

I.

THE CROSSES OF KIRKMADRINE: DISCOVERY OF THE MISSING THIRD STONE. BY THE RIGHT HON. SIR HERBERT E. MAXWELL, BART., F.R.S., D.C.L., LL.D., F.S.A. SCOT.

Among the many valuable services rendered to archæology by the late Sir Arthur Mitchell, one of the most notable was his discovery of the inscribed and sculptured stones at Kirkmadrine, Wigtownshire. There is a tinge of romance in the paper which he contributed to the *Proceedings* of the Society in 1872, describing how he found two pillar crosses applied to the humble purpose of gate posts (fig. 1), and was tantalised by information about a third, which had vanished, but of which Dr Mitchell was shown a drawing. It was in the early 'sixties that, having occasion to visit the parish of Stoneykirk,¹ he wandered into the ancient graveyard of Kirkmadrine.

“When climbing over the gate, I observed that there was a figure and an inscription on the stone pillar on which it was hung. The figure I recognised as one which I had seen in the Catacombs at Rome, and the

¹ The parish of Stoneykirk absorbed the parishes of Kirkmadrine and Clayshant after the Reformation. The modern form of the name disguises the dedication to St Stephen. It occurs as Stevenskirk in Court of Session papers in 1725, but was usually known as Steenie's Kirk, which, in the old pronunciation, sounded like “staney,” *i.e.* full of stanes, and English surveyors and map-makers made it appear genteel by altering it to Stoneykirk.

inscription, which was easily read, appeared to me of remarkable interest. I knew enough of our sculptured stones to be immediately aware that I had fallen on something which had no counterpart anywhere else in Scotland. . . . I found that the other pillar, to which the gate fell, had a similar figure on it, and also what appeared to be a continuation of the inscription."¹

Dr Mitchell then searched for other objects of interest and inquired diligently of the neighbouring farmers whether they had ever seen or heard of carved stones in the old graveyard. He recovered a broken sculptured slab (fig. 2), which had been built into the kirkyard wall as a "through stane" or stepping-stone, and he was told that there had been once a third inscribed cross, not unlike the pair which he had found in the gate pillars; but this, it was said, had been carried off to form a lintel in a farmhouse, and could not now be traced.

In the following year² Dr Mitchell returned to Kirkmadrine, determined to exhaust all means which might lead to the recovery of the vanished stone. "Remembering that I had found the so-called reindeer stone as the cope of a pigstye, I thought no building too mean for examination." He did, indeed, find another fragment of sculpture built into the wall of the kirkyard (fig. 3), but it was not the missing cross.

"I then enquired whether there was no old person in the parish who had shown an affection for the relics of a bygone time, but I heard of no one. Mention, however, was often made of Mr William Todd, an old schoolmaster in the neighbouring parish of Kirkmaiden, who had been a correspondent of the late Mr M'Diarmid of the *Dumfries Courier*, and who was then living on his pension in Drummore. Next morning I had an opportunity of calling on him, and I asked if he had ever seen, and if he remembered anything of, the two stones at Kirkmadrine. 'There are three,' he at once said; 'I have often seen them, and remember them well.' I assured him that there were only two now, but told him I had heard from others of a third. After some reflection, he assured me that what I had been told was correct; that he had once—about fifty years ago—made a drawing of them, and that it was possible he had the drawing still in his possession. An old desk was sent for, and among the papers it contained there was one folded like a letter, brown and



Fig. 2. Slab from Kirkyard Wall.

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. ix. pp. 568, 569.

² Sir Arthur Mitchell has not recorded the year, but we know it must have been anterior to 1867, when the second volume of Dr John Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* was published, containing plates and description of the Kirkmadrine crosses.

stained with age, and on this we found the drawings of the three stones, which are exactly copied in figs. 1, 2, and 3 of Plate XL. Fig. 3 represents the missing stone, which, like the others, has the well-known monogram enclosed in a circle, and below it the words INITIUM ET FINIS (fig. 4).

"These drawings are rude, but we may fairly infer the substantial accuracy of the sketch of the third and lost stone from the accuracy of the sketches of the other two, which we can still compare with the originals, as carefully depicted in figs. 1 and 2 of Plate XXXIX. The only mistake Mr Todd appears to have made is in substituting an R for an M at the end of INITIUM. I assume this to be an error in his drawing."



Fig. 3. Slab from Kirkyard Wall.

only about a mile down the road to the United Free Church Manse of Stoneykirk, where, during the summer of 1916, it was recovered, in the manner described as follows, by Mr J. Wilson Paterson, A.R.I.B.A., of H.M. Office of Works:—

¹ *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 35, plate lxxi.

² *Ibid.*, p. 51, plate lxxvii.

³ "The monogram called the chrisma occurs frequently in the catacombs enclosed within a circle, which is thus explained by an inscription found at Milan:

'Circulus hic summi comprehendit nomina regis,
Quem sine principio et sine fine vides.'

It continued to be used on sarcophagi till about the end of the seventh century. It occurs fourteen times in Britain. . . . The chrisma does not occur in Ireland." (*Scotland in Early Christian Times*, by Joseph Anderson, LL.D., second series, p. 252, note.)

Dr Mitchell's discovery, happening just in time to enable Dr John Stuart to describe and illustrate the two Kirkmadrine crosses,¹ and coinciding with the recognition of the Peter Stone at Whithorn,² attracted considerable attention owing to a peculiar feature common to all these three crosses, but unknown elsewhere in Scotland, and indicative of a very high ecclesiastical antiquity. This feature is the Chi-Rho monogram, originally displayed on the *labarum* or standard of the Emperor Constantine.³ The lonely little graveyard of Kirkmadrine became quite a recognised place of pilgrimage for antiquaries, but more than half a century had to pass before any trace of the missing third cross was forthcoming. It now turns out that it had not travelled far,

“During the past summer the Kirkmadrine inscribed stone, No. 3, so called in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, by J. Romilly Allen, was fortunately rediscovered. While executing certain repairs to the gate-pillars of the Stoneykirk United Free Church Manse, the local mason, Mr Robert Nelson, came across the stone in the centre of the pillar. Unfortunately, the stone had been broken by him before he discovered its importance. The stone had been built into the gate-post and used as a bonder, the crooks of the gate being sunk into the bottom of the stone.

The three following figures are faithful representations of three stones with inscriptions on them (as below) as they stand in the
 1. *Old burial ground at Kirkmadrine Parish of Stoneykirk and Estate of Strawell*

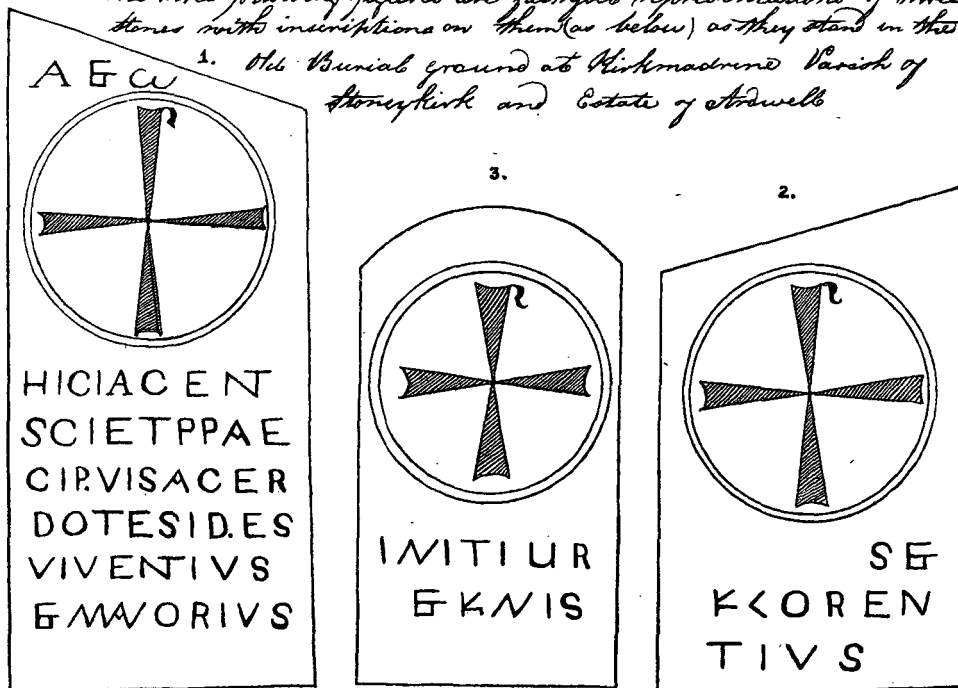


Fig. 4.

(Mr William Todd's drawing, executed about A.D. 1820.)

The stone had been set in the pillar with its inscribed face downwards and the head towards the centre of the pillar. These pillars were erected at the time of the Disruption, and consequently, although search has been made throughout the district for the stone, no trace of it could be found. I attach a photograph and drawing showing the position of the stone in the pillar.

“The stone (fig. 5) is considerably smaller than the other two already in the porch at Kirkmadrine Church; it measures only 3 feet 3 inches high by 8½ inches wide and is 9 inches thick, widening at the base to 12 inches thick. The incised circle (8½ inches diameter) and the Chi-Rho are well cut, and the inscription INITIUM ET FINIS, with the exception of the letter M, is easily decipherable. The letter M being cut at the extreme

edge of the stone may account for its bad form and for its being given as R in Mr Todd's drawing. The stone is of a local bluish-gray whinstone of similar character to the other two, while the lettering is also similar. The letters vary in size, but average about 2 inches in height. The stone has now been repaired and the fractured pieces cemented together and the whole set up with the others in the porch.

"The attached drawings and photographs were taken from the stone before the repairs."



Fig. 5. The missing Sculptured Slab, now recovered.

The first thing to be noted in connection with the recovery of the third Kirkmadrine Cross is the gratifying evidence it bears to the intelligent interest in objects of antiquity which has been diffused and stimulated of late years among working-men and their employers; so that we are not likely to be distressed in the future, as we have often been in the past, by hearing of the heedless or wanton destruction of valuable relics of the past. All the more reason, then, to pay a tribute of gratitude to the memory of William Todd, the parish school-master, who, about one hundred years ago, took reverent note of objects which were then regarded with popular indifference or contempt; for it is through his fidelity as a draughtsman that Sir Arthur Mitchell obtained knowledge of the character of the missing stone and Mr Robert Nelson, the mason, was enabled to recognise it when at last it was found.

The stones themselves have been described by Mr Romilly Allen as indurated schist,¹ but I think Mr Wilson Paterson more accurately describes them as slabs of Lower Silurian greywacke, the prevailing rock of the district. I confess, however, that I have not examined them microscopically. Either stone is very intractable material for the sculptor, who has, however, incised the crosses with masterly precision, and the inscriptions are very fair examples of Anglo-Roman capitals. We may be thankful for the hardness of the stone, which has been the means of preserving the figures and inscriptions through so many centuries of neglect. Had there been freestone at

¹ *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, p. 495.

hand to work on, no doubt it would have been chosen, in which case the frost and storms of a thousand winters would have long since obliterated all trace of handiwork.

So much attention has been devoted to the probable age of the Kirkmadrine crosses and the Peter Stone at Whithorn (fig. 6) (the four stones may safely be assumed to be of coeval workmanship) that I hesitate to add anything to what has been written by men of such caution and erudition as Sir Arthur Mitchell, Dr Joseph Anderson, Mr Romilly Allen and Dr John Stuart; but it may be noted as suggestive of the origin of these monuments that the Chi-Rho monogram first appears in the catacombs of Rome in connection with inscriptions executed early in the fourth century, and that it occurs in France only on monuments dated between A.D. 377 and 540.

“The symbols and formulæ of Christian monuments appear in Rome about a century earlier than in Gaul, and the natural inference is that, if they are a century later in Gaul than in Rome, they will be still later in Britain, assuming of necessity that their progress westward continued to be gradual. We can therefore say with something like certainty that this monument [the Peter Stone] bearing the chrisma cannot be earlier than the end of the fourth, and that it may be as late as the latter part of the sixth century.”¹

To this most reasonable hypothesis I would venture to add that the westward progress of Christian symbolism may have been accelerated by the mission of Bishop Ninian, who, if we may accept Bæda's statement (and I know of no reason to question it), came straight from Rome to Tours, where he remained a while with Bishop Martin and, on leaving, took with him certain masons to build his missionary church at Whithorn.² This we know to have taken place in the last decade of the fourth century, for Bishop Martin died in 397, while Ninian was busy building the Candida Casa. It seems, therefore, not only possible, but attractively probable, that “the holy and distinguished priests Viventius, Mavorius, and Florentius” were actually companions of Bishop Ninian, perhaps his masons, whom he may have consecrated as priests after they had finished the building at Whithorn. Nay, may not one of them

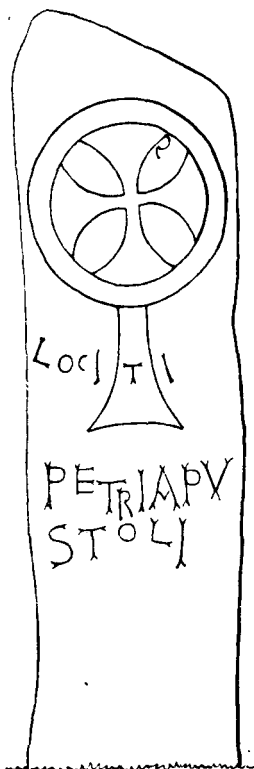


Fig. 6. The "Peter Stone," Whithorn.

¹ *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, second series, p. 253.

² "Cementarii quos secum adduxit." (Ailred's *Vita Niniani*, cap. iii.)

have been that very priest of whom we read in the fifth chapter of Ailred's *Vita Niniani* as having been appointed by the bishop to the cure of a parish,¹ and whom Ninian, by the exercise of his miraculous power, is stated to have defended successfully against the woman who accused the said priest of being the father of her bastard?

The hypothesis that the priests commemorated by these stones were contemporaries of Bishop Ninian and co-operated with him in converting the Picts of Galloway seems to be strengthened by the fact that these Picts relapsed into paganism after Ninian's death, and appear to have remained pagans even after the province had passed under dominion of the Angles of Bernicia (Northumbria), until at last the Anglian bishopric of Candida Casa was founded about A.D. 730.² By that time, three hundred years after the death of Ninian, it is highly improbable that local sculptors would revert to the archaic cross with the Chi-Rho monogram. It is to that date and the two following centuries that we may assign the numerous sculptures of Celtic design which remain in Galloway. Moreover, during the brief and precarious existence of the Anglian bishopric of Candida Casa, which came to an end in A.D. 803, there were five holders of the see all with either Celtic or Anglian names, which William of Malmesbury, though writing in Latin, makes no attempt to cast into Roman form, as was done to the names on the Kirkmadrine stones.

"Him [Pechthelm] there followed," says he, "Frithewald, Pectwine, Ethelbriht, Beadulf, nor do I find that there were any more, because the bishopric soon came to an end, on account of its being, as I have said, the most remote part of the territory of the Anglians, and most exposed to devastation by Scots or Picts."³

If, then, it may be assumed that the work on these stones carries us back to the beginning of the fifth century, it seems a fair opportunity for an attempt to remedy the confusion which has taken place about the name Kirkmadrine.

There were of old two parishes of that name in Wigtownshire, one, the site of the sculptured stones presently under notice, now united to Stoneykirk; the other, about four miles from Whithorn, now united to Sorbie parish. There were also two parishes called Kirkmaiden, one of which, extending from the boundaries of Stoneykirk to the Mull of Galloway, is still intact; the other now united to Glasserton parish. Both

¹ "Cui curam parrochie pontifex delegaverat." (Ailred's *Vita Niniani*, cap. v.)

² "In the province of the Northumbrians, where King Ceolwulf reigns, four bishops now preside: Wilfred in the church of York, Ethelwald in that of Lindisfarne, Acca in that of Hexham, Pechthelm in that which is called Candida Casa, which, from the increased number of believers, has lately become an episcopal see and has him for its first prelate." (Bæda's *Ecclesiastical History*, B. v., cap. 23.)

³ William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, B. iii., cap. 118.

the suppressed parishes of Kirkmadrine are written Kirkmadrin by Chalmers,¹ under the erroneous belief that the name was simply a corruption of Kirkmaiden. He cannot have heard the names pronounced, else he would have learnt that in Kirkmaiden, a dedication to the Irish virgin Medan,² the stress is on the penultimate syllable, whereas in Kirkmadrine it is on the last syllable. Dr John Stuart was the first to suggest that the dedication of Kirkmadrine was to a Gaulish saint Mathurinus, who died about A.D. 387, several years before Ninian paid his visit to Bishop Martin at Tours.³ Bishop Forbes quotes Dr Stuart's suggestion, but observes that "it may be that this Madrine is more probably Medran, of which name there are instances at June 6 and June 8 in the Martyrology of Donegal."⁴ I trust that I may not be deemed presumptuous if I remark that this is pure guesswork, wherefore it may be permissible to make another guess. The name is obviously in the Gaelic language; for although the prefix to a Celtic church name is usually Kil-, representing the locative case of the word *ceall*, literally a cell, but commonly a church, this is often replaced in Galloway, long subject to Anglian rule, by Kirk-; e.g. Kirkcudbright, Kirkmichael, Kirkpatrick, Kirkmaiden, etc. Now Bishop Ninian dedicated his principal church to him whom he revered as his spiritual father—Bishop Martin of Tours. Martin in Gaelic is written Matrainn, and a church dedicated to Martin would receive the name Kilmatrinn, or, according to Gallovidian usage, Kirkmatrinn. I submit that the two churches named Kirkmadrine, one of them within five miles of St. Martin's church at Whithorn, were more likely to be dedicated to Bishop Martin than to Mathurinus, of whom nothing is known in Celtic hagiology, or to the obscure individual of whose existence we are aware only through a passing reference in an Irish Martyrology.

¹ *Caledonia*, iii. 439.

² *Breviarium Aberdonense*.

³ *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii., part 1, p. 36.

⁴ *Kalendar of Scottish Saints*, p. 382.



Fig. 1. Pillar Crosses formerly used as Gate Posts in the Kirkyard.