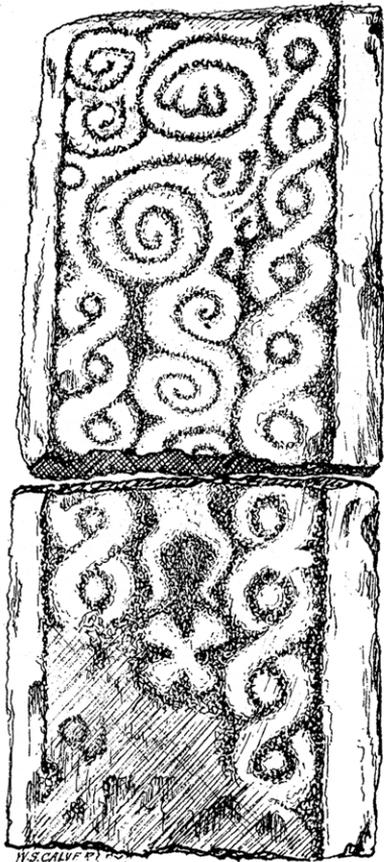
VIII.



PARISH CHURCH WORKINGTON. S. MICHAEL.



W.S. CALVEY



W.S. CALVEY

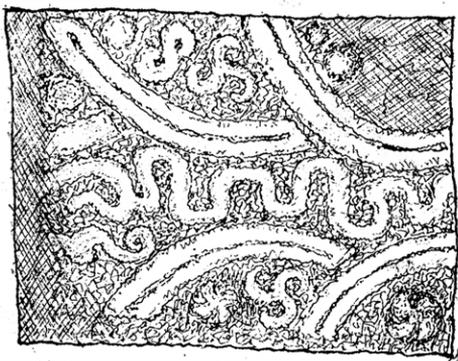
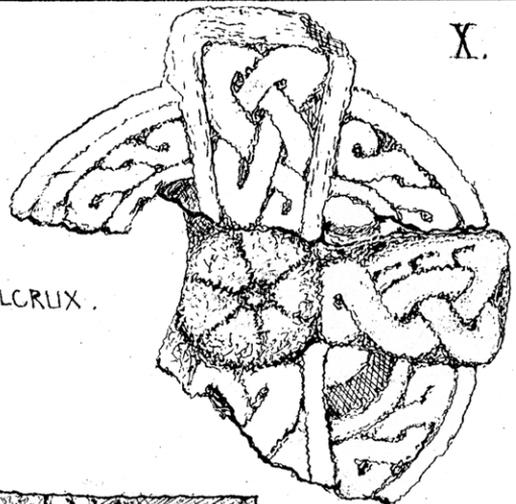
CROSS SHAFTS ASPATRIA FORMERLY ASPATRICK



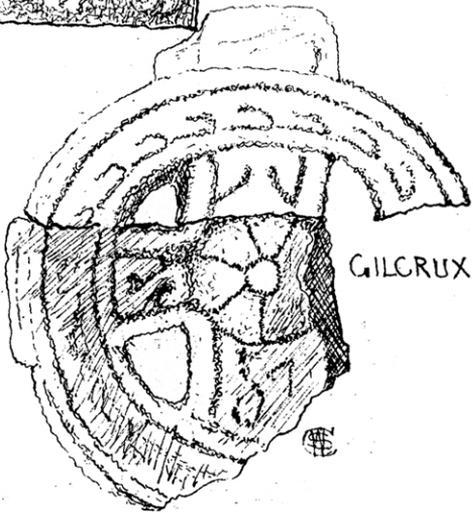
PART OF SMALL HEAD LATER

X.

GILCRUX.



PLUMBLAND.



GILCRUX.

VI.—Two sides of boss and arm of a cross head at Bridekirk:—double raised ring and projected arm with small boss at the end, surrounded with raised spiral work on the face; flatter boss with single raised ring and spirals on the back. White sandstone.

The two arms with boss, raised ring and lateral extensions in the arms, at Cross Canonby. White sandstone.

The two sides of a fragment with rather rough and flat spiral-like design at Isell. White sandstone. 19 in. by 16½ in. by 6½ in. thick.

VII.—Two sides and one edge of white sandstone, 20 in. by 13 in. by 5½ in. thick. Also one edge of the fragment figured in VIII. white sandstone, 14 in. long, 5½ in. thick at the lower sculptured end, tapering to 5 in. thick at the opposite end, to the left in the drawing. Workington.

VIII.—Upper part of cross shaft with arms and top broken off. White sandstone. 14 in. by 7½ in. Also one edge of the same 14 in. by 5½ in., tapering to 5 in. Workington.

IX.—White sandstone cross shaft, broken across, length 3 ft. 9½ in. by 16 in. in widest part. Two pieces of a white sandstone cross shaft, the lower fragment 16 in. by 15 in., the upper one 20 in. long by 15 in. across the lower, and 13½ inches across the upper end; thickness six inches. Also a small piece. Aspatria.

X.—Two sides of broken red sandstone circular cross head at Gilcrux. Greatest diameter 15½ inches. Also Triskele fragment of shaft from Plumland. White sandstone, 17 inches by 14 inches. Built into tower wall within.

Reference to these dimensions is necessary as the photographs could not be produced on a uniform scale.

Here are twelve relics from pre-Norman times, which have never before been engraved or made known; the

Cross

Cross Canonby head alone having been noticed. (Part I, vol. V, p. 154.)

They furnish specimens of at least six styles of art and ornamentation, and they appear to spread over a period beginning soon after the close of the Roman occupation, and embracing periods of settlement or colonization by Teutonic peoples on the Solway coast at a very early date. They may also serve to remind us of a more purely Northern influence, for at the base of the east face of the Aspatria standing cross, beneath the tangled strands and convolutions which appear to have been woven into a pattern or web (of life) which might have been copied from one of the ancient MS. Gospels, we see the devouring wolflike progeny of mankind's enemy (death or hell, Fenris or Helia) bound, unable to hurt where the cross triumphs. This cross has been copied and set up at Bowness in memory of the Rev. S. Medlicott.

The circular head, the curve of which may be seen, and which would be something like the head of the Dearham standing cross, has been purposely knocked off, but the stem was so strong that it withstood the mad storm, and, indeed, served for long (it is said) as a pillar to which horses and cattle could be tied to be claimed on the Sunday; even this usage failed to overthrow the silent witness of the Truth of the ages, which stands firm to-day in its own native red sandstone socket stone.

Whoever set up this cross quarried a great block of living stone; they did not even weaken it by squaring down to get a perfect surface, but worked upon the face almost as it left the quarry. Notice the hollowed surface beneath the north-east shoulder.

The north edge bears broad rings, with two crossing bands as its ornament.

Two of the predecessors of this cross (IX) are in sorrier case, but enough of them is left to furnish interesting links in

in our christian pedigree. The remains of each of these two earlier crosses consists of two pieces.

One shaft shews spirals near the bottom, massed in a manner reminding one of the curved svastika on the Dearham fragment (Vol. VII, p. 290,) with two pieces of plaitwork of three double strands having bosses worked in every available space; this seems to have been a tall, broad, and thin cross fixed in the ground without a socket stone. The line marking off the carved from the uncarved part is not horizontal, and the work is irregular. It is the lower part which remains.

The other shaft has two broad bands passing round bosses similar to the back of the Dearham stone (Vol. VII, p. 292,) along each side of a central scroll; in the lower part are the body and legs of a man above a svastika of solid form; the man is hoisted up in the air a sacrifice to the God of heaven, to heathen minds it might be a victim hurled to Odin, to christians the God man (the sun of righteousness)—the svastika is the sun sign—raised on the cross. In the upper part the scroll enlarges, and the space to the left is filled with spirals which take the place of the bands and bosses. A portion is missing between the two pieces of this shaft. The scroll work in the centre of the upper fragment, if continued downward would appear like the work on the Dearham stone before-named. A precisely similar raised scroll ornaments the edge of this cross, and the reverse is covered with spirals.

This work is such as might be the result of the free-working of British native artists following their idea of the scroll work and plaited patterns on Roman pavements, &c., in the years following the decay of the Roman civilization consequent upon the retirement of the legions.

The very small piece of redstone interlacing shewn is probably of much later date.

The Distington stones, IV, V, are parts of three cross heads and of a shaft. All are of the type having central boss

boss with rings. One (V.) is so much weather worn that no tracing of older design is found upon it, it thus resembles the newly discovered Bromfield cross. (Art. XII, p. 120 of this vol.)

Another shews the meandering raised twining work like that on the Dearham head (Part I, vol. V,) and so well shewn on the Bridekirk relic (VI.)

A third shews the round bossed end of the projecting central arm within the cross arm (IV) with an S shaped curve alongside; this may be part of the cross of which the piece figured with it formed a part, and which is of later date than the other two heads; its ornament contains the triskele sign, an 8 shaped figure and a large boss with central depression within the divisions formed by the broad bands of a three stranded plait. At the break in the lower portion may have been a svastika within another space, so little remains of the sign that I can only express the opinion.

I think we have here the very early British cross heads followed by a later but still early cross, of a period when the Saxon "ton" (tun) had become a part of the place name Distington, through the settlement there of men to whom the symbol with the three curved legs and other signs as the 8 shaped figure, and the boss with hollow centre were familiar. (The triskele is used here no doubt in place of the well known triquetra form at Gosforth, part II, vol. VI, p. 394, Aspatria, part II, vol. IX, p. 466, to signify the Trinity). This sign is cut in relief at Isell, pt. I, Vol. IX, p. 29., and at Plumbland.

The spirals of the early crosses arrange themselves in threes and in the S form, as though it were the aim to lead the mind to the christian doctrines by the use of symbols already recognized.

These fragments were brought to our notice by the Rev. W. G. C. Hodgson, vicar, after the rebuilding of the church: they have all been used as building stuff, and the weathering

weathering is the work of the centuries before they were imbedded in the old church.

The Bridekirk head (VI) has much lime sticking to it. It is a good illustration of its type, and seems to link the old Norman church from which it was taken with the far past of the times of the saint of its dedication,—St. Bridget.

The spirals on both sides of the Isell stone are very noticeable. The work is unfinished, being picked out rather than worked in relief. A piece of the same cross has been built by the vicar, Rev. W. H. Sharpe, into the west wall of the porch, within. At the bottom of the drawing to the left hand will be seen a broad arrow, point downward; this would be the sacred emblem of Woden. In Gautrick's saga,* the "sacrificer marks the victims breast with a spear point, and devotes him to Woden, while the halter is round his neck, after which he is hanged." The ceremony of marking to Woden is noticed both in *Yuglinga* and elsewhere by Ari. The spear is as characteristic of Woden as the hammer is of Thor. The cross itself is the gallows on which the victim is hanged. The tree, the ash *Yggdrasil*, is the horse of the hanged one—the gallows. The cross of Christ and the ash *Yggdrasil* of the northern tribes bore a like meaning, at a certain time, to the mixed peoples on this coast.

At Waberthwaite near Muncaster, towards the more southern limit of Copeland which was filled with Scandinavian settlements, you may see the churchyard great cross with the horse clearly sculptured on its face. Lord Muncaster has lately had this cross shaft taken from its false position of lintel to the church porch, and fixed upright in its own socket stone, which stood waiting for its owner's return, near by. A smaller shaft lies in the vestry.

* The Rev. T. Lees, M.A., F.S.A., very kindly drew my attention to the extract from *Vigfusson*. The subject must be treated separately when other remains are at hand.

The

The more northern parts of Copeland, the border of the Strathclyde whose southern boundary was the Derwent, abound in sculptures of a less pronounced northern type. It would appear that the native races and anglic or so called Saxon colonies chiefly held sway here.

During the work done at the parish church of Workington, S. Michael's, since the fire, two fragments have been taken from the vault of the Curwen family, where they had been used as building material. They are both of white sandstone. A plait with bosses in the spaces is seen on one side (VII) whilst on the edge is the key pattern ending in a curve, and on the other side part of an uncommon design of spirals.

The (paradise) tree appears in the upper part of the other fragment (VIII) above a finely worked geometrial pattern such as seen in the book of Kells and other early MSS. formed of H shaped lines set diagonally.

On either side of the tree, the arms of the cross formerly extended; these have been cut away, most likely by the workmen who built up the vault. The two edges have knotwork finishing off square beneath the cross arms, see horizontal drawings VII, VIII, where the uncarved portion shews the position of the cross arms.

The fragment which was formerly built into the tower (vol. IX, p. 458) has been taken out, and proves to be worked on all sides with plait work of wythes. The building committee intend to fix up these valuable sculptures in the west porch—tower—of the church. The Rev. T. Hackworth and the clerk of the works have been very careful of all historic finds.

Several years ago workmen engaged in Gilcrux churchyard found the upper part of the Gilcrux circular cross-head X. It was broken into two small pieces which they hid in a drain, and afterwards took to Mr. Robinson of Maryport, who made a cast, which I now possess.

At

At the alteration of the chancel lately, the Rev. J. C. Pigott, vicar, discovered beneath the altar, the lower part of a head, being the boss, the greater part of two of the arms and a quarter of the wheel; on placing the casts and the newly-found stone together, more than half the cross head was revealed. It resembles the Dearham Standing Cross, but it is much smaller, very roughly worked, and apparently unfinished. This cross has been reproduced as a foot stone to the grave of the late H. A. Spedding, of Mirehouse, in Bassenthwaite churchyard with a copy of the Dearham Standing Cross as a headstone.

The Plumbland triskele fragment was walled into the church tower at the time of the rebuilding and has remained unnoticed. It bears a rude spiral running scroll between pieces of plaitwork of divided strands, having triskele signs, 8 shaped figure, bosses, and svastika-like raised surface between the strands, and points I think to a Teutonic settlement at a very early time.

These and other remains when illustrated and thus brought together, for comparison, &c. may give valuable testimony to a history which has so far only been written in stone.

The evidence of the various settlements of Northmen and Teutons in Strathclyde, as well as that of the earliest missions amongst the native races cannot fail to be interesting and useful.
