

NOTES.

1. A NEW PICTISH SYMBOL-STONE IN THE LOWLANDS.

In the course of a survey of the ancient monuments of Roxburghshire, recently carried out by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, a stone was discovered which bears the incised representation of a fish, which appears to belong to the series of Pictish symbols. This discovery is of so much general interest that the Commissioners have instructed me to publish the following note on the stone in advance of the appearance of their Inventory of the monuments in the county as a whole.

The new discovery is a stone pillar which is situated in the garden of Borthwick Mains, four miles west of Hawick. The pillar, which stands to a height of about 5 feet above ground-level, is roughly square in section, each side measuring about 14 inches in breadth. The surface has received damage from weathering and from rough handling; a hole bored near the top of the face on which the fish is incised, together with other marks elsewhere on the stone, suggests that it was once in use as a gatepost. The incised outline is alined vertically on what is now the north face of the pillar, with the ventral side to the west (Pl. XXIV); it is 37 inches in length. The head, which is uppermost, starts 2 inches from the top of the stone. The outline is formed by percussed lines, a technique which is found in authentic examples of Pictish symbols. It consists of a continuous deep line which delineates the head, body and tail; less deep but perfectly clear lines indicate the dorsal, adipose, pectoral, ventral and anal fins, the gills, an eye, and a transverse line which divides the tail from the body. There is no indication of a mouth; the impression of one is provided by a wavy line which runs forward from the eye, but this does not appear to have been made by percussion and is probably due to weathering.

A study of the undoubtedly authentic incised symbols has shown that there are sixteen which represent fish.¹ When the various characteristics of these are closely examined, and those of the Borthwick Mains fish are compared with them, no exceptional features can be observed in the latter. It so happens that there is no other example of an incised fish appearing unaccompanied by any other symbol, but there are examples, which include single instances, of other symbols appearing alone.

The pillar on which the fish is incised is a sandstone of a type which is obtainable, according to expert opinion, from as near to its present situation as Denholm, some eight miles to the north-east. It is said, however, that the pillar was moved to Borthwick Mains from the bed of the River Teviot at Commonside, in Teviot-head parish, about four miles to the south, where it had been in use as a nilometer at a ford. And, as has been observed above, it has probably also been used as a gatepost. Its size suggests that it would never have been moved very far. It has generally been observed that the fish appearing on Pictish monuments are very much like salmon in appearance, and the same can certainly be said of this example. It is considered very probable, therefore, that the fish is a Pictish symbol, and that it originated in the Lowlands.

¹ *E.C.M.*, pt. iii. pp. 34, 42, 48, 58, 99, 126, 170, 172, 181, 182, 223. *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. iii. p. 72 and fig. 1; *ibid.*, vol. lxxiv. Pl. XXII. Also, as yet unpublished, a stone slab with an incised fish on either side, from Inchyra, now in Perth Museum, and a stone from Loch Broom, Ross and Cromarty.

The great majority of the Pictish symbols is found in the area north of the estuaries of the Rivers Forth and Clyde. The following, however, have been recorded in the Lowlands.

1. The three symbols which are incised in a group on an outcrop near the hill-fort on Trusty's Hill at Anwoth, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright,¹ are the only examples so far known in the Lowlands of which it can definitely be stated that they are still in their original situation. One is a double-disc and Z-shaped rod symbol, one is a sea-monster, and one is a horned circle in which there are rudimentary features.

2. The block of sandstone incised with symbols which was found in use as a footbridge on one of the walks in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, is more than likely to have originated in the immediate vicinity. Its size is such that it could have been part of a contractor's load of constructional material, but even so it is not likely to have been brought very far. It bears a crescent and V-shaped rod symbol below which is part of another symbol which has been damaged beyond recognition. The stone is accurately illustrated by Stuart.² Romilly Allen gives a satisfactory description of the upper symbol,³ but he offers a confused interpretation of the fragmentary lower one, listing it as a mirror-and-comb symbol in one part of his work⁴ while, in another, describing⁵ and illustrating⁶ it as a double-disc and Z-shaped rod symbol partly defaced.

3. The only other symbols from the Lowlands which have been published are those which are engraved on the terminal penannular ring of a silver chain found at Whitecleuch, Lanarkshire.⁷ They are a double-disc and Z-shaped rod symbol and a notched rectangle symbol.

In conclusion, a word of warning may be given concerning the presence of a stone ornamented with carved fish in the vicinity of Wooler, in Northumberland, of which mention is made by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik in his as yet unpublished MS. *Travels at Home—Journey to England in Aprile 1724*. He writes: "In our way we passed Oular haugh head a very good Inn and dinned 5 miles further on, at a house called the White house. Near to this place I observed a high stone set up by way of a cross, with the figures of fish cut upon it, but no inscription. I take it to have been some Danish monument." This stone, however, is not a symbol-stone, but a mediæval cross-shaft, now known as Percy's Cross, which stands in the garden of a cottage near Wooperton, seven miles south-east of Wooler, and not far from a house called Brandon White House. It has been fully described⁸ and illustrated⁹ in recent years.

My thanks are due to Mr R. J. C. Atkinson for undertaking to photograph the stone at night, thus producing the excellent illustration; to Mr R. Eckford, Geological Survey of Great Britain, for identifying the material of the stone; to Mr J. C. H. Fasson of Borthwick Mains for kindly granting permission for visits

¹ *E.C.M.*, pt. ii. pp. 60, 77, 92; *ibid.*, pt. iii. pp. 477-9 and fig. 508. Stuart, vol. i. pl. 97; R.C.A.M., No. 5, vol. ii. pp. 14-16 and fig. 11.

² R.C.A.M., vol. i, pl. 128.

³ *E.C.M.*, pt. ii. p. 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pt. ii. pp. 69, 92, 122.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pt. iii. p. 421.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pt. iii. fig. 438.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pt. i. p. lxxxvii and fig. 17; *ibid.*, pt. ii, pp. 60, 68, 102; *ibid.*, pt. iii. pp. 472-3 and fig. 503. *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xiv. p. 224 and figure. J. Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 2nd series, p. 44 and fig. 32.

⁸ *Archæologia Æliana*, 2nd series, vol. iv. p. 197.

⁹ *Northumberland County History*, vol. xiv. p. 423.

to be made to the stone; to Professor Stuart Piggott for pointing out the passage in Sir John Clerk's MS.; and to Mr R. B. K. Stevenson, Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, for bringing to my notice the stone from Loch Broom mentioned in reference 1 above.

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:—

E.C.M.—*The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, by J. Anderson and J. Romilly Allen.

R.C.A.M.—*Inventory* published by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Stuart—*The Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, by J. Stuart.

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Pictish symbol-stone at Borthwick Mains,
near Hawick. (c. $\frac{1}{2}$.) (See Note 1.)