

Notes and News

A NEW CHI-RHO FROM MAUGHOLD, ISLE OF MAN (Pl. XI, A)

The parish church of St Maughold, in the NE. of the Isle of Man, occupies an ancient religious site on the southern slopes of Maughold Head, with a holy well nearby. The large graveyard indicates the extent of an important pre-Scandinavian monastery which continued to be occupied during the Viking period.¹ During November 1900, when major renovations were in progress at the parish church, part of a stone slab was discovered lying against the S. wall near the W. end of the church (SC49 S.E. 49299169) about 15 cm below the surface.² A description was subsequently published by P. M. C. Kermode³ and the slab appears as number 21 in his important work *Manx Crosses*.⁴ The slab has since been renumbered and appears as number 41 in the Manx Museum *Register (Crosses)*.

The slab, which is figured on one side only, is an irregular fragment of soft blue-grey slate, 54.6 cm high by 32.5 cm wide, with a maximum depth of 5.2 cm. What remains of the slab appears to be slightly less than half of its original size and a large surface flake 0.8 cm deep is missing along the whole length of the fractured edge of the figured side, removing all trace of carving in that area. The surface does not seem to have been dressed before the incised design was applied. The slab is currently displayed on the central plinth in Maughold Cross House with its lower 6.5 cm embedded.⁵

The incised design is composed of two arcs, cut to a depth of 0.4 cm, each of which represents approximately one third of the circumference of a circle. The arcs radiate from the broken edge of the slab, so that the remaining fragment (including the area lost owing to the fracture) would probably have been sufficient to carry almost a semi-circle. The arcs lie on average 6 cm apart; although both are slightly irregular and it is difficult to project a common centre, it seems reasonable to postulate that they were originally constituent parts of two circles which continued beyond the fracture.⁶

Within the inner arc and running at an angle to it from the broken edge are two more incised arcs, cut 0.15 cm deep. These join the inner circle obliquely and together probably form the remains of half the right arm of a cross patée.

Three centimetres beyond the outer circle, in the top right-hand corner of the slab, is incised the minuscule form of the Greek letter Omega which is now partly obliterated due to the fracturing of the stone. The top left-hand stroke and curve are clearly visible and expand at the top into a clubbed serif terminal — a feature which has been lost from the other damaged stems. It is highly probable that the Omega was balanced on the lost area beyond the fracture by a matching Greek letter Alpha.⁷

A feature not previously noted on this slab is a shallow curving incised line which begins at a point on the edge of the fracture 1.2 cm below the topmost point of the inner circle arc and runs in an approximate semi-circle, at a radius of 1.2 cm, to a lower point near the fracture, where it becomes difficult to follow because of the surface damage. The curve appears to be part of the Greek letter Rho which is likely to have been attached originally to the right-hand vertical arc of the upper arm of the cross patée which is now lost. The proportions of the remaining curve (see Pl. XI, A) seem consistent with this suggestion.

A strikingly similar Chi-Rho is now preserved in the Museum at Whithorn, Galloway⁸ where it was removed from the high ground on the S. of the town by the side of the road

leading to the Isle of Whithorn.⁹ This example has previously been held to be unique and is dated to the 7th century on epigraphic evidence.¹⁰ Although there is another Rho attached to an arciform cross patée at Iona¹¹ and two more at Raasay House, Skye,¹² none of these occurs within a circle and all are significantly different from those at Maughold and Whithorn.

There is one probable Irish example from the important site on the island of Inishkea North, Co. Mayo.¹³ This, however, has an elaborately voluted and crossed stem, and an added arc joining the vertical arcs forming the upper arm of the cross, while the intersecting arcs which form the cross continue beyond the inner circle to join the outer circle in each instance — features not found at Maughold or Whithorn.

This new example of a Rho attached to an expanded-arm cross from Maughold is concrete evidence which lends further credibility to the view that there were close links during the late 6th and 7th centuries between what appear to have been similar types of monastic site at Maughold and Whithorn. This idea should not be surprising as the Isle of Man and Isle of Whithorn are only 32 km apart and the respective monasteries no more than 39 km as the crow flies.

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NOTES

¹ B. R. S. Megaw, 'The Monastery of Saint Maughold', *Proc. of the Isle of Man Nat. Hist. and Antiq. Soc.*, 5, part II (1950), 169–80.

² P. M. C. Kermodé, *Manx Crosses* (1907), 109.

³ P. M. C. Kermodé, 'Early Christian Monuments at Kirk Maughold Isle of Man', *Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist* (July 1902), 184–85.

⁴ Kermodé, *op. cit.* note 2.

⁵ Using the measurements given in Kermodé, *op. cit.* note 2.

⁶ Cf. 42(25)*, *ibid.* 110–11; 46(26), *ibid.* 111; 164(—), *Jnl. of the Manx Museum*, 4, no. 61 (1939), pl. 176; 169(—) B. A. M. Cubbon, 'Cross-Slabs and Related Inscriptions found since 1939', *Jnl. of the Manx Museum*, 7, no. 82 (1966), 26 — not illustrated.

* Where crosses are quoted by number, the first element is the number in the Manx Museum *Register* and that within the brackets is the number used by Kermodé.

⁷ Compare the stone from Kirkmadrine, Rhinns of Galloway, C. A. R. Radford and G. Donaldson, *Whithorn and Kirkmadrine* (1953), 43, K1. and pl. 8, and V. E. Nash Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (1950); 207, no. 376; 208, no. 380; 210–11, no. 382; 215, no. 392. Compare also C. Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo Saxon Painting* (1977), 57 and plate 14 for an illuminated example in the Durham Gospel fragment II fol. 38v.

⁸ R. Allen and J. Anderson, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, vol. 3 (1903), 496–97 and Radford and Donaldson, *op. cit.* note 7, 36 and fig. 7.

⁹ Allen and Anderson, *op. cit.* note 8, 496. The road to Isle of Whithorn would have been the way taken for embarkation in medieval times for the Isle of Man.

¹⁰ Radford and Donaldson, *op. cit.* note 7.

¹¹ K. Steer, 'Two Unrecorded Early Christian Stones', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, 101 (1971), 129 and pl. 9b.

¹² J. J. Galbraith, 'The Chi-Rho Crosses on Raasay', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, 67 (1933), 63–64 and 318–20.

¹³ F. Henry, 'Early Christian Slabs and Pillar Stones in the West of Ireland', *Jnl. Royal Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 67 (1937), 379 and pl. 33; F. Henry, 'Remains of the Early Christian Period on Inishkea North, Co. Mayo', *Jnl. Royal Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 75 (1945), 137 and pl. 28; F. Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* (1965), 121, fig. 14b.

A PRE-CONQUEST MOULD OF ANTLER FROM MEDIEVAL SOUTHAMPTON (Fig. 1; Pl. XI, B, C)

Included in the published catalogue of small finds from medieval Southampton is an object described as an 'unfinished bone artifact, probably a gaming-piece', for which a 12th-century date is suggested.¹⁴ It was recovered from an excavation by Mr J. Wachter (site E) between Brewhouse Lane and St John's Lane, in the SW. quarter of the medieval town.¹⁵ The object was found in a late, disturbed context, associated with the demolition of a 13th-century wall, although accompanying 12th-century rim sherds (131, 170) supported the earlier date given to the piece in the catalogue. It is suggested here that the