

X.

NOTES ON A PECULIAR CLASS OF RECUMBENT MONUMENTS.

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These recumbent stones are of rare occurrence and singular type. By some writers they have been described as "hog backed," from the peculiar resemblance the curved top has to the back of a hog; and by others they have been described as keel or boat shaped. The area in which they are found is, so far as I can find, limited to England and Scotland, and in each country there seems to be only a very small number of examples—probably thirteen or fourteen at the most. One or two writers have referred to them as coffin lids, but a single glance at their transverse sections serves to dispel that idea; and there can be no doubt, I think, that they were used singly, and possibly in groups, as recumbent memorials. Why they took this shape is a matter for considerable speculation. They have been called Danish, Dano-Scottish, Celtic, and Saxon. The period of their production may, I think, range from the ninth to the twelfth century. I will now describe those I have seen and made drawings of.

The first of these monuments to be now noticed (fig. 1) is at Abercorn, in Linlithgowshire; its present position is a little to the south-west of the interesting old church, and it lies almost due east and west. It measures 6 feet 3 inches in length, and is 16 inches thick at the centre; both sides curve downwards from a narrow flat ridge, which is not placed at what the apex of a triangle would give as the centre of the stone, but to the one side, so that one side has a sharper curve than the other; both sides are covered with straight rows of a regular scale-like ornament, very commonly used in Romanesque architecture for the decoration of capitals, string courses, &c. The curve of the top is not a regular fall to each end from the centre, but falls more quickly to one end, the height of the stone in the middle being 2 feet 1 inch, at the highest end 1 foot 8 inches, and the other end 1 foot 5 inches. The flat ridge is regular in width from end to end, and slightly raised above the surface, and at each end there is a flat band about the same width,

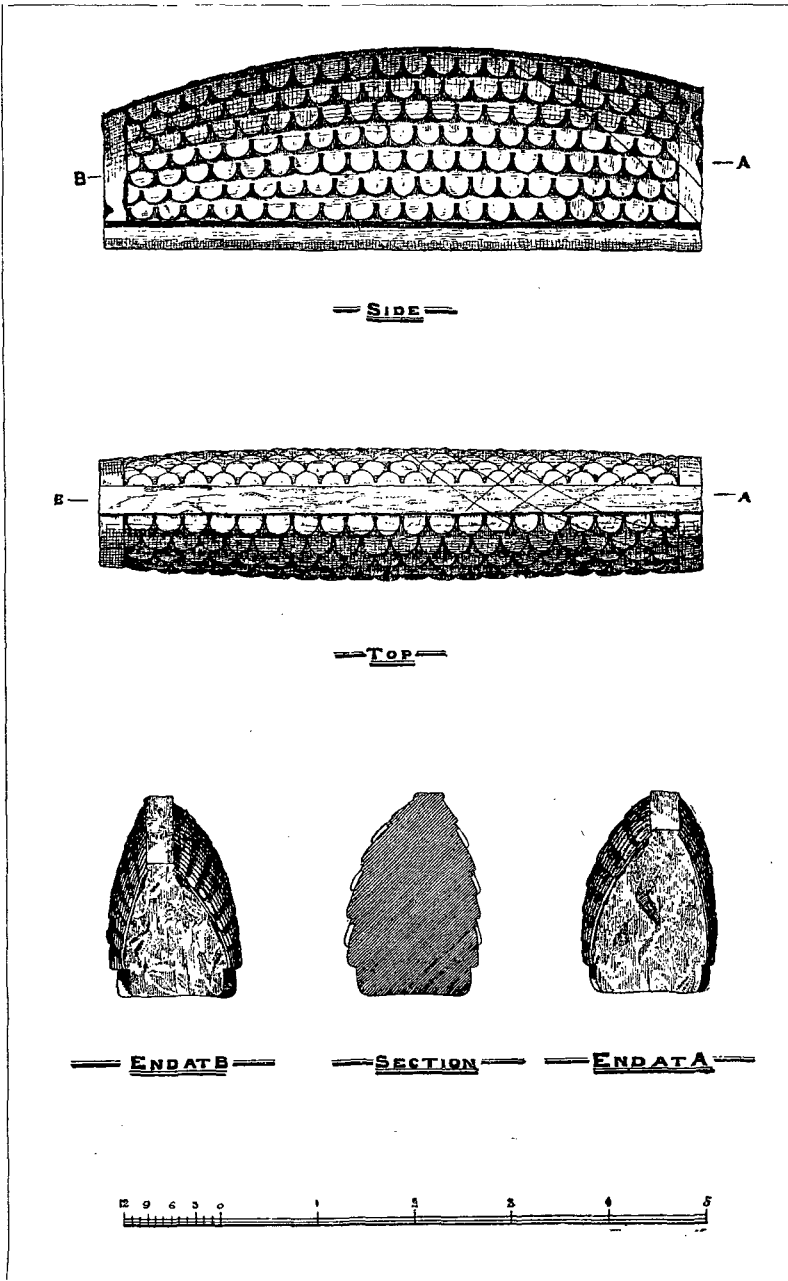


Fig. 1. Recumbent Monument at Abercorn.

viz., 3 inches, running down the sides. At the bottom of each side the stone is checked back about an inch, and forms a plain undecorated band from end to end of the stone; the bottom is slightly hollowed out. Both ends are perfectly plain, and seem always to have been so. Towards the high end of the stone there are several lines drawn across the top and sides, intersecting each other on the ridge. So far as I can learn, it occupies its original position in the churchyard; it is in excellent condition, and very little worn by the action of the weather. There is said to have been another of the same class here, but it has long since been lost sight of, very probably broken up or buried.

The next example (fig. 2) is at Brechin. It is the most elaborate specimen of the class that I have seen, the whole surface being beautifully covered with interlaced dragons and other figures; four of these figures towards the largest end of the stone are evidently intended to represent human beings. This stone does not have the peculiar outline that has induced several writers to give the fanciful name of "hog back" in writing of them. In section the stone is flat bottomed, the sides straight, and gradually rounding away to the top. The sculpture has been deeply and boldly cut. The present length of the stone is 4 feet $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, but both ends seem to have been broken off; the greatest thickness is at the centre, where it measures 18 inches, at the smallest end it is barely 15 inches across; the greatest height is in the centre, and measures 10 inches by about $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the small end. Its present position is within the ruined chancel of the fine old church, where it is fixed against the south wall.

The third example (fig. 3) is at Dornock, near Annan, Dumfriesshire. I have had some hesitation in classing this stone as of this peculiar type—it may have been a coffin lid, but I can scarcely think so. It is triangular in section, with the sides perfectly flat; it slightly increases in width towards the one end, and the top does not curve downwards to the ends, as is the case with other examples, but the ridge is flat and well developed. Each side is divided into four distinct panels by a small rounded bead, and the panels are filled in with a very-peculiar leaf ornament, altogether different from anything in the way of ornament I know of in Scotland, but very similar in style and character to the

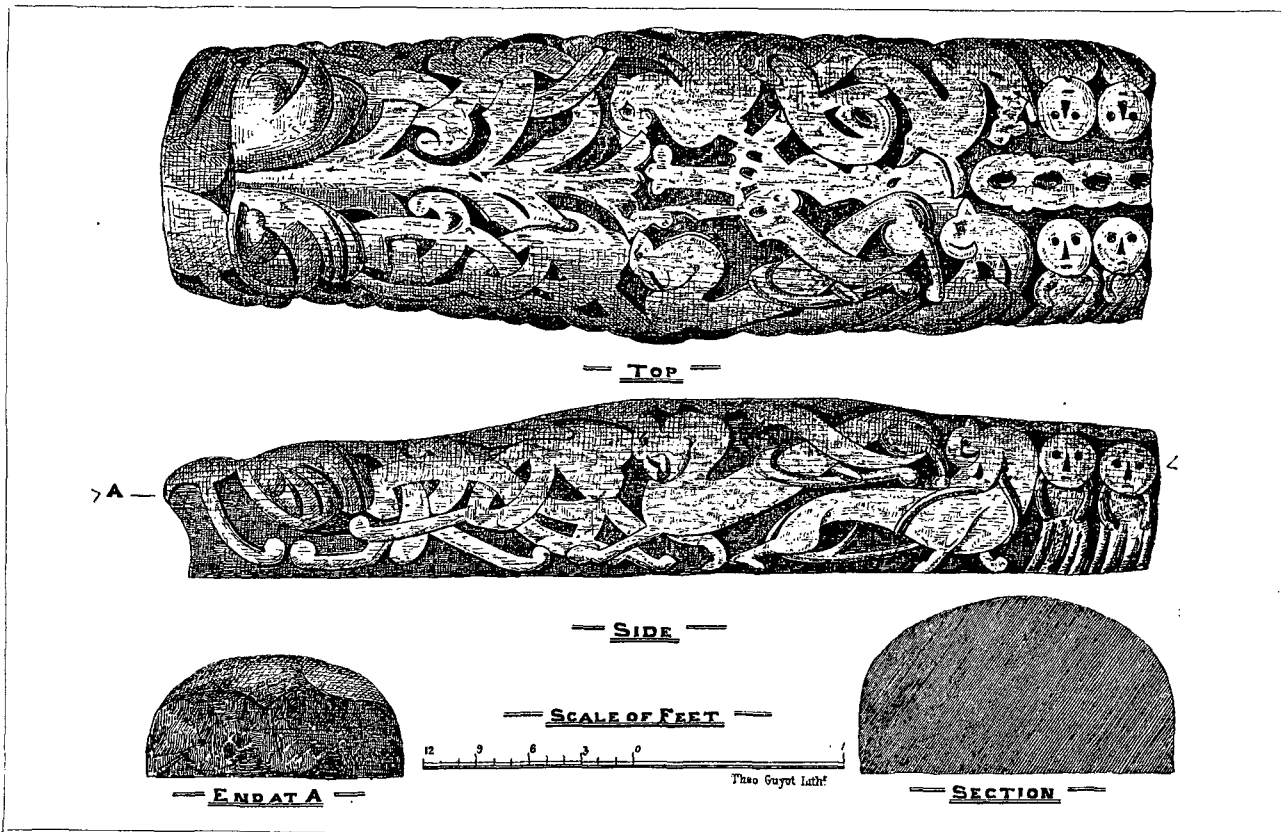
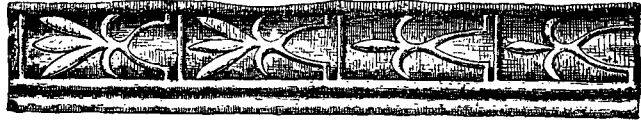


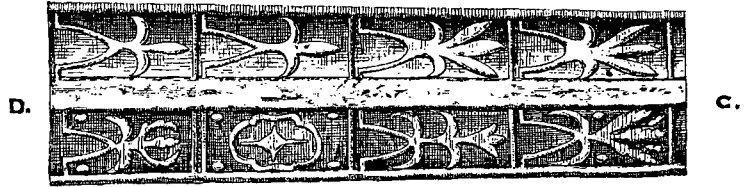
Fig. 2. Recumbent Monument at Brechin.



SIDE A.



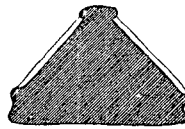
SIDE B.



TOP.



END C.



SECTION.



END D.

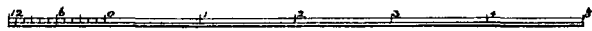
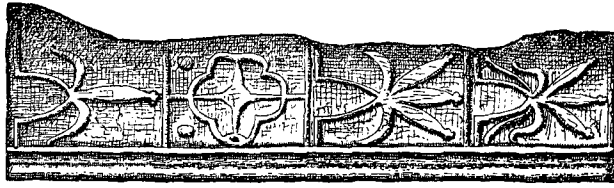


Fig. 3. Recumbent Monument at Dornock.

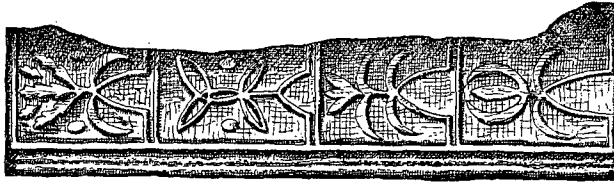
ornament on some of the capitals of the early churches at Glendalough, in Ireland. The ends are also ornamented—the narrow end with a fan-like pattern, and the other with four circles set in the arms of a cross, the whole being within a containing circle, raising the design above the rest of the stone. The length of the stone is 6 feet 8 inches, width at the largest end 2 feet, and at the small end 1 foot 9 inches, and the height 1 foot 3 inches.

The next example (fig. 4) lies alongside that just described, and is of very similar character. The ends are higher than the centre, but this, I think, is due to mischief. Each side is divided into four equal panels, like the last, and filled in with raised foliated ornament. The stone measures 6 feet 6 inches in length, by a uniform breadth of 2 feet, and an average height of 18 inches. Both of these stones are in the churchyard of Dornock, close by the church, and easily found.

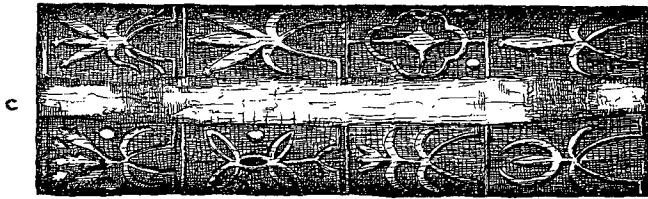
At Govan there is a group of five of these peculiar monuments; probably there are more, if the ground were carefully examined. I have made drawings of three of these, the other two are unfortunately nearly buried in the ground under a modern monument surrounded by a high railing. I understand the churchyard is to be raised and levelled when the new church is completed, and I may then be able to get drawings of them made. The first (fig. 5) is a very fine example of the class, and of large size. The ridge transversely is narrow and flat, and seems always to have been perfectly plain. The sides are divided into longitudinal bands, the upper band shows faint traces of a fret-like ornament; next follow two rows with triangular spaces cut out, somewhat like tiles on a roof, each space having a clearly defined narrow margin or fillet round it. The lowest band on each side is more of the panel shape, and filled in with a curious sort of half interlaced half fret-like ornament. Both sides convey the impression that the artist had either changed his mind pretty often during the progress of his work, or that he was working at a transitional period, when the old style was passing away and the new was not fully understood. On one end there is a small panel filled in with similar incised work; the other end seems to have been meant to represent a head of some sort, but the stone is so worn that the indications are faint. It measures 6 feet 6 inches in



SIDE A.



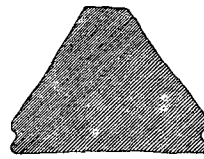
SIDE B.



TOP.



END AT C.



SECTION.



Fig. 4. Recumbent Monument at Dornock.

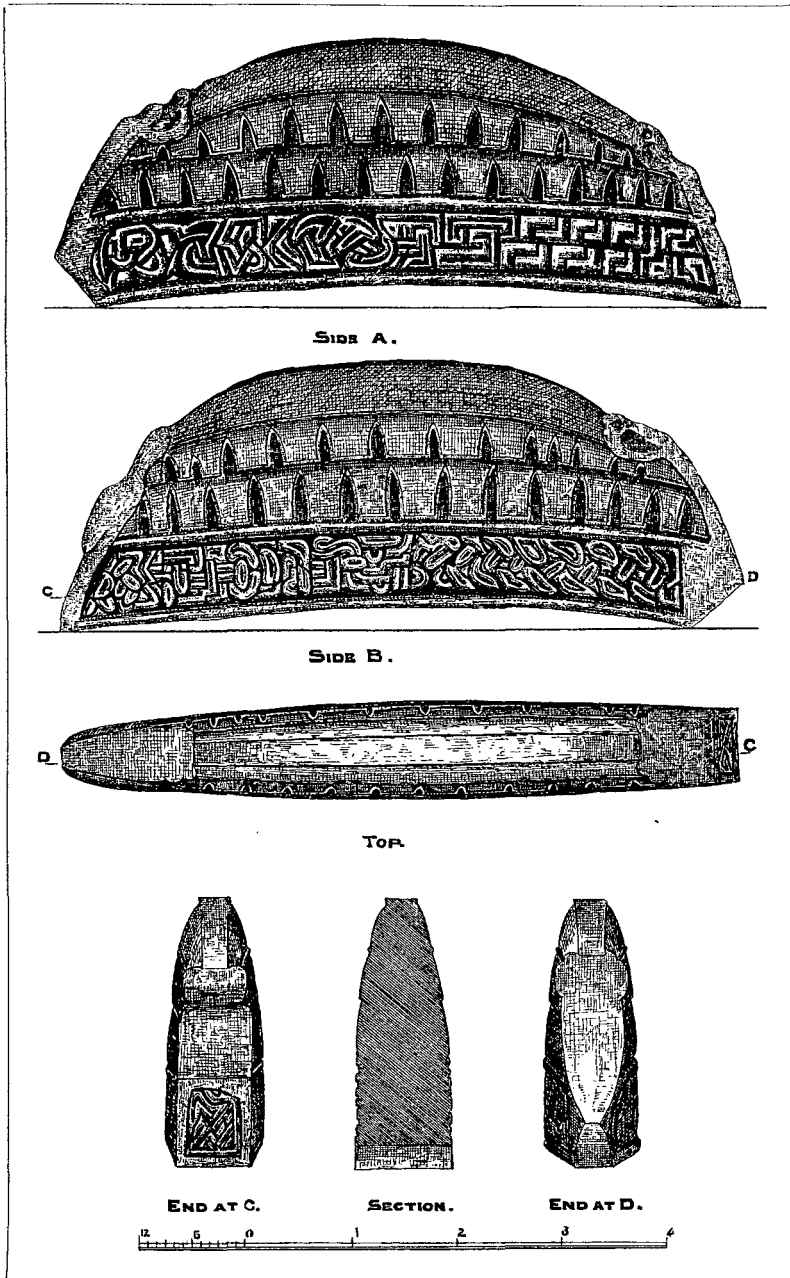


Fig. 5. Recumbent Monument at Govan.

length by 2 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high at the centre, the greatest thickness being 11 inches. There is a considerable curve on the base in the longitudinal direction, and its whole appearance is very much like a fisher's "cobble" turned upside down.

The second monument at Govan (fig. 6) is clearly meant to represent some animal. The head is well defined, and the eye prominent; the back is flat on the top and plain, and slopes gently towards what we must call the tail end; the sides are covered with square flat scales, and the legs, though peculiar, are well marked. The sides below the decorated portion are straight and perfectly plain. The stone measures 6 feet 8 inches long, 2 feet 5 inches high, and 15 inches at the thickest point.

The third example at Govan (fig. 7) is the largest I have seen. It measures 7 feet 8 inches in length, 2 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and 2 feet thick across the centre. The ridge is very narrow and rounded, and has been finished at one end with a serpent-like head, now much worn and defaced. Both sides are completely covered with the tile-like ornament (also seen in the first example) arranged in rows. In section this stone is almost a triangle, and the bottom is perfectly flat. I am inclined to think that both ends have been broken away, or at least partially destroyed.

The next example (fig. 8), in the island of Inchcolm, has had more attention bestowed upon it than any of the others. In Stewart's metrical version of the *History of Hector Boece*, finished about 1535, this so-called Danish monument is referred to. Sir Robert Sibbald, in his *History of Fife*, published in 1710, gives a careful description of it. Pennant, in his *Tour through Scotland* in 1772, notices it; so also does Grose in 1797; and the late Sir James Y. Simpson describes it in his paper on Inchcolm, read before the Society, and published in the *Proceedings*.* The late Mr James Drummond, R.S.A., made a sketch of it for Sir James. Each end has terminated with a large head, but they are now much worn and defaced, and it is impossible to say what kind of creature they were meant to represent. There is no defined ridge, as in the majority of the examples, the top rounding away into the sides,

* *Proceedings Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. ii. p. 496.

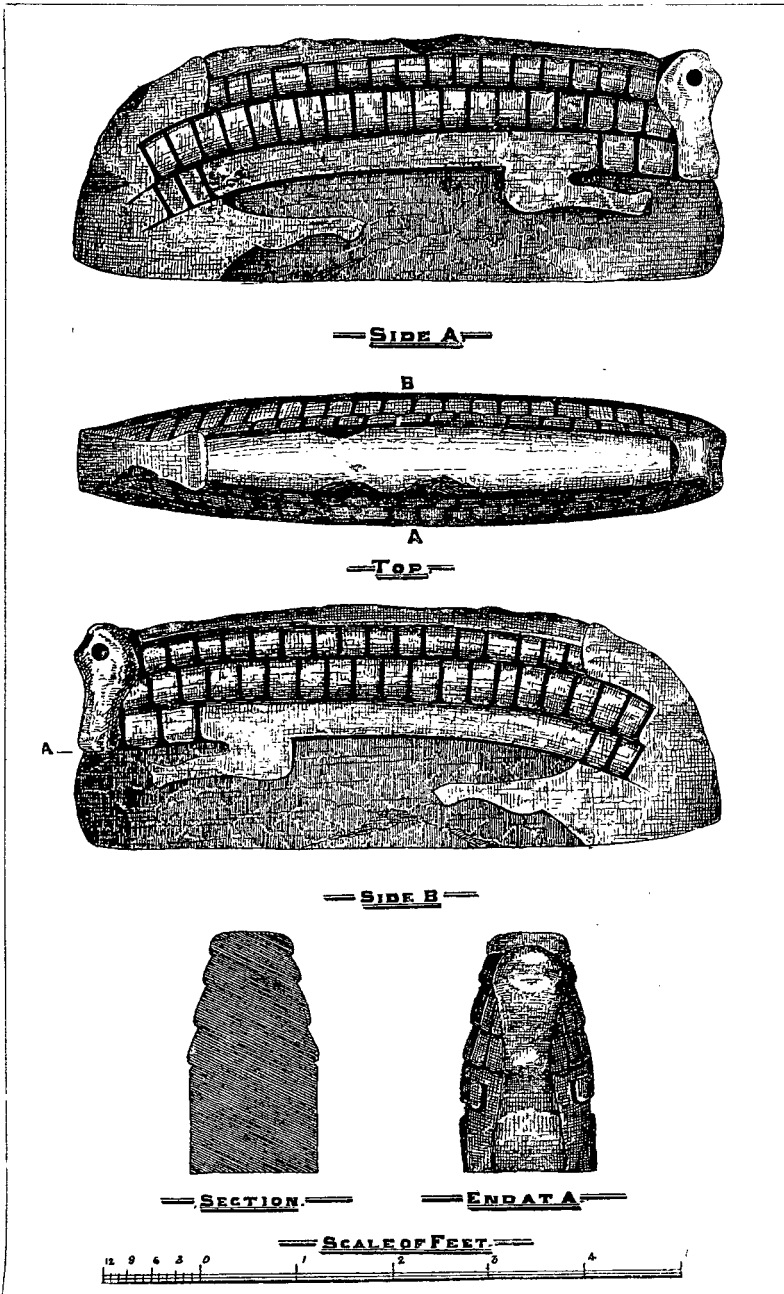


Fig. 6. Recumbent Monument at Govan.

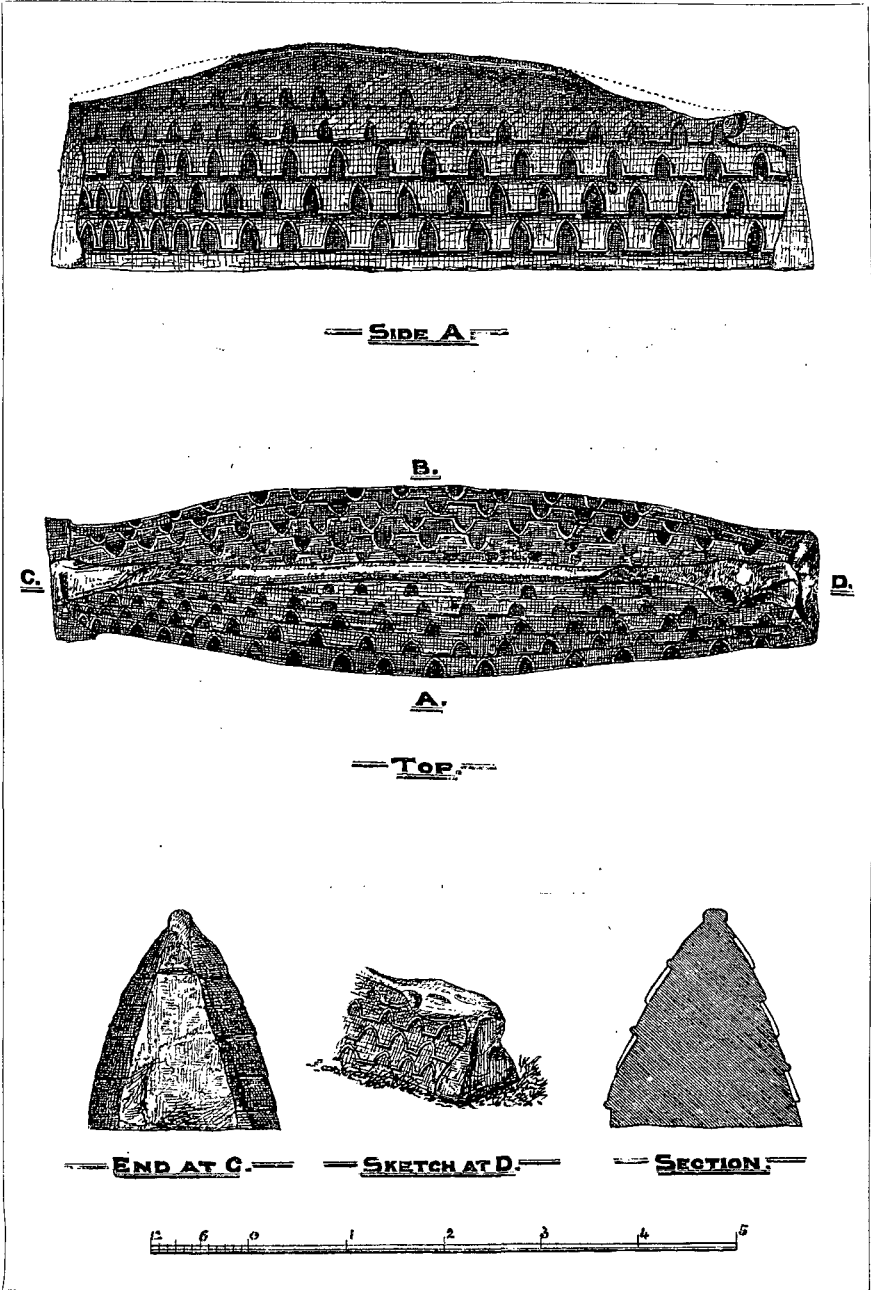


Fig. 7. Recumbent Monument at Govan.

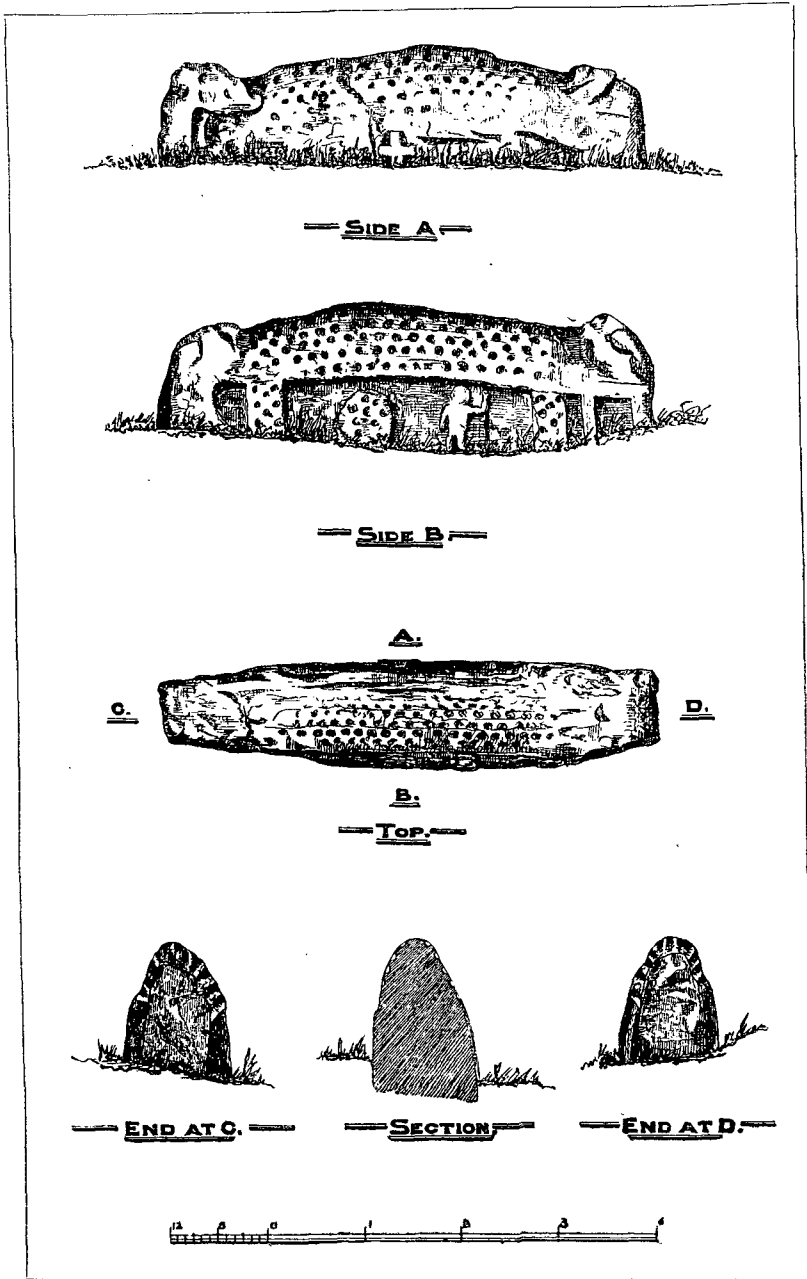


Fig. 8. Recumbent Monument at Incheolm.

and the whole being covered with a curious cup-like ornament regularly placed. One side shows on the lower central part a small square limbed cross, and on the other side there is the figure of a man holding what Pennant describes as a spear, but of which there remain now but very faint traces.

Stewart's description of the monument is very interesting, because, as Sir J. Y. Simpson says, "it is not only a personal observation," but also as showing that in the year 1535 "the recumbent sculptured 'greit stane,' mentioned in the text, was regarded as the monument of a Danish leader, and that there stood beside it a stone cross, which has since unfortunately disappeared." After speaking of the burial of the Danes—

"Into an yle callit Emonia,
Sanct Colmis hecht now callit is this dae,"

and the great quantity of human bones still existing there, he adds :—

"As I myself quhilk hes bene thair and sene
Ane croce of stane thair standis on ane grene,
Middis the feild quhair that they la ilk ane,
Besyde the croce thair lysis ane greit stane ;
Under the stane, in middle of the plane,
Their chiftane lysis quhilk in the feild was slane."

The length of the stone is only 5 feet 2 inches, thickness at the centre 1 foot 1 inch, height 1 foot 8 inches at the highest point. It is a good deal weather worn.

The next example (fig. 9) at Luss, on Lochlomond, seems to be of later date than any of the others. Transversely it is roof-shaped, sloping away on each side from a central ridge, and covered with the scale ornament seen on the Abercorn example; the sides are straight, and ornamented nearly along the whole length of one side with an interlaced arcade of distinctly Norman character; the other side shows a shorter similar arcade, and three circular-shaped panels closely resembling the ordinary dedication crosses seen on pre-Reformation churches. One end has a slight resemblance to the head of a fish, the other is perfectly plain. The length is 5 feet 11 inches, height at centre 1 foot 8 inches, and greatest thickness 18 inches.

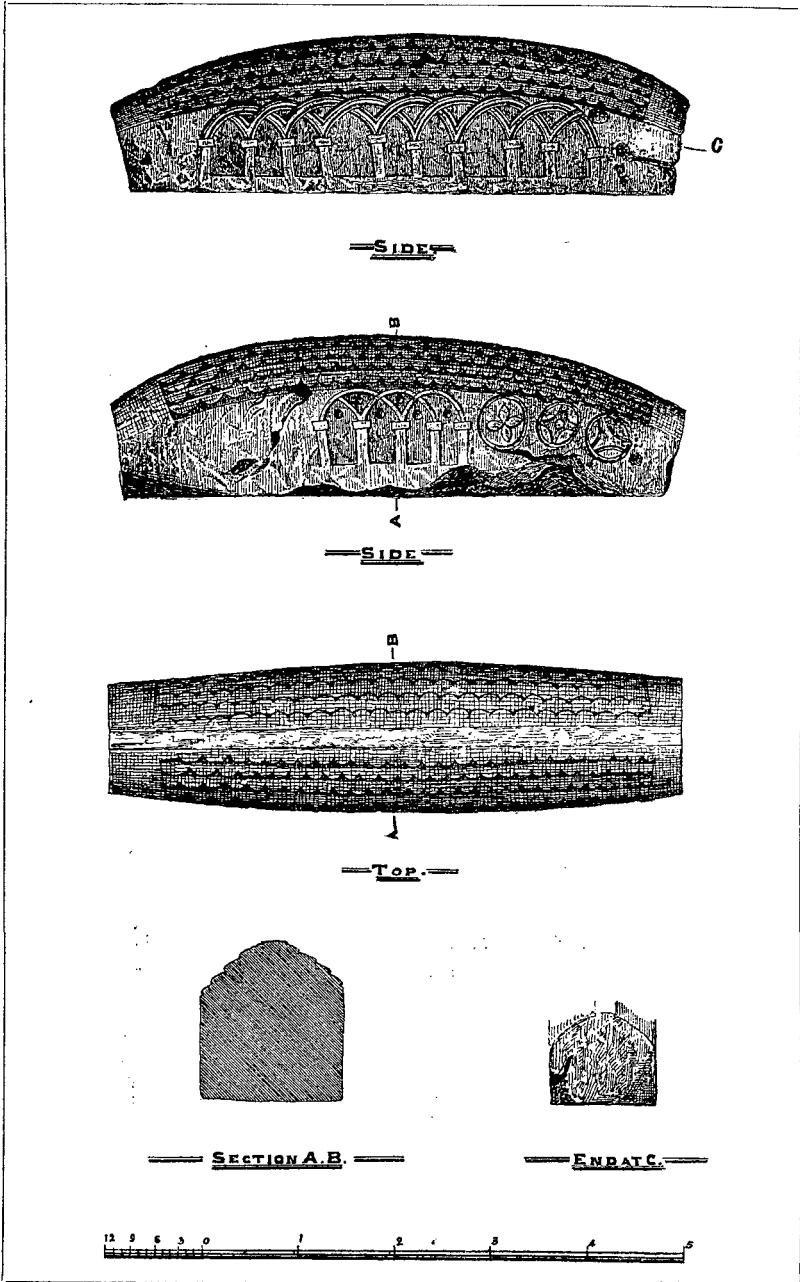


Fig. 9. Recumbent Monument at Luss.

The Meigle example (fig. 10) is of a peculiar shape, and differs from most of the others in that, viewed laterally, the top curves from the height of 1 foot 11 inches at one end to nothing at the other end; the narrow ridge is finished at the high end with a serpent-like head, and the sides are covered with the curious regular tile-like figures seen on the Govan examples, but without the narrow fillet running round the margin of each. The side of the rounded ridge has been ornamented with an interlaced pattern, and running down the sides below the head there is a small panel filled with a small ornamental pattern that must, I think, have originally been an interlacing one. The high end is perfectly plain, and the flat portion of the other end filled in with the tile arrangement. The length is 5 feet 1 inch, greatest thickness 1 foot, and greatest height 1 foot 11 inches. There is a curious twist on this stone, the ridge being to the one side, the same as in the Abercorn example; the bottom also is (unlike most of the others) not level, so that the one side is deeper than the other.

This completes the description of the Scottish examples which I have drawn, and with the exception of one entirely disfigured at Govan, parts of two that seem to have been of the same type at St Andrews, and a coped stone in Orkney covered with the scale ornament,¹ I know of no more in Scotland as yet discovered.

Examples are to be found in England at Durham, Brompton, York, Bedale, Repton, Heysham, Bakewell, Hexham, and Penrith.

The drawings of the remarkable group of monuments at Penrith were made by one of my assistants, Mr A. H. Crawford, during a holiday. Fig. 11 shows the stones as they lie at present, viz., two on each side, and a cross at the head and another at the feet; little more than the shafts of the crosses remain, and they are very much worn. It is difficult to say whether the stones are in their original position or not, but from what Stewart, writing in 1535, says of the Inchcolm example, I am rather inclined to think they are. The people of the district call it "The Giant's Grave." The hog backed stones are very much worn and defaced, and two of them are split into separate pieces; the two best are

¹ Low's *Tour through Orkney and Shetland in 1774* (Kirkwall, 1879), p. 55.

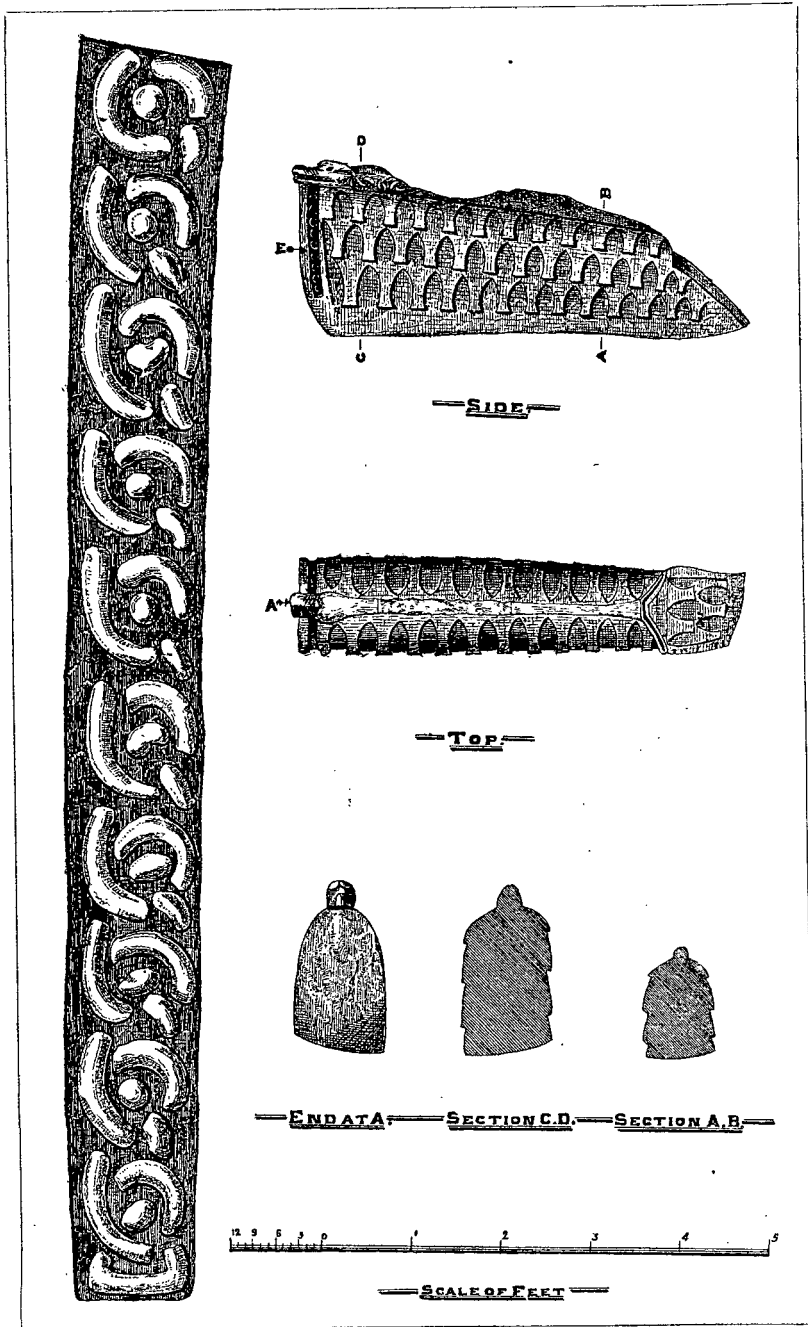


Fig. 10. Recumbent Monument at Meigle.

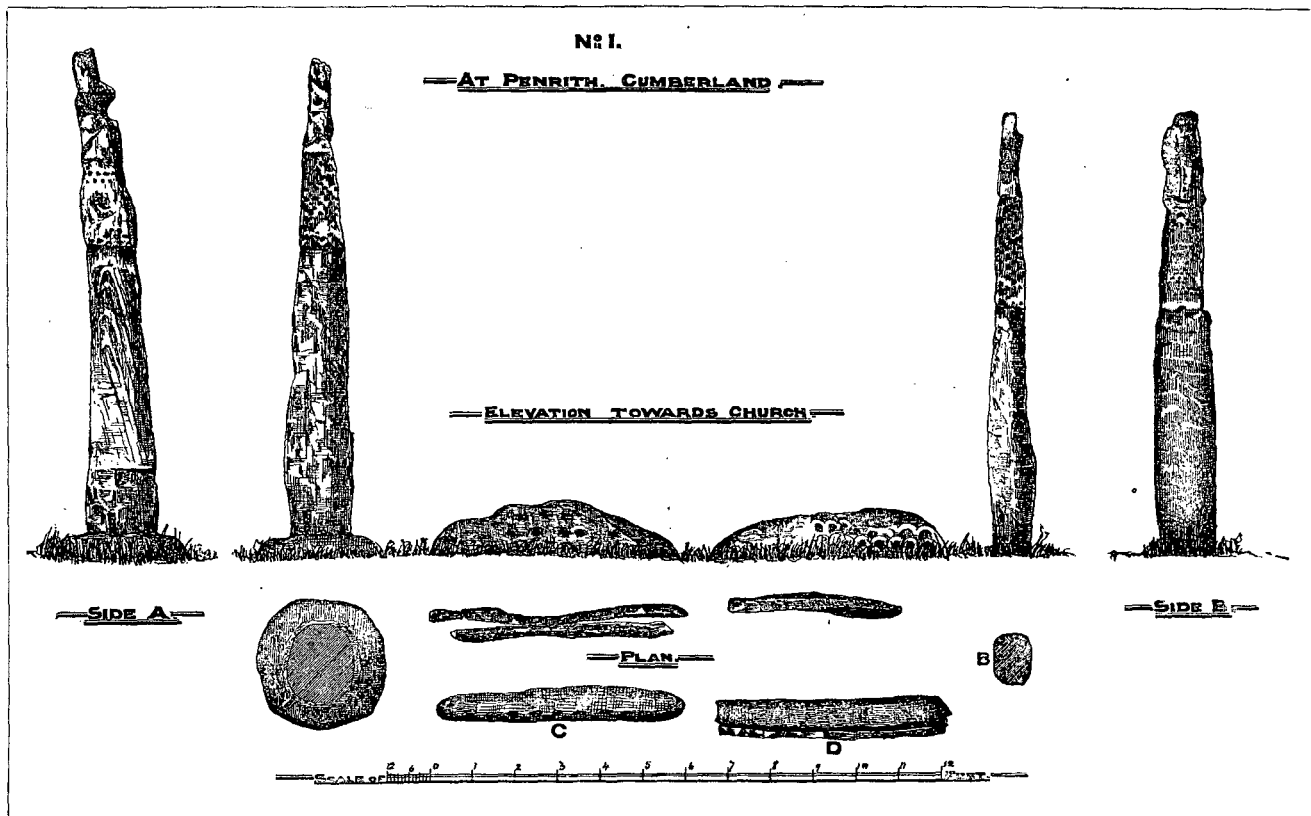


Fig. 11. Group of Recumbent Monuments and Crosses at Penrith.

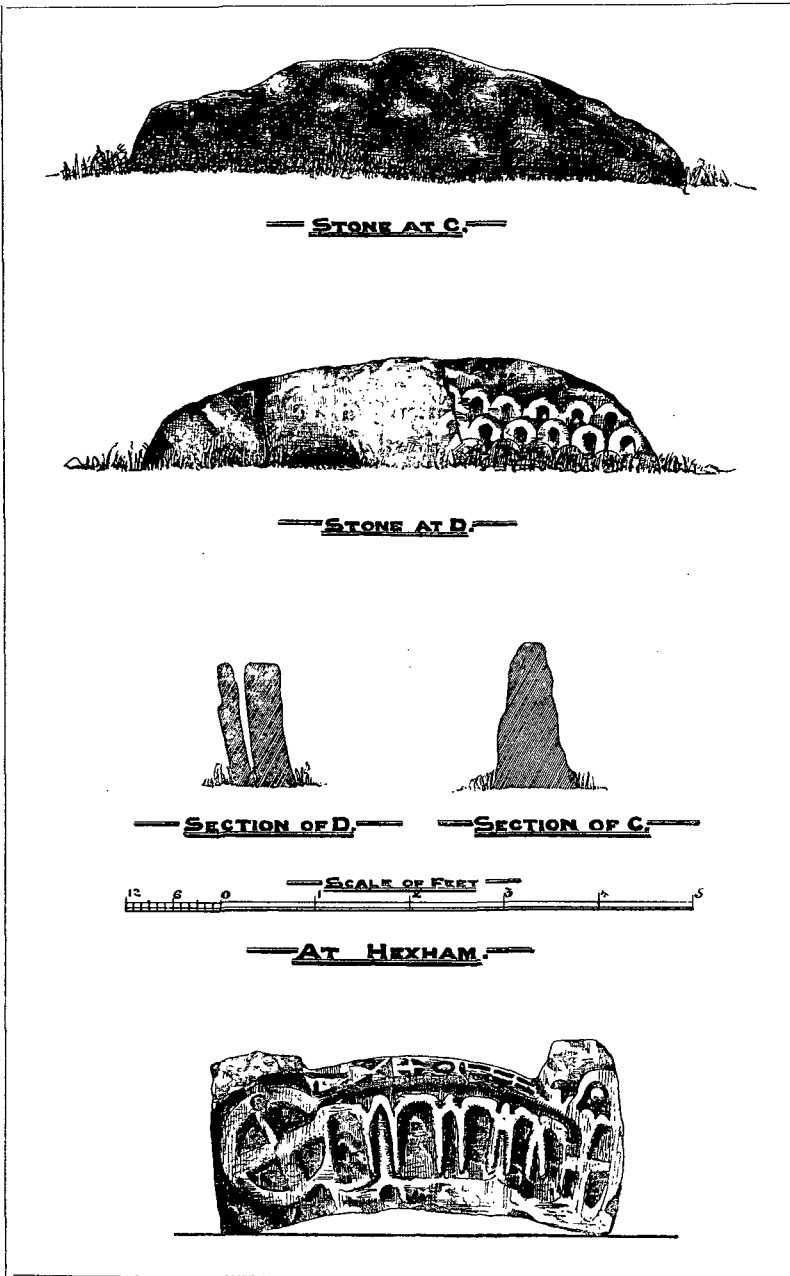


Fig. 12. Recumbent Monuments at Penrith and Hexham.

shown in fig. 12 (C and D with their sections) to the same scale as the Scottish examples; the largest is 5 feet 11 inches long, and the other 5 feet 7½ inches. The present height of the crosses is respectively 11 feet 3½ inches and 10 feet 7 inches.

On the same drawing (fig. 12) I am able to give a representation of the example at Hexham, from a sketch kindly sent me by C. C. Hodges, Esq., architect. This monument, which is a very characteristic specimen of the class, measures 4 feet 1 inch in length, and about 1 foot 11 inches in height at the centre. The bottom has a considerable curve on it in the longitudinal direction, and in this resembles one of the Govan examples. There is a fine drawing of the Hexham example in the Rev. E. L. Cutts's *Manual for the Study of the Sepulchral Slabs and Crosses of the Middle Ages*. He classes it under the head of eleventh century remains. He also gives smaller drawings of examples at Bedale and Durham, and states that many of them have the sides cut to "represent overlapping square tiles. This," he says, "overthrows the idea that these monuments represent Danish boats." An example at Dewsbury, Yorkshire, is engraved in Whittaker's *Loidis*.