

II.

NOTICE OF A FRAGMENT OF AN ANCIENT STONE CROSS FOUND AT CARPOW, IN THE PARISH OF ABERNETHY, PERTHSHIRE. BY ALEXANDER LAING, Esq., F.S.A. SCOT., NEWBURGH. (PLATE XXVIII.)

The fragment, of which a full-sized drawing by Mr William Galloway, Corresponding Member of the Society, is now exhibited, is undoubtedly part of the upper portion of a cross of great antiquity. It came for the first time under my observation in September last, in company with Professors Mackay of Edinburgh, Bryce of Oxford, and Robertson Smith of Aberdeen, who had come on a pilgrimage to visit Mugdrum Cross and other remains of antiquity in the neighbourhood. A moment's observation showed that it was part of the head of a very ancient cross. The interlaced carving is beautifully wrought, and the very natural attitude of the stag carved on it shows more artistic taste than is usually found on similar monuments.

In investigating the history of this fragment, I learned that it had formed for upwards of two hundred years the lintel of a well, that jutted into the wall of the garden of Carpow. I infer this from the circumstance of the outer edge of the lintel having the date 1610 carved upon it, and also that the cross itself was broken up at that time, and appropriated for the purpose mentioned. When the garden wall was taken down about thirty years ago, the old carving on the lintel was noticed, and the fragment fortunately preserved. It lay uncared for until August last, when it was removed for preservation to Mugdrum, and came under observation as previously mentioned.

It enhances the interest of this fragment to know that it was found at Carpow, which formed part of the lands dedicated by Nectan, King of the Picts, "to God and St Brigid, to the day of judgement." In all probability the cross was erected shortly after this dedication, the earliest grant of lands of which we have record in Scotland. The grant, or rather gift, is recorded in these terms:—"Nectan Morbet [recte Morbrec] filius Erip xxiv. [annis] regnavit. Tercio anno regni ejus Darlugdach, abbatissa Cilledara, de Hibernia exulat pro Christo ad Britanniam. Secundo

anno adventus sui, immolavit Nectonius Abernethige Deo et Sancte Brigide, presente Darlugdach que cantavit Alleluia super istam hostiam. Optulit igitur Nectonius magnus filius Wirp, rex omnium provinciarum Pictorum Apurnethige Sancte Brigide, usque ad diem judicii, cum suis finibus, que posite sunt a lapide in Apurfeirt usque ad lapidem juxta Ceirfuill [Carpow] id est Lethfoss; et inde in altum usque at Athan."¹

We quote this in the hope that some local antiquary may yet discover the stone at Apurfeirt, and that the boundaries of the lands may be completely verified.

When Dr Stuart (whose comparatively early death is an irreparable loss to Scottish Archæology) was engaged with the second volume of the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," he besought me to endeavour to find out the stones at Apurfeirt and Ceirfuill, which formed the landmarks of Nectan's gift. In the former I was unsuccessful; but there can be little doubt that the huge stone known as "The Cloven Stone," which marks the limits of the lands of Carpow on the south-east, is the *lapidem juxta Ceirfuill* mentioned in the record of the donation of the King of the Picts.

That this most interesting cross was broken up at the time it was appropriated for a lintel is corroborated by the evidence of Lady Dunbar of Mochrum, a daughter of the late James Paterson of Carpow. She remembers distinctly of seeing what she now believes to be the other half of the cross, with the letters J. O. (the initials of John Oliphant, the proprietor of Carpow in 1610) carved upon it, and she is under the impression that the missing half was taken for some building purpose to one of the steadings on the estate. This statement is corroborated by another relative. Though no trace of it has as yet been discovered, search is being made, and there is a hope that it will be found, and the ancient Cross of Ceirfuill restored. Meantime the recovered portion is laid beside Mugdrum Cross, where it can be seen.

Mr Galloway adds the following notes on the stone:—

In its present state the stone measures 2 feet 5 inches in length, by 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, and 9 inches in thickness.

As the date indicates, it was re-hewn as the lintel for an opening to a

¹ "Chronicles of the Picts and Scots," p. 6.

well in the year 1610. One extremity of the lintel is gone, but it is clear that it must have spanned an opening with chamfered rybats, checked for a door, with rybat-heads of about 7 inches.

A bold chamfer, 2 by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, mitred at the one end, to return down the side, with the date cut in large figures above it, marks the exterior face of the lintel. (See Plate XXVIII fig. *c*.) In dressing this face, a considerable portion of the carved work must have been hewn away. About 20 inches of the original edge still remains on the opposite side, and by the measurement from this edge to the centre of the cross, it appears that in its complete state the stone was about 30 inches broad. This dimension exceeds the present standing cross at Mugdrum, which is only 2 feet 3 inches broad, and 13 inches in thickness.

In its original condition the stone has had a large cross occupying its full breadth, carved on both of its sides. Of these the most ornate (fig. *b*) has formed the soffit or under side of the lintel, but unfortunately it has been very much damaged in the conversion of the stone to its later purpose. A portion of the shaft, of the centre, and the right arm of the cross, still remain.

Like most of these early crosses, the form has been that usually called "Irish," hollowed at the axillæ, which are pierced right through the thickness of the stone, and have the arms connected by a glory. The edges of the stone have been carved with a face-bead, which runs into that marking the outline of the cross. The shaft has been over 9 inches broad at the top, and expanding at the rate of about an inch to the foot. It has been richly ornamented with a diagonal plait-work, unfortunately now very much worn. The centre of the cross, like those on the Bore Stone at Gask, is occupied by a square filled with plait-work. A device of the same kind appears also in the sole remaining arm. In the space immediately below it, and on the right side of the shaft, there is a very well carved stag, with large branching antlers and reverted head. In the compartment below it, there is the partially fractured figure of a dog, a bloodhound apparently. These animals are separated by a line of interlaced ornament, which is carried round so as to form a vertical border just inside the edge-bead.

Turning to the other or reverse side of the stone (fig. *a*), we find the ornament on the cross still more worn and obliterated; indeed it is

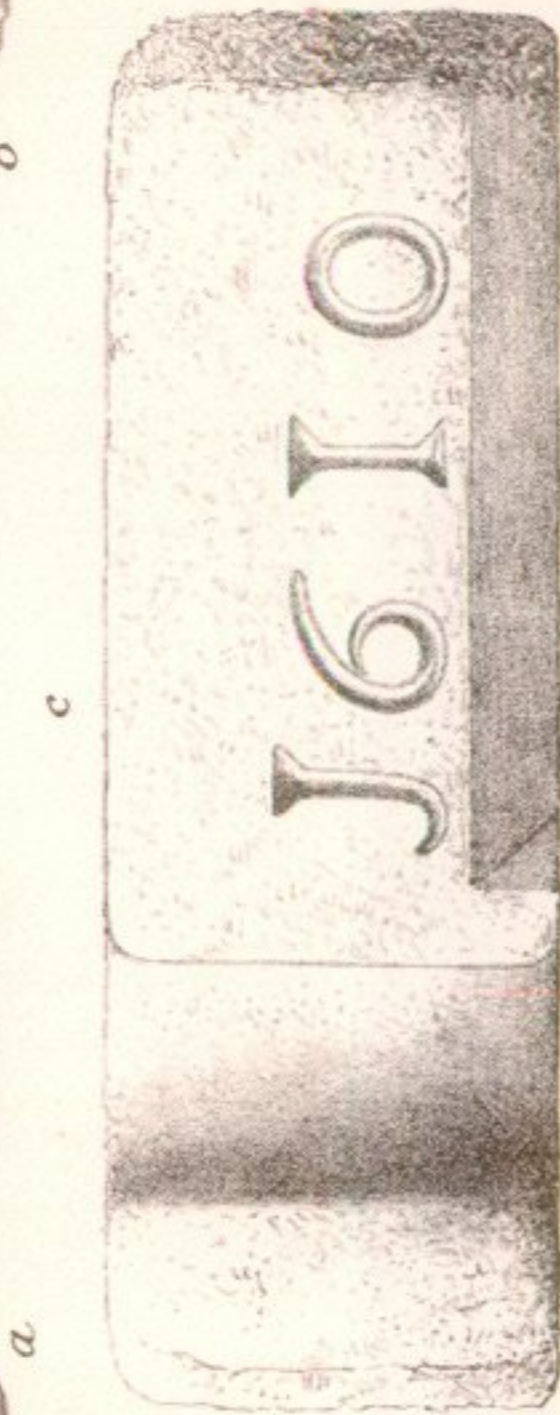
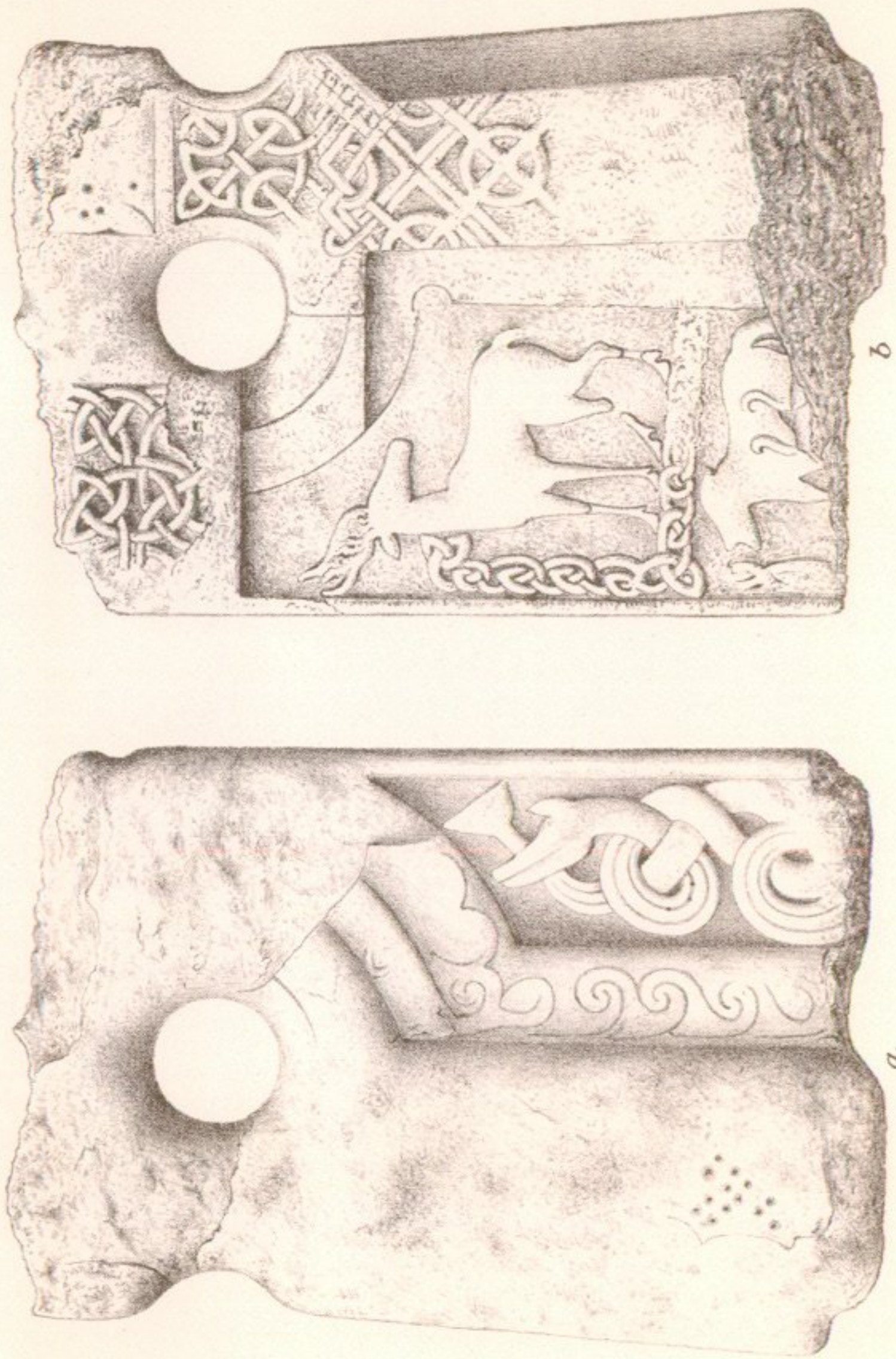
evident that before this relic of the olden time was transformed into a lintel, it must have gone through a good deal of rough usage. With some variation in matters of detail, the cross is very much of the same character as that already described. All the ornament on the more elevated surfaces is entirely gone, only a few pits or dots, symmetrically arranged on the lower part of the shaft, remain to show that it really was once decorated probably with an interlaced plait.

The treatment of this cross differs from that on the other side, in there having been a border about 2 inches in breadth, evidently of plait-work, carried round each quadrant of the glory externally, and, in addition to this, a broader raised border, 3 to 3½ inches in breadth, carried round the entire cross. This latter border has been decorated with an incised linear scroll ornament, of which a similar example appears in the richly ornamented cross at Cossins.¹ What remains of the side space between this border and the edge-bead is filled in with entwining serpents, partially damaged, but probably two in number.

Although there can be no doubt as to the original breadth of the stone, we have no means of determining its height. That it was one of the large cross-graven upright slabs, which so frequently occur in the eastern counties, is evident.

Perhaps the stone already referred to at Cossins presents a pretty near approach to what this Carpow cross would be originally. The latter is indeed from 3 to 4 inches broader, and may therefore have been larger, but the style of treatment of the two, and mode of decoration, are quite analogous. It has the same richly-interlaced plait-work on the limbs of the cross, the incised scroll ornament formerly mentioned, and the double-headed entwining knot of serpents. The Bore Stone at Gask may also be cited as supplying points of analogy, especially in the arrangement of the animals.

¹ "Sculptured Stones of Scotland" (Spalding Club), vol. i. pl. lxxxv.



Scale 1½ inch to the foot.