

ART. VIII.—*An Anglian cross-shaft fragment from Brigham.* By R. N. BAILEY, M.A.

Read at Carlisle, January 23rd, 1960.

IN the course of a survey of the pre-Conquest sculpture of the Cumbrian peninsula three fragments were discovered at Brigham in addition to those already described and illustrated by W. S. Calverley.¹ How long these pieces have been lying in the church is not known. They were not noticed by W. G. Collingwood in his 1923 inventory.² nor in his many articles, and there is no mention of them in the reports of the two visits paid to Brigham by the Cumberland and Westmorland Society in 1936 and 1948.³ The cross-shaft fragment discussed here is the earliest and most important of the three. The other two will, it is hoped, form the subject of a later note.

As may be seen from the accompanying illustration, the fragment has been broken into two pieces during, or since, recovery. Its greatest length is $24\frac{1}{2}$ in. whilst at its greatest width it is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. The depth is uneven and the carving has been lost on three sides. The surviving face is decorated with part of an Anglian vine scroll motif, carved in relief, of which the two intersecting curves of the stem of a double scroll are visible. On the upper part of the fragment the space between these curves and the arris edge is filled with a decorative pattern consisting of two leaves flanking a fruit roundal. Below this can be seen a further leaf of what was probably an identical decorative motif.

The only other ornament visible is on the inside of the stem, where a further fruit roundal and a stalk can be

¹ *Early Sculptured Crosses, Shrines and Monuments in the Diocese of Carlisle*, 1899, 72-9.

² CW2 xxiii, 250.

³ CW2 xxxvi, 208-209. CW2 xlviii, 199,

distinguished. These, however, seem to be associated with yet another roundal, now badly worn, to the right. From these traces it is possible to reconstruct a leaf form with two pellets at its base. This is a well-known type, seen as early as the late 7th-century Bewcastle,⁴ which had a very long period of usage. This reconstruction is far from being a certain one, however, and no argument can be based upon it.

The pattern of the fruit or flower flanked by two leaves is a common one in the vine scrolls of the pre-Conquest period. At an early date in the sculptural series it can be seen on the west face of Ruthwell.⁵ Ilkley⁶ is a good example of a late 9th-century usage and there are survivals of the motif as late as the Ringerike period of the 11th century.⁷ Even the particular variation of the motif employed at Brigham, with its long stalk to the central roundal, is found on sculptures of widely separated dates and sites at Ruthwell,⁵ Hexham,⁸ Hulne priory,⁹ Dacre,¹⁰ and Croft.¹¹ There is nothing in the pattern therefore indicative either of date or of a local style and the dating of the fragment must therefore rest upon considerations of style.

This is plainly work of the Anglian period. There is no parallel in the later work for the chiselled carving, the attention to detail seen in the raised serrated edges of the leaves, or in the general excellence of workmanship. We are therefore dealing with a piece carved in the period between the late 7th century and the early 10th.

The first factor to be taken into consideration is the size of the carving. From the dimensions of the surviving fragment it appears that the sculptor was working on a large scale. There is nothing here of the delicacy, the

⁴ T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 1938, plate xlvii, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, plate xlvii, 1.

⁶ W. G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, 1927, fig. 63.

⁷ T. D. Kendrick, *Late Saxon and Viking Art*, 1949, plate xli.

⁸ W. G. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, fig. 40.

⁹ PSAN4 ii 92.

¹⁰ "Lion" fragment.

¹¹ T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, plate lxi.

fanciful miniature work which T. D. Kendrick¹² noted as a Carolingian influence upon English art of the 9th century. This does not necessarily mean that the Brigham fragment is earlier than the 9th century, but that the sculptor was working in the more monumental tradition that stemmed from work like Bewcastle and Ruthwell, and achieved massive proportions in late 9th-century work like Ilkley.⁶

The closest parallel to the Brigham piece is the Hexham shaft now in the Cathedral Library at Durham.¹³ On the face of this shaft are the remains of a double scroll with the same type of repetitive pattern of two leaves and a roundal filling the spaces between the intersections of the stems and the arris edge. The Brigham leaves, apparently unparalleled in their actual detail, are nearer to those on Hexham than they are to the stalkless Ruthwell type, and there is the same sort of attempt at a naturalistic rendering of the leaf veins, which is a feature of Brigham.

The Brigham fragment is, however, a more pedestrian piece of work compared with the Hexham shaft. Its vine scroll is flatter, and more geometrically regular in its curve. The whole effect is less life-like than even the patterned Hexham scroll. In terms of art history the Brigham scroll is derived from the stage of development reached on the Hexham shaft, while it is clear that this Hexham piece itself is derived from the type of double scroll seen on Accas cross.¹⁴

This relationship can be seen clearly in the treatment of the leaf. At Brigham this is set very stiffly and awkwardly on the stem. The origins of this feature can be seen on Hexham iv and Accas cross. Hexham iv takes over the turns of the leaf stems of Accas cross but makes them slightly more angular. Brigham takes the angularity a stage further. This stiff, set leaf becomes a feature of 9th-century scrolls like Ilkley and Dacre.

¹² *Ibid.*, 143 ff.

¹³ *Durham Cathedral Library Catalogue*, 1899, 59, no. iv, *Northumbrian Crosses*, fig. 40.

¹⁴ *Anglo-Saxon Art*, plate xlix.

We have established that the scroll on Brigham is derived from the Hexham iv stage of development, which itself is derived from a type of scroll such as that on Accas cross. We are now in a position to give an absolute dating.

Accas cross has a certain amount of external evidence which points to a date of about 740.¹⁵ Hexham iv lies somewhere between this stage and the stripped scrolls and other work of the 9th century in which late Anglian features predominate. A late 8th-century date of this shaft would seem the most plausible, and the Brigham fragment would then fall into place as work of the late 8th or early 9th centuries. This is, in fact, the stage that is indicated by the stiff, set leaf. It is doubtful if it is any earlier than this date, though it could of course be slightly later. Art typologies cannot take account of a conservative sculptor.

This fragment of sculptured stone from Brigham church, small as it is, is a valuable addition to the pre-Scandinavian sculpture of Cumberland. It is a traditional piece, drawing on motifs common to the whole of the north of England, carved very competently. It gives the first indication of a pre-Scandinavian foundation at Brigham and will, I hope, draw the attention of members to this type of archaeological evidence to whose study their Society has contributed so much.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134, note 2.