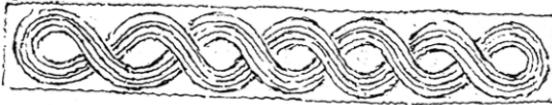
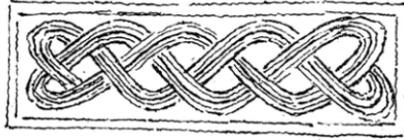
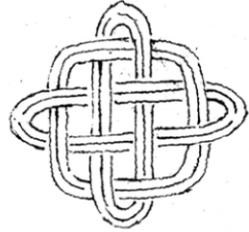
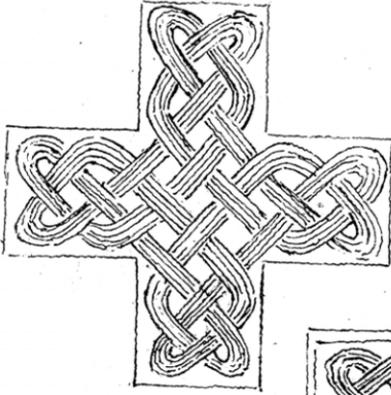
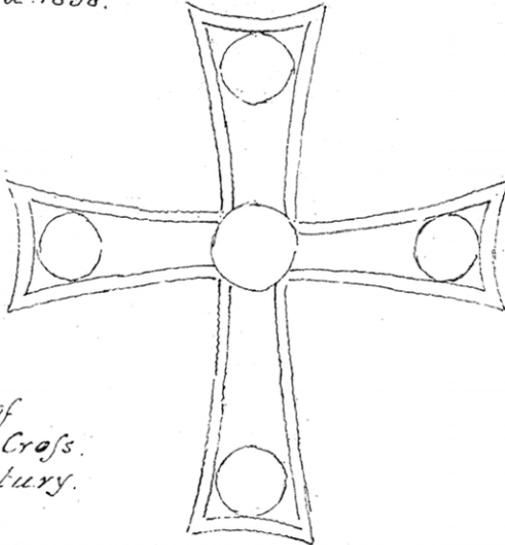


PLATE I.

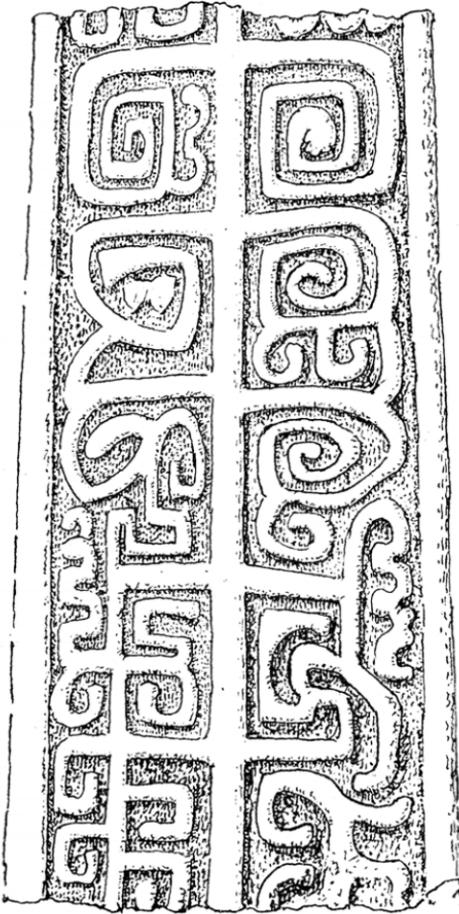


Mosaic. 4th Century. Catacomb of S. Helena.
discovered. 1838. ROME.



Shape of
Vatican Cross.
6th Century.

St. John's, Beckermel. 1.



*grooves
nearly
effaced.*

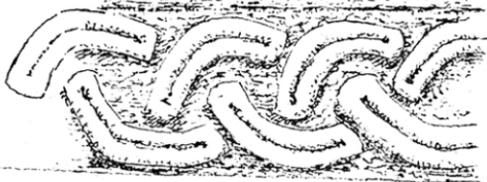
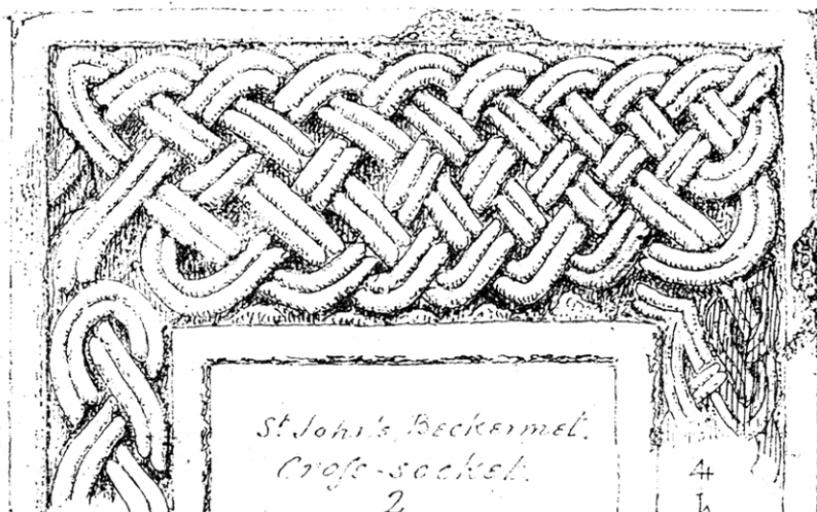
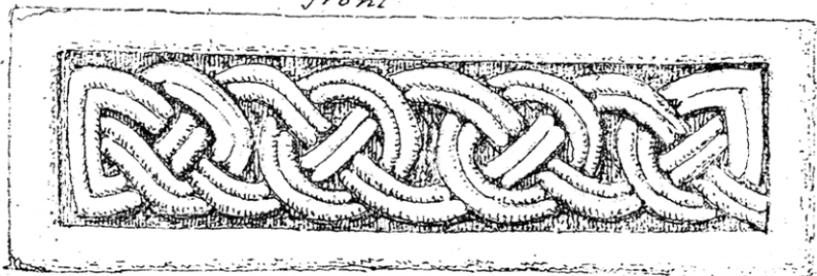


PLATE III.

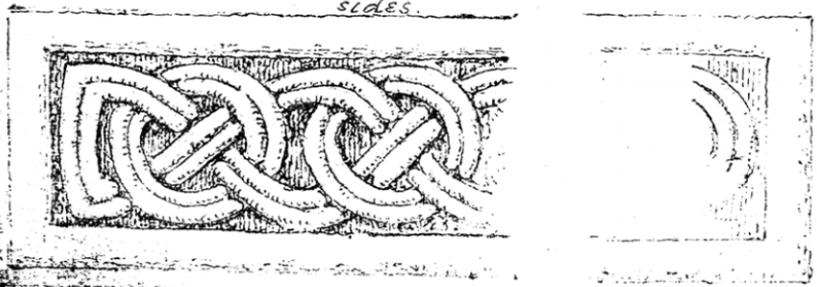


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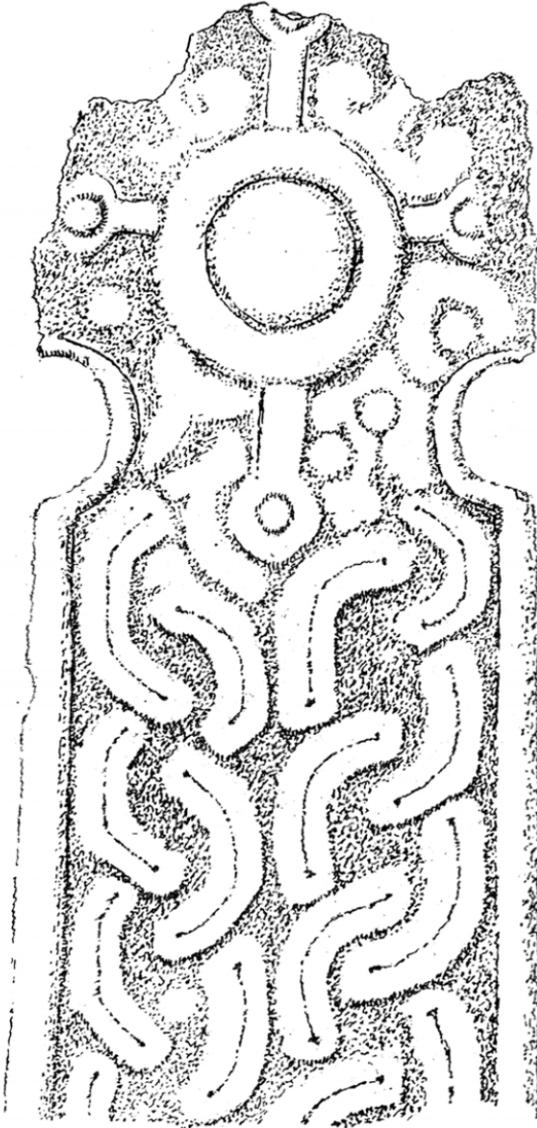
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sides



S^t. John's Beckermat. 3.

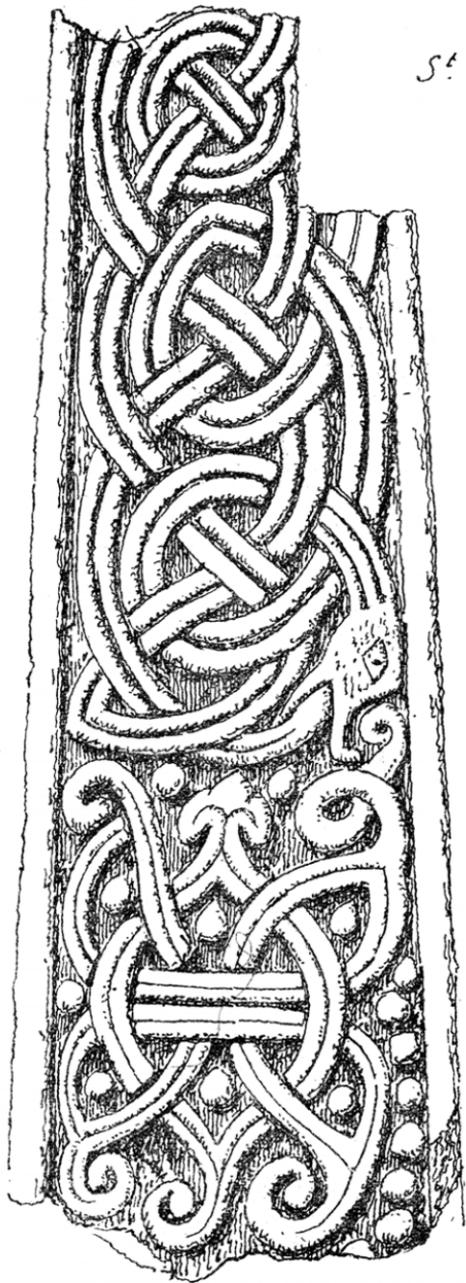


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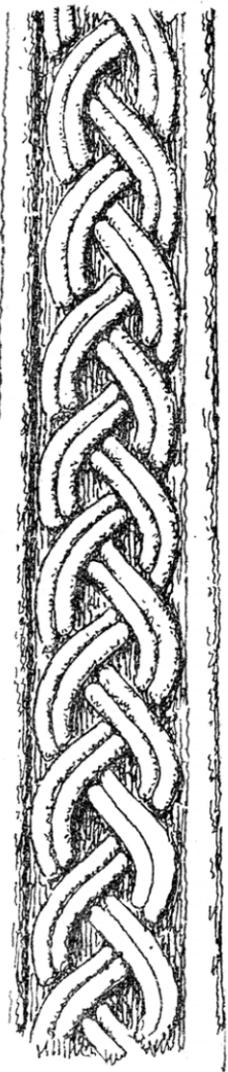
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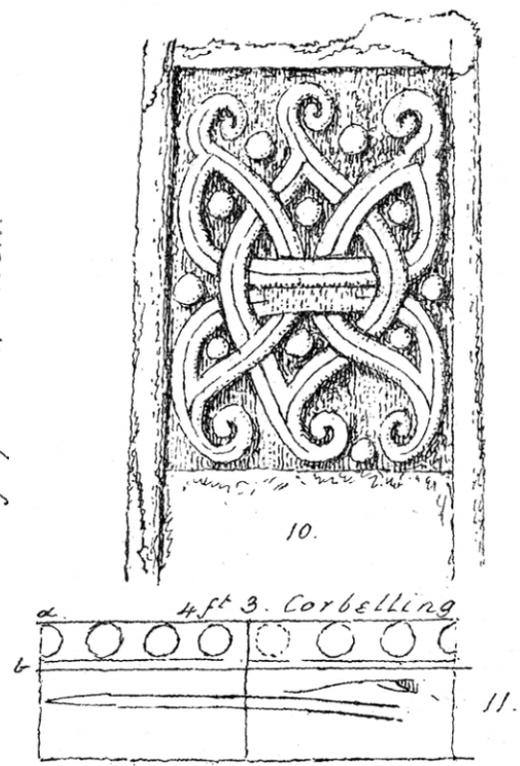
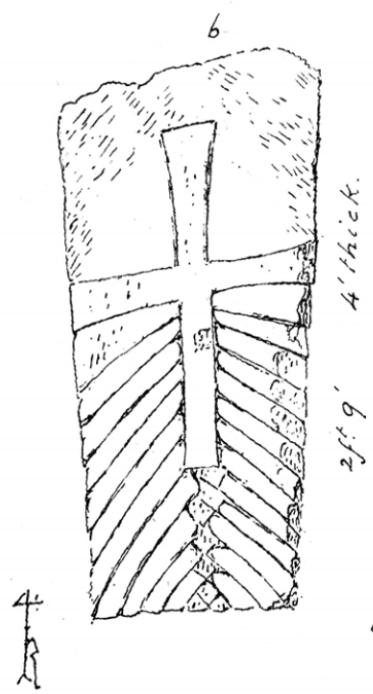
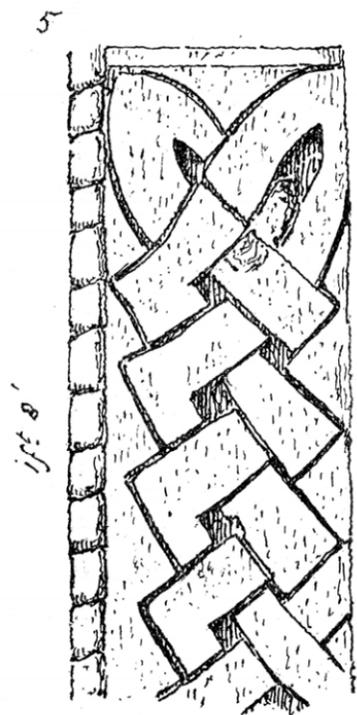
St. John's, Beckermel.
4

2549.



4

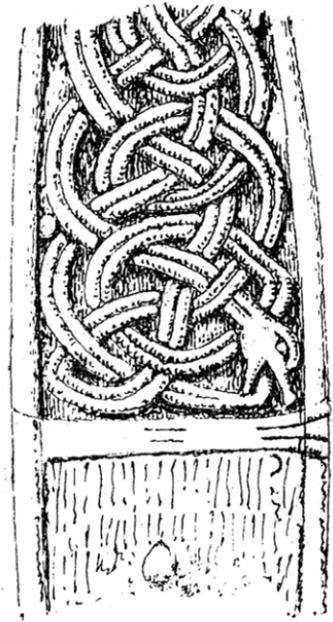




St John's Beckermel.



1836



1836

St. John's Book cover, f.

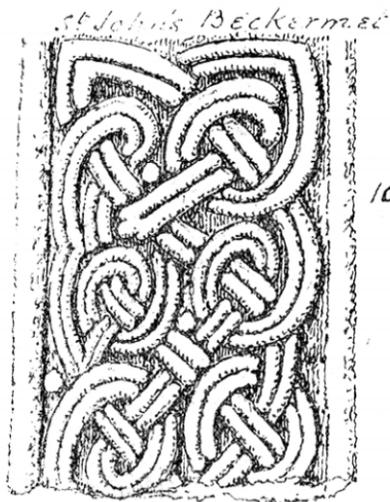


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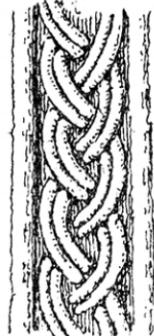


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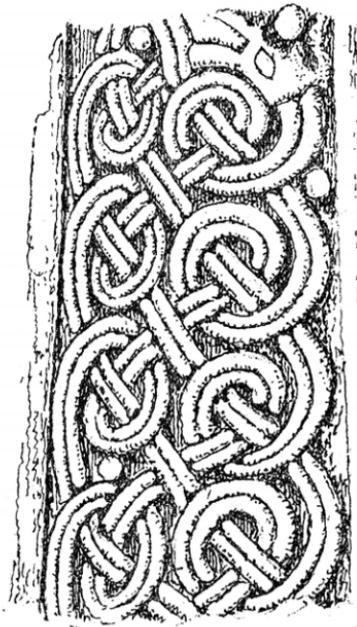


St. John's Beckermee

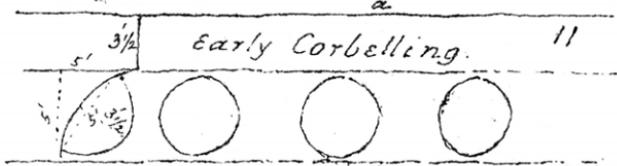
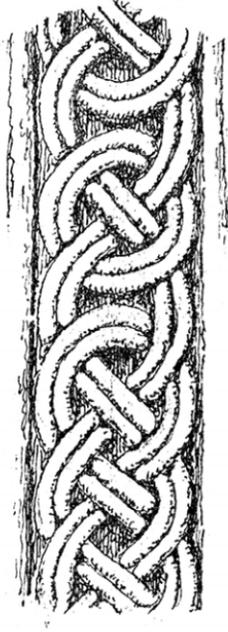
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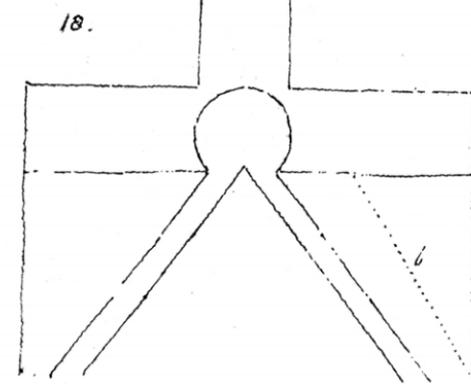
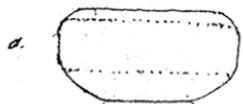
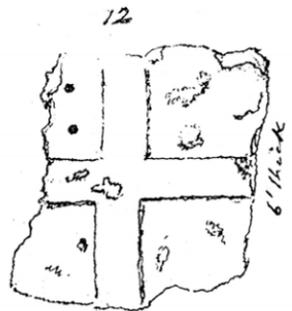


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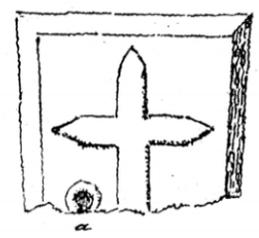


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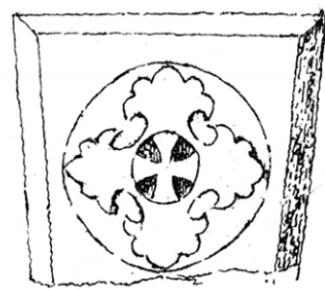




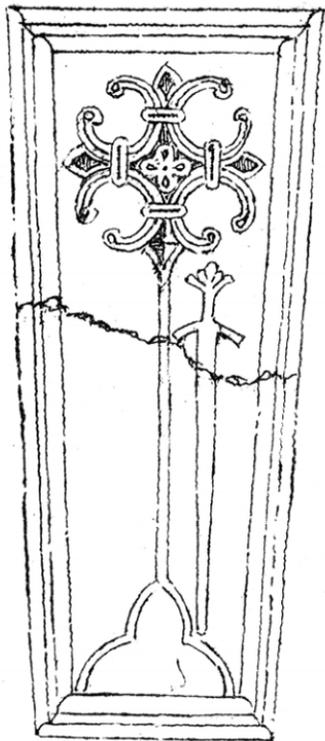
b
slant of front
on
each face



a. Shears.



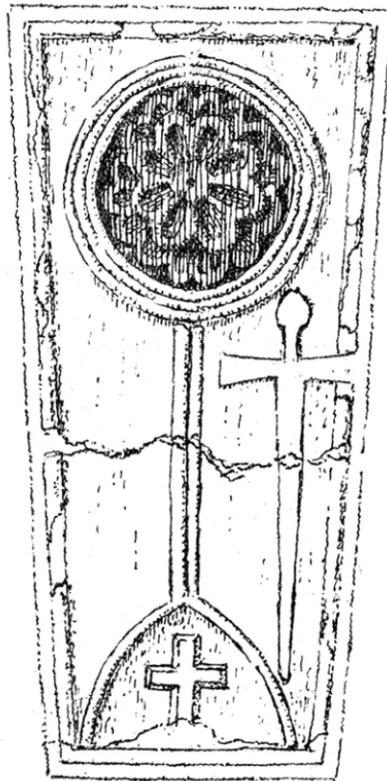
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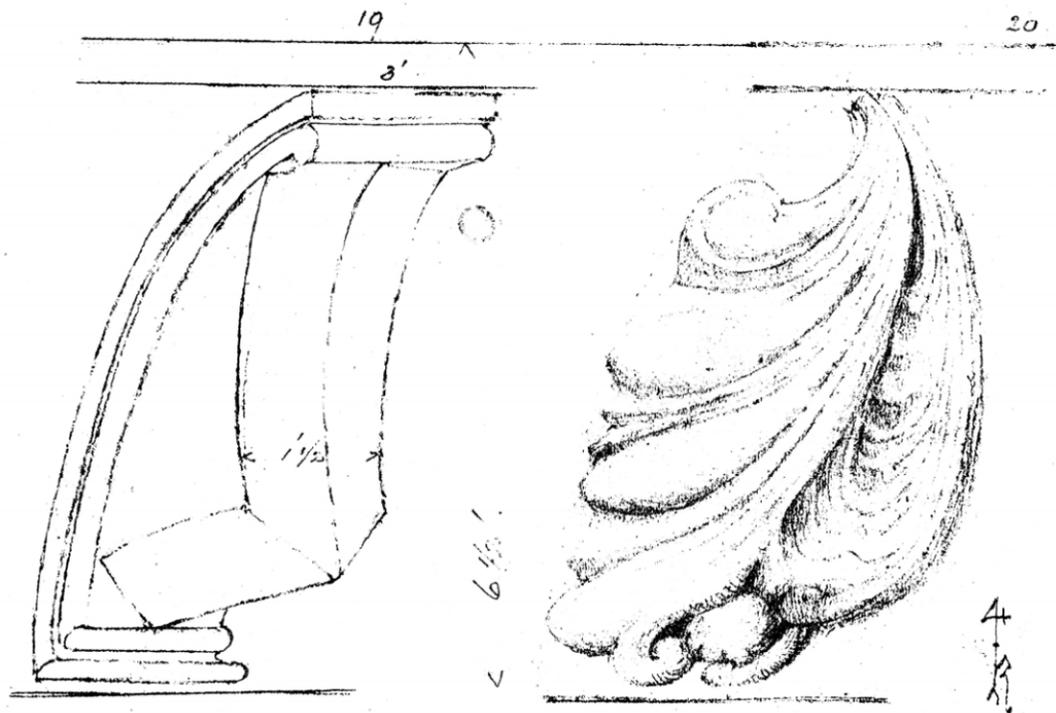


*St John's
Beckermel.*



17.





St. John's Beckermel

ART. XIV.—*Notes on Fragments at St. John's, Beckermets : Whitbeck : Corney.* By the REV. E. H. KNOWLES, Hon. Canon of Carlisle.

Read at Cockermouth, August 22nd, 1878.

BEFORE I speak to you of Beckermets, let me say a few words modestly, as a tyro should before men some of whom know more than I do, respecting the origin of the braided or interlaced ornaments that occur on the many venerable fragments and monuments which happily still remain to us in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Man, and this our ancient realm of Strathclyde.

I mentioned, recently,* an ingenious theory of the late Gilbert French, simply to draw attention to it. He traced all our Celtic and British interlaced work to the basket-making and wicker-weaving for which our native tribes were famous, and he very fairly claimed support from the figures of animals and men at Shandwick, Brodie, Glenferness, and Forteviot, as well as from the recorded erection of churches and crosses “de virgis,” and from the actual discovery (in 1630) in the holy island, on Lough Derg, of a cross, called “St. Patrick's Altar,” made of interwoven twigs. I cannot despise this theory; but still less can I accept it as a sufficient account by itself.

I submit to you very rough sketches† (Plate I.) of certain compartments of a Christian mosaic pavement found forty years ago in what is called the Catacomb of St. Helena. I have indeed omitted details not essential to my purpose, because not easily producible in carving; and have given only the main outlines. The work is Roman of the fourth century, but I am sure that no

* Transactions, Vol. III., p. 98. Consult the same Volume, p. xii.

† From Martigny's Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes S. V. Mosaïques Chrétiennes.

part

part of what I have given would strike us as out of place on one of our old crosses. It must convince us, I think, that in the Christian sculpture which our ancestors wrought with hands unskilled but loving, the influence of Rome, whether secular or Christian, is a chief factor.

When the imperial legions left the Britons to themselves, villas by hundreds, nay by thousands, contained tessellated pavements, to which the natives, for fear or for hire, had contributed their handiwork. They might destroy their masters' houses, but the right hand would not forget her cunning. At Arles, also, a great centre both political and ecclesiastical, British Bishops were present in 314 A.D., and must then, and at other times, have come into contact with the Church Art of Rome. To the importation of this by ecclesiastics I give by far the greatest share in the formation of our insular schools.

"In 418," says the Saxon Chronicle, "the Romans collected all the treasures that were in Britain; some they hid in the earth, so that no one has since been able to find them; some they carried with them to Gaul."

With that departure, darkness falls upon our home history for more than half a century; and whatever connexion our British churches had with the great patriarchal city of the west, it must *utterly* have *ceased*, since at the end of the sixth century, when St. Augustine, the Roman monk, came into contact with them, the whole controversy about Easter was based on ignorance on both sides. Rome had forgotten that at Arles an eighty-four years' cycle was the common rule of the West, and that she had made changes, *e.g.*, in 457, and in 523, influenced by Alexandria: there was also a question as to the Sunday on which Easter was to be kept, but here also the Romans seem to have changed and then to blame those who had had no opportunity of conforming—"Haddan and Stubbs' Councils," Vol. I., pp. 152, 3. That, to say the least, things were most inaccurately recorded and remembered at Rome, the

the contest with the church of Carthage proves, for in 418 the Legate of Pope Zosimus adduced the Canons of Sardica as Nicene. The Britons knew nothing of Roman improvements; and both parties fought out the battle on wrong grounds, fully excused, I believe, by the troubles of Western Europe.

I mention this only to show how utterly the old relations between Rome and Britain were broken off, when the legions were withdrawn.

It is necessary therefore to assign that Roman influence which we discern in our native sculpture chiefly to the time preceding 450, when St. Patrick, a native of our Strathclyde, was past his middle age, and Ireland had already contracted a debt which she repaid with full interest.

I add a rough sketch of the famous Vatican Cross, though it is assigned by critics to the sixth century, because from the Roman, or Byzantine-Roman, predecessors of this, the bosses that adorn our British and Irish crosses may have been borrowed. Let me repeat that I speak as a tyro.

Respecting the bands of our provincial work it is perhaps worth while to note that there are three varieties:—one with a single line of division which does not run out into the ends; a second with one or more lines, dividing the whole band into two or more divisions or bandlets, ending each for itself; and a third not divided at all. The Greek-fret-like ornament which is rare and, I think, very old, is found perhaps only with the first of these.

St. Bees No. 1.,*—the only stone lintel of the true interlaced-work that we have in England of this sort—stands by itself; in shape, at least, surely old Irish;—recalling the classical pediment—differing from all that I know of early or late interlaced work in this county in this, that its great dragon, or wyvern, is a type of the Evil One,

* See "Fragments at St. Bees," By Rev. E. H. Knowles.—Transactions, Vol. II., p. 27., Vol. III. p. 95.

whereas

whereas the serpents of the others and the wyverns of Bridekirk font are innocent. Our St. Bees No. 2 follows it in giving the serpent a tail-head.

There are evidently two schools at least. In the great majority of our local fragments historiation is not attempted; we have here no crucifix, no saints with aureoles, no rampant quadrupeds, or happy birds feeding on the fruits and flowers of the tree of life, as at Bewcastle. Were not the artists of the Lindisfarne school ascetic like the Cistercians of Furness, and opposed to historiation? It occurs at Gosforth, doubtless, and at Dacre, but yet how vast a difference there is between these later semi-secular stones and the pious hagiology of the great Bewcastle cross. The head circles are not common. The fine examples at Gosforth, one of which has been a gable cross and has both foot and socket, and one at Irton, which I have not yet seen (a fragment), are all latish, and the rarity of the head-circle is not greater than that of the unencircled head: most of both kinds having perished either before or in the sixteenth century.

The cross at Dearham is late, I think,—of about the same age as those at Gosforth,—and those at Rockcliffe and Rheda are not interlaced, and therefore do not come into my subject. They are perhaps of a different school, nay (I believe) *later*.

I must add that it has been asserted that the heads of these old crosses were usually separate stones, dowelled into the pillar top. This does not seem to hold good of our local work.

Now of Beckermest itself. The pretty little Kirkbeck is happily still named as the early Norsemen christened it, "The Stream of Churches." Near its banks, within a course of very few miles, are three ancient ecclesiastical sites. Hale, where are at least six mutilated fragments of the eleventh century; * St. Bridget's, with its two famous

* Transactions, Vol. 3., p. 96.

crosses: and St. John's, with which I have now to do. As to the last two sites, I am daring enough to suggest that whatever their earlier history may have been,—St. John's is artificially scarped, and the site* of St. Bridget's sloped formerly with some steepness into the river-plain opposite Braystones.—Whatever their earlier history may have been, I suggest that they were (possibly in the seventh century) occupied by two religious establishments; St. John's by a small monastery; St. Bridget's, almost within sight, by a small nunnery,—a near approach to the double foundation which we find at Kildare, and later, but still very early, at Whitby, Barking, and other places.

Hale has a certain beauty of situation, and St. Bridget's has remnants of the later thirteenth century, but doubtless when their homely and unchurch-like structures shall be condemned, fragments of an earlier Christianity will be discovered. On St. John's little mound we have, as (I think) you will confess, a real treasure of church art, ranging from the seventh or eighth century to the end of the thirteenth.

THE PRE-NORMAN PERIOD.

Some three feet below the surface, under the floor of the demolished church, lie Christian cists, facing eastward, without bolster stones, formed (ends, sides, and covers) of the rudest‡ freestone flags. One has been necessarily removed, and will, I trust, be set with due honour in a shallow trench within the churchyard. The rest of the fragments I have sketched sufficiently I hope to give you a fair idea of them—not worthily—not even with due ac-

* The domestic buildings, if there were any, stood southwards of the present church, perhaps, and the two crosses shew the site of the little cemetery.

† Taken from the upper bed, and placed on end, these are 'laminating' and require care.

‡ Roman sarcophagi were not unfrequently plain and oblong, with plain covering-flags, as, e.g., one found at Alcester, and now placed in the Museum at Warwick. Our cists may be a rude imitation of these—such examples as the thirteenth century coffin at Cashel certainly are of Roman descent.

curacy,

curacy, since I have wrought by eye with common pen and ink, and, moreover, have had to reduce my copies. Very much also of the time that I could spare has been taken up with the patient removal of mortar from the sculptured faces of the stone,—a delicate work which I could trust to no one.

Compare first the fragments numbered (1) and (3) with those of our St. Bees* series (3, 4, 5, 37). They are not of our excellent red sandstone, but of a harder and coarser white stone,† and evidently belong to the same age, as St. Bees (5) connects them. Something like parts of them may be seen on a stone at Kirk Maughold, in Man, but not very much, even allowing for the great difference of material.

I ask you to compare St. John (4) with St. Bees (5), simply to note the strings of pellets and to remark that pellets are used pretty generally, but not universally, sometimes as a mere stopgap, sometimes with more artistic effort, always I believe without any symbolical meaning. As to the age of these stones, be it remembered, that our most characteristic St. Bees (5) was not used like our grand pediment (1) and other stones by the Norman builders for rubble, but was found in the earth *under* the foundations of the 12th century west-front—a lost relic of a far earlier age. Under correction, therefore, I give all these to the British period, and to local workmen.

The grave-stones (6) and (12) are doubtless very early. (6) is specially interesting. No. (3) is so far defaced that I have not ventured to define the decoration of the cross-head. One obscure detail I have noted with some little exaggeration in order to shew that it possibly may be the Irish triquetra, or interlaced trefoil; but I doubt it, and find no other Irish characteristic here. The triquetra

* Transactions, Vol. II., p. 27.

† I am told by Mr. Russell, C.E., F.G.S., that it is called "sixquarters," and lies above the Whitehaven coalmeasures, coming near the surface at Bargill. It has been wrought with a sharp pointed instrument of well tempered iron.

OCCURS

occurs on the silver pennies of Anlaf titular King of Ireland and King of Northumbria from 941 to 945,

On these little centres of evangelisation—St. Bees and Beckermet—the Norsemen came down in force, and ruined them without mercy, in the ninth and tenth centuries. Then in their turn these ruthless devastators became settlers and Christians, converted by the efforts of missionaries who inherited either the semi-Irish traditions of Lindisfarne or the spirit of the Anglican church; in either case much beholden, however unconsciously, to Rome for the style of their art. Some of the work done for or by these Norse Christians is, I believe, comparatively late. The grand monolith at Gosforth, with its secular historiated, the inscribed cross at St. Bridget's,* and probably one at Waberthwaite, may be assigned to the twelfth century. St. John's (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) are of this period, but earlier, and I think of the eleventh century. I cannot piece any two of them together at present. On (7) we have traces of an inscription which some mason of later times has brutally effaced. Are they "Runic?" On none of these fragments is any specially distinct Irish character; but all seem to belong to the later Lindisfarne school, which must have lingered long here, dying very hard, and bequeathing perhaps something to the makers of Bridekirk and Dearham fonts.

NORMAN PERIOD.

Absolutely nothing, and this is not wonderful.

After 1102, there were purely British Bishops in Strathclyde. Carlisle even was not a completely Norman see until 1138, from which time the earliest part—the lower parts of the western curtain-wall and of the entrance tower—of Egremont Castle dates. The Norman abbeys

* This is evidently Saxon, with a dash of Norman. Its four faces have cartouche endings that connect the lower circular section with the upper oblong. It ought to be very carefully photographed: I have tried with the pencil, and failed to satisfy myself. Its sister cross, to the north, is, I believe, earlier, and its socket may yet retain traces of interlaced work.

T

and

and priories of Benedictines, Cistercians, and Augustinians were not founded earlier, or much earlier, in these districts, and the erection of church and domestic buildings must have engrossed all their time and powers till the early English style came in on them in its glory from Lincoln and the south. I even doubt whether the Norman Church of St. Bees was ever fairly finished till 1190 or 1200, unless, indeed, as some things seem to shew, it was destroyed in an unrecorded Scottish foray.

Purely Norman details are therefore not so frequent in the small rural churches of Cumberland as in those of other counties; but we have earlier and even better things.

EARLY ENGLISH PERIOD.

The church of St. John's, which was in part at least destroyed in the last century, was I suspect in the main early English. I have not much proof to adduce; the very bold corbelling* (11), the dog-tooth string (13),—noted roughly for this point only,—fragments of grave-covers (14, 15), and another like (15), but with a second outer-circle, are nearly all, unless I may add the socket of a gable-cross of simple and early character (18), the cap of which has been pierced for an iron cross, long since rudely wrenched out, possibly in the time of Edward the Sixth.

LATER TIMES.

The advowson of St. John was, we read in Lysons, given by the Flemings to the Cistercians of Calder, who became impropiators in 1262. Not long after—ere the close of the thirteenth century—the new patrons built the very elegant door† that was the sole redeeming feature

* This stone, (or rather couple of stones,) is about 4ft. 3in. in length, and $16\frac{1}{2}$ ins. broad. The bead (*b*) is seemingly a drip-moulding, and would, of course, set (*a*) at the top, and the 10in. face would be the horizontal under-face, but the latter is not left rough, and has a rudely incised pike or javelin, the lower lines of which die out. Possibly, therefore, this is a fragment of some rude old monolith, recut for a corbel-stone, about 1200 A.D.

† Here I must note a tradition, for which I cannot vouch, that on the brow above Yeorton, near the main road, stood a little chapel, from the ruins of which St. John's received its exquisite porch in recent times.

visible

visible in the late church, and will find a worthy place in the new building. It was surmounted with a crocketed gablet, and shews as delicate stone-craft as any little door of the period.

To the same time belong, 1, the fine monumental stone of which a sketch appeared in our third volume, p. 95, 2, two pretty little* stones of which I now offer sketches (16, 17), with apologies for failure of both eye and pen. All these are possibly "Fleming" grave-covers: all have an arch at the foot instead of the Calvary steps. In one, this is filled with characteristic window tracery; in the second (16), it is a simple trefoil; in the third (17), it has a small slightly chamfered Latin cross. By the way, the stone† at Brougham, attributed to Udar de Broham and set at A.D., 1185, has in like manner an arch substituted for the Calvary, and is the earliest instance of this variety that occurs to me at present.

To this early decorated time belong the two interesting corbel shoulders of the old eastern gable. I shew two of the six corbels (19, 20), hastily sketched, to illustrate their transitional character. One has all the severity of early English, the next has much of the freedom and grace of the succeeding style, but the weather has worn it, and in removal it has been broken unfortunately. No late decorated or perpendicular work has come to light. The monks of Calder had enough to do to keep their minster in decent repair during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The rough handling of Scottish raids and the consequent pressure of poverty have left, I think, very plain marks on Calder Abbey. Indeed, it was never fully restored to its ancient grandeur, till the Dissolution made it a ruin for ever.

* The size of such memorial stones was often, perhaps, dictated by the space available in the church pavement, not by the stature of the person buried.

† *Cutt's Manual of Sepulchral Slabs and Brasses*, Plate VII. *Boutell's Christian Monuments*, p. 74.

I have reserved to the end, as a *bonne-bouche*, No. (2.) It is the larger half of a singularly elaborate cross-socket, probably of the eleventh century, sculptured on top, front, and sides. Two accidental defects in the surface were accepted by the artist who wrought his interlacing down into the slight hollows.

It now only remains for me to repeat my sincere apology for the imperfection of my essay and its illustrations. I shall be quite content if they but serve to draw the attention of better Antiquaries to the whole subject, and that of better draughtsmen to those particular relics of ancient piety. It would have been better to photograph these, but I could not well afford the expense, and naturally prefer the process by which I myself learn more.

WHITBECK.

By a sketch, which was taken in a difficult light and does not satisfy me, I beg leave to introduce our readers to "The Lady of Annaside," as local tradition calls the mutilated but very fine effigy now exposed to the weather in Whitbeck churchyard.

Her face is worn by the passing of many heedless feet, and the lower part of the monument has been roughly used, but the drapery is of early character: her wimple is drawn over the chin, a veil covers her head and falls upon her shoulders, her mantle is gathered up under her left arm, and I venture to give her the date of 1283-1300. She must surely be one of the last Huddlestons of Anneys. I hope that ere long she will be rescued and replaced within the church.

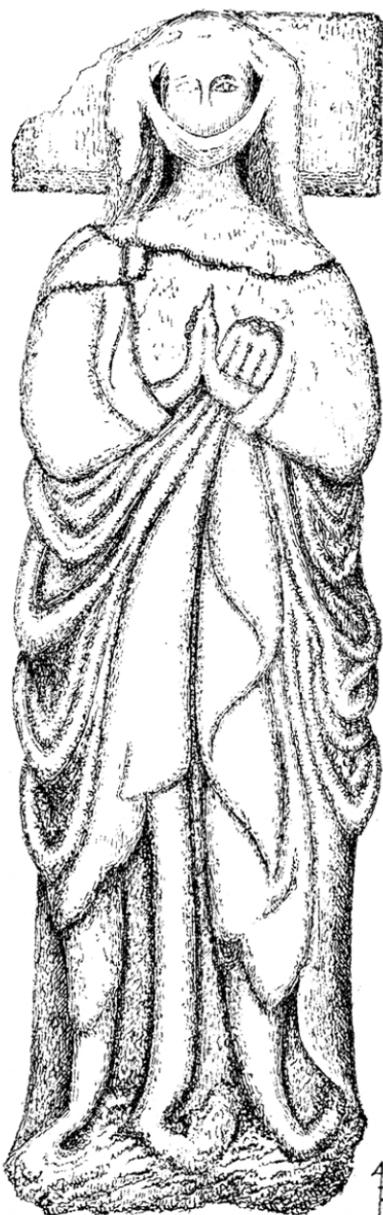
In the church itself are only a few noticeable features: the weatherings of the western buttresses are of fifteenth century work, and the chancel-arch with its bold respond-capital dates from 1240.

There are also preserved an old pewter flagon (seventeenth century) and a curious leathern case (late sixteenth), which was probably made to hold the Elizabethan chalice and paten cover.

CORNEY.

The little ruins of the "old Parsonage" have some rough work of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The lintel of the door of the barn which stands near them is the (late thirteenth century) sepulchral slab of which I give a sketch. It is in fair preservation.

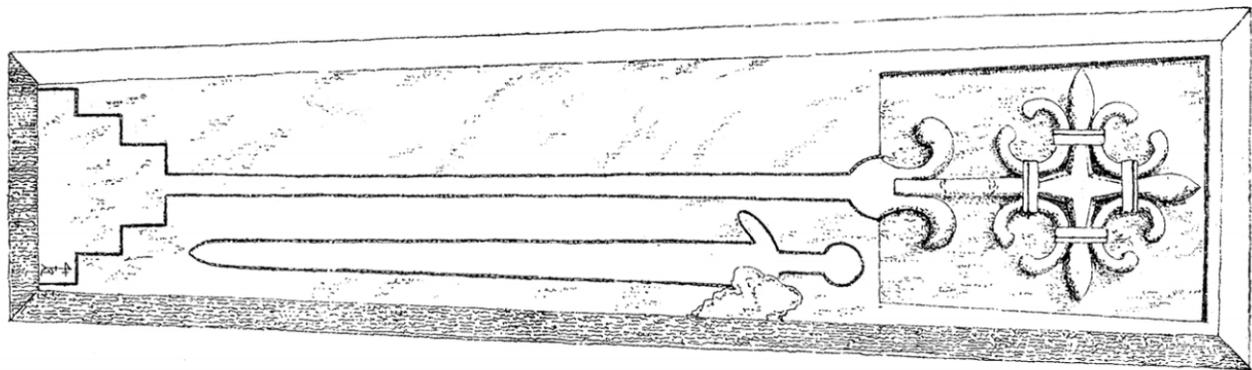
ΘΗΑ: ΛΥΔΙΑ: ΟΥ: ΙΑΝΝΗΣ: ΙΔΑ: †



Whitbeck

ab. 5f. 9' long.

4
18



*Sepulchral stone. {13th Century} Gornsey.
scale 3' to 4" foot*