

ON A NEWLY RECOVERED RUNIC MONUMENT AT KIRK  
BRADDAN, IN THE ISLE OF MAN.

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THE fragment of a Runic Cross, which is the subject of the following observations, was formerly built into the Church-tower of Kirk Braddan in the Isle of Man.<sup>1</sup>

It was one of the stones of the lintel of a door-way communicating from the Tower into the roof of the body of the Church. I observed some time ago that on the exposed portion there were carved two of those remarkable scale-covered animals which form such conspicuous objects on the well known cross in the centre of the Church-yard of the same parish. On inserting my finger in the aperture between it and the adjoining stone, I felt that along the edge there were Runic characters inscribed. This made me the more anxious for its removal; and I made several applications and offers on the subject to the vicar and church-wardens of the parish, but at that time without effect. At a lecture which I subsequently delivered in Douglas, in December 1854, I obtained a promise that steps should be taken by the parishioners for its removal; but it was not till the autumn of last year that through the exertions of George Borrow, Esq. this was effected.

It is now carefully cleared of the mortar in which it was embedded, and it has been erected in the Church-yard along side of the other interesting Scandinavian monument which exists there.<sup>2</sup> The two are evidently of the same age, and, I suspect, may be by the same hand. They differ considerably

<sup>1</sup> A cast from this fragment was exhibited by Mr. Cumming, when this communication was read. It was subsequently presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> See *Archaeological Journal*, vol. i. p. 75, and the "Runic and other Monumental Remains of the Isle of Man," by the Rev. J. G. Cumming, p. 29. Bell and Daldy, London.

from all the other Crosses in the Island, which must be regarded for the most part as mere slabs of stone, the central portion of which is occupied by knot-work assuming the form of a Cross, the spaces on each side of the shaft being filled, either with various devices of knot-work, or with very rude representations of animals of the chase or domestic use; whereas these two Braddan Monuments approach more closely to the form of the Irish and Iona crosses, and are of a more finished and delicate character than the generality of the Manx monuments.

From an examination of the fragment last recovered, we must clearly allow an addition of a foot to its length, not including the heading, which would probably be similar to that of the more perfect Braddan cross. If we take that face of it which is covered with the lacertine animals as the principal one (and the small cord running along the edge indicates this), we shall notice that there has been lost on the *obverse* (so to speak) a *third* compartment, somewhat smaller no doubt than the two others, the length of which, however, would be about twelve inches. This was probably filled with a device in knot-work. That so much of the shaft is lost, is evident also from the broken inscription, the completion of which would require about that space. The upper of the two remaining compartments consists of a plain riband, and one studded with large dots or pellets, interwoven so as to fill up the entire space. The form of the pellets in this example gives the appearance of a twisted cord, (similar to that on the edge of this monument) inserted in the middle of a flat strap. On other Manx Crosses the pellets are round or lozenge shaped. To preserve, however, uniformity in the general appearance of the compartment, and to avoid at the extremities the concurrence of two plain ribands at the interlacing, a small portion of the otherwise plain riband is pelleted, and the pelleted riband is for a small space left plain. In the lower compartment we have two pair of double *Triquetras*; one pair being formed by a plain riband, the other by a pelleted one.

The extremely rude manner in which the carving has been executed must strike every observer.

No parallelism of lines is observed. The ribands separating the compartments are of very unequal width, and the attempt to fill up the inequalities of the compartments, caused



Fragment of a Sculptured Cross, found in 1855, in the Tower of Kirk Braddan Church, Isle of Man.

UTR : RISTI : CRUS : THONO : APT : FROKA : FATHUR : SIN : IN : THURBIAURN SUNR . . . . .

Oter erected this Cross to Froga his father, but Thörbjörn son of . . . . .

by the want of parallelism of the bounding edges, is extremely awkward.

This is a circumstance almost characteristic of the Manx Crosses.

In reference to the scale-covered lacertine ornamentation, an examination of these two Braddan crosses compared with others on the Island, especially with the beautiful cross at Ballaugh, impresses me with the idea that it is simply a development of the ordinary riband interlacing.

In the compartments of the obverse side of the Cross under consideration we have noticed a plain riband interwoven with one ornamented with large pellets. By making two or three rows of pellets where the breadth of the riband will allow, and affixing a head, we have at once the scale-covered snake, or sea-serpent, so firmly believed in by the Norwegians. Comparing these two Braddan Crosses, we perceive that whilst the edge of one is occupied by two *plain* intertwined ribands, that of the other has one of the ribands so dotted with pellets, that with the addition of the head at one extremity, it passes at once into the Serpent. On both crosses, and also on one at Kirk Michael, we have the appearance of feet or fins under the body. The interlacing ribands surrounding the body may be conjectured to represent the meshes of a net.

Such an idea is not inconsistent with the fanciful monstrosities which the peculiar genius of the Northmen impressed upon other crosses in the Isle of Man, whether we consider that they borrowed their general notions and ornamentation from Irish or Hiberno-Scottish models, or that they themselves originated the form and designs.

On referring to the Runic inscription along the edge of this fragment, we are enabled to form a conjecture both as regards the name of the maker of it, and its date. The portion of the inscription which remains, and which is very distinct, runs thus :—

UTR : RISTI : CRUS : THONO : AFT : FROKA : FATHUR SIN :  
IN : THURBIAURN : SUNR. . . . *i.e.* Oter erected this cross to  
Froga his father, but Thörbjörn son of, &c.

I believe that the last portion contained the name of Thörbjörn's father, and the word "Girthi," *i.e. made it*; so that the conclusion of the inscription would be,—“but Thörbjörn son of” (N. N. *made it*.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> There are at the present time living in the Isle of Man families of the name of Thorburn (Thörbjörn).

We have a similar form of inscription on a much mutilated cross at Andreas :—

. . . . . "THANA AF UFAIG FAUTHUR SIN, IN GAUTR GIRTHI SUNR BIARNAR," i.e. (*N.N. erected*) *this cross to Ufaig his father, but Gaut made it the son of Bjorn.*"

On referring to Manx history we find that in the year 1093, when Goddard Crovân was expelled from the Isle of Man by Magnus Barbeen, or *barelegs*, (so named from his adopting the Highland costume) one *Other* or *Ottar* was appointed by Magnus as his Jarl or Viceroy in the Isle of Man.

The "Chronicon Manniæ" states that this *Other* was slain in an insurrection of the Manx in 1098. If we can imagine this *Other* to be the Oter named on this monument, we have the date for this cross at the termination of the XIth century.

I would observe that this date agrees very closely with that which has been assigned to the majority of the Manx Runic monuments by Professors Munch and Worsaae, from a consideration of the language and characters in which the inscriptions are written.