



THE PENNINGTON TYMPANUM. (FIG. I.)

Photo. by Dr. T. K. Fell.



THE PENNINGTON RUNES, FROM A CAST. (FIG. II.)

Photo. by S. B. Gaythorpe.

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ART. XXIV.—*The Runic Tympanum lately found at Pennington.* By HARPER GAYTHORPE, F.S.A., Scot.

Read at Seascale, June 11th, 1902.

THE discovery on St. Patrick's Day, 1902, of a tympanum at Loppergarth, Pennington, bearing a sculptured figure of an angel and a Runic inscription of a Scandinavian type is a unique circumstance in the archæology of Furness.

The accompanying photograph (No. 1) shows the stone in its present position over the doorway of an out-building at Beckside Farm. It is 4ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, 2ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, and 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. thick, and is of local red sandstone. The background of the angelic figure is one inch below the surface of the stone, and the wings about half an inch. The head rests upon the projecting arms of a cross or cruciferous nimbus. The Runic letters are incised, but owing to the action of time and weather many of them have been obliterated. Those remaining are shown about one-fifth full size in No. 2, taken from a photograph of plaster casts made from a "squeeze." The ornamentation at the base of the tympanum, a small portion of which is shown at the bottom of this photograph, points to late Transitional Norman—twelfth century. At the commencement of the inscription the stone is broken away, and at some past time it has evidently been lime-washed, for in the grooves of the semi-circles and in other places traces of lime can still be seen. The Rev. T. Edge Wright of Fell Mount, Pennington, called the attention of Dr. T. K. Fell of Barrow-in-Furness to the stone, who, observing the Runic letters, at once saw its value and importance. He subsequently photographed it, and afterwards I took a rubbing and squeeze-tracing. Figs. I. and

II. are from the *Reliquary*; the blocks kindly lent by Mr. J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A.

The tympanum has evidently belonged to the doorway of the church at Pennington, which existed from a remote period. It can be shown to have been in existence in the time of King Henry I.—that is, prior to A.D. 1135. By a mandate of William, Earl of Warrenne, son of King Stephen—which could not be earlier than A.D. 1153, for he did not obtain his father's estates till after that date—the church at Pennington was commanded to be restored to Furness Abbey, from whom it had been appropriated by the brethren of Conishead of the gift of Gamel de Pennington.

I therefore advise, command and enjoin unto all, that whatsoever properties appertaining to the Abbey, which it possessed in the year and on the day King Henry died, by whomsoever they may have been taken and appropriated must be fully restored to it without delay or trouble, especially its church of Pennington, and another Religious Order shall not be commenced in its fee, against the will of the Convent; and assart Ireleth, and all things taken away, and all assart [cleared land] which was in the forest of my alms after the death of King Henry, all these the Abbot of Furness shall re-take into his own hands, nor elsewhere throughout all Furness must any Religious House be established without the license and testimony of my assent.*

The church at Pennington is also referred to in a grant dated sometime between A.D. 1175 and 1187 to the monks of St. Mary of Furness, of Fordebodele, Crivelton and Roose, and in the advowson of the church of Urswick with the chapels (of Pennington and Ulverston), together with Bardsea and its fisheries. Among the witnesses to this grant were Richard, master of the hospital [of Conishead, or of Loppergarth, Pennington]; Daniel, the parson of Aldingham; Benedict de Pennington, and Alan and Alexander his sons, and eight others. (Seal of William de Furnesia.) †

* *The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey*, pp. 126-7.

† *Charters of the Duchy of Lancaster*, Box B 2, S.D., No. 50.

Until A.D. 1208 the chapels of Ulverston and Pennington belonged to Urswick Church, and at that date the monks of Furness gave up all claim conditionally.*

The dedication of Pennington Church to St. Leonard is referred to in the will of Richard Fell of Pennington, dated 12th October, 1478, of which part reads as follows:—

“ In Dei nomine Amē xij^o die me(nsis) Octobr' anno Dn. (M) cccclxxviii^o Ego Ricūs Fell de Penyngton cōpos m(entis) sane memorie videns piclū mort' appinquare ordino facio testamentū meū in hūc modū. Inp^{is} lego āiam meā Deo ōipotenti b'te ōib; scīs corpusq; meū ad sepeliend' in eccl'ia scī leonardi de Pen(yngton) mortuario meo meā optiam togā et alia bona se'dū usū pochie. It' leg p'dicanc' videli't loncastr' carliol' Sancto Roberto de Knaresburgh eo' xx^d”

(TRANSLATION.)

In the name of God, Amen. On the xiith day of the month of October Anno Domini 1478, I Richard Fell of Pennington of sound mind and perfect memory seeing the peril of death approach, ordain make (and publish) my will in this manner. In the first place I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, (to blessed Mary) and all the Saints and my body to be buried in the Church of St. Leonard of Pen(nington) For my mortuary my best cloak and other goods according to the usage of the Parish. Item I bequeath to the following Chantries, namely, Lancaster, Carlisle, and St. Robert of Knaresburgh (.) xx^d (each ?)

In one of Dr. Close's unpublished MSS., written about 1810, he states that the church at Pennington contained “remains of a larger fabric, as is evident from several round-topped arches being incorporated in the north side wall. The great doorway on the south is a circular arch, with a chevron or zigzag moulding.” It is somewhat singular that no mention is made of a tympanum, but

* *The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey*, pp. 437-8.

according to Mr. T. Alcock-Beck, who made copies of the MSS., they were left in such a confused state that it is not improbable some reference to the tympanum may have been made and lost, or the tympanum may have been plastered over.

When the church at Pennington was rebuilt in 1826, the ancient dedication to St. Leonard seems to have been unknown. The late J. P. Morris, F.A.S.L., once stated to Dr. T. K. Fell that the dedication to St. Michael was given from the fact that what was taken to be a representation of that saint had been found in one of the windows of the previous church—or possibly this stone gave the idea of St. Michael. Mr. J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A., informs me that the cruciferous nimbus is usually supposed to be an attribute of Christ in Christian art,* so that it is unusual to find an angel with a nimbus of this kind.

In the grounds at Fell Mount are several carved red sandstones, which have been part of the ancient church at Pennington. These stones are apparently Transitional Norman and of about the same date as the tympanum, and have formed parts of the capitals of octagonal pillars. Each of these stones has had carved on it four human heads in high relief. The largest stone (Fig. 3) measures 2ft. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins. across, and it is 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high. The three smaller stones are each 2ft. 2ins. across and 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high. The carved heads on the largest stone (Fig. 3) are 5ins. high and 4ins. wide, while those on the three smaller stones are 5ins. high and 3ins. wide—one only of the latter having a beard. So far as is at present known, these stones and the octagonal-shaped font (which was formerly with the carved stones at Fell Mount, but has recently

* Miss Stokes' translation of Didron's *Christian Iconography*, vol. i., p. 40. (In Mrs. Twining's *Christian Symbols*, &c., p. 204, it is noted that "in Saxon subjects the rays of the nimbus frequently pass beyond the line of the circle," giving an example from an eleventh-century MS.—the wheel-cross of the period, in fact. Here the circle seems to be absent; only the arms of the cross appear.—ED.)



CARVED STONE AT FELL MOUNT, PENNINGTON. (FIG. III.)

Photo. by S. B. Gaythorpe.

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been removed into the church) are all that remain of the ancient church at Pennington.

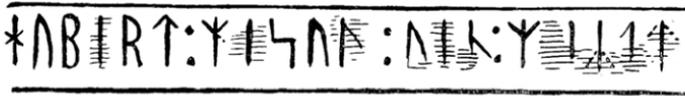
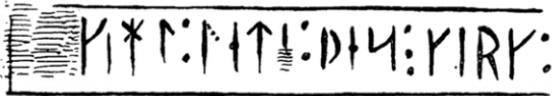
About 100 yards from Beckside Farm is the traditional site of a leper hospital. Little is known of its existence, but there is some record which the name Loppergarth (leper inclosure) confirms.* Near Ragged (Ragot) or Old Gill, about three-quarters of a mile north of Beckside Farm, is a field a little more than three acres in extent, known since the latter half of the eighteenth century as "Hospital." At an earlier date this field may have been endowed land belonging to a hospital at Pennington, but so far I have been unable to trace any connection between it and the leper hospital at Loppergarth.

In bringing before you the account of this tympanum, I wish to express my sense of obligation to the Rev. T. Edge Wright for permission to photograph the carved stones at Fell Mount, and to Dr. T. K. Fell, whose researches into the history and antiquities of Furness are well known. Had it not been for his knowledge of Runic inscriptions, this find—the first of its kind ever discovered in Furness—might still have remained unknown.

NOTE.—When the Fennington tympanum was discovered, Dr. Fell and Mr. Gaythorpe kindly sent me photographs and rubbings, from which, however, it was impossible to get a satisfactory reading. Since then I have had the opportunity of examining the stone itself at leisure and in a good light, and found that many of the marks in the photograph and cast are natural cleavage-cracks, weathered out. In Fig. 1 you can see a series of lines crossing the picture diagonally—from north-east to south-west, one might say, if the tympanum were a map. These cracks, where they come into contact with the Rune-staves, are hopeless to disentangle in the best photograph or cast; but in the real thing they can be more or less distinguished by a difference in the texture of their edges from the artificial clearness of the cut letters. For instance in the sixth

* *The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey*, p. 411. Will of William de Skelmersherk, A.D. 1247:—"Item Leprosis juxta Ulverston vid. Leprosis juxta Coninghede," &c.

word, the strong line crossing the second letter is a natural crack. There seem to be eight words in all, and the rest of the space has not been inscribed. The first two or three letters have been broken away; in the sketch subjoined, the horizontal shading shows the defaced parts, and one or two doubtful members are given in dotted lines.



(. .) (K or M) I A L : (L or S ?) E T (I or E) : T H E S A : K I R K :
H U B (I?) R T : M (I or E?) S U (L or N) : U (I?) (N?) : M (.) (I?) (Y?) A (T?)

These are late Scandinavian Runes, less English in character than those of the Bridekirk font, but not quite the same as the "Dolfin" inscription in Carlisle Cathedral; and, of course, quite different from the much earlier Anglian Runes of Bewcastle Cross. One is apt to be suspicious of a new discovery in Runes, but these have an appearance of genuine antiquity. In twelfth-century tympana, the inscription usually records the dedication—"So-and-so built this church in honour of such-and-such a saint." We know that Gamel de Pennington gave the church to Conishead in the time of Henry II. (see Mr. Farrer's *Lancashire Pipe Rolls*, p. 357), and the architecture suggests that it might have been built in his time. Dr. Fell's first idea was that the first word was K M L and stood for Gamel. Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon, who points out to me that the third letter of this first word (as it stands) is a form undoubtedly used sometimes for A, also suggests in comparison the old form NURUIAK for *Norveg* in the Jellinge stone inscription, where also the spelling IAS for *es* occurs. The first word then may very reasonably be taken to have been (KA)MIAL for *Gamel*. Mr. Magnússon goes on to say, "If the first rune in the next word could be the short half-stroke which is a not uncommon form of the letter S in later runes, we should have SETI (*setti*) = 'established,' 'founded.' Then, with the short half-stroke for S again, THESA (*thessa*) and KIRK (*kirkiu*) would give 'Gamel founded this church.' *Setja* is quite a technical term in this connection,—*setja stad*, to found a church benifice; *setja klaustr*, to found a monastery; *setja musteri*, to found a minster; *setja kirkeju*, to

set up a church on a site where none was before." To this it might be answered that Pennington seems to have had a church before Gamel built this one; but still the word may have been used of his new foundation—if indeed we can read an S.

Mr. Magnússon continues, "The next three words I venture, hesitatingly, to read *Hubert mesun van(n)*, 'Hubert the mason wrought (built)'" Dr. Fell had previously suggested "Hubert" and "mason," but as Mr. Magnússon makes the suggestion independently, great support is given to this reading.

The last word is still a puzzle. The initial M is clear, and *mynd*, "the picture" or figure of the angel, would make sense, but does not fill out the line. Mr. Magnússon says, "I cannot, to my satisfaction, make out of it *Mikial*, Michael, and yet I feel that the winged figure may possibly represent that Archangel."—(ED.)