

H. SCALVERLEY.

WORKINGTON

S^t Michael. 1.

ART. XV.—*Fragments of pre-Norman Crosses at Workington and Bromfield, and the standing cross at Roccliffe.* By the Rev. W. S. Calverley, F.S.A., Vicar of Aspatria, Cumberland.

Read at Appleby, July 3, 1890.

NUMBERS 1 and 2 of the illustrations of pre-Norman fragments found in St. Michael's Church, Workington, during the late re-building after destruction by fire, shew the sides and edges of the upper part of a cross which has had a circular head something like the Roccliffe crosshead or perforated between the arms. The lower part of the circle is seen in No. 2. This fragment is eighteen inches long, five and a half inches thick, and tapers from nine and a half inches wide at the bottom to eight inches at the top. The two faces are ornamented with plaitwork. On one side there are three two-stranded bands doubled over at the top and plaited together, forming a six-plait. On the other face there are four bands divided down the middle (two-stranded) doubled over at the top and plaited together, making an eight-plait.

These designs correspond with the "fretty" of heraldry, a "frett" being simply a small portion of the whole plaited design.

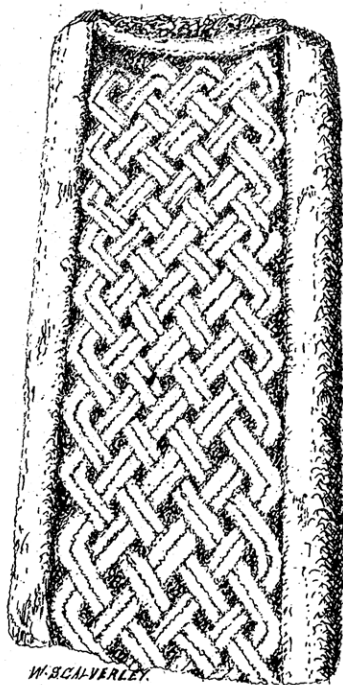
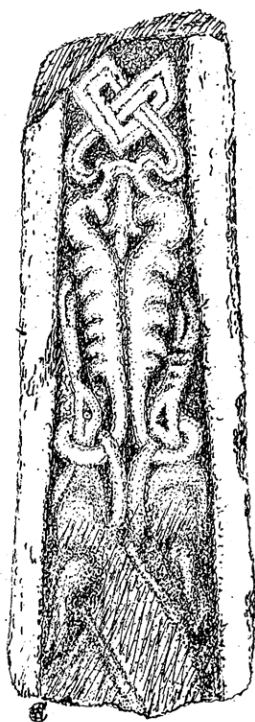
The Salkelds of Little Salkeld, Corby, Whitehall, &c., Thornborowe of Selsheyd, Thwaytes of Thwaites, and afterwards of Ewanrigg Hall, Morton of Morton, and Stavely of Renwick, bore arms fretty in some form. Harrington Lord Harrington, whose family took their name from the village of Harrington, Curwen of Workington, Hudlestons of Millom and of Hutton-John, all bore "a frett" upon their shields.

The origin of this interlaced ornamentation may be sought in the wattle-work and plaitwork of early days
but

but one reason why so much of it appears upon crosses, which no doubt marked burials and which were to some extent modelled from designs of larger crosses, is made clear at Plumbland where is a house-shaped or shrine-shaped tomb whose sides are plaited with *serpent's backs* according to the idea expressed in the Edda. See these Transactions, vol. ix, p. 465., and figure III of the illustrations preceeding that paper. It is quite possible that the "frett" of local family shields is a survival from these earliest sculptured gravestones. The early crosses were broken up by the Norman builders and used as walling stones just as in later times, in this very church of St. Michael, the grand old Norman arches were pulled down and their zigzag mouldings knocked into shapelessness to fit the needs of the rubblework of the time.

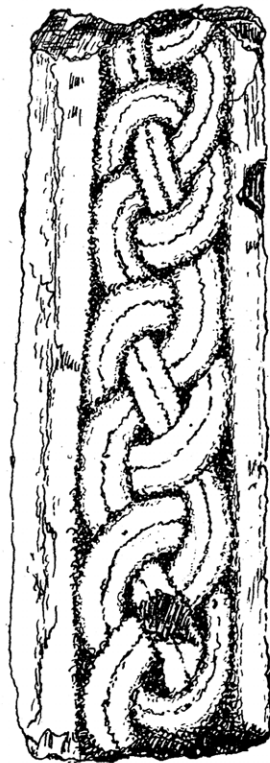
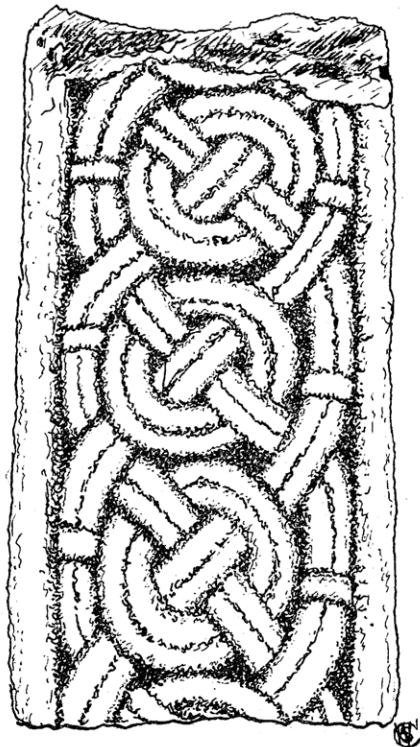
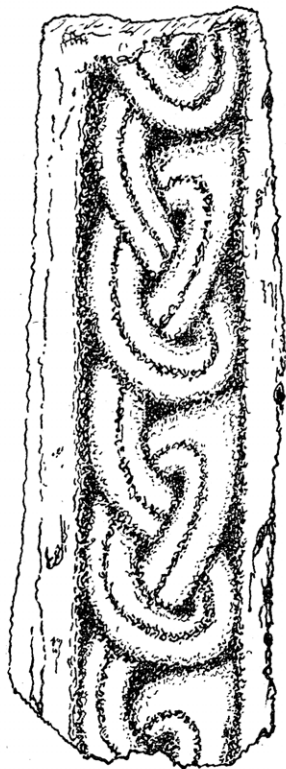
The particular stone here figured was found on the floor level at the bottom of the old tower wall near the foot of the belfry staircase. The tower is said to be Norman from the presence of a window and an arch which appears to be of that period.

The edges of this little cross are very interesting. One edge shews beneath a prettily formed knot the tail part of some water leech or reptile. The other edge shews, beneath a very beautifully formed knot bearing an inverted trefoil within two ornamented bands, two birds, their long necks and beaks stretching upwards, the ornamented bands entwining their necks and holding them up. The eyes of the bird are like swan's eyes and one can hardly fail to suppose that the powers of light and motion heavenwards are contrasted with the lower powers of darkness and grovelling, and that the idea of the swan-maidens who "having put on their swan-shifts can travel through air and water, who love to linger on the sea shore" was in the mind of him who designed this cross and was by him being used for the illustration of the highest Christian doctrines teaching of the soul's flight to the bright home
where



W. B. CALVERLEY.

WORKINGTON. S^t Michael. 2.



Workington. St. Michael. 3.

where God dwells, in grand contrast to the hopeless creed of darkness and the serpent's den.* The Celts seem to have known about swan-metamorphosis in very early times.

Number three shews one face and the two edges of a fragment (17 inches by 9 inches) taken out of the tower wall, inside the church on the north side of the arch. The ornamentation on the face here shewn consists of a series of double rings placed down the centre, two double bands cross each other in the centre of each ring and pass the one over the other and under the ring on either side and proceed to each alternate ring passing over and under each other alternately as they come in contact. These double bands, when they near the edges of the cross, are kept in place by a narrow fillet as the wythes in basket-work are held together.

The same basket-work feature is to be noticed on the opposite face of the stone which was figured—Trans. vol. ix, p. 458,—before removal from the tower wall.

These remains of two crosses together with the remains of two other crosses found about the same time and figured—Trans. vol. xi, p. 7-8.—are now fixed with copper dowells upon a large Norman respond built into the south wall of the tower, inside the baptistry. An old font and some mediæval incised slabs are placed near, and the whole forms an interesting historic corner for which the curate in charge, the Rev. T. Hackworth, and the building contractor may be thanked, as they very readily acquiesced in the suggestions made to them as to the desirability of preserving such treasures worthily.

Outside the church, on the south side of the east window of the south aisle, there is a fragment of purple sandstone, 14 in. by 3½ in., shewing interlaced work.

* Grimm's Teutonic Mythology, 1880, Vol. I. p. 430. Swan Sonnenschein.

Thus

Thus we have, at this church, remains of five crosses of varied character all of a date earlier than the time of the Normans.

At St. Mungo's Church, Bromfield, we meet with quite another type of cross ornamentation. The stone is cut away so as to leave a series of horizontal projecting bands. The small fragment, one face and one edge of which is here given, was found by the vicar, the Rev. R. Taylor, broken up and buried beneath much mason's rubbish and the remains of a very ancient weather-worn white sandstone cross (figured *Trans.* vol. xi, p. 123), in the centre of a platform surrounded by steps which no doubt marked the site of the churchyard cross in its better days. The sculptor has had some type in view, but he has not been skilful enough to form the designs correctly. Interlaced or knot-work appears upon the face, upon the bands, down the sides, and in the ends of the horizontal bands. The edge is better done than the face and the rosette formed of two double rings with an interlacing knot seen in the end of the upper horizontal band has been perfect. The design in the end of the lower horizontal band is similar to one on the edge of the Roccliffe cross, that on the edge of the stone itself is similar to one on the standing cross at Aspatria. These remains consist of three pieces and have been fixed within the church porch for safety, by the vicar.

At Roccliffe, St. Mary's, we come upon the type of the smaller Bromfield cross. The conception is that of a rectangular cross built up of wickerwork, having two broad sides and two narrow edges: around the upright cross shaft are two horizontal strengthening bands; around the cross arms is the plaited circle, wheel or glory, through which the ends of the arms pass. A boss surrounded by a raised ring appears in the centre of the cross-head. The stone between the arms of the cross and the circle has not been perforated as at Dearham--

Trans.



Bromfield. St. Mungo.



Trans. Vol. v., No. II., Ancient crosses at Dearham Church. The main body of the cross is covered with interlacings, the design of which cannot be traced with certainty. The edges have a design which is in some parts traceable and which is given approximately in outline in the accompanying sketch, and which agrees with one of the designs on the Bromfield cross and is also an adaptation of some of the work on the great cross at Gosforth, Trans. vol. vi.

The horizontal bands which are worked round the main body of the interlaced or wickerwork cross (done in stone) have upon them beasts with hugh open jaws, eyes, ears, and teeth. The bodies of these beasts are bound with bands and terminate in the same manner as those seen on the Gosforth cross. They are in fact the same progeny of the evil one, combining the serpent and the wolfish nature, which appears on that cross.

At Aspatria, at the bottom of the standing cross is figured one of these creatures in a somewhat different form. Trans. vol. ix, p. 473.

At Crosscanonby the wolf, the serpent, and the human form are all three combined and bound with a fetter. Trans. vol. ix, p. 437.

The engraving of this Rocliffe cross in Lyson's History shews no carvings and gives bosses instead of depressions between the cross arms.

The Rev. C. H. Perez, Stanwix, first drew my attention to the sculptures and gave me photographs. By the kindness of the vicar the Rev. E. Gabriel, M.A., and the help of W. L. Fletcher, Esq., we have been able to obtain photographs which shew as well as may be what is to be seen on the cross. I think we have here a link between the early wood and wickerwork crosses and the stone ones set up by St. Kentigern and afterwards. This cross appears to reveal a tradition of the early wickerwork and a reversion to the Gosforth type and motive. St. Kentigern
would

would pass with his company along these shores and cross by this ford or pass near here to meet King Rederech Hoel, in the latter part of the sixth century, at Hoddam near Annan, to found again the Christian realm after the conquest of the pagan.

We hope soon to gather all the pre-Norman christian sculptures of this Diocese together (by illustration) in one volume so that the subject may be worthily investigated.

The great crosses at Penrith seem to me also to follow the type of the Gosforth Rood concerning which Mr. Rawnsley has just written to me :—

“ When I bethought me of the woes and cries
Now hushed for aye within each grassy door,
The sorrows of the uncomplaining poor
The pain—where now at rest each labourer lies,
I said, for these what prospect did arise
To bid them, ere they turned to dust, endure,
What tree of healing could their anguish cure ?
When lo, this cross rose up before mine eyes
Then knew I how above each opening grave,
For those who toiled through generations long,
Since first our Father carved with holy craft
His saga signs upon the rosy shaft,
A preacher stood and told the weary throng
Of one who suffered silently to save.”

H.D.R. Oct. 6, 1891.