

RELIQUES OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCHES
OF ST. BRIDGET AND ST. HILDEBURGA,
WEST KIRKBY, CHESHIRE.

By Henry Ecroyd Smith.

(READ 1ST DECEMBER, 1870.)

THE Parish of West Kirkby (now West Kirby), lying 18 miles N.W. of Chester city, is one of the most important in the hundred of Wirral, and occupies the whole of its north-western angle. Dr. Ormerod describes its *first* quarter as comprising the townships of West Kirkby and Newton-cum-Larton, with that of Grange, Great Caldey or Caldey Grange; *second*, the townships of Frankby and Greasby; *third*, those of Great and Little Meols, with Hoose; *fourth*, the township of Little Caldey.*

Originally *Kirkbye*, or, settlement at the Church, it became "*West Kirkby*," to distinguish it from "*Kirkby-in-Walley*," at the opposite corner of the peninsula of Wirral, now commonly known as Wallasey. Each of these extensive parishes possessed two Churches, those of Wallasey lying the one in Kirkby-in-Walley, the other on the Leasowes and near the sea, which ultimately destroyed it and engulfed the site together with that of its burial-ground. For further information on this head, Bishop Gastrell's "*Notitia*," Dr. Ormerod's "*History of the County*,"† and Lyson's "*Cheshire*,"‡ may be consulted.

* Gastrell's *Notitia*. The last now simply bears the name of Caldý.

† II, 260. Heading of Moreton. ‡ Page 807.

The Churches of West Kirkby were situate, the parish Church at the town proper, the other, a Chapel of Ease, upon Saint Hildeburgh's Eye, *i.e.*, the island of St. Hildeburga, which had become insulated through the same potent influence which had wrecked the Chapel, as Bishop Gastrell calls it, upon the Leasowe shore.

From the Charters in the Chartulary of St. Werburgh,* in Chester, Dr. Ormerod obtains most of the information he producest† respecting the early ecclesiastical condition of this parish, all mention of which is strangely omitted in Domesday. The Charters commence in the time of the Conqueror, and the light reflected upon these ancient Saxon foundations is consequently more incidental than positive; we must e'en be thankful for these scraps.

Robert de Roelent, or Rodelent, as he is more frequently designated, was inducted into the fine Norman Barony of Rhuddlan, of which this district formed a part, by Hugh Lupus, created first (Norman) Earl by his uncle the Conqueror. Robert had accompanied William and his nephew over the channel, but would seem to have left his heart behind, inasmuch as we find him at a very early period transferring the revenues of the Churches of West Kirkby and Hildeburgh-Eye (with lands and other Churches) to the Abbey of St. Ebrulf, now St. Evroul, situate at Utica in Normandy, where the bones of his ancestors reposed.‡ This gift was confirmed by King William in 1081, in his Charter to the Abbey, in the following terms§ :—"Robertus de Rodelento, prefato Hugone Cestrensi comite domino suo concedente, dedit Sancto Ebrulfo, Cerchebiam cum duabus ecclesiis, unam scilicet quæ in ipsa villâ est, et aliam prope illium manerium in insulâ maris."

* Page 23, *Harl. MSS.* 1865. + II, pp. 267-9.

‡ Earl Hugh had a natural son named Robert, who became a monk here. Pedigree in Ormerod's History, p. 47.

§ *Leycester's Cheshire Antiquities*, p. 105.

Robert was named from Rhuddlan, in the Vale of Clwyd, Flintshire, which town, designated Roelent in Domesday, and subsequently Rodelent or Rothelent, became Rhuddlan, but pronounced *Rhythlan*. As governor of all Cheshire, and commander of the forces to the Earl, he was no inconsiderable person. Though a native of Normandy he came early to this country, where, being thoroughly trained in arms, he was knighted by Edward the Confessor. His father was Umfrid de Telliolo, son of Amfrid, of Scandinavian descent; his mother, Adeliza, sister of Hugh de Grentemaisnill, of the famous family of Geroians. Taking part in all the chief actions of the Conqueror, we find him Commander-in-chief of Rufus's forces at the siege of Rochester in 1087.* At the period of the survey for Domesday, Robert held "divided possession" with his cousin the Earl, of half the castle and burg of "Roelent, half the church, the mint, the iron mine, the "stream of Cloith (Clwyd) with its fisheries and mills, and "the toll and forests not attached to particular villis of that "manor. He had also a moiety of Bren, with five berewicks, "and had lands in 33 berewicks of Englefield, formerly "attached to Roelent, and five manors in Atiscross hundred. "These were held of the Earl of Chester.

* * * * *

"In Cheshire, Robert de Roelent held the two Mollingtons, "Leighton, Thornton Mayow, Gayton, Haselwall, Thurstanston, the two Meolse, Wallasey, Neston and Hargrave.

"These possessions were dispersed on his death; it is, "however, probable that he left illegitimate issue, as Thurstanston continued in possession of a family who bore his "name, from whom it has descended by heirs female to the "present proprietor.†

* Leicester's *Ches. Antiq.* Vide account of Hugh Lupus, his kinsman, in first edition.
 † Ormerod, I, p. 52.

“For his works of piety,” continues Sir Peter Leycester, “he gave to the Abbey of Utica in Normandy (where his brothers Ernold and Roger were monks, and his father and mother, *alique parentes ejus*, were buried), the Church of Telliotes, and the tythe of his mills, land, and beer in his cellar; and he gave in England two carucates of land and 20 villanes and the Church of Cumbivel, *all the town tythe and Church of Kirkby in Wirral, within the county of Cheshire, and the Church of the Island*, and the Church of St. Peter’s in Chester city.”

He is described by Ordericus,* as a wise and valiant soldier, eloquent and liberal. His death occurred under the hill of Hormaheva, whilst fighting with Griffith, king of Wales, on the third day of July, 1088. “Afterwards with great lamentation, both of the English and Normans, his soldiers brought his body to Chester, and it was interred in the monastery of St. Werburge in that city; which monastery Hugh Earl of Chester had built, and had made Richard, a monk of Becke, in Normandy, the first Abbot thereof.” A long epitaph, said to have been inscribed on his tomb, is given in Dugdale’s *Baronage*.†

The Abbot and Convent of St. Ebrulf, however, were soon tired of managing this distant property, and gladly effected a transfer of their rights in respect to the Churches of St. Bridget and St. Hildeburga—with that of St. Peter, in Chester—to the monks of St. Werburg in this city, subject to the payment of an annual rental, at the manor of Petheling, of £30. Lysons states‡ that a further consideration was paid down in the form of *a palfrey* and nine marks. Nevertheless, we shortly find the parish Church at West Kirby in possession of the Earls of Chester, and by one or other of these, during the reign of King Stephen, annexed to the manor of Caldey. As a part of this manor it was awarded to

* 669-671.

+ Ormerod, *note*, I, p. 53.‡ *Cheshire*, p. 668.

the Abbey of Basingwerk, on the opposite shore of Flintshire, the result being a very fierce litigation between the Basingwerk ecclesiastics and those of Chester.

“The Abbot of Basingwerk* claimed the presentation in right of his manor of Caldey, to which, he stated, it had been annexed by Randle Gernons (fourth Earl), with all other privileges, except warren and pleas of warren. That in the time of King Stephen, one Nigell was presented by his predecessors; who was succeeded, with their permission, by his son Thomas, and he by his son Richard, and so on, until, in consequence of the Council of Lateran, in 1215, hereditary succession in benefices was forbidden by the Legate in England. The Abbot added, that after the death of the last hereditary incumbent, his convent was dispossessed of Caldey, the advowson of West Kirkby, and other estates, by Randle Blundeville (sixth Earl); by whose collusion the abbey of St. Werburgh obtained several presentations, of which the last was that of Ralph de Montalt, *‘qui tempore querræ per posse occupavit,’* and that the last rector being now deceased, the Abbey of Basingwerk reclaimed its privileges, and estimated their losses at £200.

“The Abbot of St. Werburgh asserted, on the other hand, that the advowson had been procured by his convent, for *the sum of 60 shillings, paid to the Abbot of Basingwerk* in open court, before Lucas de Tancy, chief justice of Chester, to whose jurisdiction an objection was raised by the plaintiffs, on the ground of his appointment by Simon de Montfort, an acknowledged rebel, King Henry being then in his custody, and Edward Earl of Chester a prisoner in Wallingford Castle.

“This objection being deemed insufficient, and the jurors

* *Harl. MSS.* 2072, 21.

“finding the three last appointments to have been made by the Abbots of St. Werburgh, the determination was in favour of that Abbey, with which the advowson remained to the dissolution, and was then given by charter, and has since continued attached, to the Dean and Chapter of the new Cathedral. The rector has the tithes of the whole parish.”*

The present Church, dedicated, like its Saxon predecessor, to St. Bridget, stands at the distance of half a mile from the estuary of the Dee, which the western side of the tower faces, as is likewise the case with all the old country Churches between this and Chester.

To Saint Bridget, or Bride, V.M. (Virgin Abbess and Martyr), a saint of the sixth century—well known as the patroness, as St. Patrick the patron, of Ireland—several other of our Cheshire Churches were dedicated, including one in Handbridge, Chester city. St. Bridget *the abbess*, is patroness of Kildare; St. Bridget *the widow*, of Sweden; and a fourth, or one of the three already named, of Holland. The Irish element, so often noticed among our historic relics of *ancient Meols*, as coins and personal ornaments, is again evident in the dedication of West Kirkby Church. Curiously enough, a Scotch element also appears, seemingly introduced into the district by Nigellus, the first Norman rector under Ranulf Gernons, a trace of which occurred during late operations in a coin of Alexander. A few Scotch coins have likewise been found upon the Meols beach, in connexion with other mediæval objects washed from the artificial stratum of soil, to which we have frequently had occasion to advert; they were all struck by Alexander III, A.D. 1214—1249.

* “Tax Eccl. £10 13s. 4d.; Abbas Cest. in eadem £2 13s. 4d.” Dr. Ormerod and other writers omit all mention of a *South Aisle*, removed during the Vandalic “improvements” in 1788. In 1860 a portion of the parish went to form part of the newly constituted one of Frankby, viz., Greasby, Frankby, and a part of Newton and Grange.

The Church is prettily situated, nestling under the western slope of the sandstone eminence, partially planted, here called Grange hill, and surmounted by a landmark, erected in the year 1841 by the Dock Committee of the Liverpool Town Council, as Trustees of the Dock Estate.

Dr. Ormerod states (1819) that the building originally comprised a tower, nave and north aisle, the division between the latter being removed, whilst a piscina and two stalls for officiating priests remain under three niches within the chancel at the extremity of the nave.

The list of Rectors supplied, commences with Nigellus, *temp.* Stephen, patron Ranulphus de Gernones Count of Chester, who dying was succeeded by his son Thomas, and in similar succession, Richard and William. Upon the death of the latter, Symon Dyggons, a clerk of the Abbey of Chester and Chancellor of the County Palatine, was inducted by Roger Abbot of St. Werburgh, in the name of his convent. This appointment bringing us down to the reign of Henry III : we need not further pursue the record here.

Thus far Dr. Ormerod, in his excellent history of the county. Mr. Lysons gives little additional general information, and blunderingly makes the township of Grange identical with Little, in place of Great, Caldey.* Like Dr. Ormerod, he supplies no record or tradition of the *real original* fabrics constituting the Churches of St. Bridget and St. Hildeburga.

Later remarks, and a professed account, with illustrations, of the mediæval structure at the town, appear in the Transactions of our Society ; but the statements are fugitive, and, in common with the illustrations, are unfortunately inaccurate in several important particulars—for instance, the very number of the windows and the lights therein. Of the existence above ground of any Anglo-Saxon remains, not the slightest suspicion is entertained by any of the writers above mentioned.

* *Chesh.*, p. 669.

The restoration of old Churches in this country seldom fails to be accompanied by a disclosure of some sepulchral stones of a date far anterior to that of the building renovated, and St. Bridget's has proved no exception to what may be almost termed the rule.

The different alterations effected in St. Bridget's Church must now be briefly adverted to.

Whether the Late-Norman Church was a distinct erection from its Saxon predecessor or not, we have no grounds for determining. Its form we know to have combined a tower (still existing) with a nave and chancel, and aisles, north and south.

Mr. James Middleton, in his *Notes on the Church of West Kirby, Cheshire*,* remarks—

“The body of the present Church of West Kirby offers the curious anomaly of the ridge-plate joining the north-eastern angle of the tower, the eastern face of which bears the trace of the gable of the nave having been at some former period attached centrally, as usual.

* * * * *

“The tower is certainly of much older date than any part of the nave or chancel at present existing. The moulding of the battlements is in very good taste, and the coupled belfry lights are fair in design and execution.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Middleton's “young relative, Mr. A. F. Oridge, at present on the staff of the Borough Engineer of “Liverpool,” who made the drawings from which the lithographic plates illustrating the short paper were taken, appears to have but half learnt his business, as the four views are all more or less faulty. I have excellent local authority for stating, that in the north view the Church is not long enough, and *only four instead of five windows* are represented, a

* *Trans.*, Session 1851-2, Vol. IV, pp. 198-9.

buttress also being deficient. Again, the window nearest to the tower, *i.e.*, the westernmost, had but three lights in place of four. The omitted window was the next eastwardly, and had four lights; it differed from the others in having square panes of glass, the rest being supplied with those of lozenge form. A door is depicted by Mr. Oridge on this side, but it was only an old one *walled up*; probably no entrance here was used subsequently to 1788. The pathway in front only existed in the artist's imagination, and during late operations no vestige appeared of an approach.

The tower with its window tracery and battlements are rendered too massive throughout, the windows being placed too high; these are, in fact, unusually low. In the south view some mouldings at the east end are omitted, and the buttresses here are all too slight and not truly shaped. At the east end the chancel window is represented as having only four lights in place of five, and the moulding is deficient. We are very sorry Mr. Middleton did not impress upon his friend the importance of more care; for we cannot suppose a want of ability. Several errors occur in the letter press description of the Church, short as this is, not extending over two pages, but these we must pass by.

In the alterations effected in 1788, the south aisle, wholly unnoticed in his description of the Church by the Rev. Thos. Moore,* was removed. It would seem to have been quite a short one, in this respect resembling that at Woodchurch. A portion of one of the old pillars which had served to separate the nave from this aisle long stood close to the south wall built in 1788. The expenses of the alterations named, with re-roofing and slating, all executed within the year, were defrayed by the sale of the old lead.

The ancient building was getting seriously out of repair, and

* *Some Notes on the Parish of West Kirby, in the Hundred of Wirral, by the Rev. Thomas Moore, M.A. Trans., Vol. VII, pp. 12—15.*

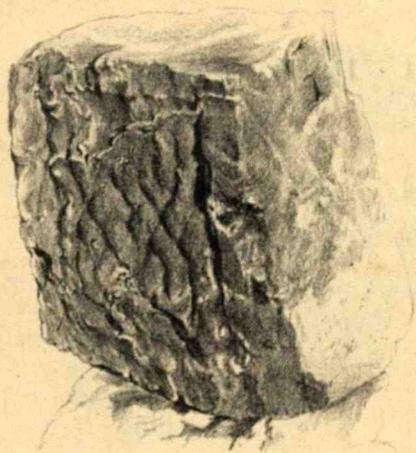
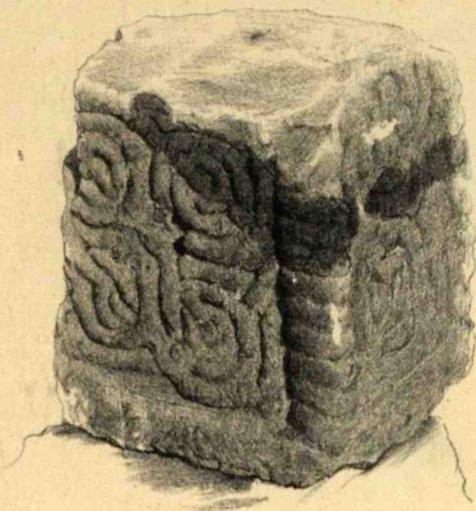
additional accommodation for the increasing population being urgently required, a restoration was resolved upon and has lately been creditably carried out by the Rector and Churchwardens, assisted by a Restoration Committee, to the great advantage of the parish, although we regret to learn that the re-building fund has hitherto been much in arrear of the disbursements. The architects were Messrs. Kelly and Edwards of Chester, and the contractor Mr. Robert Dobson, Rock Ferry. It was between the (outer) south wall just mentioned and the position of the old pillar at this side of the nave that, mixed with mortar and rubbish, the various remains in stone and wood, about to be described, were, with little exception, disclosed during demolition.

PLATES I, II.

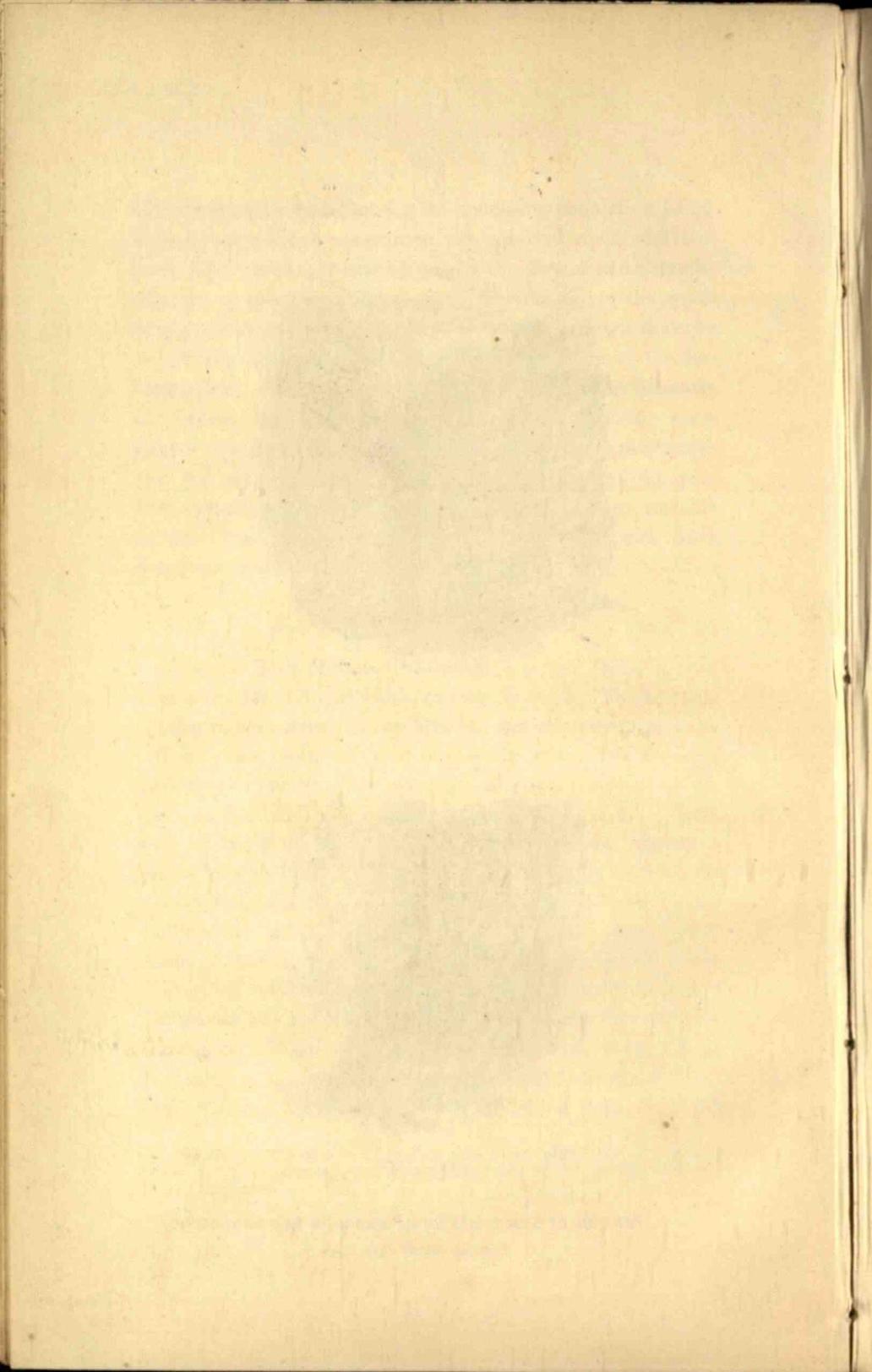
These exhibit a portion of the shaft of a small Runic* Cross, 11 in. in height, 12 in. in width, and 8 in. in depth. The first pair of illustrations show the two broader, and the second pair the two narrower sides of this interesting relic of a class of sculptured remains which, although of not unfrequent occurrence in Scotland and Ireland, are rare in England. Upon each of the four sides, complete or fragmentary, appears a Runic knot or braid; two of them are so badly chipped the ornamentation is only recognisable, but their fellows display varieties of the Runic interlacing design of great rarity. Among a number exhibited for comparison are several plates—from his invaluable work, “The early Sculptured Stones of Scotland and the North of England,”—kindly forwarded by Dr. Stuart. These most graphically illustrate about thirty-four analogous types of detail in this class of ornament, which have occurred in England, Scotland, Isle of Man, &c.; and

* We here use the term in its ordinary and general signification. Originally it was, and more correctly would be applied only to the peculiar characters designated *Runes*.

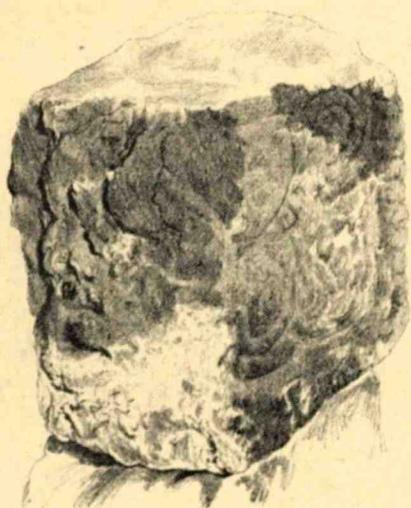
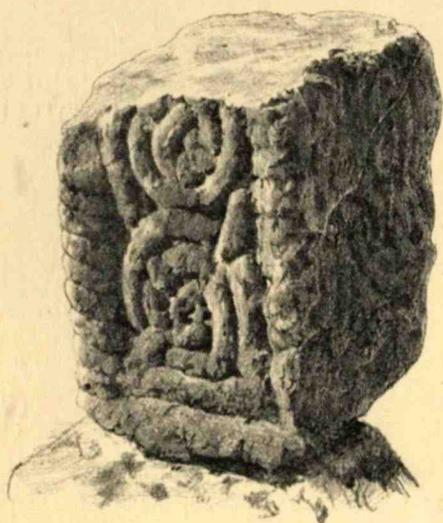
I.



PORTION OF SHAFT OF A RUNIC CROSS, IN RED SANDSTONE;
VIEWS OF THE BROADER SIDES.

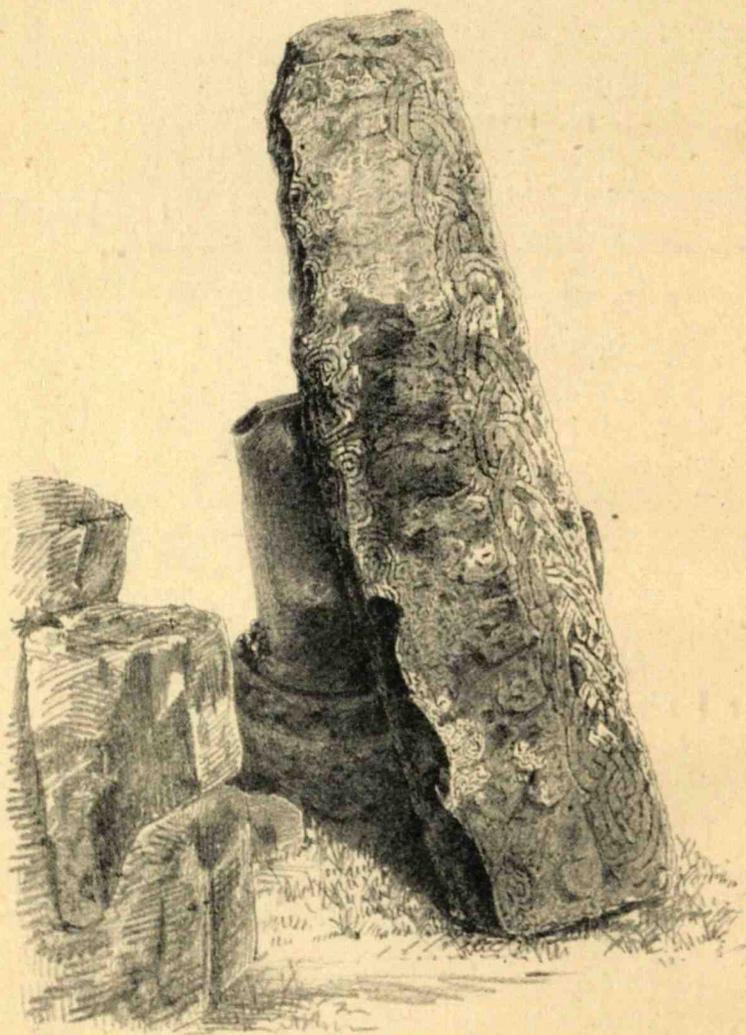


II.



PORTION OF SHAFT OF A RUNIC CROSS, IN RED SANDSTONE;
VIEWS OF THE NARROWER SIDES.

III.



LINTEL IN MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE,
(FRACTURED TOWARDS THE ENDS OF THE LOWER PORTION.)

yet not one presents either of the peculiar varieties apparent upon the two perfect sides of this little stone! It proves the marvellous and infinite variation to which the interlacing of wattles or rush-work is capable of being carried. The late Mr. Gilbert A. French, of Bolton, penned a very interesting brochure, well illustrated by examples, to prove this class of ornament to have originated wholly and solely in the osier or rush-work of our Scandinavian ancestry; but we are rather inclined to refer some among the more complicated ones to the Roman Pavements, which, even to our day, existing far more numerous than is generally supposed, offered through their then presence on, or but little below, the surface of the soil,* all the elaboration in Greek and other classic braids and frets of which art is capable. The nearest approach we have detected among the above varieties, appears upon a stone in the churchyard of Kirk Braddan, Isle of Man, but has fewer bands than the broader knot in Plate I, and only two ends appear.—*Vide Kinnebrock's Runic Monuments in the Isle of Man.* The angles of this stone are all *corded*, an ornament but very rarely appearing on contemporary remains.

PLATE III.

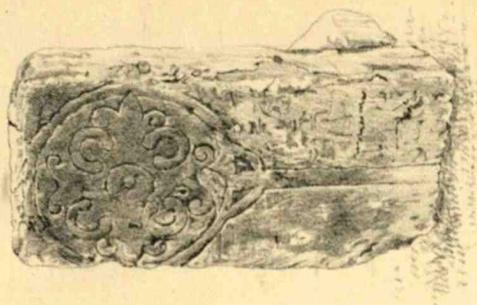
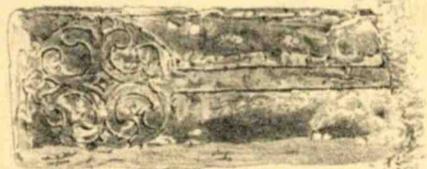
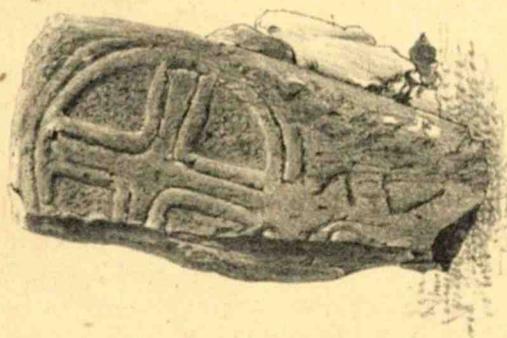
This exhibits a *Lintel*,† of a pale greenish white stone, polished on the faces, measuring $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length by $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in breadth, but towards either end, where purposely broken away, it is narrower. The block has, to all appearance, been put to some secondary purpose in the various alterations, “improvements,” and restorations this poor maltreated erection has undergone,—suffering many things at the hands of many physicians. It presents a uniform thickness

* The rise of land upon long-continued building sites is astonishing; the level of Rome is about 25 feet higher than in the time of the Republic, whilst the foundations of the oldest erections in this country are found to lie, in London 20 to 22 feet, York 16 to 18, and Aldborough, (long but a mere village,) 6 to 8 feet below the present surfaces respectively!

† Possibly originally the shaft of a cross.

of eight and a half inches at the top, but in the lower portion is bevelled off. Upon what we present as the front, a band of rather loosely-worked treble braid, five inches deep, is sculptured atop and carried throughout the length without any attempt at any border moulding. A second band of similar dimensions may be designated as bearing an imbricated or leaf pattern, but it so nearly coincides with a large longitudinal compartment of similarly arranged *phallic* objects, graven upon the outer wall of the Maison Carée at Nismes, that it might be held to have been copied therefrom. Below, appears the remains of a border pattern, much resembling, at first sight, that of the well-known classic loop and tassel, but in reality is a peculiar and uncommon variety of a chain-pattern, possibly one of Scandinavian origin. This lower portion of the lintel falls away at either side to a sharp curve, at the centre of which is a plain mould. At the back this succession of patterns is repeated, but their execution is far inferior to that of the side described. The whole ornamentation has been effected by a blunt-pointed chisel, resulting in a frosted appearance. It may be referred to as early a period as the ninth century. The material differs from the rest of the remains, which are composed of the new red (Keuper) sandstone, whilst the lintel is of a different formation, looking much like a hard limestone but feeling like a freestone. As, however, it was not uncommon in early Churches and Chapels to introduce into the new building a sculptured block from some much older and revered foundation, this curious lintel, whose ornamentation is so unusual we cannot recal a similar instance, may have been manipulated in some distant quarry. It is really a freestone of unusually fine and hard grain, the basis being quartz, with a slight admixture of lime; we have good reason for believing the block to have been quarried from some stone bed in Yorkshire, probably in the neighbourhood of Bradford or Halifax.

IV.



SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS, IN RED SANDSTONE;

V.



GROUPS OF MISCELLANEOUS SCULPTURED STONES;
IN RED SANDSTONE IX TO XIV CENTURY.

PLATE IV.

Three Headstones are here engraved—that to the left being the oldest, and, in connection with the early sculptures described, may be regarded as but little later than, or about, the tenth century. Atop, and in relief, is a variety of the voided cross, which, when composed of a simple double line, is by no means infrequent at a later period. In this instance, however, we find the design a plain moulded cross within an open one. Below, some ornamentation is visible, but so imperfect as scarcely to warrant conjecture of its original contour. This headstone remains four feet high and two feet and a half broad.

The lesser headstones belong to the thirteenth century, measuring respectively $2\frac{3}{4}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet by 10 inches. They are sculptured incusely with floriated crosses, in good design, closely resembling those upon the reverses of the silver pennies of our later Saxon and Danish kings. The art of engraving metals was singularly ahead of similar manipulations with stone, a fact well illustrated in this connexion; but a yet better example still remains, face outwards, in the wall at the west end of the chancel, and abutting upon the tower, at its north-eastern angle, having probably been built therein in early mediæval times, possibly at the erection of the tower. It is now, unfortunately, enclosed within the new roof of the chancel, lost to sight and all chance of reproduction here.

PLATE V.

Two groups of fragments serve to complement our series of illustrations of the early Saxon and Norman churches of West Kirkby, *i.e.*, if these can be considered as really distinct erections.

The uppermost group comprises two fragmentary sculptured

Crosses, possibly from headstones. The smaller of the two may have belonged to the Runic Cross, of which we have described and illustrated a lower portion (Plates I, II). Here, again, the corded ornament appears; it is upon the edge or outer rim of the cross,—a part of which being broken off, has been laid face outward for exhibition of its appearance. The angles of both crosses have been deeply chiselled, and becoming chipped behind, have now a perforated appearance. These are of ninth century work, and make a total of four pieces of sculpture of this early national date. The remaining fragments here, with rudely incised *limbs of crosses*, would appear to have been copied by rustic hands from old designs.

In the second group, a small Coffin to the right is also of early date, and interesting from its contents as found, but not preserved. It is 3 feet long and 15 inches wide, but diminishes downward. The receptacle measures $2\frac{3}{4}$ feet by 9 inches. The child's remains were discovered in concrete, the sand for which had been procured from the neighbouring sea beach, as small marine shells may yet be noticed attached to a patch of mortar within.

The other relics consist of a Male Head, broken below, 9 inches broad, and probably used as an antifix or corbel,—fragments of columns and tracery from windows; but these mediæval remains demand no especial notice here.

Of the oaken backs of Stalls, used by the officiating priests, about a score were disclosed during the restoration; these run upward into rudely formed fleur-de-lis or "poppy-heads."

The origin of the designation of the Hundred—*Wirral*—has never been satisfactorily explained, even if any studied attempt has been made in this direction. It was not unnatural to seek for the derivation in some early local appellation; but none such, we believe, has been noticed within

its boundaries, except Willaveston, which we discard, and consider all attempts have hitherto proved abortive. The limits of the division in question—the *Cilguri* of the Ancient Britons—during Saxon times must, however, have been different from those of a later period; this being evidenced by the very earliest known mention of Wirral, which appears in the *English Chronicle*. A late writer in the *Saturday Review** thus introduces it, but for other purposes, in a very interesting and informing article, headed “CHESTER”:

“The desolation and renewal of the City of the Legions, are facts which admit of no doubt;—we read expressly that in 894, a Danish army, followed by the forces of King Alfred and the Ealdorman Æthelred, found shelter within its forsaken walls and found means also to defend them during the whole winter. The way in which the Chronicler describes the desolate site is remarkable. The event happened ‘*on aure wæstre ceastre on wirhealum; seo is Ligeceastre haten.*’ The Roman city was then a ‘*wæste chester,*’—the future proper name, curiously enough, being incidentally used as an appellative, but the ‘*wæste chester*’ still kept the memory of what it had been; it was *Legeceaster*, the City of the Legions, as indeed it already was in the days of Bæda.”

This application of *wæstre* is founded on a misapprehension; it simply means western.† It is, however, in regard to the derivation of the name of the hundred that we desire now to record a note for the consideration of Topographers. If Wirral included the city of Chester, as we have just seen, the immediate neighbourhood would likewise belong to it; and at no great distance, and absolutely abutting upon its south-eastern border, stands a desolated ancient chapel, in the midst

* November 19th, 1870.

† The quotation is from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, cir. A.D. 894, in *Monum. Hist. Brit.*, I, 367.

of an isolated hamlet now known as Werven. Let us, through a tabulated form, compare the successive designations of the Hundred and of the Manor, the latter an appanage of the Convent of St. Werburgh, from the time of Hugh Lupus downward.*

<i>Hundred.</i>	<i>Manor.</i>
Weahaldus.	
Wirhaelum } (894.)	Wivevrene (<i>Domesday</i> .)
Wirhalum } (<i>Domesday</i> .)	Wervena (Hugh Lupus's Charter to St. Werburgh's.)
Wirehall (foreste de Wirehall, <i>Harl. MS.</i> , 2115.)	Wyvir (Saxton's Map.)
Wyrral (Drayton's <i>Polyolbion</i> .)	Wirum (Overton's Map.)
Wyrall (Ed. I. Ormerod II. 189)	Wervin (Ormerod 1819.)
Wyre Hall (Overton's Map.)	Wirven (Teesdale's Map.)
Worold (1636.)†	
Werrale (Lysons's Map.)	
Wirrall (18th century.)	
Wirral (19th century.)	

NOTE.—In the *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Cheshire*, published by F. White and Co., Sheffield, 1860, this place is not once mentioned!

Can it be that the coincidences here apparent, especially between the *Wirhalum*, a Saxon dative plural form, and *Wirum*, the natural contraction, are purely accidental? May they not point to the probable existence hereabout in Saxon times, of some *Wireheal* or *Wyre Hall*, giving name to the division of which its demesne formed a part? The nominative of Wirhealen would be *Wirhealas*, which analogy would dictate as *the name of a tribe occupying the district*.

There can be little doubt but that the Cheshire patronymic *Worrall* is also a corruption of Wyre Hall.

* Ormerod's *History*, II, 423-4.

† Poem, "*Iler Lancastrense*," 1636. Edited by Mr. Cunningham, for the Chetham Society.

THE ISLAND OF ST. HILDEBURGHE.

Of the island of St. Hildeburghe, now the islets of Hilbre, the history is yet to be written. A sketch of its story has strong bearings upon our subject. What is known of the existing remains of its early development, has, with little exception, resulted from pure accident. Much may yet be discovered, even within the very limited area of its soil.*

The islets now consist of Hilbre proper, the "Middle Island," and "The Eye," *vulgo* "ee," which is doubtlessly a traditional appellation, derived from the Scandinavian *Ea*, a water, generally one formed by a river before conjunction with the sea. Eye, on the other hand, is clearly derivable from *Ig* (pron. *ey*—Gaelic *Ynys*) an island, as also in the case of "Ireland's Eye," off Howth, Bay of Dublin. From one or other of these we must look for the origin of the modern name of the watering-place, *Hoylake*, now threatening to include not merely much of Little Meols and Hoose, but the western part of Great Meols. In confirmation of these remarks we give its successive appellations,—*Lacus "de Hildburg Eye,"* (*i.e.* Lake of the Island),—Heye-pool,—Hey-pol,—Heye-lake,—Hoylake.

Early Condition.

Lying off the south-western angle of the coast of Wirral, the larger islands not only present a pleasing contrast to the level tameness of the main, especially upon their western sides in rocky boldness, headlands and caves, but prove an invaluable bulwark against the encroachments of the sea.

Appreciating its importance in this connexion, as also for its utility as the residence and depôt of the Superintendent of Buoys, &c., of the River Dee under the Trinity Board,

* "Here, divided from the land," says King in his *Vale Royal*, "lies that little barren island called Hilbree;" but from personal experience we can testify to deep and excellent soil, remaining wholly uncultivated, and abounding with curious remains, on Hilbre proper.

and its convenience for a self-registering tide gauge and lifeboat house, the Liverpool Docks and Harbour Board, having purchased the islands from the Dean and Chapter of Chester, about 1856, has shewn great wisdom in repairing Hilbre proper through protecting the more friable portions of the cliffs by excellent masonry. Should the idea—a very easily practicable one—of making a *ship-canal* through the Great Float and the Western Leasowes ever be carried out, Hilbre will prove of incalculable importance.

It now constitutes an extra-parochial liberty of the parish of St. Oswald in Chester.

Before, and probably long subsequently to, the advent of the Romans, these islands constituted an isthmus or promontory of Wirral. From its marine position it would be a place of frequent resort of the primitive fishermen in their oyster-boats or *coracles*. Mr. Graham H. Hills, Marine Surveyor of the Port of Liverpool, is of opinion that Hilbre was a station for observation from very early times, every craft from the higher part of the estuary being visible, whether an east wind carried it by Chester bar and along the Welsh coast, or a west wind through the Hoyle lake and the Horse channel to the sea.*

Roman-British Development.

Mr. Chas. Hardwick, author of the *History of Preston*, has stated his profound conviction, one in which we thoroughly unite, that all our neighbouring coasts were utilised by the energetic Latin race whilst here,—that all the chief estuaries were furnished with *lighthouses*, as the promontories were with *landmarks*. Take the Lancashire and Cheshire seaboard, a *Pharos* would be thus sustained at the mouth of the estuary of Wyre of Ribble and of Dee—that of the Mersey, despite of old and late assertions to the contrary, having at

* *Ancient Meols.*

this era been only a marsh-water, as its name implies ; it has been a fresh-water pool inland—and later, a marsh seaward. Those who advocate a different opinion know little of the geological features of its mouth, as displayed at low water, even in quite recent times.

The former promontories of Lytham, Formby and Great Meols would be furnished with marks. Recent investigations tend most powerfully to confirm the supposition, for we have identified traces of Roman occupation, if not near Lytham, approaching, and at Formby and Great Meols, whilst there is every reason to conclude a Pharos existed near the mouths of the Wyre and Ribble and upon Hilbre.

The earliest lighthouses of which we have any record were erected on insular positions.

The first seems to have been reared by Lesches, the author of the "*Little Iliad*," about the ninth Olympiad, upon the promontory of Sigeum, at the entrance to the Hellespont ; it is figured in the Iliac Tables.* The huge turret-shaped building, erected upon the island of Pharos, off Alexandria, served not only as a model for future architects of similar structures, but gave a generic name to its successors in Roman times. The Emperor Claudian caused one to be constructed at Ostia ; it was the most remarkable upon the whole Italian seaboard, being situate upon a breakwater or artificial island, which occupied the mid space between the two huge moles that formed the harbour.† Its remains were visible until the fifteenth century. A fine Pharos, as Strabo records, was constructed of stone at Capio, entrance to the harbour of Menestheus, the modern Puerto de Santa Maria. Standing upon a rocky headland, all but surrounded by the sea, it served excellently to guide vessels through the dangerously shallow channels off the mouth of the Guadalquiver. The

* Lighthouses and Lightships, 1870, p. 13.

† Suetonius, Claudian, 20.

Pharos on the chalk down above Dover, is almost the only one in this country of which remains exist dating from the Roman era : it is not supposed to have continued in use later than the Norman Conquest.

The fact is of no small importance in this connexion, that as Ancient-British instruments, in manipulated flint, are associated, as regards site, with Roman coins and other objects upon the Meols beach ; so upon Hilbre, at a distance of four miles, *and nowhere between*, we find relics of both eras ! The flints are chiefly to be met with on the beach of the little Eye, washed out from the sole remains of the rapidly-diminishing bank (surmounted by the landmark), and in the face of which examples may at times be found protruding.

Certainly the isthmus would be utilised, commanding as it did the great water approach to the important city of Deva, whose walls were laved by every ocean tide. The foundations and other remains of its Roman *buildings* would, we may well suppose, be availed of in the erection of the Christian Church, as at Hexham, Lanercost, Reculver, York, Aldborough, and hundreds of other instances in our country. As it is, the few remains of such occupation, yet reserved to our day, are confined to coins and personal ornaments. These include—

A bronze Fibula, imperfect, but which has been of larger dimensions than any example found on the main ; it has been enamelled in blue upon the breast of the bowed portion.

A second, of smaller size.

Buckles, of bronze, with bevelled frames and in several sizes. Objects of this class, dating from the Roman period, are very rare.

Bead, in glass, of large size and rich cobalt-blue colour, inlaid with a wavy band of yellow, entwined by a thread of green, the latter composed of opaque enamels. This is a superior specimen of its class ; it was exuded with soil from what is believed to be the deepest rabbit-burrow upon the

island, lying in the rich earth formerly the *Cemetery of the Saxon Church*. The Roman beads, especially when large and showy in colour, were in great demand by the Saxon ladies, who highly prized them, and justly, as far superior in quality and colour to those of northern make. They were especially selected for the gaud or central bead of the necklace. Many excellent examples may be seen in the Faussett Collection, obtained from Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries, all of which, it will be remembered, were used in the earlier or *Pagan* times; nevertheless, this beautiful bead may have been worn by some lady connected with the early Church, possibly St. Hildeburghe herself.

Anglo-Saxon Period.

We now come to the era of the Christianized Saxons, and the erection of the Church dedicated to Saint Hildeburghe.

As we have seen, the earliest recorded designation of the original island was *Hildeburgh-eye*, the former part of which all must acknowledge to be a proper name. The lady in question would be either proprietress or the saint to which the earlier Church was dedicated; and we consider excellent analogical grounds exist for the latter assumption. The name, as elsewhere, would naturally be transferred, in course of time, from the Church to the whole island as it became more thoroughly insulated, and the *Saint* of the ancient appellation has accidentally dropped out of use, as in many other cases. Cheshire is the very home of corruptions and contractions of names. In a manuscript written by Sir Peter Leycester, now at Peover Hall, this author enumerates no less than *one hundred and thirty-one combinations of letters*, used in the more or less corrupted forms of *Mesnilverin*, at present written Mainwaring.* Our own pages supply curious instances of the persistent and increasing tendency to contraction.

* Mortimer's *History of the Hundred of Wirral*, 1847. Introd. xiv.

A well-known local writer, our friend Mr. Joseph Boulton, eschewing all such considerations as *inconvenient*, refuses to believe in the existence of any such person as Hildeburgh, plainly stating his belief that it is a mere relic of a legend, invented by the monks of the "cell" here, to enhance the attractiveness of the island, for devotees. He wholly confounds the early Anglo-Saxon Church, of which such clear mention is made, with that of the mediæval convent dedicated to "Our Ladye." The redundant scepticism of this gentleman has, however, on many other points thrown him into direct antagonism with antiquaries, some of which, bearing as they do on the features of this district, ought in candour to be noted.

For an unknown number of centuries past the encroachments of the sea upon the beach of Wirral has continued to expose, by the denuding of their covering of clay and sand, fresh stumps of trees, many of considerable size. This locality has long borne the designation of *sub-marine forest*, but the term is incorrect and misleading. Along the range of shore between Mr. Shaw's house and the western end of the Leasowe embankment, an area, varying from twenty to thirty feet, may at all times be noticed at ebb tide abounding with tree stumps; to seaward some as regularly disappear as others are cleared of the overlying sand landward. This is the upper arboreal stratum; a second, less numerously studded with trees, lies below, the two being separated by a deep bed of blue clay. These have too often been confounded with *peat*, which is composed almost wholly of *sphagnum*, whereas the mass, in which the stumps and occasional trunks of trees appear, is wholly arboreal or nearly so. In the higher portion, leaves and roots of the common *flag* appear, a later growth, when the wood was decaying in the marsh, as may now be seen from the railway beyond the Point of Ayr, on the opposite shore of Flintshire. The rest of the composition of the

stratum is purely arboreal, roots, stems or trunks, branches, leaves, fruit, of shrubs and forest trees, all are here—all blackened through long decay in water, and including oak, beech, larch, chesnut, hazel, and probably others as yet undetected, the larch predominating. All are naturally upright, yet Mr. Boulton asserts that these innumerable trees have never grown where found, but, dislodged by flood from inland mosses, have been deposited as sediment upon our shores! Mr. Charles Potter concurs in their non-growth *in situ*, and bolsters up his belief by specious assertions, but these have landed him in such a quagmire of fallacies and misconception of palpable facts, that his theory is becoming quite a by-word among local students. We had hoped that, before ventilating his peculiar theories, this gentleman would have gained a more lengthened experience of the peculiar features of this beach; but unfortunately he has not only written papers for the Geological Society, but rushed into print with crotchets which his geological friends are fain to ignore, and which all archæology is “dead” against. These arboreal strata are simply in an unmineralized stage, an early one in the history of a coal field. They occupy, at varying depths below the surface and wholly disconnected with the modern “mosses,” the area of all the lower-lying lands of Lancashire and Cheshire.

These woods were of very early growth, especially the lower one, and even the upper had flourished and decayed long anterior to the advent of the Romans in this district, as is clearly demonstrated by the industrial products of the Roman-British era, which are invariably found lying upon the surface of the upper bed on the receding of the tides, washed out from the blue clay above, which is here but a few inches in thickness, whilst between the arboreal beds below it has been found to measure above two feet. These facts admit of no honest denial, but Mr. Boulton confuses two distinct classes of relics when he sneers at “many thousands of Roman objects”

as said to have been found here. They do not number as many hundreds; nor is it likely, when the very site of the Roman settlement has long been washed away. As supplying some idea of the destruction still in progress on this beach, we have been credibly informed that a breadth of not less than twelve feet of the bank, landward, fell away during the late spring tides! The Dove Mark has necessarily been re-erected three, if not four, times during the past twelve or fifteen years.

Mr. Boulton also denies the former existence of a second Church in the parish of Kirkby in Walley (Wallasey), despite Bishop Gastrell's assertion, which has already been referred to.

Again, although it would be no unreasonable supposition that a *burial ground* was attached to this recorded church, the "*Kirkway*" to which still retained its designation to a late period, Mr. Boulton laughs the idea to scorn, and disputes the account of its discovery as reported by the late Mr. Alex. Nimmo and others, upon the occasion of a survey for a suggested ship-canal to connect the rivers Mersey and Dee.* Our own belief in the desolated graveyard has been confirmed by the statement of a neighbour, who, in company with a friend, chanced to take a stroll down here at low water, after an unusual spell of north-easterly winds, which had cleared off the sand to such an extent that they were quite astonished at suddenly finding themselves among tombstones, short headstones, and longer recumbent ones. No inscriptions were noticed, but yet some might be graven, for such would not be searched for by country people. Only those who have had a fair amount of experience in perambulating this beach can have any conception of the varying accretions of sand by different winds. It is well known to fishermen that wrecks such as the St. Andrew, lost here many

* *Vide* Report by T. Telford, Robert Stevenson, and Alex. Nimmo, 16th May, 1828, Appendix C.

years ago, are, at some ebbs of spring tide, four or five feet above the surface, and at others all but invisible, if not wholly so.

Lastly, Mr. Boulton asserts that the "church of the island," given with others by Robert de Roelent to the Convent of St. Ebrulf, was really that "Kirkby in Walley" (Wallasey), although the charters of St. Werburg distinctly say "Chapel of Hildeburg-eye." Even had we no such record, the probabilities would all lie in favour of Hilbre. Historians are all agreed on the point; and had we erred, it would have been in good company. There can be no doubt, however, that Wallasey, as its name implies (woody island), was insulated in early times, but certainly not so lately as the Norman era. Wirral itself is conjectured to have formed part of the site of one of the five fortified woods in the Sistuntian Districts, belonging to the Brigantes, to which they retired when pursued by their enemies. This forest is said to have extended from the Ribble to the Dee, and the names of various places bear out this belief, as *Woodside*, Birken-haven (i.e. *Birchen*),—Birket-stream,—*Wood-church*,—and Wallasey (a grove or wood on the island).*

Had we Mr. Boulton's apparent convictions we should be disposed to throw all our county histories into the fire and concoct others more in consonance with our paramount opinions. As it is, we distinctly and firmly decline to be led aside into this gentleman's sometimes very plausible and ingenious, but delusive and dangerous labyrinths.

We are unacquainted with any other religious foundation claiming this Saint as patroness; but *Hilburghausen* is the name of a town in central Germany, which, once the capital of the Duchy of *Saxe Hilburghausen* (afterwards united to Saxe Meiningen), lies upon the river Werra, twenty miles from Coburg, and has over 5,000 inhabitants.

* *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Wirral Hundred.* 1866.

The name, as orthographically rendered Hildeburgha by historians,—a latinised form of the Saxon Hildeburghe,—does not occur among the multitude recorded in Dr. Husenbeth's *Emblems of Saints*—a most useful manual.

In the Old English Calendar one would have expected to find it, but once again we turn to Chambers's *Book of Days*. Here appears a notice of a *Saint Idaburga or Edburge of Mercia, virgin, of about 7th century*.* Evidently the orthography has been rather loose, but taking all the circumstances into consideration, it seems highly probable that Idaburga, or Ildaburga, and Hildeburgha were one and the same individual. At any rate the last name was destined henceforward to be associated with these Islands, corrupted as it is from St. Hildeburgh's Eye,† Hildburg-eye, Hildbury,‡ Hillbyri,§ Hilbury, Hilburge, Hilburg, Hilbery, Hillbree, Hilbree, into the shortest of the short, the Hilbre of our day.

All the known history of St. Hildeburgha's Church is so interwoven with that of the "*mother one*" of West Kirkby that we have already supplied the record, until we come to the time of King Richard, after the release of the convent of St. Ebrulf (or Evroul, as it is later rendered) when a separation was effected in this wise.

" This convent released it to the Abbey of St. Werburg
 " with that Church, under the name of Capella de Hildburgh-
 " eye, or the Isle of Hildburggha, from which the present
 " name is corrupted; and William Fitz-Richard, rector of
 " Kirkby about the time of Richard I, after Kirkby had
 " passed to the Abbey of Basingwerk from that of St. Wer-
 " burg, by a deed preserved in the Chartulary of the latter
 " abbey, *quit-claimed* the isle Hildburgheye, with its chapel
 " and appurtenances, to the monks of that house, reserving
 " only the right of sepulture to the *mother church* of Kirkby.||

* Vol. i, p. 798. † Chart. of St. Werburg, p. 23; Harl. MSS., 1065.
 ‡ Lyson's *Cheshire*, p. 619. § *Leland*, vol. v., 55. || *Ibid.*

“The cell which the monks of St. Werburgh established here, had a grant* of 3*l.* issuing from little Meoles by Robert de Lancelyn about the time of Richard I. William Lancelyn, his son, quit-claimed also to the same monks for ever, the lake (meaning the fishery) of Hoyle lake adjacent, under the description of ‘lacus de Hildburgheye, que vocatur Heye pol.’ The same William Lancelyn gave also a message in Little Meoles, which grant was confirmed by Robert Grosvenor and Margery his wife, ‘dominos ‘capitales.’”†

Leland observes of this island, that “at the floode it is all environed with water as an isle, and then the trajectus is a quarter of a mile over, and four fadome deep of water, and at ebbe a man may go over the sand. It is about a mile in compace, and the ground is sandy and hath conies. There was a celle of monks of Chester, and a pilgrimage of our lady of Hillbyri.”§

A similar account occurs in the introduction to Holinshed's *Chronicles*.

“It [Hilbre] was included within the parish of their Church of St. Oswald, to which it still continues attached, although it is twenty miles distant from any other portion of the parish.

“Like the Holy Islands of Lindisfarne, it was the object of superstitious pilgrimage; and like those islands alternately joined to or separated from the contiguous mainland by the variation of the tide.

“With the flow and ebb it still
Varies from continent to isle,
Dry shod o'er sands twice every day,
The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
Twice every day the waves efface
Of staves and sandal'd feet the trace.”

Marmion.

* Chart. of St. Werburgh, p. 23; Harl. MSS., 1965. + *Ibid.* † *Ibid.*
§ Vol. v, 55.

“The sanctity of the shrine of Hilbree is said to have been
 “manifested by a miraculous interposition of St. Werburgh, in
 “favour of Richard Earl of Chester, in the life of his sainted
 “patroness. The earl was performing a solemn pilgrimage to
 “St. Winifred’s Well, on the opposite shore of Flintshire, when
 “he was attacked by a band of Welsh insurgents, and driven
 “into the Abbey of Basingwerk, which seemed likely to afford
 “him only a temporary security. In this dilemma he addressed
 “himself to St. Werburgh, who is said to have instantly parted
 “the water of the Dee by the formation of new sand banks,
 “over which his constable, the Baron of Halton, marched
 “troops to the relief of his lord: these banks have since
 “retained the name of the Constable’s Sands.

“Of this cell there are not the slightest remains. The
 “island is at present used as the situation of two large land-
 “marks to guide vessels into the Hoyle Lake. A light was
 “maintained here for the same purpose at a very early period,
 “to which John Scott Earl of Chester contributed 10s. per
 “annum, 20 Henry III.*

Michael Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, thus alludes to Hilbre
 and its position: he terms it the “Corner of Werrall.”

Mersey for more state

Assuming broader banks him selfe so proudly beares,
 That at his sterne approach, extended Wyrall feares,
 That (what betwixt his floods of Mersey and the Dee)
 In very little time devoured he might be;
 Out of the foaming surge, till Hilbre lifts his head,
 To let the foreland see how richly he had sped.
 Which Mersey cheeres so much, that with a smiling brow,
 He fawnes on both these floods, their amorous armes that throw.

A monk of St. Werburgh’s, named Bradshaw, writing in
 the fifteenth century, when alluding to the above incident,
 represents the neighbouring waters,—long known in con-

* Stone’s MSS., Chester Cathedral.

nexion with the rest of the estuary as *Chester water*,—as perfectly free for all craft during the twelfth.

The constable congregate in all goodly haste,
 A myghtye stronge host, in theyr best arraye,
 Towards Hilburgee on iorney ridyng fast,
 Trusting upon shippes, all them to convaye,
 Which was a *riall rode*, that tyme, night and daye,
 And when they thedyr came, shipping none there was,
 To carie all them over in convenient space.

Life of St. Werburge (p. 108). *Chetham Society*.

Dr. Ormerod acknowledges the absence of any remains of the mediæval "cell;" but before addressing ourselves to this subject, the relics of *St. Hildeburga's Church* and times claim emphatic notice.

About the year 1853 the head of a fine Cross was discovered by the late Mr. Thomas Hughes, keeper of the telegraph station: it is of the local red sandstone, and displays a cross of rather unusual character, which has been illustrated in our Transactions,* and likewise in *Ancient Meols*.† Dr. Hume supposes this stone, which dates from the 9th or 10th century, to be identical with the cross represented upon Camden's map of the island, and marking the site of the holy place. It no doubt stood in the ancient *Cemetery* and near the *Church*, a large number of the flag-stones from the floor of which were found and utilised by the late Mr. Stephen Barnett, Superintendent of the Buoys of the River Dee, and long a resident here. In his garden was a square excavation in the rock, said to have been used by the monks as a bath; it is now used as a greenhouse! The cross is similar in design to several remaining in Ireland and the Isle of Man, except in its circular border, which closely approximates to a variety of the Greek *meandros*, and is of rare occurrence, as we have only been able to discover it (but associated with other details) upon the following crosses, all situate in the Isle of Man, viz.,

* Vol. xv., 1862-3, p. 233.

† p. 267.

Ballagh churchyard, with *Runes*; Kirkandrew's Green, at the church gates; Garden of the Vicarage, Jurby. Taking the whole design, the nearest we have seen is figured in Kinnebrock's *Runic Monuments of the Isle of Man*, No. 10. This cross is situate by the side of the high road, one and a half miles from Ramsey, toward Kirk Maughold; it is formed of freestone, is five feet in height, width two feet eight inches. Another relic of the early Hilbre Church we found several feet under the sod near the site of the cross; it is a piece of a cornice-moulding or pilaster in stucco, and of excellent composition, or the alkalis of the soil would have long since disintegrated it. Stones, well squared which have plainly belonged to a superior erection for so isolated a position as this, in considerable number, remain as foundation, &c., of a gig and cart house; these may either have formed part of the Convent or its Chapel, successor of the Church of St. Hildeburga.

Turning to the surrounding open ground, a space containing nearly a quarter of an acre, is supposed, and with good reason, to have formed the Cemetery of the Church and Chapel in succession. It was here that the Cross was found, and in September 1864, we had the pleasure of uncovering an interesting sepulchral stone of the 11th century, the upper end of which displays "a plain cross, limbed at the extremities and continued through two concentric circles, a pellet occupies the centre and others the angles of the cross. The whole is bordered by an outer bead at the edge of the block, the dimensions of which are,—length, five feet four inches; breadth at head, twenty-one inches; shoulders, twenty-two inches; foot, seventeen inches; thickness varying from five to six inches. The weight was found to be so great that removal at the time was quite out of the question."*

This horizontal sepulchral stone still remains *in situ*, and

* *Vide Trans.* vol. xvii., p. 271, for particulars of this discovery.

whilst lately uncovering its top to shew the design to a friend, we found on a slight examination at its north-western side that a drain, at some very uncertain period, had been carried thus far, and still caused wetness in a bed of sand here accumulated. All around and below, the soil proves rich, and thus contrasts, strongly with the poverty at the surface, filled as it is with *debris* of former buildings. This soil is enriched by no inconsiderable amount of decayed animal matter, and human remains devoid of any trace of receptacle, of all ages, and lying at every possible angle. These are not improbably the remains of persons found drowned upon the beach and who have been interred in the handiest spot where a fair depth of soil favoured the dismal operation. At the distance of about a hundred feet to the southward of the site of the horizontal stone and its late neighbour "the cross," now in possession of Dr. Hume, is the burrow mentioned whence the fine Roman Bead was extracted by the rabbit. Smaller Beads, barrel-shaped and blue in colour, have been found by Miss Hughes in her late father's garden; *beads of this shape we only meet with among ancient Egyptian and Saxon remains.*

The soil of Hilbre proper is replete with *debris*, no doubt of various ages, and yet mediæval objects are very rarely noticed. The foundations, like those of the common houses or cottages of ancient Meols, are found "puddled" with blue clay from the beach, in place of mortar.

Of the pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin Mary here erected by the monks of the convent or "cell" within their chapel, above mentioned by the mediæval historians, we know of only a single relic, but it is one of considerable interest, having without doubt been obtained, *i.e.*, purchased, at a shrine in the centre of France, and lost by the devotee either upon journeying to, or returning from our island shrine. We quote from our article, intituled "Seals and Pilgrims' Signs," com-

municated to "*Ancient Meols*"* :—" Plate XXVII, fig. 6. " Fragment (the upper portion) of a sign of ' Our Ladye of " ' Roc St. Amadour,' in lead, date 13th to 14th century. " Several perfect examples of differing types of this interest- " ing sign have occurred in France, and, connected as they " are with a once highly-celebrated continental shrine, now " utterly neglected and all but unknown, we cannot do better " than transfer to our pages, from the *Collectanea Antiqua*,† " all the information which appears to have hitherto been " gleaned respecting it. Although the first recorded instance " of the occurrence of the sign in this country, it yet proves " the widely-extended fame of the old Hermitage (?) chapel. " It is in the collection of the writer of this chapter.

" An oval plate, with a representation of the Virgin, " crowned, nimbed, and holding a sceptre, seated with the " Infant Jesus in her lap, and inscribed ✠ ' Sigillum Beate " ' Marie, de Roc Amador.' M. Hucher correctly assigns " the date to the 13th century, or, possibly, to the early part " of the 14th. An example, in larger module, is etched by " Mr. W. H. King (from my own collection) in the ' Publi- " cations of the Antiquarian Etching Club,' part III, 1853, " and is now in the British Museum. It appears to be of the " 12th century, and differs somewhat in detail from M. " Hucher's; the nimbus of the Virgin is surrounded by a " shaded pattern, that of the infant shews three points of a " cross, and the embossed legs of the chair terminate upwards " in fleur de lys. They both have been cut from the matrices " of seals, and adapted for sewing upon the dress.

" ' Roc Amadour,' M. Hucher tells us, ' is a celebrated " ' place of pilgrimage, situate in the middle of the ancient " ' province of Quercy (a division of Guienne in Aquitaine), " ' at eighteen kilometers north-east of Gourdon. Placed in " ' the bosom of a site exceedingly picturesque, it seems sus-

“ ‘ pended between heaven and earth. Roc Amadour owes its
 “ ‘ renown partly to the worship paid, from the most remote
 “ ‘ times, to the sacred Virgin, in a particular chapel of the
 “ ‘ Church of that locality, and partly to the relics of St.
 “ ‘ Amadour, which have been preserved there for ages, and of
 “ ‘ which some remains are still shewn. The chapel is of the
 “ ‘ simplest construction and its altar is of wood. The effigy
 “ ‘ of the Virgin is small, and painted black. The origin of
 “ ‘ the pilgrimage of St. Amadour is lost in the night of time,
 “ ‘ the history of the sacred personage himself is not well
 “ ‘ understood, some confounding him with the Zaccheus of
 “ ‘ the New Testament, and others with St. Amateur, Bishop
 “ ‘ of Auxerre.

“ ‘ St. Louis, convalescent from a long sickness, made, in
 “ ‘ 1244, a pilgrimage to our Lady of Roc-Amadour, as did
 “ ‘ Charles le Bel and John of Bohemia in 1634 ; and in 1463
 “ ‘ the weak and superstitious Louis XI bestowed at her shrine
 “ ‘ a share of his devotions, carrying away with him, upon his
 “ ‘ hat, we may suppose, one of the leaden signs of which he
 “ ‘ was so fond. Friends and enemies equally respected the
 “ ‘ pilgrims who carried these tokens ; and there is on record
 “ ‘ an account of an Englishman who had been captured by
 “ ‘ the soldiers of Cahors, having been set at liberty imme-
 “ ‘ diately he was recognised as a pilgrim of our Lady of
 “ ‘ Roc-Amadour.* The English acted in like manner ; but
 “ ‘ to render this privilege available, it was necessary to carry
 “ ‘ the particular sign, called in the Latin deed *sportula* or
 “ ‘ *sportella*, bearing on one side the image of the Virgin,
 “ ‘ and on the other that of St. Amadour. The people of the
 “ ‘ town manufactured them in a somewhat different manner,
 “ ‘ introducing the Veronica, but these were not so esteemed as
 “ ‘ the others. The Bishop of Tulle, as Abbé of Roc-Amadour,
 “ ‘ granted the right to the former, and forbade the inhabitants

* *L'Abbé de Fouilhiac Chron. Manusc. du Quercy à l'an 1399.*

“to make them. But they sold both kinds to make a livelihood in those troublous times. At last it happened, in 1425, that the Bishop permitted the inhabitants to sell both these kinds of signs during two years.”



Signe of Our Ladye of Roc St. Amadour ;
A Relique of "Ye Pilgrimage of Our Ladye of Hilbyri."

Col. H. Eroyd Smith.