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THE ST. HELENA CROSS, CHURCH KELLOE, CO. DURHAM

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IN THE modest church of St. Helen at Kelloe in Co. Durham (NZ 345366) stands a fine example of Romanesque sculpture, a complete standing cross with wheel head and richly carved shaft panels depicting scenes from the legend of the Invention of the True Cross (plates V and VI). Early descriptions of the monument were extremely brief¹ and disagreed in the identification of the illustrations. More recently Swarzenski completed Saxl's study of the finer pieces of English 12th-century sculpture with the cross, devoting three good plates to the carving² and it has been mentioned in passing in general surveys of the art of the period.³ Yet this important monument has never been described in any detail, nor has it been related to its local context.

The cross was found in 1854 incorporated in the south wall of the chancel.⁴ It was broken into three or four pieces which fortunately fit together with little loss. Parts of the cross-head's wheel are missing, and the lower and lateral arms are fractured at their narrowest points. The shaft is fractured near the top of the central panel and modern mortar to some extent conceals the carving at that point. Presumably at the Dissolution or during the Commonwealth, some of the figures' heads were defaced, almost with care, since only the lower parts of the faces suffered. Indeed, in the lowest panel the faces are unscathed thanks either to the reluctant iconoclast or to the possible inaccessibility of the base of the shaft in its original position. After the 19th-century restoration of the church, the cross was re-erected against the interior north wall of the chancel where it still stands.

DESCRIPTION

The cross is elaborately carved on its front face and western narrow edge, but there is no carving on the back nor on the eastern edge.⁵ As the tapered neck of the shaft has an uncut eastern edge, it follows that the absence of decoration is not

¹ DN II (1869-79), xlii-xliv; J. T. Fowler, "On a Sculptured Cross at Kelloe, Durham", *Archaeologia* 52 i (1890), 73-4 (transcribed in J. R. Boyle, *Guide to Durham* (1892), 622-3, & J. E. Hodgkin, *Durham* (1913), 178-9); DN V (1905), ccii ff.

² F. Saxl, *English Sculptures of the 12th Century* (1954), 67-8, Pls XCVI-XCVIII.

³ A. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture* II (1934), 159; T. D. Kendrick, *Late Saxon & Viking Art* (1949), 146; T. S. R. Boase, *English Art 1100-1216* (1953), 233-4; R. Stoll, *Architecture & Sculpture in Early Britain* (1967), 328, Pl. 169.

⁴ DN V (1905), ccii.

⁵ DN II (1869-79), xliii.



a. Church Kelloe: St. Helena Cross,
lowest panel



b. Church Kelloe: St. Helena Cross,
central panel



c. Church Kelloe: St. Helena Cross,
top panel

Photographs: J. T. Lang



a. Church Kelloe: St. Helena Cross,
cross-head



b. Church Kelloe: St. Helena Cross



c. Byzantine staurotheque,
Nonantola Abbey, Italy

Photographs: J. T. Lang

Photograph: Edinburgh Festival

the result of later dressing but must indicate that the back and one side never received the chisel.

The cross is 186.0 cm high, 42.0 cm wide and 14.5 cm thick, and was originally cut from a single piece of grey sandstone. At the base of the shaft is a tenon which must have fitted into a socket. The front face is divided into three panels of unequal height, the topmost tapering into the lower arm of the cross-head.

The lowest panel has a plain arris. Within it at the dexter side a crowned woman stands in half profile facing the centre. Beneath her crown is a drape that covers the back of her head and sweeps forward across her throat. She wears a long robe, the ribbed folds falling diagonally across the chest and right arm and sweeping to one side near her feet. Over this an outer garment resembles a cloak whose ribbed drapes hang vertically from the left arm and are concentric on the right shoulder. The hem carries staggered incised lines, like those of the undergarment's cuffs. Her left hand holds an upright sword, the upper part of its blade broken. The tips of its hilt guard curl in tiny volutes towards the blade. In the centre stands a large cross with a blank label in the shape of a parallelogram at its crest. Both the stem and the transom are decorated with a medial line of pellets; at the intersection is a saltire with raised edging. Above the transom the cross is flanked by a seven-rayed sun and a crescent moon on its back containing a flame. At the sinister side stands a male figure, in half profile facing the cross. He wears a flattish hat, pleated into a narrow headband. His hair falls behind his ear to his shoulder, and his beard and moustache consist of long wavy fronds. His extended right hand holds the T-shaped handle of a spade with a narrow spit. His long undergarment has diagonal ribbed folds above the waist and V-folds below; on the arm are tight concentric ribbed folds. He wears a cloak with concentric drapes on the shoulder and diagonal folds falling from the left arm. Small feet emerge from the clothing. The left hand supports the head of a naked figure who sits up from a shroud, his left hand reaching to the spade, the other raised from the elbow. The hair is short and swept back behind the ear.

Along the base of the panel are two prostrate shrouded corpses. Their heads rest on vertical bars near the arris and their worn faces are just visible. In contrast to the rest of the panel, the upper parts of these figures show more wear and tear. The dexter corpse's shroud is treated in a similar way to the drapery of the standing figures and the sinister body has a cross laid upon its breast. Between the woman and the cross, filling the background, are tapering, curling flames with volute tips. Each flame's contours are echoed by internal incised lines.

The central panel is oblong. Its chamfered arris carries a series of trilobate forms which spring from a line of pellets on the inner edge of the border. At three-quarters of the panel's height the chamfer swings into a semicircular arch with more fluid foliate ornament. The pellet strip now assumes rising, slightly bent stems, four on each side, and the trilobate leaves are swept back from their stalks away from the central axis, lying on the spandrels of the arch. At the crest two low leaves join to form a fan with a triangular void centre. All the leaf lobes of the panel are scooped. At the vertical sides of the spandrels, two pelleted stems with trilobate leaves over-

lap from the arris, giving the illusion of growing over from the adjacent side, though in fact they are distinct from the decorative scheme of the narrow edge.

Within the arch stand two confronted half-profile figures. Their treatment is similar but not identical. Both wear shallow caps with beaded headbands; the flat crown of the cap dips at intervals into the band suggesting a low coronet, but neither has the vertical flourishes of the crowns in other panels. The faces, although damaged below the eyes, were modelled and each has a small ear holding back long, centrally parted hair. The dexter figure has a light rear head covering below the cap, its edge receding in zig-zag folds. The other figure may have a similar feature though it is less distinct. The shoulders now consist of modern cement.

The dexter figure's drapery descends in vertical ribbed folds but some movement is conveyed by a slight billowing at the top of the skirt and a sideways flourish at the feet. The contours of the drapery fall in concentric folds over the feet as though the garment were too long. There is no indication of the anatomy of the underlying figure except for a slight division between the shins where the folds lie in complementary directions. The toes emerge from an undulating hem. The drapery on the arms consists of tight diagonal ribs, turning into the long pendants of the overgarment that terminates in zig-zag edges. The hands are disposed left below right with the fingers extended diagonally upwards. Rising from the right hand is an upright element with a medial incised line topped by a cross bar with volute tips curling upwards.

The sinister figure's drapery differs. The outer garment is a coat or chasuble of some kind. The folds are diagonal on the chest and arms, forming a chevron effect across the figure. The outer robe is hemmed with pellets between flanking beads and hangs low at the sides. The drapery of the garment under this clings to the legs in V-folds from focal domes on the knees. It hangs open and splays outwards by the shins to reveal the V-drapes of an undergarment that falls heavily about the feet. The hands are held just above the pelleted hem of the outer robe looping across the stomach, and hold a cross decorated with incised lines. Between the heads, which are on a level, is an empty oval setting for a jewel or crystal.

The topmost panel is accommodated to the neck of the cross. Its lower part occupies the width of the shaft and contains a semicircular cable frame topped with a series of trilobate stiff leaf fans. From the cable a curtain is suspended. Vertical incised strips hang from eight fastening points and between them are runs of close V-folds. In front of this curtain lies a king on a bed. He wears a low crown consisting of a pelleted circlet with twin volutes rising at the front and sides. His long hair is swept back behind a small ear. The lower half of the face is lost but the brow and eyes are turned in half profile. He wears a tunic with ribbed and V-folds and lies beneath a coverlet that clings to his belly and legs. The edge of the coverlet is gathered in meander folds along a horizontal line and it overlaps a similarly treated cloth below it. The drapes of the blanket are concentric about the knees and stomach but form chevrons within the pleats. Behind the head is an oblong cushion decorated with a diaper of lozenges, and this is supported by a tapering pole with spiral ornament from which the lower cloth hangs in V-folds. The king's hands are

lifted from the elbow. An oval horizontal setting is placed between the curtain and the arch near its crest.

At the arch the sides of the shaft curve inwards forming a shoulder and slim neck. The spandrels at each side are filled by a tall frond whose expanded tip folds over in a trilobe. Along the centre of the leaf runs a row of small pellets flanked by diagonal scooped loops. Above these forms the aris has the pellet strip and foliate motifs of the sides of the central panel. From the top sinister corner an angel descends from five wavy bars notched along their upper edge. The angel's tunic is treated in the same way as the king's garment and has an identical neck opening. The wings point down from the head, four upper layers of scooped feathers above two longer layers of flat pinions, the longest lying to the front. These elegant wings are slim and slightly curved. The damaged head has a small halo behind thick locks of hair. The right hand is raised in a Latin blessing and the left holds a blank scroll that bends across the arch towards the king's head. Two iron rings are set horizontally above the angel, intruding upon the carving.

The cross-head has equal fan arms with concave sides and convex tips, springing from a central rosette and joined by a slender recessed wheel. The dished rosette has a circular setting surrounded by eight scooped petals, in turn surrounded by a ring of tiny drilled pellets. The longitudinal arms have a broad plain medial band with a narrow incised contoured edge. At each side of this are three scooped elements forming a fan. The tip is edged with a run of pellets flanked by plain moulding. Intruding into this rim is a horizontal oval setting (the upper one lost). The lateral arms have a similar rim and medial bar but in their case the latter is inscribed in capitals with *IN HOC VINCES*. In place of the fans are trilobate leaves blossoming from a pelleted strand and leaning away from the inscription. The oval settings at the tips are broken away. The wheel rim, decorated with a pellet strip, is recessed from both the face and the line of the convex arm tips.

The outer edge of the cross-head is uncarved, like the eastern narrow side. The western side carries a repeating foliate pattern of cusped elements containing pellets and central whorls interspersed with narrow diagonal leaves, alternately scooped and pellet filled. The pattern is symmetrical.

ICONOGRAPHY

There can be no doubt that the shaft panels illustrate the legend of the Invention of the True Cross with its associated saints, Helena and Constantine, and that the inscription relates to the same legend. Of the many commentators on the monument, only Prior and Gardner⁶ deviate from this interpretation. However, there is considerable divergence of opinion in interpreting the individual panels, especially the central one. The following table sets out the identifications that have been offered over the last hundred years.

⁶ E. S. Prior and A. Gardner, *An Account of Medieval Figure Sculpture in England*, (1912), 219-20.

<i>Panel</i>	<i>Top</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Bottom</i>
Fowler 1872	Helena's dream	Helena with cross and Constantine	Constantine with sword; Helena with spade
Fowler 1889	Helena's dream	Helena and another, one with (?) reliquary	Helena and Judas Invention of Cross
Burnet/Hodges 1905	Helena's dream	Both Helena	Helena and Judas Invention of Cross
Prior & Gardner 1912	Annunciation	Salutation	Symbolic "crucifixion"
Pevsner 1953	Helena's dream	Helena with cross and another	Helena and Judas Invention of Cross
Boase 1953	Constantine's dream	Helena and (?) Queen of Sheba	Invention of Cross
Saxl 1954	Constantine's dream	Ecclesia with cross	Invention of Cross
Stoll 1967	Constantine's dream	Helena and Ecclesia	Invention of Cross

Fowler's first account⁷ perhaps suffered from being a report by another hand on a site lecture delivered at Kelloe, and his second account, under his own name,⁸ embodied certain corrections as well as providing an engraving. The third account also arose from a visit by the Durham and Northumberland Society⁹ but it is difficult to determine whether the quoted description belongs to Hodges or to the Kelloe vicar of the time, Burnet (probably the latter). It relies largely on Fowler's interpretation except for the enigmatic central panel which has always provided the most difficulty. More recently Pevsner¹⁰ relied firmly on Fowler but in the same year Boase¹¹ diverged from the established view of the top panel and introduced a new possibility for the two central figures. Saxl, edited by Swarzenski, modified

⁷ DN II (1869-79), *op. cit.*

⁸ Fowler (1890), *op. cit.*

⁹ DN V (1905), *op. cit.*

¹⁰ N. Pevsner, *County Durham* (1953), 67-8.

¹¹ Boase (1953), 233-4.

Boase's view of the central panel but both he and Stoll¹² share his basic interpretation. All these interpretations, however, have been unsupported by analogous evidence.

The early commentators made the mistake of reading the shaft from the top to the bottom and therefore saw the angel as appearing to Helena. Such an error was possible because the angel's label is blank; had it borne the motto that appears across the cross-head there would have been no problem in identifying Constantine. That the motto lies above the scene is only one indication that the narrative proceeds upwards. On the famous Stavelot reliquary of the True Cross,¹³ the wings of the triptych carry roundels depicting the Helena-Constantine sequence which progress from the base to the top, so if such a reliquary provided the iconographic model for Kelloe the upward movement might be expected. Furthermore, a total view of the Kelloe cross reveals that its decorative embellishment becomes more elaborate the higher up the monument it appears: for example, the lowest panel has no foliate arris, the central panel has pellet stem and leaf, and the uppermost has florid leaf forms in addition to the centre's repertoire. The ornament, in fact, ascends in growing profusion to the cross-head where the inscription provides the climax. The placing of the crystals or jewels has the same effect: none in the lowest panel, one each in the two others and five in the cross itself.

Lowest Panel

The lowest panel illustrates the Invention of the True Cross, that is, the finding of Christ's cross by Helena in A.D. 327. Helena is shown threatening the Jew Judas who then digs to find the three crosses. The true one restores a corpse to life and the thieves' crosses are burned. The version of the story depicted here draws upon the same source and variants as the account by Jacobus de Voragine in his *Golden Legend*,¹⁴ though this literary example differs in a number of details and post-dates the Kelloe sculpture by a century. In the St. Ambrose version¹⁵ the cross is found in a cistern with the nails, which are later incorporated into the imperial crown and the Emperor's horse's bit, but in the Kelloe panel the crosses are clearly dug up, witness the spade, and in this respect the sculptural version may derive from a source similar to Rufinus's account¹⁶ which includes the digging element alongside the notion of Helena's vision and the cure of a dying woman. However, in the literary

¹² Saxl (1954), 67-8; Stoll (1967), 328.

¹³ C. H. Reed, "On a Triptych of the 12th Century from the Abbey of Stavelot in Belgium", *Archaeologia* 62 (1910), 21-30, Pls. II-VII; S. Collon-Gevaert, *Histoire des arts du métal en Belgique* (1951), 170-3, Pl. 28; H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art*, 2nd ed. (1974), 68, figs. 364 & 365; S. Collon-Gevaert et al., *A Treasury of Romanesque Art* (1972), 208 (translation of *Art Roman dans la Vallée de la Meuse aux XIe, XIIe et XIIIe Siècles*, Brussels, 1966).

¹⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Caxton, ed. F. S. Ellis (1900, reprint 1973), III, 169-73. This version is also illustrated in an early 9th-century Compendium of Canon Law from Northern Italy; J. Hubert, et al., *Europe in the Dark Ages* (1969), 142, fig. 156.

¹⁵ L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* III 2 (1958), 633-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 633.

sources only the *Golden Legend* refers to Judas, whose acquiescence to Helena and subsequent conversion make reparation for his namesake, Iscariot. The Kelloe portrait of Judas is, then, perhaps one of the earliest sculptural references to this character of the legend.

The Kelloe version, nevertheless, has its idiosyncracies. Jacobus de Voragine makes Helena threaten the Jews in general with fire but Judas in particular with six days starvation in a pit. At Kelloe the drawn sword is a unique element in the legend's iconography and, unlike the metalwork parallels, Helena stands rather than sits. The Stavelot reliquary and the Tongres triptych¹⁷ show no sword, only a fire which may, as Swarzenski suggests, be ready for burning the false crosses. The flames behind the True Cross at Kelloe are surely the fire that appears in the Belgian reliquaries, not, as Stoll proposes,¹⁸ mirabilia. Indeed the Stavelot roundel neatly labels the feature "ignis". Perhaps it was the drawn sword which led Fowler to the initial identification of the figure as Constantine, though the unhappy consequence of this was to attribute Helena to the bearded figure holding the spade. Certainly Judas did the digging, on the reliquaries with an adze-like implement, but at Kelloe with a narrow spade with a T-shaped handle, for which a parallel exists in the York psalter.¹⁹ The same psalter miniature, of the Expulsion and Adam delving, shows a similar sword to Helena's with identical volutes on the hilt guard.

Judas's long, straggling beard is typical of many Romanesque carvings of Old Testament personages; among the more famous examples are Abraham and Isaac at Souillac.²⁰ His hat, however, does not have the brim and tapered dome that was traditionally given to Jews in 12th-century manuscripts and that can be seen both on the reliquaries and in some of the prophet portraits in the Puiset Bible.²¹ The cap is much closer in style to the headgear of the two figures in the panel above.

The iconography of the True Cross itself is especially interesting at Kelloe. It carries the (blank) label by which it was identified in one version of the story; it is not a double-transomed cross as the label is in the form of a parallelogram and is fixed to the very top of the beam. The Cross is flanked by stylised depictions of the sun and moon, no doubt mistakenly culled from the iconography of the Crucifixion where they traditionally occur, for example in Carolingian ivories.²² This confusion may also account for the erection of the Cross (it is not laid upon the resurrected corpse) but another explanation may lie in a different tradition relating to Constantine and Helena: the Exaltation of the Cross, where they flank the elevated Cross in adoration. Romanesque Europe provides many examples of this scene,²³ for example the portable altar of Gertrude of c. 1038²⁴ and in the churches of Moldavia.²⁵ Such confusion of iconographic traditions is not surprising

¹⁷ S. Collon-Gevaert *et al.* (1972), 258, Pl. 49; Swarzenski (1974), Pl. 187, Nos. 424-5.

¹⁸ Stoll (1967), 328.

¹⁹ T. S. R. Boase, *The York Psalter* (1962), Pl. I.

²⁰ A. Kingsley Porter, *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* IV (1923), Pls. 344 & 352.

²¹ Durham MS A.II.1 f.109r.

²² J. Hubert, J. Porcher, W. F. Volbach, *Carolingian Art* (1970), Pls. 209, 227 & 229. A similar transfer, Ascension motifs taken into the Emmaus iconography, is cited by O. Pächt, *Pictorial Narrative in 12th-Century England* (1962), 39-40.

²³ E. Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie* VII (1974), 336-7.

²⁴ Swarzenski (1974), Pl. 36, no. 85.

²⁵ Réau (1958), 635.

in the light of the Kelloe narrative method. The Invention of the True Cross is usually depicted as two episodes:²⁶ the discovery and the resurrection miracle. The Stavelot and Tongres reliquaries extend to at least three scenes. The Kelloe sculptor, however, contracts the threatening, the digging, the burning and the miracle into a single illustrative panel.

Central Panel

The central panel presents the greatest difficulty. Unlike the others, the static figures are not engaged in a narrative event. The only clue to their identity lies in the objects which they hold, and these are partly lost because of the fracture across the stone. Most commentators have assumed that one of the figures is Helena. Fowler originally thought²⁷ that she was the cross-holding figure, a view reiterated by Pevsner. Burnet/Hodges went so far as to suggest that *both* were Helena.²⁸ It seems logical enough to expect the Empress with the Cross at this point in the sequence, but other possibilities exist. Saxl and Stoll²⁹ identify the cross-bearer as the personification of the Church, Ecclesia, but she is usually depicted carrying a chalice as well as a long-shafted cross. Some representations of Ecclesia show her being crowned with a circlet such as the figures wear at Kelloe but then she is set in opposition to an unveiled Synagogue.³⁰ There is no hint of Synagogue at Kelloe though it is interesting to see on the Tongres triptych's central panel both Ecclesia and Synagogue flanking the Cross, in turn flanked by the Invention sequence on the reliquary's doors.³¹ Stoll identifies the two Kelloe figures as Helena and Ecclesia but this is to mix two distinct iconographic traditions. Boase tentatively proposed that they were Helena and the Queen of Sheba since the earlier episodes of the Invention legend refer to the refusal of the Old Testament character to cross a bridge made from the tree that eventually becomes the Cross.³² However, this would place the Queen of Sheba out of sequence; she would more convincingly belong to a series portraying Adam's grave with its cutting from the Tree of Life, Moses' miracles and Solomon's attempts to use the tree in the building of the Temple.

Fowler's original suggestion that the two figures are Helena and Constantine has much to commend it as it would connect the lower Helena panel with the upper Constantine panel. Moreover there are many depictions of Helena and her son standing in veneration of the Cross³³ and it is likely that the central panel is an insertion from the related iconography of the Exaltation of the Cross. In Byzantine cross-reliquaries, or staurotheques, the scene is a common one, the best example being the 11th-century reliquary for the True Cross in the cathedral at Esztergom,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 635.

²⁷ DN II (1869–79), xlv.

²⁸ DN V (1905), cciii.

²⁹ Saxl (1954), 68; Stoll (1967), 328.

³⁰ E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIIe Siècle* (1928), fig. 130.

³¹ Swarzenski (1974), Pl. 187, no. 425.

³² M. Didron, *Iconographie chrétienne* (1843), 376; G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art II* (1972), 13, fn. 39.

³³ Didron (1843), 424.

where the figures are happily labelled as Constantine and Helena.³⁴ The incorporation and copying of these staurotheques in Romanesque reliquaries of the west, like the Stavelot triptych, would not be without stylistic and iconographic influence. The type remained popular in Byzantine churches until the 13th century, readily available to grasping crusaders, and there is indeed an eastern feeling in the elongated, draped figures at Kelloe, suggesting an ultimate Byzantine metalwork model.

The difficulty in identifying Constantine at Kelloe lies in the similarity of the dress of both figures, which offers little indication of sex. Both wear the head covering over the nape of the neck which is more often associated with female dress at that period, and owing to the later disfigurement it is impossible to assume that one has a beard. Helena's attributes are traditionally the crown and the imperial mantle (note the elaborate overgarment), and she often carries a cross.³⁵ These are not exclusively her symbols, however, since at Valcabrère on the west jamb of the north portal, c. 1200, a queen saint holds a cross on her breast and another from the same church is described by Kingsley Porter as a "female martyr".³⁶ Indeed the much earlier procession of female saints at Cividale³⁷ carry small crosses and they are commonly held by saints on Byzantine enamels and ivories.³⁸ At Kelloe the similarity of the clothing must be put down to the sculptor's desire for symmetry and the identification must rest with the small cross held by one figure and the hilt of a sword, not a reliquary as Fowler proposed, carried by the dexter figure. The stone is unfortunately broken near this feature but the guard with volute tips and a vertical element within the hands remain clear. It was clearly a diminutive weapon.

If the Stavelot reliquary is opened it reveals an earlier Byzantine staurotheque dating from c. 1100, a small triptych containing a cross-shaped receptacle for the fragment of True Cross flanked by Constantine and Helena, their names by them in the manner of the Esztergom staurotheque. Here, however, Helena carries a small cross³⁹ so the Stavelot piece provides not only evidence of the eastern tradition entering the west in the 12th century but also of the convention of Helena standing with a cross on the sinister side of the relic. A rather later reliquary from Byzantium is preserved at Nonantola Abbey in Italy⁴⁰; it too has the Emperor and Empress flanking the relic and it provides the solution to the Kelloe panel. Helena holds a small cross before her breast and on the other side Constantine grasps a miniature sword with volute tips to the hilt guard. There can be no doubt about the identification of the figures since both are labelled. The diminutive size of the sword both at Kelloe and Nonantola indicates that the weapon is symbolic rather than real. Cross and sword taken in conjunction underline the motto IN HOC VINCES as well as giving added point to Helena's sword in the panel below. The iconography of the reliquaries clarifies their significance. In the mid-12th-century triptych of the Holy Cross in the church

³⁴ Kirschbaum (1974), 336-7; D. Talbot Rice, *The Art of Byzantium* (1959), 321, Pl. 135; K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels* (1969), 158-63, no. 49.

³⁵ Réau (1958), 635.

³⁶ Kingsley Porter (1923), Pls. 498 & 500.

³⁷ R. Salvini, *Medieval Sculpture* (1969), Pl. 20.

³⁸ Wessel (1969), Pl. 47b; Talbot Rice (1959), 314, Pl. 100.

³⁹ Wessel (1969), 152-7, no. 47.

⁴⁰ D. Talbot Rice, *Masterpieces of Byzantine Art* (Edinburgh Catalogue) (1958), 49, no. 126.

of Sainte-Croix in Liège⁴¹ the relic is held by two angels holding flabella and caption VERITAS and JUDICIUM. The Nonantola reliquary depicts Helena holding a similar flabellum and Constantine with a staff version of the double-transomed cross. It is therefore quite possible that the personification of the angels has been transferred to the imperial saints and the concepts have been symbolised, the Cross representing Truth and the sword Justice. This interpretation is corroborated by a fragment of a Byzantine crown, now in Budapest,⁴² upon which an enamelled figure of a woman holds a small cross, like Helena, and is captioned *H AΛΙΘΗΑ* (Truth).

Top Panel

The iconography of the top panel is more straightforward because it complies with the conventions of the European reliquary sequences. The position and posture of Constantine and the angel are identical with those of the Tongres triptych's exterior panel.⁴³ The descending angel, his scroll and the diagonal clouds of heaven belong to the iconography of visions and visitations.⁴⁴ The inscription was never carved on the label since it was the sculptor's intention to lift it onto the cross-head. The Kelloe angel does not point to the scroll in the accepted manner, but gives a Latin blessing by raising an extra finger. Rather than a mistaken rendering of a pointing finger, it is the result of raising the motto to the arms of the cross since there would be no point in indicating the scroll to Constantine. The florid decoration that flanks the inscription, in contrast to the sobriety of the vertical arms' ornament, also points to the sculptor's deliberate placing of the lettering on the Cross to which it refers. The Stavelot angel points to the Cross which is set in the heavens above Constantine; the placing of the Kelloe motto makes the same point.

STYLE

Among many commentators, only Kendrick considered the monument's shape. It is a shouldered shaft whose tapering neck has concave sides. There are late pre-Conquest parallels for this type but they are rare: at Whalley, Bolton and Kirkby Misperton.⁴⁵ Kendrick attempted to establish the continuation of pre-Conquest traditions in the Kelloe cross but the shaft type hardly provides evidence for stylistic survival. First, there are no Durham examples of shouldered shafts and secondly, there is a time lag of a hundred and fifty years between the Kelloe cross and those

⁴¹ Collon-Gevaert *et al.* (1972), 198.

⁴² Wessel (1969), 97, Pl. 32g.

⁴³ Collon-Gevaert *et al.* (1972), Pl. 49.

⁴⁴ Boase (1962), Pl. 2; Kingsley Porter (1923), Pl. 347; M. Rickert, *Painting in Britain: the Middle Ages* (1965), Pl. 67A.

⁴⁵ J. Romilly Allen, "The Early Christian Monuments of Cheshire & Lancashire", *Chester Arch. Soc.* V (1895), 142; W. G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (1927), fig. 132; J. Brøndsted, *Early English Ornament* (1924), 198.

from Lancashire and Yorkshire; a period in which Norman builders smashed crosses little more than two generations old to provide rubble for Durham's Chapter House and when south of the Tees a cultural hiatus resulted from the Harrying of the North. Kendrick's supposition that the Kelloe cross might be distantly related to the St. Andrew's Auckland cross has no art historical basis in the absence of a surviving progression of sculpture.

The cross-head, with its wheel and splayed arms, is at first sight reminiscent of Anglo-Scandinavian crosses in Northern England, although the wheel-head was not common north of the Tees. It is more likely that the Kelloe head is related to the finial crosses of Norman churches. Several of these survive, for example at Sherburn and Thorpe Bassett in the East Riding and at Bromfield in Cumberland.⁴⁶ Their characteristic features, apart from the splayed arms and the wheel, are the rosette centre, fluted fans on the arms and pellet contours. A more austere version of the splayed finial cross with its wheel composed of a concentric ring-knot, thought to have come from the Abbaye aux Dames in Caen,⁴⁷ points to a Norman origin for the Kelloe type that accords with Romanesque taste in the Durham area. That such architectural ornaments could influence decorative sculpture at this period is testified by the halo of Christ on a fragment at Lincoln,⁴⁸ which corresponds in many details to the finials and to the Kelloe cross. The splayed wheel-head was also employed on gravestones in the first half of the century in Derbyshire and later at Old Sarum,⁴⁹ and, nearer Durham, a recently identified example occurs at Billingham which Mr. C. D. Morris has shown to be a reused pre-Conquest stone.⁵⁰ The closest parallel for the Kelloe cross-head, however, is an almost complete wheel-head in Walcher's Crypt in Durham Cathedral, believed to have come from the chapel of St. Mary Magdalen in the city. There can be no doubt that it was drawn from the same template as the Kelloe head, since the shape and dimensions tally exactly, even to the size of the central rosettes and the placing of the wheels.

To find a free-standing cross on this scale in the 12th century is surprising indeed (*contra* Swarzenski).⁵¹ In Normandy there is a solitary parallel, a wayside cross at Grisy in Calvados. In general terms its cross-head is in the same class but the clustered pillars that comprise the shaft are quite different from the English examples.⁵² Perhaps the closest parallel is the weathered cross at Fletton in Huntingdonshire⁵³ but, like Kelloe, its stylistic origins are not pre-Conquest. Two post-Conquest shafts in Yorkshire at Thyburgh and West Marton⁵⁴ have archaic features

⁴⁶ W. G. Collingwood, "Anglian & Anglo-Danish Sculpture in the East Riding", *YAJ* 21 (1911), 270-1; W. S. Calverley, *Early Sculptured Crosses, Shrines & Monuments in the Diocese of Carlisle* (1899), 85.

⁴⁷ L. Musset, *Normandie Romane* I (1967), Pl. 22.

⁴⁸ G. Zarnecki, *Romanesque Sculpture at Lincoln Cathedral*, 2nd ed. (1970), fig. 22a.

⁴⁹ L. A. S. Butler, "Minor Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the East Midlands", *AJ CXXI* (1965), 114-5; A. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture* II (1934), Pl. 45.

⁵⁰ C. D. Morris, "Two Early Grave-Markers from Billingham", *AA* II, 52.

⁵¹ Saxl (1954), 67.

⁵² G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* VI Pt. 2 (1937), 107-8, Pl. 29; Musset (1967), Pl. 121.

⁵³ VCH Huntingdon, III (1936), 171-2.

⁵⁴ W. G. Collingwood, "Anglian & Anglo-Danish Sculpture in the West Riding", *YAJ* 23 (1914), 177 & 249.

which make the continuity theory attractive if not tenable but there is in fact a very meagre Romanesque context for the Kelloe cross in Northern England, and perhaps for this reason some scholars have been too ready to recognise "Anglo-Saxon" influence in the workmanship of the cross. To those of us who usually work on the abundant pre-Conquest material there is a semantic difficulty here: does "Anglo-Saxon" have meaning in a 12th-century context? If it is intended to refer to a continuing sculptural tradition, then the notion is without art historical foundation. If on the other hand it refers to the preservation of Winchester Style elements in manuscripts, there is a confusion of Southern English and Northern English taste of the period. It should be remembered that, although the ultimate origins lie in pre-Conquest painting, the Winchester features that occur in the Carilef books evolved through the scriptoria of Southern England and Normandy;⁵⁵ to the northern artist these styles would have been as foreign as the imported architectural taste in the new cathedral. The last pre-Conquest sculptors of Durham seem even to have ignored the Winchester stimulus of Cuthbert's vestments given by Aethelstan, and the Carilef manuscripts, which undoubtedly served as pattern books for the Kelloe sculptor, provide no ornamentation that can be linked to pre-Conquest fashions in the North.

It is to the Carilef books that we must turn for the models for the foliate decoration on the Kelloe cross. Housed in the abbey library, they would have been readily available to the artificers of ecclesiastical sculpture, as the capitals of the north-west portal of Durham's nave testify with their winged beasts drawn directly from Carilef initials. At Kelloe the treatment of the leaves and stem is particularly two-dimensional and there is no hint of the fleshy, tubular tendrils or frilled fans of the Puiset illuminations. The regularity and immobility of the foliage at the sides of the central panel convey a static, even monotonous effect, echoing the symmetry of the figures within. The side leaves are quite horizontal and have the rigidity of stiff leaf. Those on the arch have more life but they hang limply with barely the tip of the leaf showing. Moreover, the stem's linear pelleted character works against an impression of organic growth. Kendrick's description of these leaves blowing with the gusty strength of Saxon manuscript foliage⁵⁶ is perhaps too enthusiastic a comment. The central fan at the crest of the arch formed by two converging leaves with a triangular void has a close parallel in Durham MS B IV 5 f.1, an early 12th-century copy of St. Ambrose's *De Officiis*,⁵⁷ and its placing on the crest echoes late 11th-century examples in B II 13 f.7 and B II 14 f.7.⁵⁸

In the upper panel there are three varieties of leaf. The fluted stiff leaves of the arch have their origin in the acanthus since they have its concave sides and convex tips. Compared with the stiff leaf on the string course of the north-west door of the nave of Durham Cathedral, they are debased. Curling from the arris of the neck of the shaft are the same limp leaf tips of the central panel, their pelleted stem giving them

⁵⁵ F. Wormald, "The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination after the Norman Conquest", *Proc. British Academy* (1944), 127-145.

⁵⁶ Kendrick (1949), 146.

⁵⁷ R. A. B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts* (1939), Pl. 34b.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Pls. 19 & 21.

the illusion of belonging to more complicated foliage that clings to and enwraps the frame of the monument. The source of this motif lies in the Carilef Bible whose well known Beatus initial⁵⁹ has trilobed tips curling round the stem of the capital B. This can also be seen in A II 4 31v and 119v, the latter also providing a parallel for the angel's wings. The transition from the calligraphic version to the three-dimensional sculpture was bound to lose movement and lightness in the process. The shape of the leaves in the spandrels is dictated by their position and they too appear as applications rather than naturalistic growth. Their decorative function resembles that of stiff leaf fans on the corners of some capitals, though freer forms of this leaf type lead back to the fronds that issue from Winchester-style cat masks.⁶⁰

The pelleted strand is ubiquitous in Romanesque sculpture but Durham Cathedral had examples enough to serve as models for Kelloe, like the Chapter House caryatids and the roundels of the north-west door. The Kelloe use of these stems lies midway between the loose, free undulations of the Winchester door jamb, dated c. 1140, and the schematised symmetrical patterns of the York Minster crypt capitals of c. 1160.⁶¹ Alongside the cross's side decoration their lay-out belongs to the tradition of formalised pattern and they have none of the quasi-naturalism of the trees of the Durham pulpitum fragments.⁶²

The profile leaves of the lateral cross-arms can also be traced to Durham manuscripts: in Hunter 100 f.119 they occupy similar cramped spandrels, showing how an architectural context imposes rigidity upon what usually appears as a flowing terminal flourish (contrast B II 14 f.7, for example). The decoration of the narrow side of the cross is a chunky adaptation of the linear foliate ornament arranged in vesica registers that fills the uprights of some manuscript initials. The Durham MS B IV 4 f.2 gives a good impression of this⁶³ whose origins lie in 11th-century Winchester borders like Arundel MS 60 f.85.⁶⁴

The cutting of the drapery is perhaps the only disappointing feature of the cross. It cannot compare with the damp fold and modelling of the Durham pulpitum figures and there is little sense of anatomy underlying the garments. The folds fall in tight ribs or inverted chevrons and the impression conveyed is of the heaviness of the robes, their own weight determining the contours. None of their pendant elements waft or float; even the sideways drift of the skirts is governed by gravity and should not be confused with the upward draught that appears in the hems of Winchester drawings and in the portraits of the Carilef books. A comparison of the Kelloe "drift" with that of the angel in the Carilef Bible (A II 4 f.87v)⁶⁵ reveals that the movement in the Kelloe skirt is basically downwards unlike the angel's windswept folds. However, the York Psalter possesses one miniature in which the drapery of the apostles in the scene depicting the Incredulity of Thomas has the Kelloe stiffness, the same distinc-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Pl. 16.

⁶⁰ G. Zarnecki, "1066 and Architectural Sculpture", *Proc. British Academy* (1966), Pl. XX.

⁶¹ M. and B. Biddle, *Winchester Saxon & Norman Art* (1973), 26, Pl. VII; G. Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture* (1953), 59, Pls. 77 & 78.

⁶² Zarnecki (1953), Pl. 67.

⁶³ Mynors (1939), Pl. 34a.

⁶⁴ *British Museum Reproductions from Illuminated Manuscripts*, Series II (1910), VIII. It also occurs as a border in the Bury Bible, pre 1148, f. 94r.

⁶⁵ Mynors (1939), Pl. 17.

tive features of ribbed and chevron folds and the "drift" near the base of the skirt.⁶⁶ Saxl, referring to the Kelloe drapery's elegance, assigns it to the "baroque" phase of the Romanesque as well as recognising Gothic elements in the structure of the figures.⁶⁷ It is hard to justify either of these judgements in the light of surviving English contemporary sculpture, but he rightly compares it with the York tympanum⁶⁸ for that, in Dives' coverlet and in the devils' hair, employs the same close-ribbed technique as well as indicating the division between the shins. Stoll linked the "upswept" hems with late 12th-century court fashions in the eastern Mediterranean whilst Kendrick saw the same drapery as a Saxon survival. The Kelloe drapery, like the iconography, has its own individuality, though the York Psalter parallel suggests a northern fashion that embraced both the cross and the York tympanum. Sometimes the folds can be effective in conveying statuesque dignity or in the way they lead the eye to the cross held by Helena in the central panel.

FUNCTION

The crispness of the cutting and the absence of carving on the back of the cross suggest that it originally stood against a wall inside a building. The uncarved eastern narrow edge leads one to speculate that the cross stood as one end of a composite reredos or similar furnishing, and perhaps a hanging was strung from the iron hoops in the top panel to a similar cross at the other side of an altar dedicated to St. Helena. The only hint of this lies in the blank edge and further substantiating evidence is needed. The settings for the crystals or jewels are all very shallow, including the central one, and the idea that the stone cross served as a reliquary⁶⁹ must be discounted, not only because of the shallowness of the cavities but because the most fitting relic would have been one associated with the True Cross, as the Belgian triptychs demonstrate. So valuable a relic would have merited a far richer housing than stone.

Neither is there any reason why the monument should be a gravestone, since its iconography is totally restricted to Helena and Constantine, without any reference to salvation or redemption. It is most likely a votive cross to the patron saint of the church, since in Europe Helena's iconography does seem to be largely associated with churches dedicated to her. Its discovery in the church fabric after so many centuries is a fitting tribute to the patron of the finding of lost articles: Saint Helena.

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⁶⁶ Boase (1962), Pl. 3.

⁶⁷ Saxl (1954), 67-8.

⁶⁸ RCHM, *City of York* IV (1975), Pl. 29a.

⁶⁹ DN II (1869-79), xliv.

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