

II.

CROSS-SLABS RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT FOWLIS WESTER
AND MILLPORT. BY J. JEFFREY WADDELL, I.A., F.S.A.Scot.

These stones (fig. 1) were discovered in the course of the work of



Fig. 1. Cross-slab and Fragments of other two at Fowlis Wester.

restoring the Church of Fowlis Wester, near Crieff, Perthshire, which was undertaken by me at the request of Captain Drummond Moray

of Abercairnie, the laird, and the Rev. T. C. Sherriff, M.A., minister of the parish. The church is a pre-Reformation one, and a sharp lookout was kept by all for any fragment of carved stone. The result was the finding first of all of the two fragments used as beam-filling at the wallhead of the church walls. They are very interesting fragments, each of a cross-slab with interlacing ornament, the larger fragment with single strand, the smaller with a double strand enriching the head of the cross. These are shown at the base of the cross-slab in fig. 1.

But the importance of these finds was overshadowed by the discovery of the larger slab illustrated herewith. When the old harling was stripped off the north wall of the church near its base, I noticed an abnormally long stone among the rubble, its long edge parallel with the surface of the wall. I managed to get my hand under it—it seemed to be just clay-built—so far as to feel what I suspected were carvings. We got the stone out without damaging it. It proved to be a very elaborately designed and finely cut stone—I know of no finer.¹ Design and execution are carried as far as is possible in this material—the local slightly pink freestone. All the carved work is on the one face; the lower portion, top, sides, and back are uncarved. The stone may never have been finished, but have been discarded.

It is 5 feet 2 inches long by 2 feet 8 inches, tapering to 1 foot 8 inches at the top, and is about 11 inches thick.

The carving is “on cant,” and the stone has a tendency to flake or scale off. It will require to be watched carefully, and treated if necessary with stone preservative. (It has already been coated with “Cephasite” stone preservative.)

The design consists of a very finely enriched cross standing on an upright oblong base, in this respect resembling the standing cross out in the square at Fowlis Wester and that at Kirkcolm. It is decorated with spirals and key patterns. The cross has a square centre also enriched. The arms are enlarged at the ends, and the top or centre arm is longer than the side arms. They are bound together with a circle or aureole also covered with surface carving. The cross resembles those at Lothbeg, Farnell, Inchbrayock, Auldbar, Invergowrie, St Vigeans, Meigle, and Largo.

The remainder of the field is sculptured in low relief. In the upper left-hand corner there is a figure of an animal with a large square-jawed head from which projects a semi-circular tusk or ring. The

¹ Mr J. S. Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, was present when the larger of the three stones was discovered. He gave it as his opinion that some of the larger quoin stones at the S.W. angle of the church and others in the walling might also be carved stones of an earlier date than the present church; but these stones have not been moved.

body tapers to a tail, ending in a curl. There are no limbs. Beneath it is what seems to be a sword with a short parallel-sided blade, and a disk which may be meant to represent a circular shield or buckler. In the right-hand corner there is a similar creature, beautifully carved, with its jaws opened to their maximum, and with a human figure perfectly modelled with its head between the jaws of the animal.

On the field beneath the arm of the cross to the left there is a figure in profile seated upon a chair or throne, and dressed in a hooded embroidered robe. In front of the figure there is a rod with nine buds; behind and above it is a tree with leaves and fruit. Beneath this are two similar standing figures, smaller in scale, also in profile and facing the cross, and with hooded and embroidered robes. On the opposite side there is a somewhat similar seated figure, with a figure above and behind. Beneath this the field has flaked off before the carving was completed, for the carving seems to attempt to follow the irregularity of the surface and then stops.

The lower portion of the face is uncarved and rough for about 15 inches of its height.

The design of the cross resembles that of the larger standing cross in the square just outside the church, only the latter has no ring or aureole, and the ornament is different, not nearly so fine, and also much more weathered. At St Vigeans—on a cross-slab—there are two seated figures, but they are both on the same side of the cross; other four figures on the same stone have similar hoods and enriched garment hems.¹ On the stone near the old church of Eassie there is a representation of a tree with nine buds growing from a pot, but these buds grow four from each side and one from the top.² Seated figures are to be found at each side of the cross on a stone at Kirk Maughold,³ and on a stone from Papil are four upright figures, two at each side of the cross.⁴

At Dunfallandy there are two seated figures, one on each side of a much smaller cross.⁵ These figures have similar robes, but without enrichment and with the hoods drawn over their heads. The chairs are somewhat similar, but again not so fine as in this example. At Kingoldrum there is a fragment of a similar seated figure.⁶

CROSS-SLAB FROM MILLPORT.

In the monumental work of J. Romilly Allen on *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, at page 413, there are described three fragments

¹ *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, p. 268, fig. 278.

² *Ibid.*, p. 218, fig. 231 B.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10, fig. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11, fig. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 288, fig. 305 A.

⁶ Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. i. pl. xlix.

of carved stone which may be seen in the Cathedral Church of the Isles at Millport, on the Island of Cumbrae, Buteshire. They were placed there some years ago, having been removed, I understand, from the burial-ground adjoining the Parish Church Manse.¹

The stone which I wish to describe and illustrate herewith was also discovered adjoining the manse garden (fig. 2). Taken in conjunction with the stones at the Cathedral, this stone seems to prove that there was an early Celtic settlement on this site, although nothing definite of its history seems to be known. A further proof is that the manse



Fig. 2. Cross-slab from Millport.

garden-wall contains quite a number of fragments of broken stone with carved designs similar in style.

There is also a late Renaissance armorial panel built into the garden-wall.

The cross-slab is 3 feet 1 inch long by 14½ inches broad by about 6 inches in thickness. It is of freestone, and is carved on the face as shown and on one of the long sides only. The narrow end seems to be complete. The other end is broken, and one of the long sides is irregular. The ornament seems to follow this irregular shape. It is of the type known as Celtic and consists of interlacing strands forming a cross. Another portion of the ornament is enriched with studs. The whole design is formed by cutting out the background and leaving the ornament flush with the surface of the stone. The ornament on the side is very slight and consists of three parallel lines, broken at intervals.

¹ Eight of the Millport stones are illustrated in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii. pl. 74. There are six cross-heads, one cross-shaft, and one incised cross. Some seem very early in date, and none is like the one now described.