

Reconstructing the Rothbury Cross: how the discovery of one mistake changes almost a century of scholarship

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SUMMARY

During a visit to All Saints church, Rothbury, to see the basal fragment of the Rothbury Cross, it became apparent that the latest reconstruction is incorrect. A mistake made in the connection of certain scenes results in a scheme that does not match the existing evidence. Further research showed that none of the proposed models matches the stone fragments, meaning that the Rothbury Cross has never been properly reconstructed. This paper explains the mistakes made in the past and proposes a corrected reconstruction of the Cross. As a result, it will be possible to re-examine previous scholarly theories, and even to establish some new ones.

INTRODUCTION

LIKE COUNTLESS OTHER PIECES OF PRE-NORMAN SCULPTURE, the Rothbury Cross is broken up into fragments of which many are lost. In fact, only less than half remains of a monument that must have once been highly sophisticated and awe-inspiringly beautiful. Interpreting pre-Conquest stone carving is often comparable to trying to put together the pieces of an incomplete puzzle, without actually knowing the final image. Far too often, scholars have to settle for mere propositions and guesses; however, in the case of the Rothbury Cross, the sandstone fragments that do remain are in very good condition. They show a high level of sophistication, well executed stonemasonry, and a novel depiction of scenes and styles, making them very interesting for scholarship.

Not much is known about the origins of the Rothbury Cross or the history of All Saints church before the late eleventh century (NCC Urban Survey 2009, 43). Only three pieces of the Cross survive and it seems like sheer luck that these three pieces consist of the cross-head, the base, and the top of the shaft. Since 1664 the base of the shaft has been utilised to support the font in the church, but the two other fragments, the head and top of the shaft, had been hidden away from view for centuries. It was only in 1849, when the old parish church was being almost entirely rebuilt by Salvin, that these long-lost pieces were rediscovered, hidden inside a wall (Charlton 1855, 60). They had been used as building material at an earlier date, which had protected the stone from weathering; they were afterwards donated to the Society, and are now in the Great North Museum in Newcastle.

The measurements of the fragments, and the fact that the cross-shaft tapers towards the top, made it possible to reconstruct an approximate original height of 14 feet (Collingwood 1927, 77). In reconstructing the original appearance of the Cross, the alignment of two of the fragments could be established, due to a continuous vine scroll that is present on the base and the top of the cross-shaft. By supposing that the vine must have grown on the entire side, the six remaining scenes (three on each fragment) could logically be connected to one another.

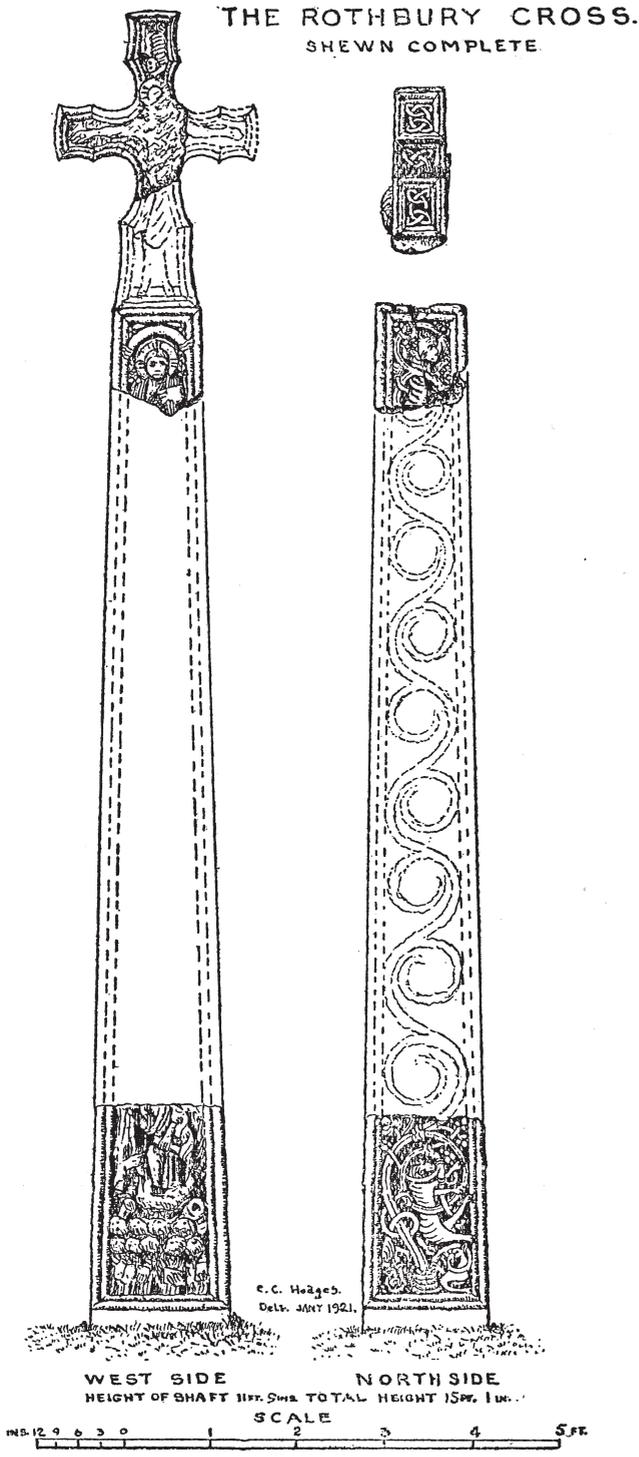


Fig. 1 The Rothbury Cross, showing the arrangement of the decorated fragments as reconstructed by Hodges (1925, 160).

The vine scroll is also helpful in connecting the Cross with other comparable stone sculpture in the area, such as Ruthwell and Bewcastle (Cramp 1984, 220; Kendrick 1938, 157). The Bewcastle Cross has been dated to the early eighth century, and Ruthwell is thought to have been erected shortly afterwards (O’Carragain 2005, 36). Considering the dates of their individual creation, it seems likely that the sculptor of one monument knew about the existence and appearance of the other and drew inspiration from it. Although a universally accepted dating of the Rothbury Cross has not yet been established, it is generally placed before the Norman conquest, but later than both Bewcastle and Ruthwell. Collingwood (1927, 78) proposed a tenth-century date; Cramp (1984, 221) suggests an early ninth-century production, and Hawkes (1996a, 77) considers the second half of the eighth century to be more likely.

A reconstruction diagram, using the alignment of the two sides depicting the vine scroll, was drawn up by C. C. Hodges in 1925 (fig. 1). Two years later, W. G. Collingwood proposed a revised, slightly different version of the model (fig. 2), which was then adapted by Rosemary Cramp in her own reconstruction (fig. 3). Apart from differences in artistic execution, and the addition of the cross-head in her model, the cross-shaft reconstructed by Cramp shows the same combination of scenes as Collingwood’s, and for this reason the two will here be treated as one. First published almost one hundred years ago, the reconstruction has been an indispensable source of information for scholars of all levels of expertise. It is hard to imagine that anyone who has written anything concerning the Cross or a related topic would not have been familiar with at least one of the models.

After comparing the surviving stones with Cramp’s model, it became apparent that the layout of the scenes on the fragments did not match the model. As it turned out, not only Hodges had made a mistake in reconstructing the individual pieces, but Collingwood had also done so two years later, meaning that the reconstruction of the Rothbury Cross is incorrect in every version ever published. This paper therefore proposes a new and corrected arrangement of the stone fragments. By doing so, it will be possible to analyse how the mistake might have affected scholarship and to make room for a new programme of iconographic analysis of the Rothbury Cross.

THE DECORATION ON THE SURVIVING FRAGMENTS

To help to understand the mistakes made in the past, the following abstract of the cross-shaft will focus on the positions the scenes hold on the respective sides of the fragments. (A more in-depth description of the scenes has been provided by Rosemary Cramp: 1984, 219–20.) Initially, this discussion will concentrate on the layout of the two pieces of the cross-shaft. In order to clarify the alignment of the fragments, each side has been assigned a label: A/B/C/D for the base, and a/b/c/d for the top of the shaft (see figs. 2, 3, 6).

Beginning with the base, on side (A) one can see an intricate interlace pattern, neatly confined in a frame under a rounded arch. Moving on in an anti-clockwise direction, the following scene, (B), houses a vine scroll with a canine quadruped — possibly a lion — biting the stem (Cramp 1984, 219–20). The following side, (C), shows the lower part of a scene in which eleven apostles watch Christ, flanked by angels, as he ascends into Heaven. The scene is incomplete towards the top as Christ’s head is missing and the angels which accompany him are in a fairly worn condition towards the base, but it is clearly visible that four of the apostles are holding books in their hands. Side (D) contains a scene commonly described as depicting Hell (Bailey 1996, 3). Terrifying creatures, biting each others’ tails and devouring each other,

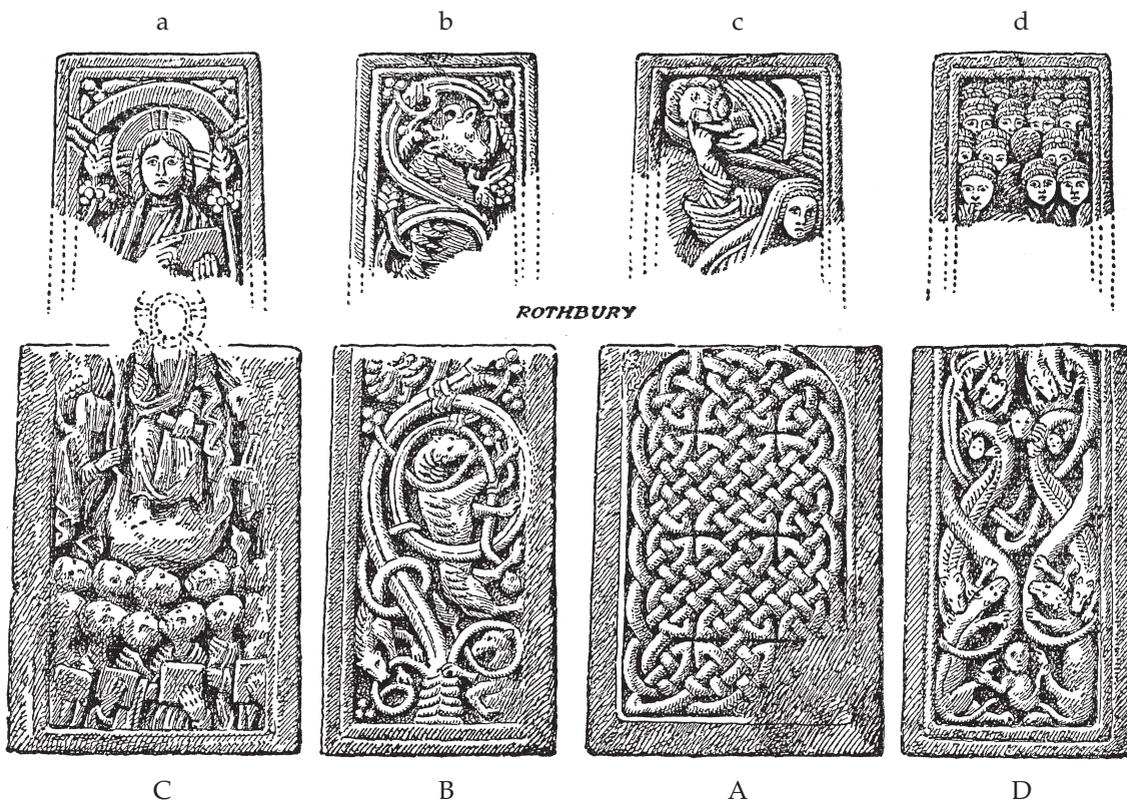


Fig. 2 The alignment of the scenes on the Rothbury Cross, as envisaged by Collingwood (1927, 76, fig. 94).

are easily visible, but whilst Jane Hawkes sees various human figures amongst the beasts (Hawkes 1996a, 89), Cramp only clearly identifies one at the bottom, holding two of the beasts' legs. The rest are described as 'quadrupeds' (Cramp 1984, 220), of which at least one clearly shows not five but only three fingers.

On the top of the cross-shaft, side (a) shows Christ in Majesty underneath a rounded arch, holding a book in his left hand. Moving once again in an anti-clockwise direction, the following scene, (b), contains the same vine scroll as seen on (B); however, this time the animal nuzzling the vine has a calf-like appearance. Cramp suggested (1984, 220) that the calf, and the lion on the base, could be depictions of two of the Evangelists in the form of their respective symbols. The subject of side (c) has not been clearly identified, but is considered to contain at least one miracle. In a slightly awkward arrangement, a man can be seen horizontally on the top of the frame covered by something that could be a blanket or cloak. At ninety degrees, a veiled woman is positioned at the right side of the scene, and a headless figure on the left reaches upwards to touch the man above the eye. In the past, this scene has been interpreted as showing two different stories, namely the woman with the bloody flux and the healing of the blind man (Cramp 1984, 220). However, Hawkes has argued that the scene depicts the Raising of Lazarus, and Brandon Cassidy (1996, 149–51) has preferred the Dream of St Joseph.



Fig. 3 The reconstruction of the Rothbury Cross proposed by Cramp (1984, 1, pt. 1, 218). Image copyright © Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, drawing by Keith McBarron, reproduced by courtesy of Rosemary Cramp.

In side (d) a crowd of eighteen figures stares at the viewer, but it is unclear whether they are earthly or heavenly beings as too much of the Cross is missing.

If the two fragments on the vine scroll are aligned, the resulting monument looks like this:

a	b	c	d
A	B	C	D

However, this has not been the commonly accepted reconstruction of the Cross because crucial mistakes have been made in recording the relative positions of certain scenes.

PREVIOUS RECONSTRUCTIONS

The first published pictorial reconstruction of the Cross was by C. C. Hodges in 1925 (fig. 1). Like every scholar after him, Hodges aligned the two pieces by the continuous vine scroll that clearly begins to grow from the base fragment and ends in the piece at the top of the shaft. This seems to be the most obvious and secure solution as the remains show a clear beginning and end of the plant ornament with identical features and stylistic execution. Various other Northumbrian and Irish stone monuments, including the crosses at Ruthwell and Bewcastle, show a plant ornament that is stylistically very similar to the one at Rothbury, indicating a similar source or origin (Hodges 1925, 164–5). Although Hodges recorded the sides of the base in a correct manner, his drawing of the top fragment is faulty. Placing the vine scroll on side B/b, Hodges accidentally swapped the other scenes around and created a cross that does



Fig. 4 The top of the shaft of the Rothbury Cross, showing sides d and a; now in the Great North Museum. Photograph courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.

not match reality. It may not be clearly visible in the model he drew up (fig. 1), but from his description it becomes apparent that Hodges placed Christ in Majesty and the crowd on opposing sides. When walking in an anti clockwise direction, in his model Christ in Majesty (side a) follows the vine scroll. On the next side, he placed the miracle scene (side c), followed by the crowd (side d). Thus his alignment of the sides (fig. 1) was as follows:

a	b	d	c
A	B	C	D

As the photograph (fig. 4) clearly shows, this is not the case: Christ in Majesty and the crowd scene are adjacent to one another, meaning that Hodges' model has to be dismissed.

It is likely that the later reconstruction by Collingwood, and consequentially also that by Cramp, was inspired by Hodges' original proposition (Collingwood 1927, 76). Although the mistake in the fragment from the top of the shaft has been corrected and the scenes are shown on their correct sides, Collingwood kept one idea which had been shown in the previous diagram, this time resulting in a faulty reconstruction of the base. Even though a/b/c and d are reconstructed in a correct manner, Christ in Majesty remains aligned with the Ascension scene on the base (a/C) as Hodges had previously suggested. Supposing that the continuous vine scroll still grows on the same side of the shaft (b/B), this can be expressed by the diagram:

a	b	c	d
C	B	A	D



Fig. 5 The base of the shaft of the Rothbury Cross, which supports the font in All Saints church.

A photograph taken from an angle (fig. 5) clearly shows that this proposition also has to be dismissed. When moving in an anti-clockwise direction from the Ascension (C), the Hell scene (D) — and not the vine scroll (B) — immediately follows.

NEW INTERPRETATIONS

When the cross fragments are correctly aligned, the resulting model has a distinctly different, truly novel look to it (fig. 6). The Hell scene (D) is still underneath the crowd (d), as can be seen in the previous plans (see figs. 1 and 2), but the two broader sides are completely changed. Christ in Majesty (a) now towers over the interlacing (A) on the bottom fragment, and on the opposite side, one can see Christ ascending towards Heaven (C) underneath the miracle scene (c).

This correction of the familiar model opens new connections between the scenes and new interpretative possibilities because many previous ideas have derived (at least in part) from incomplete and faulty information. Even though the identification of most objects and scenes seems conclusive and well referenced, the corrected alignment of the fragments may suggest new interpretations. Thus, for instance, it may help to resolve the discussion concerning the miracle scene which had always been on the same side as the interlace, with the consequence that it could not be put in context with another narrative. Now that it is placed above Christ's Ascension, it may be easier to point to a more convincing interpretation.

The cross-shaft (side C/c)

This may be made possible by the relative canonical accuracy of the surviving carvings. In one of her articles, Jane Hawkes (1996, 81) stresses the inclusion of only eleven rather than twelve moustachioed apostles in the Ascension scene which 'makes the portrayal canonically accurate, but it is without precedent in earlier Ascensions, despite the numerous iconographic types which seem to have existed.' This is only one of numerous elements of the Cross which point towards a highly literate and educated source or sculptor, and an affinity to canonical accuracy. Another very peculiar anomaly included in Hawkes' discussion of this scene is the absence of the Virgin Mary, who was commonly included in the depiction of the Ascension, for example in the folio 71^v of the ninth-century Drogo Sacramentary (Hawkes 1996, 82). Considering the importance of the written word, which is stressed by various depictions of books and scrolls, and by the canonical accuracy, it seems strange that a figure as important as the Mother of Christ would not make an appearance in relation to His passion.

However, when considering the miracle scene (c), Mary's absence might help to decide on one possible interpretation. In the previous reconstruction of the Rothbury Cross the miracle was thought to have been placed above the interlace pattern on the base (A) which made it difficult to put it into context. Now the scene towers above the Ascension of Christ (C), and the importance of such a combination should not be underestimated, as one can now suppose a connection of themes.

Hawkes (1996, 85–7) has suggested that the scene shows the Raising of Lazarus, a story that stresses the importance of belief and of resurrection. The combination with Christ's Ascension on the base and a scene showing resurrection at the top of the cross-shaft seems rather fitting. It would support the idea that resurrection, both that of Lazarus and of human-kind, was the common theme on this face of the Cross.

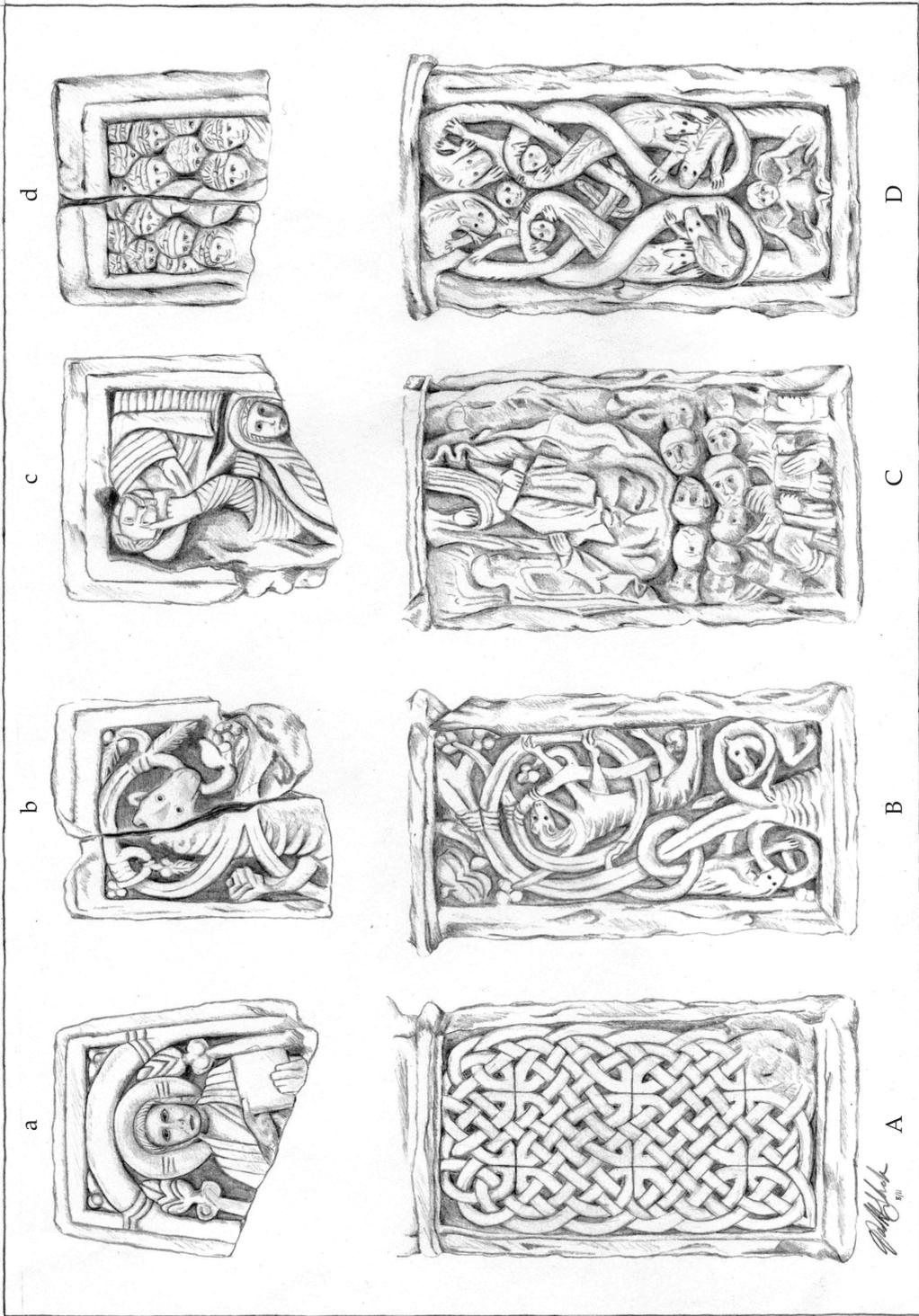


Fig. 6 The shaft of the Rothbury Cross, reconstructed by the author, and drawn by Alessandra Parisatti-Slack.

The problem with such an interpretation is that most aspects of the miracle scene (as depicted at Rothbury) are neither in line with the biblical account, nor with previous depictions in other religious art (Schiller 1981, 189–92; figs. 559–69). In the Gospel of John, Christ calls out for Lazarus, rather than touching him (John 11: 43). This, in connection with a few other anomalies regarding the grave clothes and lack of a tomb, make it seem unlikely that the scene depicted really is the Raising of Lazarus.

Brendan Cassidy posits that the scene — involving a woman and two male figures of which one is touching the other above the eye — could in fact be the Dream of St Joseph, depicting an angel, the Virgin Mary, and the sleeping Joseph (Cassidy 1996, 151). The theme of resurrection now becomes less important. Instead this face of the Cross appears to portray a more general approach. The viewer could see a complete picture of Christ's life, death, and reign in Heaven, easily accessible for both a lay and monastic audience and very useful in liturgical feasts all year round.

However, there are aspects that argue against the scene being the Dream of St Joseph, for example the fact that the sleeping figure wears a very prominent moustache. Only a distinct group of figures on the Rothbury Cross seem to have moustaches, which is thought to have been a means of separating Christ from others, both earthly and heavenly beings (Hawkes 1996, 80). Without exception, facial hair is used in every scene that features Christ, but moustaches do not seem to be obligatory for all of the figures portrayed. Each member of the crowd, for example, is clean-shaven, and the little man gripping the beasts' legs in the Hell scene also appears to be without facial hair. Hawkes suggested that moustaches are used to identify Christ, but are only necessary in scenes in which he is actually present (Hawkes 1996a, 80). If that were the case, the miracle scene would have to feature Christ in some way or another, which would support the Raising of Lazarus interpretation. Unfortunately, because the head of the figure on the left is missing it is impossible to tell whether he too once had a moustache or was clean-shaven. The bottom frame of the miracle scene and the top frame of the Ascension are missing, so it is possible that the entire side was never strictly separated into individual framed scenes. The two scenes in which all figures seem to be clean-shaven are the crowd and the depiction of Hell, which are both featured on the same face of the Cross. Christ might have been absent from the entire side, and therefore a distinction was unnecessary. In that case, Christ's presence in the Ascension scene on the base and his extremely prominent position on the cross-head above, could have been reason enough for moustaches on that side. From a symmetrical point of view, this could mean that both the front and back featured Christ in person, while the two narrow sides might only have contained symbolic references to the Son of God.

Now that the miracle can be put into context with the Ascension it will be possible to reconsider both theories and perhaps even develop a new one. Whilst Cassidy's suggestion seems more fitting for the narrative scene in its own, Hawkes's theory gains strength through the new context. Even though Cassidy argued convincingly for the scene to portray the Dream of St Joseph, one cannot help but wonder why this particular story would receive a much more prominent position on the monument than the Ascension.

The cross-shaft (side A/a)

On the reverse side (a) of the upper cross-shaft, Christ in Majesty is placed underneath an arched frame. This frame is a very unusual feature, appearing only twice on the remaining

fragments. In the revised model the scene is connected with the interlace on the base (A), that is contained within the only other arched frame. In all previous reconstructions, the scenes had not been considered to be on the same face of the Cross, which is probably why this striking similarity has not been extensively analysed. Stylistically, it is quite fitting that the frames of both scenes have the same layout, as they are also seen together. From an aesthetic point of view, it is certainly more pleasing than alternating between different designs. Of course it could be argued that not enough is left of the Cross to exclude there having been a curved frame in another position. However, all three remaining scenes on the top shaft fragment have a straight frame and for this reason the rounded arch was probably a feature exclusive to only one side of the monument. Did this have a particular meaning at the time?

On the other faces of the Cross the sculptor did not use the frame as a fixed border. It functions more like a window through which the beholder can view the scenes. In this 'window-frame' technique, various heads are cut off at random and disappear behind the frame (Hawkes 1989, 209), almost as if the confined space had no influence at all on the design or layout of a scene. On the other hand, both Christ in Majesty and the interlace, seem to have been specifically designed to fit into the space that was available. The scenes are neither narrative nor do they convey any movement, but are instead iconic, reminiscent of a holy shrine.

A comparable feature can be found on the West side of the Bewcastle Cross, where Christ, acclaimed by two animals and a falconer, is set in a frame with a rounded arch. The falconer on the Bewcastle monument may have been a king, requesting prayer for himself and his family, and so this panel in particular may have had a commemorative function (O'Carraigan 2005, 37–41) The remains of the Rothbury Cross show no commemorative scenes or inscriptions, which is why it has not been thought of in such a way before. When looking at the layout of Bewcastle however, one cannot help thinking that the Rothbury Cross might have included such a topic. On both crosses Christ is set under a round arch, placed above another scene with the same frame. Even though on the Rothbury Cross this scene is an interlace, and has therefore no commemorative connotations, there is enough space between the two fragments for at least one more figural depiction, maybe even an inscription. An interlace can also be found on the base of Bewcastle's South side, but it is set in an angular frame.

Commemorative or not, this particular side of the Rothbury Cross might have been used to stimulate private contemplation and prayer. Even without a connection to other monuments, the scenes are iconic rather than narrative and each scene is framed as if it were a shrine of its own. Such quiet and contemplative connotations might lead to a conclusion that this side was less accessible to a wide audience and may instead have been part of a more secluded, private approach. The interlace on the base may have been deliberately less narrative than the other scenes, so a statue, flowers or some other object could be placed in front of it.

The cross-head

In addition to the changes to the way that the cross-shaft is viewed, it may now also be possible to reconsider the alignment of the cross-head but, unfortunately, we have no way of knowing in which direction it was placed on the shaft.

Even though the whole of the lower part of the head and one cross-arm have been broken off and are now missing, the quality of the carving is still in a surprisingly good condition.

Hardly any traces of wear or weathering can be seen which is why various scholars have agreed on the idea that from the beginning, the Cross might have been placed inside a building, possibly a church (Cramp 1984, 220). Three dowel holes, two in the remaining arm and one at the top strengthen this idea, as they could have been used to hold candles (Bailey 1996, 9). On one face of the cross-head only an arm, a cruciferous halo, and an angel, remain of the carving that used to show a Crucifixion scene. Christ's drooping hand is fixed to the Cross by a prominent nail and his arm is unclothed, suggesting that he was originally wearing a loin-cloth (Hawkes 1996a, 77). A small moustachioed angel in the topmost cross-arm is flying towards His head, grasping a cruciferous halo. The iconography of the other side is much less conclusive. Three figures can be made out, one in each surviving cross-arm, but the roundel in the centre is badly mutilated. Even in good light it is almost impossible to see any shapes that could give a clue as to what was originally placed in such a prominent position. Cramp suggests that it may have been a portrayal of Christ in bust (Cramp 1984, 220), and thinking of such an image, the shape of a shoulder and the vague outline of a book may support this idea. The figures in the remaining cross-arms hold things that elude identification. In the top arm, a man is holding two connected sticks or rods; on the right, a figure flying towards the centre holds two circles; and in the bottom cross-arm a man holds up a bundle of four little sticks, presenting them to the centre. Edward Charlton suggested that these little objects might be the instruments of the passion (Charlton 1855, 61) and Hawkes (1997, 31–39) has convincingly argued for an interpretation as symbols of power: two imperial sceptres, the crowns of victory and immortality and the *mappa circensis*, a napkin commonly used in the depiction of Roman emperors.

When including the cross-head in a possible reconstruction, the sheer relation of height to size of the scenes means that the instruments of power (if such they were) were most likely of less importance for a general audience than the Crucifixion. Considering that the Cross was approximately 4.3 m (14 ft) tall, it must have been hard to make out such small details, especially in the dark environment of a church and when seen from a certain distance. Therefore, the crucified Christ must have had a very prominent position, easily seen and decipherable from near and far. The Crucifixion scene might have been placed above the Ascension (side C/c), as both would have been readily comprehensible, portraying scenes directly related to Christ's death. Such a position of the cross-head is in line with previous reconstructions by Collingwood and Cramp — as far as the base is concerned — but in the past Christ in Majesty had been set directly underneath the Crucifixion. Now, in the new model, a scene either depicting the Virgin Mary or a resurrection would be placed underneath the crucified Christ, which seems much more fitting.

On the reverse side of the cross-head, figures presenting symbols of power or the passion of Christ in the central roundel would both fit above Christ in Majesty (side A/a). The theme of this side may have been the unlimited divine power and authority held by the Son of God, either simply in an iconic way, or as specifically received through His sacrifice on the Cross on the reverse. It would invite private prayer and contemplation about life, death, faith and resurrection and even of Christ's role as a judge and His Second Coming.

The other face (C/c) would speak to both a monastic and to a lay audience as it includes three narrative and more accessible scenes with strong, easily identifiable biblical connotations. It must have been the prominent or frontal side of the monument, looked at and understood by a larger audience than the reverse face with its contemplative, quieter connotations.

CONCLUSION

It is impossible fully to imagine the impact and importance the Rothbury Cross had on its community. Too much of it is lost to establish a full iconography, and therefore its messages and the way it was viewed can only ever be guessed at. Elsewhere, traces of paint and gesso suggest that many objects made from stone were originally painted and adorned with coloured glass or precious stones (Collingwood 1927, 49). Such adornment is also plausible for the Rothbury Cross, as the deeply drilled eyes could certainly have held metalwork, little precious stones or glass (Bailey 1996, 8). If it is true that the holes in the cross-head were indeed made to hold candles, then the flames would have been reflected in the inlaid glass and the scenes must have looked very different than they do today. Placed in a relatively dark environment, illuminated only by the flickering light of candles, the figures would have come to life, turning the Cross into a powerful instrument of propaganda and faith. It would remind the viewer of Christ's glory, the power of Christianity and the dangers awaiting the unfaithful.

The iconographic programme of the Rothbury Cross, with its partly iconic, partly accessible scenes, seems ideally suited to the confined space of an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical building. The crowd staring down at the spectator, for example, must have been most effective when seen close up, from immediately in front of the Cross. Whilst the Bewcastle Cross is most likely to have functioned as a memorial, the Ruthwell Cross has more instructive connotations and could have been used to teach the illiterate (Cramp 1978, 8; O'Carragain 2005, 297). Even though evidence suggests that art was indeed used for instructive purposes, Barbara Raw (1990, 4–5; 12) particularly stresses that its nature was often iconic rather than narrative. She mentions the Ruthwell Cross as an exception on the grounds that it was not part of the fittings of a church, but even if it was not initially intended that it should stand inside a building, O'Carragain has argued that it was moved into just such a position. He suggests that it may have been placed behind the main altar after being moved inside from its initial position somewhere out in the open. Standing in this position, Ruthwell could have inspired the position of the cross at Rothbury (O'Carragain 2005, 23, 47; Nussbaum 1965, 431 on large crosses behind the main altar on the continent). If the Ruthwell Cross was instructive, was placed inside a church, and was used in liturgy, then it may have been so influential that the sculptor who created Rothbury had learned from it.

Being aware of this, one cannot help wondering whereabouts in a church the monument could have stood. There are carvings on all four sides, so it is unlikely to have been placed next to a wall. Instead it seems that the Cross was made for a position where at least a select number of people could have had access to every side. The Cross does seem to have been ideally suited for liturgical purposes, being both narrative and instructive and, at the same time, containing various iconic and possibly even commemorative scenes. Some parts of the frame on the base fragment are badly worn away. Such wear is not visible on the other two fragments and therefore may result from the position lower to the ground. On the Ascension scene, in particular, entire parts of the frame are missing; if some of the damage occurred relatively early on it may have been caused by being touched repeatedly over the years. It may be that it was a habit to kneel and pray in front of the monument, to kiss it or at least to touch it when passing by. However, its four centuries as a font must also have taken their toll.

To find an answer to the question of why a cross of such sophistication was erected in Rothbury, is much more difficult, but even in its fragmentary condition the Cross provides many clues to the refinement, beliefs and habits of pre-Norman Northumbrian culture. It is

hoped that the model proposed in this paper will motivate scholars to re-think some of their previous studies and to develop new theories concerning its iconography, positioning and use. It may be possible to solve some of the puzzles still surrounding the Rothbury Cross, leading to further insights into the daily life and culture of a people that were able to create such breathtaking beauty.

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