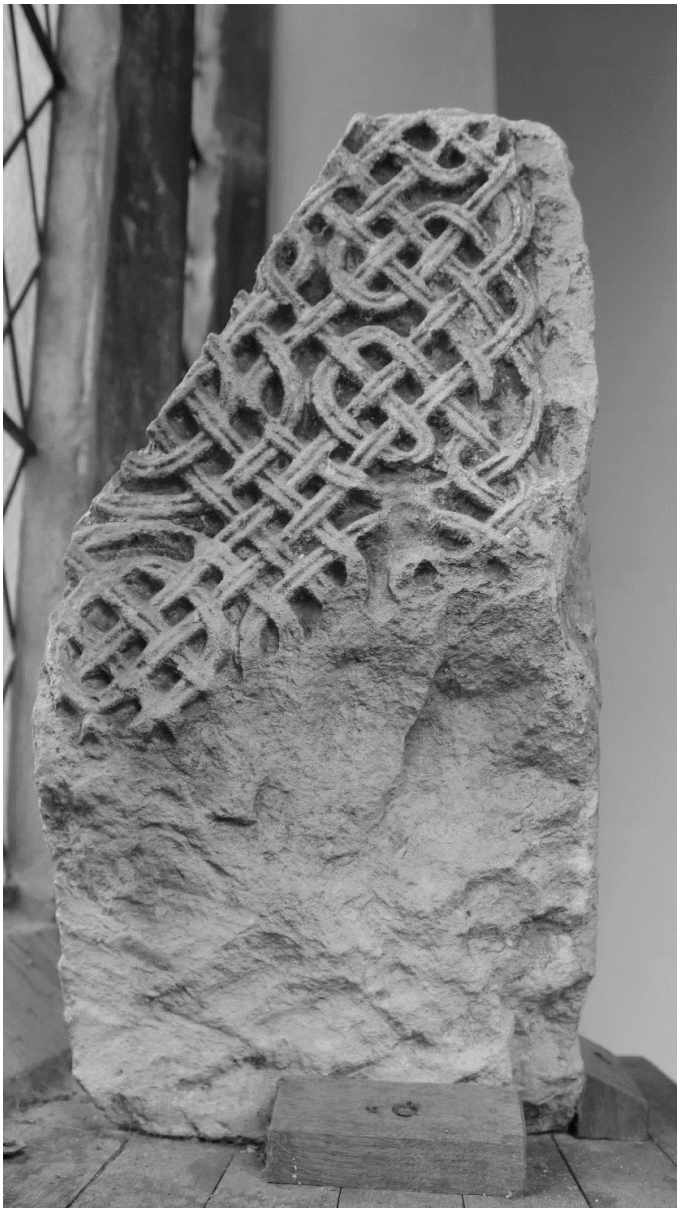
ANGLO-SAXON PREACHING CROSS FRAGMENT
CHURCH OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN, GILLINGHAM



ANGLO-SAXON PREACHING CROSS FRAGMENT : CONDITION REPORT

For the PCC of the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Gillingham

August 2021

Job No. 2293

SALLY STRACHEY HISTORIC CONSERVATION

Revision

Date	Revision	Comments
11/08/21	1	

Quality Assurance Review

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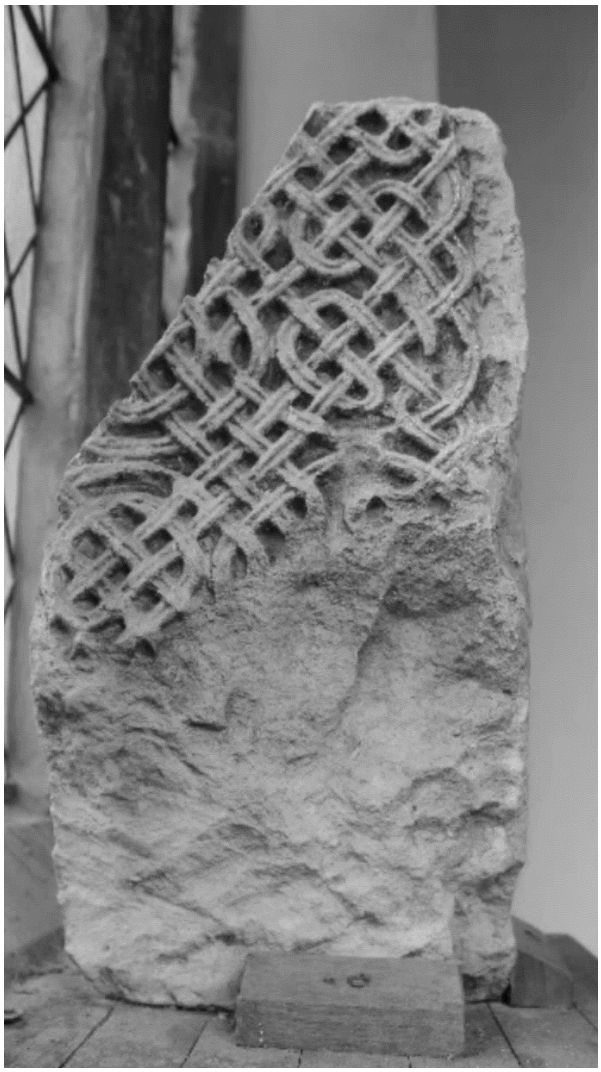


Figure 1 Cover page, interlaced double strap carving of the west face

2. Brief

Sally Strachey Historic Conservation was instructed by the PCC of Saint Mary's to carry out a condition survey of the Anglo-Saxon preaching cross fragment. The purpose of this report is to flag any issues prior to the loan of the Saxon Cross to Gillingham museum or the subsequent return to the church.

This survey was commissioned by Mr T Wickson. Church warden on behalf of the PCC for Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Gillingham, Dorset.

A site visit was undertaken on the 23rd of July 2021 by Mr L. Hargreaves, Senior SSHC conservator. In addition to a visual and photographic survey, a cover meter survey was conducted using an IMP wall tie locator and a Garrett Pro Pointer-2 to identify any iron fixings. A Protimeter MMS2 was used to record surface moisture.
The weather while conducting the survey was within a mini heatwave. No air flow was present within the church and the interior was very humid.

The following report documents the current condition of the monuments and makes recommendations for a repair programme. Samples of photographs are reproduced in the report below to illustrate any points of interest and recommendations. Categorisation for treatment is based on the table below:

Category	Conditon and Risk Status	Action Required	Re-inspection required
1 (very bad)	Hazardous/unstable	Intervention as soon as possible	Once repaired, after 5 years
2 (poor)	On-going deterioration	Intervention within 2-5 years	Prior to intervention and then after 5 years
3 (fair)	Some decay but generally stable	Intervention may be required in 5 years	After 5 years
4 (good)	Stable	No intervention required	After 5 years

3. Significance and History Summary

The town of Gillingham dates to the Stone age, a burial barrow was constructed by the early Britons marking the start of human habitation within this area. The Roman empire then establish themselves; many finds have been found in various locations dating from between the second and third centuries. The town took favour when the Anglo-Saxons established a market town with a charter in the tenth century. The cross was at the centre of its early days as a meeting and praying point until a church building superseded it. After which it was broken up, its history and where-abouts thereafter was lost. Hidden until this fragment was rediscovered during building works (*It was documented at the time two fragments existed, but the smaller fragment has gone missing, see 26.4. Papers*). Incorporated into the north wall of the vicarage in the 19th century. The fragment was then removed from the wall in 1980 and presented to the church. This came about because the vicarage was being transferred from Church of England hands to Local Council. The fragment has remained in its current position since. This fragment still has a role in the social history of the town.

The cross has sustained damage over the years but does retain two large areas of double strand interlaced ornament. It is proposed that it belongs to several similar preaching crosses in this area of Wessex. Many have elements which are the same design or carving; one-in-particular, the East Stour Saxon cross which is now held in the British Museum (*see figure 41*). With much of the decoration being lost on this Saxon cross, what is left is exceptional and carved by someone with great skill.

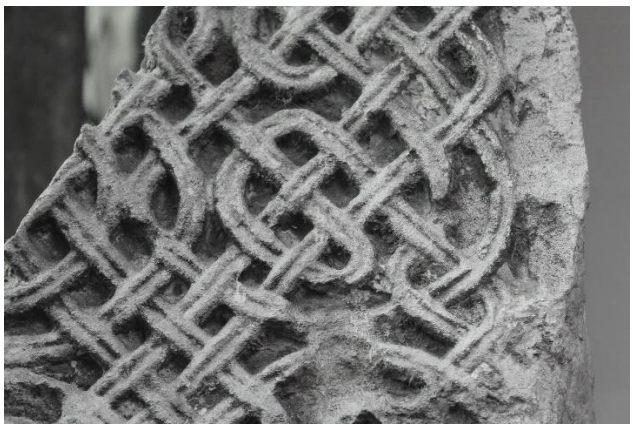


Figure 2 Detail of the west face showing the interlaced double strap work

4. Orientation	The fragment is not fixed to the church and the orientation and placement are not original. This report will use the actual, original orientation of the preaching cross fragment rather than the current church ones.
5. Date	Circa late 8th to 9th Century
6. Sculptor Workshop	Unknown, Wessex area.

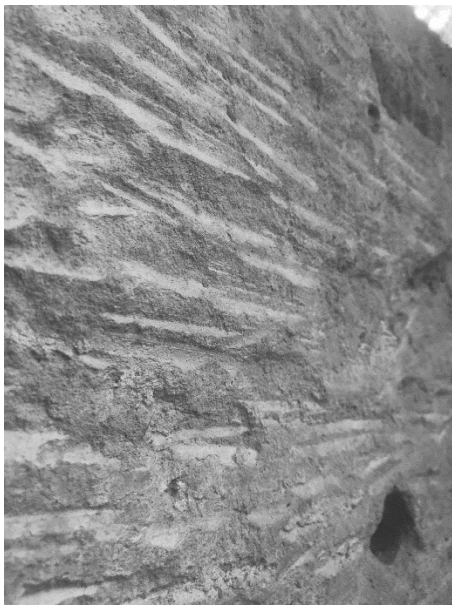


Figure 3 North face

Figure 4 South face

Figure 5 East face

Figure 6 West face

7. Outline Description

Decorated Anglo-Saxon preaching cross fragment. Free standing, oblong in shape, made of white/grey limestone. This fragment was originally from the lower section of the cross, a socket stone which the cross shaft fitted in. Preaching crosses were averagely about 8ft in height.

Carved in low relief into the limestone, the original Anglo Saxon interlaced decoration can be found on two sides (*east, and west*). Additional carving remnants can be found in the top dexter corner consisting of a depiction of a bunch of grapes and contorted vines. All six sides have been eroded or sustained historic damage. The fourth side (*north face, currently the back*) has been completely reshaped and has no original carving present; just the later tooling marks. There is however a curious hole which has the same dimensions as the hole in the south face, they do not connect.

The top of the fragment has a square socket for the cross shaft. Within the base of the socket is a small circular depression, location aid for the shaft.

On the south face there is a type of sundial scribed into the stone surface, this was not part of the original design and now the lines are very weathered. The hole which has been drilled in the centre of the dial is for a gnomon. It is believed this sundial to be a mass-dial rather than a sundial by the lack of segments, only eight segments existing. These segments marked times of the day when prayers were said.

Figure 7 Markings of the mass dial

Figure 8 Top side of the fragment showing the socket and depression

Sunrise canonical hours

Prime– Chanted at the first hour of the day (generally 6am, but this changes with winter and summer)

Terce – Chanted at the third hour of the day (at 9am)

Sext– Chanted at the sixth hour of the day (at 12 noon)

None– Chanted at the ninth hour of the day (around 3pm, mid-afternoon prayer)

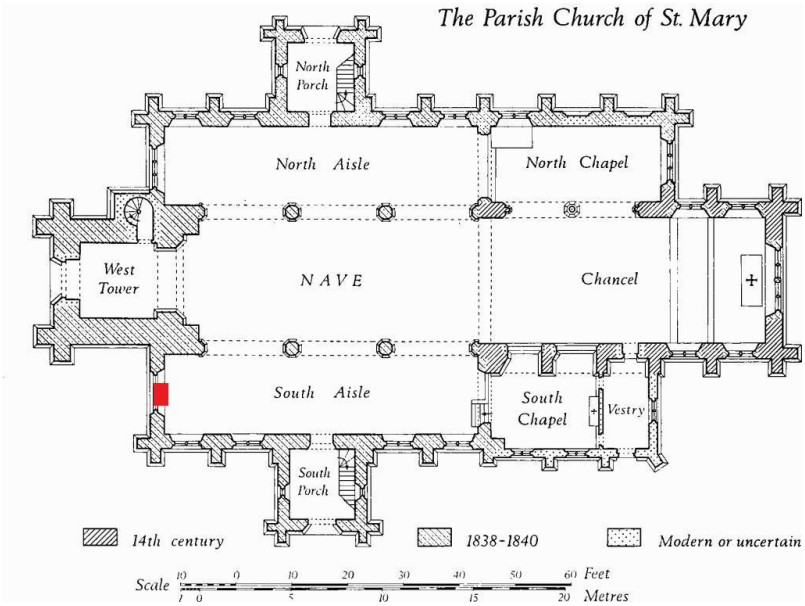
Vespers– Chanted at the twelfth hour of the day (about 6pm, with the lighting of lamps)

Night-time canonical hours

Compline – Chanted about 7pm

Matins - Chanted at midnight

Laud – Chanted first thing in the morning.

8. Overall Dimensions	The dimensions are in both metric and imperial. Imperial measurements make more sense when trying to understand the mechanics behind the carving. **Height** 571mm **(22 1/2" or 1' 10 ½")** **Width** south mid-point 330mm **(13"or 1' 1")** **Width** north mid-point 330mm **(13")** top 330mm **(13" or 1' 1")** **Width** east base 280mm **(11")** midpoint 267mm **(10 ½")** top 267mm **(10 ½")** **Width** west midpoint 280mm **(11")**
8.1 Dimensions of the socket	**Thickness of wall** – 50mm **(2")** **Diameter of depression** – 63mm **(2 ½")** **Width of socket**, east to west internal 190mm **(7 ½")** **Dept of socket** 160mm **(6 ½")**
9. Stone Type	Oolitic Portland stone (*medium grain*). Containing random fossilised shells of various sizes from 10mm to 50mm on average.
10. Stone Condition	Very good for age, history, and passed treatment of what is left. Surface has dust and dirt present but is stable . Carbon deposits on the west face are thin and currently stable
11. Inscription	None
12. Current Location Within the Church  *Figure 9 View of the Saxon cross from the south door*	Sitting on a wooden box, sat on the windowsill of the west window in the south aisle of the church.  *Figure 10 The red box indicates the current location of the fragment within the church.*
12.1 Church Address	Church of Saint Mary the Virgin. High Street, Gillingham. SP8 4AW

13. Decoration and Condition	On three sides, varying amounts, of low relief carving. Less than a quarter of the original decoration remains on this fragment of the cross. General dept of carving is 10mm. • South face, in the top dexter corner is a stylised depiction of a cluster of grapes within an intertwined vine. Leaf stems can be seen springing off the vine, the leaves however fade into obscurity as does what remains of the rest of the carving. The decoration on the lower half has been flattened and corresponds to the mass dial. • The west face has the largest section of the Anglo-Saxon double strand carving on the fragment. Sadly the lower half is again missing. • The east face also has the double strap work present. More weathered than the west but still very present, upper half only. • North face all decoration has been lost.  *Figure 11 Detail of the vine and grape carving in the upper dexter quarter of the south face (the grapes are approximately 60mm x 35mm)*

Figure 12 Detail of the double strap work low relief carving of the west face

Figure 13 Detail of the weathered double strap low relief carving of the east face.

14. Mortar

There are three mortars present on the surface of the fragment, the white and brown mortars are lime, the grey mortar needs further investigation (*possible weak cementitious mortar*). The white mortar contains black flecks of charcoal and has minimum fine sand (*see figures 16 and 17 below for some of the locations of white mortar*) and can be found on all four sides. The brown lime mortar is more course and contains clay. The brown mortar can be found in the gnomon holes of both south and north. It can also be found in small patches on the west and south faces (*see figure 23 of the north gnomon hole, see figures 14 and 15 for general patches*). The grey mortar is only found in the inner walls of the socket (*see figures 21 and 22*). The three different mortars indicate that this stone has been used more than once as a building material.
When looking at this stone under the changing light, inside the socket can be seen an almost translucent white veil of lime. This thin veil is what remains of the original mortar which held the cross in the socket. There is a second thin lime veil on the lower half of the south, this lines up to the band of later carving on the east.

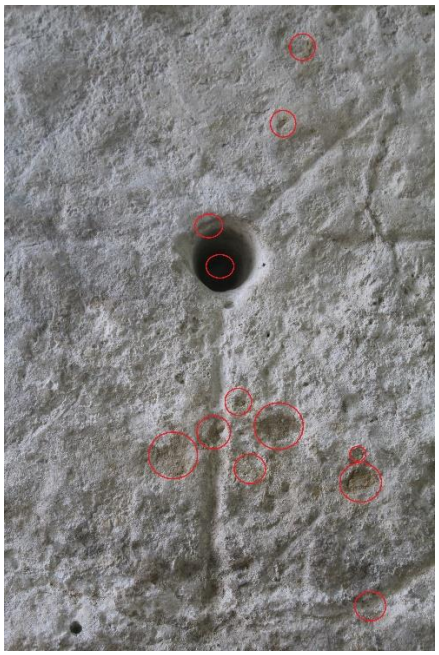


Figure 14 Locations of brown mortar on the south face

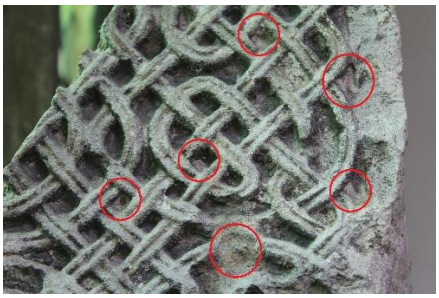


Figure 15 Locations of brown mortar on the west face

Figure 16 Detail of the location of white mortar on the upper decoration of the west face

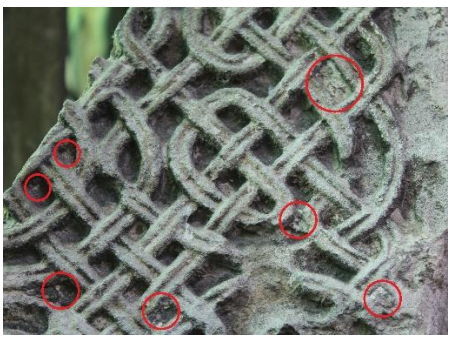


Figure 17 Location of white mortar on the west face

15. Fixings	There are no wood or metal fixings attached to the fragment. The readings from the cover meter came back negative for any ferrous fixings too. On the south face about 60mm or so from the bottom of the fragment, visible and detected by the cover meter are the remains of iron rusting which has fused itself to the surface. These are not causing any harm. They are the remains of some ferrous metal object once in contact with the fragment (*see figure 18 below*).  *Figure 18 Location of bonded iron rust on the south face*

16. Coatings	Weathering has affected all sides at some point, the west side is the only one to have collected carbon. Which points to this being the side on show in the vicarage wall. Fine white lime mortar remnants are also contained in the decoration of the west side, possible render which would explain why the carving on that side is still quite crisp. Brownish staining can be found on all sides of the lower half of the fragment.

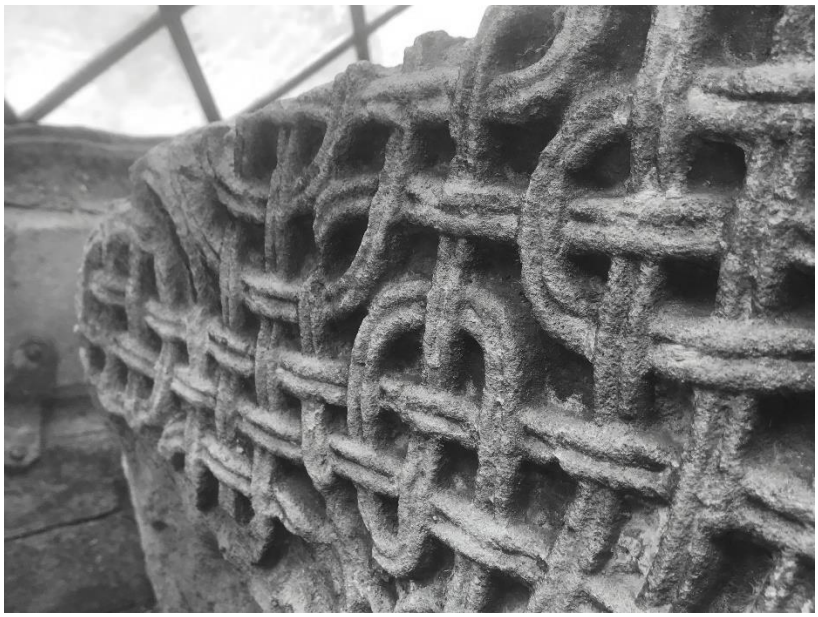


Figure 19 Carbon deposits on the west face

Figure 20 Modern paint drip from the redecoration of the church

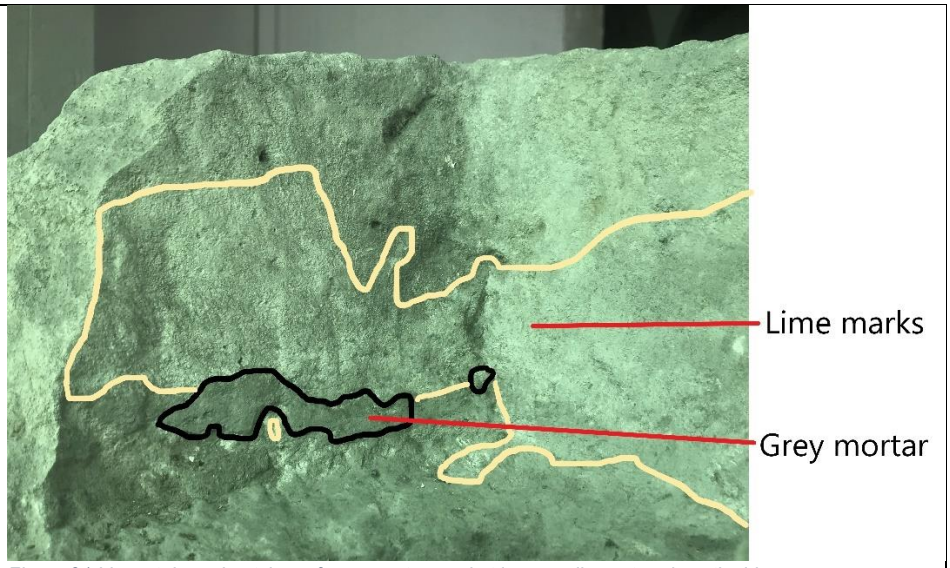


Figure 21 Lime stain and patches of grey mortar, socket inner walls east and south sides

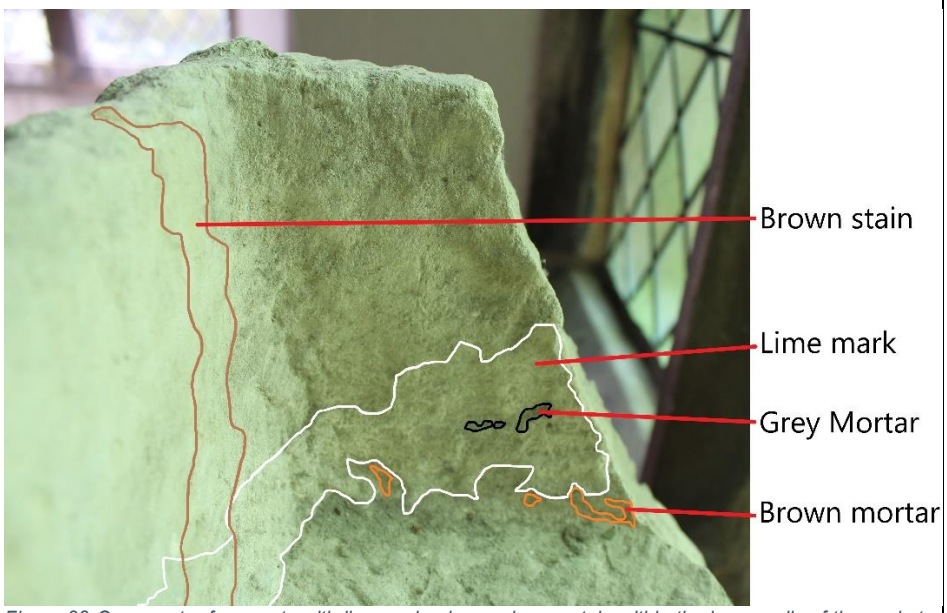


Figure 22 Grey mortar fragments with lime and unknown brown stain within the inner walls of the socket, south and west sides

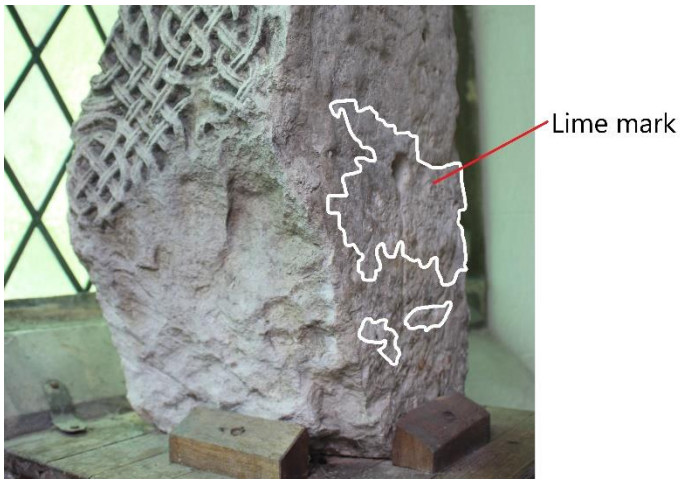


Figure 23 Lime stain on the south face

17. Biological growth	The current remnants of biological growth i.e. the ivy roots are not active. No other evidence of biological growth is present. Moving the fragment to another location may however trigger dormant algae etc to start growing if the conditions are right.  *Figure 24 Detail of the root system still present from when the cross was covered with ivy*

18. Interventions from Original

The south face central drilled hole and scribed circle with segments has been made for the purposes of a mass dial. The is second hole on the opposite face is matched in depth and diameter. The depth of the mass dial hole is 50mm, the opposite hole 40mm. The stone face of the opposite hole has been lost, and quite possible could account for the missing 10mm. Both holes are 90 degrees to the vertical surface and taper to the centre (*33mm down to 15mm*). The holes do not line up with each other, the north face hole is lower in position on the block than the south face.

Figure 25 The unknow hole on the northside

Figure 26 Detail of the northside hole, showing brown lime mortar remains within the hole

Figure 27 The gnomon hole on the southside

Figure 28 Locations of drill holes on the east face

Figure 29 Locations of drill holes on the south face

Reshaping for use as a building block, the north face has had the whole side reduced very carefully and precisely, The chisel marks are still present and show they were struck with a small bolster (*see figure 22*).

The lower east face has been worked twice, once with just being roughly chased out, then a second time which was more thoughtful with a small chisel and mallet. The two phases may be a considerably long time apart, the chasing out has lost all marks, but the later chiselling still has its white strike marks etched onto the stone.

On the east side, upper dexter quarter, there has been some chiselling applied to the decoration (*see figure 30*). The marks are close to the same fresh strikes lower on the same face.

Evidence of small drill holes exist on the south and east sides (s*ee figures 28 and 29*). The reason for these little holes is unclear. The set of two holes on the east side are the only holes that seem to have a common link with each other and are more likely to be made when the fragment was used as a building block. They do seem very small for standard building wooden plugs for use with screws; as do the four holes on the front face (*south*) unless they were for pins to secure light cables such as telephone wire? All the holes have a diameter of 5mm, all the holes but the lower sinister one on the south face are at a ninety-degree angle to the surface. The lower sinister drill hole is set at a forty-five-degree angle down into the block.

The west side looks like it was nature that was responsible for this section cracking no tool make are evident. Ivy roots (*see figure 24)* are still present and could have helped split a weakness in the stone alongside ice, but it is also possible the removal from one of its many locations caused the loss of this section of stone.

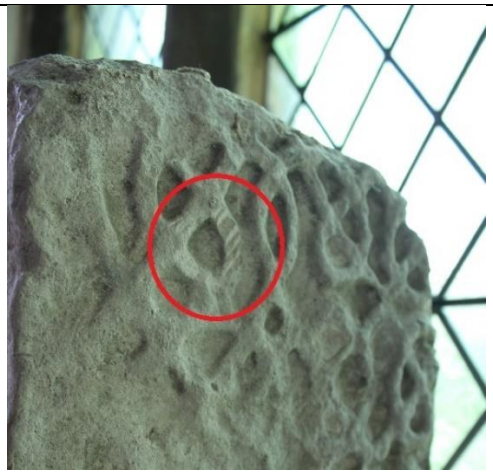


Figure 30 Location of modern chisel marks on the east face

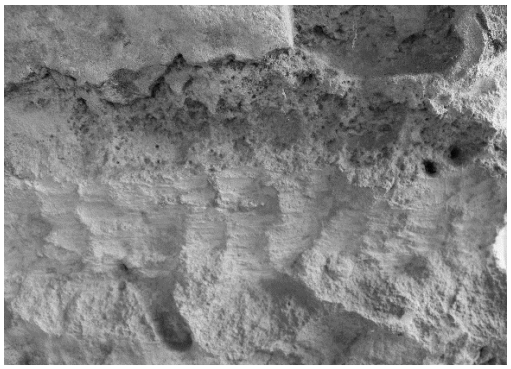


Figure 31 Two types of cutting into the east lower faces. The larger chasing out with crude cutting and the more considered cutting.

Figure 32 The top of the socket on the west side, tool marks levelling off the stone

Figure 33 Cut marks made by a bolster along north side. All the decoration on this side has been lost.

19. Current Presentation

The fragment is presented on the top of a constructed oak wooden box; held in place by three close fitting wooden blocks on the three front faces.
The blocks which hold the fragments are fixed to the box below with screws. The box fits the profile of the sloping sill and has three sides and is central to the inside moulding of the window opening. The box has two visible points of attachment; two brass plates span between the stone of the window and box (*see figure 35, below*) Both fixed with screws. Hidden fixings within the box may exist as well.

Figure 34 The wooden holding blocks around the base of the cross

Figure 35 One of the visible attachment points from the oak box to the stone window

The glass within the window have differing shades of the colour green; set as diamonds in lead cames. This coloured glass does cast a displeasing hue onto the stone (see figures 37 and 38 for comparison).

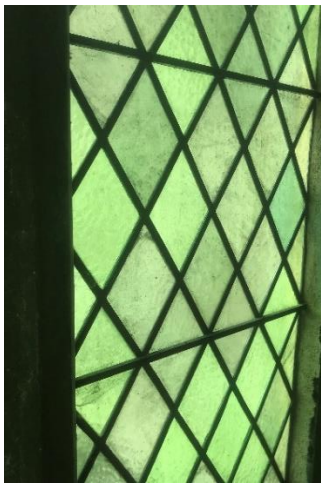


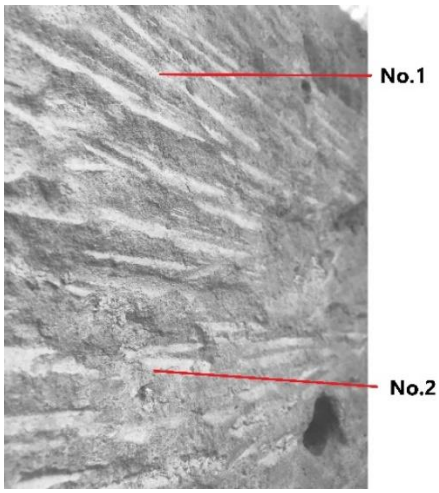
Figure 36 Detail of the leaded light and the green hues of the glass

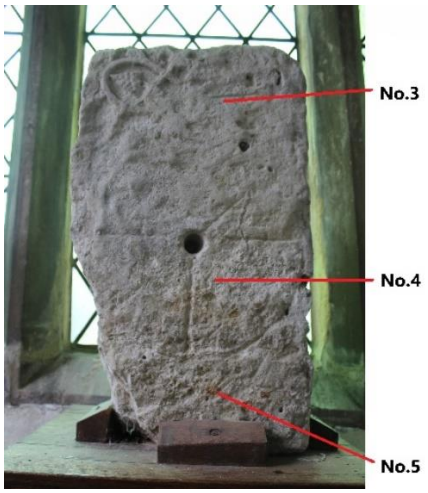
Figure 37 East side, photograph taken without flash with the green hue cast

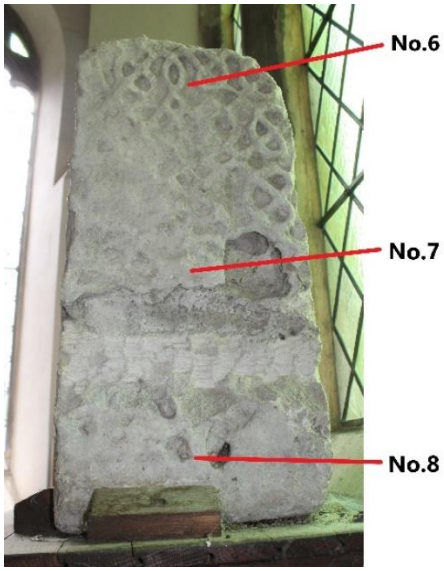
Figure 38 East side, photograph taken with flash

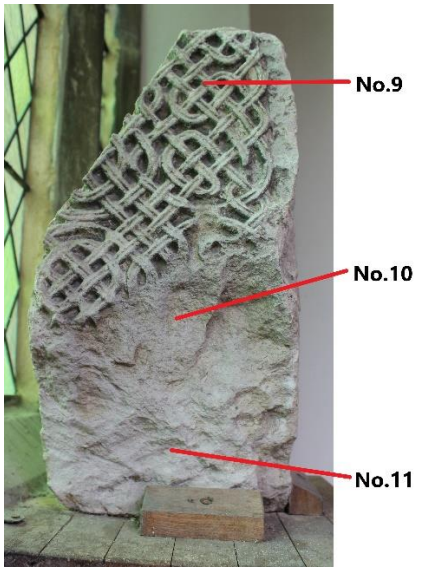
20. Lead Light Condition	Good, no signs of water ingress. No signs of biological growth from window condensation.
21. Windowsill Condition	Condition is fair for age, cracking in the plaster on both sides of the sill indicates movement within the south isle. Looking at the dust and dirt accumulation this movement is historic and not presently active.
22. Heating	The position of the box on the sill is directly over a water fed Victorian cast iron radiator. Additional heat variation will be caused by the sun during the summer months, as it passes the south aisle windows including the one behind the Saxon cross.
23. Other Signs of Environment Impact	There are no major visual signs of current environmental conditions impacting the fragment. Historic evidence of water damage with the marks on the wood are present (*see figure 39, below*). Water runoff from the glass would pass under the box so this can be eliminated as a cause. The stone is gathering condensation when humidity in the church reaches a high percentage; current moisture readings reflect this. The stone however has a higher moisture content only on the upper front of the south face. The stone is very dry elsewhere including where the wooden box meets the stone. Another cause could be that there was an issue with the roof that has since been corrected. The current paint above the window shows no signs of water ingress. With the placement in the museum, this threat to the stone condition is moot, but if it was to return to the church to the same position then this factor would be of concern.  Figure 39 Water damage, recorded in the block and top of the wooden box sinister side of cross

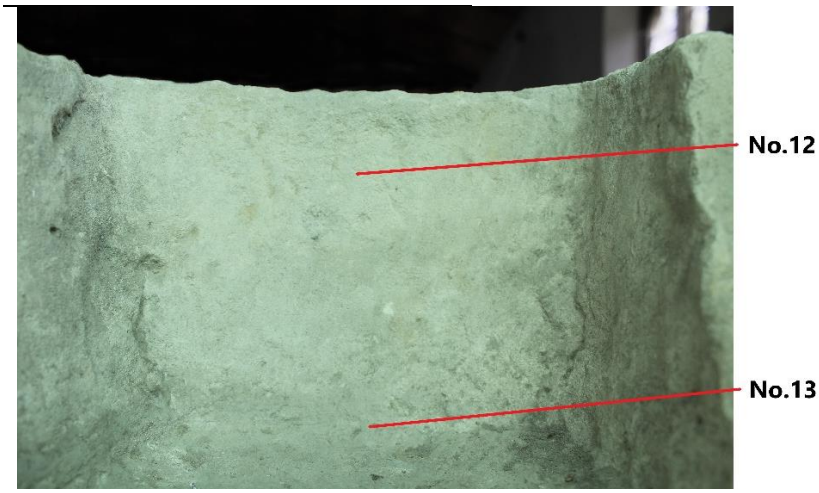
23.1 Moisture Readings Locations











23.2 Moisture Readings

No.1- 11.6 Dry	**No.5** – 12.3 Dry	**No.9** – 15.1 Dry	**No.13** – 10.9 Dry
No.2 – 15.1 Dry	**No.6** - 15.5 Dry	**No.10** – 9.8 Dry	
No.3 – 22.7 Wet	**No.7** – 10.1 Dry	**No.11** – 9.8 Dry	
No.4 – 19 Risk	**No.8** – 9.5 Dry	**No.12** - 21.8 Wet	

24. Security

The Anglo-Saxon preaching cross is not filed under the umbrella of the church listing; thus has no listing protection. The church was granted listing status on the 16th of Aug 1960. The fragment was given to the church in 1980. The listing status has not been updated since.

In recent years objects like this have been taken by criminals who steal to order architectural items of interest. The market for such items is that there are buyers and even opportunistic thieves that can still move these objects without trace.

This Anglo-Saxon cross is unsecured and has no CCTV or alarm measures in place.

The church is open to the public with no permanent stewards.

Another fixed monument within the church (*Jesop Brothers*) has had more damage from persons unknown cast upon it very recently (*see figure 40, below*)

Consider the Saxon cross is at high risk of damage or theft.

Figure 40 Recent damage to one of the Jesop Brothers tomb (1626) which is situated hidden behind the organ just off the chancel to the left.

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25. Risk Status

	Category	Conditon and Risk Status	Action Required	Re-inspection required
Stone Surface	**4 (good)**	Stable Dust, dirt, and modern paint on the surface	Intervention within 2-5 years Clean	After 5 years
Stone Carving	**3 (fair)**	Some decay but generally stable. Carbon on the west face is stable and not causing issue at present. Ivy roots are present but not active.	Intervention may be required in 5 years	After 5 years
Fragment structure	**3 (fair)**	Some decay but generally stable. No fractures within the stone to cause concern	Intervention may be required in 5 years	After 5 years
Fragment Security	**1 (very bad)**	Unsecure and no security mesures in place	Intervention as soon as possible	

26. Recommendations

Stone Surface	Light clean to remove dust, dirt, and modern paint marks
Stone Carving	Carry out cleaning trials to reduce or remove carbon deposits prior to cleaning programme.
Fragment structure	No work required
Fragment Security	Move to a more secure location

27. Appendix

27.1 Notes

The forty-five-degree degree hole is an oddity, the only rational reason to drill at this angle was space around the hole at the time was restricted for drilling. Reading up on the description of the Stour Saxon cross is that it also has one hole drilled at forty-five degrees. The hole on the Stour cross is much larger and (*the size of south dial hole on this cross*) its use is unknown.

Weathering on this fragment is very uneven and does not sit right with how the cross would have originally been positioned. The prevailing wind for Gillingham is the southwest. So the south and west faces should have the most if the cross was standing for a long time. The west face has received little so points to the cross had a short life from carving. The main band of weathering on the south face is from just under the mid-point on the dexter edge up on a forty-five-degree angle to the top sinister corner. The top dexter corner has decoration left and the bottom of the mass dial is still evident. The east side has the biggest amount of weathering from the top dexter corner down on a forty-five angle towards the bottom sinister corner, only interrupted by the chopping out stone on the lower half of this face. The weathering suddenly reduces above this line and the decoration returns to varying amounts, but not close to how crisp the decoration is on the west side. The north side since being trimmed has not received any weathering. The top is more problematic to unpick. The tool marks and the step in

on the west side are not that weathered and consistent with the weathering on the same face below (the west face). The back or northside of the socket is completely missing. The top edge of socket, south and east sides have no carving faces just the general shape of what should be there. Both these sides have had weathering and physical damage mixed up one after the other, so it's hard to say what came first, second or third.

These uneven weathering patterns point to these surfaces being exposed when they were utilised as a building block. Having two main lime mortars present implies that it was used a minimum of two times and may have not been in the same orientation for each use.

From the weathering, the south and east sides were probably on show in full sun on a southeast corner with the north face top and bottom built into the wall. The top of the south and east side were also half protected by a roof eves? This connects the mass dial in being in use, and possibly dates from this period? The building is then altered, the mass dial and decoration lost, makes the west side more desirable? And was placed in the north wall. Protected from the southwest driving rain by its aspect and then ivy, is why the decoration is well persevered?

The north side missing does not help, but the placing of the hole does tell us something. If this hole was another gnomon hole and the stone was placed on a southeast corner, then the west side would have had more weathering. The lack of weathering means it has always had protection, which means the stone current position is now upside down in relation to this setting; and rather than the hole being low down it is then higher up on the stone and the west side decoration on a south elevation would then be built into the wall with the east side still being on the east side. And would explain why two similar holes on north and south exist, two mass dials relating to two periods of history.

27.2 Further Reading

27.3 Books

The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966 to 1066

Author/editor
Webster, Leslie
Backhouse, Janet
Turner, D H
Publisher
BMP, London, 1984

Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England

Volume 7
By C. Roger Bristow, Richard N. Bailey, James Lang, Dominic Tweddle, Paul Everson, David Stocker · 1984

27.4 Papers

Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset (*SDNQ*)

2) **Carved Stones**, two, built into the N. wall of the late 19th-century vicarage, are probably of the 9th century and presumably from a cross-shaft. The exposed face of the larger fragment (Plate 3) measures 30 ins. by 18 ins. and retains a considerable area of closely woven two-strand interlace ornament. The back and sides of this stone are said also to have carved decoration, but this is no longer seen. The smaller fragment measures 4 ins. by 3 ins. and is much eroded; it retains vestiges of interlace ornament. (*S.D.N.Q.*, XV (1917), 233.)

*(*SDNQ *has been published in an unbroken sequence since 1888. During that time it has recorded evidence on local history, archaeology, architecture, antiquities, genealogy, heraldry, literature, dialect, family history, customs, and folklore of the two counties*).

The Discovery of a Fragment of Saxon Cross Shaft at Shaftesbury

Authors : Brian and Moira Gittos

Publisher : Chronicle April 1984. Page 88

Figure 41 The East Stour (Dorset) Anglo-Saxon Cross held in the British Museum.