



A. Victor Haslam.

“THE SHALL-CROSS.”
A PRE-NORMAN CROSS.

The Shall-Cross.

A PRE-NORMAN CROSS, NOW AT FERNILEE HALL.

By W. J. ANDREW, F.S.A.



THE familiar appearance of the shaft of a sun-dial in the gardens of Fernilee Hall, the residence of Mr. H. S. Cox, some five miles north-west of Buxton, attracted my attention. It then appeared to be about eighteen inches in height, resting upon a square base stone, and surmounted by a Victorian capital bearing the dial. That it was the upper portion of a Saxon cross shaft was certain, and it was natural to assume that it had been mutilated to the length desired for its present purpose. A close inspection, however, raised a suspicion that the cross instead of resting upon the base stone might possibly pass through it; in other words, the base stone might have been bored and passed over the head of the cross.

Mr. Cox at once showed his interest in archæology by ordering an excavation. This resulted in proving the surmise to be correct, and disclosed a cross of the "pillar" type, nearly five feet in length and, near the base, three feet in circumference. The circumstance is curious, for it shows that whoever converted the cross to the purposes of a sun-dial had sufficient regard for its antiquity to preserve it intact. It is not *in situ*, but it is believed to have been at Fernilee Hall for about a hundred years. The shaft is complete, save that perhaps an inch or so at the top has been removed to level the stone for the capital, which probably dates from about a quarter of a century ago, but as it is a large square cap it is eminently suitable for the preservation of the relic from further weathering.

Mr. Haslam offered to photograph it for these pages, but an unexpected difficulty arose; the cross would not pass through the heavy base stone, and the latter would not pass over the capital. All attempts to remove the capital only disclosed that it was deeply dowed into the head of the cross, and Mr. Cox's men were of opinion that to persist would result in splitting the relic. Mr. Haslam was therefore restricted to photographing that portion, exactly four feet, which could be raised above the base stone. Hence the illustration in the plate is but four-fifths of the full length.

For 4 feet of its length it is cylindrical, with a girth of 35 inches at the foot, tapering to 32 inches at a point 13 inches from the present top. Here it is encircled by a double roll moulding $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, and immediately above that the stone is chamfered to a square, which gradually narrows to 7 inches at the top. Upon each face of the chamfered portion is a compartment formed of a single moulding, following the lines of its face, thus in form resembling a staple. Across one of these compartments, not shown in the illustration, the initials "H L" above the date 1720* have been neatly carved.

This cross is of a well-known type, of which Mr. J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A., wrote: "Judging from the relative number of monuments of this class in each county [Derbyshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire, and Cumberland], it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the type had its origin in Cheshire or Staffordshire, and it is therefore Mercian rather than Northumbrian,"† and he adds a list of the twenty examples then known to him, but he only credits Derbyshire with one example.

The following table of twenty-six specimens, including six specimens in this county, without in any way aspiring to be comprehensive, may be sufficient for the object of this paper, which is special rather than general:—

* The last two figures are not quite distinct.

† *Chester Archaeological Journal*, vol. v., p. 145.

CROSS AND PLACE.	NUMBER.	REMARKS.
Derbyshire—		
The Shall-Cross, Fernilee Hall	1 ..	Not <i>in situ</i> . Roll, double.
Wilne Church	1 ..	Ditto. Fragment converted to a font.
Bakewell Church	2 ..	Ditto. Fragments in the porch possibly more than two crosses. Roll, single.
The Picking Rods, Ludworth Moor	2 ..	<i>In situ</i> , standing in a single block of stone.
Cheshire—		
Macclesfield Park	3 ..	Removed from Ridge Hall Farm. Roll, double.
Pym Chair, Taxal	1 ..	<i>In situ</i> , a cross stump with circular socket.
Clulow Cross	1 ..	<i>In situ</i> upon a partly artificial mound. Fillet double.
Upton	1 ..	Near its site.
Cheadle	1 ..	Found underground with an example of another class.
The Bow Stones, Whaley Moor	2 ..	<i>In situ</i> , standing in a single block of stone. Roll single.
Staffordshire—		
Ilam Churchyard	1	
Chebsey	1	
Stoke	1	
Leek	1	
Nottinghamshire—		
Stapleford	1 ..	<i>In situ</i> , a few yards over the Derbyshire border.
Denbighshire—		
Eliseg's Pillar, Vale Crucis	1 ..	An inscribed stone.
Cumberland—		
Beckermet St. Bridget's	2 ..	<i>In situ</i> , but with separate base-stones. Rolls, single and double, one inscribed.
Gosforth	1 ..	<i>In situ</i> . Long chamfered portion.
Penrith	2 ..	<i>In situ</i> , but 15 feet apart, connected by hog-backed stones.

Although included in the above list, Eliseg's Pillar and the Penrith Stones have distinct characteristics, and were probably erected for different purposes to the rest. Several of these crosses bear typical Saxon ornamentation, such as interlaced

knot-work within the upper compartments, as at Bakewell, Macclesfield, and in Cumberland; or elaborated carving round the cylindrical portions, as at Stapleford, Wilne, and Gosforth; or cross-heads, as at Ilam, Leek, and Gosforth. Some have a single circular roll moulding as the Bow Stones, or double as the Shall-cross, and at Macclesfield and Clulow; but where the shaft is perfect the single staple moulding is uniform.

It will be noticed that all these crosses are north of the Trent, and therefore, as Mr. Allen suggested, they are distinctly Mercian in origin, and located in that portion of Mercia which, until the commencement of the seventh century, had remained under the rule of the Britons. That they are subsequent in date to the introduction of Christianity is also beyond doubt, as a reference to the Wilne, Stapleford and inscribed examples will prove. Therefore they may with confidence be dated between the seventh and the tenth centuries, but most of them indicate art of, probably, the earlier half of that period, and the example before us is of the early type. Probably the plain crosses were earlier than the ornamented, the knot-work pattern in the upper compartments prior to the carved cylinders, and, last of all, the figured designs as at Stapleford and Wilne. But fashions then, as now, would often overlap. I hope, however, presently, to offer further evidence for assuming that these crosses were already old at the date of the Norman Conquest.

Although, to quote Mr. Allen, they are "Mercian rather than Northumbrian," they are closely allied to the Northumbrian crosses, and in Mercia, *south* of the Trent, this particular type of cross is entirely absent. Therefore we must look for their *origin* to a condition of affairs which would bring the inhabitants of Derbyshire and Cheshire under the religion and customs of their neighbours north of the Humber, whilst it left those of the rest, and greater portion of Mercia, under its old *régime*, a condition which would sever all associations and intercourse between the two peoples.

This can only, I think, be found between the years 627 and 685. In 607, Ethelfrith, King of Northumbria, by his victory

over the Britons at Chester, had extended his kingdom to the Dee, and was slain at the battle on the Idle, in Nottinghamshire, in 617. Thus the district comprising the whole of the crosses in question came under the Northumbrian sway, and remained so, with temporary exceptions, until the year 685, when Ecgrith of Northumbria was defeated and slain at the battle of Nechtansmere, and the Northumbrians lost a considerable portion of their territories. During this period, namely, in 627, Christianity was introduced into Northumbria by Paulinus, and we know that in 632 he extended his mission throughout the boundaries of the then province, and, as Beda tells us, "preached the Word on the south side of the Humber," journeying as far as the Trent, in which, in the presence of King Edwin, who accompanied him, he baptized a multitude of the people near a town called Tiovulfingchester, which is usually accepted as Southwell. Thence he journeyed into Cumberland, preaching as he went; so his mission would embrace the very ground now sprinkled with this type of cross, namely, along the banks of the Trent and the Dove, passing Stapleford and Wilne into Staffordshire, by Chebsey, Stoke, Leek, and Ilam, and thence northward through the western borders of Derbyshire and Cheshire, past Bakewell, Shallcross, and Ludworth on the right, and Clulow, Macclesfield, Upton, Pym Chair, Bow Stones, and Cheadle on the left, on his way towards Cumberland. Thus he would pass within a few miles of every one of these monuments.

At this time the whole of the country south of the Trent was under the rule of Penda, of whom Beda writes: "Penda, with all the nation of the Mercians, was an idolater, and a stranger to the name of Christ," and in the following year King Edwin was slain by him at the battle of Heathfield. Therefore, if Paulinus introduced the custom of erecting crosses to commemorate the stages of this great religious movement, and this was the particular design of cross set up in Mercia on that occasion, we can well understand that the custom would not be tolerated across the Trent, and the design then popularized

would have become old-fashioned and obsolete when, after the death of Penda in 655, Christianity was finally established in Mercia proper. Hence a type which had been introduced by the first great missionary north of the Trent would be venerated in his memory for ages there; whilst south of the Trent another form of cross would remain the symbol of another preacher and of another period.

That it was customary where there was no church, to set up a cross upon such occasions, is well authenticated by our early historians. Bede tells us that in the year following the death of Edwin, King Oswald, marching against Penda, and finding there was neither church nor altar at a place called Havenfield, erected the sign of the Holy Cross, and the hole being dug the King himself held it with both hands whilst the earth was thrown in, ordering the people to kneel and pray for the safety of the nation. This cross, however, was "made in haste," and was of wood, but others of the same or the following century are recorded as being of carved stone.

It seems probable that the original crosses, which I have suggested were erected by Paulinus, were also of wood, for they would be set up in haste as occasion required. This is important in view of the peculiar form of this type. The usual and natural Saxon *stone* cross shafts have a rectangular cross section, but I think that these pillar cross shafts bear a close resemblance to a felled and lopped tree trunk, especially to that of the pine, which would be the common and most convenient tree of the district. They are rounded at the base where the tree would be felled, and their curious tapering square at the top, with its oval faces, exactly reproduces the effect of lopping off the rest of the trunk with an axe, for saws were not then used by woodmen. To demonstrate this a pencil has only to be sharpened with four cuts of the knife. The cross before us and its colleagues are, I believe, reproductions in stone of these early wooden prototypes, and if we imagine that the single and double roll mouldings are representations of the ropes which originally bound the cross pieces to the

wooden shaft, we have a very close picture of what the shafts of the crosses of Paulinus must have been. This is the more marked when we remember that on some crosses this moulding actually assumes the rope or "cable" pattern, as it is termed. Exactly the same system of imitation was extended to Anglo-Saxon stone architecture, where the tie beams and other details of the wooden buildings were carefully reproduced in the courses and ornamentation of the masonry.

The wooden crosses of Paulinus would soon perish, for apart from their natural disintegration, they would be the prey of the devout relic searcher, as, indeed, a story of Bede implies was the fate of King Oswald's cross. But before fifty years had elapsed another great revival passed over the land, which, I suggest, led to their reproduction in their present durable form. Towards the close of the same century Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, originated the parochial system, by which the whole country was intended to be divided into ecclesiastical parishes, and each to be assigned to the ministrations of a single priest. As a matter of fact, it took centuries to complete the system, but the work was then commenced and intermittently continued until the reign of Edward III.

In June of last year I had the privilege of accompanying Dr. Cox in a search, extending over several days, for the lost crosses of the Peak. The results are given by him in a paper to the *Athenæum* for July 9th, 1904, entitled "Early Crosses in the High Peak." He had obtained tracings of sixteenth and seventeenth century maps of the Forest, which disclosed many crosses now entirely unknown either to the ordnance surveyors or others. The stumps of some of these we found, but—with the exception of the well-known crosses on Ludworth Moor, Robin Hood's Picking Rods, as they are now called, but the "Standing Stones" and the "Maiden Stones," as the old maps called them—none appeared to have been of the type which is the subject of this paper. But we noticed that almost invariably, and in the one or two instances when this was not the case it is probably accounted for by modern diversions, the cross was

upon the line of the parish boundary, and not only upon the line, but the face of the cross, as indicated in the stump, was always true to the direction. Hence there is little doubt that the crosses were originally placed to record the boundary of each parish, and they are usually at its corners. One instance in particular demonstrated this. From the Picking Rods, one of the boundaries runs in a south-easterly direction to the stump of a cross we discovered, and then in a straight line to the Abbot's Chair, which is a Saxon cross stump of the ordinary rectangular section set true to line. Here the boundary turns sharply to the north-east, but only for a length of about fifty yards, where it crosses the road called the Monks' Road; yet here, although so close to the other, is also a cross stump, but seemingly of later date, and thence the boundary once more assumes a south-easterly direction, though not quite in the same line as before. From this I am now inclined to deduce that originally the Abbot's Chair marked the corner of the whole, but that at the date of the later cross a small deviation was made, possibly in consequence of some charter to the Abbot of Basingwark, who held a grange in this neighbourhood. In this relation I would suggest that the word "chair" here, is really the old Anglo-Saxon *cérre*, which means a turn, corner, or bend, hence it was the abbot's boundary-corner. We note the same word in Pym Chair, the Saxon cross stump at Taxal, which is also on the boundary line of its parishes.

It follows, as Dr. Cox cogently remarked, that if a single cross was necessary to define the direction of the single boundary between two parishes, double crosses would be required to point those where three parishes unite at a corner. This is exactly what occurs where the two pillar crosses—Robin Hood's Picking Rods—stand in one huge block of millstone grit on Ludworth Moor, and their cross heads no doubt originally pointed the meeting of the three ways. It is true that the precisely similar monument, the Bow Stones, does not now stand upon a boundary line, but as the point of junction of three parishes does occur within a mile of it, on Whaley Moor, we

may safely assume that, at some time during the thousand years and more that it has stood, one parish has encroached upon the other and so set back the corner or point of union, for the word Bow itself means "a corner." This is almost proved by the fact that within half a mile of the present junction, where one of the boundaries points directly for the Bow Stones but is again deviated, there is another double cross stump on the moor. This, although Saxon, is of the ordinary type and of later date than the Bow Stones, and its finely carved crosses are no doubt those preserved at Lyme Hall. There is, therefore every indication that originally the three ecclesiastical parishes met at the Bow Stones. Later, but prior to the Conquest, the point was deviated eastward to the Whaley Moor crosses, and again in more modern times to its present site. This is the more certain for each of the three lines is pointing directly for the Bow Stones in its original course, one actually approaching them within about half a mile and then, turning backward at an acute angle, runs in a straight line to within fifty yards of the Whaley Moor stump, where it again turns, this time at a right angle, and joins the other two boundaries.

I have endeavoured to show some probabilities that the class of crosses which we are considering was derived from a wooden prototype, that the prototype was designed in that portion of Mercia which is north of the Trent, and includes this county, that its date must have been between A.D. 627 and 685, that the mission of Paulinus in 632 was the most natural occasion, that as such the type would be venerated in this particular district and reproduced in stone for a long period afterwards, when other designs were more popular elsewhere, and finally that these crosses, amongst others, marked the original boundaries of the ancient parishes. I will now return to the origin of the parochial system.

When at the close of the seventh century Archbishop Theodore issued his mandate that the country was to be divided into ecclesiastical parishes, the movement would probably be slow in its progress and difficult in its solution. It would not be

until the eighth century that it was attempted in Derbyshire. The old crosses of Paulinus, or their sites, would be the best known ecclesiastical landmarks, and therefore it would be almost impossible to imagine that they would not be brought into the scheme of division. The difficulty where they existed, and no doubt they were then very numerous compared to the crosses we now know, would be solved at once by assigning to a priest the township or parish lying between four crosses, or between certain crosses, and some well-known landmark. As a matter of fact, the boundaries rarely followed any such simple lines as these, but their variation was probably by arrangement between the neighbouring priests. Then it would be that the old wooden crosses would be reproduced in stone, to permanently record their origin and their new use. Where these had not existed, and in other districts, probably the ordinary Christian cross of the fashion of the day would be erected to mark the corners of the boundaries, and of these many also still remain. As time went on and stones perished or boundaries varied, they would be renewed or increased in number, but it is probable that each locality in those early days would reproduce the design which tradition, custom and veneration had popularized, whether it was the pillar or the ordinary Saxon cross. Nevertheless, I believe that the Picking Rods, the Bow Stones, the Shall-cross and some of the others are the original crosses set up in the eighth century on the first division of the parishes. That Stapleford and Wilne are probably a century or so later is but a natural conclusion; still they are, or were, elaborated reproductions of the original prototype, the wooden cross.

Although now at Fernilee, I have not hesitated to call this specimen the Shall-cross, for that is what I believe its name to have been. It had obviously been removed to its present site in comparatively modern times. From the initials "H L," and the date, 1720, so carefully carved upon it, I think it is almost certain that it was standing *in situ* in that year. Who H L

was I do not know, but it seems to have been customary in olden days for Government officials to so mark these crosses as records of their surveys. For example, the Edale cross bears the inscription, very similarly cut, "I. G. 1610," and Dr. Cox has the credit of having identified this with John Gell, who received a commission in 1610 to survey the Forest of the Peak. On Pym Chair, which is in Cheshire, we have, oddly enough, the initials "P. C." on either side of a pheen. On the later of the two cross stumps at the Abbot's Chair are the initials N and R,* also a cross, and on the Picking Rods, which are in the same district, again we have the N, which is also repeated on the Bow Stones. But it is in these that the interest centres, for they are neighbours of the Shall-cross, and, in addition to the N, they also bear the same initials as those on our subject, viz., H. L. Hence we may infer that in 1720 someone bearing these initials was commissioned to survey the boundaries in this district, and then it was perhaps that the *present* junction of the three parishes near the Bow Stones was selected. This is again evidence of the part these crosses played in the delineation of our ancient parish boundaries, and that in 1720 the Shall-cross stood upon a parish boundary line.

Mr. Cox has made enquiries, and now informs me that the stone is said by tradition to have been brought down from the old road above the hall, namely, what is believed to be the old Roman road to Buxton. If that be so, and it seems highly probable, the site must have been at Elnor Lane Head, Shall-cross, where four roads join, at a distance of nine hundred yards from Fernilee Hall. The reasons for this assertion are the following. The only parish boundary line available for the purpose approaches within three hundred and fifty yards of that spot where it turns northward, and again westward, and finally northward. In other words, it cuts off a corner, and if its approach and its final retreat be continued in a straight course they would exactly meet at Elnor Lane Head, Shallcross. Thus

* I am careful to treat only inscriptions which are clearly official, as opposed to the unfortunate custom of defacing our monuments. When the inscription is on the base stone is it not presumptive evidence that the cross was not then standing?

the same indications of a deviation of the boundary exist here as at Bow Stones, and the same initials, H. L., appear upon both monuments. The only difference is that here we have the corner of two parishes only, and therefore but a single cross. We may, therefore, assume that in 1720 H. L. made both these deviations, and that is why he initialled both monuments. But even if this assumption were wrong, the cross would still be the "Shall-cross," as wherever it was upon the boundary line it must have been in Shallcross.

Lest it should be thought from the last remark that I have named this cross the "Shall-cross" after the hamlet, let me say at once that I trust to prove the very opposite, namely, that the hamlet derived its name from this little cross, which had stood for a thousand years to commemorate the mission of Paulinus, until, even subsequently to the year 1720, it was ruthlessly removed. Again, the deviation I have suggested alone enabled this to be done, for few would venture to remove a parish boundary mark.

We will now turn to the evidence of the Wilne cross. The remains of this are represented by the font in Wilne church, and, as Mr. G. le Blanc Smith, in a most interesting paper to vol. xxv. of this *Journal*, p. 217, demonstrates, the conversion from cross to font must have occurred as early as in Norman times, for it is mounted upon a base of that period. But he and all others who have written upon it, have been content to leave the question of the original site of the cross itself, as a subject for interesting speculation only. The solution of the problem is, however, not at all difficult. Following the rule that the cross must have stood upon the parish boundary line, we find that at almost the nearest point to Wilne church, there is a place still called "Shacklecross," and here, no doubt, it stood; and additional proof of this will be offered later on.

Its conversion in Norman times is presumptive evidence that it was then a very old cross, for no one would thus mutilate anything of so grand a workmanship as this great cross must have been unless it had fallen into decay. This is one of the

reasons why I have not hesitated to place even this probably late example of the pillar crosses I am treating, as early as the ninth century. Having now established some probability that the Wilne cross originally stood at Shacklecross, I will return to my subject.

The ancient name of Shallcross was also Shacklecross. For instance, in the Receipt Roll of the Peak Jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield* for the year 1339 John of the Hall and Benedict de Shakelcros return the tithes for Fernilee, and many other documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries similarly record the name. Hence we have now two instances of this particular type of cross, the origin of which I have referred to Paulinus, connected with a place called Shacklecross, and yet separated by nearly the entire length of the county. This could scarcely be a mere coincidence, and therefore there must be some latent reason.

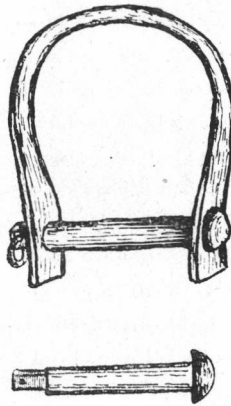
We have seen that both these crosses would be old at the date of the Conquest, that at Wilne was presumably ruinous. The cross heads, assuming that they ever existed, were probably gone, as, indeed, nearly all are now, and the bare shaft of each would remain. The traditions of their origin and the memory of Paulinus would be a closed book of indifference to the Norman race, and to it they would be mere standing pillars. We have seen that Clulow Cross and Vale Crucis were named after two of these crosses, and it is quite common for places to so derive their names in the instances of other types of early crosses, not included here. Hence the Normans found two crosses standing, and in course of time the people named each of them from its appearance the "Shackle-cross," for these pillars, when bereft of their cross heads, bear a remarkable resemblance to the Norman shackle.

The shackle, or as it was sometimes called, the fetter lock, was originally the bolt which locked the link or fetter, but in course of time the whole came to be known, especially in

* Communicated to vol. xi., p. 142, of this *Journal* by Dr. Cox.

heraldry, as a shackle bolt or fetter lock. This shackle or shackle bolt was a cylindrical bar of iron thickened at one end so that it would not pass through the hole in the first side of the fetter, and chamfered to a square at the other, so that the shoulders of the chamfering would fit tight into the square hole in the other side of the fetter and the portion of the square which had passed through was pierced for a rivet or padlock.

The origin of the name Shallcross and its predecessor, Shacklecross, has been the subject of many theories and much speculation. The Rev. W. H. Shawcross, of Bretforton, came



An Ancient Shackle.

nearest to the facts when he suggested that the affix *cross* might refer to the junction of the four roads near Shallcross Manor, for I think the place, at least, was right. It is curious how time works its changes. The cross has passed through many vicissitudes, yet the old cause preached by Paulinus, of which it was but an emblem, has remained unchanged to this day, namely—

VIA CRUCIS VIA LUCIS.