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JOURNAL OF

THE TRANSACTIONS

OF

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VOL. LII.

1920.

620TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, MAY 17TH, 1920,
AT 4.30 P.M.

GILBERT R. REDGRAVE, ESQ., ASSOC.INST.C.E., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed,
and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following Elections: H. O.
Weller, Esq., and E. Luff Smith, Esq., as Members; and Miss Mary R.
Fleming, M.D., Arthur J. S. Preece, Esq., Bernard S. M. Blythe, Esq.,
and Professor Addison Hogue, of Lee and Washington University, U.S.A.,
as Associates.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced the Right Rev. Bishop G. Forrest
Browne, D.D., to deliver his lecture on "Monumental Art in Early
England, Caledonia and Ireland," illustrated by lantern slides.

MONUMENTAL ART IN EARLY ENGLAND, CALEDONIA
AND IRELAND. By the Right Rev. Bishop G. FORREST
BROWNE, D.D. (With lantern illustrations.)

NOTES OF THE LECTURE.

THE early Anglian Monuments are graceful and aspiring
in form. Their ornamentation is rich in the intricate
patterns of interlacement, and beautiful in the flowing
scrolls of arabesques based on the idea of the tree of life; while
scenes from Holy Scripture and the earliest Ecclesiastical
History are remarkably well rendered. The inscriptions are
general, and run to very considerable lengths. They are
indicative of personal affection for deceased persons. They
are made supremely interesting by being incised in Anglian
Runes, in which script we have had preserved to us the earliest
piece of English prose and the earliest piece of English verse,
as they were originally produced.

The origin of the beautiful vine-scrolls, with birds and other
creatures feeding on the grapes, we trace to Byzantine or
Near Eastern ornamentation, as set forth on the ivory chair
of Maximianus, Archbishop of Ravenna, 546–556, who conse-
crated the Church of St. Vitale there, and whose name appears
in the great mosaic of Justinian and his Court in that church.

The chair is covered with examples of the vine-scroll, and its two front uprights may well have suggested the actual shape of the very graceful shaft at Bewcastle.   Our earliest Christian art was no doubt brought to us by Benedict Biscop and by Wilfrith in the second generation of our Christian existence ; and Wilfrith, who travelled his dioceses with a company of persons, including masons, no doubt set up altars and stone crosses at places where he preached the Gospel to our pagan ancestors, where the itinerant priests would come from time to time to celebrate the sacraments ; and his masons ornamented them with patterns from Italy.

The High Crosses of Ireland are less graceful in form and less early in date than the corresponding monuments in the northern parts of England.   They are much more numerous, as are also the tombstones.   This is mainly due to two far-reaching facts. Ireland has not been conquered, as Anglo-Saxon England was, by a dominant race which threw down the religious monuments as the work of a superstitious people, and built solid churches on the sites of unsubstantial places of worship, burying in their foundations the great crosses they had smashed.   And Ireland has not suffered from the universal occupation of ancient sites for agricultural and residential purposes.   Such vast collections of sculptured stones and tombstones as the Irish have at Clonmacnois have no parallel remaining in England.   Another reason for the preservation of the High Crosses has been put forward—they are so massive that it would be a serious task to smash them.   Ireland had one finely aspiring shaft, the Cross of Tuam.   It is broken in pieces.

The ornamentation of the Irish crosses has its panels of interlacements, as the English crosses have, but the main feature is the crowding into panels as many human figures as the artist can fit into the space (much as their manuscript treasure, the Book of Kells, is spoiled).   There is no indication of a love like that of the Angles for the endless developments of the arabesques of the tree of life.

Inscriptions on the High Crosses are no part of the purpose of their erection or their ornamentation.   We have not the interesting details of the Anglian tombstones.   The Ogam script, with which we deal in the Caledonian part of our consideration, exists in greater abundance in Ireland than in all other parts of these islands put together, and was no doubt borrowed from Ireland when it is used elsewhere.   But we do not find it in

connection with the Irish monuments we have considered, and we must attribute it to an earlier race than the cross-builders, or to the time of an earlier basis of worship than theirs.

We enter upon an entirely new series of questions when we enter upon the corresponding monumental remains of early Caledonia. We have there large numbers of standing stone slabs, with, on one side, crosses wrought with elaborate and intricate interlacements, accompanied by dragons and other creatures knotted up and fettered by the power of the Cross; and on the other side of the slab crowds of horsemen, hounds, various animals, and, constantly recurring, one or more of three unique symbols, called respectively the "elephant," the "crescent" and the "spectacles." The "elephant," which, like the other two, is of very frequent recurrence, has all the appearance of being drawn originally by someone who had only glanced hastily at an elephant once, when its trunk happened to be thrown back. The "crescent," with the beautiful pins through it jointed at an angle, is like the golden ornament of the head of a king. The "spectacles," again, with beautiful jointed pins through the connecting links, are exactly like the great circular buttons on either side of the upper part of the royal robe, with fastenings made safe with the pins. These circular buttons and their ornamentation are exactly like golden buttons found by Schlieman in old Mycenæ. Some writers trace them all to sun worship.

These were probably the "figures," "marked out with iron pricks," which the Roman soldiers gazed at on the bodies of the "dying Pict," as the poet Claudian tells, A.D. 400, transferred by stencil plates to memorial and boundary stones when the Christian preachers clothed the half-naked Pict.

Unlike the Anglian and the Hibernian stones, the whole of these Pictish stones are silent, with one exception. On the other hand, there was for a short time an outburst of Ogam inscriptions in one part of Caledonia, probably due to the missionary work of a Scot, who went to Ireland to study and came back to work among his own countrymen as a bishop in Buchan, having, no doubt, in his train some attendant who knew and could cut the Ogam script, and did so cut his master's name. Accordingly, the Annals of Ulster tell us under the year 669 "Itarnan died among the Picts." The monuments of the Scots in Argyleshire are of an Irish order.

Lantern slides shown by the Right Rev. Bishop G. Forrest Browne in illustration of the Early Monumental Art of England, Ireland, and Caledonia.

EARLY ENGLAND.

The Bewcastle Cross, Cumberland, A.D. 670.—Three faces; interlacement; figure of Our Lord; the Runic alphabet (Futhork).

The Ruthwell Cross, Dumfries, ? A.D. 685.—The Cross; washing the Feet; Latin inscription; Runic inscription.

Jedburgh sculpture.

The crosses at Sandbach, Cheshire.

Tombstones with Runes.—Thornhill, Yorks, two; Hartlepool, two.

IRELAND.

High Crosses.—Castle Dermot; Monasterboíce, two, A.D. 924; Kells (street).

Tombstones.—Odran, Clonmacnois, A.D. 994; Colgen, Lismore, A.D. 850; Martin, Lismore, A.D. 875.

CALEDONIA.

Monumental Slabs.—Aberlemno, Forfar, four; Meigle, Perth; Rossie, Dundee.

Inscriptions.—St. Vigean's, Forfar; the Ogam alphabet (bethluisnion); St. Dogmael's, Cardigan (Wales); Brandsbutt, Inverurie; Newton, Aberdeen.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said he thought he was voicing the opinion of the meeting when he expressed the great pleasure with which he had listened to the valuable lecture they had just heard, with the excellent illustrations of the interesting monuments described by Bishop Forrest Browne. He had often been impressed with the wonderful resemblance between the interlacing ornaments so freely used in Lombardic architecture and the sculptured work of the early British crosses, and they had heard how this resemblance

was accounted for by the Lecturer. The fact was new to him that there was such a great difference in age between the Northumbrian crosses and the stone crosses of Ireland and Scotland. It would seem from the dates, historically fixed by the learned Bishop, that the English crosses ante-dated the others by upwards of 200 years. The ingenuity shown by Bishop Browne in deciphering the Runes and Ogam inscriptions was very remarkable, and his explanations gave great interest to the beautiful photographs they had seen. He understood that there were gentlemen present who had devoted much attention to the study of these monuments, and he would therefore request them to take part in the discussion which was to follow.

Mr. ROUSE said :—The Ogam characters are at least as old as the Roman domination of Britain, for at the Reading Museum you may see them, as I have done, inscribed on a monument that was dug up from Silchester, an entirely Roman city, which bears not a trace of Saxon occupation. The monument is a cone with a rough base, in all about a yard high, up which, across and on either side of a long upright line, runs the inscription ; and this was clearly read by Professor Rhys as the name of a chieftain, *mic*, or son of, another chieftain.

If the Druids, as Bishop Browne says, used the Ogam characters as signs with their hands before they wrote them, we can understand how Julius Cæsar imagined that they did not write at all, but imparted all their knowledge to their disciples by word of mouth lest it should leak out to the mass of the people.

In Cornwall one meets with still older monuments of Christianity than the beautiful Runic crosses reproduced, described and deciphered for us by Bishop Browne. At St. Colombs, a village called after Columba, beside its old parish church I have seen the head of a stone completely cut out in the form of the Greek letter **X**, the first in the name 𝕮𝖍𝖗𝖎𝖘𝖙𝖔𝖘, surrounded with a circle, and again a broad stone post, about 8 feet high, stated to be more ancient, with a broad **X** near the top of it ; and I learnt in the neighbourhood that there are a good number of stones so carved in Cornwall, and that they are believed to have been set up as rallying marks for listeners to the Gospel of Christ and the Word of God preached

in the open air by such men as Columba and Pieran, whose tomb I have seen in the ruins of that small simple British church which lay overwhelmed by sea sand for 300 years until it was dug out by Haslam about eighty years ago.

Dr. SCHOFIELD said that they had too few archæological papers, and that the Society were much indebted to Dr. Forrest Browne for his interesting lecture on early monumental art in England, and that he trusted we should have another paper on a similar subject before long. His remarkable interpretation of Ogam in its origin was somewhat new. His history of this antique script, consisting of incised lines on the edges of slabs of stone, was very interesting. The subject is most obscure, and some have gone so far as to connect the scripts of music with that of Ogam. It was his good fortune to know a widow lady, Mrs. Jones, who had a large farm near Saundersfoot in South Wales. In the next field to the garden stood a stone post that had been used as a rubbing-post by the cattle for centuries. One day, however, a savant calling there, examined the post and found a long Ogam inscription on one side, and a later one on the other in Latin. He deciphered them and found the stone was a monument erected to the memory of a famous British prince who ruled that part of Wales. The Latin inscription also stated the same. From the date, however, the inscription appeared untrue, inasmuch as by then the British prince had been superseded by the Roman Government. It was found, however, by research that the Roman historian, while stating this fact, makes one exception, and names the British prince whose name is on this stone as being so distinguished by his wise rule that he continued to reign. Needless to say that in late years hundreds from America and elsewhere have visited the stone, and very large sums have been offered for it, but it still stands where it did, with a fence round it.

Mr. JAMES GRAY said that his interest in Celtic monuments in Scotland lay in rather a different direction from that in which lay those dealt with by the Lecturer, as he had given more attention to the relics of pagan than of Christian times in Scotland. He desired, however, to add a few words as to the cross at Ruthwell in Dumfries-shire, which he had studied, and which the Lecturer

had described so well.   This most striking and beautiful monument had originally stood in the churchyard there till 1642, when it was broken in pieces, though the fragments were preserved inside the church till near the end of the eighteenth century, when they were placed on the ground in the churchyard again.   But about 1802 the cross was partly dug up and completely re-erected in the garden of the manse by the parish minister, new arms being designed for it by him and added some years later.   The whole is now, with a fine disregard of Presbyterian scruples, placed within the parish church in an apse built to receive it about 1887.   The inscription in Runic letters, running along its edges from the base to the top and down the other side to the base again, without any division into words, was at first translated wrongly as being Old Norse ;   and although the letters were read fairly correctly, and as translated made sense, the translation was completely mistaken. It was to the effect that a baptismal font of 11 lbs. in weight was given by the authority of certain Fathers to atone for the devastation of certain fields and the theft of certain cows.   In 1840, however, the late Mr. J. M. Kemble correctly read what remained legible of the inscription as Anglo-Saxon and rhythmical, and showed that it was a poem describing the Passion of Our Lord, with, unfortunately, considerable gaps where the Runes on the stones were defaced.   In the poem the Cross addressed the Crucified, and considerable portions of the writing were legible.   The whole story of its decipherment is given by Dr. Joseph Anderson in the Second Series of his Rhind Lectures on *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 1880, published by David Douglas of Edinburgh in 1881, from which it appears that long after he had deciphered the stone Mr. Kemble found in an appendix to a Report to the Record Office on quite another subject by Mr. Cooper, a complete poem of 314 lines entitled " The Dream of the Holy Rood," in which (as Dr. Anderson puts it) the Christian sees in a vision the instrument of man's salvation appearing in the sky surrounded by angels, and revealing its sympathy with the Passion and Glory of the Redeemer, and breaking into impassioned but dignified language as it tells the story of its experience on the Day of the Crucifixion

Dr. Anderson goes on to give certain parts of the poem, which are freely translated by him from the manuscript in the Saxon tongue found by Mr. Cooper at Vercelli.

Professor Stephens, in his *Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*, states that he had read on the upper part of the cross in Runic letters the words " Caedmon me made," referring to the poem not to the cross, which is said to belong to the tenth century.

Mr. Gray gave the two diverse renderings of this inscription as an instance of the extreme difficulty which the Lecturer must have met with in deciphering the numerous monumental records which he had described so clearly and simply to those present, and apologized for alluding to the story of the Ruthwell cross, which must have been well known to all. He also mentioned Mr. J. Romilly Allen's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, which contained not only photographs but reproductions of the designs of every monumental stone in Scotland, and a full description of the Ruthwell cross (see pp. 442–48). At p. 243 of his book Dr. Anderson gives a free translation of parts of the poem found in the manuscript at Vercelli, printing those which are still legible on the Ruthwell cross in italics as follows :—

'Twas many a year ago,
I yet remember it,
That I was hewn down
At the wood's end.

.   .   .   .   .

There men bare me upon their shoulders
Until they set me down upon a hill.

.   .   .   .   .

Then saw I tremble
The whole extent of earth.

.   .   .   .   .

But yet I stood fast.
Then the young Hero prepared Himself,
That was Almighty God,
Strong and firm of mood
He mounted the lofty Cross
Courageously in sight of many.

.   .   .   .   .

I trembled when He embraced me,
Yet dared I not to bow earthwards—
Fall to the bosom of the ground,
But I was compelled to stand fast.
A cross was I reared,
I raised the powerful King,
The Lord of the heavens,
I dared not fall down,
They pierced me with dark nails.

.   .   .   .   . .

They reviled us both together,
I was all stained with blood
Poured from the Man's side.

.   .   .   .

The shadow went forth
Wan under the welkin,
All creation wept,
They mourned the fall of their King.
Christ was on the Cross,
And thither hastening
Men came from afar
Unto the noble One—
I that all beheld
With sorrow I was stricken.

.   .   .   .   .

The warriors left me there
Standing defiled with gore,
With shafts all wounded
They laid Him down limb-weary,
They stood at the Corpse's head
Beholding the Lord of Heaven,
And He rested Himself there awhile,
Weary after the mighty contest.*

Lieut.-Colonel MACKINLAY said the Victoria Institute is happy in having to-day not only a distinguished exponent of ancient art in this country as Lecturer, but also in having as Chairman a distinguished representative of modern English art. Mr. Redgrave

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* For the Runes and Saxon original see Romilly Allen, pp. 446–48.

is the son of a very eminent and well-known Royal Academician, and he is himself an architect with an excellent reputation. The present is, I think, the first occasion he has been with us ; we trust that he will frequently come in the future. We shall always welcome him warmly. I have the greatest pleasure in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to him for presiding. (*Carried unanimously.*)