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## A Fragmented Masterpiece

Recovering the Biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish Cross-Slab

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## Chapter 4

# The cataloguing of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab

ISABEL HENDERSON

### 4.1 Terminology

For purposes of study the slab is described moving anti-clockwise round the monument: the broad face A is the front of the slab, with narrow face B, to its right; the broad face C is the back of the slab; narrow face D is to the left of face A (illus 4.3a & b). Face E is the upper edge of the slab. The slab displayed in the National Museum of Scotland comprises the defaced upper portion of face A (the face with the 17th-century memorial to Alexander Duff), and the upper portion of face C (the face with the symbols, hunting scene, and part of a spiral panel, all contained within borders of vine-scroll). The fragments of carving removed from the original upper portion of face A which were recovered in the excavations are currently housed in the National Museum of Scotland.

The lower portion is the part of the slab excavated in 2001. It is damaged at the bottom edge, and the lowest area of the carved surface and virtually all of the original tenon are lost. Modifications to faces B and D were made at some later period in order to provide a substitute tenon. The lower portion is currently displayed in the Dolphin Cafe of The Seaboard Memorial Hall, Balintore, Ross-shire. The fragments which belong to the area of the slab between the lower and upper portions are described as belonging to the mid-portion. These mid-portion fragments, as well as the fragments mentioned above as assignable to the original upper portion of face A, have been accessioned by the National Museums of Scotland. The recording and cataloguing of the fragments took place in the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

### 4.2 Introduction

The recovery in 2001 of the lower portion of the slab with all four faces intact provided instant information about the original thickness of the slab, the nature of the lower edge of the vine-scroll border on face C, and a dramatic sample of the dynamic carving on the previously wholly unknown original face A. In striking contrast, assessing the information implicit in the 11,252 fragments also recovered in the excavations

has involved long patient study. Some 7497 fragments considered to be from the missing parts of the cross-slab have been catalogued individually.

The fragments have varying physical characteristics, which can aid the reconstruction of the appearance of the mid-portion of the slab and the carving on the upper portion of face A. A thin slice of the upper portion of the original front face had been neatly chiselled off and dressed flat for reuse as a memorial slab. This secondary dressing no doubt accounts for many of the smaller chips of carved and uncarved fragments, while thin carved fragments can be considered for location on the upper portion of face A. In general, the carved stone, whether assaulted by a chisel or more forcefully damaged, tends to fragment either conchoidally, resulting in a convex back, or with a markedly flat back. Other fragments have fractured in such a way as to produce an uncarved sloping area. These characteristics greatly aided the reconstruction.

The severance of the upper portion from the newly recovered lower portion involved violent destruction through the entire thickness of the slab. Large fragments, some as thick as c170mm, come from this mid-portion point of severance. Some of these are carved with sections of vine-scroll and large triple spirals carved in low relief, and undoubtedly belong to face C. Other thick carved fragments display parts of animal ornament such as is found on face A of the lower portion, and thus they obviously came from face A. One such fragment, .5, with a fine animal head and animal body parts was known from the time of excavation to fit on to the lower portion, but only in May 2005 was it possible to confirm the nature of the fit, and lack of access to the lower portion has prevented building on this and other conjunctions between mid-portion fragments belonging back to back on all the faces of the mid-portion of the cross-slab (see illus 5.33a & b). Some of these larger mid-portion fragments suffered further impairment of their carved surfaces through natural lamination that created very thin frail slivers of carving, some of them comparatively large in area. The excavation records show this process underway. Other fragments from

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this mid-portion have no discernible carved surfaces and may be internal fragments. The violent severance of the upper portion from the lower portion will undoubtedly have pulverised many carved surfaces, and their nature is lost forever. Other reasons for loss of material may be the removal of larger fragments from the site, or simply that the defacer stood on small fragments as he worked with his chisel.

The process of reconstruction of the appearance of face A has frequently been described somewhat simplistically as similar to the task of completing a jig-saw. For face A this is, of course, largely a jig-saw without the assistance of the complete design. Quite apart from the chips of secondary dressing and the internal fragments described above, all the carved fragments are three-dimensional and a means of determining their orientation is rarely present. The difference in section of the narrow faces, face B (bevelled) and face D (rounded), which create the lateral edges of face C, is one of the few ways to identify the right side from the left side of the slab, thus aiding the location and orientation of fragments. Another is the crude assumption that the fragments of human figures are unlikely to have been depicted upside down. The device of sorting the carved fragments in boxes of sand was essential, for it allowed the carved faces to be set on a level plane. The methodology for sorting, drawing and classifying the fragments is fully described in Chapter 7.1. So far, it has not been possible to affirm with confidence whether or not the majority of the fragments belonging to face A when complete has been recovered. Aspects of the remnants of figure sculpture on face A suggest that some other event in the disintegration of face A led to a horizontal line of impairment in the upper area of the mid-portion. No stone or bag of chips has been left unexamined and all are retrievable for future examination.

Disappointingly, nothing of the shape of the cross-head has been revealed as yet by the fragments, but a full inspection of face C of the upper portion by staff of the National Museums of Scotland, for photography and close examination of key areas of carving, included an inspection of the upper edge, face E. This showed beyond reasonable doubt that the damage at its central area, consistently recorded in early drawings and photographs, was the result of the removal of a projection. Taken with the scars of projecting features on faces Band D at a level appropriate to the transverse arms of a cross it would seem, that like some other Pictish monuments, the cross-head was emphasised by projecting the upper and transverse arms beyond

the edges of the slab. This new perception of the contours of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab gives at least an outline for the cross-shape on face A, and gives a further indication of the ambitious nature of a monument which in its breadth and height is already quite exceptional.

The aim of the cataloguing is to provide descriptions and discussion of those carved fragments which with reasonable certainty can be used to reconstruct and describe significant aspects of the lay-out, subject-matter, and decoration of the mid-portion and of the original upper portion of face A. Initially around eight hundred fragments were selected for cataloguing, either because of their probable connection with the known nature of the mid-portion of face C, or because of the apparently informative nature of the fragments and their carved surfaces. Thereafter, a further selection of carved fragments was made to retrieve smaller but potentially informative carving. Eventually a total of some 7497 fragments were given individual catalogue entries. All these entries can be interrogated on the electronic database. Had work on the fragments continued there is no doubt that other useful fragments could have been identified, for although many of the later selection of fragments for cataloguing consisted of tiny and ambiguous carved fragments, a significant number of them eventually found a place in the reconstruction.

The cataloguing process has also made it possible to characterise the physical nature of a fragment belonging to the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, a characterisation, which, in conjunction with the analysis of the material composition of the stone, can be used to identify more fragments from the cross-slab which may still be on the site. Cataloguing also initiated provisional identification of any fragment which was judged not to belong to the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. Providing a monumental context on the site for the slab was an aim of the excavation. The recovery of a substantial fragment of a plain relief carved cross-slab demonstrates that the Hilton slab was not the only early medieval monument on the site (Chapter 7.5.1). The project should also provide a methodology for the examination of other defaced or fragmented monuments, and for recognising the debitage of either the original carving process or of later destruction. For the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab some significant information was obtained on the later destructive processes, but, because of the apparent resetting of the slab, debitage from the original carving is likely to be located outwith the excavated area.

### 4.3 The catalogue entries

Initially it was intended to give single fragments, conjoined fragments and clusters of four or more conjoined, or associated, fragments individual catalogue numbers. This would have allowed the bringing together of fragments that displayed the same type of ornament in a consecutive numbering sequence. As work progressed it was recognised that difficulties might arise in making decisions about the appropriate renumbering of the many ambiguous fragments, and of fragments carved with two types of ornament. Because cataloguing was regarded as an aid to reconstruction, each fragment was examined with the care commensurate with the strong hope of conjoining it to other fragments, understanding its role in the original design, and generally defining characteristic traits of the sculptor. The ascription of fragments to different portions and faces, and to the original upper portion of face A in particular, is based on the considered opinions of the cataloguers but often remains open-ended. To have been content with a simple objective inventory would have failed to capitalise on cataloguing as a means of aiding present and future reconstruction. To the difficulties created by ambiguities was added the unpredictability of the timing of the finding of conjunctions, which might have changed the basis on which the renumbering depended. It would also have been necessary to substitute the new catalogue number for all the careful comparative cross-referencing made by the cataloguers using the National Museums of Scotland X.IB 355 numbers. The idea of creating new catalogue numbers was therefore set aside as impractical.

It is intended that accompanying pages of illustrations will provide, at a glance, representative examples of the individual patterns and subject-matter employed by the Hilton of Cadboll sculptor on the upper portion of the original front face of the slab. In addition to the complete catalogue of individual entries (including some entries for clusters) in the database, catalogue-style descriptions covering the whole cross-slab as it is currently known follow this introductory text. These should give the reader a sense of the transformation of the Hilton of Cadboll slab of the 20th century to the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab of the 21st century. The entry for the original upper portion of face A will characterise the carved fragments assignable to this face of the slab, even though nearly all of them are still free-floating in terms of their location on face A. Work by Douglas Morton, the cataloguer who has most experience of the later stages of the catalogue and of

the complete database, focuses on the many fragments with edges and mouldings with the aim of identifying the lay-out of the designs on face A (Chapter 7.2.4). Although some suggestions can be made, the bringing together of the repertoire and its lay-out on the original upper face A will be work for future investigators.

The fields used in the catalogue entries are as follows:

*Finds number.* The finds number refers to the location of the 0.5m square in which the fragment was found. The first four numbers of the finds number is the easting and the second four numbers are the northing. The numbers after the full stop differentiate the large fragments that were found in this square and was allocated on site.

*The National Museums of Scotland accession number.* The number comprises four elements: X represents the Department of Archaeology; IB indicates sculpture; an accession number follows, 189 for the upper portion and 355 with a numeric sequence following a stop for all fragments associated with X.IB 189. In discussion, fragments are identified either by their full number, or by an abbreviated number giving the stop and the number following 355. There is no accession

#### *Illustration 4.3a & b*

Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, partial reconstruction of the upper, middle and lower portions (scale 1:15)

*Note by Ian G Scott.* Although face C (with the spiral panel, mid-portion X.IB 355) seems to reconstruct fairly easily, following previous predictions, problems have been encountered. For example, the drawing sets the bottom left corner of the spiral panel rather lower than work with the NMS conservator (at the Seaboard Memorial Hall on 25 May 2005) suggested, because of subsequent difficulty with pattern fitting. Also, the left panel of scroll looks slightly too large, but any correction could not be reconciled with the size of the panel in the right, as reconstructed.

Locating clusters of fragments on face A (the cross) has proved more difficult. Practical problems did not allow complete bonding. The position of the left and right blocks are known but the fitting of these together will depend on more careful physical positioning on the bench. Until then the depth of the slab in the centre remains in some doubt and thus also the absolute connection between the left cluster and the central cross. The fitting of back to front seems quite possible (by measurement) and should be tested. No suggestion for the filling of gaps on this side has yet been proffered, and there remain few fragments which may be useful for this purpose.

Some of the problems encountered in the drawing of a reconstruction may well be resolved if the clusters were reversed and the backs and sides of the mid-portion observed, recorded and photographed. This would presumably require a 'workshop' layout and would be much enhanced by physical access to the lower portion, and further measurement. Faces B & D remain under-recorded owing to difficulties of access for observation and recording.

Hilton of Cadboll,  
cross-slab:  
partial reconstruction  
Ian G. Scott 2006

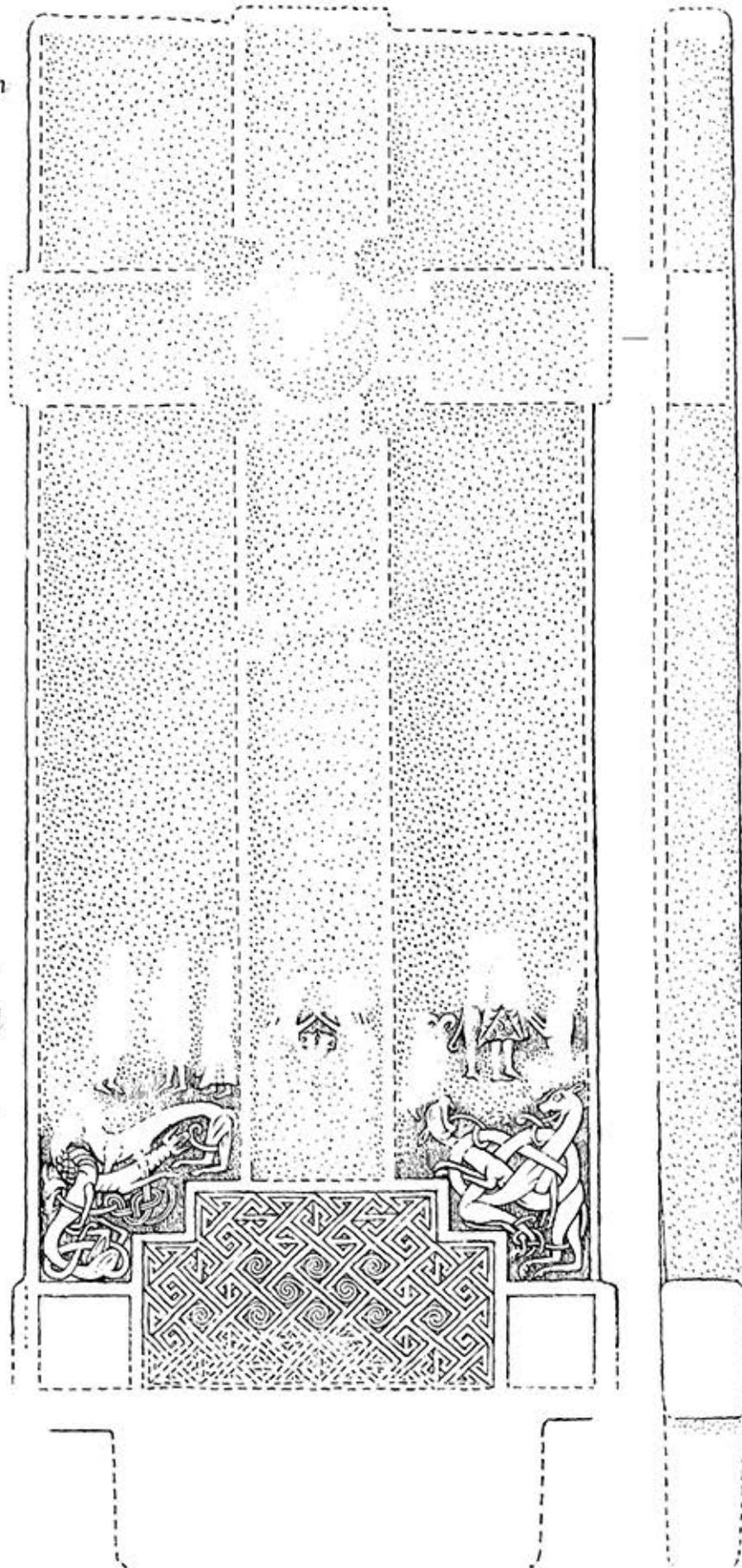
upper portion  
defaced -  
excavated  
as fragments

mid-portion:  
from excavated  
fragments

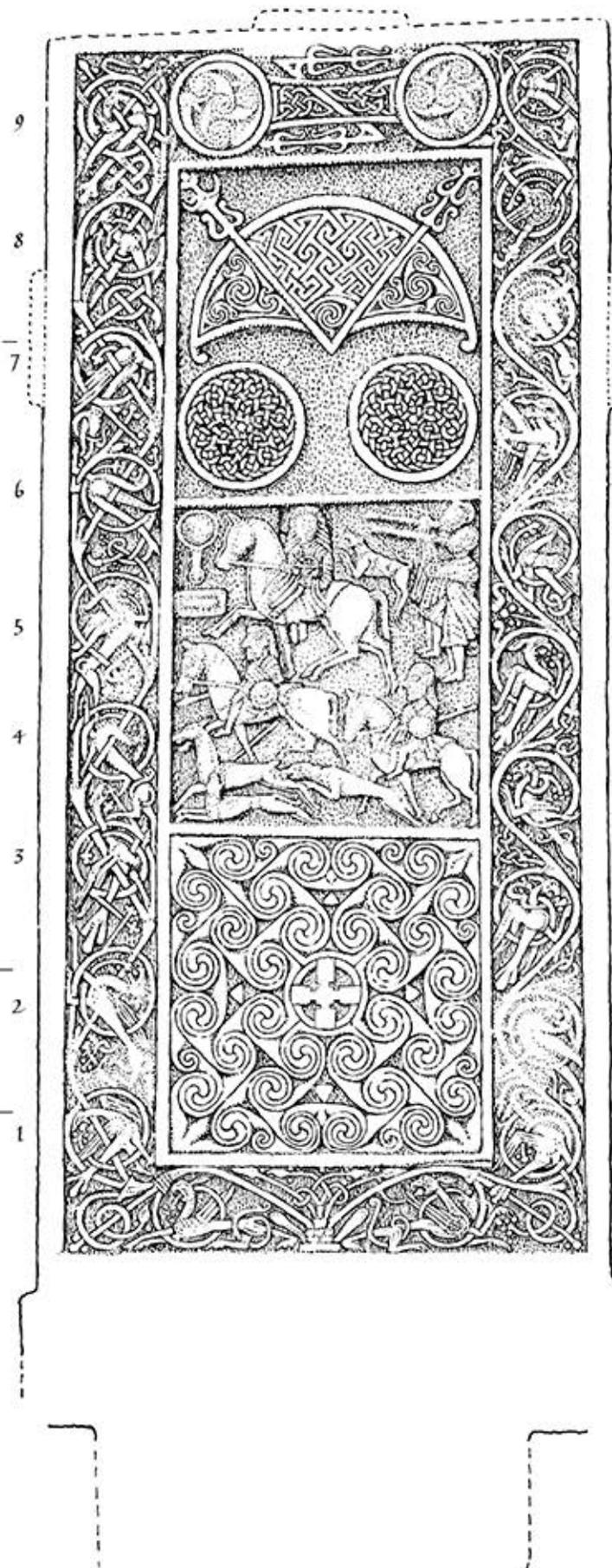
lower portion:  
at Hilton

face A  
front  
(+5.1)

face B  
right-hand  
edge  
(+5.2)

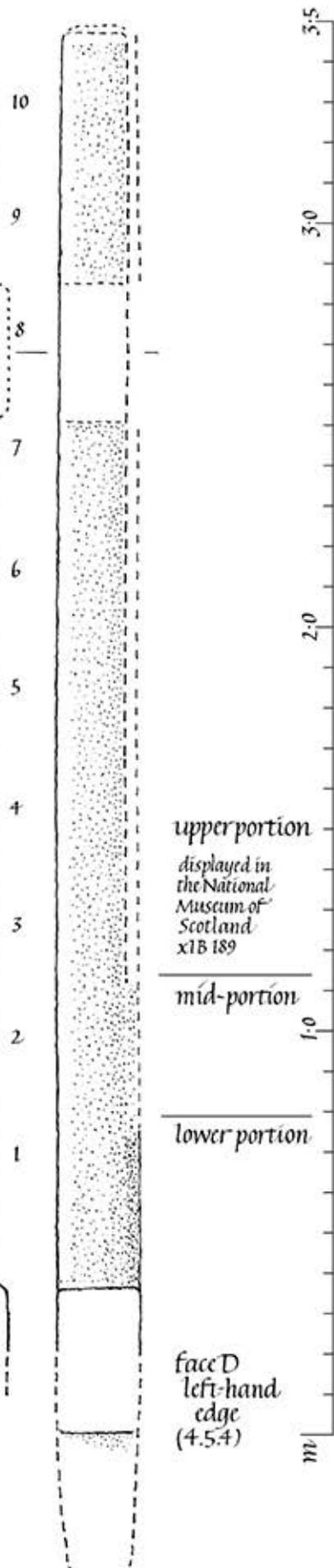


face E  
top edge  
(4.5.5)



animals in  
vine-scroll,  
numbered  
separately  
left-right

face C  
back  
(4.5.3)



upper portion  
displayed in  
the National  
Museum of  
Scotland  
x1B 189

mid-portion

lower portion

face D  
left-hand  
edge  
(4.5.4)

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number for the lower portion, which is not part of the Museum's collections.

*Measurements.* The maximum length and thickness of the fragment is expressed in mm, and the weight, in gm. (In the descriptive fields 'width' is used for the width across a band, strand or strip.)

*Class.* This classification was devised as a result of an examination of the lithology of the fragments. Class IA, the most important group, is defined as a carved fragment which probably belongs to the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. For the other categories see Chapter 9.1.

*Keywords.* A maximum of three keywords taken from the catalogue description, to aid searches in the electronic database and for distribution analysis of the find spots of fragments carved with different types of ornament. See Chapter 7.1. Definitions of the less self-explanatory keywords appear in the Glossary.

*Condition.* A note on the condition and surface appearance of a fragment at the time of its examination, including wear, colour, and the presence of 'blebs', swellings the size of a nail-head, caused by oxidisation, that can result in weakening the stone structure.

*Fracture.* Observations are recorded which include the shape of the fragment and any signs of later destructive toolmarks. Many of the fractures resulting from the 17th-century defacement of face A have a carved front, a convex conchoidal back, and a well-defined notch made by a chisel (see *illus* 7.12).

*Short description.* This introduces the main body of the entry and provides a brief objective description.

*Long description.* This covers the cataloguers' observations, interpretations and reservations, and includes noting the presence of original Pictish toolmarks such as the stugging or pecking of faces B and D.

*Discussion.* This field is intended for free speculation, the recording of conjoined fragments, and for cross-references to analogous forms among the fragments. Suggestions are made for further study of certain distinctive types of fragment. For the more complex pieces, which were catalogued at an early stage, more general art-historical observations were included in this field. For very small fragments the use of the discussion field was not always appropriate. In the database this field is used, additionally, as the up-dating field for recording fresh observations relevant to fragments in the catalogue, and their context.

### 4.4 Conclusion

Much of the cataloguing was done while Ian G Scott was sorting and recording the carved fragments, or at work on the reconstruction. The cataloguing process was enriched by this juxtaposition and the arrangements in the National Portrait Gallery were ideal for maximising observations which led to the fitting together of fragments. The cataloguing process remained investigatory, and morale was thereby kept up during the cataloguing of the less obviously significant fragments. Although by far the greater part of the reconstruction was achieved by Ian G Scott, the vigilance of the cataloguers, Meggen Gondek and Douglas Morton, contributed significantly to the process. The bonding of proposed conjunctions, which involved independent vetting, was the work of the conservation department of the National Museums of Scotland. The photography of the most informative fragments and the reconstruction of the mid-portion of faces A and C is the work of Neil McLean of the Photography Department of the National Museums of Scotland, with the assistance of Douglas Morton.

From the above account it will be apparent that the fragments recovered have not yet yielded all the information that was hoped for in the early years of the Hilton of Cadboll project. It is frustrating that there is no doubt that the longer the time spent on the fragments the more significant are the results achieved, and the more apparent are the best methods of achieving them. However, an 'honourable stop' had to be made. What is certain, however, is that further study can go forward based on the project's methods of cataloguing and recording of the fragments, from the point of excavation to the post-excavation analysis. Suggestions for possible future lines of investigation are made elsewhere in this volume, for which see, in particular, Chapter 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 by Stuart Jeffrey and Douglas Morton.

### 4.5 Catalogue

#### 4.5.1 Face A (*illus* 4.1 in pocket, *illus* 4.3a & b)

*Face A, lower portion* (*illus* 4.4a, 5.3)

*Finds number:* none

*Context number:* 008

*Measurements:* max width c1420mm, max thick c210mm, max height c840mm, weight unknown

*Keywords:* cross-shape, animal, key

*Condition:* all surviving carved surfaces are well preserved, with the exception of the upper horizontal moulding of the cross-base and the lateral edges of the slab which are damaged and worn.

*Fracture:* the severe damage on the upper edge that severed the lower portion from the mid-portion has the appearance of being caused by a blow directed at the bottom of the cross-shaft where it meets the base. However, it is possible that a fall due to natural causes could account for its appearance. The fracture is concave, with the deepest loss in the area of the cross-shaft. The damage to the bottom edge, resulting in the loss of the carved lower edge of the slab and the original tenon, has more of the appearance of a natural arc-shaped break. The lateral projections, which are the outer edges of blank panels which flank the cross-base, have been deliberately refashioned by cutting away. Their original relationship to the design of the slab is shown better on this face than on face C where there is no carving adjacent to the projections. The lower surviving edge of the slab, now concealed by the display stand, is recorded in the reconstruction drawing.

*Short description:* The carved surfaces show a two-stepped cross-base flanked with contoured but otherwise blank panels. The base is decorated with key pattern, with some terminals treated as triple spirals. The spirals are raised to create three lines of bosses consisting respectively of three, two, and on the lowest row five high-relief bosses. On either side of the base large-scale ornamental animals, elongated and entwined, are carved in high relief.

*Long description:* A trace of the return from the base up the cross-shaft has been preserved on the right-hand side. A very slightly larger return is present on fragment .3030 which was detached at the time of the excavation and remains unattached. It conjoins fragment .2998 which preserves a trace of carved surface lying within the cross-shaft. These returns give us the width of the shaft which is c390mm.

The very exact geometry of the decoration of the cross-base is fixed by the centre point of the slab, which is also the centre point of the cross-shaft. The breadth and height of the steps at c150mm were designed to be the same size (the sides of a square) and the breadth of the blank panels is twice the breadth of the steps. The key

pattern was gridded to produce diagonally set squares where the central bosses of rows one and three were aligned vertically with the central point of the slab. The grid also controls the distances between the bosses. The bars which are juxtaposed to the bosses are made of reversed Z-shapes, set horizontally or vertically. At those parts of the design on the periphery of the centrally placed bosses, but juxtaposed to the bosses at the edges of the bottom row of five bosses, are bars bent to form an axe-like shape. These are symmetrically placed, in mirror image, to the right and left of the field. The corners of the field are mitred with the bars closed horizontally on the left and opened diagonally on the right. The distance between the outer edge moulding of the shaft of the cross and the edge of the slab was designed to be roughly four times the breadth of the steps. The translation of the design into relief sculpture would, of course, lead to some loss of exact measurement. For example, the second step on the right of the base is fractionally larger than that on the left, and the internal measurement of the blank panel to the right is fractionally smaller than that on the left. To a large degree the balance of the design would be something the sculptor could achieve by instinct. The challenge, geometrically, was to design a key pattern that filled the field and centred the spiral bosses. The alternate twist of the spiral bosses, to the right in the top and bottom rows and to the left in the middle, is standard practice.<sup>1</sup>

To the right and left of this rigidly geometric field are carved, recessed into the thickness of the slab, parts of five large-scale ornamental animals, arranged in free-style, that is, without any regard for symmetry. Only one of them, on the left margin of the slab, has survived complete on the lower portion but there is nothing in the arrangement to suggest the possibility of lost mirror-image symmetry higher up the slab. The complete animal lies on the outer edge of the group of three to the left. Its attenuated tubular body forms a reverse S-shape. Its long neck is hooked on to the body of a scaly creature, the heavy head drooping on to its slightly swollen chest. From a pear-shaped shoulder a slender foreleg hangs limply, close to its body, to end in a hoof-like foot. The body forms a wide curve. The hindquarters are slender. Both legs are shown, the haunches defined by surface marking on their edges presumably to define the contour of the muscles. The creature has an extended

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tail which sweeps between the hindquarters to loop round its own body and fetter its off-side leg. The neck has well-defined twisted hanks of mane expressed by curved ridges. The naturalistic head is the most powerful part of the design. The skull and brow are rounded. A well-defined leaf-shaped ear lies along the back of the neck. A round eye socket is set within the brow. The muzzle is separated from the brow and skull. The jaws have a modelled contour line and are wide open. The top jaw has a fang. From the mouth emerges an extended tongue which passes over the animal's body and under its foreleg to end within a loop of interlaced band marked with a median-incised line. The interlace has one end free, while the other end passes between the extended forelegs of a scaly creature whose body interlocks with the complete S-shaped animal. A stick-like leg passes behind the shoulders of the scaly creature and must belong to a largely lost third animal. (The mid-portion fragment .1 was found to preserve the hinder part of the body of this third animal and the head of the scaly creature which was biting its tail.)

Although as described the arrangement of the animals seems crowded, in fact the bodies are clearly differentiated by surface marking, and the spaces between the interlaced forms are generous. The motif produces a design contrast between fleshy bodies and mats of interlaced forms.

The two animals to the right are of the same general type although they are larger in scale and more distorted in form. A large pair of hindquarters with rounded haunches lies on the outer edge of the slab, occupying the lower right corner of the field. Like the S-shaped animal to the left of the cross-base, the haunches have surface marking and the legs bend sharply at the hock. The offside leg ends in a neat ball-and-claw foot. The nearside foot droops and is fringe-like. The narrow body stretches up in the manner of a rampant animal. Its extended tail passes under its offside leg and over its nearside leg to pass between and loop round the small-scale hind legs of a similar animal. These small hind legs do not bend but are extended over the corner of the second step of the base, curving slightly to end in small hooves. The tail of the creature with smaller hind legs passes through its own lower legs. Its narrow tubular body passes over the tubular body of a larger creature of the same species. It then passes under its own shoulders to loop round the body of this second creature. Its

forelegs rest on the corner of the first step of the base and nip the body of the second creature. This second creature has a curved body and its slender forelegs grip the body of the creature with the diminutive hind legs.

The device whereby animals grip each other's bodies between their forelegs is not present in the animal ornament to the left of the cross-base. (The interpretation of the animal motif on the right of the slab was not obvious until the large mid-portion fragment .5 and mid-portion conjoined fragments .11/.265 were found to fit on to the lower portion. It then became clear that two large elongated animals with naturalistic heads made up the motif.) The surface condition of the two blank panels flanking the base varies (see Chapter 7.2.2). The panel to the left is carefully worked, the panel to the right much less so. It is possible that the panel to the right has been damaged, but perhaps, more probably, a decision not to carve these fields was taken and the need for further preparation regarded as unnecessary. Enough of the laying out of the panels survives to make it clear that the projections were part of the all over design of face A. They extend the stability and grandeur of the cross-base and in their plainness heighten, perhaps fortuitously, the dramatic impact of the densely carved bossed base and disturbingly unshapely tangled animals.

*Discussion:* As yet no key pattern of the type that fills the cross-base has been located among the fragments of key pattern assignable to face A. Animal heads, bodies, appendages and extensions similar to those described above occur on a number of carved fragments thought to belong to face A. Some have been located within the mid-portion associated with figure sculpture and within the cross-shaft. Others can with confidence be assigned to the upper portion of face A but are so far unlocated. The art-historical importance of face A of the lower portion lies in the unique nature of the base and its decoration, and in its animal ornament, which can be shown to have close connections with the local Nigg cross-slab, the St Andrews Sarcophagus, south of the Grampians on the east coast, and with other works of Insular art of the later eighth century. For the implications of these connections see Chapter 5.

### Note

- 1 ECMS, pt II, 376–7.

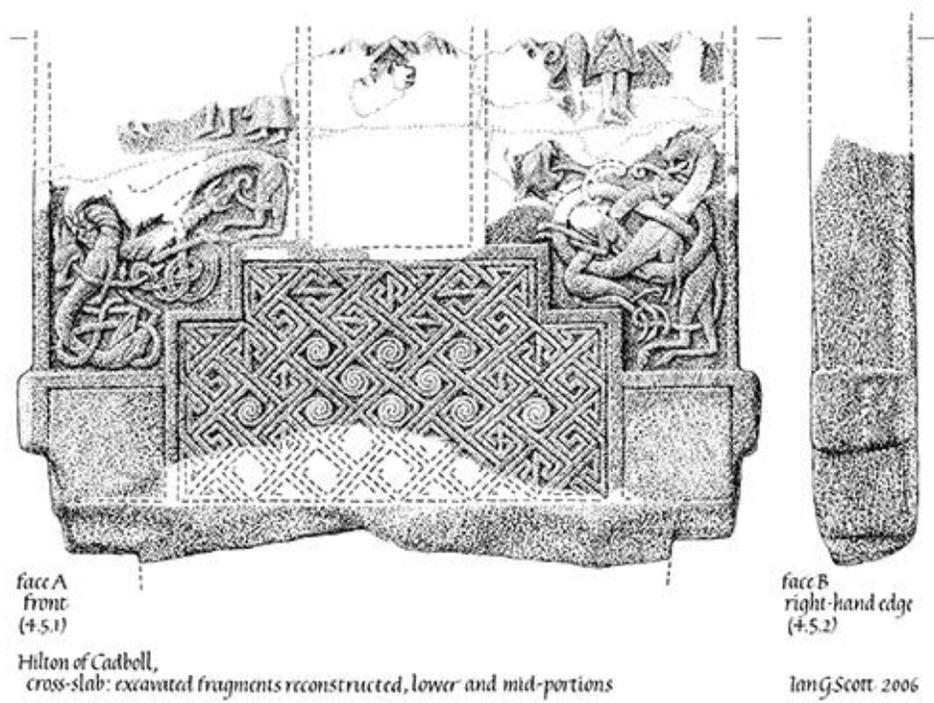


Illustration 4.4a

Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab faces A and B, lower and mid-portions (scale 1:15)

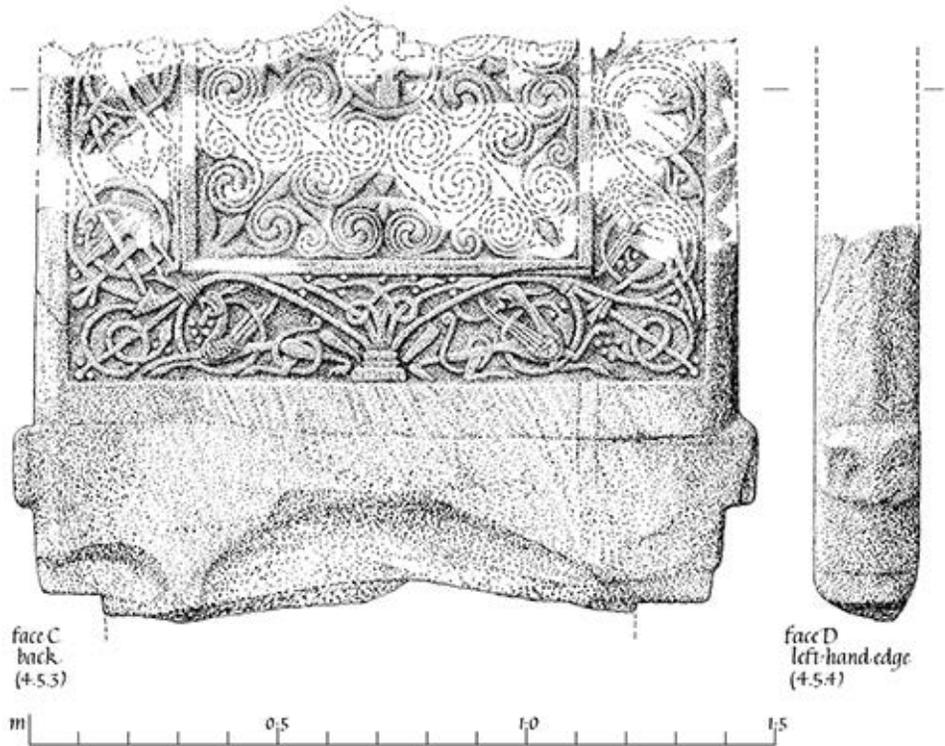


Illustration 4.4b

Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab faces C and D, lower and mid-portions (scale 1:15)

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*Face A, mid-portion (illus 4.4a & b, 5.35)*

*NMS Number:* X.IB 355

*Measurements:* max height c400mm, including c200mm known to have been attached to the lower portion, max width c1420mm

*Keywords:* animal, human, toolmark

*Condition:* some of the carved surfaces are in good condition preserving high relief and surface detail, but many of the fragments have large areas of lost surface.

*Fracture:* the mid-portion of face A comprises 16 fragments. The fracture at the upper edge of the lower portion presents as a curved convexity with the lowest point in the area where the cross-shaft would have met the cross-base. Three large fragments of large-scale, high-relief animal ornament, .1 to the left of the cross-shaft, and .265 and .5 to the right, were found in May 2005 to attach to the surface of the concave fracture (see illus 5.33a & b).

The fragments in the mid-portion above these animal motifs have some large components, for example .268 on the left and .6, .7, .8, and .11 on the right. Characteristic of the fragments to the right is the way in which uncarved surfaces interlayer. Both sides share the feature of the fracture of human figures so that nothing of their anatomy above the waist survives. The presence of the destructive toolmarks of a chisel on .7 and on the adjoining fragment on the right edge raises the possibility that these fragments were chiselled off the surface of the slab in the 17th century. There are no signs of such destructive toolmarks on the upper edges of .21 and .268, on .8, or on .9, the large fragment from the cross-shaft decoration. The Pictish sculptor's characteristic shaping and studded tooling of the right edge of the slab played a crucial part in the location of fragments.

*Short description:* The area occupied by the cross-shaft is defined by features on the upper moulding of the cross-base on face A of the lower portion (see above). The shaft decoration survives on three conjoined fragments of animal ornament. The animal motif to the left of the base on the lower portion is completed on the mid-portion by a fragment showing an animal biting the tail of another animal. The animal motif of two confronted animals to the right of the base is completed on the mid-portion. Above the animal motif on the left is the remnant of a scene originally

involving at least three figures. Above the motif to the right is a truncated figure with the haunch of a leonine naturalistic animal at his right and part of an ornamental animal of the scale and type of the motifs on either side of the cross-base on his left.

*Long description:* The conjunction of .8 (which links with fragments that extend to the right edge) and .9 requires .9 to be located in the central area of the slab, that is, on the cross-shaft. What survives of the carved surface of .9 consists of parts of a pair of confronted animals, of the same scale and type of those flanking the cross-base, with their forelegs stretched out to meet and cross. Two small fragments, .47 and .737, were found to conjoin to produce the upper part of a motif of addorsed animals both with the rounded brow and open fanged jaws typical of Hilton animal heads. This conjunction was found to belong to the surface of .9 in the area immediately below the crossed forelimbs of the larger animals (see illus 5.14).

The animal motif on .1 conjoins with .268 and .294 which itself joins to .21. Immediately adjacent to the left side of the cross-shaft, the lower anatomy of a figure with feet facing to the left wears an ankle-length robe that clings to his limbs and tapers at the hem. He stands behind the legs and feet of a figure that also faces to the left. The offside toe of this figure is on .21. This fragment has a significantly large area of uncarved but dressed surface. At its edge a pair of feet at the same level of the other figures faces to the right.

To the right of the shaft a scene is focused on the truncated body of a single figure. The body is expressed in rounded high relief. The scale of the figure with his short patterned tunic and long legs is somewhat larger than that of the robed figure to the left of the shaft. On the figure's right is a naturalistic haunch of a large lion-like animal, possibly with a tufted tail and a prominent dew claw. Behind the haunch, on conjoined fragment .8, is a small section of two interlaced high-relief tubular bands, one of which appears to have an animal head. This could be part of serpentine ornament, but the confined location would not allow it to be part of a panel with structural serpentine ornament such as is found on other Easter Ross cross-slabs. To the left of the figure, with forelegs stretched out towards him, is part of an animal of the scale and type of the animal motifs on either side of the cross-base (see illus 5.35c).

*Discussion:* There is no indication that panel mouldings separated either of the figure scenes from the animal motifs below. The head of one of the confronted animals on the left, .265, looks up, rather than towards the animal it confronts on the lower portion. This positioning may suggest that the scene with the single figure relates in some way to the tangle of distorted animals beneath it. There is no such indication surviving on the left side but there would have been an animal head somewhere in the area of carving missing to the upper left of the motif and it is possible that it too looked up towards the figures above. The presence of figure sculpture on the cross-face A is of great importance for it extends the number of instances of potentially scriptural iconography on Pictish sculpture.

The evident interaction between the three figures on the left and the unusually ornate tunic of the single figure on the right are rare in Pictish sculpture. In spite of the indications of the importance set on these figural scenes the iconography is very difficult to establish not least because of the truncation of the figures. There was certainly at least one other figure on face A, for a human leg and foot survives on .340. The leg is roughly similar in scale to the other figures but is carved in a different way from the truncated figures currently located in the mid-portion of face A. There are also five fragments (.16, .37, .48, .54, .28) each of which may represent a human head but none is certainly so (see *illus 4.16*). The possibilities of their location on the slab are raised below in the description of the fragmented original upper portion of face A, and their relationship to other Pictish representations of the human head discussed.

The reconstruction of the mid-portion of face A although involving a small area of carved surface has been rewarding. Here we are in wholly unknown territory, but what has been recovered relates closely to what has survived on the lower portion, thus extending its significance, and has given us a precious glimpse of the cross-shaft and its decoration. The figure with the patterned tunic, albeit truncated, must rate as a rare representation of fine garments such as appears more often in contemporary literature than in contemporary art. It was with something like disbelief that the conjunction to the right of the figure was found to involve a large-scale decorative animal. The earlier, more obvious, suggestions for the identification of an important figure associated with lions, such as David, King of Israel, or the prophet Daniel, had therefore to be discarded. The

case for reading the figure sculpture as having to do with ‘the four last things: death, judgement, heaven and hell’ is made in Chapter 5.

*Face A, defaced upper portion (illus 4.1 in pocket)*

*NMS Number:* X.IB 189

*Measurements:* max height *c*2340mm, max width *c*1404mm at the bottom and *c*1394mm at the top, max thickness *c*190mm

*Condition:* the lettering is clear and the surface, though pitted, seems unimpaired, except for a hollow slightly to the left of the date in the last line of the memorial inscription, and some breaks on the edges. Both Campbell-Kease and Thomson (see Chapter 7.2.6) are of the opinion that the letters T B and N, incised on the banner in the second quarter of the heraldic shield, are an example of early graffiti.<sup>1</sup> If so, like the initials on the upper portion of face C, they are neatly cut and unobtrusive. What remains surprising is that, if the story of the abandonment of the memorial, by whoever commissioned it, is true in any respect (its physical size can scarcely have been an adequate reason), one would have expected the name of Duff and the initials of his wives to have been obliterated, or at least for the slab to be turned back again so that their resting place was not recorded in two nearby churchyards. The inscribed face is in comparatively good condition. Had the slab been turned in the 17th century in such a way that the reused front face was hidden, and the back face exposed, and then turned again to expose the defaced front (perhaps by some other hopeful recycler who was sorry to discover an inscription) before Cordiner detected the carving on the back in the 1780s? The simplest, if unprovable, solution is that Duff and his wives were in fact buried in the cemetery at Hilton of Cadboll. The story of the slab’s abandonment could then have been contrived to explain the shameful removal of a gravestone from a grave out of antiquarian interest in the carving discovered on the other side.

*Fracture:* it is now known that a thin slice of around 20mm was removed from this face in order to dress it flat for reuse as a memorial slab. The defacement may also have removed some areas of higher relief. The appearance of the cast made by the National Museums of Scotland of the lower edge for the redisplay of the slab in the Museum of Scotland in 1998 suggests that the lower edge was comparatively

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irregular. One would have expected the lower edge to have been worked neatly at the edge had the slab been planned in the 17th century as a table-top memorial. Was it then unfinished? If it was intended to be set upright in the ground, or sunk at ground level then the irregularity would not have mattered, for only its bordered edge would have been visible. It is possible, of course, that the irregularity was the result of the display at Invergordon Castle.

*Long description:* The face, cleared of all trace of eighteenth-century carving, has been dressed flat to create a memorial slab with an inscription, dated to 1676, incised on the upper half of the slab. Immediately below the inscription, a recessed heraldic shield allows the heraldry to be expressed in relief. The shield is flanked by four sets of incised letters, which read right to left: A Duff followed by the initials of his wives.

Two incised parallel lines, 70mm apart, create a blank border round the edge of the slab. The inscription and the shield occupy only slightly more than half of the enclosed area. This may be a usual positioning on a slab, enabling the shield to have a more or less central position, but the space left below would allow for further inscriptions.

The inscription reads

VEIL  
HE THAT LEIVES VEIL DOOES  
SAYETH SOLOMON THE WYSE  
HEIR LYES ALEXANDER DUFF  
AND HIS THREE WYVES 1676

The lettering style and the lay-out of the inscription are discussed by Thomson (Chapter 7.2.6). For the interpretation of the heraldry and the identification of the initials of the wives, see Chapter 6.4. Campbell-Kease and Thomson point to mistakes in both the inscription and the heraldry. Could it have been that when the Duff family, and evidently also the Urquhart families, saw the reversed coupled heads in the third and fourth quarters and the conspicuously floating VEIL omitted from the first line of the inscription they decided it was unworthy and decided to commission another slab?

*Discussion:* The biblical-seeming source of the epitaph has not been identified and it is possible that it too contains a mistake. The saying attributed to Solomon the Wise is difficult to understand. It reads HE THAT LEIVES VEIL DOOES VEIL. In *The Book of the Duffs* compiled by Alistair and Henrietta Tayler is

included, in a section devoted to 'Duffs unconnected or unidentified', a reference to the inscription on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, but it gives a different version of Solomon's saying as 'Live well and die well', a natural amendment of the Hilton epitaph.<sup>2</sup> Careful searching in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in the King James Authorised Version of the Bible, and in The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus in the 1611 edition of the Old Testament Apocrypha has identified nothing that fits the sentiment 'He lives well who does [charitable acts?] well'. Whereas the constant refrain of all these sententious texts is indeed 'who lives well, dies well'. For example, in The Wisdom of Solomon 3.1, 'The righteous are in the hand of God, no torment shall touch them' and 4.7, 'a righteous man, though he die before his time shall be at rest'. The rich collection of 17th-century inscribed post-reformation tombstones in St Andrews Cathedral Museum includes epitaphs in Scots and Latin from 'Sap', Wisdom [of Solomon], and express sentiments such as 'Death cannot be evil to him who has lived righteously'.<sup>3</sup> The Hilton epitaph would make much better sense if 'Live well and die well', the Taylers' silent amendment, was what had been originally intended. Did the inscriber misunderstand an oral instruction to write 'dees well' (dies well), meaning to suffer death well, as 'dees well' meaning to do well?<sup>4</sup> Even if there had been three mistakes in the memorial would they have mattered? In Thomson's view the 'client' for such inscriptions had low expectations.<sup>5</sup>

The question also arises whether the form of the inscription has literary integrity to the extent that it may have been intended as a rhymed epitaph, a rhythmic couplet with 'wyse' and 'wyves' as a near-rhyme such as occurs in informal verse. If so, then it is an individual epitaph particular to the marital circumstances of Alexander Duff, composed for him, and likely therefore to involve a paraphrase of Solomon's alleged saying. If the first two lines are a quotation, not a paraphrase, however erroneous, it ought to be possible to find a source with vocabulary closer to the inscription.

The specialist analyses of the heraldry and inscription suggests that the memorial slab is for its time not a very polished performance. In comparison with the memorial slabs at St Andrews, and indeed with a reused medieval slab dated 1659 in Nigg churchyard in memory of Alexander Gair and his wife K McC, with its recessed circular panel, heraldic shield between two branches of laurel, and

Latin motto, it is certainly very plain.<sup>6</sup> To modern taste the plainness of the Duff inscription gives it a dignified, handsome appearance well suited to the classical lettering style. In spite of the mistakes and the somewhat risible number of wives the Duff memorial does not altogether detract from the general appearance of the slab. However, the removal of what was a masterpiece of early medieval sculpture cannot be regarded as anything but a cultural catastrophe. Research on Duff for this project has to some extent lessened his responsibility for the vandalism. Even if we do not know all the circumstances, this looks like a case of to know all would be to understand all.

### Notes

- 1 Campbell-Kease 2002, 98.
- 2 Tayler & Tayler 1914, 2, 586.
- 3 Hay Fleming 1931, no 53, 154–5.
- 4 Chambers *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (1996).
- 5 Thomson 2001, 368.
- 6 Macdonald 1902, fig 3, 693–4.

*Face A, original upper portion (illus 4.3 and 4.5–4.16)*

*NMS Number:* X.IB 355

*Measurements:* max height c2340mm, max width c1404mm at the bottom and c1394mm at the top, max thickness after defacement, c190mm (to which compare c210mm for the thickness of the lower portion)

*Short description:* The number of fragments which can probably be assigned to the original face of the upper portion is 3287. They consist of fragments carved with the standard ornamental repertoire of Insular art in all media, key pattern, spiral, interlace, key pattern, animal ornament, plant ornament and a few fragments of human body parts. For a description of the physical nature of these fragments, see Chapter 7.2.3.

*Discussion:* A characterisation of a selected number of fragments assignable to face A of the original upper portion

Among the conclusions resulting from the application of the technique of Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating to the Hilton of Cadboll site was the possibility that the cross-slab had been subjected to a degree of damage at the time of the Reformation (Chapter 7.3.2). This suggestion has yet to be fully absorbed into the analysis of the fragments. If there was Reformation damage then

its prime target would have been the face A original upper portion, particularly the cross-head. Had a zealous reformer delivered blows to the cross-head area, or indeed had a natural destructive event led to the fall and smashing of this area of the slab, then the chances are that a degree of reconstruction similar to that achieved for the broken up mid-portion would have been possible, for such events produce large fragments. In contrast it was the systematic chiselling off of the carving on the upper portion of face A to produce a flat surface for use as a memorial slab which presumably accounts for the greater part of the damage. The nature of this work involved taking off the top level of relief, followed by the removal of what was left beneath, and then the final dressing flat. The difficulties created by this staged removal of carving for the reconstruction process are obvious.

The earlier stages of the sorting of fragments for visual inspection and cataloguing produced between 750 and 800 fragments with sufficient carved surface to allow a realistic prospect of finding conjunctions. Those responsible for recording, reconstructing and cataloguing were aware that among them there was a good representation of mouldings of different section and width which ought to belong to the edges of the slab, the contour of the cross-shape, or be panel dividers for the decoration of the background of the cross (Chapter 7.2.4). If carving is damaged carved mouldings tend to drop off the surface in a strip and to snap across when they fall. A number of such fragments were joined together by visual inspection, and there were examples of mouldings at right angles suggestive of panelling and the occasional heavy edge which could be reasonably assigned to the edge of the slab or to the contour of the cross. Measurements for these mouldings could be extrapolated from the lower portion.

In reconstructing the upper portion of face A, a priority was to discover some evidence for the shape of the cross-head. Was it the very common type, with rounded arm-pits, as on the full-length cross at Edderton, or the slightly less common one with stepped arm-pits as on the Nigg slab? Were the arms encircled by a ring? In spite of some promising conjunctions, no single fragment or conjunction of fragments give satisfactory evidence for an armpit shape. Nor was there clear evidence for the shape or decoration of the central field where the arms of the cross intersected, whether it was rounded or stepped. The failure to make any progress in defining the

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cross-head led to speculation, still sustainable, that substantial deposits of fragments remain to be found on the site. Another explanation might be that the cross-head, and not the sculpture on the rest of the face, was chipped off systematically rather than destroyed violently at an earlier period, and that in the years intervening the chippings of the cross-head were dispersed differently from those of the later systematic defacement and re-dressing. It was unsatisfactory to have recourse to such speculations to account for the failure to reconstruct the cross-head and therefore a serious attempt was made, quite late in the project, to harness the search capacity of the electronic database (Chapter 7.2.5). Although it too failed to produce the shape of the cross, much was learned by the study and some useful observations and joins made. Undoubtedly there is scope for further focused searches in the database and this first attempt is in the nature of a pilot study which will provide useful guidelines.

The account given here of the characteristics of the fragments is based on a sample of those fragments thought to belong to the upper portion which were selected for visual and manual inspection on the basis that they preserved significant amounts of carved surface. The fragments belonging to the mid-portion of face A are described in Chapter 7.2.4. The account here will be largely descriptive and factual. The evidence they provide has art-historical implications which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Within this selection the number of fragments in each category of ornament is as follows: key pattern 206, animal ornament 133, interlace 121, spiral pattern 73, plant ornament 33, human parts 10. Because these numbers contain fragments of diverse size, including larger fragments with small amounts of carving preserved on them, the numbers do not reflect accurately the area of the slab covered by a particular category. There was, however, a clear impression that in the sample selected solely on the basis of the potentially informative nature of the surviving carved surfaces, there was more key pattern and less interlace than one might have expected. The small number of interlace fragments may be due to the way interlace fractures, for its narrow strands can easily be wrongly allocated to plant or animal ornament. Fragmented animal and plant ornament can themselves easily be confused, for parts of bodies and stems can be of similar width, and strands can be foliate tendrils or animal extensions. The numbers in these categories may

also therefore be deceptive. Key pattern has the advantage of being comparatively flat and readily recognisable, although small fragments can easily be confused with narrow strips of mouldings. Cataloguers use the terms 'bar' or 'strip' to describe the straight elements of key pattern indiscriminately but with a tendency to use the latter term when the identification of key pattern was less certain. Nonetheless, key pattern does seem to dominate this group of fragments that have survived with a significant amount of carved surface.

For this purpose those parts of the repertoire possibly more likely to have decorated the cross will be described first: they are key pattern, spiral ornament and interlace. There follows animal and plant ornament which one could expect to find either on the cross or its background, and finally, human parts, which almost certainly belong to the background of the cross. Fragments are referred to by the consecutive numbers following the full stop in the NMS accession number X.IB 355. Conjoined fragments are expressed by a forward slash between fragment numbers. Allen pattern numbers are those given in ECMS, part II, chapter VIII, 129–403. The brief descriptions and measurements of motif elements are for the most part taken from the catalogue entries prepared by Meggen Gondek. Using fine measurement to establish connections proved difficult because of differential wear and the chiselling off of top surfaces. It is hoped that the level of detail supplied here and the accompanying photographs do justice to the surviving fragments of the original upper portion of face A, and will enable those with a special knowledge of the ornamental repertoire of Insular art to contribute to their understanding. Every fragment carved with a particular pattern has an individual description and illustration in the digital database.

### *Fragments with key pattern (illus 4.5 and 4.6)*

#### SPECIAL ASPECTS

Many fragments of key pattern have 'key' as the only keyword in the catalogue entry and thus they are readily searchable in the database. Other relatively common keywords associated with fragments with key pattern are 'edge' and 'margin'. This alone presupposes that somewhere on the slab there were stretches of key pattern in panels either on the cross-shape or its background. A number of fragments of key pattern, usually thin in fracture, have a distinctive rusty brown

appearance suggesting that they came from the same area of the slab.

#### PRESENTATION ON THE SLAB

The key pattern carved on the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab is carved in a middle grade of relief, neither the exceptionally high relief of the Tarbat fragment NMS X.IB 284, or the flat strap style of a fragment of later sculpture found in the recent excavations at Portmahomack. The nature of key pattern allows for different styles of presentation: some patterns have straight edges in order that a containing pseudo-margin can be created by the edges of the pattern units; in other stretches of key pattern, part of the structure of the units can run into what are true mouldings, whether of a straight-edged field or a curved field. In other instances the complete key pattern may be set within wholly independent mouldings. All these possibilities contribute to the difficulties of identifying stretches of key pattern.

Those in the project involved with the reconstruction and with cataloguing detected a significant number of instances where the key pattern was raised on a pad of relief, there being a drop down to a lower surface on one side, which may or may not have then met a moulding. This trait suggests that some stretches of key pattern were carved on a surface at a higher level than the dressed surface. Examples are:

.652/.307: Carved with key pattern which on one side drops down to a lower background surface on one edge.

.651: key pattern with adjacent carved surface. One strip drops to a lower dressed surface.

.345/.625: Key pattern with one edge dropping on one side *c*7mm, and on the other to a shallow incised line.

.669: An outer strip of key pattern drops down *c*6mm to a dressed surface.

The most obvious location for the emphasis achieved by such marginless raised areas would be on the cross-shape. This would not, of course, preclude the use of unpanelled key pattern in the background of the cross-shape uniformly level with the dressed surface, in the manner of, for example, the key pattern on either side of the cross-shaft of Aberlemno no 3, dividing the angels under the transverse arms of the cross from the scenes of animal combat at the bottom of the slab (illus 5.17). On the other hand, there are fragments of key pattern within independent mouldings of a width

appropriate for the cross-shaft. It is possible therefore that there were two methods of presenting key pattern on the cross-shape. If so one would expect the patterns to be differentiated.

#### IDENTIFYING PANELS

Identifying panels or stretches of key pattern can be made through the survival of parts of key pattern adjacent to mouldings. Examples are:

.372 : a 20–5mm moulding with an unambiguous trace of key pattern on one side and a dressed surface on the other. The moulding appears to be independent of the pattern edge.

.368: a 22mm moulding with adjacent key pattern.

.38: a corner of a panel of key pattern within an adjacent moulding of *c*22mm width.

Another way of identifying panels of key pattern is through the survival of parts of the distinctive methods of treating the corners of panels. If, for example, key pattern decorated the arms of the cross then one would expect to find evidence for a considerable number of mitred corners, although the areas where the pattern met the crossing might have been modified to fit the shape of the arm-pit. Even though the complete corner mitre has not survived the presence of an irregular arrow- or T-shape is enough to suspect that a fragment is part of a corner of a panel. If there was a panel of the size appropriate to decorating parts of the cross-shaft, then obviously there should be a set of four mitred corners, but such a set has not as yet been identified. Examples of such corners are:

.38: corner of a panel of key pattern with adjacent moulding

.203/.328/.616: corner of a panel with adjacent dressed surface

.343/.215/.937: the corner of a panel of key pattern within a corner of moulding, set on two levels of dressed surface

.373: a distinctive corner treatment with a T-shape within a triangular shape.

#### SCALES AND TYPES OF KEY PATTERN

The fragments contain examples of the two main types of key pattern: diagonally set, and those with the elements set at right angles to each other. There are also examples of straight-line spirals. All three could not appear in the same panel, but Pictish sculptors regularly liked to vary the design even if the panels

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themselves were arranged symmetrically. An example is Aberlemno no 3 where the panels beneath the angels have Allen no 958 on the left of the shaft, and Allen no 980 on the right. Cataloguers were aware of instances of no 958, but there were no certain identifications of the common pattern Allen no 974 which is used prominently on the Shandwick cross-slab and partially survives on the Nigg cross-slab. In spite of the identification of types of pattern on individual fragments and conjunctions of fragments, no framework was built up which completed a significant part of a panel containing a particular pattern type. Examples of types of key pattern identified are:

- diagonally set: .204, .328, .368, .174, .278
- square set: .391
- single straight-line spiral: .177, .203, .217
- double straight-line spiral: .220/.170 (an example of Allen no 958, found also on the shaft of the Nigg cross-slab).

There appear to be groupings of fragments with patterns of the same type but carved on different scales, although often such differences which seemed obvious to the eye could not be substantiated by measurement. One of the larger scales of key pattern, on .628, has bars c10mm wide. One recurring difficulty in identifying similarities of scale is the degree of differential wear, but in the majority of the catalogue descriptions similarities and differences of scale of key pattern are recorded.

### KEY PATTERN MERGING WITH OTHER TYPES OF ORNAMENT

The trait of running one pattern into another represents a departure from the earlier convention in Insular art of each panel containing only one type of ornament. Such merging can take place in small fields such as the turn of the frame on the top right corner of the Nigg cross-slab, or between larger panel-sized stretches of pattern. For example, on the shaft of the cross on Meigle no 4, key pattern no 974 runs into a panel of interlace. Examples of such merging of patterns evident on the fragments from face A are:

- .70: angular interlace adjacent to key pattern
- .31: interlace strands adjacent to key pattern
- .29: interlace and key pattern running into each other
- .559: interlace and key pattern merging.

In Pictish sculpture such merging is often found on shafts, and in the area where the ornament at the crossing meets the ornament on the arms. None of the fragments with this trait is large enough to tell with certainty how the device was used on the Hilton of Cadboll slab.

### FINDINGS

There seems little doubt that stretches of key pattern were located somewhere on the cross-shape, perhaps most probably on the cross-head, balancing the dynamic use of the pattern on the cross-base. These could have been of different types or differently presented, panelled or unpanelled. Although no example of key pattern adjacent to faces B and D has been detected, key pattern might well also have been part of the decoration of the background of the cross, aesthetically bridging the two main areas of its deployment.

### OTHER LINES OF INVESTIGATION THAT COULD BE PURSUED

The considerable quantity of key pattern among the fragments selected for visual and manual inspection can be separated and categorised in the ways described above. The varied thicknesses, the differential wear, and for some fragments, the characteristic rusty-brown colouration should all help to establish connections within the groups of fragments exemplified above. It is probable that with more man-power, time, and physical space to layout the fragments, visual inspection might have produced more conjunctions. It is, however, now possible to search the database in such a way that the chains of similarities recorded in the catalogue, including pattern type, scale, and surface levels, can be collected together and analysed. A single study concentrating on key pattern fragments, using both the catalogue and the database is the strategy most likely to produce the reconstruction of more substantial areas of key pattern and to identify their probable location on the original face A.

*Fragments with spiral patterns (illus 4.7 and 4.8)*

### SPECIAL ASPECTS

Pictish sculptors generally used higher relief on the front of the slab and lower relief on the reverse. The recovered lower portion of X.IB 355 shows that this convention was observed by the sculptor of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. Any of the components of the ornamental repertoire can be laid over domed projections, such as bosses, but spiral pattern can

raise its own central design elements to create a boss projecting from a background network of expanding bands and connecting curves in shallower relief. Because of this characteristic it is possible to assign with confidence the majority of fragments with knob-like bosses, usually made up of triple spirals, to the original face A.

Key pattern can also produce bosses by coiling and raising a double straightline spiral. This is how the bosses on the cross-base on the lower portion of face A are produced. All these lower portion double spiral bosses are approximately the same size, 60–70mm in diameter and projecting 16mm from the background key pattern. Among the selected fragments there is no positive evidence for spiral bosses rising from a bed of key pattern. Even if such bosses had been chipped off cleanly from a background of key pattern, fragments of key pattern with traces of a circular scar would be expected. Theoretically, some of the decapitated bosses such as .434, which is approximately 55mm in diameter and projects 15mm from the dressed surface, could have belonged to a bed of key pattern. While there is no evidence to support this, the recurrence somewhere on the cross-shape of the design scheme used for the base remains a reasonable supposition.

#### PRESENTATION

No surviving fragments of spiral pattern are associated with a margin or edge. This contrasts strongly with the fragments of key pattern. However, the destruction of spiral-boss ornament by knocking off the summit of the boss followed by the finer chipping off of the curvilinear background might not preserve any adjacent mouldings. Generally the removal of the boss summit makes the reconstruction of the structure of panels of spiral ornament difficult to achieve.

#### DIFFERENT PATTERNS

Differences in fragments of spiral pattern are confined to the diameter size of the raised boss, whether the boss is made up of double or triple spirals, and whether or not any of the curvilinear pattern from which the boss is developed has survived.

Diameter size varies from *c*55mm to 25mm, with examples occurring at 5–10mm intervals within the range. For example:

.455: described as part of one of the largest bosses judging from the scale of what survives of the lobed spirals

.434: 55mm  
.113: 45mm  
.379: 35mm  
.26, .130, .131: 25mm.

There are a few examples of what appear to be double spirals including:

.123: 40mm in diameter  
.430/.453: 35mm in diameter.

Examples of spiral bosses with some traces of their lower reaches surviving are:

.109 where the top of the boss has been lost, .337, .113, .118, .436, .704  
.112: either the lower reaches of a boss or low relief spiral ornament  
.353/.437: conjoined fragments which show the extent of the space between bossed elements  
.431: the boss is 30mm in diameter and projects *c*10mm from its surface background  
.379: a well-preserved example of triple spiral pattern culminating in a boss.

Only two examples of spirals adjacent to other ornament have been identified: .279: a raised spiral pattern adjacent to what is probably interlace

.432: a raised boss adjacent to a curled relief strip which could be part of animal or plant ornament.

Both of these examples are ambiguous. Raised spirals run into interlace on the sophisticated spiral panel to the left of the Nigg cross-shaft. If the curled strip on .432 is a remnant of animal or plant elements, this merging with spiral pattern would be very unusual and cannot be discounted. Nonetheless, the interpretation of this curl of relief should include the possibility that it is part of a hooked connection between spirals.

#### FINDINGS

Raised boss spiral patterns were defaced in the form of firm nodules and their survival rate is likely to be comparatively high. Spiral pattern with raised bosses is suitable for emphasising a cross-shape but it is also found decorating the background of a cross. It would be expected that the raised bosses on the cross-base would be replicated somewhere else on the cross-shape. The number of surviving culminations of spiral bosses appears small, but the bosses are a relatively small

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area of the total pattern from which they emerge, and their effective use on the cross-shape could have been achieved by generous spacing, a trait of the sculptor of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. The well-spaced spiral pattern at the bottom right of the Nigg cross-slab when complete would have required 26 spiral bosses of differing sizes. The 70 or so unambiguous spiral bosses surviving from the Hilton slab could therefore notionally come from at least two such panels, leaving a number suitable for emphasising the four arms of the cross.

### OTHER LINES OF INVESTIGATION THAT COULD BE PURSUED

An important aim of those involved with the reconstruction was to find examples of the cross-base ornament, key pattern rising into regularly placed bosses. Visual inspection, to this end, of the fragments of key pattern and the fragments of spiral bosses produced nothing comparable to the cross-base decoration. A consideration of the find context of the spiral bosses as recorded in the electronic database should be undertaken to see if any relationship with fragments bearing key pattern could be established.

*Interlace (illus 4.9 and 4.10)*

### SPECIAL ASPECTS

Face A has no interlace on its lower portion, and interlace is confined to the symbol designs on face C. On the basis of the principles of selection of ornamental repertoire on other Pictish sculpture this would suggest that interlace would have played a significant role on face A. Although interlace is comparatively well represented among the selected fragments one would have expected rather more to have survived. As mentioned earlier a complete piece of interlace is easily recognised but elements of plant and animal ornament also interlace, and it may be that some fragments with interlace strands have been assigned the wrong keyword. On the other hand, there is no hint of interlace being made up of serpentine bodies such as are found on other Easter Ross cross-slabs in both high and low relief. Some of the interlace fragments are very worn, leading to the perforation of the structural hole-points. Other fragments have well-preserved strands with rounded profiles. There is no evidence for patterns created out of double strand interlace. Open loops of band are sometimes median-incised, but there are not parts of interlace patterns with this feature surviving on their surfaces.

### PRESENTATION

The fragments with interlace rarely retain parts of possibly associated mouldings although .344 may be an example and .29, which has unusually thick strands, does preserve evidence for interlace adjacent to margins but not necessarily contained by them. Some fragments of interlace, for example, .686, drop down on to a lower surface which may result in a pseudo-margin, or border. One of the conjoined clusters centred on .395/.396 was found, when drawn in section, to create a gently rising dome creating a form similar to the shallow bosses in the arm-pits of Aberlemno no 3.

### DIFFERENT PATTERNS

The catalogue entries for fragments with interlace regularly record the scale of the interlace. There are clearly distinguishable examples of tightly knit interlace and looser interlace with thick strands, and these patterns must have come from different areas of the slab. Some of the fragments show meshed interlace, others symmetrical or asymmetrical loops with diagonal strands passing through the loops.

Examples of these differences are:

.165 and .166: tightly knit meshed interlace, with strands 7mm wide and similar in scale to the domed element centred on .395/.396, which includes .397,/.398/.399

.30 could be a section of circular interlace

.161, .33 and .156: Strands of 10mm wide comparable to .163, .157, .714, .717, with loosely constructed interlace made up of thick strands

.144, .148, .152: symmetrical or asymmetrical loops

.34, .155, .143, .146: asymmetrical loops with diagonal strand.

There is a considerable number of fragments where interlace is found adjacent to key pattern, some of which have been mentioned above. A clear example is .70.

### FINDINGS

Although at a superficial glance the fragments with interlace look very similar, close scrutiny reveals at least two types, the fine mesh and the thick stranded, loosely constructed. No substantial area of interlace within a defined field has been reconstructed but the dome-shape gives a rare glimpse of ornament functioning on the slab as a point of emphasis. That it is a survivor of a set of four mesh-covered domes located in the arm-pits of the cross-head, or a single dome at the crossing,

are at least possibilities. The natural location for fine meshed interlace would be the cross-shape, placed in between more dynamic patterns, such as raised spiral or animal ornament. Unlike key pattern interlace is less suitable for use as a section of 'wall-papering' on the background of the cross. On the other hand the observed merging of key pattern with interlace could take place on either the cross-shape or its background. The domed interlace could also be the sole survivor of a boss made up of the meshed bodies of serpents, a dominant theme of Easter Ross sculpture.

#### FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

The fragments with interlace divide into different patterns and scales more obviously than do the fragments with key pattern. They were more straightforward to catalogue than key pattern and the detailed work on interlace which is part of *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* provided cataloguers with some useful perceptions. While it is acknowledged that within Insular art Pictish sculpture displays uniquely complex interlace, the patterns surviving at Hilton seem to have been reasonably straightforward. The evidence for panelled interlace has eluded identification, but the structure of some of the loops, particularly in the way they appear to fit into corners, raises the hope that further consideration might produce a pattern within a panel shape.

#### *Plant ornament (illus 4.11 and 4.12)*

#### SPECIAL ASPECTS

Cataloguers chose the keyword 'plant' for a carved fragment when the character of the carved strips or bands showed no affinity with the geometrically constructed repertoires of key pattern, spiral or interlace, or were inappropriate in width for attribution to interlaced extensions of animal anatomy, such as tails, tongues and lappets, but which were appropriate for stems and tendrils. There are, as yet, very few examples of other more positive attributes of plant growth, such as leaves, fruits, or nodes. The keyword 'vine-scroll' is reserved for plants with unambiguous evidence for plant growth such as is found in the plants growing up the left and right sides of the frame on face C. The scrolls growing from the stems of these plants contain birds and winged quadrupeds, and this 'inhabited vine-scroll' has direct relevance for defining animal styles. Nonetheless 'inhabited vine-scroll' is part of plant repertoire and so the evidence for the possible

occurrence of this motif on the upper portion of face A is included here.

#### PRESENTATION

As yet no fragments have been found carved with foliate ornament adjacent to slab edges or set within panel mouldings.

Foliate ornament can have asymmetric growth but its stems have to give the motif some direction and articulation. None of the fragments of potentially plant ornament attributable to face A upper portion has provided clear evidence of this nature. What has been observed by cataloguers sufficiently often to suggest a trace of an underlying recurring framework, is the juxtaposition of animal ornament adjacent to a curving, substantially wide, band. Examples of this feature are:

.371/.571/.108: animal hindquarters and the forelegs of a second animal adjacent to a curving tubular band

.269: with keyword 'animal', (now joined with .1115 which extends the band or margin adjacent to the animal head)

.360/.86: the head of an animal possibly biting a plant shoot

.404/.405: part of an animal neck with attached coiled extension adjacent to a curved band.

#### DIFFERENT PATTERNS

Foliate ornament without associated animal ornament or separated from associated animal ornament is represented on fragments carved with two curving bands, one branching from the other to create a Y-shape. This form is the most positive evidence as yet available for plant growth, for it does not belong to interlace patterns or to the anatomy of animals with tubular bodies, such as are typical of the animal style elsewhere on the monument. The stem widths and curvature are comparable to those associated with animals as described above.

Examples of such branching stems are .311, .488, .593.

Examples of single related stems may be .55, .408.

Varying widths of strands suggestive of plant ornament are .87, .488, .541.

Examples of possible berries or fruits, seemingly on a larger scale than those on the vine-scrolls on face C, are .327, .600, .350, .732. These rounded forms could

## A FRAGMENTED MASTERPIECE

be rounded leaves rather than berries. Leaf-shapes are found on .300, .378.

### FINDINGS

The evidence for plant ornament on the original face A of the upper portion depends largely on the detection of curved or branched tubular stems. Other evidence is ambiguous: animal extensions can be misread as tendrils and shoots and leaves may be leaf-shaped ears. The lively animal ornament associated with the strips or bands suggests a typically Pictish virtuoso performance similar to the more disciplined and purely animal ornament on the cross-head of the Nigg cross-slab. Inhabited plant-scrolls do not need to have the botanical growth associated with inhabited vine-scroll where there is a growth point and a single meandering stem. The fragments of strongly curved stems look as though they belonged either to two-stemmed plant organisations that create a medallion shape (possibly the interlaced variety, with its tighter Y-shaped juxtapositions) or to bush scroll, where the side growth is, in botanical terms, opposite, and wider spreading.

### FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Fragments with substantial, single, curved tubular bands deserve further analysis. One result might be to identify a foliate design framework, whether or not associated with animals, belonging to the original face A. It is desirable that the geometry of the curved bands associated with animals be analysed in order to establish implications for the nature of the framework. A small beginning is the recognition of a series of conjunctions and similarities centred on .371 involving plant stem and tubular band. The catalogue entry for fragment .371, based on visual inspection, records carved surfaces with profile hindquarters and adjacent strand on two levels of surface. Its later conjunction with .571 and .108, and its association with .404/.405, is an example of how visual inspection and interrogation of the data base can work together.

*Animal ornament (illus 4.13 and 4.14)*

### SPECIAL ASPECTS

A significant number of the selected fragments preserve parts of animal bodies, particularly heads and hindquarters. Other fragments were assigned the

keyword 'animal' when the relief, often a tubular band or rounded form, was of a scale unsuited to plant ornament. Face A of the lower and mid-portions has a dramatic range of animal ornament. On either side of the cross-base are loose arrangements of large-scale animals in high relief, on the cross-shaft are the scars of a pair of affronted animals on the same scale, within whose outstretched forelegs are an addorsed pair of the heads of two small-scale animals. The animal fragments on the upper portion of the original face A provide evidence for the same range of animal ornament both in variety of scale, and in the variety of arrangement, whether symmetrical and asymmetrical. More particularly, the style of the heads most vividly expressed in the mid-portion fragments 355.1 and .265, both now known to be conjoined with the lower portion, is replicated in fragments from the original upper portion. It is a type of head also used for creatures in the inhabited vine-scroll on face C with the important difference that face A creatures, instead of being winged and eating fruit, have wide open jaws from which emerge long sinuous tongues, dropping down from their mouths to end in a coil. The animal head type, with its rounded cranium, separated by a change of relief height from its snubby snout and wide-open fanged jaws, is the trademark of the Hilton of Cadboll animal style. The other features of the surviving fragments of animals are tubular bodies with slim almond-shaped hindquarters, and stick-like forelimbs, both traits found in other Pictish monuments. The high survival rate of haunches is probably because these rounded forms were chiselled off more or less intact rather in the manner of the spiral bosses.

### PRESENTATION

There is evidence that some of the animal ornament was in panels and located on the background of the cross. Examples are:

.421: the upper part of a profile head with a pricked up ear similar to the animals on the lower portion of face A, and to many of the creatures in the vine-scroll on face B. It is adjacent to a broad band

.15: a well-preserved substantial fragment of flat band moulding with adjacent legs of confronted creatures, one of which cuts into the moulding

.46: A piece of flat band moulding with relief forms adjacent, which are probably animal parts. The

pocking of an edge of the flat band suggests that the fragment preserves part of face B or D

.49/.50: claws cutting into an edge, as in .15

.320: a snake-like head conjoined to mouldings at right angles made up of fragments, .741/.3082/.742

.108/.571/.371: the hindquarters of one animal and a pair of outstretched limbs adjacent to a curved band which could be either a curved panel margin or, as listed above with plant ornament, a curved plant stem or tendril.

#### DIFFERENT TYPES OF MOTIF

On the cross-shaft in the mid-portion large scale animals on fragment .9 contain small animals, .47/.737. This mid-portion motif is found on other Pictish sculpture and the differing scales of heads found among the fragments of animals could be part of a similar motif. As described above parts of animals are adjacent to curved bands and it is possible that animals are enclosed in foliage formally arranged as medallion or bush scroll. Other animals seem more enmeshed with each other in a way appropriate neither to an inhabited foliate scroll motif nor to a symmetrically constructed pattern. The species most represented among the selected fragments has a mastiff-like head and slim hindquarters. There are two fragments, .8 and .320, with possible snake ornament such as found in Easter Ross sculpture and there are some fragments with attributes more suitable to birds than quadrupeds. One pair of unlinked animals is adjacent to a curved moulding which could be a margin. Examples of these motifs and single animal parts are:

.269, .360/.86, .423, .308, .376: typical heads of varying scales

.354/.358: a typical small-scale animal uniquely looking back over its shoulders Adjacent to it is a slim pair of hindquarters, and the animals appear tightly enmeshed in their own extensions.

.62/.63: a tangle of animal parts very similar in scale and composition to .354/.358: and may be part of the same composition. Compare also possible animal ornament on .352/.722

.338/.585/.283: A tangle of parts of large-scale animals

.61, .65, .67, .529: typical almond-shaped hindquarters with possible body marking on .61 and

.529, such as is preserved on the thighs of animals flanking the cross-base on the lower portion

.80/.322, .609: haunches of large-scale animals

.78, .342: a haunch or shoulder with the upper limb bent. The typical sharply angled upper limb found elsewhere on the cross-slab is not well represented in the fragments.

.371: bent forelegs carved above the hindquarters of a second animal

.320, .607/.90: fragments with snake-like heads, one seen from above in high relief and the other profile in low relief

.310, .349, .244, .749: possibly wings. The fragment .244 is more like a fin. There are fins on some of the extended bodies of birds in the face C vine-scroll. The evidence for winged creatures on the original upper portion of face A is meagre, but relief forms, with a superimposed pad of relief, as on fragment .745, could well be the remains of the level of relief used to carve, for example, the wings of birds, or quadrupeds.

#### FINDINGS

There is little doubt that there was a lively display of ingeniously varied animal ornament on the original face A, including static large-scale motifs, and intricately interlaced small- and large-scale animals. It is of great interest that the fragments of animal ornament from the original upper face A are commensurate with the dramatic display of the complete motifs of this ornament which flank the cross-base, and that some of them were also located in the background of the cross. The under representation of serpent ornament, which contrasts strongly with the rest of Easter Ross sculpture, taken with the certain location of one of the two examples within a panel, either supports the view that some significant quantity of carved fragments of animal ornament have yet to be retrieved, or raises the suspicion that these fragments do not in fact represent serpents.

#### FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

While it would obviously be desirable to determine more closely the diverse compositional organisation of the stylistically homogeneous animal ornament on the original face of the upper portion of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, it is fortunate that sufficient evidence has survived to establish that there was a

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consistent animal style in use, albeit on different scales, and in different contexts, on both broad faces of the cross-slab, and that it is a style which is susceptible to specific art-historical investigation (see Chapter 5).

*Fragments with figurative carving (illus 4.15, 4.16 and 5.35)*

### SPECIAL ASPECTS

The fragments with figurative carving, a group of three figures, focusing on .21/.268 to the left of the mid-portion of face A, and a single figure focusing on .7 to the right, are an important indicator of the function of the cross-slab. That all four figures were cut off at the waist, one indeed with only feet surviving, is the result of their being located at the point of severance between the mid- and upper portions. It was to be hoped that some of the recovered fragments of the original upper portion of face A would supply some aspects of the bodies, heads and upper limbs of the four figures. However, there are only eight fragments that were assigned, tentatively, the keyword 'human', and two or three which in catalogue descriptions were referred to as possibly parts of drapery rather than wings.

### PRESENTATION

None of the upper portion fragments recovered was adjacent to margins or edges. One, .340, a leg, carved on a pad of relief is on a different scale from the other four figures suggesting that it was part of a different scene. The group of figures and the single figure in the mid-portion have been located, at approximately the same level, immediately above the animal motifs flanking the cross-base without any panel division.

Fragments carved with parts of human figures are:

.16, .28, .37, .48, .54: heads

.340: a well shaped leg and foot, with possibly, traces of a second leg

.594 : a part of a limb, perhaps an upper limb, approaching the elbow

.602 : what may be a foot

.59: possibly a piece of drapery. There may be a human foot above the brow of the animal head on the mid-portion fragment .265, which is now attached to mid-portion fragments .11/.7, and to the lower portion.

That there is a total of five headless figures and five possible heads surviving is probably a coincidence.

None of the heads is in good condition but they are all similar in shape, ovoid, with a well-rounded crown. Three, .28, .48, and .54, have the knobby hair found elsewhere in Pictish sculpture. One of the heads, .48, is probably shown in three-quarter view, with hair falling on the shoulder in the manner of the rider at the bottom left-hand corner of the hunting-scene panel on face C. One head, fragment .28, has a fillet confining his hair over the brow. The hair of the largest head, .54, is organised in two rows giving it the most elaborate hairstyle. These differences suggest that the figures represented individuals with distinctive appearances rather than a group of members of the same class. The most worn of the heads, .16 and .37, preserve more traces of facial features than do the better preserved fragments. However, the nature of the features is uncertain and it must be stressed that none of the heads is sufficiently well preserved to give an idea of facial types. Nonetheless, on balance, the conventional depiction of the hair on three of them is convincing, and the contours of all five heads are similar to each other, and to human heads on face C. The fact that they all have the same fracture as a result of having been knocked off more or less intact, in the manner of the spiral bosses and the animal hindquarters, also justifies giving these five ovoid-shaped fragments the same identification.

The fragment .340 with the leg, or legs, is more difficult to interpret. The pad of relief on which the complete leg sits could be a broad horse-cloth as depicted, for example, on Meigle no 5, but if both legs are present then a striding figure is more probable. Striding figures with widely separated legs, one of which is raised, are found in other Pictish sculpture, but the function of the pad of relief remains problematic and the leg, and its presentation, is not sufficient evidence to suppose that figure sculpture appeared at a raised level somewhere on the cross-shape.

### FINDINGS

Figure sculpture on the cross-face is not unusual but the evidence of the mid-portion face A suggests that on the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab it had a more than usual significance. If, as seems possible, there were five other figures somewhere on the original upper portion of face A, then the iconographic programme was ambitious, reducing to some extent the emphasis on the hunting scene on face C, which for so long has been regarded as of unique social importance.

## FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Further study is necessary to identify a context for the figure with the richly decorated tunic shown adjacent to animals of different scales and styles to the right of the cross-shaft. The reconstruction has if anything increased the impenetrability of this iconography. Latterly, reconstruction work in this area of face A of the mid-portion was gaining momentum, but clarification of the significance of the figure remains elusive. The identification among the fragments of face A, of parts of the rest of this figure must be high in the list of priorities for further study. That the elaborate hairstyle of .54 may belong to the figure, and that .59 is part of his drapery is a start, but there is no means of proving that these fragments belong to the figure with the decorated tunic. What is required is the reconstruction, based on conjunctions, of the upper halves of all the figures in the mid-portion, particularly, of the all-important upper limbs which convey action and interaction. The possibility that the heads and shoulders of all the figure sculpture on face A were specially targeted for destruction, quite apart from damage by the elements and the 17th-century defacement, may make such additional reconstruction a vain hope. If so, the iconography, undoubtedly of great, possibly unique, interest, may have to remain a matter for speculation.

*Conclusion*

It is evident from the above review that as yet the carved fragments assignable to the original face A of the upper portion have revealed little about its overall design and lay-out. An impression, for what it is worth, of what the lay-out and its ornament might have consisted is attempted in Chapter 5. Nonetheless this rich harvest of fragments of the Pictish ornamental repertoire can, without speculation, help to place the cross-face in the context of other Pictish sculpture and to perceive the overall aims of the sculptor of the cross-slab. Taken with the evidence of the lower portion, and to some degree, that of the mid-portion, the fragments of the original face A of the upper portion undoubtedly play their part in providing a greatly enriched assessment of the totality of the achievement of the Pictish sculptor, his individual responses to a variety sources of imagery, and in the case of animal ornament, both his place in the Easter Ross/St Andrews, Fife, style, and within animal styles in Insular art generally. These matters, and the extent to which all the fragments, whether or not conjoined or located on the slab, contribute to

the reunification of this work of art are discussed in Chapter 5.

**Note to accompany illus 4.5 to 4.16**

The following pages of illustrations are representative examples, surviving as carved fragments, of the ornamental repertoire and subject-matter employed by the sculptor of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab when carving the original upper portion of the cross-bearing face A. Many of the fragments selected for illustration are mentioned in the foregoing text, under the appropriate sections.

The paired pages of illustrations appear in the following order:

- Key pattern
- Spiral pattern
- Interlace
- Plant ornament
- Animal ornament
- Figurative carving (includes comparative fragments from the mid-portion of face A)

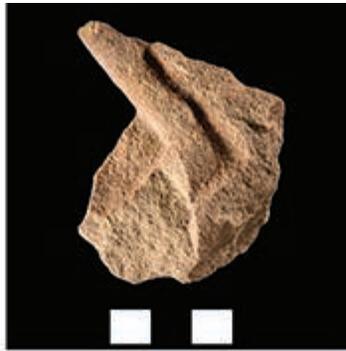
The photographs were taken by Neil McLean of the National Museums of Scotland photography department. All the fragments laid out in the sand trays in the Queen Street gallery were photographed by him, with the assistance of one of the cataloguers, Douglas Morton, during the period January to May 2005. They show conjunctions made between fragments by that date. It was not practicable to photograph conjunctions or additions to existing conjunctions found subsequently, although the catalogue entries were updated. The numbers under each image refer to the running number of X.IB 355. The divisions on the scale within each image represent 10mm. The diversity of scale of reproduction was felt to be justifiable because using this format for reproduction and showing each fragment at the same scale would have involved a significant loss of detail.

It is hope that, in general, the illustrations reproduced here will give some idea of the physical appearance of the fragments that were chiselled off face A and the nature of their carving and designs.

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.307/.652



.651



.345



.669



.372



.368



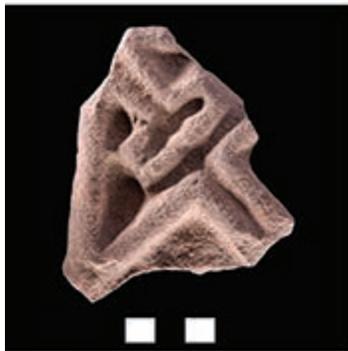
.38



.203/.328/.616



.343/.215/.937



.373



.204



.174

Illustration 4.5  
Fragments with key pattern (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



.278



.391



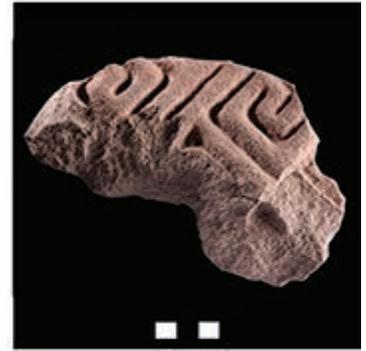
.177



.217



.220/.170



.357



.668



.628



.70



.31



.29



.559

Illustration 4.6  
Fragments with key pattern (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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.434



.455



.113



.26



.130



.131



.430/.453



.109



.112



.437/.353



.431



.337

Illustration 4.7  
Fragments with spiral pattern (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



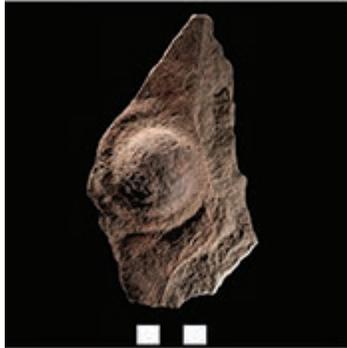
.436



.704



.279/.521



.432

*Illustration 4.8*  
Fragments with spiral pattern (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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.344



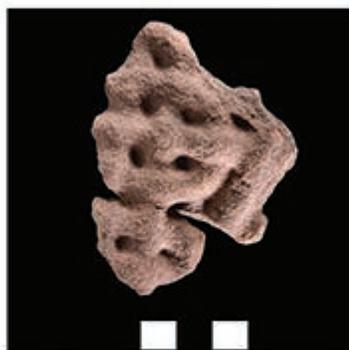
.165



.166



.395/.396



.398/.399



.30



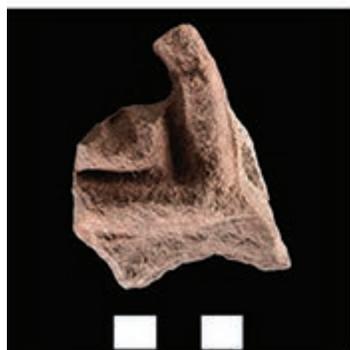
.161



.33



.156



.163



.157



.714

Illustration 4.9  
Fragments with interlace (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



.717



.148



.152



.144



.143



.146/.299



.34



.155



.70



.29



.31

Illustration 4.10  
Fragments with interlace (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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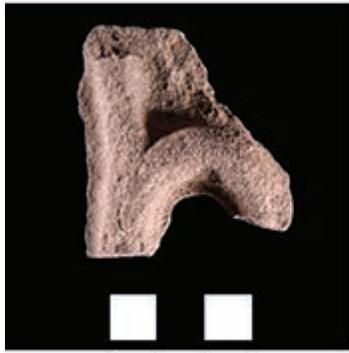
.108/571/371



.269/1115



.404/405



.311



.488



.593



.55



.408



.87



.541



.327



.600

Illustration 4.11

Fragments with plant ornament (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



.350



.732



.300



.378



.93

*Illustration 4.12*

Fragments with plant ornament (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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.421



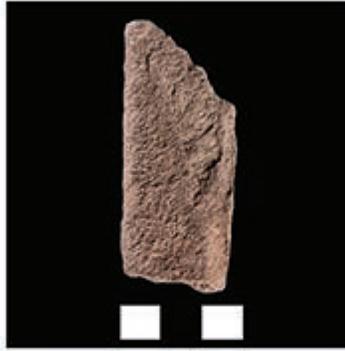
.15



.49/.50



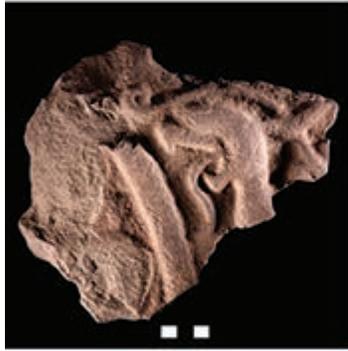
.320



.741



.742



.269



.360/.86



.423



.308



.376



.354/.358

Illustration 4.13  
Fragments with animal ornament (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



.63/.62



.722/.352



.1119/.338/.585/.283



.61



.65



.67



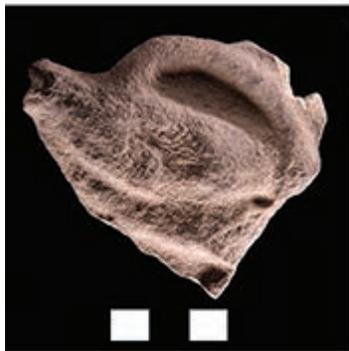
.78



.342



.90/.607



.310



.349



.749

Illustration 4.14  
Fragments with animal ornament (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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.21/.294/.268/.1



.265/.11



.71/.22/.36/.23



.6

*Illustration 4.15*

Examples of fragments of figurative carving from the mid-portion of face A, with relevant adjacent animal carving  
(© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)



.28



.48



.54



.16



.37



.340



.594



.602



.59

*Illustration 4.16*

Possible fragments of figurative carving on the upper portion of the original face A (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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### 4.5.2 *The right-hand edge, face B (narrow) (illus 4.3a)*

*The whole length of the slab*

*NMS number:* none (lower portion), X.IB 355 (mid-portion), X.IB 189 (upper portion)

*Measurements:* height *c*3550mm, max thickness *c*210mm (lower portion) *c*190mm (defaced upper portion)

*Keywords:* edge, toolmark, cross-shape

*Condition:* the mid-portion edges of face B survive only as fragments. The projection on face B of the lower portion has been refashioned, but much of the original surface of both the lower and defaced upper portion remains. The projection on the lower portion preserves its original top edge (a ledge of *c*50mm) and just over a half of the edge abutting face A. The surviving surface is pitted and damaged. In modern times the surface of face B has been slightly impaired by the pressure of a display stand visible at the bottom of the defaced upper portion. Further up the slab there was a hole around 40mm in diameter which was still visible as a hole in the 1970s. This hole and its partner on face D were made by the support system at Invergordon Castle, and these are now repaired.

*Fracture:* face B of the lower portion shows, at the top right, the crack caused by the lamination which resulted in face C of the lower portion having to be reattached after excavation. The projection which relates to the design of the blank panel to the right of the lower step of the cross-base has been mechanically cut away but not so as to obscure the contours of the blank panel. There is evidence, below where the original projection would have been, for a smoothed band running horizontally across the edge at the point where the original shaped tenon would have met the socket stone (illus 4.4a).

*Description:* Face B is bevelled on the side that abuts on the left side of face C. On the lower portion part of a projection with a maximum projection of 50mm survives. The projection presumably originally extended vertically to the level of the bottom of the blank panel, possibly including a moulding. Its original height would then have been around 300mm. At a point approximately adjacent to the middle section of the symbol panel on face C, there is a scar measuring 325mm in height and 140mm in breadth. There is a similarly located scar of approximately the same dimensions on face D. It

appears that there were projections at this point on the edges of the slab, and that the scar on face B may therefore have been where the projecting end of the right cross-arm met the edge of the slab. The height of the arm would have been only 25mm greater than the projection at the bottom of the slab, and this would conform to the 25mm standard width of fragmented mouldings.

*Discussion:* Measuring face B is made difficult by the extent of the shaping of the side abutting on face C. Nevertheless, to attempt approximate measurement is worthwhile, given that in the lower portion we now have, for the first time, the thickness of the whole slab before the defacement of the upper portion. The measured difference between the two thicknesses, 210mm for the newly recovered lower portion and 190mm for the defaced upper portion, representing approximately the slice taken off the upper portion, is, at 20mm, very small. In fact this measurement is consistent with the height of relief of many fragments assigned to the original upper portion face A.

High relief on Pictish slabs was often achieved by cutting into the slab. The animal ornament on either side of the cross-base on face A is an example of this. On the other hand, there are Pictish monuments where the cross, cross-head or other features are carved in such high relief that the height of their relief above a background plain or carved surface can be appreciated when the slab is seen in strict profile. On the evidence of the cross-base, the surface of the cross was set higher than the carving on its background, and it appears that the raised spirals on the cross-base were in fractionally higher relief than its mouldings. Fundamental to determining how the height of relief has been achieved on a slab is the height of the enclosing moulding, if present and if intact, at the edges of the slab. Close analysis of the dimensions of some of the moulding fragments assigned to the original upper face A can provide some evidence for the nature of the relief carving of the cross on face A. The breadth of the unbevelled surface on face B of the defaced upper portion is 148mm at the bottom and 131mm at the top. Such differences in handling make it difficult to determine whether the edge tapers or whether the slab has been cut back to a greater extent in the upper reaches.

If the scars represent a truncation of the cross-arms, their height might be expected to match the

width of the lower arm of the cross-head. If this were the case then the shaft tapered from 390mm where it met the base, to 325mm where it met the lower arm. The lower arm is frequently distinguished physically or decoratively from the shaft on Pictish cross-heads. Although the loss of the original tenon means that we cannot estimate the total height of the slab, we can now say that there is evidence that the height of the slab, carved on the broad faces and shaped on the narrow faces, was around 3550mm. This makes its height almost as exceptional as its breadth. For further discussion see Chapter 5. The shaping and tooling of the edges of the slab are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.2.2.

#### 4.5.3 Face C (*illus 4.2 in pocket, illus 4.3b*)

*Face C, lower portion (illus 4.4b, 4.17 & 5.1)*

*Finds number:* none

*Context number:* 008

*Measurements:* max width c1420mm, max thickness c210mm, height c840mm

*Keywords:* vine-scroll, animal, spiral

*Condition:* the surviving carved surfaces within the lower edge of the vine-scroll frame are well preserved in spite of the fact that the extent of the internal lamination required this face to be lifted off and resecured by Historic Scotland's conservators immediately after excavation. Damage at the upper edge has resulted in loss of carving but where it has survived it is in good condition.

*Fracture:* the fracture at the upper edge is flat until it meets a bedding plane. Beyond the bedding plane it becomes irregular expressing the contours of the upper edge as preserved above face A. Below the flat edge, which has the appearance of trimming, the remnants of the spiral panel appear battered, perhaps the result of the damage to face A. Some of the carved surfaces in this area scaled off, to be found where it fell at the time of the excavation (see *illus 3.6*). The fracture at the lower edge, now partially concealed by the display stand, has the same arc-like shape visible on face A, but it has a deeper curve and is more centrally placed. The damage to the tenon is recorded in the reconstruction drawing.

*Short description:* The carved surfaces consist of the lower horizontal edge of a frame containing an inhabited vine-scroll. The upper edge preserves

parts of the first scrolls of the vine-scroll stems ascending the right and left sides of the frame. It also shows traces of the bottom edge of the spiral panel.

*Long description:* The lay-out of the lower horizontal edge is centred on the growing point of the vine, which itself lies on the horizontal centre point of the carved area. The growth emerges from a plinth of three tiers. The lowest tier has sloping sides. Two widely arching stems reach out to the corners of the frame. The broad spandrel thus created between them encloses a complex, but carefully designed, growing point motif. From a centrally placed node secondary stems curve out to right and left to end in spear-shaped leaves with unattached basal lobes which are probably intended to be berries. Between these secondary stems, on a stalk, a further centralised node produces stems which loop round the secondary stems to cross over each other and lie horizontally along the upper moulding of the frame. They too have unattached berries. A central unattached berry at their crossing point lies on the mid-point of the moulding. From the lowest tier of the plinth single spatulate leaves not found elsewhere in the vine-scroll, grow to left and right.

This fountain-like growing point occupies almost half the breadth of the spiral panel. The growth from the nodes of the main stems starts exactly at the left-hand corner of the spiral panel. At the right it starts just before the corner and somewhat higher up the frame so that the thickening of the node lies against the inner moulding of the frame which in this section has an invasive, curving, incised line.

The growth from the main stem nodes marks the end of geometrical symmetry. From the node on the right (the one close to the invasive incised line) three stems emerge. The central stem is straight and stretches out to the bottom right-hand corner of the frame to end in a trilobed berry bunch. The lower stem coils round to end in a broad spear-shaped leaf with basal berries. The upper stem moves towards the edge of the slab. It develops a rounded bud from which two further shoots emerge, the upper to form the undulating main stem of the right-hand vine and the lower to loop round the straight stem to end in a triangular bunch of six berries. Within this foliage is a winged quadruped with a rounded chest and a raised wing. The wing is carved on a pad of relief. The covert feathers are expressed by small bosses, the primary tail feathers by deep incisions. The quadruped has a long neck with the head looking

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over its back in the direction of the growing point. The head has a rounded skull from which emerges a long ear extending horizontally. The muzzle is separated off from the skull, and the jaws are opened wide to feed from a single berry which grows on a small shoot from the main stem. The offside foreleg is elegantly bent in a saluting posture to clutch at the berry bunch outside the coiled scroll. The nearside foreleg lies along the lower edge of the frame. The nearside hind leg is at full stretch, the foot braced against the lowest tier of the plinth. The offside hind leg is bent at the hock and lies along the lower edge of the frame. An extended tail loops round the body and between the hind legs. The tail is raised to end in a lobed coil. Haunches and neck are contoured, presumably to define muscles.

The growth at the end of the ridged node to the left, immediately under the bottom left corner of the spiral panel, develops, like the right-hand node, three points of growth. As on the right, the central growth is straight and reaches to the corner of the frame to end in a trilobed berry bunch. The lower stem coils round to enclose the forequarters of a winged quadruped. Here, the creature looks forward, away from the growing point, towards the left side of the frame. It bites at the enclosing coiled stem, rather than feeding on the triangular six-berry bunch which ends the stem. The head, ear, wing, and hind legs are designed in the same way as those of the creature to the right. The front legs, however, are treated differently, being stretched out in parallel to grip the coiled stem. Also the tail makes a more generous loop, more in keeping with the series of curved forms to the left of the growing point.

The upper growth from the ridged node has a very short stem and a wide mouth. Almost at once it produces three stems of its own. The lower one loops round the straight stem, as in the design on the right, but here it ends on a spear-shaped leaf with basal berries not in a triangular berry bunch. The central stem starts the coiled hook-like scrolls which enclose the creatures in the left frame. The uppermost stem is straight, the first growth of the zig-zag organisation that moves from side to side of the left hand frame and is its dominant characteristic.

There are traces of the ascending inhabited scrolls to the right and to the left. The first creature in the ascending scroll on the right is a bird with heavy tripartite tail feathers which pass over the straight

stem that ends in the corner of the frame. Its wings, of which only one is completely visible, appear to have been displayed. The angled incisions which form the principal feathers of the wing are well preserved whereas the surface of its scapular feathers and the neck and head of the bird are lost. Beneath the wing is the end of the enclosing scroll which ends in a trilobed berry bunch. The bird's legs are stretched forward, drooping down in space, but interlacing with the coils of the scroll. A similar bird has occupied the first enclosing coiled tendril on the left. Its loss of carved surface is comparable but with the addition of the loss of the carved surface of both wings. Its legs have a wider splay as it straddles the coil. Unlike the bird on the right it has fully expressed powerful claws. One claw lies above the productive ridged node, and the other rests upon the corner of the frame. The head of this bird, eating a five-berry bunch, and other details have been retrieved among fragments clustered around fragment .246 of the mid-portion.

The bevelling of the sides and top of the whole slab provides an external moulding for the vine-scroll frame, and it is in this context that the lack of a lower moulding for the part of the frame on the lower portion should be viewed. The area beneath the recessed carving is roughly and irregularly worked. An incised horizontal line runs from the right of the slab starting at the level of the projection on face D but it wavers upwards as it moves towards the left edge to meet the level of the projection on face B. Two parallel vertical draughting lines, c50mm apart, cross the horizontal line at the right-hand side of the slab. An interpretation of the function of these lines has been proposed in Chapter 5. Both projections have been refashioned in order to create a secondary tenon to replace the damaged original tenon, traces of which are recorded in the reconstruction drawing.

*Discussion:* Quite apart from the elegance and ingenuity of the design in the lower edge of the frame, its condition allows a much better appreciation of the impaired vine-scroll on the upper portion of face C. The ascending scrolls afford the clearest guide to the carving in the fragmented mid-portion. However, the fragmented mid-portion on the left is a particularly difficult area to reconstruct because of the complexities and irregularities of the design at this point. The simpler organisation of the scroll on the right made reconstruction somewhat easier to

achieve, although some of the fragments from this area, for example .14, displayed ambiguous forms which took time to fall into place. Vine-scroll is a motif which permeates Insular art of the late eighth century, and its presence on the Hilton of Cadboll slab has always been the main line of argument for its date and origin. The version of the vine-scroll used at Hilton has always been recognised as having some distinctive qualities. The evidence for its complete design recovered in the lower portion of face C which includes, a three-sided frame filled with inhabited vine-scroll, a novel treatment for the relationship of the growing point to the flanking animals, and details of the depiction of the winged creatures, provides a wholly new perspective on the use of vine-scroll by Pictish sculptors. The implications of this new evidence are discussed in Chapter 5. The damage to the original tenon, and the refashioning of the projections mean that we do not know exactly where the slab was first erected. For full discussion of these issues see Chapter 3.5.

*Face C, mid-portion (illus 4.17)*

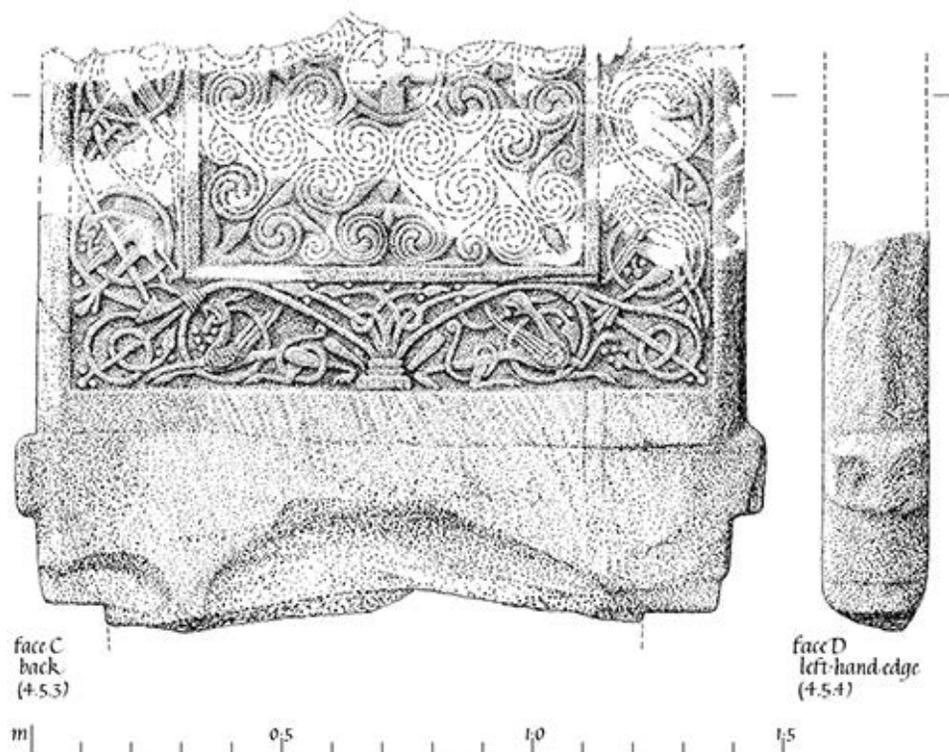
*NMS number: X.IB 355*

*Measurements: max height c330mm + 110mm of carved surface known to have been attached to the lower portion, max width c1420mm*

*Keywords: vine-scroll, spiral, cross*

*Condition: some of the carved surfaces of the fragments are in remarkably good condition suggesting comparatively short exposure to the elements, but there are also areas of total loss caused by destruction.*

*Fracture: the fragments belonging to the mid-portion of face C include thin skims of carved surface which fell off the lower portion either when it was worked to form a straight edge across the upper edge, or when it was impaired by destruction. The shattering of the heavy edge to the right of the face C mid-portion, adjacent to the narrow*



*Illustration 4.17*

Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab faces C and D, lower and mid-portions (scale 1:15)

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edge, face D, indicates the radical nature of the damage. The comparatively uniform nature of the long narrow thick fragments produced by the destruction greatly aided the reconstruction, although some of the fragments had very little carved surface, or even indication of lost carved surfaces in the form of scars. Smaller fragments of carved surfaces were found to have lain on top of the larger ones which themselves mesh with each other in layers. The reconstruction drawing shows only carved surfaces, not the physical appearance of this interlayering of fragments with large areas of lost surface. No through-stone, with carving on both faces A and C, has been found and there is no specific evidence for hammer marks to help define more closely the nature of the destruction.

*Toolmarks:* the shaping of the narrow edges of the slab is different. The right edge of face C, abutting on face D, is gently rounded, whereas the left edge, abutting on face B, is heavier and bevelled. This distinction was useful to those involved in the reconstruction. Both edges have been stugged by the Pictish sculptor, and this distinctive tooling was also useful in assigning fragments to the edges of the slab.

*Short description:* The mid-portion of face C comprises fragments from the area of carved surface between the lower edge of the upper portion in Edinburgh and the upper edge of the lower portion currently at Hilton. Both edges show signs of trimming. The mid-portion survives as approximately 75 fragments comprising slightly more than half the complete design of the spiral panel, the upper part of which survives on the upper portion, together with adjacent sections of inhabited vine-scroll in the borders to the right and left. All the fragments are catalogued individually, with cross-references to their location within the most significant clusters of joined fragments or to their proximity to them. There is currently a discernible gap, which can be seen in the reconstruction drawing, in the restoration of the carving between the fragments belonging to the lowest section of the spiral panel and those from below the middle of the panel. The gap was probably due to the trimming of the lower edge of the upper portion in modern times and to the destructive events experienced by the upper edge of the lower portion some centuries before.

### *Long description*

#### THE SPIRAL PANEL

It has been assumed by previous writers that the design of the spiral panel, when complete, was symmetrical, and this has been confirmed by the recovery of the three missing space-filling triangular shapes. The complete set of four are placed around the innermost tier of triple spirals at the cardinal points: on .254/.255 located towards the bottom edge, on .277 located towards the right edge, and, vestigially, on .276 to the left. The recovery of most of the bottom left corner on .247/.256 and .252/.253 replicated the corner motifs in the design on the upper portion, further confirming the symmetry of the complete design. The upper part of the design on the upper portion shows double spirals lying on the margins of the panel. One of these has survived on the upper edge of the lower portion and another, on the right margin, was located in the mid-portion on .259.

It has always been known that the spiral panel design was centred on a circular motif, for a small segment of a circular moulding survived on the upper portion. The typically shaped fragment, X.IB 355.4, shows that the circle contained a ringed cross with the lower arm, carved on a higher level, superimposed on the ring. The ringed cross is within a circular moulding, to which the innermost spirals attach. Bonding of fragments has now shown that the equal-armed cross has double square angles at the crossing. The evidence for this completion of the design of the cross roundel is found on .276 (an area of the right arm and armpit), on .4 (the lower arm superimposed on the connecting ring, with a section of the circular moulding), and on .18 (a section of connecting ring and arm-pit) (illus 5.38). In the catalogue all the individual fragments in this area of the mid-portion are referred back to the cluster description centred on 355.4. This detailed description was the work of Meggen Gondek in August 2003. Since then there have been additions to the reconstruction of the mid-portion, most of which are listed in this overview of what has been reconstructed of the mid-portion since that date. It should be noted, however, that all suggested conjunctions have to be agreed with the conservator of the National Museums of Scotland and that some of the joins have still to go through this process before being bonded.

## THE BORDERS WITH INHABITED VINE-SCROLL

To the left, a skim of carved surface broken into ten fragments has been reassembled so as to recover the complete design of the bird inhabiting the first scroll whose tail and legs survive on the lower portion. The ten fragments centred on .246 have been bonded and were part of a very limited exercise to refit fragments on to the lower portion in May 2005. Above this scroll the second node of the zig-zag stem that fills the left border has been recovered, along with some sections of interlacing tendrils belonging to the first and second scrolls (.317 which joins with .334, .13, and .314). Sections of the body and wing of the winged quadruped inhabiting the second scroll have also been found. This scroll is completed on the upper portion where the creature's head is seen eating a berry bunch. The hindquarters, which would have been placed outside the second scroll, have not been located. They would have been within the missing stretch of the mid-portion. A length of the edge of the slab, where face C meets the narrow face B, has been retrieved, but it does not join the upper to the lower portion.

To the right, a fragment carved with the hindquarters of a winged quadruped has been located outside the second scroll of the undulating stem that fills the right-hand border. The tip of its wing and, inside the scroll, its head have been recovered. The fragment, .14, with the hindquarters and raised tail, is adjacent both to the main stem and to the growth point between the first and second scrolls, presenting, initially, a dauntingly ambiguous set of forms well described in the individual entry for the fragment. The reconstruction of this area was aided by evidence for the left edge of the slab, where face C meets the narrow face D, with its characteristic stugging mentioned above. A substantial stretch of this edge has been reassembled, which as can be seen on the reconstruction drawing, approaches very closely the edges of the upper and lower portion.

*Discussion:* The reconstruction of fragments on face C of the mid-portion has clarified the organisation of the vine-scroll in the left border, confirming that it had nine scrolls only, in contrast with the ten scrolls on the right. One early proposal was that there might have been a smaller scroll in this area to balance the design on either side. The completion of the spiral pattern not only physically confirmed its design symmetry but most importantly has revealed that

its central motif contained an encircled relief ringed cross of a typically Pictish design. Suggestions for the treatment of this area have included a raised boss or a flat disc. We now know from the recovered lower portion that fountain-like sprays of inhabited foliage, centred on a growth point, fill a lower border for the vine-scroll frame. Although the growth point is not precisely centred on the cross-design in the spiral panel, they are obviously intended to relate to each other spatially. The major implications of these new perceptions of the completed spiral panel and the vine-scroll frame for the reappraisal of the iconographic programme of face C are discussed in Chapter 5, and attention is drawn to the need for a closer look at the designs of some other Insular spiral patterns, including those on Pictish cross-slabs.

*Appendix*

This guide to the more locationally significant fragments recognised as belonging to the mid-portion of face C can be used in conjunction with the individual entries in the digital catalogue, which sometimes represent work at a different stage. The reconstruction of this area was an early priority because of the size of the fragments, and knowledge of the nature of the designs provided by the upper and lower portions.

*The upper horizon of carved surface*

left edge of face C: .317; .334

left section of vine-scroll: .314 (wing of winged quadruped); .317 node of second stretch of zig-zag stem)

left area of spiral panel: .315 (panel margin) ; .316

Centralised cross roundel described clockwise: .4; .276; .275; .18

right area of the spiral panel: .277 (triangular space filler); .267 (spiral and panel margin)

right section of vine-scroll: .267 tail of bird; .351 (head of winged quadruped)

right edge of face C: .351; .42; .44

*The lower horizon of carved surface*

left edge of face C: not recovered

left section of vine-scroll: .246 (head of bird) focus of a joined cluster of 10 fragments now fitting on to the lower portion

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left corner of spiral panel reading from the lower edge: .252; .253; .247 (with corner motif); .256

centre of lower edge: .257 (pair of spirals with centralised almond-shaped motif); .255/.244 (triangular space filler)

right area of spiral; .40 with .361 from its surface lying on top

right section of vine-scroll: .14 (hindquarters of winged quadruped with adjacent growth)

right edge of face C: .296

*Face C, upper portion (illus 4.2 in pocket, illus 4.18)*

*NMS number:* X.IB 189; donated by R W MacLeod of Cadboll, 1921

*Measurements:* max height *c*2340mm, max width *c*1404mm at bottom and 1394mm at the top (including bevels), max thickness *c*190mm (to which compare the approximate thickness of the lower portion which is *c*210mm)

*Keywords:* vine-scroll, figural, spiral

*Condition:* the carved surfaces are much impaired. Many have simply fallen off, apparently through lamination and contour scaling.<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the total loss of surface of the carving of the volutes at the ends of the horns of the crescent, and the wear and lamination of the left terminal of the crescent rod, in comparison with the reasonable state of preservation of the surface of the right-hand terminal. The location of wear is reversed for the two disc symbols, where the one to the left is virtually complete and that to the right much impaired. J R Allen notes that the sculpture is 'weathering rapidly in its present exposed condition'. He was aware that Cordiner and Petley had recorded details that had almost entirely disappeared. He had himself noticed deterioration of the spirals carved within the discs of the double-disc symbol over an interval between two visits to Invergordon Castle. Within the hunting scene both mirror and comb have lost surfaces. The arms and heads of the trumpeters have been damaged and only a scar of their trumpets remains. The facial features of the female rider are worn, with more serious loss from damage over the brow. The vine-scroll on the left has lost almost all of the surfaces to the immediate left of the hunting scene. When Allen made a rubbing and later published a photograph, the surface of the area immediately adjacent to the

mirror and comb was still intact. On the vine-scroll to the right the areas of greatest loss are farther up the slab, running from the right horn of the crescent down to the upper level of the hunting scene.

There are at least three graffiti on the slab. In the space between the left horn of the crescent and the disc below, the initials D S and B F are neatly incised within an incised rectangular frame. The F appears to have serifs and the points after the letters are drilled. Between the apex of the V-rod and the right-hand disc is a well formed capital D apparently cut with a chisel. The down stroke has serifs. The horse at the bottom right-hand corner of the hunting scene has been given an eye formed by a drilled hole surrounded by an incised saltire cross joined to a V-shape. There are some other incised lines, for example the short parallel lines on the haunch of the female rider's horse, one of which ends in a hole, which may also be the work of vandals.

*Fracture:* although a cast of the lower edge of the upper portion is available for study it is not possible to make deductions from it as to the nature of the original fracture or possible later trimming.

*Short description:* A framework containing inhabited vine-scroll on its lateral edges and a double disc and Z-rod symbol on the upper edge, encloses three panels divided by horizontal mouldings. The upper panel contains a crescent and V-rod symbol and two examples of the single-disc symbol. The central panel shows a hunting scene with a small-scale mirror and comb symbol-pair in the top left-hand corner. The bottom panel is filled with spiral ornament organised round traces of a circular moulding.

### *Long description*

THE FRAME (ILLUS 4.18)

#### 1 The right side

The creature at the bottom of the upper portion we now know to be the third in the ascending vine-scroll when the slab was complete. It is a bird, facing to the right, whose forequarters are enclosed by the scroll. Its long neck is lassoed by one strand of the bifurcated growth at the end of the scroll which terminates in trilobed berry bunches. The bird has its beak wide open as it feeds on the berry bunch nearer the outer edge of the frame. The bird has a

rounded cranium with an ear-like crest flying out from the back. Its raised wings grip on to the scroll, and its legs straddle it with the front nearside leg bent and the other stretched out. There are traces of trilobate tail feathers, but the tip of the tail is lost. (It was eventually recovered on the mid-portion fragment .267.)

The fourth creature is a winged quadruped looking left. It has its long neck lassoed in exactly the manner of the bird below but it feeds at the berry bunch nearer the inner frame. Its wings grip the outer edge of the scroll and its forelegs are parallel, bent at the hock and stretched forward. The body is tubular, and the slim hindquarters lie outside the scroll against the outer edge of the frame. The tail rises up to bend under the body to end in a lobed scroll.

The fifth creature is a bird facing right, very similar in design to the third bird but without the lassoing device.

The sixth creature is also a bird but faces left. It has the standard head type. Its forelegs grip the scroll in an 'Anglo-Saxon' lock, where the offside leg comes forward over the scroll. The claws are comparatively large and both rest on the main stem. The scroll is gripped between the wings and the body. The body of the bird is extended to loop round a tendril from the scroll. Both body and scroll end in rounded forms. This extended body creates a distinctive type of bird that has something of the appearance of a winged bipedal creature.

The seventh creature is a bird facing right. The surfaces are very worn. A standard head is discernible, but the arrangement of the wings and legs is unclear.

The eighth creature, a winged quadruped facing left, is equally worn. Its hindquarters can just be discerned, but how they are arranged is unclear. Its lobed tail appears to pass under a hindleg.

The ninth creature is a bird facing right but with its head tilted upwards looking towards the corner of the frame. It is of standard design except in two respects: it does not eat a berry bunch within the scroll, rather its head is outside the scroll and it eats a bud growing from the main stem, and its tail feathers are an odd shape, for the basal feathers are the usual heart shape, but the central feathers have a hook-like curve.

The tenth and uppermost creature is a winged quadruped with its head in the corner of the frame looking in the direction of the upper edge

of the slab. Most of its carved surfaces are lost. It has a standard head but like the ninth creature eats outside the scroll. Its hindquarters are also outside the scroll, as is usual for winged quadrupeds. Its forelegs widely straddle the scroll. Both the ninth and tenth creatures sit within double-spun scrolls.

#### THE SPANDREL GROWTH IN THE RIGHT STEM

Undulating vine-scrolls regularly have growth in the spandrels formed between the main stem and the outgrowth of the scroll. The growth takes various forms.

The upper area of the spandrel survives under the third creature (the first surviving on the upper portion). A shoot from the main stem curls upwards to end in a spear-shaped leaf with basal lobes. It may also loop under a shoot from the scroll below. Within the spandrel between the bird and the quadruped on the inner margin the growth comes from a node which produces a central stem which divides into two. The shoots cross, and each loops round a shoot from the main stem. All the shoots end in lobes.

The next spandrel lies on the outer margin between the quadruped and a bird. A central shoot divides into two stems which reach out to the edges of the spandrel to end in standard spear-shaped leaves. Single shoots from the main stem loop round each of these stems to end in leaves which flank the central shoot. These shoots themselves develop shootlets which loop round just below the spear-shaped leaves at the outer edge of the margin. Spandrel growth of this complexity echoes the organisation of the growing point on the lower portion.

The next spandrel lies on the inner margin between two birds. The growth consists of a central stem which ends in a bunch of five berries. Shootlets emerge from the scroll below and the main stem above to enclose the berry bunch.

The next two spandrels are too worn to determine the design of the growth.

The next legible spandrel lies on the outer margin between a quadruped and a bird. The growth consists of a central stem which ends in a leaf which lies along the outer margin. A shootlet from the main stem loops round it to end in a lobe.

The final spandrel between a bird and a quadruped lies on the inner side of the margin. It is very worn. The growth appears to consist of two shoots. One ends in a single berry which is being eaten by the

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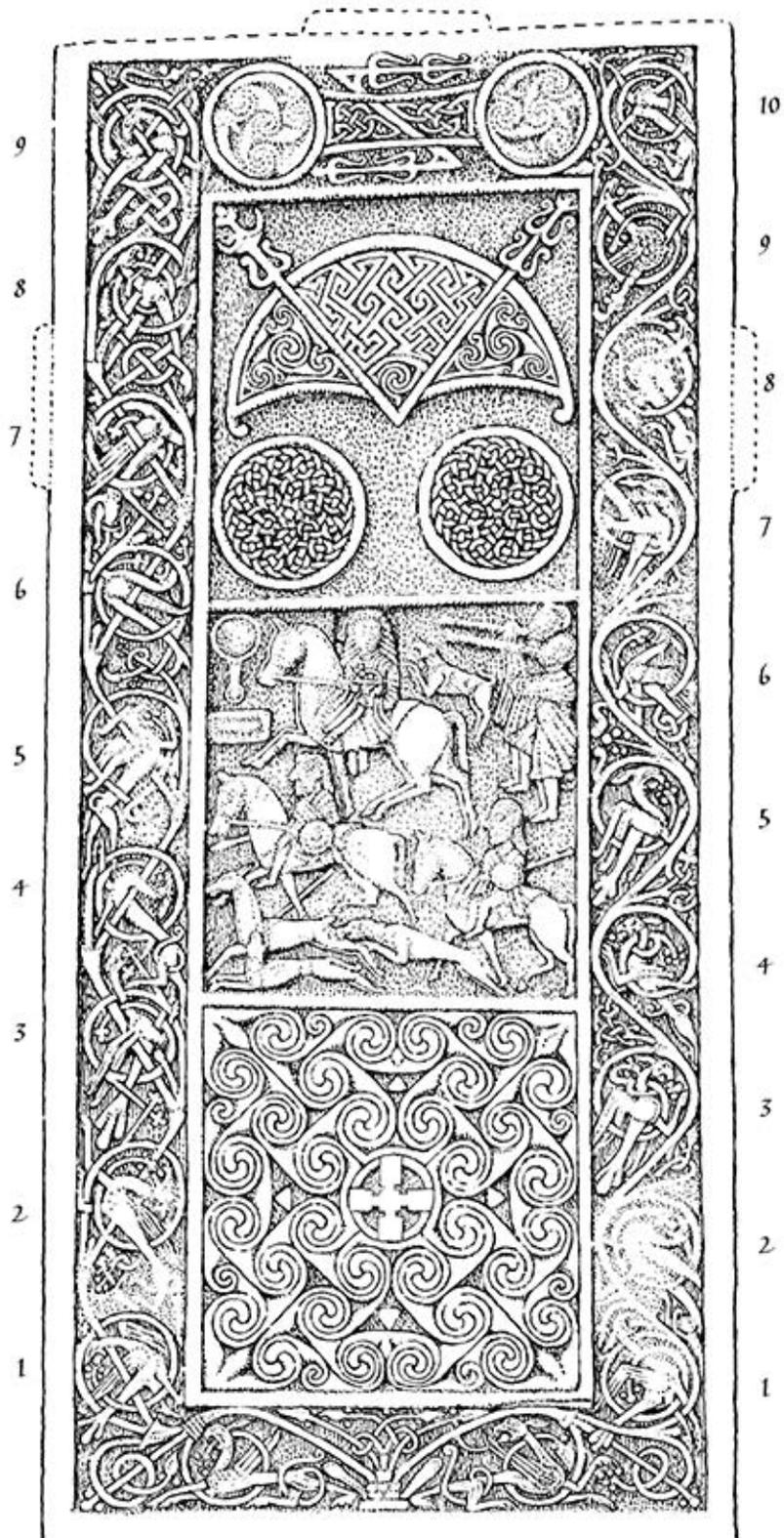


Illustration 4.18

Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab face C with numbered vine-scroll (scale 1:15)

bird. The second stem is looped round by a shootlet, possibly two, produced from the main stem. The spear-shaped leaves of the shootlets lie on either side of the corner of the mouldings of the frame.

The top left of the vine fills the space between the uppermost scroll and the right disc of the double-disc symbol in spandrel fashion. The details are very worn: a shoot from the scroll divides into two, the growth to the right ends in a standard leaf. It is not clear how the growth to the left develops.

## 2 The left side

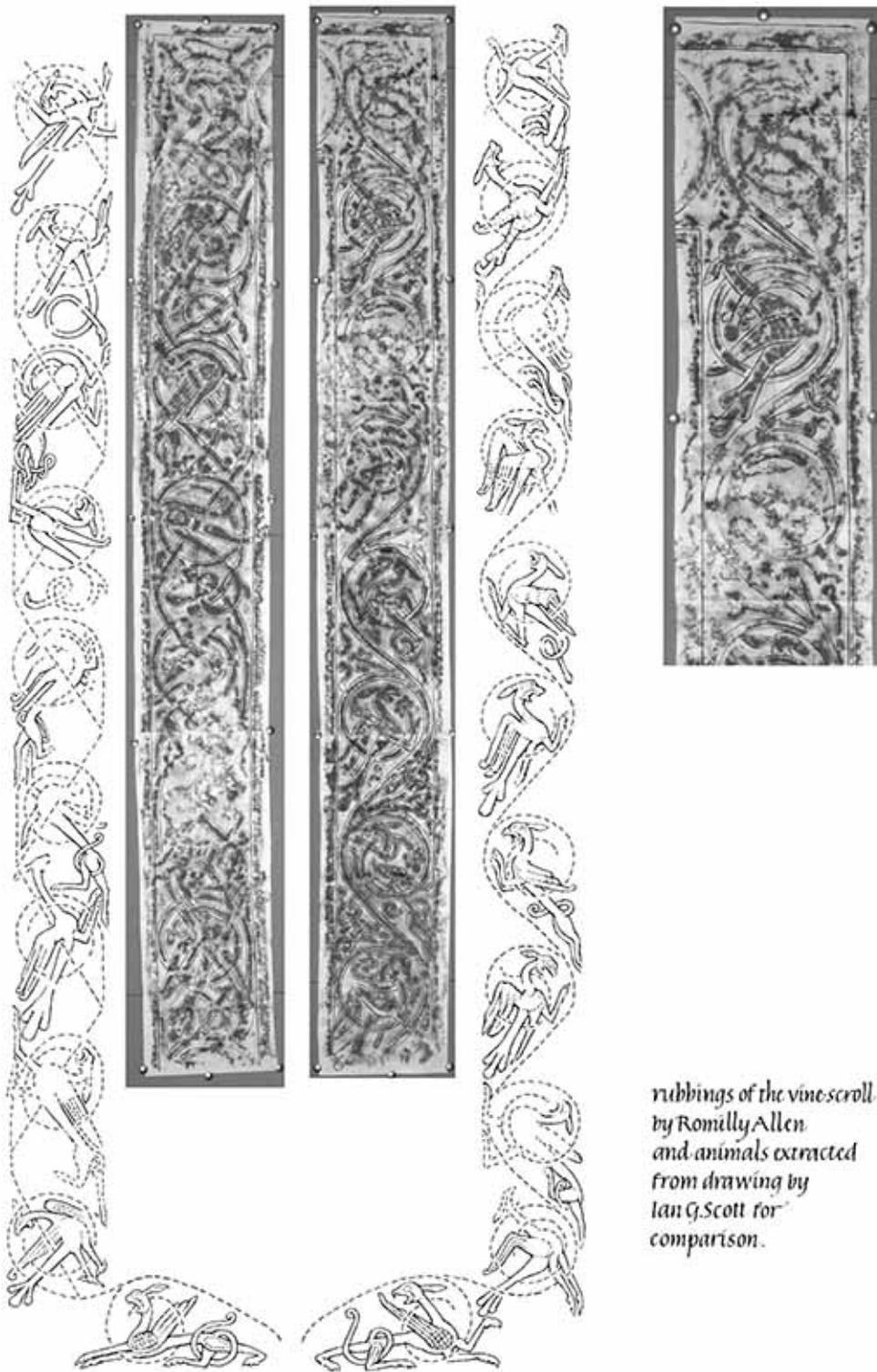
The basic organisation of the vine-scroll to the left consists of alternate nodal points which can be clearly seen at the edges of the frame. The nodes produce a central bud and two side growths. One of these produces the straight sections of a zig-zag main stem. The other side growth produces, in hook-like fashion, the scroll which encloses the inhabiting creatures. Each section of the zig-zag stem, from alternate node to node, runs diagonally through the scroll. This arrangement eliminates the spandrel growth present in the undulating vine-scroll on the right side. The space to be filled lies adjacent to the nodes and between the scrolls.

The first node visible on the upper portion is probably the third node of the complete design. (The first node is on the lower portion and the second node was recovered on mid-portion fragment .217.) It lies to the right of the frame. It produces the hook-like scroll as described above, its first stretches lying along the inner margin. The main stem, the zig-zag element, runs through it. The hooked scrolls from above and below, the latter only partially surviving, produce straight shoots ending in trilobate forms which intersect between them. This is a recurring feature of the left-hand scroll organisation. To the left of the intersecting shoots the heavy tripartite tail feathers of the enclosed bird fills the space. The bird's wings and outstretched legs grip the scroll. It feeds outside the scroll on berries produced by one of the next pair of intersecting straight shoots. There is a difficulty with the depiction of the legs: a third 'leg' appears to belong to a forgotten intention to straddle the legs of the bird. When Allen drew over his unpublished rubbing of the carved surface, he interpreted this 'leg' as a central strand growing from the node and disappearing into the body of the bird (illus 4.19). This is an unlikely arrangement. When Ian G Scott made his drawing in 2001 he retained

the third leg, accepting it as a mistake. (A similarly anomalous third leg may account for the difficulty of interpreting the arrangement of the hindquarters in the eighth scroll of the right-hand stem.) The next node lies to the left of the margin. Adjacent to it on the right is the intersecting shoot motif with the bird feeding to the left, as described above, and to the right, the elegantly arranged hindquarters of a quadruped with a tail that curves between its legs and over its back to end in a lobed coil. Its tubular body passes into the scroll interlacing with it and the diagonal section of the zig-zag stem. Thereafter the surface detail of the arrangement of its forequarters is worn away. Similar hindquarters are all that is left of the next creature. They are positioned outside the scroll on the left margin, and opposite the fifth node on the right of the margin.

The sixth node is on the left side of the margin. It has a central bud and the usual outer strand that forms the hooked scroll and the inner strand that is the straight section of the main stem. The inhabiting bird feeds within the scroll. It is oddly positioned with its long neck, the head with the typical flying crest, lying horizontally across the frame. The single wing is similarly erect. The forelegs lie vertically along the left margin. When Allen made his rubbing, the surface to the right of the node was still intact, and he was able to draw the forms between the scrolls which are now scaled off. His drawing shows that the bird had an extended body that looped round standard intersecting shoots to end in a hook shape which still survives. This treatment of a bird is found among the creatures in the undulating vine-scroll on the right. However Allen misinterpreted his rubbing in two respects when he came to draw over it. The scroll end, in fact, goes straight into the bird's beak whereas he interpreted it as the end of the scroll, located outside the coil, and performing the function of one of the intersecting shoots. What misled him was his failure to realise that the bird had the usual crest, the carved surface of which is well preserved. Allen's fin-like form on the lower reaches of the extended body requires explanation. There was obviously something of the sort carved there. In spite of his misinterpretations, Allen's rubbing does preserve accurately a substantial part of this now missing part of the design. The complete bird is also clearly visible on the photograph commissioned for publication in ECMS by Allen from D Whyte of Inverness.<sup>2</sup> The quadruped immediately above the oddly positioned bird probably preserves the design

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*rubbings of the vine scroll  
by Romilly Allen  
and animals extracted  
from drawing by  
Ian G. Scott for  
comparison.*

*Illustration 4.19*

Face C animals: Allen's rubbings (© British Library Board, Addl MS 375.62) are aligned with outline drawings of the animals as they are now known (1:15). To the right is a detail (1:10) of the top three animals in the right-hand panel

of the forequarters missing for the quadrupeds lower in the vine-scroll. The creature's neck swings back over its body, parallel to the curve of the scroll, to feed awkwardly on the berries at the end of the scroll. The long straight wings lie across its body. The drooping hindquarters lie to the left of the intersecting shoots opposite the seventh node on the inner margin. For the first time the shoots have a bud at the point that they emerge from the scrolls.

The eighth node lies on the outer margin. Its hooked scroll is double spun. Within it is another example of a bird with an extended body. It feeds on the terminal berries within the scroll. The intersecting stems are longer than usual. The point of intersection lies within the loop formed by the extended body. A narrow wing interlaces with the scroll and one of the intersecting shoots. The head has an usually large crest. The tail feathers end in a hooked form. The forelegs stretch forwards to rest on the inner frame.

The corner design at the top of the frame is difficult to interpret. It has to achieve a termination of the design and there is considerable loss of surface. The node is on the inner edge just at the corner of the frame. The outer strand creates a double-spun scroll, while the inner forms the final diagonal of the zig-zag main stem. The diagonal passes through the scroll to end, not this time in a node, but in a pear-shaped leaf with basal berries. A further growth is produced at the top of the uppermost section of the tendril in order to fill the remaining horizontal space at the very top of the slab. The neck of the bird swings back, in the manner of the quadrupeds, to bite at the diagonal main stem. To the left of the node the usual shoots intersect, but bend back to intersect again. They end, not in the usual trilobate leaves, but in rounded forms. To the left, touching the outer frame, are the bird's tail feathers made up of a central element and two pairs of flanking projections. The wings, unusually, are spread apart. The upper interlaces with the scroll and the lower extends beyond it. The legs appear to straddle the scroll to lie between a shootlet from the scroll and the tail feathers. One part of the design is particularly difficult to understand. A substantial spear-shaped leaf with four basal berries lies at the top right of the vine-scroll, close to the left side of the double-disc symbol. The offside leg of the bird may reach out to touch the berry bunch. This shoot interlaces with the scroll and meets the diagonal stem at right angles. It may be that it was intended to branch out from the

stem but if so, unusually, there is no indication on the stem that there is growth at this point.

It will be noted that for some reason the sculptor's design became more complex in its upper reaches. On both sides the two scrolls at the top are double spun. Discussion of this trait will be found in Chapter 5.

### 3 The upper edge of the frame

The upper edge of the frame is designed to be slightly deeper than the other sides, including the lower edge on face C of the lower portion, presumably to accommodate and give prominence to the double-disc and Z-rod symbol which it fills. Although there is no absolute standard, the proportions of the symbol are, in this case, necessarily unusual. The juncture between the discs is long and the diagonal section of the rod is short. These traits allow the discs to be positioned on the corners of the central panel and the Z-rod to be compressed within the frame. The discs are filled with an arrangement of triple spirals described by Allen as 'the most effective spiral pattern for filling a circle' and the one that is used for this purpose 'with greater frequency than any other'. Allen cites examples in all media.<sup>3</sup> The juncture is decorated with interlace with an arrangement of loops tailored free-hand to fit the spaces on either side of the middle section of the rod. The rod passes behind the juncture with the illusionistic open interlace occupying the fields on either side. The terminals of the Z-rod are very worn but both have their curvilinear flourishes arranged in opposite pairs. The two terminals are differentiated to the extent that the pair of flourishes on the upper section of the rod face the same way, to the right, while the lower section has them facing each other. Whether the Z-rod terminates in the standard blunt and sharp ends cannot now be determined.

## THE CENTRAL PANEL

The central panel is created by the inner margin of the vine-scroll frame. It is further divided into three panels by two transverse mouldings. The upper panel displays the crescent and V-rod symbol set above two single disc symbols.

### 1 The symbols

Allen fully analysed the geometry of the shape of the crescent and V-rod.<sup>4</sup> He demonstrated that it was designed on the framework of a wreath-like annular

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space. Uniquely, the spandrel-shaped angle where the arms of the V-rod meet is superimposed on the crescent shape instead of being, as is usual, outside it. The Hilton spandrel is a segment of the centre of the ring and is decorated with a triple spiral.<sup>5</sup> The horns of the crescent are decorated with Allen's spiral pattern no 1119, which is an arrangement of triple spirals similar to that used for the double disc symbol. The central section of the crescent, between the V-shape made by the rod, consists of a key pattern tailored to fit the segment of the annular ring. At its centre two of the bars are treated as spirals. Allen did not describe another peculiarity of the basic shape of the Hilton crescent: the carved surfaces at the tips of the horn have scaled off but the scars of the volutes that end them can still be seen. They appear in the drawing made by Petley at the beginning of the 19th century.

The two disc symbols positioned under the crescent are generously spaced with their frames touching the inner sides of the frame. They appear to be decorated in the same way. The disc to the right is very worn but the complete design has survived on the disc to the left. The method of filling the circular field is the common one of making two concentric circles of loops, in this case twelve tighter in construction for the outer circle, and six looser loops for the inner one. The concentric circles used for the discs is also a wreath, albeit a tight one, with the centre being expressed by a stud-like feature.

### 2 The hunting scene

In spite of the heavy loss of carved surfaces the firm designing of the scene allows its impact to remain to a remarkable degree. A mirror and comb symbol-pair fills the top left corner immediately adjacent to the two riders at the top of the panel who are moving from right to left. They ride abreast. The rider closer to the viewer sits facing forward but holds reins to control the horse. There is a horse-cloth on the back of the horse and probably a crupper backstrap. The horse's head is very damaged but there are traces of a snaffle bit, a noseband and a browband. The rider facing forwards is a female wearing a draped cloak and a full-length undertunic, both with folds expressed by ridges. The cloak appears to be fastened by a large penannular brooch worn on the breast. Other suggestions for the interpretation of this ambiguous area of carving have been made, but recent close scrutiny supports the view that a brooch

is intended. The female rider's head is ovoid with ridged hair falling to the shoulder. All traces of the facial features have been lost. There is no indication of any headgear. The accompanying rider's horse is conveyed largely by doubling the outline of that of the female rider. There is no indication that this second rider carries a spear, although there is space sufficient to show a spear's tip above the comb. The difficulty of conveying the second rider's face when the figure riding with him abreast was depicted facing forwards and with flowing shoulder length hair is solved by cutting a recessed panel on either side of the female rider's head, thus allowing a bearded male head to be glimpsed above the female's right shoulder. Above the haunches of the horses a small quadruped leaps up. Behind the quadruped two figures stand, their feet close together, blowing long trumpets. They too are abreast but their spatial relationship is clearly conveyed by the fact that they stand on different ground lines. The trumpeters' heads fit neatly into the top right corner of the panel. The proportion of their heads to their bodies is more naturalistic than that of the riders below, but whether their faces are in profile or in three-quarter view cannot be determined because of lamination. Their arms are raised, bent at the elbows, but these details survive as scars only. They wear cloaks draped over their arms, and tunics with short skirts that cling to their legs.

Below, two riders advance from the right in a diagonal line. The horse of the leading rider has a harness similar to that of the horse of the female rider. His horse's back cloth may be fringed. The horse's nearside foreleg passes behind the head of the deer below. His spear appears from behind his horse and the spear that has been thrown to kill the deer passes under his horse's offside foreleg. The rider's head and shoulders fit comfortably between the forelegs of the horses above. His profile head, with shoulder length hair drawn back to show the ear, has a clear space of uncarved surface in front of it. He wears a draped cloak with tight-fitting trousers. In his left hand he carries a small hunting shield. The tip of his sword can be seen emerging from behind it. The rider in the bottom right corner of the panel has a smaller mount but otherwise has a similar appearance, except for the position of his horse's forelegs which are in a walking position rather than in the stepping gait of the mounts of the other riders. These traits are presumably due to design rather than narrative requirements. He

has the same small shield but there is no sign of his having a sword and the tip of his spear is not shown. The bottom left corner contains a spirited scene of a deer at full stretch attacked by two equally straining hounds. One leaps up at the deer's throat while the other bites at its hindquarters. The offside foreleg of the rider in the bottom right-hand corner passes behind the hound that grabs the deer's hindquarters. The open mouth of the deer and the fact that it has been speared suggest that the deer has been brought down and that the hunt is over.

### 3 The spiral panel (illus 4.3b)

According to Allen the spiral panel when complete would have consisted of thirty-two triple spirals and eight double spirals arranged round 'a central boss'.<sup>6</sup> There is no evidence for there having been a bossed form at the centre, but enough of the upper half of the design survives on the upper portion to show that there was a framed circular field at the centre of the panel, and more information about its nature has been identified centred on the mid-portion fragment .4. After all the relevant fragments had been bounded it was evident that the circular field contained an equal-armed cross with a square at the crossing. This is a very common type of Pictish cross-head (see illus 5.25 and 5.45).

The upper portion preserves four of the triple spirals immediately adjacent to the central field and eight of the triple spirals which surround them. It also shows in the upper left- and right-hand corners a pair of triple spirals. This adds up to sixteen triple spirals. On the upper edge of the panel two small double spirals fill the spaces between the triple spirals and two others, one to the right and one to the left, perform the same function. C-shaped curves expanding at their centre link all the spirals. At the corners these expand to fill the angle producing the effect of two leaves enclosing a central, pendant, almond-shape. The linked pair of spirals at the centre of the top edge has the apex of a decorative triangular shape touching the C-shaped connection at its expansion point. Such unattached shapes, frequently pellets, are often randomly placed within spiral work in Insular art. Other triangular shapes belonging to the spiral design have been recovered among mid-portion fragments.

*Discussion:* Although the importance of face C of the lower portion, with the completion of the

vine-scroll frame on the lower edge, is of major significance for the understanding of face C of the upper portion, the fact that the pre-eminent figure sculpture on face C of the upper portion is now matched by narrative figural scenes on face A has considerable significance for the interpretation of the iconographical programme of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab as a whole. Full consideration of the detail of the inhabited vine-scroll on face C not only reveals the workings of the sculptor's mind but also makes it possible to relate the animal and figure styles of the upper portion of face C, hitherto appreciated only in a general way, to this ornament on face A, thus restoring the artistic integrity of the monument. The discovery amidst the fragments of the mid-portion of the nature of the cruciform design at the centre of the spiral panel reinforces the need to give full weight to what has scarcely been remarked, that the entire central panel of face C of the upper portion, with its symbols, hunt, and spirals, is presented within the Eucharistic symbol of the true vine. This sacramental symbol can now be seen as a commentary on the historical Calvary symbolism of the newly recovered lower portion of face A.

### Notes

- 1 Maxwell 1994, 5–19.
- 2 BL Additional MS 37562–7 (Hilton of Cadboll). Part of the Romilly Allen Collection, BL Additional MSS 37539–37628; ECMS, pt III, 61, fig 59.
- 3 ECMS, pt II, 398, where Hilton of Cadboll is omitted in error. Cp pt III, 62.
- 4 ECMS, pt II, 362.
- 5 ECMS, pt II, 402, where it is described mistakenly as a double spiral.
- 6 ECMS, pt II, 395; pt III, 62–3.

#### 4.5.4 The left-hand edge, face D (narrow) (illus 4.3b)

*The whole length of the slab*

*NMS number:* none (lower portion), X.IB 355 (mid-portion), X.IB 189 (upper portion)

*Measurements:* height c3550mm, max thick c210mm (lower portion), c190mm (defaced upper portion)

*Keywords:* edge, toolmark, cross-shape

*Condition:* the mid-portion edges of face D survive only as fragments. The projection on face D of the lower portion has been refashioned for the same

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purpose as that on face B, but what survives is in better condition than the projection on face B, with much of the original tooling surviving on the right side. Face D has the same impairments on the defaced upper portion, caused by support systems at the bottom, and farther up the face, as described for face B.

*Fracture:* face D of the lower portion shows the lamination crack on face C on the left side (illus 4.4b). There is some damage to the right of the crack in the form of hollows and gouges. The mechanical cutting away of the lower half of the projection has resulted in the loss of the bottom left-corner of the blank panel to the left of the cross-base on face A. This degree of damage did not occur when refashioning the projection on face B. Below what remains of the projection on face D the surface reduction is similar to that on face B. Thereafter, immediately below, the face would have become part of the original tenon.

*Description:* The right edge of face C abutting on face D is gently rounded whereas the left edge of face C abutting on face B has a heavier bevel. Impressively thick fragments of this rounded face D have been reconstructed in the mid-portion. The projection on face D may preserve more of the original appearance of the projections. It certainly presents a somewhat different appearance from that on face B. The part of the face D projection that survives on the right side curves smoothly round as an extension of the upper moulding of the blank panel to the left of the cross-base on face A. The effect is similar to a column base. Towards the centre of the face the surface of the projection is hacked away. Most of the upper edge survives although it falls away towards face C. The present appearance of the face D projection shows it narrowing as it approaches the back of the slab. This is unlikely to be of design significance. Although the projection on face B lacks the curved feature, both respond, and indeed are essential to, the design of the cross-base on face A.

*Discussion:* The narrow faces B and D of the Hilton of Cadboll slab, although not decorated, were very much part of the conception of the total design of the slab and they preserve many clues not only to the modern history of the slab but to its later history in antiquity. These faces on the upper and lower portions functioned in a number of ways: to create a moulding for the vine-scroll frame on face C, to bring the design of the cross-base with

flanking panels round to the edge of the slab, and probably to emphasise the cross-head by projecting the transverse cross arms beyond the slab edges. The extent to which these devices are paralleled in other Pictish sculpture is discussed in Chapter 5. In the event of the recovery of the fragments, the distinctive shaping of the edges abutting on face C, that on face D rounded and that on face B heavily bevelled, proved enormously useful in the work of reconstructing the middle portion. The tooling and refashioning of faces B and D of the lower and upper portions are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.2.2.

### 4.5.5 The top edge, face E (narrow) (illus 4.20)

*NMS number:* X.IB 189

*Measurements:* width c1390mm, thickness c150mm

*Note.* This account is based on photographs of face E, taken by the NMS, from the viewpoint of face C in October 2005, and a brief inspection, on that occasion, by NMS staff.

*Condition:* the condition of the surviving surfaces of the face appears to be good. There is no sign of internal separation of the bedding planes. There is a broken area at the centre of the face affecting a third of its breadth. The area of damage has affected the upper moulding of the frame on face C, with loss of carved surface and subsequent wear along the edge abutting face C immediately above the double disc with Z-rod symbol within the frame. The upper section of the Z-rod has been impaired by the damage.

*Fracture:* the area of damage at the centre of the front edge abutting face C has jagged peaks reminiscent of areas of the fractured top of the lower portion. Damage of this nature is not due to dripping trees, although water ingress may have affected the relief surfaces of face C after the edge was broken. The fracture suggests a rough separation from the face of a central feature by hammer blows.

*Description:* The face divides into three sections. Those to the right and left are dressed and stugged. The central area is similarly dressed on the edge abutting on face A. The edge abutting on face C is badly broken.

*Discussion:* Clearly some feature was knocked off the upper face of the cross-slab. Similar damage occurs on the cross-slab from St Madoes, now in Perth



*Illustration 4.20*  
Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab face E

Museum, and on the slab in the grounds of Elgin Cathedral, and in both these cases a human head may have been removed. The placing high of heads is a usual design feature of Insular art. The design on face C is complete on its upper edge, and thus it is unlikely that there was any similar target for such an action relevant to that side of the slab. We know that the lateral edges of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab had projecting features. At the bottom of the slab they had an architectural function relating to the design of the two-stepped base, and possibly they had a practical one, connected with the raising of the slab. The function of the projections, surviving as scars, higher up the lateral edges adjacent to the symbol panel, is conjectural, but since they occur at a level that would be appropriate to the arms of a cross they may well be projections of the transverse arms, a device known elsewhere in Pictish sculpture. Such projections need not have been any larger than the lower ones, indeed they would probably be rather smaller so as not to disturb the strong emphasis on the base of the cross. For a full discussion see Chapter 5.

The observable damage to the top edge could have been caused by the removal of a projecting top arm, but this proposal is not immediately confirmed by the inspection of face E. Certainly this projection, if it was such, was not removed in the discreet and careful fashion of the removal of the

upper projections on faces B and D. The damaged area of the face is centred but is broader than would be required for the removal of an emergent top arm. The rough nature of the work, or later damage to face E, could account for this spread of damage. In the recent inspection no photographs were taken obliquely from the viewpoint of face A, and seen from face C the edge abutting on face A appears undamaged. However, we know that face E was damaged on this edge, for the defacement of face A would have necessitated the trimming of the front edge of the face. The apparent flatness and stugging of this area could be the result.

Several options could account for the damage on face E. It appears on Petley's drawing, and thus it belongs to the period before the removal of the slab to Invergordon Castle. Such damage could perhaps have been caused by a crowbar inserted between the ground and face C in order to assist the turning of the slab so that face C lay upwards. This could have been done when the Duff family ordered the slab to be turned over in order that the superfluous inscription and heraldry now on face A was hidden. If, as suggested in the catalogue entry for the defaced upper portion, the slab was turned face A upwards again, perhaps by another agent who hoped to be able to reuse a slab which, by feel, appeared to be blank, then Cordiner, feeling carved surfaces on the face next to the ground, had the slab turned over,

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the crow bar again being inserted under face C in such a way as to increase the damage on the back edge of face C. In these circumstances the damage to face E could have been due simply to the turning of the slab to expose face A, not to the removal of a projection of the top arm. It might be argued, however, that leverage under a narrow side of the slab would not have been so effective as leverage at two points on a long side, and that the damage cannot be accounted for by the use of a crowbar.

A simpler scenario, and one endorsed by Ian G Scott, would be that after Duff's mason had removed the lateral projections and the relief carving from face A, which included the upper arm of the cross, he removed its projection by carefully dressing along

its length. When the half-way mark was reached the remainder was simply knocked off from the face C side without regard to the damage that would be caused to its carved surfaces. The top level of face E would then be lowered a little and tidied up with the aim of producing a neat top edge for face A in a manner similar to the treatment of the sides, faces B and D. It is certainly the case that comparison with the recovered lower portion, which provides the original dimensions of the cross-slab, makes it clear that all the refashioning of the cross-slab in the 17th century was done with economy of effort, in terms of the amount of stone removed to create a memorial slab with a flat surface and straight edges suitable for re-use.