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Welsh medieval freestanding crosses

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INTRODUCTION

There would have been a time towards the end of the Middle Ages when the freestanding cross was such a common feature of the landscape that it would have merited barely a mention in the itineraries of the day. Visible in the town, in the churchyard and in the countryside, crosses would have been everywhere, 'the most ubiquitous elements in [the] late medieval religious landscape' as Nicola Whyte has put it (2009, 32). A century after the Henrician Reformation, when Richard Symonds, a member of Charles I's lifeguard, rode from Cardiff to Brecon, an entry in his diary recorded that there was 'almost in every parish the crosse, or sometimes two or three crosses, perfect in Brecknockshire and Glamorganshire' (Morgan 1903, 209).

Despite its former prevalence, the medieval cross now seems a topic more attractive to the antiquaries of the nineteenth century than to modern archaeologists and structural historians. The general syntheses by Alfred Rimmer (1875) and Aymer Vallance (1920) have been available for a century or more, and Monmouthshire alone of the Welsh counties in having a full study of its surviving crosses, also saw this completed in the Victorian era (Mitchell 1893). To this short list should be added a regional study, that by Elias Owen, a clergyman with a strong antiquarian bent whose study of *The Old Stone Crosses of the Vale of Clwyd* (1886) is rather more than its title imparts, both in its geography and subject matter. Vallance's 1920 bibliography on the subject, running to two and a half sides of print, reveals the scale of publication on the subject up to the time of the Great War, but it would not have been markedly longer, one suspects, had it been prepared today. Examine the indexes of modern historical and archaeological studies, and it is the market that generally appears not the market cross, the churchyard but not its cross. Where crosses do feature strongly, as in Whyte's study of Norfolk (2009), Sam Turner's assessment of the south-western peninsula (2006a), and more locally Rhiannon Comeau's consideration of a Pembrokeshire parish (2009), it is the cross in its landscape context which is emphasised, rather than the cross as an artefact in its own right.

This paper is not concerned specifically with the origins of the standing cross, though this is a topic that needs to be touched on here, nor with the cross that memorialised the individual. It is not geared to producing new insights into the religious significance of crosses during the Middle Ages, a subject more for the ecclesiastical historian, nor with analysing in any depth the iconoclastic practices that removed so many of them from the Welsh landscape. Its purpose is altogether more prosaic. It sets out to determine what medieval crosses remain in Wales and is a progression from four separate regional surveys that were conducted by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts on behalf of Cadw in 2010–11, which in turn has enabled the pooled data to be used for a country-wide assessment.[1] It focuses on three types of freestanding cross: the churchyard cross, the town cross and a more disparate type that encompasses wayside and boundary crosses which for ease of reference here are occasionally termed countryside crosses.

IDENTIFYING THE CROSS

Establishing how many crosses once populated the medieval landscape of Wales is an impossible task, frustrated in part by the religious connotations that made many commentators avoid any pronouncement on the subject. When Edward Lhuyd circulated his *Parochial Queries* at the end of the seventeenth century, question VII asked *inter alia* about crosses. Correspondents for almost exactly two hundred parishes replied to the questionnaire (Morris 1909–11). Including one or two churchyard crosses, the positive identifications totalled no more than 35 and over one third of these came from the Wrexham area of north-east Wales, with five from Wrexham itself, three from both Bangor-on-Dee and Gresford, and two from Marchwiel. Not a single cross was recorded for Radnorshire, and as the St Clears' (Carms.) reference to the fragments of 'a popish cross in the churchyard' makes clear, crosses were still treated with opprobrium by at least some sectors of society, with the country periodically unsettled by fears of a return to Catholicism, exemplified at the time of Lhuyd's research by the Popish Plot less than twenty years earlier, and the deposition of the Catholic James II, an even more recent event.

The four Welsh Historic Environment Records (HERs) and the National Monument Record provide the basic data on extant crosses, drawing on a wide range of source material in addition to field observation by numerous individuals over many years. For lost crosses, the net has to be spread more widely. The pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in the nineteenth century feature prominently, and a further and much more recently available source is the collected online calendars of documentary archives held in the National Library of Wales. But with the exception of Mitchell's booklet on Monmouthshire there is no single primary source of information for any one area, and that county has additionally benefited from the research of David Williams (2002) who has identified a further ten or more wayside crosses. In this context we might contrast the situation with the English border counties almost all of which have seen thematic studies—Pooley on Gloucestershire (1868), Watkins on Herefordshire (1932), and Freeman on Shropshire (2009).

Maps provide a significant source of information, but the cartographic tradition came late to Wales and, although there are some estate maps from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, their numbers pale beside what is available for the counties of eastern England (Whyte 2009). That every town had a cross is probably not an unreasonable expectation, and the publication of John Speed's atlas of 1611, less than a century after the Reformation, offers a check on that assumption. His atlas displayed plans of seventeen towns accompanying the Welsh county maps, thirteen county towns and four cathedral cities. Eleven of the seventeen show crosses associated with the town (and a further five in churchyards). Three towns—Carmarthen, Monmouth and Pembroke—display two crosses (with two more in the town churchyards of Pembroke), while Brecon had three. Other early town maps from Wales are a rarity, though Humphrey Bleaze's Welshpool (1629) shows the market cross (Silvester 2008, pl. 3). Other, later maps are very occasionally informative. An estate map of 1776 shows the village of Defynnog (Breckn.), and in front of the church, a churchyard cross of which nothing otherwise is known; the same seems to be true for the cross at Llanrhidian (Glam.) on a map of *c.* 1798, while the still surviving village cross at Merthyr Mawr (Glam.) is shown on a map of 1794 (Thomas 1992, 41, 87). Such depictions, however, are generally uncommon.

Nor is it just the historic map that is informative. The remarkable map of South Wales in the early fourteenth century compiled by the historian William Rees and published by the Ordnance Survey in 1933, flagged the presence of some crosses inn the Welsh countryside using an unmistakable symbol of a small red cross on a diagonal base. How many he recorded in this manner has not been established—the writer became aware of this source only because of the record for Cynan's Cross in the Glamorgan HER, a cross by a trackway leading onto Margam Mountain. A rapid and unsystematic perusal of Rees' map

yielded several other examples: another cross, unnamed, close to Margam, a group of four near Raglan (Mons.), 'Yatoedh's cross' near Llaneglwys on the edge of Mynydd Epynt (Breckn.), and a Shropshire example north of the road from Shrewsbury to Welshpool. With the exception of two of the Raglan group, which are still in existence, it seems improbable that any of these survive unrecorded, and because of the small scale of the map prepared by Rees, together with the likely imprecision attendant on translating features that are mentioned only in medieval documents into the medium of the modern landscape, it would probably be difficult even to pinpoint their positions on the ground. Nor do we have any detailed guidance on the full range of sources that were consulted by Rees (Griffiths 2011, 212).

Other sources, usually documentary, increase the known stock of lost crosses, particularly those in towns. Some make an appearance in manuscript sources housed in the National Library, and even in the pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, as with the nostalgic comment by 'a travelling antiquary' in 1851 on the old market cross at Knighton (Radns.); his brief description that it was octagonal with a conical head implies first-hand observation, even if its attribution to the time of Elizabeth is not particularly convincing. Palmer (1893, 16) authenticated the high cross in Wrexham which had been observed by John Norden in 1620; the high cross at Carmarthen depicted by Speed is of greater repute as the place where Robert Ferrar, bishop of St Davids, was burnt at the stake for heresy in 1555 (Lewis 1833); Pembroke's market cross was mentioned in a charter of 1154, was shown by Speed and is known to have been a place where bargains were struck; a document refers to an announcement being made at the cross in Beaumaris (Angl.) in 1638/39; and the site of the market cross at Mold (Flints.) is revealed in a mid-nineteenth-century print, the cross itself replaced by a clock but the steps and base displaying an authentic medieval appearance (Veysey and Pratt 1977, 17).

ORIGINS AND FUNCTIONS OF CROSSES

The pre-Conquest cross

For the earliest freestanding crosses, we need to go back beyond the medieval centuries to the pre-Conquest era of the ninth to eleventh centuries.[2] A few years ago, establishing anything close to a full picture would have necessitated considerable research to assemble the relevant data, even with V. E. Nash-Williams' *Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (1950) as a base. The wholesale revision of that work by Nancy Edwards, Mark Redknap and John Lewis, transformed into the three-volume *Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* (Edwards 2007; 2013; Redknap and Lewis 2007), offers not only a comprehensive listing of all the known crosses and cross-like fragments, but also invaluable analyses that obviate the need for anything similar in this paper.

What emerges from these volumes is the wide range of functional contexts for the pre-Conquest crosses identified across Wales, a situation with strong similarities to England. It has been argued that the cross served as a visible symbol of ground consecrated to the service of God, for burial, and perhaps separated from all secular use (Pounds 2000, 429). There are, too, crosses that were set up close to a church or cemetery, probably as memorials of founders (Blair 2005, 146; Redknap and Lewis 2007, 66). Intended more for veneration than for commemoration, they emphasised the sanctity of the site, and in time evolved as foci for prayer and contemplation, and perhaps for burial. It was the more important churches and monastic establishments that were likely to have been so endowed, or at least this is what the surviving examples tend to indicate. Both Edwards and Knight have gone further, positing that where a church was too small to accommodate its entire congregation, or where no church existed, a cross in the surrounding enclosure might have been a ready focal point for open-air services for the laity (Edwards 2013, 84; Knight 2013, 112), and the latter situation resonates with John Blair's belief that English nobles

inclined to set up crosses rather than build churches near their houses (2005, 119). Rather less likely is the premise that a cross could have been erected specifically as a grave-marker, although Edwards (2013, 84) is reluctant to dismiss the idea completely, citing the small cross at Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf on Anglesey as a possible example of the practice.

Those crosses that were erected at some distance from an ecclesiastical establishment might have marked the boundaries of a church or monastery's lands and possibly its rights and privileges, or commemorated specific events or donations of land. The crosses around Merthyr Mawr (Glam.) have been singled out as examples (Edwards 2001, 35; Redknap and Lewis 2007, 66). Perhaps, too, the zone of sanctuary that extended around the church might be marked in permanent fashion, and here the several crosses around Dyserth (Flints.) and Penmon (Angl.) reinforce the belief (Edwards 1999, 14; 2007, 61). Penmon is considered a mother church and Dyserth likewise, though it has not received the same detailed attention from historians as Penmon. Realistically, the identification of sanctuary crosses is something that can only be surmised, and indeed it is arguable as to whether it was the cross or the special definition of sanctuary (Welsh *noddfa*) that came first. Interesting in this context is the account in the nineteenth century of three stones a mile to the east, south and north-east of the church at Darowen (Monts.) which lay within the township of Noddfa (Lewis 1833 *supra* Noddva); though there is nothing to suggest that these had previously supported crossheads, the presence of the stones reinforces the reasonable belief that physical markers would have defined the limits of sanctuary.

Other crosses might have had a more overtly secular origin, perhaps marking an assembly place, as with the lost Atiscros in coastal Flintshire whose name was given to a hundred (or its Welsh equivalent) already in existence at the time of the Norman Conquest. Its reputed pedestal base was seen by the antiquary Thomas Pennant in the eighteenth century, though whether this was in fact a boundary feature or some other form of cross we are unlikely ever to establish. What is obvious is that in pre-Conquest times no single solution explains the original purpose for the erection of crosses, and distinguishing a cross's initial function from those for which it was subsequently appropriated may well be at best speculative.

The churchyard cross

The churchyard today provides the most tangible reminder of the veneration of the cross in the pre-Reformation landscape, and it is from such ecclesiastical *loci* that the majority of surviving examples in any county survey will be drawn. As already noted, a few churchyards had a standing cross prior to the Conquest, but in most places they were erected after the Conquest, a necessary component of the consecrated ground that encompassed the church, and one infused with liturgical importance.

There was a consistency to the components that made up the standard churchyard cross: a combination of a set of steps often though not always of square design, a socket stone, again usually but not consistently square, a cross shaft and, surmounting this, a crosshead which depending on its form has sometimes been termed a tabernacle, particularly in antiquarian literature. The number of steps varied and was reputedly symbolic, the cross with three steps sometimes now being known as a calvary cross (though only from the early nineteenth century), with the entire cross or by extension just the steps themselves referred to as a calvary and appearing not only in three-dimensional form in the churchyard, but also incised on to medieval grave slabs (see for instance Gittos and Gittos 2012, 358). Very occasionally, the socket stone or the shaft carried some decoration, as at Raglan (Mons.), and at Mitchel Troy (Mons.) and Llanrhudd (Denbs.) respectively; but the majority, on the basis of the surviving examples were plain. A feature of a small number of socket stones was the provision of a niche, as at Raglan (Mons.) and Llangattock (Breckn.) (Fig. 1), variously claimed to have held a small statuette or to have been a receptacle for the pyx, the vessel that held the Host on Palm Sunday or to have played a part in the Easter Day celebrations (Vallance 1920, 13).[3] While the head might be unembellished, the survival of a significant number of

Fig. 1. Llangattock (Breckn.) medieval cross shaft and cross base with niche.

heavily sculpted crossheads in certain parts of Wales makes it impossible to gauge the former prevalence of ornate churchyard crosses.

The cross came to play a particularly significant role in the Palm Sunday rituals when ceremonies beginning and ending in the church took in the churchyard cross in what, by the later medieval period, had become the most elaborate procession in the church calendar, to a degree where the churchyard cross became known as the 'palm cross' (Duffy 1992, 32). Its fundamental significance in the ceremony has engendered a belief that the latter specifically occasioned the erection of many churchyard crosses (Steane 1985, 85). As far as the writer has been able to establish, canon law did not require a cross to be set up in a graveyard, but there is evidence that the Church, particularly through archdeacon's visitations, encouraged their erection. And some credence is given to the causal link between the ceremony and the cross by one thirteenth-century bishop of Worcester who by statute in 1229 required the presence of a cross in every churchyard in his diocese, in order that it could be integrated into the Palm Sunday procession (Vallance 1920, 13; Dymond 1999, 464).

An alternative label, the 'preaching cross', should be treated with caution and indeed might be misleading, although it surfaces regularly in listing descriptions and the like, as at Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd (Denbs.) where the cross in the churchyard is specifically referred to as a fifteenth-century preaching cross. Preaching in the churchyard, it can be argued, is not likely to have been common before

the arrival of the friars in the thirteenth century, and one authority would have it that the mendicant orders being essentially urban-based would have ventured little into the countryside (Pounds 2000, 429). A counter-argument that crosses were the regular foci for the open-air sermons proffered by visiting friars and other preachers (Gray 2000, 52) appears to be supported by little actual evidence in Wales (see Spencer 1993, 71), but then such evidence would generally have to be documentary rather than physical in nature.

The churchyard cross acquired other symbolic properties over time. For the devout the ground around it was the place to be buried. Elias Owen made this point, citing extracts from late medieval English wills in evidence, and he reflected too on how graves, presumably of later, post-Reformation date, clustered around some surviving churchyard crosses (Owen 1886, 8; Whyte 2009, 32). Other less plausible uses are recorded too. At Eglwyscummin (Carms.) the heads of wolves and other animals were supposedly attached to the cross for the purpose of valuing them after they had been hunted down (Vallance 1920, 15).

The town cross

It is commonly assumed that a market would have had a market cross (Soulsby 1983, 41) and it is a reasonable assumption that every town regardless of its status would have had at least one cross of some form within its boundaries. Villages might have them too. Rimmer in his nineteenth-century synthesis felt sufficiently confident to separate town crosses into five different types which he termed 'memorial', 'market', 'boundary', 'preaching' and 'weeping' crosses (1875, 4).[4] Interestingly, what was missing from his list was the 'high cross', a landmark that makes regular appearances in the records of the medieval and early post-Reformation centuries. Multiple crosses within a town were far from unusual (Vallance 1920, 16). As already remarked, Brecon had three crosses, as shown on John Speed's map of 1611. Gwenllian Morgan rationalised this plurality in her conviction that the cross in 'High Street Inferior' was the market cross (also known as the butter cross) which acted as a point for commercial transactions and a place where the lord could collect the traders' tolls; a preaching cross stood on the Bulwark to the east of the chapel of St Mary and reputedly had been used by friars from the Dominican house of Christ Church just over the river; and the high cross in High Street was supposedly the most important, a place for public meetings, proclamations and for civil business to be transacted (Morgan 1903, 207–9). Conceivably Morgan may have been correct in her distinction, particularly with regard to the significance of the cross in the market square, though it might be wondered whether her attribution of the Bulwark cross to the friars could have been influenced by the fact that John Wesley preached in the open air there in the eighteenth century. A more eminent historian of recent times, R. R. Davies, was less precise, though arguably no more accurate; for him the streets of Brecon 'were well provided with preaching crosses' (1978, 61). The case of Brecon is cited in detail here, for it epitomises a key issue as to why there were crosses in towns.

Elias Owen (1886, 27) was not alone in viewing the origin of the market cross in the early use of the churchyard as a place where business was transacted. With the transferral of trade to a specifically designated market area in the town in the post-Conquest era, a new cross was erected as the symbolic focus for commercial activity, emphasising continuity of practice. The concept of the churchyard as a precursor or even a substitute for the marketplace, particularly in Wales (and also in Scotland), has found more recent support (Platt 1976, 53; Jack 1996, 8), and inadvertently has reinforced this particular theory on the origins of the market cross. It was though just one of a number of nineteenth-century religion-inspired explanations for the cross in the market. There was, for instance, the view that the Church sanctioned trade and the clergy initiated town fairs and markets; that crosses originated in those towns where there were monastic establishments and a monk or preacher was sent to preach on market days; that crosses inspired a sense of morality and piety amongst those conducting the material transactions of life, and so on. It might be wondered, however, whether the cross was the physical counterpart of the written charter, a sign

that the town or its lord had been given by royal grant the right to hold a market and fairs. Regardless of its original purpose, the market cross presumably came to signify the market itself, a physical manifestation within the open space that was central to the existence of every medieval town (Holt and Rosser 1990, 7; Slater 2005, 28), and it presumably symbolically influenced (or was held to influence) fair trading practices and peace within the community (Steane 1985, 125).

As time passed market crosses became more elaborate, the standing cross giving way in the more affluent urban centres to covered shelters with heavily decorated superstructures surmounted by a cross, a half-way house between the cross and the market hall. There are though no known examples in Wales, other than the former corn market at Cardiff (Suggett 2012, 57). Even after the Reformation, market crosses continued to be rebuilt or refurbished, with the cross and any religious imagery simply replaced by less contentious features.

As with the churchyard cross, its equivalent in the marketplace acquired supplementary uses through time. In post-medieval times, that at Denbigh became a place where workers were hired for harvest work, the wages called *cyflog y croes* ('the wages agreed upon at the cross'). Owen noted, too, on a visit to Denbigh how people congregated at the cross to exchange news or gossip, seeing in this the continuation of a custom in which the cross was the place where important announcements were made, whether parliamentary instructions or notices of marriage, the latter particularly common during the Commonwealth, and even where justice was dispensed by itinerant justices of the peace. And he detailed how different traders consistently occupied the same pitches in relation to the cross (Owen 1886, 29).

The origins of the high cross or town cross, assuming it was an entity distinct from the market cross, are also elusive, generating questions that are probably irresolvable. Was its erection for instance a sign of a developing urban presence and a focus within a town prior to its market grant? Or did it function under a different jurisdiction, or at different times from the market cross? What is plain is that the cross, raised on its stepped plinth, in the town, in the marketplace or in the village, emerged as a designated focal point for the community, where people gathered and meetings convened, where proclamations were read, and where elections and other civic functions took place (Suggett 2012, 58).

The preaching cross, assuming that it was purposefully constructed as such, is probably the easiest of the three to comprehend. For some earlier writers it represented the earliest form of cross from which market crosses developed, although this view now seems to have been largely discredited (Vallance 1920, 4, 113). Preaching crosses as already noted are associated primarily with the friars who established themselves in urban centres in the first half of the thirteenth century.

Countryside crosses

It is generally accepted that wayside crosses would once have been extremely common, and a range of potential functions have been attributed to those found in the countryside. Much of the conceptual evidence and inference comes from England rather than Wales, and some of the surviving crosses at least are considered to be early medieval, though assigning a date to a simple stone cross is unlikely to be a precise art. A valid point made by Turner amongst others is that a cross could have a dual function, perhaps marking a track across rough ground but also informing the traveller that they were crossing a sanctified boundary. Thus crosses were particularly dense around some Cornish collegiate churches, marking out territories in the Late Saxon landscape. The four early crosses around St Neot, are cited as an example, all on routeways but in a rough ring around the village, suggestive of boundary markers (Turner 2006b, 35, 39). What holds true for England might reasonably be inferred for Wales as well.

Some crosses may have been boundary markers from before the Conquest, signifying church territories including zones of sanctuary; monastic lands and estates might be distinguished by them as a statement of ownership, not least when ecclesiastical land was under threat from secular rulers (Davies 1996); crosses

might mark too the bounds of secular estates and even the urban limits of expanding towns (Bond 2004, 226); churches and holy wells could be embellished by their presence nearby.

Crosses might mark parish boundaries, and in the south-west of England with the luxury of pre-Conquest charters, three separate examples are mentioned. Later they were resorted to during the Rogationtide processions when portions of the Gospels were read out or prayers were said at fixed points, in ceremonies that emphasised parish identity, better known by the colloquialism of 'beating the bounds', with crosses seen as a means of warding off the devil (Duffy 1992, 279; Whyte 2009, 36). The fact that these processions had an obvious practical purpose in defining the parish landscape and strengthening the social identity of the community is advanced as a reason why Edward VI's injunctions of 1547–48 which banned religious processions were not extended to the Rogationtide ceremonies (Walsham 2011, 253), and perhaps why at least some crosses survived longer than might otherwise have happened. And while there was undoubtedly a strong practical purpose behind the erection of many crosses, it should never be forgotten that they functioned too on a spiritual level, forever reminding travellers of the faith in which they had been baptized as Alexandra Walsham has recently put it (2011, 61). As in southern Europe today crosses might mark wayside shrines (Everitt 1986, 186), an overt link to the Catholic religion that would undoubtedly have attracted the attention of reformers at an early date.

Routeways were frequently marked with crosses. Blair, drawing on the admittedly limited evidence that remains in England, has argued that those crosses of undoubted pre-Conquest origin set well away from ecclesiastical centres marked relatively important roads, particularly where they crossed high ground or rivers, rather than boundaries (2005, 479). Some marked pilgrim or monastic routes, one of the uses suggested by Coemau for the lost wayside crosses in Dinas, Pembrokeshire (2009, 241), though as she points out these may have been cross-inscribed stones of early medieval date if extant examples in neighbouring parishes are any guide. A further example of a group of cross bases around Llangewydd, near Bridgend marks the line of the Ffordd y Gyfraith but focuses on the area where it was re-routed around Margam's Llangewydd grange.This is not to suggest that such trackways were used exclusively by the religious. Good examples distinguished by crosses are to be found on Dartmoor and in the Yorkshire Dales (Hindle 1993, 62; Bond 2004, 294), though pinpointing comparable examples in Wales is much more difficult. Crosses might signal key locations such as crossroads or fords, or commemorate where a benefactor had repaired a road or bridge (Turner 2006a; Whyte 2009, 35). Crosses often seem to have been placed at road junctions leading to churches and chapels (Aston 1985, 145). Others may have been erected simply as memorials, but all it would seem were aimed at the wayfarer, in anticipation that their prayers might assist the soul of the departed through purgatory (Whyte 2009, 34).

Crosses too might be set up on corpse ways, the tracks on which coffins were taken from remote settlements to the parish church for burial (Hindle 1993, 59). Rarely documented, other than in casual asides, the presence of a corpse way (or alternative terms such as a coffin road) is as likely to be a matter of local tradition. Yet the fact that in 1585, Marmaduke Middleton, the bishop of St Davids, felt it necessary to include a stricture against erecting wooden crosses where a burial party rested with a corpse implies that the practice continued well into the seventeenth century (Owen 1886, appendix p. ii).

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CROSS

Contrary to what might be assumed, the removal of the cross from the landscape cannot be linked to that earliest phase of the Reformation that terminated with the enthroning of Mary in 1553. True, some of the Church's long-established ceremonies that might have involved churchyard crosses were banned in 1548 (Williams 1997, 161), but crosses appear to have been deliberately omitted from the acts and injunctions

of Henry VIII and his son Edward that erased the chantries, hospitals, guilds and free chapels from the ecclesiastical landscape, demolished shrines and places of pilgrimage, and destroyed relics and images. Possibly an act passed early in 1550 requiring the defacing of stone and wooden images could have resulted in some crosses being mutilated (Williams 1997, 165), but it seems likely that this would have singled out those crosses which had heavily decorated heads rather than the entire range of structures.

It was towards the end of the third quarter of the sixteenth century, from perhaps around 1570, that crosses became a specific target for demolition and desecration, on the orders of both Church and state, this affecting crosses on both consecrated ground and in the town and countryside (Aston 2002, 263; Walsham 2011, 102). In 1592 the Privy Council directed Welsh magistrates to pull down 'idolatrous monumentes' where people congregated (Walsham 2011, 103). A deposition in a case that came before the Court of Chancery around 1578 referred to the throwing down of 'a crosse of especial marke' in the manor of Candleston near the road to Merthyr Mawr (Glam.) (Anon 1853, 233). And as noted in a previous paragraph, prohibitions on erecting wooden crosses at places where a corpse was set down to allow the bearers to rest were introduced in Elizabethan times in various dioceses including St Davids (Vallance 1920, 21; Aston 2002, 265).

Town crosses were potentially as vulnerable to the religious iconoclasm as their countryside counterparts, yet their continuing functional value perhaps provided rather more security. Nevertheless, they were not immune. The absence of crosses in the marketplaces of Flint, Montgomery and elsewhere on Speed's town maps reveals early but otherwise unremarked destruction, while the subsequent death of the sheriff who pulled down three crosses within Chester's city walls in 1583—and seen by some as an act of divine vengeance (Walsham 2011, 102) —provides a documented occurrence of the practice.

If official government directives are a guide it was late in the reign of Charles I that the fate of the cross was sealed. The Long Parliament's Committee for the Demolition of Monuments of Superstition and Idolatry under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Harley passed ordinances in 1643 and 1644 that demanded the destruction of crosses not only inside churches but also in churchyards and significantly in other open places, the first time that Parliament rather than the Crown or the Church had involved themselves in the issue (Vallance 1920, 16; Aston 2002, 272; Walsham 2011, 129). Harley himself set an example immediately by demolishing crosses on his estate around Brampton Bryan, just over the Welsh border in Herefordshire, and pulled down the churchyard cross in Wigmore (Walsham 2011, 130).

Many crosses were dismembered without record, a few were commented on. Town crosses probably suffered as much from the fact that they became dangerous, superfluous through changing practices or were obstacles in the growing towns of the post-medieval centuries, demolished for pragmatic rather than religious reasons, and comparable with other unwanted elements of the medieval townscape such as gates and walls. Thus Ruthin's market cross was taken down in 1759 because of its condition, and though the High Cross at Brecon was shattered by 1650, it was probably not until 1776 that it and its fellows were removed from the streets of the town (Suggett 2012, 57; Morgan 1903, 209–10). Like other types of crosses, it was the head of the cross that was specifically a target of reformers: the shaft might survive as it still had a use but the head was replaced by another symbol, perhaps a ball or a sundial as happened at Denbigh (Anderson 1967, 122). Surviving crosses might be pressed into service for other purposes. Parish notices might be given out from the churchyard cross; that at Derwen was so used in the middle of the nineteenth century and Owen reported that the custom still occurred at some other churches in the Vale of Clwyd (1886, 36).

The loss of the cross continued into the nineteenth century, not always through religious zeal but more probably through neglect. Mitchell's survey of Monmouthshire lists a number of crosses known to her but no longer traceable. And a search through the pages of nineteenth-century volumes of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* reveals a series of lost crosses on Anglesey: the socket stone at Llanbeulan was mentioned in

1846, as was that at Llanfair-y-cwmwd, the shaft of the Llanfechell cross was still in evidence in 1862 and the steps and base of the Llanfachraeth cross were recorded in the same year. Elias Owen (1886) noted that socket stones had disappeared from Llanasa (Flints.) and Bryneglwys (Denbs.) within living memory while at Llanelidan (Denbs.) he established that the cross had been taken down on the orders of the rector in the 1820s or 1830s, parts of it being built into the new schoolroom and the steps reused at the entrance to the churchyard. The cross at Monkton Priory (Pembs.) was pulled down in 1847, though its modern replacement, said to be erected on the same spot, may utilise the original socket stone.

THE AFTERLIFE OF CROSSES

The early medieval cross

The recent re-evaluation of early medieval inscribed stones and stone sculpture is of more than passing interest to this assessment of medieval crosses, because of the possibility that the presence of early medieval crosses may have influenced the erection of churchyard crosses. Across Wales, a considerable number of crosses of variable form survive, an element of what Edwards has termed the ambitious sculpture of the final centuries of the early medieval era (Redknap and Lewis 2007, 59). Many of them are associated with important ecclesiastical and monastic centres, nearly 60 per cent, for example, of those in north Wales, and Edwards has argued that this emphasis reflects the patronage, the wealth and resources, and perhaps the skilled labour commanded by the major churches (2013, 83). Only in a few instances do such crosses coincide with ecclesiastical sites that are seemingly less significant, and in some places this might result from a dearth of other evidence that signifies status rather than a reflection of their actual importance.

Across the country there are then nearly ninety surviving crosses that are considered to date to the broad period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries (Fig. 2). The distribution is uneven with an obvious emphasis on the southern coastal plain, but the spread encompasses most parts of the country. Few remain *in situ*—Edwards (2013, 78) has singled out in north Wales only the Whitford cross known as Maen Achwyfan (Flints.) and the Pillar of Eliseg near Llangollen (Denbs.)—while the original positions of a larger though still small number can be established with some confidence from past records. In broad terms the ecclesiastical association of most can be assumed. Only the undecorated crosses offer a challenge, and this is chronological rather than contextual: some on Anglesey such as the Llanfihangel Tre'r Beirdd cross, two from Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf and another from Llanfihangel Ysgeifiog (Edwards 2013, 166–77) have reasonably been attributed to the late eleventh to earlier twelfth century on typological grounds, yet such a late flowering in the extreme north-west raises questions of its own and Edwards has hinted that at least one of these crosses could have been a burial marker. In the south the socket stone known as Croes Antoni near St Brides Major (Glam.) has been claimed as 'probably pre-Conquest' solely on the basis of the shape of its socket (Redknap and Lewis 2007, 497).

The cross in the churchyard

It is the churchyard cross, though not necessarily in its complete medieval form, that is the most likely to have survived the vicissitudes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When the Welsh Archaeological Trusts examined the country's historic churches in the 1990s the overall number was found to total about 940 (Evans 2000, 6), a figure that allows for a few foundations between the Reformation and 1800, the study's cut-off date. Within their churchyards it is now estimated that no more than 194 crosses survive, with generally only a portion of the cross remaining. In five the evidence is ambivalent. A further ten cross fragments seem to have disappeared since they were first recorded in the eighteenth or more often in the nineteenth century. The socket stone is by far the most common surviving

Fig. 2. Early medieval freestanding crosses in Wales.

element. In 34 churchyards it is the socket stone alone that reveals the former presence of a cross. There are eight churchyards which have retained only the steps and ten with only a cross shaft. And of nearly 200 crosses only nine appear to be complete and entirely of pre-Reformation date.[5] In summary, a component of a churchyard cross survives in less than a quarter of Welsh churchyards.

Of course it is of little surprise that it was the head of the cross that almost invariably suffered at the hands of the reformists and iconoclasts. This was the symbol that required to be ovethrown or destroyed. The steps, the socket stone and even the cross shaft (unless it carried decorative imagery) were the supporting accessories which were vested with limited meaning. These survived, as at Llangattock (Breckn.) and Llangattock Lingoed (Mons.) (Figs 1, 3), because in themselves they carried no symbolism, and could of course be turned to other uses or left to their own anonymity. Alfred Watkins remarked on the fact that cross shafts were being brought back into use in Herefordshire by the addition of sundials as early as 1649 (1930, 32).

The distribution of the two hundred or so surviving churchyard crosses, whether entire or only in fragmentary form, is significant (Fig. 4). Some level of destruction varying across the country is only to be expected, even if the chronology of that destruction is unclear. But differential destruction cannot account for the distinctive distribution mapped here. Densest in Monmouthshire and along the Glamorgan coastal plain (as remarked on specifically by Vallance many years ago: 1920, 9) into southern Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, with a few in lowland Brecknock, churchyard crosses are almost entirely absent from vast tracts of central and north-west Wales. Numbers pick up again only in the north-east (Flintshire and eastern Denbighshire), though not on the same level as in the south, and there are a few outliers on Anglesey. With the exception of these last examples, the pattern is unmistakably reminiscent of the maps

Fig. 3. Llangattock Lingoed (Mons.) medieval cross base.

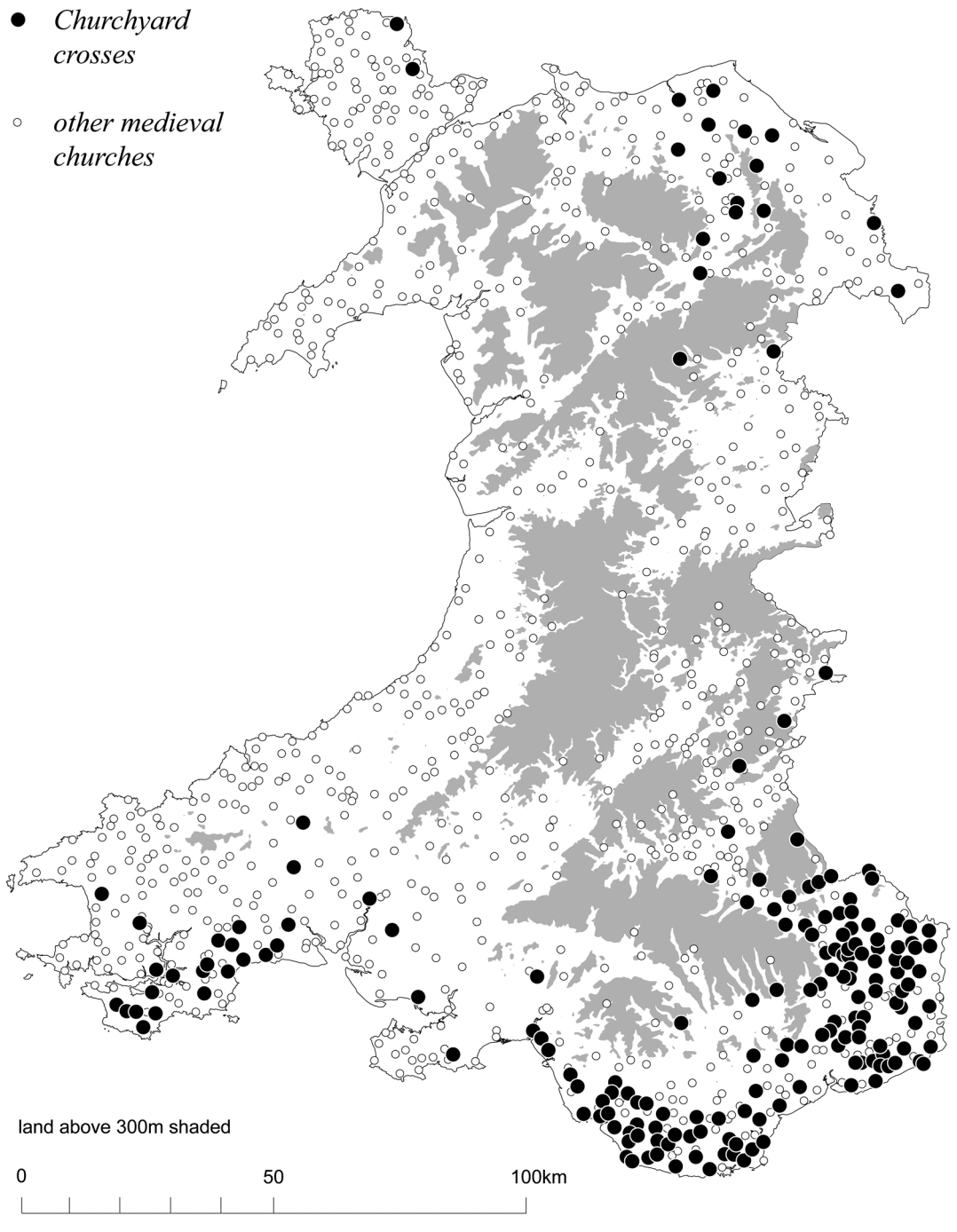

Fig. 4. Medieval churchyard crosses in Wales.

that depict the more anglicised regions of Wales in the period after the initial Norman Conquest. The simplest interpretation is that the concept of the churchyard cross was imported into Wales from England, like many significant facets of secular life, and had little impact in those regions that remained under Welsh control. In the less anglicised regions of Wales, the requirement for a churchyard cross was almost comprehensively ignored.

Foremost, it is the crossheads that attract attention. In the north-east of the country a remarkable group have survived: Derwen, Hanmer (Fig. 5), Trelawnyd (Figs 6a–b), Tremeirchion (Fig. 7), Flint and Halkyn, all in Flintshire with the exception of Derwen which lay in Denbighshire west of the river Clwyd, and a seventh which came not from a churchyard, but from the grounds of the friary at Denbigh (Fig. 8) and was removed in the nineteenth century to a private house a mile outside the town where it remains. All are complete except for two where only a single panel has been preserved: at Halkyn the crucifixion was inserted into a buttress of the new Victorian church in 1877 where it can still be seen, and the same procedure was adopted for a panel of the Flint churchyard cross, which was found in the churchyard wall at the time that the church was being rebuilt in *c.* 1846. It was moved to a house owned by Catholic gentry near Holywell where it was seen by Elias Owen prior to 1886, and ultimately is believed to have found a similar resting place to Halkyn, the recipient building in this instance reputedly being a Catholic chapel in the town of Flint.[6]

Derwen exemplifies the group, a cross that survives in its entirety and without doubt the most elaborate of the extant group. Two square steps support a socket stone cut from a single block of stone with broach stops at the angles. The shaft about 2 metres high and octagonal in cross-section has four of its faces decorated with raised bosses in the form of human heads and foliage. The head of the cross, nearly 0.9 metres high and seated on a decorated capital, is rectangular in cross-section, the east and west faces nearly double the size of those on the north and south. Beneath canopied niches, the west face depicts the crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and St John in attendance, the south face appears to show the Archangel Michael weighing souls on Judgement Day, the east face shows what has been variously interpreted as the Coronation of the Virgin or the Wisdom of Solomon, and on the north is the Virgin Mary and Child

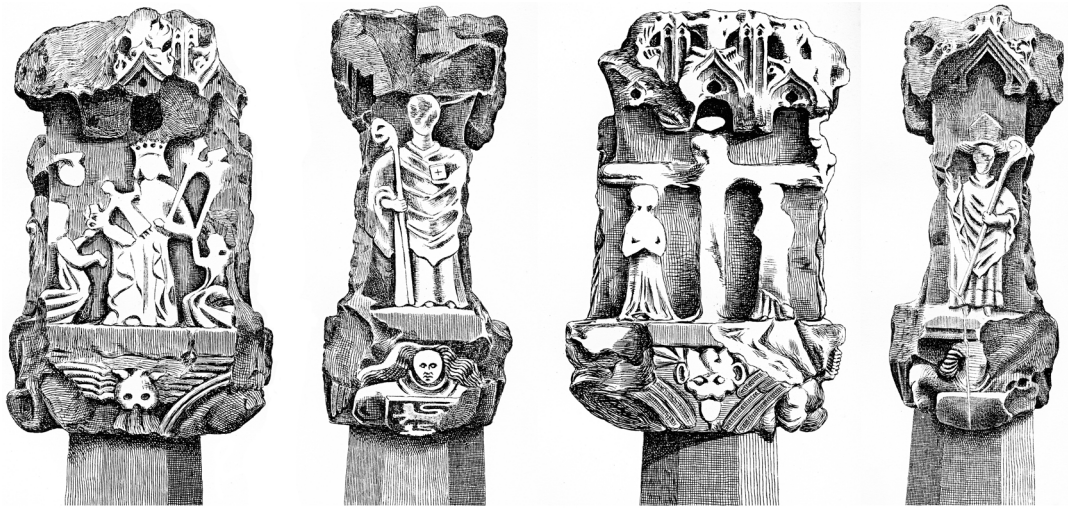

Fig. 5. Detail of the Hanmer (Flints.) crosshead (east, north, west and south faces, from left to right). *After M. H. Lee, Archaeologia Cambrensis 1876.*

Fig. 6a (*left*). Trelawnyd (Flints.) medieval cross and crosshead.
Fig. 6b (above). Detail of the Trelawnyd crosshead.

(Owen 1886, 34; Lord 2003, 192; Butler 2005). The imagery on all these crossheads is broadly consistent. As could be anticipated all have a crucifixion and those from Flint, Halkyn and Tremeirchion appear very similar with Christ on the cross flanked by the figures of the Virgin and St John within cinquefoil niches. Four of the complete crossheads have panels depicting the Virgin and Child, reinforcing both the well-evidenced frequency with which the Virgin appears on churchyard crosses, and also the symbolism underpinning the frequent pairing of the Nativity and Crucifixion (Gray 2000, 6, 13). And three display ecclesiastics on other panels. Only Trelawnyd appears different with two crucifixion scenes and two apparently empty niches (Owen 1886, 150).

Some at least may have come from a putative workshop in the Flintshire area that also produced effigies and memorial slabs, embellished by a small but distinctive quatrefoil cross carving as a signature. This unlocated workshop is thought to have been established in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, using a fine-grained local stone, the source of which has yet to be traced. The Trelawnyd cross has been tentatively attributed to the workshop (Lord 2003, 145, 172), and it is probably significant that most of the others also come from Flintshire churchyards and that the imagery is generally similar in appearance. Halkyn has been attributed to the fourteenth century, Derwen and Hanmer to the fifteenth century.

A second group of decorated crossheads concentrates in the south-east of Wales. Llangan, more elaborate than its northern counterparts (see Gray 2000, figs 46–48), St Donat's (Vallance 1920, figs 108–9) and St Mary Hill (all Glam.), and Caerwent—surely a churchyard cross on the basis of its imagery (Mitchell 1893, 18)—and Llanarth (both Mons.), of simpler form (see Gray 2000, fig. 30). Porthkerry

Fig. 7. Tremeirchion (Flints.) medieval crosshead.

(Glam.) has a mutilated crosshead though the Virgin and Child can still be detected. On the basis of this group the late Glanmor Williams argued that the Vale of Glamorgan must once have been rich in crosses which as he put it 'spoke eloquently of the minor sculptor's art' (Williams 1976, 436).

Others no doubt existed, particularly in Monmouthshire. The heavily decorated socket stones at Bettws Newydd, Raglan and perhaps Bedwas seem unlikely to have supported plain crossheads, and so too Michel Troy whose decorated cross shaft survives.[7] There is also a truncated crucifix fragment from Kemeys Inferior (Mitchell 1893, 22), and in much the same vein as Flint, a carved crosshead from Llanfihangel Ystern Llewern (Mons.) is also said to have found been moved to a private house in the mid-nineteenth century, but seems not to have been recorded since Mitchell saw it at the end of the century (1893, 37). But a note of caution is required here.[1] Not all of these are certainly churchyard crosses: at least some of those that are two-sided, as opposed to the four-sided lantern-head crosses found in Flintshire, could

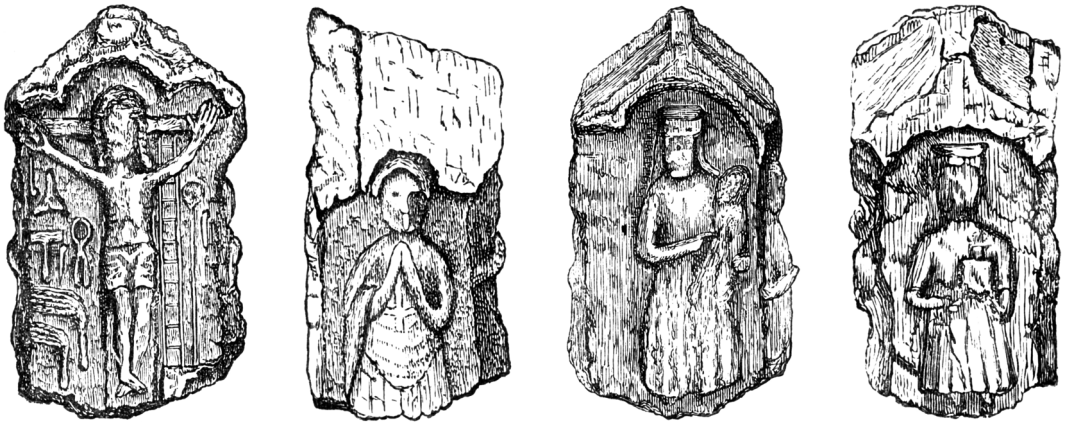

Fig. 8. Detail of the Denbigh friary crosshead. *After Archaeologia Cambrensis 1885.*

have been wayside crosses. The crudely carved example from Llanfihangel Ystern Llewern is one such example, the cross head recently stolen from Grosmont church (Mons.) perhaps another.

Falling beyond the two main groups, there is a solitary outlier, a crucifixion scene now set into one of the walls of the west tower of St Thomas' church in Haverfordwest (Pembs.).[9]

Other crossheads take a different form. The Bosherston (Pembs.) cross where the head of Christ presented in an unsophisticated fashion is set at the intersection of the cross arms (Fig. 9), and the Llanynys (Denbs.) crosshead, a flattened hexagonal plate with a crucifixion on one face, a bishop on the other and attributed to the fourteenth century. In the past it was erroneously thought of as a medieval grave-marker because it is so different from the other crossheads in the Vale of Clwyd (Lord 2003, 111).

Fig. 9. Detail of the Bosherston (Pembs.) cross. *After H. Longueville Jones, Archaeologia Cambrensis 1861 (also reproduced in Glynne 1888).*

Does the survival of these groups in the south-east and north-east present a distorted view of Welsh churchyard crosses? Madeleine Gray has argued that the churchyard cross was usually a pillar with a decorated head, taking its name from the depiction of the Crucifixion on one of the faces of the head (Gray 2000, 52). But perhaps the majority of crosses were not so richly embellished. While Derwen, Trelawnyd and Halkyn were all small churches probably serving ordinary communities, their crosses were richly carved, presumably replacing plainer predecessors; one might assume that wealthier churches would have followed a similar course. Yet there are upwards of 25 medieval churchyard crossheads surviving across the country, only about half of them richly carved. The remainder have plain unembellished heads. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that a church could have had two churchyard crosses and that the plainer, earlier one has survived, but the writer has not encountered any evidence to strengthen such a view. It is inherently more likely that some communities were inclined to be content with their simple crosses while others replaced them with more elaborate monuments.

It would be unwise to assume that those crosses that escaped the interference of the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have since remained untouched, allowing the modern visitor to observe them as his medieval predecessor would have done. This point needs no emphasis in cases such as Halkyn, Flint, and Denbigh friary where the surviving components are now completely out of context. It is true also of Tremeirchion where the crosshead (without its supporting shaft and socket stone) has been returned to the churchyard in recent years after a sabbatical of more than a century at a neighbouring Jesuit college, and Llanarth where the cross base and socket stone still feature in the churchyard, but where the crosshead, having reputedly been found in a nearby well was then transposed to Llanarth Court where it now resides outside the Catholic church (Gray 2000, 77; Newman 2000, 266).

The conversion of the lower part of freestanding crosses into other churchyard features was quite usual. Sundial stands were the most prevalent as at Bedwellty (Mons.), Llansilin (Denbs.), Llangyndeyrn (Carms.), Llanbedr (Breckn.) and others, lamp supports at Llanbedr (Radns.) and Caerleon (Mons.), decorative features as at Llantarnam (Mons.) where a stone ball was in place on top of the shaft in the late nineteenth century (Mitchell 1893, 30), and in the twentieth century their conversion to war memorials at Gladestry (Radns.), Cadoxton-juxta-Barry (Glam.) and Llanwenarth (Mons.). A further nineteenth-century trait was the restoration of medieval crosses as commemorative structures: in Monmouthshire that at Penrhos is a memorial to the rector's first wife in 1868, the cross at Llandenny was restored in memory of Lord Raglan who died in 1884, and the restoration of the cross at Llangattock-vibon-awel celebrated the marriage of Elizabeth Mitchell in 1860 who thirty years later wrote the guide to Monmouthshire's crosses. And in keeping with the age of Victorian ecclesiastical rebuilding, at least one church cross—Rockfield (Mons.) —was entirely replaced in 1865 on the site of the old one.

Crosses or parts of them have been moved around their churchyards and beyond. That from Kemeys Inferior (Mons.) was moved to Tredunnoc when a dual carriageway was constructed over the churchyard, while Henllan's cross (Denbs.) appears to have been set outside the churchyard when sketched at the end of the eighteenth century, then used as a support for a gallery in the church in the early nineteenth century and when the gallery was removed in *c.* 1878 was re-erected outside the church porch (Owen 1886, 87); the cross at St Clears (Carms.) is built into the external face of the churchyard wall, while the socket stone at Llanfihangel Rogiet (Mons.) was cut in half and used in the buttresses supporting the church tower. Few seem to have met the extreme fate of the socket stone at Mathern (Mons.) which having been removed to the former bishop's palace served over the years as a cistern for a water pump, but by 1959 had disappeared.

Jeffreyston (Pembs.) retains its steps, socket stone and lower shaft, but the crosshead is believed to have been transported a kilometre away from the churchyard and is now built into a wall beside a road leading to the village (Edwards 2007, 530). The reverse is thought to have happened at Templeton in the same

county where a cross shaft shown as outside the churchyard on an Ordnance Survey map of 1907 is now within it. At Llannefydd (Denbs.) the cross in the centre of the village was transferred to the vicar's garden in 1871 because it was an obstruction to traffic and people were causing a nuisance by congregating around it (Owen 1886, 127), but later it was set in the churchyard; and at Redwick a wayside cross was moved into the churchyard for safety in the nineteenth century (Mitchell 1893, 33).

At the time that some Victorian clergymen and sympathetic laity were making efforts to restore the old crosses, presumably under the influence of ecclesiological ideals, their contemporaries elsewhere were deliberately or inadvertently allowing their crosses to be evicted from the churchyard, an occurrence that continued into the twentieth century. To those listed above can be added the sale of the head of the Tremeirchion cross for £5, a little before 1863, when it had been lying around in the churchyard for years. Its sale allowed the churchwardens to purchase candles for the church, to the evident disgust of a correspondent in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* who was adamant that the parochial authorities should have re-erected it on a new shaft (Owen 1886, 181). The steps and part of the shaft in the churchyard at Aberffraw (Angl.), one of the very few in the north-west, were documented in 1846 having been moved to the edge of the churchyard to support a sundial. Sometime before 1970 they were removed entirely. The same fate seems to have befallen the socket stone at Capel Lligwy (Angl.) which reputedly has now disappeared from the church, having been recorded there by the Royal Commission in 1937.

Like the churches with which they are associated churchyard crosses have been subject to erosion and to damage, both deliberate and accidental, across the centuries since the Reformation. Natural 'wear and tear' has undoubtedly taken a toll though rarely do we learn of the actual event that caused the loss, amongst the exceptions being Penhow (Mons.) where the cross fell down in the seventeenth century, a yew tree being planted in its place (Mitchell 1893, 18), the Porthkerry (Mons.) cross where the head was blown off in a gale in 1874, and Cilcain (Flints.) where the two metre or more-high shaft seen by Elias Owen in the late nineteenth century is now little more than half that height. Others have been adapted to other uses or moved around their churchyards as Mitchell pointed out at Bedwas and Llanhilleth. The vast majority appear to have been restored, many in the last one hundred and fifty years or so, though the process has been going on for longer for as Archdeacon Thomas noted the parochial accounts for Hanmer in 1739 reveal that 10s 2d was paid out for 'setting ye Cros straight' (Thomas 1908, 448) and Elias Owen recorded that the shaft of the Llanrhudd churchyard cross just outside Denbigh bore the letters 'EI' and the date 1677, implying the repair of the cross after the Restoration (1886, 131).

Town and market crosses

Collectively, 17 market crosses can be authenticated in Wales, 18 if we include the more enigmatic cross at the Grist in Laugharne (Carms.), and perhaps 26 town crosses (which may have been either high or market crosses), a total then of just over 40, embracing crosses in 34 Welsh towns (Fig. 10). Thus about one-third of the 105 medieval towns listed by Soulsby (1983) provide some evidence for the former existence of a cross. Such has been the rate of attrition that now no more than five town crosses definitely survive in some form, none in its entirety, and there may be fragmentary remains of three or four others.

Holt (Denbs.) is arguably the most impressive. Of its six octagonal steps, the lowest two are original and collectively they support a modern socket stone that holds the weathered shaft (Fig. 11). The county can also boast part of the market cross at Denbigh, known locally as the high cross. Two steps, a socket stone and part of the shaft survive, topped by a ball finial which was added in 1760. It has been moved at least twice. Richard Fenton saw it in the town square at the beginning of the nineteenth century as Speed had done two centuries earlier, but it was moved to the bowling green by the castle in the 1840s and then to its present location at the top of Vale Street just off the square in 1982. The Woolmarket Cross at Tenby (Pembs.) has also moved around having been in the centre of the town opposite St John's Hospital. It was

Fig. 10. Medieval town and village crosses in Wales.

Fig. 11. Holt (Denbs.) town cross.

demolished at some point after the Reformation but the shaft was found in about 1808 and re-erected in the grounds of what is now the Old Rectory; it has now been moved to the garden area of a housing estate in the town. The city cross in St Davids has six steps and the socket stone surviving, surmounted by a Victorian crosshead and shaft, but generally believed to be still occupying the spot where its medieval predecessor was erected. Finally, there is the complicated situation at Grosmont where the socket stones of two crosses are placed one above the other in the open arcade beneath the nineteenth-century town hall. One of the stones, replete with worn quatrefoil decoration, is of fourteenth-century date and Mitchell (1893, 32) had no doubt that this was the market cross base, a view reiterated recently by Suggett (2012, 57), though contrary to the local belief that it came from the churchyard. There is though a cross shaft still in the churchyard, albeit now positioned on the north side of the church and fixed into a remarkably unweathered socket stone, but one which Mitchell was content to accept as authentic medieval (1893, 6). None of this explains the origin of the other weathered socket stone at the town hall.

Other places with more equivocal evidence are Laugharne (Carms.) where the modern superstructure of the Grist Cross appears to reside on an ancient base, and Abergavenny where Mitchell (1893, 33) specifically drew attention to the fact that the cross socket now in the churchyard had been moved from

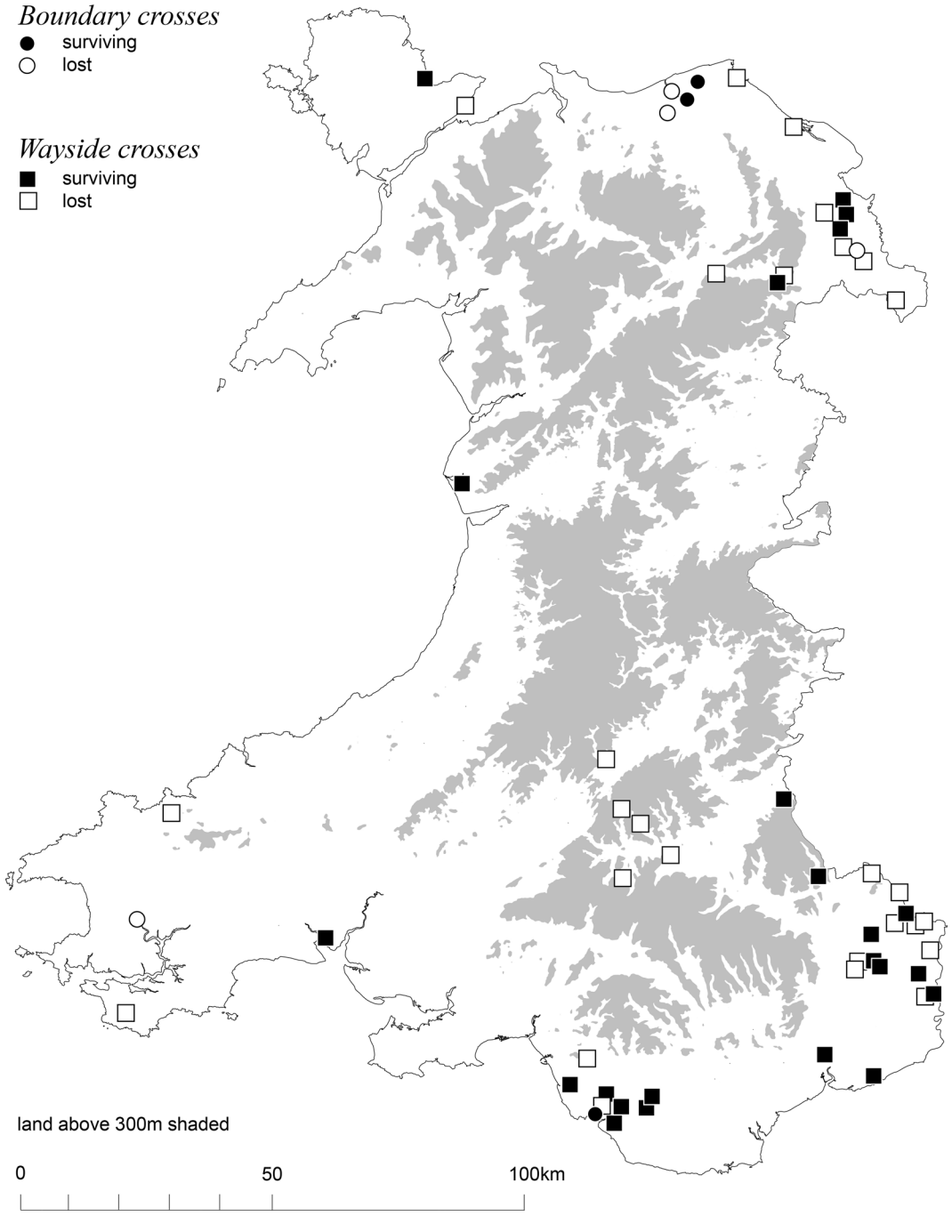

Fig. 12. Medieval boundary and wayside crosses.

outside and had formerly stood at the crossroads. Nor do all town crosses have to fit within a preconceived typology of high crosses, market crosses and putative preaching crosses. It has been suggested that a broken crucifixion from Newport (Mons.) might well have been from a wayside cross located on the river bridge within the town (Lord 2003, 176).

Villages too could aspire to a stone cross, emulating the larger communities, not so much as a central feature for the market, more presumably as a focal point within the settlement. Around 16 likely village crosses have been recorded of which perhaps nine survive, the geographical emphasis being very much in the southern counties. Uncertainty surrounds the figure for there are difficulties in differentiating some village crosses from their churchyard counterparts, epitomised by Llannefydd (Denbs.) noted above, the only postulated village cross in north Wales, other than the Lower Cross at Hawarden (Flints.) which was demolished in 1641 and a tree planted in its place. Llannefydd's attraction for local people is mirrored at Caldicot (Mons.) where the village cross was removed in Victorian times because it had became a gossiping place. That at Basseleg (Mons.) was removed sometime after 1817 when it was accounted the place where tithes were collected annually in the village.

Crosses in the countryside

If the proliferation of crosses in the south-western peninsula of England offers any form of guide, the disappearance of crosses from rural areas has probably been more pronounced than from the town and village. In Wales, somewhere in the region of 30 crosses can still be recognised in the countryside, excluding those which have been specifically attributed to the pre-Conquest period. Documentary records and cartography add a higher number (Fig. 12), although pinpointing where these formally stood may be impossible, as with the Croes Tecla which had been set up in the Denbighshire hills between Llandegla and Llangollen (Thomas 1911, 89).

The surviving wayside crosses comprise a rather motley collection, the dispersed survivors of long-lived policies randomly activated that must have removed a far larger number from the Welsh landscape. In many cases it is the socket stone alone that remains, as with the recently published Croes Antoni at St Brides Major (Glam.) which has been speculatively ascribed a pre-Conquest date (Redknap and Lewis 2007, 497). Rather less commonly it is the shaft or its stump that survives, as with Croes Wion near Benllech (Angl.) where less than one metre of the shaft protrudes from the socket stone, the cross having been the place where local inhabitants gravitated to *Y Farchnad Fawr* ('the big market') from at least the early fifteenth century. The Anglesey Antiquarian Society reconstructed parts of the cross in 1921. Only rarely has a complete cross survived. Thus, there is Croes Kyrig in Raglan (Mons.) though the shaft and head have been separated from the base and moved, and the incomplete and undated wheel-headed cross used as a gatepost at Mwche Farm, Llansteffan (Carms.) and lying on a pilgrims' route to St Davids. Arguably the most interesting is the stone cross now with a broken head, disguised in a hedge bank above a holloway near Llanigon (Breckn.). Traditionally it is said to mark the grave of a Scottish pedlar but is much more likely a waymarker on a route through the Black Mountains from the Wye Valley to Llanthony Abbey (Mons.). And only a relatively short distance away, a shaft with a rustic crucifixion, attributed to the thirteenth century (Lord 2003, 175), is now housed in the church at Cwmyoy (Mons.) (Fig. 13). Found on a nearby farm in 1871, it is said to have originally been erected beside a pilgrimage route to St Davids.

A more overtly secular context is provided in a petition to the king by the burgesses of Rhuddlan (Flints.) at the end of the thirteenth century who defined their rights, for their 'bounds and franchise used to extend as far as the dyke which is called Furian … towards the north; and to the cross of Dissard [Dyserth] towards the east, and then to the dyke Kerhaven towards the south; and to the cross which separates the meers of the King and the Bishop towards the west' (Rees 1975, no. 13715). Important here is the fact that two of the four landmarks were crosses, a significant reflection of their permanent presence

Fig. 13. Cwmyoy (Mons.) wayside cross, now housed in Cwmyoy church.

in the landscape. It would be a neat correspondence if the 'cross of Dissard' could be associated with Criccin Cross positioned on an isolated natural hillock to the east of Rhuddlan, but it is not now possible to determine whether the reference to 'Dissard' alludes to the ecclesiastical parish of that name—Criccin Cross lies close to the boundary between Rhuddlan and Cwm parish—or the landholding of the earlier mother church at Dyserth which spread across several other parishes. What does not seem to be in doubt is that Criccin Cross was a boundary cross, its significance emphasised by its topographical location. In north-east Wales a crosshead now residing in Bangor-on-Dee church and reputedly dredged from the Dee

could be a component of another boundary cross but this can only be a surmise.

Boundary crosses did not have to be of stone. Haverfordwest had a wooden cross placed against the side of a house which was used to define the extent of the corporation's authority and was still deferred to in Elizabethan times (Phillips 1896, 193). A further example was noted by a correspondent of Edward Lhuyd at the end of the seventeenth century in Coychurch (Glam.). On the large common on Mynydd y Gaer there had been a wooden cross, its original purpose uncertain, which had recently been replaced by a young tree (Morris 1911, 14).

Corpse ways seem not to have received much attention in Wales. A lost cross is referred to by Lhuyd in his *Parochial Queries* near Esly Hall in Wrexham where they 'put down the corps when they bring them to be buried and also say their prayers' (Morris 1909, 133), and Lee (1888) noted another one in the same region, on the edge of Bettisfield Park 'where Roman Catholics used to celebrate funeral rites before committing their dead to the parish priest'. Whether the practice reflected the original purpose of the cross is an open question. A surviving example is the scheduled Trellech Cross on the road to Chepstow of which the steps and socket stone survive. Mitchell (1893, 36) noted that in her time it was still used by passing funerals as a 'resting cross' the coffin being placed on the cross step allowing a change of bearers.

CONCLUSIONS

A century ago Gwenllian Morgan was moved to remark that 'in medieval times Wales was particularly rich in the number and the form of its stone crosses' (1903, 206). This rose-tinted belief might have been founded on little more than general ignorance or on the unwarranted assumption that the prevalence of crosses recorded by Mitchell in Monmouthshire was matched in the other counties of Wales. It is a view that is impossible to maintain in today's environment of searchable datasets and the current study allows a more objective assessment of what has been inherited from the medieval era. Much greater numbers of crosses remain in single counties such as Cornwall and Devon where the surviving medieval stone crosses in the former are computed at around 700 and in the latter about 300 (Turner 2006b, 34), even when a percentage of these reflect an early medieval origin. On the opposite side of England, in Norfolk, Whyte has mapped around 134 wayside crosses, 54 of them still extant (2009, fig. 5). The total for Wales is about 240, indicating that it is now hardly well-endowed with stone crosses.

On the basis of the places where they were erected, those crosses that do survive in Wales or are known to have existed can be attributed to three broad groups, those in the town, the churchyard and the countryside. Delving more deeply, it is very clear that whilst acknowledging the Christian motivation and symbolism that underpinned their erection, crosses could reflect a varying range of original functions and subsequent uses, some of the latter blurring through time or even being consigned to permanent obscurity. Five centuries separate us from the times when the cross as a physical presence in town or countryside was fully meaningful to those who saw it, and some of our modern analyses can only be speculative at best. Even simple classifications can remain unresolved. The ambiguities of surviving crosses at Grosmont and Cwmyoy have been outlined above, and here too can be mentioned the cross at Stow Hill, Newport. Despite acknowledging that it had been moved, Mitchell (1893, 32) suggested that the base—the only surviving remnant—was of a wayside cross. In 1925 an excavation within the town turned up a crosshead displaying the crucifixion, and this gave rise to it being termed a preaching cross, a function currently endorsed by the regional Historic Environnent Record. It could of course have been both, but arguably it might have been neither.

That the cross was ubiquitously symbolic does not mean that one type of cross derived linearly from another. Thus the view that the town cross was a development of the churchyard cross whilst

almost incidentally strengthening the concept of emergent churchyard markets is best abandoned to the antiquarian literature. The cross was a pervasive symbol, and both town and market necessitated a focal place where people could be relied on to gather, and where both religious affinities and secular administrative requirements could be acknowledged. Nothing else would have served the purpose better.

Even if the suggestion that early medieval cemeteries might have been proclaimed by the presence of a wooden cross is correct—and confirming such an assumption would be extremely difficult—it was not until late in the early medieval era that stone crosses began to appear in the vicinity of churches (Edwards 2013, 78). It can be argued this was part of a more general introduction of the cross into the landscape which saw too the emergence of the earliest wayside and other crosses in the countryside. But the contrasting distributions argue that in Wales the early medieval crosses set up in the enclosures around important churches were the antecedents rather than the root cause of the numerous medieval churchyard crosses. This is emphasised by the sparsity of twelfth-century Romanesque crosses (Thurlby 2006, 271), particularly now that the cross at Corwen and the cross base at Dyserth have been assigned to the eleventh century (Edwards 2013). And even allowing for some differential loss, the contrasting distribution patterns shown in Figures 2 and 4 is persuasive.

In the future excavation may throw a little light on cross sites, as has recently happened at Newport, Shropshire (Malim and Nash 2013); casual discoveries may add new fragments to the corpus, and previously unrecognised fragments of wayside crosses may yet be discovered in rural areas. But in general terms our medieval crosses are a known and finite resource, and need to be preserved and promoted accordingly.

NOTES

1. My thanks are due to Andrew Davidson (GAT), Ken Murphy (DAT) and Richard Roberts (GGAT) for providing me with copies of their trusts' reports and project datasets, without which the preparation of this paper would have been considerably more difficult. Thanks also are due to Cadw and particularly Rick Turner for supporting the preparation of this paper; to Bill Britnell for preparing artwork and in his capacity as editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, and to Dr Madeleine Gray for her helpful comments on the paper.

   The individual Historic Environment Records (HERs) for Wales contain descriptions and dimensions in varying levels of detail for the crosses discussed here, including material fed back from the surveys. Of the four survey reports only that by the Dyfed Trust is currently available, on their website. A provisional database of crosses in Wales was created to assist the analyses for this paper and to provide a basis for the mapping; details are available from CPAT. Because of the variable nature of the records within the HERs it would not be beneficial at this stage to publish a definitive catalogue.

   Vallance's volume (1920) still provides the best in-depth description of the physical attributes of medieval crosses as a whole.

2. It needs to be acknowledged here that the term 'pre-Conquest' is used in reference to the Norman Conquest of the later eleventh century rather than the Edwardian Conquest of the late thirteenth century.

3. Four of these have been noted, at Wonastow and Raglan in Monmouthshire and Cwmdu and Llangattock in Brecknock. There are probably others for the search has not been exhaustive.

4. The last of these, the weeping cross, can be easily dismissed as an antiquarian conceit. Vallance (1920, 26) dismissed it as a 'popular fallacy'.

5. There is inevitably some uncertainty in these calculations. It is not always evident whether a part of a cross is wholly original or a weathered replacement, whether the medieval cross now in the churchyard was originally elsewhere, or even if the cross now visible is a composite construction, made of genuine parts but from different crosses. It is not likely, however, that such uncertainties affect more than a handful of surviving crosses. The nine believed to be complete are: Hanmer and Trelawnyd (Flints.), Coychurch, Penarth and St Donat's (Glam.), Kilgwrrwg and Rockfield (Mons.), and St Florence and Upton Chapel (Pembs.).
6. However despite enquiries, I have not been able to establish the precise location of the crosshead.
7. The same is probably true of Llanrhudd (Denbs.) in the north.
8. I would like to thank Dr Madeleine Gray for pointing this out to me.
9. Acknowledgement should be paid here to the newsletter of the Ancient Monuments Society (Autumn 2012, 23) which drew attention to this 'jewel-like' cross. It does not figure in the HER or NMR, though it is mentioned in the unpublished Welsh Historic Churches survey for Pembrokeshire prepared for Cadw and the Dyfed Archaeological Trust by Neil Ludlow.

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