

II.

CROSS-SLABS IN THE ISLE OF MAN BROUGHT TO LIGHT SINCE
DECEMBER 1915. BY P. M. C. KERMODE, F.S.A. Scot.

Five years ago I communicated to this Society an account of some cross-slabs then newly found in the Isle of Man. Since that date we have completed our survey of the keeills or early Celtic churches and their burial-grounds throughout the whole of the island. I am disappointed not to have met with any trace of crosses at the sites examined in the south beyond those already known; still, a few more pieces may be expected to turn up from time to time in different parts of our district, probably from the walls of the older parish churches and the neighbourhood of the ruined keeills.

In order to complete our record to date, I now figure and briefly describe in the order of their development those which have come to light since the end of the year 1915. One of these, built into the gable of a modern chapel near the centre of the island and taken from the old church on the same site, had long been known to me, but, being in a very inaccessible place, I had not previously been able to have it cast or figured; the others have been met with accidentally, all in or near to some early Christian cemetery. Casts of the stones are being taken for the Museum collection, after which the originals will be placed in the cross-shelters of their respective parishes.

1. *Parish of Jurby*.—When the hedges of the present vicarage were being cleaned in the early summer, a stone was found lying loose, and was shown to me by the vicar, who had noticed what he thought might be a cross cut on it. No one could now tell how or when it had come there, but I feel no doubt that it had been brought from the site of the keeill on Ballacurry, about a quarter of a mile to the north-west, which had been examined by us in 1911. On that occasion we dug up a small boulder having on one face a linear cross-crosslet (*Proc. S. A. Scot.*, vol. xlv. p. 56). The present example (fig. 1, No. 1) is a smooth boulder of Queensberry grit, $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches long by $8\frac{3}{8}$ inches high and 3 inches thick, roughly triangular in form but with well-rounded angles. The lower edge makes a natural square with the faces; the smoother face bears a plain linear cross, $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the arms, its upper end distinguished by being forked. The lines, well cut with V-shaped section, are from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$ inch wide and about $\frac{1}{12}$ inch deep.

2. *Parish of German*.—A slab (fig. 1, No. 2) which had long been lying above the broogh near St German's railway station was last summer noticed by Mr Clementson to have the appearance of a cross and some

lines cut upon its face. He asked me to look at it, and, as I had no doubt that it was a genuine early cross-slab, it was presented to the Manx Museum. It had lain not far from the site of the old keeill on Knock Sharry, from which probably it had been taken to serve as a sill

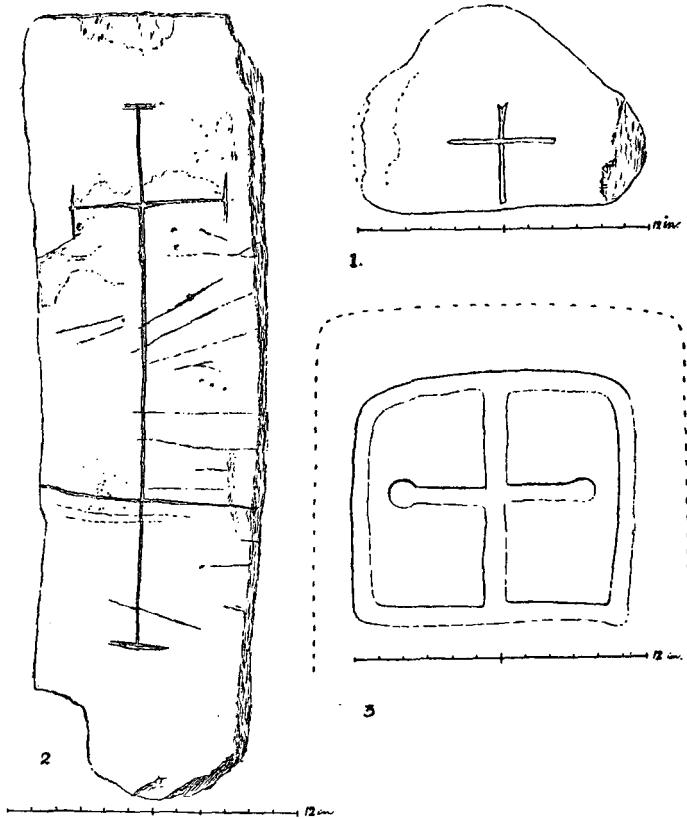


Fig. 1. Cross-slabs at Ballacurry, Knock Sharry, and Keeill Abban.

or a lintel, when it was chipped along one edge and a piece about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches square taken off the lower corner in order to make it fit. It is of garnetiferous schist such as is met with *in situ* in Marown, on the southern side of the valley between Douglas and Peel, and I think not nearer. The slab now measures 32 inches by $9\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 inches and $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. The upper edge is a joint of the rock, and the unbroken edge is naturally chamfered.

One face bears a linear cross 22 inches long and $6\frac{3}{8}$ inches across the arms, each limb having a T-shaped ending, thus taking the form of the

cross-potent of heraldry. The lines are about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch wide and deep; faulty cuts have been made at the intersection of the limbs and along the stem-line below, at the bar crossing the end of the lower limb but most noticeably at that marking the top, the execution generally suggesting an unpractised hand cutting with the point of a knife. Several scores, particularly on the right side of the slab, may have been caused by the plough when the stone lay just below the sod. Interest lies in the form, which, as in the crosslet and forked endings, was perhaps in these linear figures originally designed to express the expansion at the ends, thus leading up to the cross patee or form taken when it came to be drawn in outline.

3. *Parish of Braddan*.—Built into the west gable of St Luke's Chapel, on the ridge between East and West Baldwin, which is on the site of the ancient Keill Abban, is a smooth, dark boulder of trap rock, the outline of which is concealed by the cement; it appears to measure about 18 inches by 14 inches. The exposed face shows a linear cross (fig. 1, No. 3) within an almost square ring; the ends of the vertical limbs, about 10 inches long, run into the ring, but the horizontal limbs, $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, have bulbous terminations at a point within the ring and distant from it about an inch. The lines are $\frac{7}{8}$ inch wide and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. The execution is an advance upon the last, the lines being wider and gouged with a segmental section. That this was a step leading to the cross in outline appears by examples such as those from Lag-ny-Keeilley, Patrick (*Proc. S. A. Scot.*, vol. xlvi. pp. 58, 59), where the borders of the widened lines are seen to have been marked with a pointed instrument before the space between them was gouged out.

4. *Parish of Jurby*.—In the course of our survey in 1910 we visited Ballaconley, where Mr Callister showed us the site of the old keill from which had been taken the large Sigurd slab now at the parish church; he had found no foundation stones or lintel graves. Last spring Mr Callister had some excavations made on the site, when he came across a grave over which a millstone had been laid, and in this was set upright a broken slab (fig. 2). The millstone, not a quern, was of recent date, and may have been buried there and the slab set in it to be out of the way when first the site was ploughed over. Having been asked to look at the stones, I noticed that the one set upright was a broken slab of gritty slate which had at one time borne carving in relief, and this I made out to have been the upper limb of a Celtic cross. Both edges of the stone have been dressed to a slight round, and the upper right-hand corner remains to show that it had formed the dressed end of the slab. It is now broken off at a length of 12 inches, and measures $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. No other

portion of it then came to light, nor has any been since found. One face is marked all over with a pointed chisel, leaving smooth the space from which the projecting carving has been flaked away. This evidently represents the upper limb of a cross in low relief, and measures about

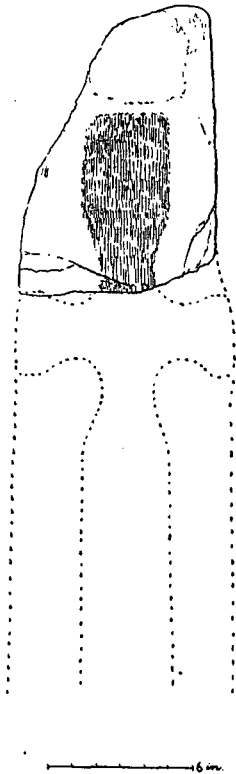


Fig. 2. Cross-slab at Ballaconley, Jurby.

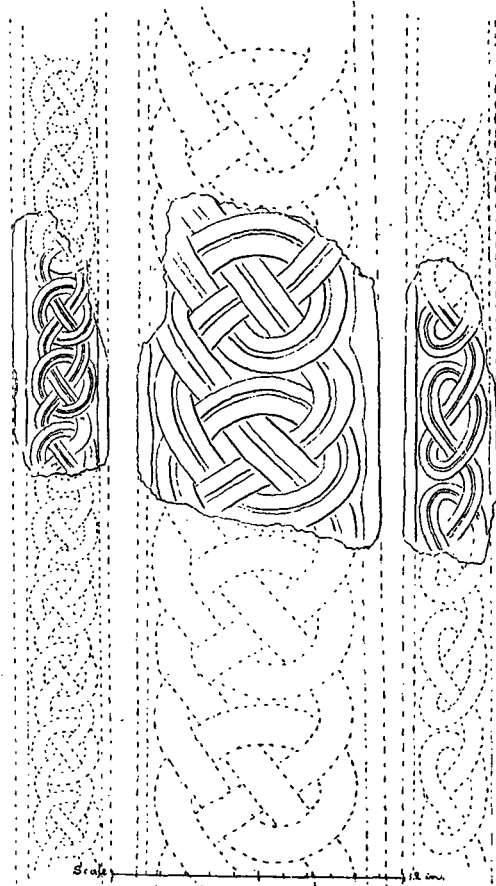


Fig. 3. Cross-shaft at Churchyard, Braddan.

$7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. The curved recesses at the junction of the limbs can be distinguished, and it is clear that there was no connecting ring. This is unusual, but we have another instance in the same parish in the head of the cross bearing a figure of Heimdall sounding his horn for Ragnarök. The other face of the slab has been worked over in a similar manner, but except at the sides is now entirely flaked away.

5. *Parish of Braddan*.—A fragment of sandstone showing carving in relief (fig. 3) was noticed last spring by Mr W. Cubbon in the wall of the old churchyard, Braddan, at a place that had recently been cleared of growth. When removed this was found to be part of the shaft of a small cross. It measures 14 inches by about $9\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 inches wide and 4 inches thick. One face is flaked completely away; the other bears a loop-form of plait, while one edge shows a band forming knots and the other twist-and-ring design; all the bands are double-beaded.

The loop-plait is formed by three bands, each in turn making a complete loop facing to the right and passing on to cross the centre of two others and make a fourth loop through which the others pass in the same way. Not only is this entirely new to our district, but in the form here shown seems not to have been met with elsewhere on stone. In the *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, at p. 156, Mr Romilly Allen, Ornamental Design, No. 259, gives a diagram of the design as "derived from a five-cord plait"—that is, by making horizontal breaks in the third row only at every other crossing-point. He repeats this at p. 226, in his masterly Analysis of Interlaced Work, No. 585, as a "combination of loops in pairs all facing to the right," and so on, but the only instance he gives is that of one in metal-work on the Tara brooch. We find it, however, as one of a double row in his No. 587, for which he mentions as localities Whithorn, Lothby (Sutherland), and Ripon (Yorkshire); also on a bone object from Strokestown crannogs. Our artist must have been acquainted with the design, which he might have seen at Ripon or elsewhere; owing to the narrowness of his panel, he was only able to represent it here in a single row. The design on the edge, also new to the Isle of Man, is No. 597 of Mr Romilly Allen, concerning which he says, p. 232, "Stafford knots arranged in single row all facing to the right (or all to the left)," and derives from a three-cord plait (No. 211, p. 147) "with horizontal breaks at every other crossing-point in one row only." As localities for this he mentions Hale and Workington in Cumberland, and Shelton in Notts.

This monument was probably cruciform in outline, and doubtless of the usual Celtic form, with a ring-contained cross as head. It is late work; the stone, foreign to the district, seems to be the same as that of a broken moulding since found near by, and may have been taken from material brought for the purpose of decorative work in connection with the twelfth-century church at Braddan.