

Cambridge University Press
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THE ANCIENT CROSS SHAFTS AT BEWCASTLE AND RUTHWELL

ENLARGED FROM THE REDE LECTURE

delivered before the University of Cambridge on 20 May 1916

BY

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With Three Photogravures and Twenty-three Illustrations

Cambridge:
at the University Press
1916

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107536586

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First published 1916

First paperback edition 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-53658-6 Paperback

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PREFACE

WHEN the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge invited me to undertake the responsibility of delivering the Rede Lecture before the University, it was natural that I should hesitate about saying yes. During my twenty-nine years of adult residence at the University, I had heard great men deliver this annual lecture. They began with Airy, Tyndall, Thomson, Ruskin, Max Müller, Huggins, Lockyer, Freeman, and they ended with Huxley, Galton, Lubbock, Seeley, Stokes, and Jebb. Only the common-sense advice of an experienced friend with whom I was staying averted the inevitable no.

In selecting a subject, it seemed right to turn to the branch of study which had been the subject of my lectures for five years in Cambridge when a Professorship had been conferred upon me unsought in 1888. In that branch of study, the Art and Archaeology mainly of our own land, two great monuments stood out very clear in my memory, and I selected them as my subject.

I soon found that since I lectured on these monuments last century the attention of experts had been fixed upon them, and there was an unexpectedly large amount of material to be examined. I had been called away to a Canonry at St Paul's, a Bishopric at Stepney, and a Bishopric at Bristol, and the work of those offices had filled time and thoughts to the almost complete exclusion of the old fascination. Further, I had parted with a very large proportion of my books on leaving a large house at Bristol for a small house at Kensington. But it was too late to draw back. The criticisms and defences of the early date of the two monuments in question had raised all manner of supplementary points, and to deal with all or nearly all of them in an hour was evidently impossible. Accordingly I did what I could to cover the ground, and on May 20, 1916, I read such parts of what I had written as were fairly representative and occupied about 55 minutes. The Essay to which this is the Preface gives the whole.

Three publications must be mentioned, all of them full of information on the subject, all of them opposed to my view. In 1912, Albert S. Cook, Professor of the English Language and Literature in Yale University, published at the Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, an octavo book of 150 pages on *The Date of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses*. The book is full of interest, and abounds with admirable photographs of the remarkable monuments. It is a book for which an archaeologist may be grateful, and in which those who are not archaeologists may find much interest. That I differ *toto coelo* from the writer only enhances my gratitude for the book. I feel sure that Professor Cook will not misunderstand my non-apologetic manner of treatment of the views which his position and knowledge so fully entitle him to express.

In 1914 Professor Cook added to the debt we owe him a second book of 150 pages, *Some accounts of the Bewcastle Cross between the years 1607 and 1861*, New York, Henry Holt and Company. This useful publication completes our knowledge of the earlier literature on the subject.

In the same year 1914 Dr James King Hewison, of Rothesay, published a very handsome volume, beautifully and copiously illustrated, on *The Runic Roods of Ruthwell and Bewcastle*, with a *Short History of the Cross and Crucifix in Scotland*, Glasgow, John Smith and Son, Ltd. The book is full of illustrative and interesting matter. Like Professor Cook, Dr Hewison assigns a late date to the Crosses. His work has evidently been a labour of love.

Among books that bear helpfully on the general subject I must mention *The Arts in Early England*, Murray, by Professor G. Baldwin Brown the Watson Gordon Professor at Edinburgh, four volumes of which have appeared; and *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, by Mr O. M. Dalton of the British Museum.

In the pages of the *Burlington Magazine* there are articles which all who wish to study the subject should read. Sir Martin Conway provides four of these articles, in volumes XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV; Professor Lethaby two, XXI and XXIII; Professor Baldwin Brown one, XXIII; Commendatore Rivoira one, XXI; and Messrs Forbes and Dickins one, XXV. There is in these articles a very large preponderance in favour of an early date, not without frank recognition of difficulties.

Preface

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After I had undertaken the Rede Lecture, Sir Henry Howorth sent me a pamphlet of 19 octavo pages on "The Great Crosses of the 7th Century in Northern England," reprinted from the *Archaeological Journal*. I have postponed the pleasure of reading it until after my Essay is published. It is sure to be full of information and ingenuity, and I preferred to write independently of Sir Henry's work.

I have to thank Mr Tassell of Carlisle for a photograph of the Bewcastle Vine Scrolls, Plate VI, 11, and Mr Gibson of Hexham for a photograph of the principal face of the Ruthwell Cross, Plate V, 9, and much kindness spread over many years. Very special thanks are due to Mr Emery Walker, F.S.A., of 16 Clifford's Inn, Fleet Street, E.C., for his beautiful photo-gravures of the Ivory Chair of Ravenna and several of the half tone blocks on Plates IV, V, VI, VII. The illustration on page 79 is lent by the Society of Antiquaries. The other illustrations are from my various books dealing directly or indirectly with the subject.

G. F. B.

2 CAMPDEN HOUSE ROAD,
KENSINGTON.
July 4, 1916.

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