

I.

NOTICE OF A REMARKABLE SCULPTURED CROSS AT BILTON.
YORKSHIRE. By W. F. SKENE, Esq., LL.D. F.S.A. Scot.

When paying a visit in the neighbourhood of York last April, I was informed by the Archdeacon of York that the fragments of a cross had been discovered at Bilton, near York, which seemed to bear upon them one of the symbolic figures peculiar to the Scottish sculptured stones.

I was unfortunately prevented from going to Bilton and examining the fragments of the cross myself, but I took some pains to obtain an accurate description of it. The cross is in two or three fragments. The upper part is in the Rectory Garden. The stem is built into the wall of the church at Bilton. The form of the cross itself belongs to that class in which the limbs of the cross are enclosed within a circle, and from the description seems to resemble that on the Auldbar and St Madoes' Stones and many others similar to these.

The stem contains some of the usual interlaced knot-work, and below it are two figures male and female. On the breast of the female figure is the symbolic figure usually called the spectacle ornament. The Archdeacon of York has sent me some rubbings of the stem of the cross, which I now present to the Society.

This cross of course derives its chief interest from the spectacle ornament connecting it with the Scotch sculptured stones, and enabling us thus to extend the distribution of these monuments into Yorkshire. The position of the ornament on the figure of the woman seems to bear out Mr Stuart's theory, that these symbolic figures in the main were intended to represent personal ornaments. I have always held the same view.

Bilton is situated about ten miles due west from York, and is not far from the river Wharfe, which was the northern boundary of the old Celtic district of Elmet.

There appear to have been two old districts lying between the rivers Wharfe and Aire, which preserved their distinctive names till long after the whole of this part of England was occupied by an Angliæ population, and these were Loidis or Leeds and Elmet. The latter name is still preserved in the two parishes of Berwick in Elmet and Sherborne in Elmet. They probably were for a time merely subjected to the Angliæ rule and retained their Celtic population, traces of which are to be found still in the topographical names. Berwick, whenever it occurs, I have no doubt was originally Aberwick, the accent, according to the law of the Welch language, being laid on the second syllable. And in Elmet there is a place still called Aberford, where, as is not uncommon, the Celtic word is followed by its Saxon equivalent, the Abers being always placed at the ford of a river.