

The Pyket Stane, a lost Peeblesshire cross

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The drawing described in this note is included in one of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland manuscripts that were transferred in 1974 from the National Museum to the National Monuments Record of Scotland. Antiquaries MS 44 is a small sketchbook containing a series of pencil and watercolour drawings, mainly of Scottish buildings and sculpture. Although most of the drawings are uncaptioned and none are signed, the sketchbook can be attributed without hesitation to the well-known artist and antiquary, James Drummond (1816–77). Alike in artistic style, handwriting and subject-matter, its contents match other examples of his work (Jones 1980). Furthermore, a drawing of the Catstane on fol 3 (Rutherford & Ritchie 1974, pl 10a) is evidently the original sketch that was engraved by Drummond for the fourth volume of the *Proceedings* (Simpson 1862, 122). This drawing is dated 14 April 1860, while the latest date in the book, August 1863, appears on a sketch of Covington Castle, Lanarkshire, on fol 20.

On fol 23 of the volume there are three drawings, in pencil highlighted with touches of white chalk, of a fragment from a cross of Early Christian type (pl 40a). The left sketch is a slightly oblique view showing one face and part of the left edge of the fragment, which comprised the upper part of the shaft and lower part of the cross-head, while the central drawing shows the left edge in elevation, at the same unspecified scale. The third drawing, also in elevation, is at a somewhat larger scale, but the extensive damage shown is consistent with that indicated at the right angle of the principal face, and it is here assumed that the right edge of the same fragment is represented. This supposition gains support from a sketch on the opposite page (fol 22v) where Drummond, in suggesting a reconstruction of the outline of the cross, indicated that only the upper part of the shaft was extant.

The surviving ornament on the fragment was composed of panels of interlace, framed both on the face and edges by a flat margin. On the better-preserved of the edges, the junction of the shaft and head was marked by a half-roll moulding whose end formed an expansion on the marginal band of the principal face. Drummond's hasty reconstruction-sketch suggests that the hollows of the armpits may have been greater than a semicircle, but the oblique angle of his detailed drawing makes it impossible to verify the accuracy of this calculation. There was no provision for a connecting ring, and the cross outline was presumably of Romilly Allen's type 101A (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 2, 51). The ornament of the shaft comprised interlaced pairs of back-to-back Stafford knots, RA 601 (*ibid*, 233), connected at the top in a right-angled bend. Above this, and without any formal division, the lower arm of the cross-head was filled by a triquetra knot, RA 798 (*ibid*, 304). On the left edge, the ornament in its damaged form had the superficial appearance of two interlaced oval loops, RA 766, but the discontinuity at the lower right angle shows that it was the upper part of a four-cord plait, RA 503 (*ibid*, 202). The right edge of the shaft showed two crossing strands, interlaced at intervals with free rings in the so-called 'twist-and-ring' pattern, RA 574 (*ibid*, 222–3). Although this edge was badly damaged, one complete ring and the right half of another are illustrated, and there can be no doubt about the identification of this pattern, which is particularly significant in dating the sculpture. Paradoxically, Drummond's interpretation is perhaps supported by his failure, in a drawing on fol 21 of the sketchbook, to recognize the same pattern on the cross-shaft from Liberton Tower that was presented to the National Museum in 1863 (*ibid*, part 3, 424–5). He showed it instead as a simple

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four-cord plait, and at this period he probably had little knowledge of the variations possible in interlace, for no earlier drawings of this type of monument by him have been identified, while the National Museum had very few examples in its collection.

As has been noted above, the twist-and-ring pattern, RA 574, gives the clearest indication of the date of the carving, for the use of free rings was a favourite motif in Scandinavian-influenced sculpture (Bailey 1980, 72, fig 7a). The list of Scottish localities given by Romilly Allen is remarkable for the number of incorrectly included examples, but the pattern is found at Inchinnan, Govan, and at Monreith and other sites in Wigtownshire (*op cit*, 458, 466–7, 485, 490), while variants with multiple rows of rings were much favoured in the 10th- and 11th-century sculpture of the latter area. Outside Scotland, RA 574 is found in Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture at Hexham (Collingwood 1927, 176), Penrith (*ibid*, 165), Aycliffe (Morris 1978, nos 8, 10) and elsewhere, and in carvings of the same period in Cornwall (Langdon 1896, 356, 409), Wales and the Isle of Man. The other interlace-types on the fragment are acceptable in the same context. The pattern of paired Stafford knots, RA 601, was described by Allen as ‘the commonest, and at the same time the most effective, of all the patterns used in Hiberno-Saxon interlaced ornament’ (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 2, 233), and it occurs in the 8th century on the Jedburgh shrine-slab (*ibid*, part 3, 434), and on the edge of the Hunterston brooch (Stevenson 1974, pl 10B), but it is also frequently found at Govan and at Aycliffe. The terminated four-cord plait occurs at the two latter sites, and triquetras filling the arms of crosses are common in Manx and Northern English carving of the Scandinavian period. In its general design, the 10th century again seems the most probable date for the cross, for attention has been drawn to the exclusive use of panels of interlace in crosses at Hexham and elsewhere in Northumbria at this period (Cramp 1974, 136–7).

The most remarkable aspect of the fragment illustrated by Drummond was its location. Although the correction of two letters in the first word of the caption indicates some uncertainty as to the name, it appears to read ‘Pygett Stane or Cross – Tweedale’, and the reference is presumably to Pyked Stane Hill, at 571 m the highest summit in the Broughton Heights (NT 122411), located some 4.2 km NNE of Broughton and 6.5 km NW of Stobo Kirk. The hill is mentioned, but only as a topographical feature, in the older literature on the area, the earliest form noted being ‘Pyket Stone’ on William Edgar’s ‘New and Correct Map of the Shire of Peebles or Tweedale’, surveyed in 1741. Armstrong (1775, 29) and the minister of Kirkurd parish (Sinclair 1794, 178) applied the name to a small cairn on the gently rounded summit, which they regarded as a boundary marker. This feature, however, probably stood upon the remains of a low cairn some 8 m in diameter (RCAHMS 1967, vol 1, no 54), one of a considerable number of hill-top cairns in the county which are ascribed to the Bronze Age (*ibid*, 14–15). A careful search for the cross-fragment among the exposed cairn-material was made by the writer in May 1981, without success. Part of the surface of the cairn is covered by turf, however, and some stones are now concealed in the base of an Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar, so that it is quite possible that the fragment has remained on the summit since Drummond’s day.

The word ‘pike’ has a complex series of meanings, of varying etymological origin, and the Scots participial forms ‘pyked, pykit’ could be derived from certain of these, but also from ‘picked’, either with reference to the carving of the surface or in the sense ‘adorned, ornate’, or even from ‘pitched’ meaning ‘fixed in the ground’ (Murray 1933, sv pick, picked, pike, piked, pitch, pitched). The application of ‘pike’ to ‘a cairn or pillar of stones erected on the highest point of a mountain or hill; also, a beacon’ (*ibid*, sv ‘pike, sb², 1b’) is of particular interest since Armstrong (1775, 49; quoted at second hand by Murray, loc cit, sub anno 1815) testified to its use in Peebleshire, and the name ‘Pykestone Hill’ was applied to one of the principal summits on the W side of the Manor Valley (NT 173313) and also to a lesser spur of the same massif, near Dawyck (NT 167338),

evidently with this significance. The 'Pyket Stane', however, probably received its name from the tapered or pointed form of the cross in its damaged state (Murray 1933, sv piked).

In considering the purpose of this 10th-century cross, raised on a remote Borders summit, one finds a tempting parallel in the Rere or Rey Cross on Stainmoor, North Yorkshire, the traditional SE boundary-marker of Strathclyde, of which, by coincidence, only the upper part of the shaft is preserved (Collingwood 1907, 385). The Broughton Heights, forming part of the W boundary of Tweeddale, may have marked the effective division between the Britons of Strathclyde and their eastern neighbours, who were at first under the nominal overlordship of the embattled Earls of Northumbria, and after about 973 possibly under that of the Gaelic kings of the expanding Scottish kingdom (Jackson 1955, 86–7; Anderson 1960; RCAHMS 1967, vol 1, 4–6; Kapelle 1979, 10, 21–4). It is unlikely, however, that any agreed political boundary-marker would have been erected in Tweeddale in the uncertain conditions of the late 10th century, and the Rere Cross itself probably originated as a wayside cross marking the summit of an important trans-Pennine route. So far as can be judged from Drummond's drawing, the Pyket Stane was more skilfully executed than most surviving Strathclyde sculpture (Stevenson 1959, 49–53; Radford 1967), and although it shares individual motifs with work from that area, the form of the cross-head is not found there. Comparable material from SE Scotland is extremely limited at this period, but within Lothian the cross-shaft from Liberton (*supra*) includes the twist-and-ring pattern, which is also found on a damaged cross from the same place (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, 425–6). The latter may be compared in outline and execution with a late 10th-century cross at Hexham (Cramp 1974, 138, pl 24a, b), and although all three carvings are apparently inferior in quality to the Pyket Stane, they show the same Anglo-Scandinavian influence.

The most suitable context for the Pyket Stane appears to be local and ecclesiastical, rather than political. The extensive medieval parish of Stobo, with its several dependent chapels which later became the centres of separate parishes, is thought to perpetuate the *parochia* of an earlier religious foundation, probably of minster type (Cowan & Easson 1976, 53), and the existence of a 10th-century cross of some elaboration provides support for this belief. Pyket Stane Hill marks the junction of the boundaries of Stobo and of Broughton, one of its former dependencies, with the independent parish of Kirkurd. It is tantalising that the cross is not mentioned in an early 13th-century record of the bounds of the bishop of Glasgow's manor of Stobo, which are defined as running 'along the brow of the hill' (*per cilium montis*) between certain natural features (Bannatyne Club 1843, no 104; Innes 1851, 109), but the fortunate chance that the fragment was recorded by an artist of exceptional skill has preserved a valuable testimony of the importance of Stobo as a religious centre in 10th-century Tweeddale.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

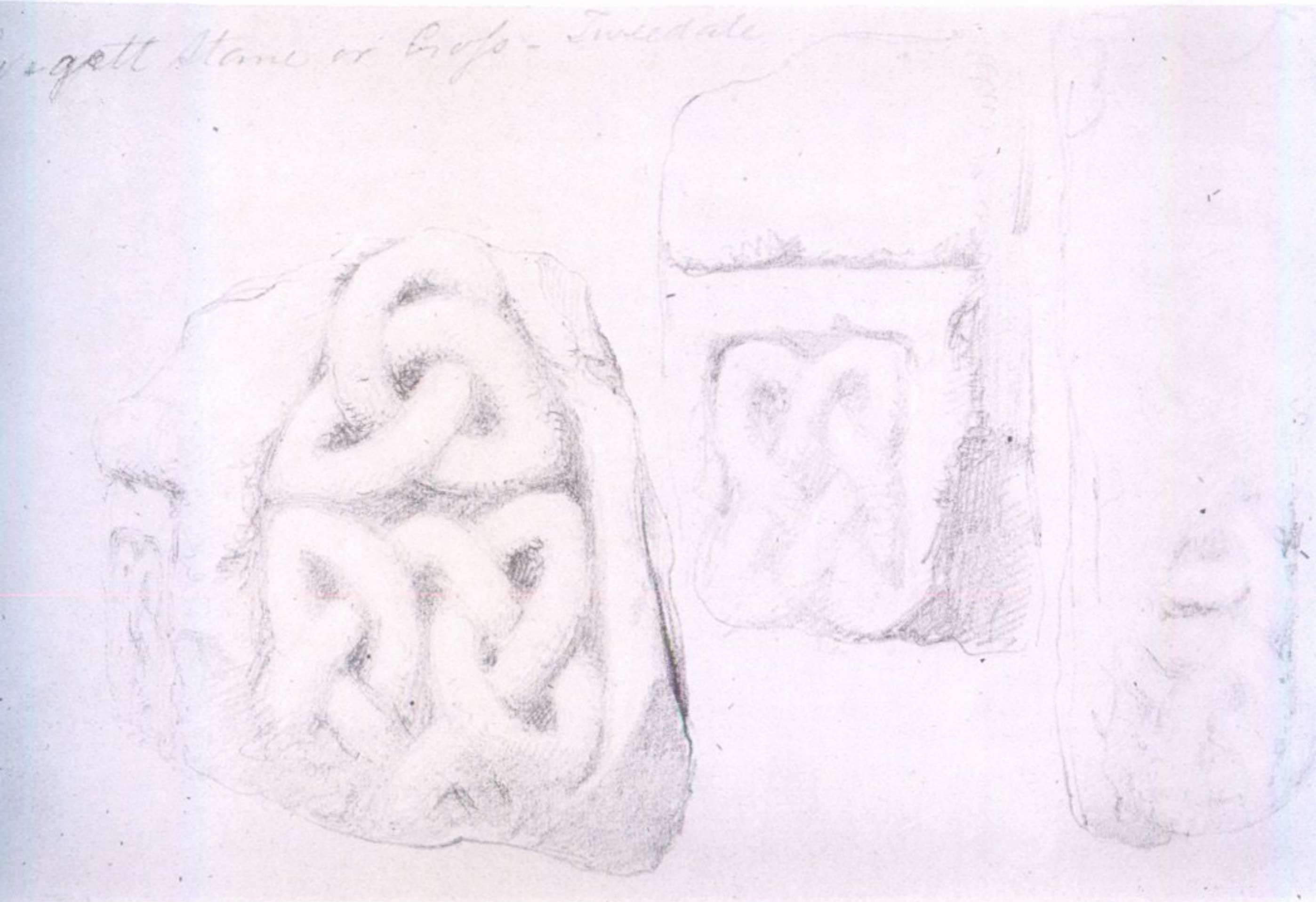
The writer is indebted to Miss Jane Fielding for bringing Drummond's drawing to his attention.

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a 'Pygett Stone or Cross - Tweeddale'; drawing by James Drummond, c 1863



b Viking-age gold finger-ring from the Isle of Skye (scale 1:1)

FISHER | Pyket Stane

GRAHAM-CAMPBELL | Skye finger-ring