

I.

DESCRIPTION OF A COLLECTION OF OBJECTS FOUND IN EXCAVATIONS AT ST BLANE'S CHURCH, BUTE, EXHIBITED BY THE MARQUIS OF BUTE. BY JOSEPH ANDERSON LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

St Blane's Church, in the parish of Kingarth, Bute, is now a roofless ruin, consisting of nave and chancel, mostly of 'Norman' work, but partly of inferior masonry and rubble work, which has been supposed by some writers to be the remains of an older and ruder edifice, but is considered by Macgibbon and Ross to be due to a later reconstruction.¹ St Blane, the nephew of St Cathan of Kilchattan, and a contemporary of St Columba, is chronicled in the Irish Calendars as of Cengaradh (Kingarth) in Bute, and the founder of the ecclesiastical settlement which bore his name there.

In 1896, in consequence of the serious disintegration of the building, Lord Bute gave instructions to Robert Weir Schultz, Architect, to have the walls thoroughly examined and repaired. Some parts were so unsafe that the only course possible was to take them down stone by stone and rebuild them. In doing so some sculptured stones were found to have been used in the foundations of the so-called 'Norman' work; and these were taken out and preserved.

While the work at the church was in progress the attention of Lord Bute was drawn by Mr Schultz to the remains of the thick wall of enclosure of the precinct, locally known as 'The Causeway,' and it was resolved to try to trace it right round. On the south side no traces of it were visible, and in digging trenches to discover the line of the wall, the remains of a series of foundations of early dwellings were discovered, extending over a considerable area south of the churchyard and inside the enclosing wall of the precinct. During the summer a considerable por-

¹ See Mr Galloway's account of St Blane's Church in the *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. v. p. 317; *Bute in the Olden Time*, by Rev. J. King Hewison, vol. i. p. 182; and Macgibbon & Ross's *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 295.

tion of the site was uncovered and the various objects which were found are now described and illustrated. At the close of the season the work was stopped, and the foundations again covered over. Lord Bute had intended to examine the excavations and eventually to explore the whole site, but nothing further has been done.

The remains indicate that in all probability the original site has not been changed. About 50 yards to the west of the church, a line of cliff forming one side of the little valley runs nearly north and south, and along its base is an irregular talus of rocky fragments, mixed up with which are here and there remains of rude dry-built walling, apparently forming parts of roughly constructed chambers of irregular circular and oblong forms. Nearly 100 yards to the north-west, and close under the shelter of the cliff, is a larger dry-built structure much more solidly and regularly built, consisting of a wall about 9 feet thick, enclosing an approximately circular area of about 30 feet in diameter. The wall is still complete in its inner circumference, rising to a height of from 2 or 3 feet to nearly 10 feet at the highest part, and showing an entrance at the south-east side nearly 4 feet wide at the outside, narrowing slightly towards the inner side. A massive dry-built wall about 4 to 5 feet thick encloses the precinct, including the church and churchyard as well as the remains of dry-built constructions, and a considerable area around the whole group. Starting from the cliff a few yards to the north of the circular structure, the enclosing wall keeps well out to the eastward of the church till the space enclosed between it and the cliff reaches about 150 yards in width, and then bends round to the south till it comes towards the cliff again, at a distance of fully 200 yards to the south of the circular structure. The area enclosed is thus approximately half of an oval of 200 yards by 150 yards bounded lengthways by the line of the cliff, having the circular structure at the northern end, the church and churchyard near the middle, and to the south of the churchyard a space apparently unoccupied. It was in this space between the southern boundary of the churchyard and the line of the enclosing wall that the principal part of the excavation was made.

The following is a detailed description of the objects found :—

Ovoid Pebble of quartzite, 4 inches in length by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, and about 1 inch in thickness, bearing marks of use at one end as a hammer-stone, and highly polished by use as a burnisher on one of its flatter faces.

Oblong semi-ovoid Pebble (fig. 1), of a reddish coloured clay-stone, 4 inches in length by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in thickness, flattened on one side by use as a burnisher.

Oblong quadrangular Whetstone or Burnisher of quartzite (fig. 2), $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth, by 1 inch in thickness, the ends bevelled off, the surfaces highly polished by use.

Oblong quadrangular Whetstone of silicious sandstone (fig. 3), 5 inches in length by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness, worn flat on one face by use.

Oblong quadrangular Whetstone or Burnisher of hard micaceous clay-stone (fig. 4), $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by 1 inch in breadth, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness in the middle of its length, tapering to both ends, and pierced at one end for suspension.

Oblong ovaly rounded Pebble of greywacke (fig. 5), $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches in length by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in breadth, and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in thickness, slightly polished on one face by use.

Oblong quadrangular Whetstone or Burnisher of hard micaceous claystone (fig. 6), $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches in length by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in breadth, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness in the middle of its length, and tapering slightly to both ends. On one side there is a groove as if by sharpening a wire or pin.

Broken portion of an oblong quadrangular Whetstone of hard micaceous claystone, 2 inches in length by 1 inch in breadth, and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in thickness, highly polished on all sides by use, and having at one end the commencement of a hole for suspension.

Broken portion of an oblong quadrangular Whetstone of silicious sandstone, 2 inches in length by 2 inches in breadth, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, highly polished on all four sides by use.

Portion of a Polishing Slab of red sandstone, 5 inches in length by

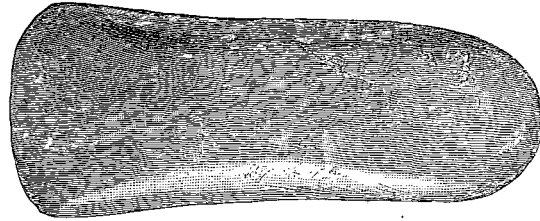


Fig. 1.

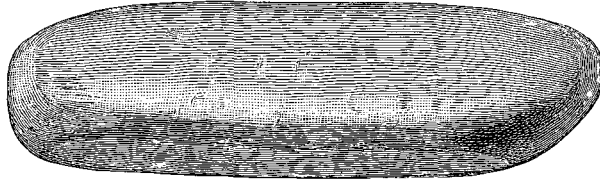


Fig. 2.

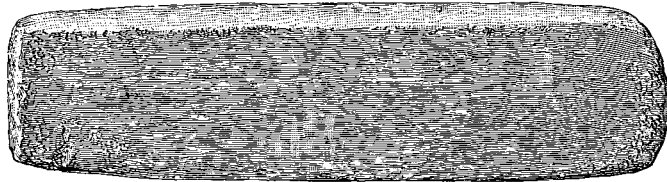


Fig. 3.

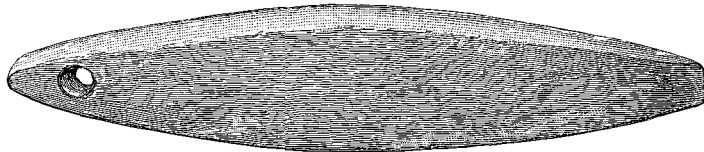


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

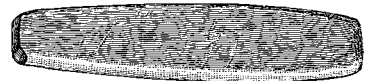


Fig. 6.

Stone Implements from St Blanc's, Bute. (3.)

$3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in thickness, with three grooves less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in width and depth on its upper surface made by point-sharpening.

Whorl of steatitic stone, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in depth, with a central hole for the spindle, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter.

Portion of a Mould of sandstone, measuring 2 inches in length by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, and 1 inch in thickness, having on one face part of a mould for ingots, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in width, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in depth, and on the other face two moulds for circular objects, partly broken away.

Portion of an Armlet of jet, about $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, the interior surface flattened, the exterior rounded.

Portion of a roughly-shaped and flattened Ring of shale or cannel coal, apparently in course of being made into an armlet.

Five portions of similar roughly-shaped and flattened Rings of shale or cannel coal, varying from 1 inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in the width of the band of the ring, and apparently in course of being made into armlets.

A complete Ring of shale or cannel coal, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness, flattened on both faces, and roughly rounded on the outside edge, having also a perforation $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, roughly cut through the centre from both lines, with an incised line cut round it at a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, so as to extend the aperture to a diameter of 2 inches, thus indicating the mode in which these armlets were fashioned out of the rough shale.

Piece of rough shale, unshaped, but with a circular button-like piece, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, and nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness scooped out of the centre, and a circular hole bored in the middle of the scooped out hollow, apparently in process of formation into an armlet.

Two of the irregularly rounded button-shaped pieces, scooped from pieces of shale like the one last described.

Small Ring of shale, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in thickness, with a central perforation $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter.

Thin splinter of shale, nearly $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches square, with an incised cross on one side, and on the other the letters D A (see figs. 7 and 8).

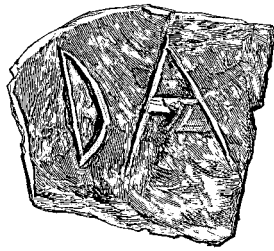


Fig. 7.

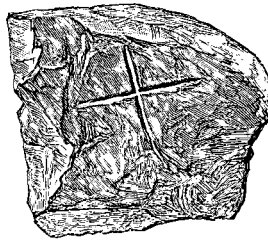


Fig. 8.

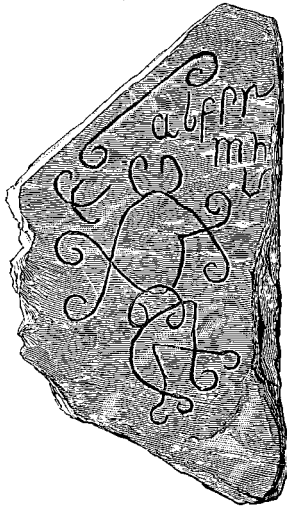


Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.

Pieces of Shale and Slate with incised letters and scrolls. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

Triangular portion of slate, 5 inches in length by 3 inches in breadth, covered on both sides with rudely scratched scrolls. On one side there are also a number of letters in old Irish script. (See figs. 9 and 10.)

Piece of slate (fig. 11), measuring $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 4 inches, having rudely scratched on one side a number of letters in old Irish script.

Piece of slate, having a peg hole through it, and one edge trimmed, and on one side, between the peg hole and the upper margin, a pattern of Celtic knot-work¹ rudely scratched in the surface (see fig. 12).

Piece of slate of triangular form, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by 3 inches in greatest breadth, having on one side a small square panel of Celtic knot-work, and alongside of it a letter or monogram with one leg lengthened, and terminating in a beast's head (see fig. 13).

Piece of slate of irregular form, 3 inches in length by 2 inches in breadth, with a figure of an animal rudely scratched on one side (see fig. 14).

Piece of slate of irregular form, 7 inches in length by 3 inches in greatest breadth, having on one side the rudely scratched figure of a running dog (?), and on the other side a stag hunt, with a single dog following the stag (see figs. 15 and 16).

A roofing slate, entire, of coarser texture than the foregoing fragments, measuring 13 inches by 5 inches, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness, with a peg hole $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter in the middle of the breadth, and 2 inches from the top of the slate. A series of 19 lines radiate from the hole at irregular distances, meeting an arc of a circle on the lower part about 3 inches from the hole.

Piece of a circular Grindstone of red sandstone, 8 inches along the

¹ There is in the British Museum a "flat piece of slate of irregular form found about 1830 at Kilaloe, Limerick, during excavations for a public work. On both sides were sculptured intricate interlaced patterns, consisting of animals and other ornaments, in the style which prevailed in Ireland during the eleventh and twelfth centuries." It was supposed to have been used by some sculptor or metal worker to trace out patterns which he intended to execute. *Proc. of the Soc. Ant. London*, vol. iv. (1858) p. 171. See also a similar piece of slate, with interlaced patterns and rude spirals, found in a crannog near Clones. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxx. p. 210.



Fig. 12.

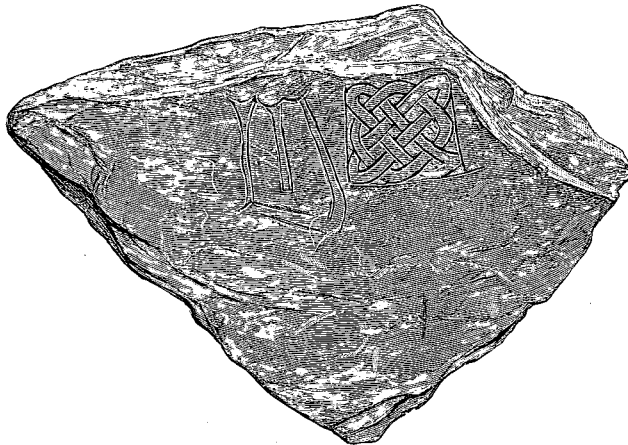


Fig. 13.

Pieces of Slate with incised ornament. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

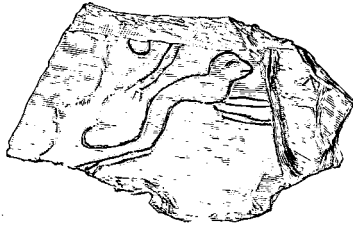


Fig. 14.

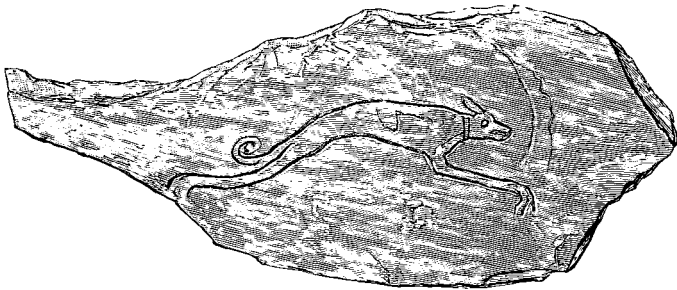


Fig. 15.

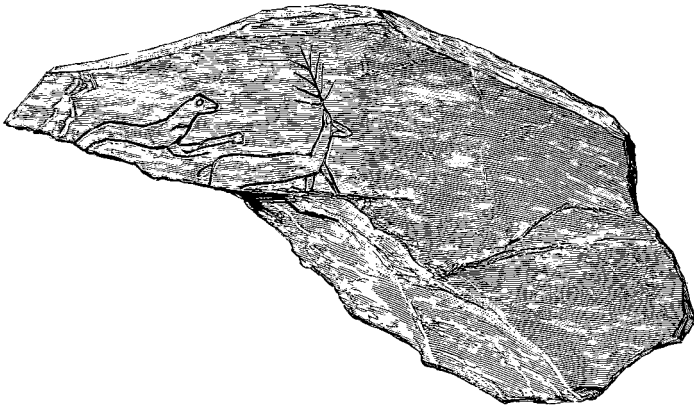


Fig. 16.

Pieces of Slate with incised animals and stag hunt. ($\frac{1}{2}$.)

curve, 5 inches in diameter, and 3 inches thick, which has been much used for grinding and point-sharpening.

Quadrangular piece of sandstone, 5 inches in length by 4 inches in breadth, by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness, the edges much grooved by point-sharpening.

Portions of a large Vessel of reddish pottery, 6 inches in diameter,

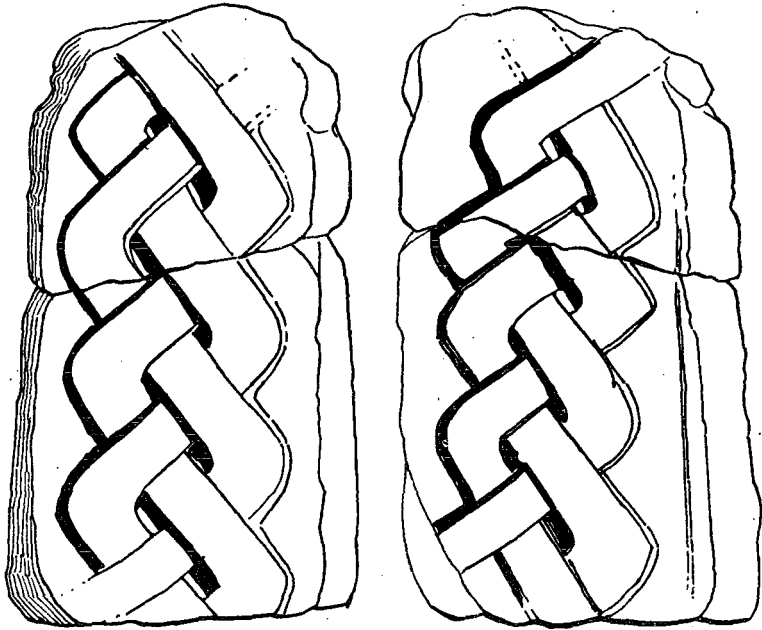


Fig. 17. Portion of Cross-shaft of sandstone. ($\frac{1}{3}$.)

the sides almost cylindrical, and covered inside and out with a black glaze. One portion shows a part of the lip. It has a heavy double moulding 1 inch in depth, and a flat brim fully 1 inch in width, which shows the brick-like colour and texture of the paste.

Portions of Water-jars of reddish ware with a greenish glaze; of two small Crucibles; and of horns of the red deer and roe deer.

The following is a description of sculptured stones at St Blane's, of

which drawings were also exhibited. Those represented in figs. 17, 18, 25, 26, 27, and 29 were found during the repairs on the church. The others were previously known.

Portion of Cross-shaft of red sandstone (fig. 17), 9 inches in length by $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, and 2 inches in thickness, having on both faces a pattern of interlaced work. Found in the north wall of the church.

Portions of Cross-shaft of sandstone (fig. 18), 2 feet 2 inches in length by $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, having on one side an angular pattern of interlaced work of four strands ending in circular loops. Found in the north wall of the church.

Grave-slab (fig. 19), 6 feet 10 inches in length by 2 feet 10 inches in breadth, bearing on the upper part a cross formed of interlinked oval rings, with terminals of Stafford-knots, and a central boss with four smaller bosses in the interstices.

Headstone (fig. 20), being a cross with plain shaft and a circular head, the cross-form defined by four oval sinkings.

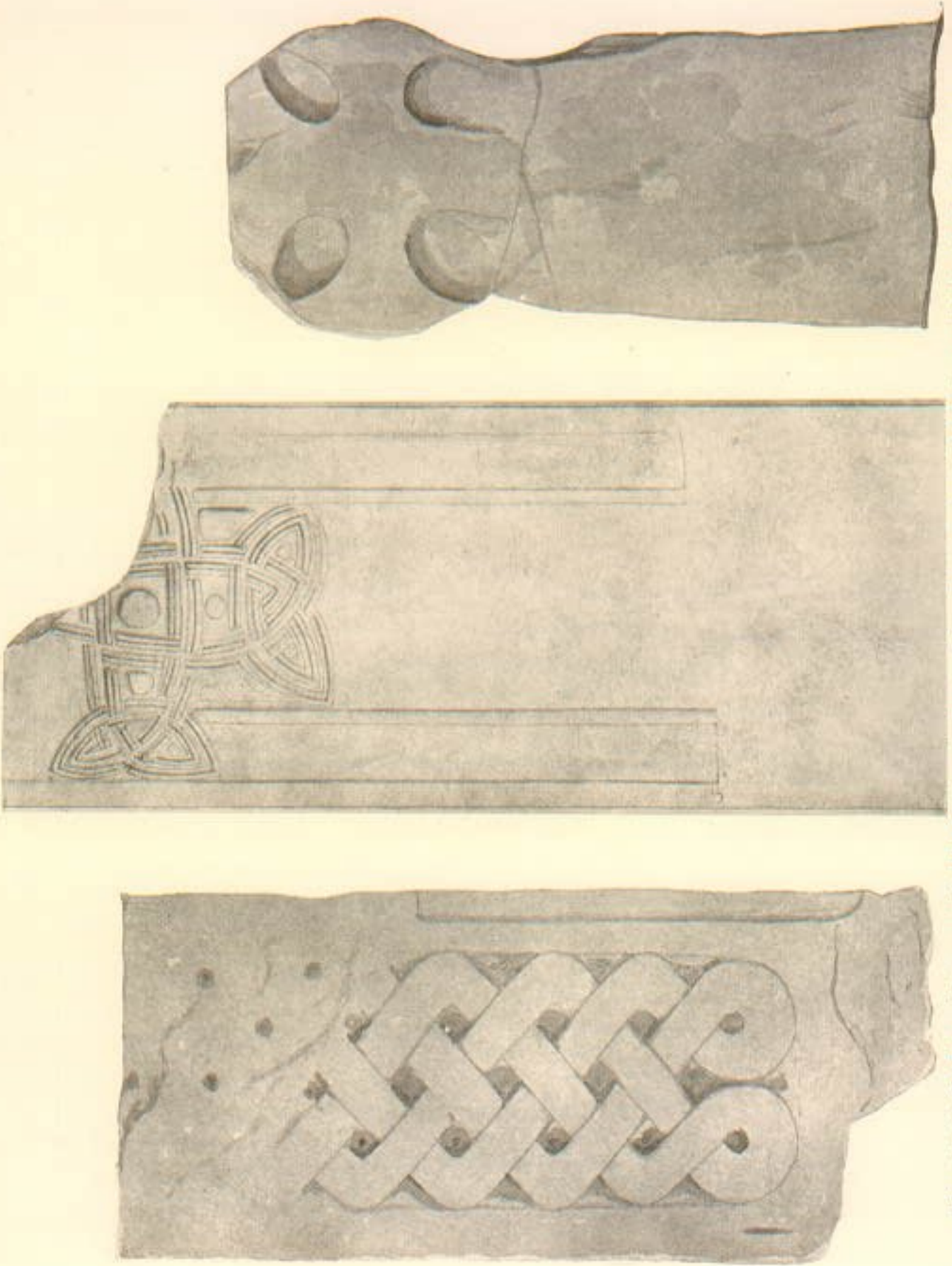
Three circular Cross-heads (figs. 21, 22, and 23) wanting shafts, the cross-form defined by four oval sinkings.

Cross-head of circular form, showing part of the shaft, the cross-shape resembling a wheel with four spokes (fig. 24), and having a diamond-shaped boss in the centre.

Portion of Slab, 2 feet 6 inches in length by 13 inches in breadth (fig. 25), having on one side a plain Latin Cross with double incised outlines. Found in the north wall of the church.

Portion, probably of the shaft of a cross, 1 foot 8 inches in length by 13 inches in breadth, having on one side (fig. 26) a man on horseback, and on the other (fig. 27) a rude figure of a man armed with a short sword, and having in his right hand a spear, and in the left a small circular target or shield. Found in the north wall of the church.

Grave-slab (fig. 28), 3 feet 8 inches in length, 12 inches in breadth at the head, tapering to 9 inches at the foot, having a defaced panel in the middle, with a pair of shears at one side, and two panels at the ends with oval rings intersecting diagonally.



Figs. 18-20. Sculptured Stones at St Blane's Church, Bute. From drawings by Mr Peckell, supplied by Mr R. W. Schultz.

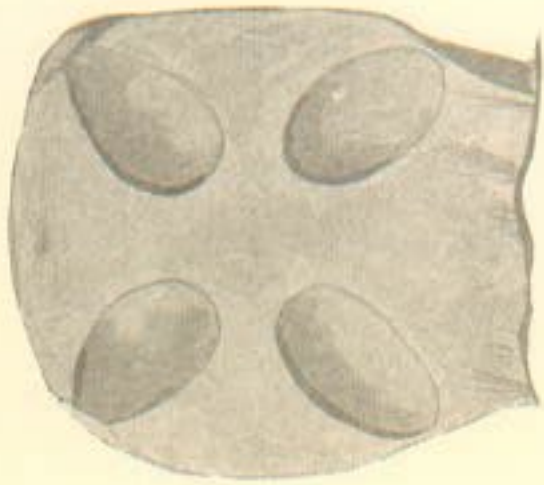


Fig. 21.

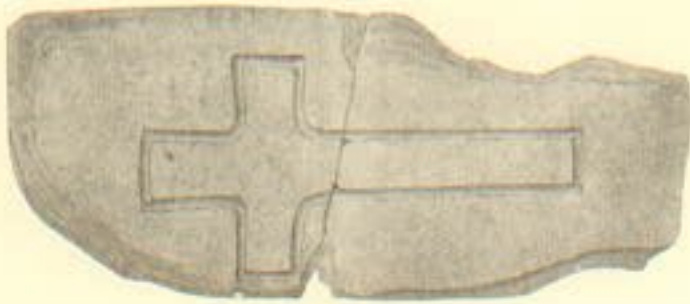


Fig. 25.



Fig. 22.

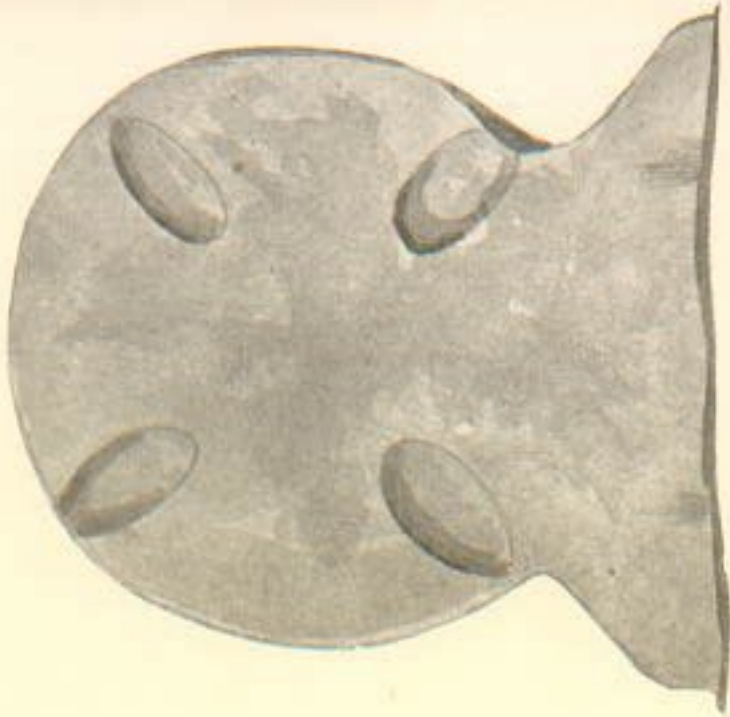


Fig. 23.

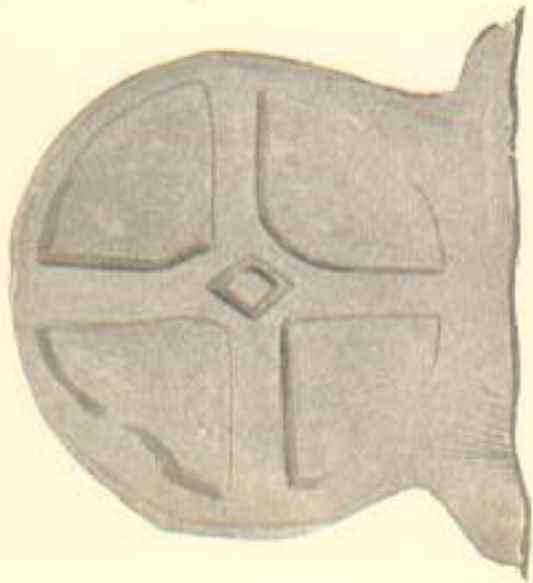


Fig. 24.

Sculptured Cross-heads and Cross-slab at St Blane's Church, Bute. From drawings by Mr Pechell, supplied by Mr R. W. Schultz.



Fig. 28.



Fig. 27.



Fig. 26.

Sculptured Stone at St Blane's Church, Bute. From drawings by Mr Pechell, supplied by Mr R. W. Schultz.



Fig. 29.



Fig. 30.



Fig. 31.

Sculptured Stones at St Blane's Church, Bute. From drawings by Mr Pechell,
supplied by Mr R. W. Schultz.

Large Grave-slab, broken across the middle, 5 feet in length by 1 foot 3 inches in breadth at the ends, having circles of 6 inches diameter at each of the four corners. The surface of the slab (fig. 29) is divided into three panels. In the upper panel is a Celtic Cross incised, having a circle connecting the arms, shaft, and summit; on either side of the shaft the space under the arms is filled with lines, which seem to be intended to outline a pattern of angular interlaced work, though the strands do not interlace. In the middle panel there is a suggestion of a pattern of fretwork. The lower panel is divided into four quarters, in three of which the ornament is defaced, while the fourth shows two oblong and pointed rings forming a diagonal interlacement. In the space between the circles at top and bottom of the slab are plain incised crosses of simple short lines, the one crossing obliquely and the other vertically.

Portion of a Slab (fig. 30), 2 feet 7 inches in length by $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, having in a panel on the upper part a figure of a horseman with a helmet and spear, the point of the spear appearing between the horse's fore legs. A partially defaced figure, suggestive, perhaps, of a bird in flight, appears before the face of the horseman. Underneath is another panel, filled with diagonal chequers with a dot in the centre of each.

Portion of a Cross-shaft with semicircular hollows at the intersections (fig. 31), the arms and summit broken away, a boss in the centre of the upper part, a marginal border of lines crossing each other diagonally, and on the lower part the figure of a nondescript animal, with defaced figures over it.

Grave-slab (fig. 32), 6 feet 4 inches in length by 25 inches in breadth at the top, and 22 inches at the foot, having in the upper part a panel 18 inches square, sub-divided into four squares, in each of which are two oval interlinked rings, placed diagonally with a diamond-shaped boss in the centre.

Grave-slab (fig. 33), 4 feet in length by 21 inches in width, with the figure of a broad-bladed sword 30 inches in length, with straight cross-guard and globular pommel.

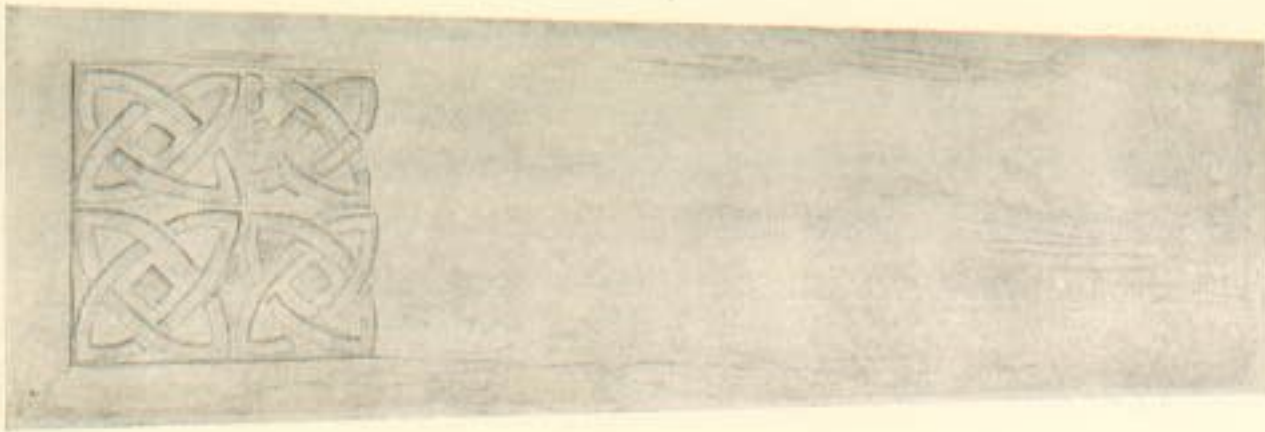


Fig. 32.

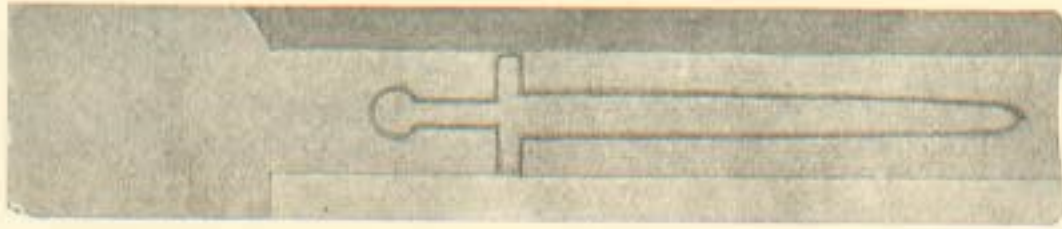


Fig. 33.



Fig. 34.



Fig. 35.

Sculptured Stones at St. Blane's Church, Bute. From drawings by Mr Pechell, supplied by Mr R. W. Schultz.

Grave-slab (fig. 34), 5 feet 10 inches in length, but imperfect at the lower end, 11 inches in width at the head, tapering to 9 inches at the foot, the edges bevelled and ornamented with a chevrony running pattern, on the lower part a square figure with triangular ornament round the margin, over that a pair of shears, and over that, occupying four-fifths of the length of the stone, a stem with alternating branches, all set at the same angle and each terminating in a quadrilobate leaf. Over this branching stem is a circular interlacement of four oval rings with a geometrical quatre-foil, the whole forming a symbolic cross with a circular head, in the manner frequently seen on the grave-slabs of the West Highlands of 13th century or later.



Fig. 36. Book-clasp of Brass.

Grave-slab (fig. 35), 6 feet 4 inches in length by 1 foot 9 inches in breadth at the top, and 1 foot 6 inches at the foot, having in the upper part a panel 16 inches square, sub-divided into four squares like the last, in each of which are two oval interlinked rings placed diagonally, with a diamond-shaped boss in the centre. The rest of the stone seems to have been covered with foliaceous ornamentation.

Not the least interesting among the many relics recovered during the progress of the excavations is the book-clasp of brass, here figured (fig. 36) of the actual size. It measures $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length by $\frac{7}{8}$ inches in breadth, thus indicating a volume of considerable thickness. The

ornamentation, which consists of a scroll of foliage, prettily arranged, with an oval in the centre enclosing a peculiarly shaped cross *fitchée*, seems to indicate a date somewhat later than the majority of the other articles found.