

## PRE-NORMAN CROSS FRAGMENTS FROM MONYASH, DERBYSHIRE

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During the course of recent archaeological fieldwork in the parish of Monyash, Derbyshire, two fragments of pre-Norman cross-heads were recovered. They were found together on the surface of a rubble-filled mining hollow (SK 16396458) within the vicinity of the farm at One Ash Grange, and are presently stored in Buxton museum. Whilst the Peak District presents one of the richest surviving heritages of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the country today, the inventory has altered remarkably little since the work of Routh (1937). Given the poor provenancing of many of the known fragments, the discovery of these examples represents, if for these reasons alone, a notable contribution to the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the Peak District.

Less than 250m from the point where the cross fragments were found are the remains of medieval building platforms and foundations, together with associated enclosures and lanes (SK16566479) (Barnatt & Myers, forthcoming). It is unclear if these represent the medieval grange of One Ash, which was owned by Roche Abbey, South Yorkshire, or a fragment of the earlier village of the same name which is recorded in the Domesday Book. The present farm of One Ash Grange stands some 550m away (SK16916523). It is not known when the present location of the farm was first occupied, but it seems likely that the deserted site is associated with the cross fragments.

### DESCRIPTION

Fragment 1 (Fig 1:1-3) is a gritstone cross-arm, fragmented from the central portion of the cross-head at the base of the arm-stem. In profile the arm is expanded, or fan-like, being 25cm at its broadest point and narrowing to 9cm at the base of the arm-stem. One face (Fig 1:2) has a simple, raised border which appears to continue from the cross-arm onto the missing central portion of the cross. In the centre is a circular, raised boss with no apparent elaboration. On the reverse face (Fig 1:1), enclosed within a similar raised border, is a triple knot interlace which clearly extended down the stem beyond the point of fracture. Midway along both sides of the cross fragment are square bosses which project outward by about 1cm. Their surfaces show clear signs of tooling similar to that visible on the other original surfaces of the cross-arm (Fig 1:3).

Fragment 2 (Fig 1:4-5) is a second gritstone cross-arm, but is in a somewhat poorer state of preservation than fragment 1. In profile fragment 2 is also expanded, being 16.5cm at its broadest and narrowing to 8.5cm in the centre of the arm stem. Both faces (Fig 1:4-5) exhibit a simple, raised border with no internal design other than on one face (Fig 1:4) where the arm has retained a small portion of the cross-head which shows traces of a groove that may have originally formed a circle around the edge of the cross-head centre. In contrast with fragment 1 the sides have no raised bosses.

### DISCUSSION

Whilst the two fragments hold certain aspects of their design in common we cannot be certain that they originate from the same cross. They both have expanding arm profiles,

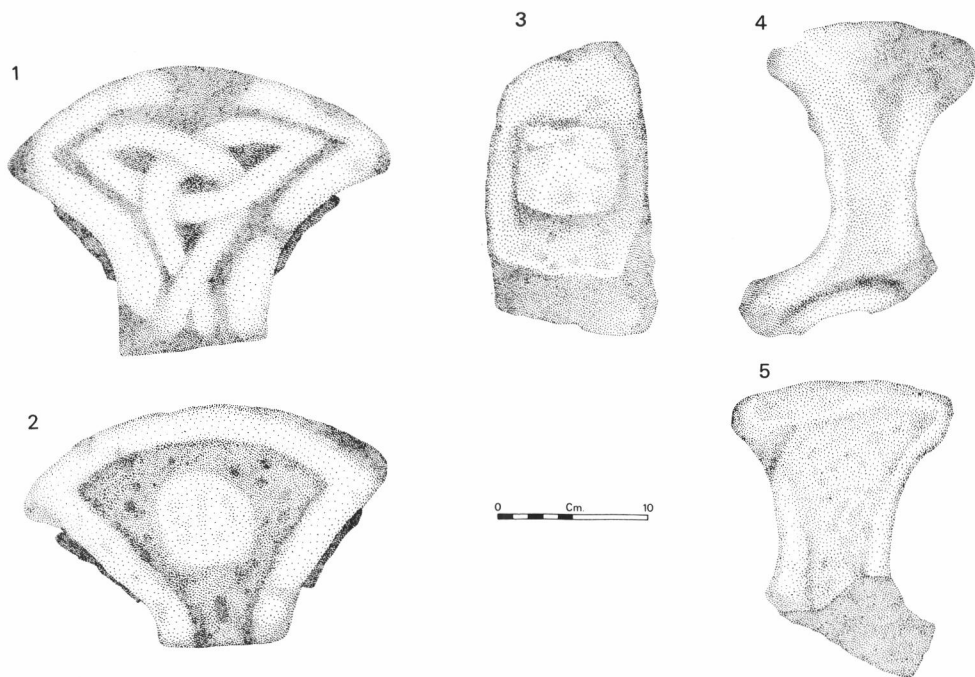


Fig 1 Two fragments of Saxon cross from One Ash, Monyash (1-3; 4-5). 1, Face of fragment 1 showing triple knot interlace. 2, Face of fragment 1 showing central raised boss. 3, Side view of fragment 1 showing square boss. 4 & 5, Faces of fragment 2.

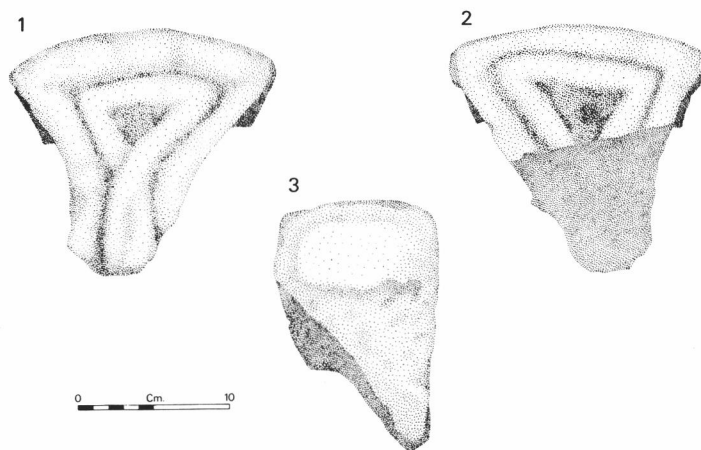
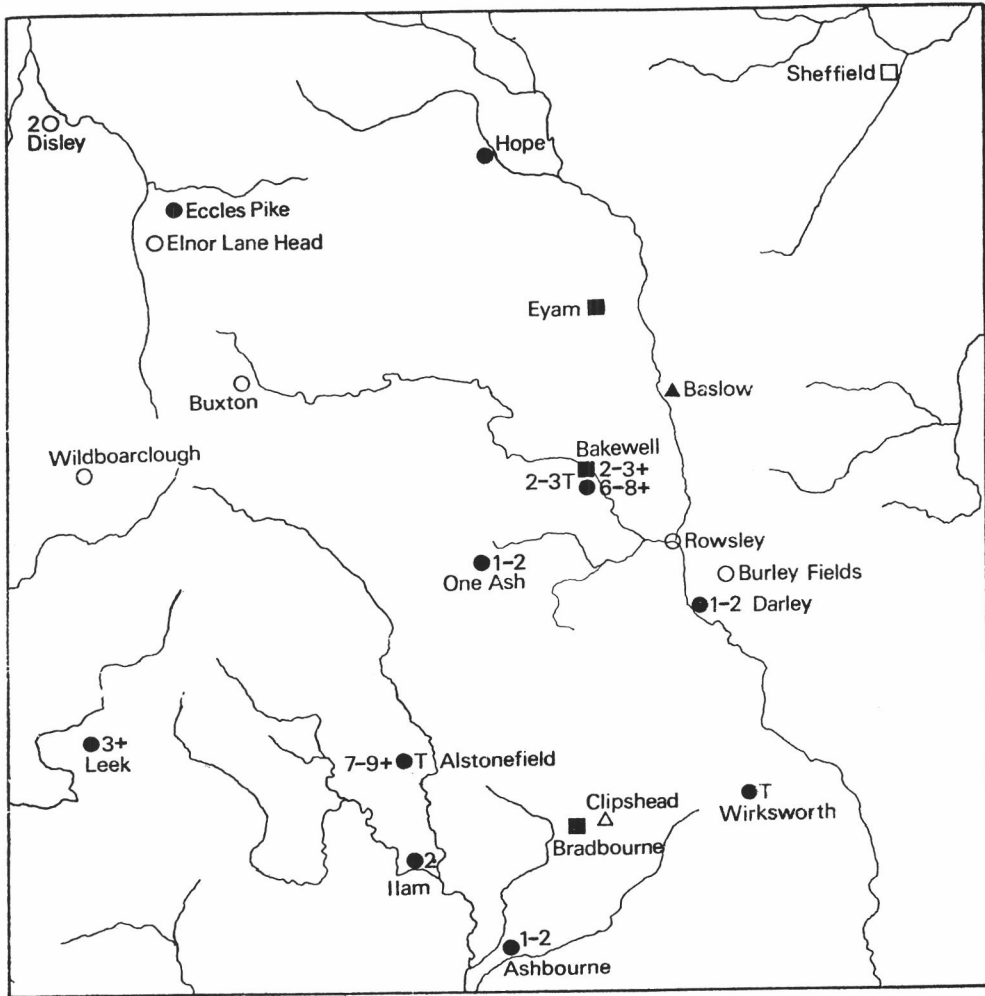


Fig 2 Fragment of Saxon cross in Buxton museum. 1 & 2, Faces of cross-arm showing simple interlace design. 3, Side view of cross-arm showing boss.



	Near Original Site ?	Original Site Unknown
Anglian Style (8-9C)	■	□
Anglo-Viking/Debased	●	○
Anglian Style (10-11C)	▲	△
Unknown		
Saxon Tombs	T	

Fig 3 Distribution of known Saxon crosses in the Peak District and surrounding areas. Stylistic attributions are based upon Cramp (1977) and Routh (1937), but in several cases undiagnostic and debatable stylistic elements are open to reinterpretation. The numerical estimates refer to number of crosses rather than individual fragments.

but fragment 1 is relatively more expanded than fragment 2. In addition, fragment 2 is somewhat thicker, being 13.5cm at its thickest point compared with 11.0cm for fragment 1. The tapering in thickness of fragment 1 might suggest that this was the upper arm of a cross-head which grew thicker towards the centre and in the side-arms,

thereby reconciling some of the differences between them. However, the gritstone from which fragment 1 is made has a somewhat pink colouration which contrasts with the grey/brown gritstone of fragment 2. It is by no means clear if such differences might be found within a single block of gritstone. Added to this, the presence of square bosses on fragment 1 and their absence from fragment 2 must cast further doubt on their originating from one cross.

The search for stylistic comparisons for the two fragments is difficult since the majority of cross fragments in the region are shafts, as opposed to cross-heads. However, the combination of expanded arms with simple triple knot interlace suggests a tenth or early eleventh century date (Routh, 1937, 29); corresponding with the later Staffordshire/Derbyshire group of crosses (Cramp, 1977, 218). Examples of fan-shaped cross-arms within the Peak District are found at Bakewell and at Rowsley (Routh, 1937, plate xviii) although neither of the One Ash fragments exhibit the terminal curls of the latter, whilst neither the Bakewell or Rowsley cross-arms have square bosses. A recently rediscovered fragment in Buxton museum (Fig 2:1-3) does combine an expanded profile, simple interlace and side-bosses. However, the side-bosses on this latter example have fractured surfaces indicating that it was once part of a wheel cross. In addition, the provenance of this cross fragment is unknown. If any reader should recognise it could they contact Buxton museum. Immediately beyond the Peak District to the west the two crosses at Disley, Cheshire, offer more complete examples of expanded arms with side-bosses (Pape, 1946, 39-41; C, Drage, pers. comm.). However, as with the cross fragment in Buxton museum, the Disley examples appear to have been wheel crosses. The clearly tooled surfaces of the square bosses on fragment 1 argue against an origin as part of a wheel cross unless this was modified after being carved.

The general distribution of cross fragments in the region (Fig 3) reveals certain interesting points. The concentration of fragments in Bakewell has long suggested a central role in the production of the region's religious sculpture. The concentration of later Anglo-Viking sculpture to be found at Alstonefield might be taken to suggest an alternative centre of production during the tenth and eleventh centuries. However, the extensive restorations of the Norman churches in Bakewell and Alstonefield, and to a lesser extent in other parishes, may have radically distorted our knowledge of the distribution of crosses in the region.

While bearing this caveat in mind, a stronger argument can be made for Bakewell being a production centre than is the case for Alstonefield. There is documentary evidence for a Saxon monastery at Bakewell (Hart, 1975) which may have served as a focal point for artistic output. The distribution of eighth and ninth century sculpture is noticeably restricted in comparison with later work. Other than those at Bakewell the only examples of ninth/tenth century sculpture are found at Eyam, Wirksworth and Bradbourne, which were all probably larger population foci than was the norm for the Peak District. In contrast, the distribution of tenth/eleventh century crosses suggests that the majority of communities in the region, other than in areas of gritstone moorland, had at least one cross during the later period. It follows that there may well be further carved fragments to be discovered in the region.

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