

I.

ON TWO INSCRIBED STONES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD FROM THE BORDER DISTRICT. BY SIR GEORGE MACDONALD, K.C.B., PRESIDENT.

The two inscribed stones of which I am about to speak both belong to a class that is common in the extreme south-west of our island—that is in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, and in the Principality of Wales. Sixty years ago these districts furnished Hübner with about 160 of the examples which he published in his *Inscriptiones Britannicæ Christianæ*. The balance from Scotland was almost negligible, and all the known Scottish examples came, as might be expected, from the country south of the Forth and Clyde isthmus—that is, from Brythonic territory. In his introduction to *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* Dr Joseph Anderson mentioned one from Whithorn, three from Kirkmadrine, one from Kirkliston, and one from Whithope near Yarrow Kirk, as well as a fragment from Overkirkhope in Ettrick.¹ So far as I remember, the number has not been added to since. Some of these have inscriptions more elaborate than those now to be described, and are therefore presumably earlier. The closest analogy is that presented by the "Cat Stane," near Kirkliston. At the same time it is worth noting that the two newcomers were found in the same region as the two which close Dr Anderson's list.

1. THE LIDDESDALE STONE.

On an evening in August 1933 Mr Andrew W. Sommerville of Bishop's Stortford was walking with one of his sons along the bank of Liddel Water at Brox, a house which stands near the road, about a mile on the Hawick side of Newcastleton. The season had been exceptionally dry, and at a point a few yards below the junction of the river with the Ralton Burn the lad drew his father's attention to a stone with "printing on it," which was showing above the surface. Wading in to investigate, they verified the fact that it was an inscription. Mr Sommerville was much interested and, on his return home, wrote asking a friend to have the stone brought ashore in order that it might be properly examined. This was done, so that on his next visit to the neighbourhood he was able to take a photograph. Last summer he

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. xiii ff.

was good enough to send me a print and a description, which between them left no doubt as to the significance of the discovery. Through the good offices of the present Duke of Buccleuch, then Lord Dalkeith, the stone was presented to the National Museum by the Buccleuch Estates Limited. For an explanation of how it got into the stream we may turn to information supplied by Mr Walter Thomson, owner of Brox. Some time ago a heavy flood washed away about 10 yards of soil, carrying with it a portion of a dry-stone wall, in the base of which the inscribed stone may have been lying. So far as Mr Thomson could learn, the "find-spot" was exactly underneath what had been the line of the wall.



Fig. 1. The Liddesdale Stone.

The block is of sandstone, and the illustration (fig. 1) renders a detailed description of its shape unnecessary. Its greatest length is 5 feet 8 inches and its greatest breadth 1 foot 9 inches, while it varies in thickness from 8 inches to 11 inches. The breadth of the lettered surface ranges from 15 inches to 17 inches. The inscription is in three lines. So far as can be determined, all the letters are or have been about 2 inches high, except at the very end, where the ligature has a height of $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches, and the letter which follows it one of $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches. The reading (fig. 2) is certain—*hic jacit Caranti fili Cupitiani*. Equally so is the sepulchral character of the monument—"Here lies Carantus, son of Cupitianus."

The form *jacit* appears also on the "Cat Stane," and in Wales and Cornwall it is far more frequent than *jacet*. On the other hand, the use of the genitival termination—*i*, where one might expect the nominative, is new to Scotland, although quite common in the south-west of the island. The affinity between the Liddesdale Stone and the south-

western group is further emphasised by the manner in which the first two letters of *fili* are ligatured; there are, for instance, exact parallels from Cardiganshire, Glamorganshire and Pembrokeshire. The proper names, too, are entirely in order.

During the period of the Roman occupation a man called Carantus dedicated an altar to Minerva at Bremenium (High Rochester),¹ and Holder in his *Altceltischer Sprachschatz* cites examples from Metz, Brambach, the neighbourhood of Mainz and elsewhere. Cupitianus is similarly attested from an even wider area on the Continent, as well as from

Fig. 2. Inscription on the Liddesdale Stone.

Britain itself. Thus, a certain C. Julius Cupitianus, a centurion, is known to have rebuilt a temple to the Mothers at Cambeck in Cumberland,² while it seems highly probable that "Cupetian," whose name is said to have been copied on a long-lost *hic jacet* inscription from Merionethshire,³ was really Cupitianus.

It would be rash to attempt to date the monument with any approach to precision. The names are of no use for the purpose, nor is there anything very distinctive about the lettering, except that it is much debased. There remains the language. Had there been no verb, the use of the double genitive would have been perfectly defensible, it being easy to supply some Latin equivalent for "The grave (of)." That might, indeed, have been represented as a return to the practice of Republican Rome! It is one of the simplest forms of Latin epitaph, and it is not unnatural that it should have re-appeared in Britain after touch had been lost with the centre of the Empire. In point of fact, the double genitive by itself is found over and over again in the inscriptions of the south-west. Only when it is combined with an expression like *hic jacit* or *hic jacet* can we be sure that all sense of grammar has been lost. Bearing, as it does, this mark of degeneracy, the Liddesdale stone can hardly be assigned to a period earlier than the seventh century of our era.

2. THE MANOR WATER STONE.

For my knowledge of this stone I am indebted to one of our Fellows, Mr James Grieve, who most generously placed at my disposal all the

¹ CIL. vii. 1033. For an example from Wales (Tomen-y-Mur, near Ffestiniog) see Westwood's *Lapidarium Walliae*, Pl. 78, No. 4.

² CIL. vii. 887.

³ *Arch. Camb.*, N.S., i. (1850), p. 204.

information he possessed regarding it, as well as more than one admirable photograph. It seems to have been first noticed about 1890 by Robert Welsh Anderson, son of the shepherd on Kirkhope Sheep Farm, then a lad but now retired and resident in Peebles. It was originally associated with a cairn of stones, but on the instructions of his master, Mr Simon Linton of Glenrath, Anderson brought it 300 yards down the hill and placed it within a railed enclosure, where it remained until quite recently, when, at the instance of Mr Grieve, it was transferred to

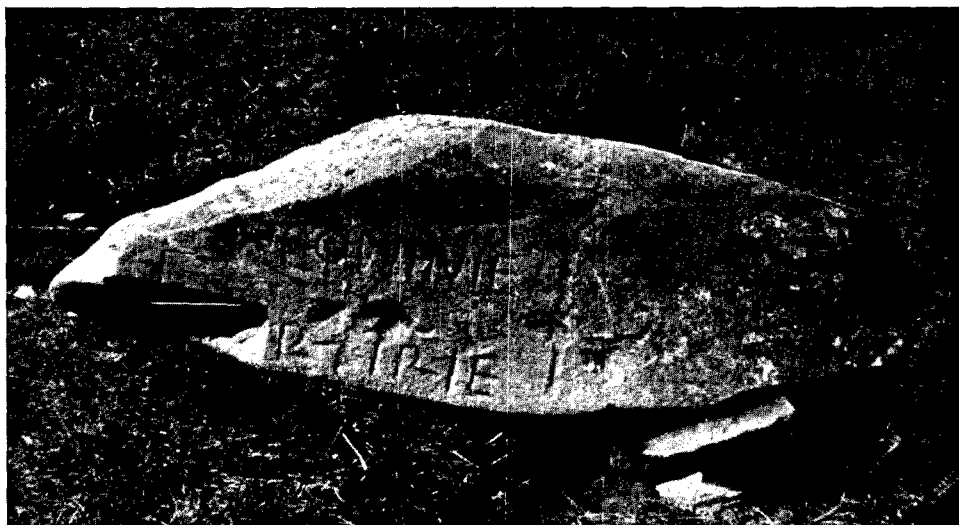


Fig. 3. The Manor Water Stone.

the shelter of the Peebles Museum. In the interval the cairn had been removed and the stones utilised to build a dyke. Mr Grieve dug into the site, but found no trace of any interment.

Even after it had been placed within the enclosure, the monument failed to attract the attention it deserved, until it was re-discovered by Mr Grieve a year or two ago. In 1910 the late Dr Clement Gunn mentions it, along with an ancient font, a piscina and a modern memorial cross, as marking an old ecclesiastical site "on the left side of Newholm Burn, near the head of Manor valley."¹ But he speaks of it merely as "an inscribed fragment," and gives no details. It is a block of hard whinstone, 3 feet long and having a maximum breadth of 9½ inches on the inscribed face (fig. 3). On this face two vertical lines have been cut

¹ *The Ministry of Peebles*, vol. iv. p. 108.

at a distance of 1 foot $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches from one another, and in the intervening space are two horizontal lines of lettering, the average height of which is $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch. The individual characters are firmly incised and stand out more clearly than those on the Liddesdale stone, the close-grained surface having offered a stouter resistance to the weather. Unfortunately, however, the task of interpretation, difficult enough in any case, has been rendered still more difficult by a breakage. Part of the second line is wanting, nor is it possible to say with certainty how many letters are missing.

Celtic philology is a region that is full of perils for the amateur, and to venture into it without expert guidance would have been rash indeed. I found, however, that distinguished Celtic scholars were more than willing



Fig. 4. Inscription on the Manor Water Stone.

to help me. Mr Nash Williams, Keeper of the National Museum of Wales, furnished me with some useful references. But my chief debt is to Professor Watson of Edinburgh and Professor Ifor Williams of Bangor, both of whom sent me full and considered opinions regarding the obscure linguistic affinities of the two words that are visible on the stone. Neither felt able to reach a perfectly clear-cut decision on the complex philological questions that arose, and I am sure that they would wish any indication of their views to be looked on as provisional. Subject to that reservation, I will try to summarise the definite suggestions that emerged from the wealth of analogies and quotations which they cited.

Before doing so, however, I ought to explain that they had before them, not only the photograph, but also a sketch of the inscription, made by Mr C. S. T. Calder (fig. 4). Excellent as the former is, there are one or two points which the camera has left just a little doubtful. In order to settle these, Professor Bryce, Mr Calder and myself paid a visit to the Peebles Museum and made a careful examination of the original. So long as we had only the photograph to go upon, there was some difference of opinion between us, but in presence of the stone itself a unanimous agreement was arrived at. It seems worth while

mentioning this, in case there may be readers to whom fig. 4 does not appear entirely convincing.

The Manor Water stone, like that from Liddesdale, is sepulchral. In this case the warrant is supplied by the cross at the beginning of the first line. The numerous parallels from elsewhere make that sign just as significant as the words *hic jacet* would have been. The cross here is a pronounced "cross pattée," a feature which it was at one time hoped might prove a serviceable clue for dating. Comparisons, however, led into a blind alley. Immediately after the cross we should expect to find the name of the person commemorated, and *Coninie*, which can be plainly read, must be a proper name. What does it represent? After weighing various alternatives—some Welsh and others Irish—the two authorities I consulted reached an identical conclusion. They think that in all likelihood it is for *Coniniæ*, the genitive of *Coninia*, the Latinised form of an Irish feminine, corresponding to the masculine *Conin*. Professor Watson reminds me that there was a Conin among the twelve monks who accompanied Columba to Iona. On this interpretation the stone must mark the grave of an Irishwoman.

Six letters of the second line are legible, and they are, without any doubt, *rtirie*. Along the edge of the fracture one can see traces of a seventh letter, very possibly an *e*, and, to judge by the space available, at least one other has been lost. However the word may have begun, it certainly terminated in the same way as the one above it. Presumably, therefore, it was also a genitive singular feminine. We have thus to choose between a second proper name and an adjunct of the first. If we prefer a proper name, there is a fairly promising one ready to hand, but not from Ireland. In the earliest Welsh MS., *The Black Book of Carmarthen*, a certain Erthir is mentioned as one of "the three best warriors in their land," and philologically *Ertirie* would be an exact feminine parallel to *Erthir*. But, if *Ertiri(a)e* be read, then (as Professor Williams points out) there must have been a second cross in front of it—partly because something more than "E" is needed to fill the space, and partly because the new name could hardly be left hanging in mid-air without any introduction.¹ The second cross would imply that there were two women buried at the foot of the stone—one Irish and the other Welsh.

However satisfactory such an equal division of the philological spoils may be, there are obvious historical difficulties which made it desirable to examine the alternative hypothesis of an adjunct. And here

¹ For a stone with crosses denoting more than one interment, see Hübner, *op cit.*, No. 61 (p. 23). There are others.

Professor Williams threw out a suggestion which Professor Watson describes as "probable and happy." If one could read [MA]RTIRIE, one might take this as a Latinised form of the Irish *martir* or even of *martre* (= *martyrium*). The trouble is that such indications as survive point to the second letter having been E rather than A. Even so, there may be a way out. The E may betoken Welsh influence, and one is then free to compare *Merthyr-Tudvil*, so called from a Welsh princess who was martyred there. After all, there is nothing intrinsically unreasonable in the idea of an Irishwoman being martyred in Brythonic territory and having this tribute erected to her memory by her Brythonic friends. As I have already indicated, the explanation is meanwhile to be regarded as tentative and provisional only. It may by and by be superseded by something better. If not, the Manor Water stone will have a peculiar interest for all lovers of Southern Scotland. It will mark what would be by far the oldest of "the graves of the martyrs" yet noted on "the hills of home."

As to its exact age nothing very definite can be said. When Mr Nash Williams first saw it, he was so much impressed by the comparatively good quality of the lettering that he was disposed to fix upon A.D. 550 as the very latest possible date for the inscription. Against that may perhaps be set the letter R with its almost horizontal tail. Professor Watson drew my attention to the fact that the form bears a close resemblance to that employed in the *Book of St Chad*, which may be as late as *circa* 700.¹ I may add that it also occurs on the stone from Yarrow Kirk, now in our Museum, and that there it has for company the square C, which appears on the monumental inscriptions of Gaul in the beginning of the sixth century, but does not disappear until after the close of the seventh.²

In conclusion I desire to thank Mr Somerville and Mr Grieve for bringing these stones to my notice, as well as the scholars I have named for help without which the last part of this paper could not have been written.

¹ See the extracts reproduced in facsimile in Evans's edition of the *Book of Llan Dâv* (1893), facing p. xlviii.

² *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, p. xviii.