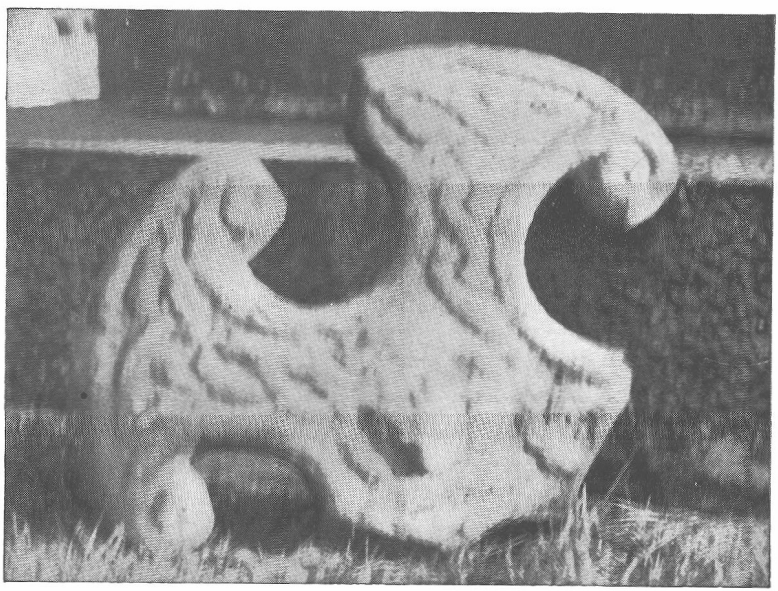

Photo. by T. L. Tudor

THE ROWSLEY CROSS-HEAD
(now preserved in Rowsley Church).

Reverse side.—The other side of the stone was illustrated in D.A.J., N.S. Vol. 6, 1932, p. 98.

The Rowsley Cross-Head.

By T. L. Tudor.

ON page 98 of Vol. LIII (1932) of the Society's *Journal* a preliminary notice of the discovery of this cross-head was given, with an illustration showing one side, we may call it the 'obverse' side, of the stone. The frontispiece shows the reverse side, from which it will be seen that the pattern is identical on both sides. Both illustrations are necessary to give a complete idea of the fragment.

Further investigations, since the date of the first notice, now make it evident that the fragment shows unique features in certain of its characteristics, at any rate, so far as the present state of knowledge in such matters is concerned. The volute endings to the arms are the crux of the question and although, as previously stated, expanded arms are common enough in the North as appears from Mr. W. G. Collingwood's exhaustive work on "Northumbrian Crosses," there is no single rival to the Rowsley stone with its graceful curvilinear terminals.

In Irish, Cornish and Welsh crosses we meet with the same disappointment, nor is there anything at all similar in the late Mr. Romilly Allen's "Early Christian Monuments of Scotland." The same opinion is held by Mr. W. H. Clapham, author of "English Romanesque Architecture," who replied to my enquiry in the negative way, and also by Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, Editor of "Antiquity." Mr. Reginald Smith of the British Museum replies to me as to Mr. T. E. Routh, "I can find no parallel in stone to your cross-head." Sir Charles Peers, at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries on

November 30 of this year, expressed the view that the style may be just a 'local peculiarity,' although such curvilinear form was common enough in manuscript art. As to the latter point, it is obvious that there is a marked affinity between the trumpet spiral of Celtic art and the volute as we see it here. Romilly Allen, in "Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian times" (Antiquary series), states, on page 287, that spiral ornament is to be found in ten famous manuscripts before the end of the 9th century, and further, that spiral ornament of one sort or another on stone and metal is found in Ireland and Scotland. Curvilinear work in the form of debased spirals has been discovered by Mr. Clapham among the relief sculptures on the frieze at Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire. But the drawing of such curves in manuscript work, and the cutting of them in relief sculpture on a small scale, are quite different matters from the carving of a large free-standing cross in the round. The craftsmanship must have been of a high order both in design and execution.

The Editor of the *Journal*, Mr. F. Williamson, added a useful footnote to my remarks last year, drawing attention to the "Lechmere Stone," described by the late Prof. G. B. Baldwin Brown in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. XI, 1931, p. 226, which has the volute endings to the arms, but that stone, bearing an equal-armed cross in high relief and not free-standing, also comparatively small and rude in technique, cannot come into the same category. The entire stone, of panel form, with cross and supporting details, is scarcely as large as the Rowsley fragment, which probably formed the head of a grand monument ten or twelve feet high. None of the opinions received suggest doubt that this is the significance of the stone under discussion. Moreover, the Lechmere cross is contained in a circular border and suggests the wheel pattern, but a careful consideration of the Rowsley

cross leads to the conclusion that the arms never touched to form an unbroken circle.

Again, so far as the general pattern is concerned, there remains the case of a small bronze brooch to which several authorities have referred me. It was found in George Street, Canterbury, prior to 1861, and is illustrated in the *Victoria History of Kent*, Vol. I, p. 382, fig. 26. Its period is the 9th or 10th century. The British Museum now has it. But on examination it proves to be very different, being somewhat angular in its design and entirely without the free and flowing grace of our Derbyshire example. Moreover, the arm-terminals are not volutes, but merely nobs.

Concerning the question of period:—Mr. Collingwood thought the 11th century a probable date, but Miss Longhurst of the Victoria and Albert Museum, thought we might place it earlier. A message from Mr. Clapham reaches me to the effect that " It appears to be a work of the 9th or 10th century." Sir Charles Peers suggests the 9th century. Mr. O. G. S. Crawford of the Ordnance Survey writes asking to be allowed to keep a print of the photograph in view of a forthcoming classification of pre-Norman sculpture as before or after the year 870. This specimen he will probably include in the later period. Perhaps in view of the accomplished craftsmanship of the stone in its freedom of design and its surface technique a date in the Anglian period is matter for dispute.

Now it cannot be denied that the form of this cross-head is very striking. It cannot have been designed and executed " in artistic vacuo." Some provoking influence is to be sought even if we cannot find it at present. Two possible sources are obvious. It may have been inspired by a two-spiral form as shown in Romilly Allen's " Celtic Art " above referred to, page 288, where a ' method of connecting spirals ' is shown, i.e. a bow-shaped curve,

each end finishing in an incurved spiral. The original idea is seen at South Kyme, Lincolnshire, on the Deerhurst font, and in the Lindisfarne Gospels. The only other incentive would be the Ionic volute, a Greek architectural motive. The former source would naturally indicate that at Rowsley we have a bold and finely executed interpretation of a well known Celtic form, the latter would offer a novel problem, inasmuch as, although Greek influence has been fully established in the North by the researches of Baldwin Brown, this architectural motive is not in evidence.

This is an interesting point but for the moment we waive it in favour of the former, and merely express the view that the stone is unquestionably Celtic in its general outlines. We have no idea as to what the shaft was like.

But the term 'Celtic' is here used with due consideration, and I must ask for a few more words to prevent myself from being misunderstood. There is a 'little war' in books on this question of the use of the term. Romilly Allen, taking it for granted that certain decorative motives, including the spiral, having appeared first in Ireland, English examples should all be termed Celtic. But Baldwin Brown argues that there were Anglian versions of this and other patterns, and would give the Lindisfarne Gospels a Northumbrian origin. Dr. Bronsted steps in with a somewhat ironical reference to the last named theory. The root fact seems to be that the spiral dates from the Late Iron Age (La Téne period) and seems to have been first carried to Ireland, whence it spread elsewhere. Thus it is Early Celtic in origin without question, unless we get further back and accept the suggestion of several writers that the motive is a derivation from the Greek volute or palmette, which brings us round a circle of argument to the suggestions above made as to the ultimate classical origin of the Rowsley example.

As to the knot-work pattern, there is now a large body of opinion that we need no longer labour the question of geographical origin in regard to certain simple and primitive devices, which may very well have been quite independently invented in many regions. In primitive things the human brain works along similar lines whenever occupied in similar activities. As to the central boss; according to Baldwin Brown this is an early Teutonic and Pagan device. It may be in imitation of the shield. But in Christian times it was adapted to Christian uses in the pectoral cross and the processional cross, for the carrying of saints' relics. Later the stone crosses perpetuated the idea.

In the former notice on this subject it was stated that "History records no ancient sanctuary at Rowsley." But the writer has since found a reference in Thomas Bateman's "Ten Years Diggings" (1848-1858), p. 101, to a tradition then extant at Rowsley, that a chapel once stood on the level ground just below the old bridge near the confluence of the Wye and the Derwent; a very likely place. But the supposed sandstone stoup found there and taken to be for consecrated water is, in reality, a domestic mortar with four lugs to steady it when in use. Many such have been found in the county.