STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ruthwell Cross

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

RUTHWELL CROSS

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Please note, the research for this document was undertaken during 2020-2021 with limited access to archives and resources, as a result of Covid-19. While every attempt was made for accuracy throughout the statement, errors or omissions may remain. Please direct comments or suggestions to CRTenquiries@hes.scot

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Figure 1: Drawing of Ruthwell Cross. Titled: Runic Monumet in the garden belonging to Ruthwell Manse. 1832. (DP 089469) © Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Courtesy of HES. (Revd Duncan artist, W Penny engraver). Reproduced with the kind permission of the Society of Antiquary of Scotland.

1   SUMMARY

1.1   Introduction

The Ruthwell Cross is an early eighth-century free-standing stone cross of a type characteristic of the early medieval kingdom of Northumbria.

Now located in the Ruthwell Parish Church, between the villages of Clarence and Ruthwell, Dumfries and Galloway, the cross was originally erected out-of-doors at a site near to its present location, but it is likely that it was moved indoors at an early date.

The cross is 5.2 metres high and is constructed from two blocks of sandstone. It is carved with biblical scenes and vine scroll panels and features inscriptions in Latin and Runic script.

The cross has a complex history and was deliberately broken into several pieces during 17th century religious upheavals. Most of the parts were recovered and it was reconstituted in the early 19th century and the design of the cross completed by the insertion of a newly carved transom (middle arm of the cross head) to replace the missing fragment.

During 1886–7 the cross was taken inside the Parish Church and set up in a specially constructed apse, where it still stands today. At this date it was also taken into State care, and as such was amongst the first sites in Scotland to be protected under the provisions of the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act.[1]

The Ruthwell Cross is free to visit, by arrangement, and access information is detailed on the HES website.[2]

1.2   Statement of Significance

The Ruthwell Cross is one of the earliest and most complex Anglian monuments to survive and is considered to be one of the most impressive monuments surviving from early medieval[3] Britain.

Like the nearby and contemporary Bewcastle Cross (Cumbria), it is carved with figural scenes and inhabited vine-scroll ornament that are amongst the most classicising in style of

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[1] The Ruthwell Cross was formally scheduled in 1921 as SM90256. This designation was reassessed and removed in 2018, due to the monument's situation within a securely curated environment. For further information, see details at: portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90256 (Accessed: 21 June 2022).

[2] Prior to visiting, please check access information at: Ruthwell Cross: Prices and Opening Times HES (historicenvironment.scot) (Accessed: 21 June 2022).

[3] Throughout this document *early medieval* is used as the term to describe the time period of the Cross in line with the terminology used in HES National Record of the Historic Environment. However, many sources use this term interchangeably with *Anglo-Saxon*.

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all early medieval Insular[4] sculpture. Latin prose inscriptions surround and identify each of the figural panels on the broad sides of the cross. Lines from a poem about the crucifixion in the Old English language is carved in the runic alphabet around the vine-scrolls of its narrow sides. These carvings and inscriptions unite the early Christian world of the Mediterranean with that of the Insular North.

It is of international significance for the following reasons:

- It is one of the most complex and accomplished works of sculpture to survive from early medieval British Isles and Ireland.
- It is a testament to liturgical developments in the early medieval Church and their spread from Rome to the English Kingdoms.
- The lines of Old English alliterative poetry written in runes are one of three surviving examples of poems in which the True Cross speaks, and the Ruthwell text (although fragmentary) is believed to be the earliest of these. The poem itself is one of the earliest and most influential Old English poems that survive.
- It is of great importance for scholars across several academic disciplines because of the quantity and quality of both figurative sculpture and inscriptions: it is an ongoing resource for the study of the early medieval period.

It is of national and regional significance for the following reasons:

- It is evidence of the short-lived expansion of the kingdom of Northumbria into British territory in the seventh–eighth centuries.
- It is the only tangible evidence surviving of what must have been a highly learned monastic community in the area.
- From a runological and a linguistic point of view, the main runic inscription exhibits an early form of a West-Northumbrian dialect of Old English.[5] This suggests that the makers of the Ruthwell inscription were linguistically distinguished. The Ruthwell carver or designer created new runic characters to be able to express the sounds of his/her variety of Old English. The Ruthwell writing "conventions" and new characters influenced the west of Northumbria. This is the only source from which we can gain an insight into the dialects of Northumbria. In early Old English there must have been an East Northumbrian and a West Northumbrian dialect.[6]
- Antiquarian study of the cross provides evidence of the development of both art-historical and literary/linguistic interest in the early medieval past.
- It is an important witness to changing religious beliefs and folklore in the area.

[4] In this context, *Insular* art refers to the art of the British Isles and Ireland between, roughly, 600 and 900 CE. At that date Britain, England and Scotland, as we understand them as national units today, did not exist and Ruthwell was part of the Kingdom of Northumbria.

[5] On the employment of certain runes and rune-forms (runic graphemes), their sound value and the respective dating of the inscription, see Waxenberger forthc..

6 Waxenberger in print; Waxenberger forthc. 1.

- It was amongst the first sites in Scotland to be protected as an Ancient Monument, and of these it was one of the first which had not been specifically named in the schedule to the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act.
- It remains an important historic and spiritual monument within the local community and to the Ruthwell parish congregation who feel a great sense of care and custodianship for the monument.
- It is highly valued for both its spiritual and art historical significance by scholars and pilgrims from around the world.

Figure 2: General view of the cross in its current position in Ruthwell Parish Church. Image shows Face 1, originally the East side. (SC 373185) © Crown Copyright: HES.
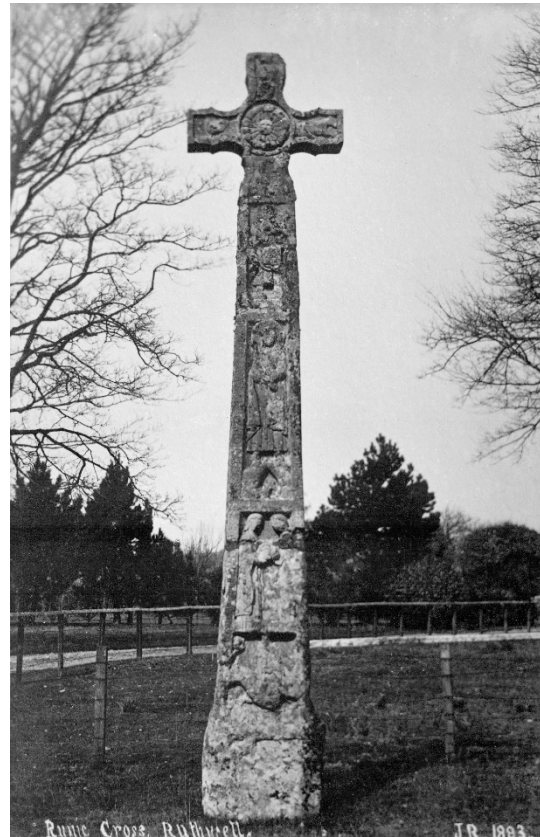
Figure 3: General view of the cross from 1883 after its re-erection in the garden of Ruthwell Manse, before it was moved into the Church. (SC 1115768) © Courtesy of HES

2 ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

Appendix 1 *Timeline* and Appendix 3 *Description of Carvings* give full details of the cross and its biography, the following paragraphs give a summarised overview.

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2.1.1 Ruthwell – location and site

In the 7th and 8th centuries the area along this part of the Solway formed part of the early medieval kingdom of Northumbria. At that time, the shore-line came closer to Ruthwell than at present so that the site of the present church would have been only one kilometre from the sea.[7]

The church, which is thought to occupy the same site as its pre-reformation and early Christian predecessors is built on slightly raised ground above the Thwaite Bum. The presence of the Ruthwell Cross, along with several other early Christian carved fragments indicates that Ruthwell was a site of religious importance in the early medieval period, but no physical trace of this has been identified.

An area around the Churchyard was excavated in 1980 and 1984 by Christopher Crowe who characterised the site thus:

> It is built on a raised beach deposit of sand and gravels with a tendency towards iron pan, overlaid with a thin topsoil of sandy loam. The site might have been chosen for its proximity to fresh water and easy access to the sea. It is perhaps significant that the shoreline lapped the village in the period when the cross was erected. Such a site would have provided easy commerce with the Isle of Man and the settlements around the Solway[8]

Crowe's investigations identified a large, defended ring enclosure part of which passed under the present churchyard. He noted this area seemed "to have been used exclusively for iron working. The period during which this iron was being produced on the site seems to fall within the Roman occupation of the area around the Wall. There were forts at Birrens and Ward Law within 10 kilometres of the site"[9].

There has been no archaeological investigation of the site since Crowe's work in the 1980s.

The present church dates from 1803[10] but incorporates fabric from an earlier church; in 1887 an apse was added to the north side to house the Ruthwell Cross. The church is likely to occupy the site of the pre-reformation church in which the Ruthwell Cross once stood and was recorded as still standing in the 17th century.

2.1.2 The physical elements of the Ruthwell Cross

The Cross is formed of two stones, both of which have been damaged and pieced together again:

1. the lower stone comprises the base panel and three figural panels above; the lower stone was broken through at the second panel and the base panel is very badly damaged.

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[7] Crowe 1987.
[8] Crowe 1987, 41.
[9] Crowe 1987, 46.
[10] Designation details are available at portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB17247 (Accessed: 27 June 2022).

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2. the upper stone comprises one figural panel and the cross-head; the upper stone was badly damaged at its lower panel and the cross-head itself broken through. The transom (cross-arm) of the cross-head has been lost and a replacement 19th century transom inserted. The top arm of the cross was also broken off but was rediscovered as a fragment and replaced - but put on back-to-front.

A further fragment of stone has been found which is thought to be part of the cross-head.

Figure 4: View of the upper stone, originally the West side. Note the transom is a 19th century replacement. (SC 1850494) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Figure 5: View of the Vine-scroll detail and Christ and Mary Magdalen panel towards the top of the lower stone showing joint with upper stone. Note the depth of carving on the figurative panel and the runic inscription bordering the vine-scroll. (SC 1850518) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Both parts of the cross are made of locally sourced carboniferous sandstone though the upper stone is a deeper red colour than the lower. Such colour variation is not unusual, and the stones are geologically very similar so they could easily have been quarried at the same time and place.

2.1.3 Brief description of the cross
A full description of the Cross identifying individual scenes and inscriptions is given at Appendix 3. The broad sides of the cross (both upper and lower stones) are filled with figurative panels depicting biblical scenes and religious symbols, each scene is framed with (mostly) Latin inscriptions. The transom (mid arm) of the cross head is a 19th century replacement. The narrow sides are filled with vine-scrolls inhabited by various creatures,

both naturalistic and fantastical. The borders of the narrow faces of the lower stone are carved in runes[11] spelling verses on the Crucifixion spoken in the first-person voice of the Cross. A detailed 3D scan of the cross is available to explore on Sketchfab.

2.1.4 Biography of the monument

2.1.4.a Early Medieval

The Ruthwell Cross is generally thought to date from the early 8th century, possibly being slightly later than the Bewcastle Cross in Cumbria, which is its closest comparator. Most scholars agree that the cross was originally set up out of doors (as Bewcastle remains today) and that it was re-sited within the church fairly soon afterwards. Partly this is because of the good state of preservation of the carvings, (except where deliberately defaced) indicating a sheltered indoor life. The lowest part of the cross is assumed to have originally been underground. Once moved indoors, this area became available for additional carvings – hence the crucifixion carving being attributed to a later date[12] than the other panels. It is uncertain whether carvings were added to the other three faces of the base at the same time, as virtually no evidence of such additions remains on these faces today.

Figure 6: Detail of lowest part of the original East side showing badly damaged Crucifixion panel below and Annunciation panel above. (SC 1506775) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Figure 7: Detail of small profile figure, now detached but thought to be a fragment of the upper stone of the Cross. © Professor Catherine Karkov

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[11] Runes are letters forming a set of related alphabets (runic alphabets) and make a writing system designed for the Germanic languages (Scandinavian, English, German), the system fell out of use as Latin script took over in these regions.

[12] The inclusion of the crucifixion panel may also reflect a shifting focus on the crucifixion in the later 8th century, see Ó Carragáin 2005, 213.

2.1.4.b Reformation to 18th century

The first documentary account of the cross comes from the notes compiled by Reginald Bainbrigg, an antiquarian and schoolmaster who visited 1599 or 1601 and described the cross in Latin as here translated[13]

> … a cross of wonderful height which is in the church at Ruthwell. It has on it beautiful images telling the story of Christ. It is wonderfully decorated with vines and animals, and on the two sides, ascending from the base to the top, and then opposite descending from the top towards the base, it is incised with foreign letters which however are disappearing. The inscription is of this kind…
>
> [copies out the runic script.]

The cross therefore seems to have stood relatively unscathed through the first decades of the Reformation, but in 1642 fell victim to the Church of Scotland *Act Anent the demolishing of Idolatrous Monuments* and sustained the damage outlined at 2.1.2 above. Dismembered, parts of it were buried, parts used as bench seating, and some fragments remain lost to this day.

Later 17th and 18th century accounts describe it not as a cross, but as an obelisk[14] or "a pillar, curiously engraved" as by that stage, the cross-head had been broken and perhaps buried or certainly not identified as part of the same monument. By this time it had become an object of note for antiquarians and its iconography and epigraphy were closely studied.

2.1.4.c 19th – 21st centuries

The parish minister, the Rev Henry Duncan collected together fragments and main pieces of the cross and reassembled them in the manse garden (see figure 3). He commissioned a new transom to take the place of the lost portion of the cross-head so that the monument could once more be "read" as a cross. Academic study proceeded: accurate drawings were made; the poem in runes was linked to the poem *The Dream of the Rood* contained in the Vercelli Manuscript (c. 1000); the runes were relatively accurately transcribed. Being heralded by various authorities as of great significance and due to concerns for its conservation the decision was taken to bring the cross once more under shelter, to a purpose-built apse[15] added to the parish church. The cross was taken into Guardianship and remains at the centre of the religious life of the Ruthwell congregation.

Ruthwell Parish church itself is designated as LB17247, a Category B Listed Building.[16]

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[13] Ó Carragáin 2005, 13.

[14] Some modern scholars have returned to this interpretation of the monument not as a cross, but as an obelisk or column and the subject has been much debated, see for example Orton and Wood with Lees 2007.

[15] The new apse was financed by subscriptions procured by the Reverend James McFarlan (minister of Ruthwell from 1871-1899).

[16] Designation details are available at portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB17247 (Accessed: 27 June 2022).

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A good account of the later history and interventions in the cross is given in the Old English Newsletter No 46 titled ['Modern impact on the fabric of the Ruthwell Cross'](#), detailing 19th/20th century graffiti and the process of taking casts from the cross.

2.2   Evidential values

In an international and national context, the Ruthwell Cross is of exceptional value as a resource for the study and understanding of important aspects of the early medieval period including the transmission of artistic and religious culture as well as the transmission of the Old English language and the runic script. It is as important for its physical attributes in terms of technique, style and composition and how these relate to other examples of religious and secular art as it is for the iconography, epigraphy and messages it transmits.

The Ruthwell Cross has more inscriptions than all the other Insular high crosses put together and is important as a resource for study of early Old English (West Northumbrian) language, literature, and culture.

Decades, nay centuries, of academic study have produced many differing interpretations of the Cross and this continuing interest is a testament to its importance to the community of scholars working across many disciplines today.

In a more regional context, The Ruthwell Cross is evidence of the territorial expansion of Northumbria north and west into the Solway area in the seventh and eighth centuries. It also demonstrates that the monastic community occupying the site was both a centre of learning and literature and was informed by the latest liturgical innovations of Rome and Northumbria. The use of both the Latin and Old English languages and the runic and Roman scripts is evidence of multilingual and biscriptual education.

Four other early medieval carved stone fragments are associated with Ruthwell church and provide evidence of a religious community of some importance based here over a lengthy period. The most important of these fragments is a small profile figure that is currently displayed next to the cross and is stylistically from the same period (see Figure 7). It is believed to be a fragment of the original cross arm, but it is possible that it is a fragment from a separate monument. There is also an architectural fragment carved with Anglian knotwork of ninth- or tenth-century type in the church, a sixth-century grave-marker with a pecked cross and a late-eleventh-century capital decorated with arcading. Together these provide evidence of religious activity in the area both prior to and after the erection of the cross in the eighth century.

As noted above (2.1.1) there has been little archaeological study around the area of the present church since the 1980s. It is likely therefore that there is high potential for further study and investigation, perhaps through remote sensing, to develop a better understanding of the early Christian foundation at Ruthwell.

In terms of the cross itself, despite the great body of research to date, there is still potential for further study and interpretation of the cross. There may be further potential for modern 3D imaging techniques to tell us more about the cross – its physical condition, destruction,

assembly, re-assembly – as well as the fine detail of the carving and greater understanding of the geology of the two stones.

2.3   Historical values

The Ruthwell Cross demonstrates aspects of the history of religious observance and liturgy within what is now Scotland from the early medieval period, through the Reformation and the change to presbyterian worship. The biography of the monument (see 2.1.4) is complex and exceptionally interesting. The early move to an interior location, the episode of iconoclasm (destruction of religious images), the burial, exhumation and restoration of the cross all make a fascinating story linked into many important historical and cultural themes. From the 17th century onwards the varying interpretations of the monument and its runic inscriptions (initially thought by early antiquarians to be Viking), represent the gradual unlocking of understanding. That said, our understanding of all the subtleties and meanings of the cross is not yet complete and still the subject of academic dispute.

2.3.1 The cross within its geographical and cultural context

Unlike its nearest comparator, the Bewcastle Cross, Ruthwell seems to have no dedicatory inscription and thus it is difficult to identify associations with particular people or events contemporary with its creation. While virtually nothing is known about the early medieval religious foundation at Ruthwell, the cross is indisputable evidence of either an important sculptural workshop on the site, or a foundation with the status and resources to employ top-quality sculptors from elsewhere in Northumbria, possibly from Wearmouth-Jarrow, Lindisfarne, or Hexham.

Ruthwell is located near an old Roman fort.[17] This is likely to have been both deliberate and important perhaps as a statement about continuity with Roman culture, and/or about the connections between the Roman and Northumbrian churches. Such a statement would certainly be in accord with the classicizing style of the images depicted on the cross and the arrangement of some of its inscriptions, both of which hark back to the art of Early Christian Rome. The subjects of its carved figural panels (further discussed at 2.4 below) relate to the liturgical year, with its Marian imagery and the panel displaying John the Baptist and the Agnus Dei reflecting the introduction of the Agnus Dei chant and the development of the cult of Mary by Pope Sergius I in the late seventh century.[18]

The poem incised in Old English runes on the narrow sides of the cross speaks in the first-person voice of the Cross. It unites the reader with the monument and the death of Christ in Jerusalem with Ruthwell. Its focus on the pivotal role of the Cross in salvation history, along with the monumentality and symbolism of the cross on which it is carved, show that Ruthwell had a central place in the spread of the cult of the Cross in the north of England.[19]

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[17] As is Bewcastle, see: hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/visit/bewcastle (Accessed: 27 June 2022).
[18] Ó Carragáin 2005, 237–49.
[19] Orton and Wood with Lees 2007, 170–80.

There are important associations with the two other known artefacts which relate to the Ruthwell runic poem, both significantly later than the Ruthwell Cross: *the Dream of the Rood* poem in the Vercelli Codex and the Brussels Cross.[20] The former is a late 10th/early 11th century manuscript which contains the poem *The Dream of the Rood*: this is regarded as one of the great masterpieces of Anglo-Saxon verse. The poem, which is framed as a dream vision[21], tells the story of the crucifixion from the perspective of the tree that was cut down to make the cross on which Christ was crucified.[22] The Brussels Cross is an early 11th century wooden cross originally sheathed in sliver and set with jewels. It was designed to be carried in procession during services and to house a small relic, possibly a fragment believed to be from the True Cross. Both it and the Vercelli Manuscript are thought to have originated in the south of England. The Ruthwell version is particularly significant because it is the earliest surviving iteration of this important poetic tradition.

2.3.2 Associations with later historical figures and reconstruction

Associations with later historical figures are easier to pinpoint, particularly some of the local figures associated with its rescue and reconstruction. Of these the Rev Henry Duncan (1774 – 1846) had both a national and a local profile and is perhaps the individual most celebrated for his association with the cross. He was responsible for the reconstruction of the cross and his drawings and observations are still relevant today. Among other things, he founded the savings bank movement, campaigned for the abolition of slavery and was minister at Ruthwell for fifty years. [23]

The Rev James MacFarlan, minister at Ruthwell 1871 – 1889, was also important in initiating the re-siting of the cross within the church and negotiating with Gen Pitt Rivers and the Office of Works over its inclusion in the Schedule annexed to the 1882 Act and for help to fund the purpose-built apse.

It is clear from surviving correspondence and contemporary academic works that the Ruthwell Cross was acknowledged as the most important monument of its class in Britain, and championed by Pitt Rivers, Augustus Franks, Sir John Lubbock and Romilly Allan. Appendix 2 discusses this in more detail.

2.3.3 Folklore and Legend

The cross has also been the focus of local folklore and legend. According to one legend, recorded in the early 19th century by Henry Duncan, it was washed up fully carved onto the shores of the Solway after a shipwreck. While according to others, it was originally erected

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[20] For a discussion of both in relation to Ruthwell see Ó Carragáin 2021.
[21] For more information on dream vision, see the following article: *Wellesley, M. (2018), Dream Vision*. Online: The British Library. (Accessed: 27 June 2022).
[22] For an introduction to the Vercelli Manuscript see The Vercelli Book - The British Library (bl.uk) (Accessed 14 April 2022).
[23] For information on Duncan, and the Savings Banks Museum, see: savingsbanksmuseum.co.uk (Accessed: 27 June 2022).

near the seashore at Priestside (about a mile from its present position) and only later moved to the area of the church.

According to a tale recorded in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, the cross was found fully carved in a stone quarry and moved by a labourer with a team of heifers to its present position where either the beasts refused to move forward or the apparatus holding the cross broke. A church was built over the cross and the cross then proceeded to miraculously grow until it touched the roof of the building. Such stories are important for what they reveal about the shifting ideas surrounding the history of the cross as well as for what they reveal about the history and beliefs of the local community.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

There is a vast body of academic literature examining and interpreting various aspects of the cross and so this Statement can only acknowledge the breadth of this ongoing scholarship and highlight some aspects of the artistic themes and values ascribed to the Ruthwell Cross.

2.4.1 Programme and iconography

The Ruthwell Cross presents a rare and complex programme of texts and images, all interlinked and apparently very consciously leading the viewer/reader through a series of meditations.

The choice of biblical scenes has been shown to relate to liturgical developments in Rome current in the late 7th or early 8th centuries and it is clear that this part of Northumbria was no intellectual backwater. Most of the figurative panels show New Testament scenes from the life of Christ, the exception being St Anthony and St Paul breaking bread in the desert. As well as the story repeated in Jerome's *Life of Paul*, the scene is interpreted as alluding to an important Iona custom whereby the Iona abbot and a visitor jointly broke bread before communion.[24]

The subjects of the panels on the east side all have a baptismal significance, with those represented being brought to recognition or acceptance of Christ. On the west side all have a eucharistic significance with body of Christ in its multiple forms (child, lamb, bread and saviour) being held up or out to the viewer. Putting the two sides together thus unites the two great sacraments of the Christian church.

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[24] The theory proposed by Fritz Saxl, reported and further discussed in Ó Carragáin 2005, 156, noting that this scene is found relatively frequently in Pictish and Irish examples, but rarely elsewhere in Europe, arguing for an Iona connection.

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Figure 8: Detail of original West side; panel shows St Paul and St Anthony in the desert, they hold a loaf of bread between them. (SC 1850520) © Crown Copyright: HES.
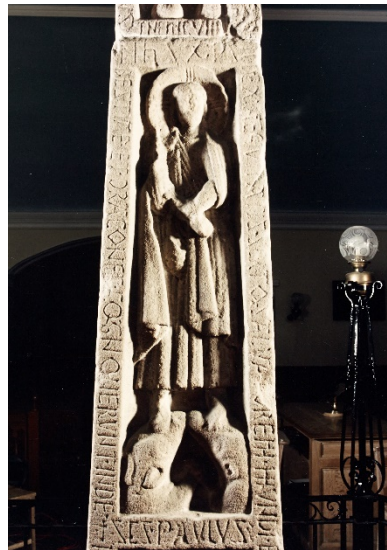
Figure 9: Detail of the original West side; panel showing Christ standing on two beasts, who cross their paws to acclaim him. The panel is framed by Latin script. (SC1850519) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Figure 10: Detail of original South side showing vine-scroll detail with birds and animals feasting on grapes. (SC 1850491) © Crown Copyright: HES.

In addition to the above, Ruthwell's narrow sides provide further meditations on the crucifixion and resurrection. The runic script frames continuous vine-scrolls ripe with flowers and berry bunches which curl gracefully towards the sun, their branches filled with creatures who climb and bite at the vine and its fruits. The animals include both naturalistic and fantastical creatures. The inhabited scrolls have a eucharistic symbolism, representing the faithful nourished by the blood of Christ, the wine of the mass. They furthermore symbolise the image of the Biblical tree in Eden, on which Jesus would later be crucified.

2.4.2 Inscriptions: Latin and Runic
The quantity of inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross is remarkable and unique and contributes to the importance of the cross. That they include both Latin and Old English languages employing both Roman and runic script adds to this interest and complexity. Each language and script was presumably chosen with specific intent. The figurative panels are mostly framed by Latin inscriptions in Roman script, they frame each scene in a way unique among Insular stone monuments using both horizontal and vertical borders. On the west face of the cross the inscriptions identify the figures depicted, on the east side they describe the action. Some of the Latin/Roman script inscriptions are quotations from the Vulgate.

The figurative panels of the east face of the upper stone differ from the lower stone in using runic rather than Roman script. The Visitation panel, though the inscription is very badly damaged, uses runic script for a Latin text.[25]

The Ruthwell Cross bears the longest inscription in the Old English Runic Corpus. The main runic inscription is carved on the borders of the narrow sides spelling out in Old English a poem on the Crucifixion. The runes are arranged to be read horizontally from left to right, though each line can only accommodate around four runic letters. Whole words could therefore stretch over two or three lines. There are further runic inscriptions, one of which is still partly legible, namely that on the upper east face (along the borders of the vine-scroll). Whether the runes on the upper stone once formed a complete text together with the runes on the lower stone is unclear.

In England runic writing continued in use after the adoption of Christianity, unlike the practice in, for example, the South of Germany. On the contrary, in England runes were used in monastic and religious contexts, sometimes side-by-side with Latin inscriptions. Use of the different languages and scripts must have been a statement of some kind: maybe to state identity and to show that runes are not considered pagan (as opposed to the Latin script being understood as Christian).[26]

2.4.3 The Runic poem

In the poem, the True Cross speaks in the first-person, giving life to the stone from which this cross is made, and through its voice, this cross becomes the True Cross of the Crucifixion. It is very possible that the Ruthwell Cross once held a relic of the True Cross, perhaps in the cavity at the centre of the Annunciation panel. However, that would not have been necessary for readers to get the sense that they were present at the Crucifixion, contemplating the mystery of the body of Christ as it moved from life to death and onward to eternal life in heaven.

Scholars have produced several translations of the runic poem and two are given here. First the most recent translation by Majewski:[27]

(original north side):

God Almighty stripped himself / when he chose to mount the gallows,

courageous [in the sight of all] men.

[...]

I [lifted up] the Mighty King,

the Lord of Heaven. / I did not dare to bend.

They mocked the two of us both together / I [was] made moist with blood,

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[25] Ó Carragáin 2005, 103.
[26] G. Waxenberger, pers comm.
[27] See Majewski forthc. 2023.

drenched [...]

(original south side):

Christ was on the Cross.

However, readily / from afar there came

noble persons to the one. / I beheld it all.

Sorely was I afflicted with sorrows. / I inclined […]

wounded with arrows.

They laid the limb-weary one down. They placed themselves at His body's head.

There they beheld […]

Secondly a version of the translation, by Éamonn Ó Carragáin, reads: [28]

(original north side):

Almighty God stripped himself. When he

willed to mount the gallows,

courageous before all men,

{I dared not} bow […]

[…]

I [lifted] up a powerful king.

The Lord of heaven I dared not tilt

men insulted the pair of us together: I

was drenched with blood

Po{ured from the man's side} […]

(original south side):

Christ was on the cross

But eager ones came thither from afar

Noble ones came together: I beheld all that:

I was terribly afflicted with sorrows:

I bowed {to the hands of men}

Wounded with arrows

They laid him down, limb spent; they took

their stand at the head and feet of his corpse

there they looked upon the lord of heaven […]

The runic text is outstanding in many ways, but particularly in its transfer of the spoken to the written language. The carver or designer must have been a "genius" in phonetics: they attempted to exactly capture their dialect in writing. Therefore, they designed new runes, and "re-cycled" some runes that were not in use any longer for their purposes. Taking the Ruthwell carver/designer's influence as far south as Thornhill (Yorkshire) into account, it may be assumed that Ruthwell may have been a runic centre.[29]

There is scholarly consensus that the Old English poem incised in runes on the Ruthwell Cross is related to, but not identical with the tenth-century Vercelli Book poem *The Dream of the Rood*. The runic inscription is unique in the Old English Runic Corpus because it is not only the longest text preserved in Old English runes, but also written in alliterative verse. The metre of the poem combines single lines, normal alliterating lines, and hypermetrical lines and thus shows a rare mixture of verse-lines.[30] The language and style of the poem are, however, traditional.[31] It may therefore be argued that this is one of the earliest religious poems of the English language.

The mystery of Christ and the miracle of the Resurrection are made more mysterious still by the use of runic letters for the poetic inscription. The cross was without doubt made by and for a highly literate and learned community, as the content of the poem would have remained illegible and unknowable to anyone not trained to read both English and runes. It may also have functioned as a preaching cross, but its content is far too complex to have been fully grasped by anyone not able to put all of its visual and verbal elements together for themselves.

The main runic inscription (the poem on the crucifixion), and possibly all other runic fragments, as well as the Roman inscriptions clearly are part of the overall design of the monument. All texts form an integral part in the understanding of the Ruthwell Cross and its overtly biblical message.[32]

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[29] Waxenberger in print; Waxenberger forthc. 1
[30] K. Majweski, pers comm.
[31] See Majewski forthc. 2023.
[32] As argued by Majewski forthc. 2023.

2.4.4 Experience and performance

As we can only guess at its intended audience, our understanding of how contemporary communities experienced the Ruthwell Cross is likewise open to debate. However, research on this and other early medieval sculptures and works of art provide some compelling theories. It is now generally accepted that the cross was to be experienced sensually as well as intellectually and that its programme and layout encouraged reading in a "sunwise" direction.[33] Further it is suggested that seasonality was important and even that the play of rain on the stone could have been exploited as a conscious part of the design[34] (see also 2.5 below).

How these original design concerns for an outdoor cross, presumably carefully positioned in relation to manmade or natural landscape features, were later squared with the move to an indoor setting is not known.

It is also likely that the poem and other parts of the inscriptions would have been chanted as part of the devotional and meditative experience of the cross.

2.4.5 Form, style and execution

Whether the carving is all the work of one sculptor or of several hands is unclear. It is all executed in a very classicising style, although the carving appears less accomplished in some panels than in others. This is especially true of the panels with John the Baptist and the Visitation[35] which, along with the different colour of the stone used for this section of the cross, has led to agreement that the upper stone is probably a later addition, but exactly *how much* later remains a matter of some debate. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this section of the cross was found buried deep beneath the ground in the churchyard and so has suffered more damage than other sections.

The figural scenes are likely to be based on early icons that English travellers would have seen in, and sometimes brought back from, Rome. Bede records that such icons were brought back from Rome and displayed in the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow by its abbots in the seventh and eighth centuries, but similar images are certainly likely to have been displayed in other important churches across the north.

The Ruthwell panels are deeply carved probably using a deep drill technique which, though common in later imperial Rome, had been out of use in most of Europe for the preceding century until it was re-employed by Pope John VII in the early 8th century. How knowledge of this technique, and the desire to use it, reached Northumbria is not known. The technique is identified most strongly in the panels showing the Flight into Egypt and the Baptist holding the Lamb of God. In both cases the outer legs of the ass and lamb are thought to have projected out into 3 dimensions as in many Roman sculptures. In both cases, the legs have long since been broken off, but vestiges of the stumps remain.[36]

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[33] Ó Carragáin 2005, 62.

[34] Pulliam 2013.

[35] The inscription for this panel is very fragmentary. Some have interpreted the runic inscription it as Martha and Mary, but the iconography is that of the Visitation

[36] Ó Carragáin 2021 [Video].

Figure 11: Detail of original West side showing Flight into Egypt panel. (SC 1850499) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Figure 12: Detail of original West side showing St John the Baptist holding the lamb of God. (SC 1850522) © Crown Copyright: HES.

There is also a mass and volume to the bodies represented that reveals a knowledge of the late imperial Roman sculpture that would still have been visible in the area. The figures also move towards each other in a naturalistic manner that suggests speech and interaction. Together, style and subject matter evoke both the Roman church and imperial Rome, as is fitting for a monument that proclaimed both the *romanitas* of the Northumbrian church and the expansionist agenda of Northumbrian rulers.

It is not known if the Ruthwell Cross was intended to be painted or coloured, but it is certainly possible that this was the original intention. The passage of time and direct impacts of destruction and later cleaning of the cross seem to have removed all evidence. A project to colour a cast of the cross was undertaken 1999 for Manchester Museum[37] and the coloured cross was initially displayed in the Museum until 2009. It is now held by Leeds Discovery Centre[38] where it is currently (2022) in store.

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[37] For an account of this project see The Colouring of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses · Woruldhord (ox.ac.uk) (Accessed: 27 June 2022).
[38] For more information visit their website: Leeds Discovery Centre - Leeds Museums & Galleries (Accessed: 27 June 2022).

2.5   Landscape and aesthetic values

While the Ruthwell Cross is not in its original location, the fact that two of its panels (Christ over the Beasts, and John the Baptist with the lamb of God) appear on the west face of the (in situ) eighth century Bewcastle Cross in Cumbria indicate that the corresponding side of the Ruthwell Cross would have faced west. The side of the shaft with the John the Baptist panel would thus have faced west towards the setting sun, and that with the Visitation panel would have faced east towards the rising sun. This orientation corresponds with the liturgical feasts celebrating the birth of John the Baptist near the summer solstice, the point from which the days begin to grow darker, and the birth of Christ near the winter solstice, the point when the days begin to grow lighter. The cross would thus have marked the changing seasons of the year along with the liturgical feasts.

The vine-scrolls of the narrow faces would have appeared to grow up from the ground, as the thick bases of their stems would have been level with the ground while the base of the cross was buried. As Pulliam (2013) has shown, rain would have dripped over the parts of the carvings which project out beyond the borders of the rectangular panels, enlivening some of the scenes. In the case of the panel showing Mary Magdalen at Christ's feet, for example, drops of water would have flowed over her head and fallen onto Christ's feet, so that she would actually have appeared to be washing them with her tears. Sunk within the pit and confined within the relatively low ceiling of the apse in which the cross is now set, it can appear less elegant and impressive than it may have been when sited outdoors where it would have blended more naturally into the surrounding landscape.

2.6   Natural heritage values

The original parts of the Ruthwell Cross are carved from two pieces of sandstone, possibly from the same quarry. The Geological Survey Report on the monument describes the massive lower stone as a pale pinkish-grey medium-grained quartz-rich sandstone, non-micacious, and with a low percentage of feldspar. The fragments of the smaller upper stone are of pale red quartz-rich medium- to course-grained sandstone, the grains coated in iron oxide and less uniform in size than those of the lower stone. Both are thought to have been quarried from the same bed or beds of Carboniferous mixed sandstone and limestone that underlie the area.[39]

2.7   Contemporary/use values

The Ruthwell Cross is a tourist attraction that draws visitors from all over the world, but it is also highly valued by the local community for both its religious content and its historical and art historical value. The cross stands behind the altar in the church and is a visual and spiritual focus during services. As well as drawing inspiration from the cross as a link to the past, it is an ongoing relationship which will contribute positively to the life of the area in

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[39] McMillan 2004.

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the future as well as in the present. The community and congregation care for the cross and are keykeepers for visitors. There is a strong feeling of attachment and custodianship, and they have a high level of understanding of how visitors feel about the monument. Recent articles on the Church website testify to the importance of the physical presence of the Ruthwell Cross as an inspiration for worship and as a symbol for the community during the difficult times of Covid 19.

There has not been a formal assessment of the social value of the Ruthwell Cross, but members of the local community and the congregation have contributed the following thoughts:

> *The Ruthwell Cross has, for centuries, been a focus for the local people of Ruthwell, Cummertrees and Mouswald parishes and for many from further afield, who have visited the cross for numerous and varied reasons.*

> *While the academic and historic importance of the cross is well documented, its significance to individuals, range from religious to curious. While the congregation never fails to notice the cross while they worship, it is more like a part of the people, rather than a large ancient monument, which dominates our church and our Sunday worship.*

> *The Ruthwell Cross attracts people from all over the world to wonder at its size, its origin and its aura, which never fails to touch anyone who gazes on its intricate carving and the story it conveys to those who visit. Its presence is enhanced by standing in a beautiful small and bright church, where The Murray Aisle was constructed to house the cross and the skylights above, ensure that the light always shines onto our most treasured possession. There has always been a steady flow of visitors, whose donations have enabled the maintenance of the church, which wraps around the cross.*

> *With the addition of the story of Rev Henry Duncan, minister of the parish and founder of the first ever Savings Bank, in the village of Ruthwell and his connection with Comlongon Castle, in the neighbouring village of Clarencefield, the Ruthwell Cross plays and amazing role in Scottish history.*

> *Recently, the new residents of Comlongon Castle, have purchased the Savings Bank Museum from the Trustee Savings Bank and plan (2022), as a legacy project, to develop the Henry Duncan story including his connection with the restoration of the cross, which was condemned during The Reformation, hidden in the church yard and was ultimately restored to its current splendour. There are, however, still some pieces missing…*

Social media reviews from visitors are generally very positive and often mention the carving, the welcome interpretation, the tranquillity/atmosphere of the place. They also mention spiritual values (sometimes linked to a particular religious belief, sometimes a more generalised feeling of spiritual connection) and respect for and connection to the complex biography that goes along with this monument.

3   MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

- Where was the cross originally located?

- Where are the missing fragments and with what subjects were they carved?

- When was the upper stone added to the lower one? Arguments vary from within a generation to two centuries later.

- Was the cross originally painted? While it is commonly believed that it was painted, no traces of pigment or gesso survive on the monument, and we have little evidence for what colours would have been used or for whether it was fully painted or whether only certain details – the inscriptions for example – would have been made to stand out with paint.

- What was the nature of the monastic community at Ruthwell? When was it founded and how long did it survive?

- What more could be learned about the cross, and its fragmented parts by close physical observation, and digital re-enactment of its breaking and reconstruction. There are still questions over the reconstruction, particularly of the upper stone, that such a project might illuminate

- For practical conservation considerations, is it possible to determine if there actually was an "iron rod" inserted into the cross, which some 19th century accounts of the reconstruction report and if so, what implications this might have for ongoing conservation/management.

4   ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Bewcastle; Hexham; Hoddom; **Whithorn**

5   KEYWORDS

Ruthwell Cross, Anglian, insular, free-standing stone cross, high cross, early Christianity, iconoclasm, Dumfries and Galloway,

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Further Resources

Canmore ID: 66586
Site Number: NY16NW 4
NGR: NY 10059 68219

Canmore entry: canmore.org.uk/site/66586/ruthwell-cross

Previous scheduling description: SM90256, details accessible at:
portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90256

Listing Description of parish church: LB17247, details accessible at:
portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB17247

A 3D digital model of the cross can be viewed at: Ruthwell Cross - 3D model by Historic Environment Scotland (sketchfab.com)

Further information on the RuneS project can be found at: Runic Writing in the Germanic Languages (RuneS): Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AdW) (adw-goe.de)

Further information on Rev Henry Duncan and the Savings Bank can be found at:
savingsbanksmuseum.co.uk

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE

Early 8th century - The cross is created and erected at a (currently unlocated) monastic site.

9th century - The crucifixion is added to the base of the cross. It may have been at this time that the cross was moved indoors from its original location.

1599–1601 - Reginald Bainbrigg, headmaster of the grammar school at Appleby (Cumbria), visits the cross and sends a description and drawing of it to William Camden, who was compiling material for a new edition of his *Britannia*, a historical and topographical survey of Britain and Ireland.

1640 - The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland meets in Edinburgh, and in its *Act anent the demolishing of idolatrous monuments* decrees that all idolatrous sculpture (crucifixes and any sculpture depicting Christ, Mary or the saints) was to be destroyed.

1642 – Apparently the Ruthwell community did not comply immediately with the General Assembly decree. In the Index of the Principal Acts of the Assembly held at St Andrews on 27 July 1642, the sixth item is 'Act anent Idolatrous Monuments in Ruthwell.' Following this, the cross is pulled down and broken into pieces. Under the direction of the Rev Gavin Young some pieces are buried in the churchyard, and others partially buried in Murray's Quire, the funerary chapel of the Murrays of Cockpool, adjacent to the north side of the church. Rev Young's actions in burying the pieces may have been intended to safeguard the monument[40].

Late 17th century - Dr George Archibald, a Dumfries physician, recorded that the monument was broken into two pieces and lying within the Church. He described it as having been 'a pillar of stone reaching from the bottom of the church unto the roof, and on it cut the portraiture of our Saviour with Beams encircling his head, and beneath his feet: "*Supra Serpentem et Draconem Conculabo*," and underneath is the effigie of Peter and Paul between whom is "*Petrus et Paulus fregerunt panem in deserto*." Many other Draughts and Letters, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew have been there, but time and ill using hath abras'd them … said to have been erected by the Saxons having progressed no farther into this country than that place, and that thereafter by Christians inscribed with sculptures and characters.'

1697–1704 - William Nicolson, Bishop of Carlisle, transcribes the Latin and runic inscriptions, which are published by Hickes in his *Linguarum veterum septentrionalium thesaurus*. He describes the shaft of the cross lying in Murray's Quire, some 'little Fragments' sitting on top of the shaft. He discovered further fragments under some of the table stones (large burial slabs set on pedestals) in the churchyard and recorded local legends about the cross.

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[40] McFarlan 1896, 19.

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1726 - Alexander Gorden publishes an illustrated description of the cross in his *Itinerarium septentrionale, or a journey thro most of the counties of Scotland and those in northern England*, describing the monument as an obelisk broken into three parts.

1760–82 - The fragments of the cross shaft are moved into the churchyard when the church was remodelled, and new pews were installed.

1772 – After visiting the monument on the 18th of May, Thomas Pennant describes the cross within his *Tour in Scotland, 1772* as 'an obelisk of a great height now lying in three pieces …. Tradition says that the Church was built over this obelisk long after its erection, and as it was reported to have been transported by angels, it was probably so secured … least it should take another flight'. He also described and measured the sockets that were used to secure the pieces of the cross together, and noted seeing some further fragments, including the upper terminal of the cross head and the lower fragment of the John the Baptist panel.[41]

1780s - The Society of Antiquaries of London commission a report on the cross with engravings by Adam de Cardonell and commentary by Richard Gough.

1792 - John Craig, minister at Ruthwell 1783–98, publishes his account of the cross now lying in the churchyard. He described it as an obelisk, noting that 'tradition says that the obelisk, in remote times, was set up at a place called Priestwoodside near the sea, in order to assist the vulgar by sensible images to form some notions of religion'.

1802 - The Rev Henry Duncan discovers further fragments of the cross amongst the tombs and buried within the churchyard. He erects the two principal parts of the cross in the manse grounds.

1822 - Dr Blume discovers the late-tenth-century Vercelli Codex.

1823 - Duncan commissions a new cross arm and has the cross re-erected near the gate of the Old Manse.

1832 - Duncan presents his study of the cross to a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, in Edinburgh.

1833 - Duncan publishes his account of the cross within the *Archæologia Scotica*, complete with accurate drawings. He records that the legend that the cross had washed up on the shore after a shipwreck and moved by oxen to its present spot where the church was built over it, was still current in the area.

1840–44 - John Mitchell Kemble publishes the first relatively accurate transcription of the runes on the narrow sides of the cross, correctly identifying them as English rather than Scandinavian. His 1844 paper on the runes was the first to establish the connection between the Ruthwell poem and *The Dream of the Rood* preserved in the late-tenth-century Vercelli Book.

1857 – Rev. Daniel Haigh publishes a paper on the similarities between the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses and corrects Duncan's misidentification of the subjects of several of the Ruthwell panels.

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[41] Pennant 1776, 96-98.

1887 - The cross becomes one of the first monuments scheduled under the provisions of the **1882** Ancient Monuments Act. The cross is installed in the specially built apse on the north side of the parish church where it still stands, and international interest in the monument begins.

1893 – Plaster casts of the stone taken by the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (a precursor to today's National Museums Scotland (NMS)), using methodology approved by Pitt Rivers.[42] The moulds and plaster casts are still within the collections of NMS.[43]

1916 - Rev George F. Browne, Disney Professor of Art and Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, publishes his Rede lecture on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses, the first serious art historical study of the monuments.

1927 - Rev John Dinwiddie publishes his *The Ruthwell Cross and the Ruthwell savings bank: a handbook for tourists*, which has gone through multiple editions and is still an important guide to the cross's history. W.G. Collingwood publishes his *Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman Age*, becoming the first to place the cross within the larger corpus of Northumbrian sculpture as well as the first to connect Ruthwell with the sculpture from nearby Hoddom.

1931 - The fragment believed to be part of the missing cross arm is discovered and fixed on a metal bracket.[44]

1936 - The fragment is put on display beside the cross.

1937 - Gerard Baldwin Brown, Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh, publishes his *The Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses*, vol. 5 of his *The arts in early England*, and the first book-length study of the monument.

1938 – Replacement of wooden balustrade with a wrought-iron railing, and wood panelling of the sunken floor replaced with sandstone. Works completed in October 1938 in memorial to Reverend Dinwiddie, minister of Ruthwell for 46 years; also served to reduce fire risk to the monument.[45]

1941 – A photographic exhibition British Art and the Mediterranean by the Warburg Institute is held. An accompanying book is published in 1948: Saxl, Fritz; Wittkower, Rudolf: British art and the Mediterranean (London , New York , Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1948) (uni-heidelberg.de).The Ruthwell Cross (together with Bewcastle) featured prominently in both exhibition and book, noting its relationship to eastern Mediterranean models and further establishing its importance in art historical terms.

1961–1965 - Rosemary Cramp publishes 'The Anglian Sculptured Crosses of Dumfriesshire', in *Transactions and journal of proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural*

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[42] Letters from Robert Murdoch to Pitt Rivers (dated 10/10/1893), and to the Secretary of the Office of Works (dated 06/11/189, both contained within file MW1/661. National Records of Scotland.
[43] Details of the cast (A.1932.636) and mould (A.1894.235 A) are available via the NMS catalogue: nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/search-our-collections/ (Accessed: 27 June 2022).
[44] Note to Mr Richardson on metal fixing contained within file MW1/662. National Records of Scotland.
[45] Letter from Melville Dinwiddie to Secretary HM Office of Works, 01/03/1938. Contained within file MW1/662. National Records of Scotland.

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History and Antiquarian Society (1961) and her 1965 Jarrow Lecture *Early Northumbrian sculpture*, raising many questions about the cross that have yet to be answered.

2012 – The Ruthwell Cross is 3D scanned by the Visionary Cross project. The project is an international, multidisciplinary research project with the principal objective to develop a new kind of digital archive and edition of texts and objects associated with the Visionary Cross tradition. Between 2013-15 a web-based visualisation was built that integrated 3D visualisation and textual information. A digital edition of the Ruthwell Cross was released and is accessible on the Visionary Cross Viewer.

2010-2025 – A long term research project is currently under way titled *Runische Schriftlichkeit in den germanischen Sprachen – Runic writing in the Germanic languages (RuneS)*. It is funded by the Union of the German Academies of Science and based at the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen. The project investigates the oldest independently developed writing system in the Germanic languages, the runic script. It aims to describe and analyse runic writing in a comprehensive way. The research data and results will be published in a database RuneS-DB. A comprehensive basic data on the nature, content and context of the European runic finds are already published on the first version of the database. As runic script was used in different variants in large regions of Europe including Great Britain, the project also examines the runic script used on the Ruthwell Cross. The current database entry can be examined on RuneS: Ruthwell, cross (runesdb.eu).

APPENDIX 2: 19TH CENTURY PROTECTION OF THE CROSS

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a concerted drive towards relocating early medieval sculptures from their open-air contexts, and into a museum environment. This was partly for their protection, but influential individuals such as Joseph Anderson, Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities (1869-1913), were also of the opinion that the creation of concentrated collections of carved stones within these museums would facilitate comparative scholarly study.[46] It is interesting, therefore, that this was not the approach adopted at Ruthwell, where the actions of the local community ensured that the cross instead remained where its historical associations centred.

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[46] See Jones 2004, 1-2.

Figure 13: Portrait of Reverend Henry Duncan who was responsible for the reconstruction of the cross in the manse grounds in 1802. The drawings and research he subsequently published are still relevant today. © The Scotsman Publications Ltd.

In 1885 the Ruthwell Cross was still standing on the Glebe of Ruthwell, visible in the grounds of the manse.[47] In July of that year, the Reverend James McFarlan (minister of Ruthwell from 1871-1889[48]) contacted the Board of Works, with a proposal from the heritors of the parish. They wished to shelter the Ruthwell cross from the elements, which they feared were damaging the stone and its inscriptions, but were keen that it should not be removed to the National Museum. Instead they proposed that the cross should be "restored to a site directly in connection with the Parish Church, in which it lay after its destruction [in the 17th century].. until the end of the last century…"[49] Various proposals had been considered, but the vast height of the cross meant that it could not be accommodated within the existing church, and enclosure within its current position would require a building with light on all sides, and a resident attendant.[50]

The heritors were therefore hopeful that Her Majesty's Commissioners of Works would instead help finance the proposed creation of a purpose-built apse attached to the existing Parish church, in which the cross could be housed, for its protection. The plans for the proposed structure were drawn up by the architects Campbell, Douglas, and Sellars for an estimated cost of £250 and included a sunken floor to accommodate the monument's full height.

However, the Office of Works would not commit any finances until the monument had been formally 'scheduled'.[51] [52] General Pitt-Rivers, the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments, supported this notion of the site being protected under the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882

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[47] The cross had been placed there in 1823.

[48] McFarlan 1896.

[49] Letter from Rev J McFarlan to the Secretary of the Board of Works, 9/7/1885. Contained within file MW1/663, National Records of Scotland.

[50] Letter from Rev J McFarlan, 08/10/1886. Contained within file CH2/1155/26, National Records of Scotland.

[51] Letter to Mr Potter from H.W. Primrose, 25/11/1886. Copy contained within file CH2/1155/26, National Records of Scotland.

[52] N.B. The entire cost of alterations finally amounted to £361.3.10, however this also included a new heating system, painting and a new carpet. (Minute of the meeting of the Committee of the Heritors of Ruthwell, 26/04/1888. Contained within file CH2/1155/26, National Records of Scotland).

(which had been principally concerned with *prehistoric* sites). He argued that the schedule to the Act already included "several monuments of the same class viz the **Suenos Stone** …[and] the inscribed slab in the churchyard of **St Vigeans**… there is nothing…in the act to prevent the Ruthwell cross from being scheduled. It is the most important monument of its class in this country, perhaps in any country…"[53]

In his Memoranda to the Secretary, Pitt Rivers included letters of support from respected antiquarians. This included correspondence from John Evans, President of the Society of Antiquaries, who described the cross as "among the earliest and most interesting of early Christian times", noting that all antiquarians would be glad to see it enter the Guardianship of the State.[54] Augustus Franks, keeper of British and medieval antiquities at the British museum, wrote: "I consider the Ruthwell cross, of which I have myself copied the inscriptions, one of the most important inscribed monuments in this country, perhaps even the <u>most</u> important, and I am very glad to learn that efforts are being made to place it under shelter."[55] [56]

Ultimately, the cross was brought under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act by Order in Council of 7th March 1887,[57] with the Board confirming they were willing to accept Guardianship later that year.[58] [59] The Reverend McFarlan had actively procured subscriptions to finance the creation of the apse, which, in addition to the £50 contribution from the Office of Works,[60] included personal donations from notable individuals including Sir John Lubbock, John Romilly Allen, and General Pitt-Rivers himself.[61]

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[53] Report on the Ruthwell Cross, by General Pitt Rivers, dated 23/07/1885. Contained within file MW1/663, National Records of Scotland. [emphasis added to denote properties in State care].

[54] Letter from John Evans to General Pitt Rivers, 2/11/1886. Contained within MW1/663 file, National Records of Scotland.

[55] Letter from John Evans to General Pitt Rivers, 7/11/1886. Contained within file MW1/663, National Records of Scotland. [Evans's emphasis].

[56] This praise from Augustus Franks is particularly notable. Franks was influential in the creation of the early Schedule list of sites to be protected by the 1882 Act. It was also he who recognised the significance of the so-called 'Franks casket'; an early 8th century whalebone casket which was likely Northumbrian, and *also* had inscriptions in both Latin, and Old English in Runic script. For further details on the casket, see: britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1867-0120-1 (Accessed: 27 June 2022).

[57] Letter from H.P. Potter to Rev McFarlan, 10/08/1887. Contained within file CH2/1155/25, National Records of Scotland. [Evans's emphasis].

[58] Letter from Donald Beith to Rev McFarlan, 21/09/1887. Contained within file CH2/1155/25, National Records of Scotland.

[59] The Ruthwell committee of management wished to retain ownership of the cross. Letter from Rev McFarlan to Donald Beith, 27/08/1887. Contained within file CH2/1155/25, National Records of Scotland.

[60] The fact that this figure seems to equate to approximately one quarter of their budget for the preservation of ancient monuments for the entire year, reflects the perceived importance of the monument. - See letter from the Secretary to Pitt Rivers, 26/11/1886 contained within file CH2/1155/26, National Records of Scotland.

[61] Subscriptions to the Ruthwell Cross Preservation Fund and for the Heating of Ruthwell Church, 1885-1888. Contained within file CH2/1155/25, National Records of Scotland.

The Ruthwell cross was moved into its new position in August 1887, where it remains to this day. On 31st Oct 1887 the church was reopened, with an inaugural service by the Reverend P.M. Muir of Morningside.[62]

APPENDIX 3 SIMPLE DESCRIPTION OF THE PANEL SCENES AND INSCRIPTIONS ON THE RUTHWELL CROSS

The following table describes each panel and gives translations of the inscriptions. These paraphrase the iconographic sequence described and set out in Éamonn Ó'Carragáin's *Ritual and the Rood*, which should be consulted for further details. It should be noted that the translations given here include reconstructed text and different scholars will no doubt produce translations that differ in emphasis and detail. The images are taken from the Sketchfab model, which should be consulted for a 3D tour of the cross.[63]

Face 1
Original East Face (Now South in Church)
The scenes on this face are associated with the sacrament of baptism. The panels are surrounded by Latin inscriptions which describe the actions depicted.

It is believed that the cross would be 'read' starting at this east face and moving sunwise around each side of the cross, reading from bottom panels up to the top.

Top arm of Cross – this stone was found as a separate fragment and re-attached, unfortunately it was reset back to front. This side depicts St John the Evangelist and his eagle.

The Latin inscription reads

"In the beginning was the word"

It should have shown the perching eagle, possibly symbolising resurrection with a runic inscription, to match the others on the upper stone East side.

Transverse arm of Cross –

The original was lost and replaced with this 19th century transom carved to recover the shape of the cross-head.

The Archer.

This possibly symbolises Christ as God's Chosen Arrow; instead of a realistic quiver, he has a book satchel – a symbolic quiver with the arrows being books/the word of God.

Very fragmentary runic inscription.

This panel has been interpreted as either Mary and Martha or The Visitation.

The iconography supports interpretation as the Visitation, it shows the meeting between Mary (pregnant with Jesus) and her cousin Elizabeth (pregnant with John the Baptist).

Part of the figurative panel is missing/damaged, the gap was filled by plain blocks of stone in the 19th century restoration.

Fragmentary inscription uses runic letters for a Latin text; difficult to decipher and badly damaged.

Christ blesses the woman who was a sinner.

This panel shows the repentant woman (Mary Magdalene) washing Christ's feet with her tears, drying them with her hair and anointing them.

Latin inscription translated as:

"*She brought an alabaster box of ointment; standing beside his feet, she began to moisten his feet with tears, and dried them with the hair of her own head*"

Healing of the man born blind.

This panel shows one of Christ's miracles in which a blind man is cured. Christ spreads mud on the blind man's eyes. When they are washed, he can see and believes.

Latin inscription translated as:

"*And going on his way, he saw a man blind from birth, and healed him…*

The Annunciation

This panel shows the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she would conceive a son by the Holy Spirit to be called Jesus. It also symbolises Christ taking on human form.

Latin inscription reconstructed as:

Entering, the angel said to her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women"

The Crucifixion

In very poor condition, probably deliberately defaced.

No inscription.

It is believed that this base portion of the monument was originally sunk into the earth, but that when the cross was moved indoors the newly exposed base was carved. The carvings are thought to date from the 9th century.

Face 3
Original West face (now North in Church)

The scenes on this side are associated with the Eucharist – the body of Christ in its multiple forms: child, lamb, bread, saviour. The panels are surrounded by Latin inscriptions which identify the figures.

Top arm of cross – the stone was reset back-to-front in the 19th century, so now it depicts a perching eagle, possibly symbolising resurrection.

Fragmentary runic inscription

The other side of the stone depicts St John the Evangelist and his symbol (the eagle) which should probably have been set on this side.

Cross-head transom, a 19th century replacement, with masonic symbols.

Probably the original would have depicted the other evangelists and their symbols: St Mark and the lion; St Luke and the ox.

Lower cross arm. Two figures identified as, St Matthew the Evangelist, and his symbol, the winged man.

John the Baptist standing on two globes points to the Lamb of God.

Fragmentary Latin inscription: *"…we adore, so that not with…"*

Note the join between the upper and lower stones of the Cross.

Christ recognised by the Beasts.

Christ blesses a scroll and stands upon two mythical beasts who cross paws to acclaim him. Evil (in the form of beasts) is defeated as they recognise Christ's divinity.

Latin inscription translated as:

"Jesus Christ, judge of fairness.

Beasts and dragons recognised in the desert the saviour of the world."

St Paul and St Anthony breaking bread in the Desert.

This scene relates to fellowship and the breaking of bread, in which bread symbolises the body of Christ in the Eucharist and relates to ritual practice.

Latin inscription translated as: *"Saints Paul and Anthony…broke bread in the desert"*

Flight into/return from Egypt

This panel shows Mary on the ass holding the Christ child. Joseph may be in the background, but the panel is too damaged to be sure.

Fragmentary Latin inscription translated as*:*

Mary and Joseph…

The Nativity

This lowest panel of the lower stone is very badly damaged – possibly deliberately defaced.

It is thought to depict the Nativity. Like the Crucifixion scene on the other side, it is thought to date from the later 9th century, when the cross was moved inside the church and the base of the cross was exposed.

There appears to be no inscription.

Face 2
North side (now east in church)

Face 4
South side (now west in church)

The narrow sides have long panels of Vine scrolls with birds and beasts with the runic poem inscribed on the borders. The vine symbolises the Tree of Life, and its grapes represent the wine as blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

'God Almighty stripped himself / when he chose to mount the gallows, /

 courageous [in the sight of all] men.

[…]

I [lifted up] the Mighty King, / the Lord of Heaven. / I did not dare to bend. / They mocked the two of us both together.I [was] made moist with blood, / drenched

[+] Christ was on the Cross.

'However, readily from afar there came / noble persons to the one. I beheld it all. / Sorely was I afflicted with sorrows. I inclined […,] /

wounded with arrows. /

They laid the limb-weary one down. They placed themselves at His body's head. / There they beheld […].'