

I.

THE ANCIENT INSCRIPTIONS OF KIRKMADRINE AND WHITHORN. BY PROFESSOR R. A. S. MACALISTER, Litt.D.

By the courtesy of Mr Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments in H.M. Office of Works, I have recently had an opportunity of making a close examination of the Kirkmadrine and Whithorn inscriptions; and I noticed some facts which seem deserving of being placed on record. As the monuments themselves are well known and have been frequently illustrated, I need not expend any words in describing them. For illustrations I refer below to Allen's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, and to the Wigtownshire volume of the Ancient Monuments Commissioners' *Inventory*.

KIRKMADRINE I. (Allen, p. 495; *Inventory*, p. 155).

Both Allen and the *Inventory*, in transcribing this inscription, omit the contraction-mark above SCI in line 2, and they both follow an erroneous reading for which Bishop Dowden is responsible (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxii. p. 247). The true reading is

A ET ω

HIC IACENT
S(an)C(t)I ET PRAE-
CIPVI SACER-
DOTES ID EST
VIVENTIVS
ET MAVORIVS

The Bishop denied the existence of the T in EST, and made a third *sacerdos* with the not very probable name IDES. This, however, is not correct. The T is broken, and the fracture has carried off its vertical stroke: but the horizontal stroke remains, and is as plain as anything else in the inscription—it appears in the photograph illustrating the Bishop's paper (here reproduced), to say nothing of the two illustrations referred to above. ID EST must therefore be restored, and the priest Ides may be suffered to return to the void out of which he came.

In the word **PRAECIPVI** I seemed to detect a bar crossing the stem of the **P**, but I could not make sure that this was not an illusion. I was also unable to trace with certainty the lower stroke of the **R**. It appeared to me that the engraver had become confused: that he either wrote **RP** for **PR**, or else that he wrote a stroked **P**, as an abbreviation for the first syllable of the word, and then forgot and began to write an **R** after it. I record these observations in order that they may be tested by other eyes.

KIRKMADRINE II. (Allen, p. 495; *Inventory*, p. 156.)

The reading

. . . . S ET
 FLOREN-
 TIVS

is certain. The letters before the **S** are flaked away: and the matrix of the flake is too deep to preserve anything of the missing letters. There seems to be the ghost of an **l** before the **S**: and a little projecting "head-land" of unbroken surface jutting into the matrix, just above the **L** of **FLOR-**, is crossed by a curved line which cannot be anything but the bottom of another **S**. Nothing more is left: but after consideration of the available space, I feel fairly certain that the lost word was **ISTIS**. The meaning would then be: With them—the **Viventius** and **Mavorius** of the first stone—is also **Florentius**.

In the photographs there appear to be letters painted on the stone, a little distance below the inscription. I see them very clearly in the *Inventory* volume and in the picture in Allen: not so clearly in the illustration accompanying Bishop Dowden's paper, which appears to have been made from a more coarsely meshed half-tone block. They appear to be **F**, a blurred letter, **R**, **O**, **S**, the **S** being $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch below the **VS** of **FLORENTIVS** in the *Inventory* volume block: there is at least one line of writing above, and another, ending with **N**, below.

The stone itself shows nothing to correspond: the human eye, as frequently, fails to catch what the camera reveals. It is possible that the letters are comparatively modern—a vulgar *graffito* painted upon the stone when it was guarded less carefully than it happily is at present. But it is also possible that they are ancient—an additional inscription, which might have told us something more of the ecclesiastics named, painted on the stone for the guidance of a possibly illiterate stonecutter, but for some reason never made permanent by his craft. The practice is indicated by the end of the long inscription carved upon the pillar

of Eliseg near Llangollen in North Wales, where we read a prayer for the man who *painted* the lettering, at the command of his king who set the monument up.

Remembering what wonderful results have been obtained from faded manuscripts by ultra-violet photography, it might be possible to recover this inscription by some such process. My friend Mr Barry Mason of Dublin, who is highly expert in the recent developments of photographic science, was greatly interested in this appearance of letters, and took much trouble, endeavouring to extract some further detail from the half-tone in the *Inventory* volume. These efforts came to nothing, however; a negative would be necessary, or, better still, a photograph of the original stone, taken with ultra-violet rays or by whatever other process would be appropriate. And success in this special case would open up a possible new field of research and of rich discovery. It has always appeared to me probable that the standing-stones and other megalithic monuments were originally decorated with painted ornament. If there were the least possibility of recovering any of that ornament it would be well worth while trying to do so.

KIRKMADRINE III. (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. li. (1917) p. 203.)

This stone, which simply bears the words INITIVM ET FINIS and has never had any further inscription, must be regarded as completing the epitaph on the other two stones—a unique case. The epitaph begins A ET ω on the first stone, and ends INITIVM ET FINIS on the third.

WHITHORN I. (Allen, p. 497; *Inventory*, p. 165.)

I had visited the Whithorn Museum on a previous occasion: but my time was limited, and I devoted it all to the difficult *Latinus* epitaph, taking this familiar *Petri* stone for granted. Later examination of a photograph which I purchased at the Museum suggested that the third letter of the inscription was a sickle-shaped G, not, as it had always been read, a C. On my second visit I had no such distraction, and could examine the stone at leisure: and I saw that there could be no doubt whatever that the letter is actually G.

In the earlier accounts of this stone, as we find them in Stuart, Hübner, and Anderson's *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, the reading of the inscription is given as LOCI [Sanc]TI PETRI APVSTOLI, an S being supposed to be lost between the I and the T. The T is on the stem of the cross, the I to the right of it, the LOCI to the left. Anderson quotes

a parallel from Fordun,¹ which would be very interesting if it could be confirmed: but Fordun's description does not carry conviction, and need not at present detain us.

It is however impossible to fit any letters in between the **LOCI** and the **T**—not so much because there is no room for them, as because the stone is here unbroken and shows no trace of writing. Collingwood, in his valuable book on *Northumbrian Crosses*, as well as Allen, detach the **I** from the **LOCI**, turn it into an **S**, and read **LOC STI**. This is quite inadmissible. There is no space between the **C** and the **I**, and a long space between the **I** and the **T**: and the letter is certainly **I**, not **S**. Like all the other letters in the inscription, it has forked serifs above and below, and possibly these deceived the eyes of those who saw an **S** in the letter.

But in any case the word is not **LOCI** but **LOGI**. This must be for *logii*, genitive of *logium*, a late Latin word meaning a dwelling, or a lodging. The **O** has been slightly damaged by a flake, as well as the upright of the preceding **L**: this injury may be recent, for it is not shown in Anderson's illustration, here reproduced. The horizontal stroke of the **L** remains, though it has to be looked for, running beneath the **O**: its forked serif encloses the lower tip of the **G**.

The forked serifs are very conspicuous in all the letters, as well as in the **R** which turns the cross into a chi-rho device; with one exception. There are no serifs on the mark which has been read as a second **I** on the right-hand side of the cross-stem. For this reason, and having regard to the conspicuous slope which it shows, and in which it contrasts with the other **I**'s in the inscription, I doubt if this was a letter at all. I take it to be a false start, made when cutting the right-hand side of the cross-stem. The engraver suddenly realised that the symmetry—none too good, even as it is—would be destroyed, unless he made the stem a little narrower. The mark is visibly shallower than the rest of the cutting, showing that it was abandoned soon after it was begun. Of **PETRI APVSTOLI** there is nothing to be said, except that the engraver obviously

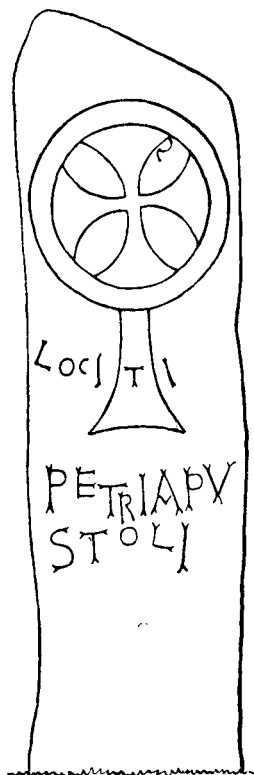


Fig. 2. Whithorn
Inscription I.

¹ Ed. Skene, cap. liv.

left out the R, and had to squeeze it in after his work was finished.

We are left then with LOGI T PETRI APVSTOLI, and have to explain the T. Fortunately the explanation is not far to seek. In the Vulgate of Ezekiel, ix. 4, we find the command *signa thau super frontes uirorum gementium*—"mark a T on the foreheads of those who lament" [the iniquities of Jerusalem]. T is therefore equivalent to a sign, a seal, or a mark. This T was in early Christian times fantastically compared to the cross, and, with the help of certain apocalyptic passages, the words of Ezekiel were taken as a kind of anticipatory type of baptism.¹ The whole inscription may then be taken as meaning "the seal of the lodging of Peter the Apostle." It is thus, as Collingwood, in the work quoted above, suggested, and even more emphatically than he could have supposed, with his inexact copy of the inscription, a record (possibly we should say *the* record) of the entry of Whithorn into the Roman obedience; of its baptism into the church of Peter the Apostle, as a consequence of the decision of the Synod of Whitby. It cannot therefore be earlier than the date of that fateful meeting, and does not possess the high antiquity that has been claimed for it.

This leads to important inferences as to the date of the use of the chi-rho symbol in these islands, and its relation to the wheel-cross. My own belief is that the wheel-cross is a representation of a cross-signed wafer—the Host in the Mass: but this is not the occasion for a discussion of any such theories. After a most careful examination of the cuttings on the stone from the technical point of view, I am quite positive that there is no justification for supposing the cross and the inscription to be other than contemporary, and the work of one artificer. Both cross and inscription are chisel-cut, unlike practically all the other carvings at Whithorn which are pocked. The R-appendage on the cross has, as we have seen, the same forked serifs as the letters of the inscription. No theories about the origin of the chi-rho symbol, based on an assumed pre-Whitby date for this monument, can be admitted.

I commend for the consideration of those who shall hereafter examine this monument a remarkable contrast between the two sides of the stone. The side to the right of the inscribed face—heraldically, the sinister side—is perfectly smooth and even. The left-hand side is violently battered, except for a smooth margin running round the edge. It gives a very strong impression that an earlier panel of ornamentation had been hammered away, perhaps to prepare the stone for receiving the seal of a new "baptism."

¹ See Charles, *Commentary on Revelation*, index s.v. seal.

WHITHORN II. (Allen, p. 497;
Inventory, p. 165.)

The interpretation of this inscription given in all the books is a mistranslation, copied from one to the other: a mistranslation which effectually conceals its unique interest. The lettering is not very clear, but so far as the mere characters are concerned they are accurately presented in the published transcripts:

1. TE DOMINVM
2. LAVDAMVS
3. LATINVS
4. ANNORVM
5. XXXV ET
6. FILIA SVA
7. ANNI V
8. IC SINVM
9. FECERVTN (*sic*)
10. NEPVS
11. BARROVA
12. DI

The engraver has written **SINVM**, though he clearly means **SIGNVM**: and he omitted the **N** of **FECERVNT**, and had to insert it afterwards, ligatured to the upright bar of the **T**, and on the wrong side of it. In the following discussion we shall silently emend these slips.

The translation of this inscription usually given is: "We praise Thee, Lord. Latinus aged 35 years and his daughter of 5. Here the descendants of Barrovadus made the monument (to them)."

To this reading there is a whole crop of objections. To dispose summarily of one hypercritical point, it is slipshod to translate *Latinus annorum*
 VOL. LXX.



Fig. 3.
 Whithorn Inscription II.

(genitive) *XXXV et filia sua anni* (nominative) *V* as "Latinus aged 35 years and his daughter of 5." With this trifle we need not trouble ourselves further in the face of more serious matters. *Hic signum* does not mean *hoc signum*: if *signum* means "a monument" the inscription would say that this stone is the monument of a monument, not the monument of Latinus. But *signum* does not mean "a monument": it means "a sign." Lewis and Short, Du Cange, and the recently published Oxford *Medieval Latin Word-List* give us between them a long list of meanings for *signum*, but "monument" is not one of them. And who made the monument? *Fecerunt* is plural: therefore *nepus*, if that be the nominative to the verb, must be plural also. But though we expect, and find, much bad Latin in these ancient inscriptions, *nepus* = **nepūs* = *nepotes* is intolerable! And even if it were not so, the interpretation would still be impossible. For it requires only a single glance at the inscription to see that the last three lines, *nepus Barrovadi*, are an afterthought, added by another hand. The **R** and the **S** used in these words are of a form quite different from the corresponding letters in the rest of the inscription. So that in any case *nepus* could not possibly be the nominative of *fecerunt*.

The true translation is obvious, logical, and grammatical. "Latinus and his daughter here made a sign. He was a kinsman of Barrovadus."

But what is the meaning of the statement that these two people, one of them a child of five, "made a sign"? The answer is given by a small fact of immense significance, which seems to have escaped notice.

Through the words **IC SINVM**, line 8; there runs a horizontal line. A second line, starting from the middle of the third **X** in line 5, cuts vertically through this horizontal line, and runs down to a point some distance below the inscription. These two lines are certainly artificial: they are quite clear in the photographs above referred to: and I believe them to be meant for an essential part of the epigraph, and to be read, in connexion with *signum*, as *crucis*. And here, *crucis signum fecerunt* can hardly be anything but a euphemism for "died a death of martyrdom." Quite possibly this was by actual crucifixion: some such horror seems to be expressed by the reticence of the inscription. Constantine had abolished crucifixion throughout the empire: but some barbarian persecutor, in an excess of morbidity, might quite well have revived it, as a suitable treatment for Christians. I have heard somewhere that certain early Jesuit missionaries in Japan were put to death by this method, in which their own teaching had inevitably instructed the inhabitants.

Be that as it may, I offer the following as the true rendering of the epitaph:—

We praise Thee, Lord.
Latinus, a man of 35 years, and his daughter,
five years old, here Bore Testimony,
[He was a kinsman of Barrovadus]

and I claim that it possesses the following advantages:—

- (1) It gets rid of the plural *nepus*.
- (2) It brings Barrovadus, presumably a man of local importance, into the picture.
- (3) It explains the triumphant *Te Dominum Laudamus* at the beginning of the inscription—an opening which would hardly be suitable to an ordinary epitaph.
- (4) It explains the emphasis laid on the *age*, rather than the *name*, of the child: the use of *hic*: the otherwise inexplicable word *signum*.
- (5) It explains why the genealogical statement, *nepus Barrovadi*, is separated from the name of the person to whom it belongs. As a rule name and kin form one undivided whole.

There is only one other monument, in the series of ancient British epitaphs, specifying the age of a child: the monument of Rasteca, at Llanerfyl in Montgomeryshire. But Rasteca died in her thirteenth year, which in her time would have been regarded as little short of maturity. The author of the inscription before us had a special purpose in mentioning the ages of his subjects: perhaps he could not have found a better way to convey to his readers the gruesomeness of the event than by recording without comment how when a man in the prime of life was made a victim, his child, a mere infant, was compelled to share his doom.

The inscription cannot be old enough to be connected even with the last of the Imperial persecutions of Christianity—that of Diocletian, which, if we can believe the late ecclesiastical tradition of Alban of Verulamium, must have affected Britain. But there were later, unofficial, outbreaks: it may be that the event recorded on the stone was a local manifestation of an anti-Christian “drive,” of which another episode gave the occasions for the blistering indignation of St Patrick’s *Letter to Coroticus*. That would indicate the third quarter of the fifth century A.D. as an approximate date for the martyrdom of Latinus and his daughter.

In any case, this earliest of the long series of the “martyr’s memorials”

of Scotland is of extraordinary interest, and may be of real importance for the ecclesiastical history of the country.

As an appendix to this paper, I may take the opportunity of making some remarks on the much-discussed Yarrow Kirk inscription. I have examined this stone twice, and have come to the conclusion that the

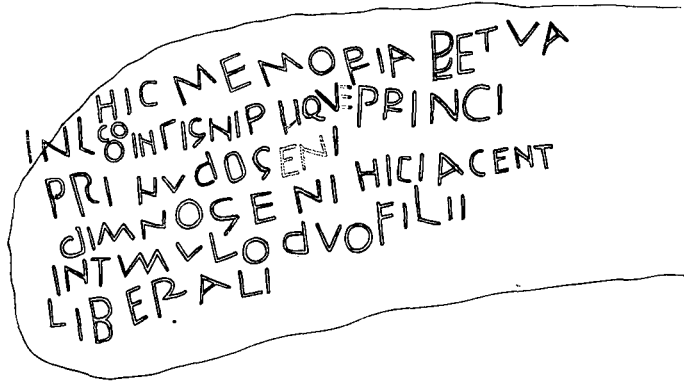


Fig. 4. Yarrow Kirk Inscription.

real difficulty in interpreting the inscription is not so much its worn condition as the fact that it consists of two independent inscriptions, carved at different times.

The original epitaph was:

HIC MEMOR PETVA
IN LOCO INSIGNI PIIQVE
PRI NVD(OGEN)I.

The engraver forgot the second P of P(er)PETVA, misled by the P which he had just formed, and rectified his error in a makeshift manner, by adding a second loop to the crossed P. The two O's in LOCO also confused him, so that he left out CO and had to insert it above the line. The VE of PIIQVE is ligatured and is very faint: the two l's in the same word are joined by a sloping scratch which looks artificial—perhaps some later tampering. PRI is an abbreviation for PRINCIPIS. The prince's name has usually been read NVDI, but the I is plainly an O, and the name was certainly longer. After the O the stone is worn smooth. I just managed to detect a G, but could find no more. It is impossible to be quite certain of the restoration suggested, but it exactly fills the

gap, is not inconsistent with the faint traces remaining, and shows us the names of two brothers constructed in the same way—a not uncommon practice.

The second epitaph begins without a break where the first leaves off:

— PRINCI
DIMNOGENI HIC IACENT
IN TVMVLO DVO FILII
LIBERALI.

The name looks like DIMNO, not DVMNO, unless we suppose the I to be ligatured to the M, making VM joined together. To understand the inscription all that we now require is to insert a full stop after this name, and the whole comes out easily thus:

- ¶ *This is an everlasting memorial
in the place (= grave) of the famous and dutiful
Prince Nudogenos.*
- ¶ [Memorial] *of Prince Dubnogenos.*
- ¶ Here lie in a grave the two sons
of Liberalis.