

II.

A CROSS-SLAB FOUND AT ST JOHN'S CHAPEL, CANISBAY, CAITHNESS. BY JOHN NICOLSON, CORRESPONDING MEMBER.

A mile east of Barrogill Castle lies St John's Chapel, on St John's Point, to the west of the island of Stroma, where the ebb tide called the "Men of Mey," coming west, rages in all its fury. On this promontory is a fort,¹ with a trench about 3 chains in length cut across the neck. Towards the eastern termination of a modern wall which crosses the landward end of the point lies the site of the chapel, the ruins forming quite a knoll.

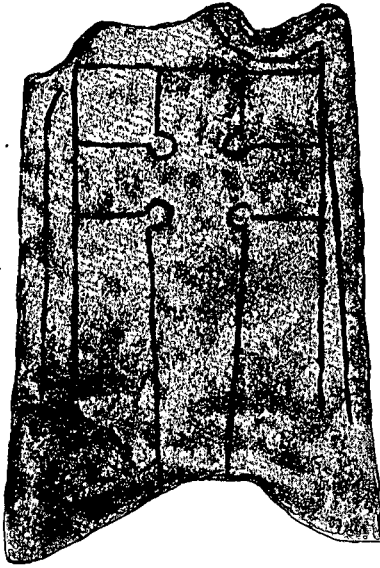


Fig. 1. Cross-slab from St John's Chapel, Canisbay.

Being interested in the height of the wall of the chapel which was buried under the turf, in the summer of 1919 I uncovered part of the inner face of the building, laying bare the western gable, which measured 11 feet in length internally, and part of a lateral wall for a distance of 22½ feet. In digging at the inside of the doorway in the western gable I came upon a slab-lined grave, the head of the grave being at the west end. One of the side slabs, which measured 1 foot 8 inches across its widest part, showed an oblong panel bordered by two parallel lines, no

further sculpturing being apparent. On removing the slab which formed the end of the grave, I found it to be part of a cross-slab of yellow sandstone bearing a plain incised cross with hollows at the intersections of the arms and the shaft. The shaft tapered slightly towards the base. The whole design was enclosed within a rectangular panel (fig. 1). The slab measured 2 feet 10 inches in length, and 1 foot 11 inches in breadth at the widest part.

¹ *Ancient Monuments Commission: Inventory of Monuments, etc., in the County of Caithness*, p. 17, No. 40.

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The inside lintel of the door of the chapel and two other long, narrow stones formed the cover of the grave.

The slab has been removed to Barrogill Castle for preservation.