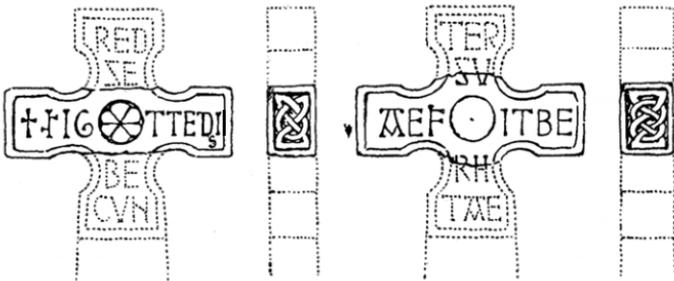


ART. VIII.—*Notes on Early Crosses at Carlisle, Bewcastle and Beckermes.* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

Read at Carlisle, April 23rd, 1915.

I.—THE CROSS-FRAGMENT AT THE FRATRY, CARLISLE.

THIS stone, described by Mr. Purday in 1857 to the Royal Archæological Institute, and by myself in Calverley's *Early Sculptured Crosses* in 1899, bears, I think, a little further study. By restoring the head, as in the dotted lines of the sketch, we get a suggestion for a reading more probable than one which attributes it to a lady named "Sigttedis." Beginning with the cross,



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and remembering that the space available for the second half of the first name is small, I propose "✠ SIG[RED SE]TTE DIS [BECVN],"—"Sigred set up this monument" (with "becun" as on the Thornhill and Wycliffe stones, and d for the crossed δ which came into use somewhat later than the period at which I think this carving and ornament must be dated). On the reverse, "ÆF-[TER] SVITBERH[TAE],"—"in memory of Swithberht"; the name seems clear, though one would expect a *d* instead of a *t* as the fourth letter. Two Swithberhts

are named by Bede ; one was a missionary to the heathen Germans at the end of the 7th century ; the other was abbot of Dacre in 698. But I do not think that this cross can be so early, because we cannot say for certain that any grave-crosses in this district date from 700 or thereabouts ; they seem to be rather later : and the rosette in the centre of the obverse, and the Carrick bend of two members on the end of one arm, are characteristic rather of work which we can place by analogy in the 9th century, but still pre-Danish.

There was a Sigred abbot of Ripon from 787, but I do not suggest that we have any reason to believe that he was the friend of Swithberht here commemorated, although his date is not inconsistent with the requirements, and an abbot of Ripon might have connections with monks in the abbey of Carlisle. But in the absence of historical accounts, between Cuthbert's time and that of Eadred, abbot of Carlisle at the Danish invasion, it is valuable to find two names of local interest surviving from that dark period.

II.—THE BEWCASTLE CROSS.

We have to thank and congratulate the committee of the Carlisle Library and Museum in the matter of the acquisition of the cast of the cross, which adorns Tullie House and ought to be of great service to antiquaries. The literature of the subject has been growing lately, and shows how great an interest is taken in this monument and its problems, far and wide. The article in the *Burlington Magazine* for April, 1914, by Messrs. M. D. Forbes and Bruce Dickins, dated the form of runes here used to the 8th century. On the other hand Professor Albert S. Cook has contributed papers to the *Scottish Historical Review*, showing that in the 12th century there was a remarkable antiquarian movement, to which he attributes the use of these runes and the design of an earlier age. Professor Cook has also published "Some Accounts of

the Bewcastle Cross between the years 1607 and 1861," which ought to be a warning to theorists. Nevertheless, we continue to theorize.

One contribution has been made by the Rev. Dr. J. King Hewison, who contends for a 10th century date. In his handsome volume, full of curious matter, are some statements and suggestions which call for remark. He considers the Bewcastle shaft as an obelisk (p. 40) which perhaps had a cone on the top, though he says (p. 151) that a cross is as likely. He connects the sundial (p. 109) and other details with Mithraism, which he thinks may have survived on "the Borders" from Roman times to the 10th century (p. 104). He suggests that the Eamot of king Æthelstan was Bewcastle (p. 11) and interprets the name as the *mound of Eâ* (p. 109)—the god of the deep in the earliest Babylonian mythology. He also finds in the runic word *Kyniburg* the Anglo-Saxon name of the Roman fort of Bewcastle, "made the site of a regularly constituted borough" (p. 76) where the cross was set up "to commemorate the recent assumption of the Northern diadem by king Eadred" (p. 103). The person who erected it he sees in the figure called the Falconer, representing Wulfric the Hunter, to whom Eadred in 946 granted land at Workington. The charter is witnessed by one Cadmo[n], a name some have read on the Ruthwell cross; and Dr. Hewison thinks that this Cadmon was an Oriental, probably an Alexandrian sculptor (pp. 103, 138). The verses from the poem of the Dream of the Rood, attributed to Cynewulf, he thinks were inserted on the Ruthwell cross on the suggestion of St. Dunstan, whom he considers the designer of that cross (p. 150): indeed, St. Dunstan himself was Cynewulf (App. 2) and had the inscription written in runes to conciliate the Northmen, agreeably to his general policy (pp. 145, 150). These monuments, Dr. Hewison says, cannot be earlier than the Danish invasion, for the Danes and other pagans would

have pulverised them (pp. 142, 151-2). As they are marvellous and unique conceptions (p. 129), surpassing in their figure-drawing all Northumbrian art (p. 87) they cannot be the work of any period before the 10th century. From indications seen on the cast at Dublin he restores the Ruthwell head as a wheel-cross (pl. xxiv.) and in the topmost figure in the Bewcastle shaft he sees St. Cuthbert holding the head of St. Oswald, where others see St. John and the Lamb.

We have therefore three completely different datings of this monument before us. Professor Cook places it in the Norman period. Dr. Hewison places it in the Viking age. The ordinary English view places it in the time of the Angles, before the Danish invasion, and the only difference between various English antiquaries has been the exact date in that Anglian period. The old view, to which I assented formerly, was that the inscriptions as then read made it erected in the first year of king Ecgrith, or 670-1. That seemed to settle the question; but the reading of the runes as a whole is now doubted, and it relieves us of a difficulty. The difficulty is this—that when the great series of many hundreds of British crosses gradually comes into classified shape, we find few that can be dated so early as 670. It seems to me very unlikely that any such stone-carvers' work was done here before the building of Hexham, which was a little later; and indeed whether the Northumbrian scroll-and-plait crosses came into fashion much before the 8th century, especially in their more elaborate forms. But I think the comparison of the remains proves that this style of art died out in the latter part of the 9th century after the Danish invasion, and that in the 10th century a new form of ornament, the Viking age style, came into vogue; which makes it difficult to place the Bewcastle cross in that period. Any cross of the 10th century in Cumberland would surely be more like the Gosforth cross in its details.

And in the 12th century, I should expect ornament of Norman type, something like the Bridekirk font.

Therefore, while offering a new date to Bewcastle Cross, I am only shifting its place to a somewhat later part of the same Anglian period—that is, between about 700 and about 870. The reasons for this are set forth in papers printed in the Newcastle Society's Proceedings and in the Yorkshire Archæological Journal, last year. In a very few words I would sum them as follows.

The plaits that appear to be used with 10th century or Viking age ornament are very simple and easy to design. Those that are seen in crosses of early Anglian character are more ingenious and complicated,—symmetrical interlacings of one strand knotted upon itself. It seems evident that designers began with elaboration and ingenuity, and gradually found means to cover the space with less trouble—a common development in the history of art. The first stage in this development seems to have been the use of more than one member in the plait, to save trouble in making ends—literally—meet; and as time went on the separate closed member became commoner and simpler until we get mere chains of loops and rings in Viking age running patterns.

Now the Bewcastle plaits are of the kind seen in later Anglian design. All of them are made of two members, as would be seen if the straps were painted—and I think they were originally painted in colours like those of manuscript illuminations of the period—giving a pretty dovetailed effect. This alone suggests a date not at the beginning of the period, but somewhat late in it.

Again, we can find analogies to some of the plaits, which tend to suggest dating. The uppermost plait of the three on the south face is identical with 9th century design at Otley and Collingham—for the proofs of the dating I can only now refer to the articles on those places in *Y.A.J.*, xxiii. The lowest plait on the same side is

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