

## THE BRIDEKIRK FONT.

"OLD NORTHERN RUNIC MONUMENTS," p. 491.

I BELIEVE I have now found who the RICHARD was that sculptured the striking Bridekirk Runic Font. If so, I was right in assigning its date—on independent internal grounds—to the 12th century, not the 13th.

Lately, again looking through the excellent edition of the Boldon Buke<sup>1</sup> by my learned friend the Rev. W. Greenwell, M.A., I was struck at pp. 2 and 43 by the following :

"Willelmus quondam Abbas de Burgo tenet Newtonam juxta Dunolm. de accommodatiōne et elemosina Domini Episcopi, et reddit pro medietate dominiū quam Ricardus ingeniator tenuit, j. mārcam."

*William, sometime Abbot of Peterborough holds Newton near Durham, by the accommodation and alms of the Lord Bishop, and renders, for the moiety of the demesne which Richard the Architect held, one mark."*

Mr. Greenwell adds in a note :

"Richard was a man of some note in his profession; he was employed by Bishop Pudsey about the repair of Norham Castle. Reginald, in his Life of St. Cuthbert (Surtees Soc.), ch. 47, 54, tells an interesting story about him, and says 'Cunctis regionis hujus incolis arte et nomine notissimus est.' He and his heir, Thomas, granted land in Wolviston to the Prior and Convent of Durham in exchange for a carncate of land in Pittington."

What was this "interesting story"? It is told diffusively by Reginald in his ch. 47, shorter, with some variations, in ch. 54. The substance is: A pious layman, who showed his faith by his works, like many other simple people carried about him some amulets, half-christian charms and spells, with verses of scripture, &c. A familiar friend, a monk of St. Cuthbert, who also bore on his person a kind of amulet, a little manuscript life of the saint, and, hidden in the binding-boards, a morsel of the chasuble which had lain by his body, showed

<sup>1</sup> Boldon Buke, a Survey of the Possessions of the See of Durham, made by order of Bishop Hugh Pudsey, in the year 1183. With a translation, an appendix of original documents, and a Glossary. By the Rev. W. Greenwell, M.A. 8vo. Durham, 1852. (Published by the Surtees Society.)

Richard this last treasure. But its sight excited holy and eager longings, and at last, overcome by his prayers, the monk gave the layman a bit of the costly fragment. For this and his other talismans Richard procured a rich silken case or bag, and constantly went with them on his person. One of the first fruits of this devotion was, that Bishop Pudsey made him his Master of the Works for the improvements at Norham Castle, and here Richard was always boasting of his precious safeguards. A certain ecclesiastic at Norham, a Frenchman, heard often of this hidden belt, and one day—Richard having gone to Berwick, and in his haste forgotten it—he happened to find it. Quickly tearing it open to see what jewels were within, what was his disappointment to find that the chief treasure was—a tiny lave of whitish cloth! Angry and disgusted, the French priest threw the relic into the fire, where it remained for a couple of hours. But it took no harm, would not burn, and so the Frenchman lifted the wondrous morsel from the coals, humbly restoring it to the returning Richard, and announced the token to all the bystanders.

Reginald says that he himself had seen the bit of cloth, and that it was whiter and brighter after its fire-bath than the robe from which it had been cut; all which only shows that it was woven of *amianthus*, or earth-flax, a kind of asbestos, which for thousands of years has been used for making incombustible stuffs. And this reminds us of the equally “unburning” hair of St. Cuthbert, evidently fabricated of *gold-wire*, a few years before, by that cunning and impudent relic-thief Elfred Westow. (See Symeon of Durham, ch. 42; Reginald, ch. 26; and the Rev. James Raine’s valuable *St. Cuthbert*, 4to, Durham, 1828, p. 59.)

As we have seen, it was while Richard was superintending the works at Norham Castle that the “miracle” in question took place, that is to say about the year 1171. Reginald wrote his book about 1172, and in the chapters on Richard that craftsman is still living (*cognominatus est*,” “*notissimus est*,” *not fuit*). But he was dead before 1183, for this is the date of the Boldon Buke, when Abbot William had followed him (how long before we do not know) as tenant of Newton. The works at Norham were too extensive to have been finished in one year (1171), and while engaged thereon Richard could neither have time nor wish to descend to simple stone-cutting with his own hands. He doubtless therefore carved the font either before his elevation to the post of Master-builder at Norham, that is, say, some time between 1150 and 1170, or else after his finishing those works, and his death, say about 1172 to 1180. *The former* is the more likely, as handiwork would better suit a clever journeyman than a renowned architect.

After praising his simplicity and piety, Reginald adds about him (ch. 47), "*artificiosus fuisset opere, et prudens architectus in omni structurâ artis forissecæ,*" *that he was most skilful in his work, and a careful architect (talented constructor) in all kinds of outdoor building;* and (ch. 54), "*Vir iste Ricardus Ingeniator dictus cognominatus est, qui Dupelmensis civis effectus cunctus regionis hujus incolis arte et nomine notissimus est.*" *This man Richard is well known by his title of the Engineer (Architect), and, having become a burgher of Durham, is celebrated both by name and fame to all the men of this region (at least including the counties of Durham, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Northumberland.*

Thus, according to all testimony, he was a worthy, highly respected artist, pious beyond the average, and distinguished as a gifted craftsman long before the favour shown him by Bishop Pudsey. It is also evident that he became a man of substance. That he was a native Northumbrian is plain, for otherwise the contrary would have been pointed out by Reginald, in the same way as he is careful to tell us that the clerk who stole his belt was "*Francigena,*" a Frenchman. When Richard was born, and when he died, I do not know. The dates will be something like A.D. 1120 and 1180.

GEORGE STEPHENS.

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### SURVEY OF THE MANOR HOUSE OF STOCKTON, COMMONLY CALLED STOCKTON CASTLE, TAKEN AFTER THE DEATH OF BISHOP PILKINGTON.

COMMUNICATED BY CANON RAINE FROM A BUNDLE OF PAPERS IN THE YORK ECCLESIASTICAL COURT, RANGING OVER YEARS BEFORE AND AFTER 1574.

STOCKTON THE verdict and presentment of the jurye whose names are UPON TEASE. herunder written taken and made the x<sup>th</sup> of September anno regni Elizabeth Dei gratia Angliæ, etc. xrx<sup>o</sup>, upon the vewe and survey of the mannour howse of Stockton upon Tease in the County of Duresme with all other howses and buildinges belongynge unto the said mannour in what decay and ruyn they were at the deathe of the late reverend father in God James late busshopp of Duresme, and what would repaire the same agayne in all thinges necessary.

First the Barne beinge of lxij yardes in length, xiiij yardes brode, builded of post & pan and covered with slate all savinge xvij yardes in length which is decaied of slate and covered with strawe; the walles beinge iiij yardes high with a xj butteresces on either syde, and xj yardes depe of thatch on either side. The walles and buttresces sore decaied and ruynouse, and the said slate woorke decayed for lacke of