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A SAXON BURIAL CROSS FOUND IN
ST. AUSTIN'S ABBEY.

BY REV. R. U. POTTS, F.S.A.,
BURSAR OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE.

ON March 13, 1924, while excavating in the south aisle of the Norman church, the workmen found, about 7 feet below the surface and about 10 feet due west of the south-west corner of Ethelbert's church, the remains of a bent and broken leaden box and a leaden cross.

The cross, which was of thin sheet lead, was 6 in. long and $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide, and bore on one side the following inscription:—

Lengthwise, in two lines—

V : IDVS : MĀR : MIGRAVIT : EX : HAC : VITA
WLFMAEG : SOROR : WLFRICTI : ABB.

and crosswise, in one line—

ANN^o : MĪ, LXIII.

and on the reverse, crosswise—

A XPI EX HOC ω

and lengthwise—

SIGNO CVNABVLA CVNCTA

and a sign not decipherable, which may be B followed by some contraction, and stand for BEANTUR.

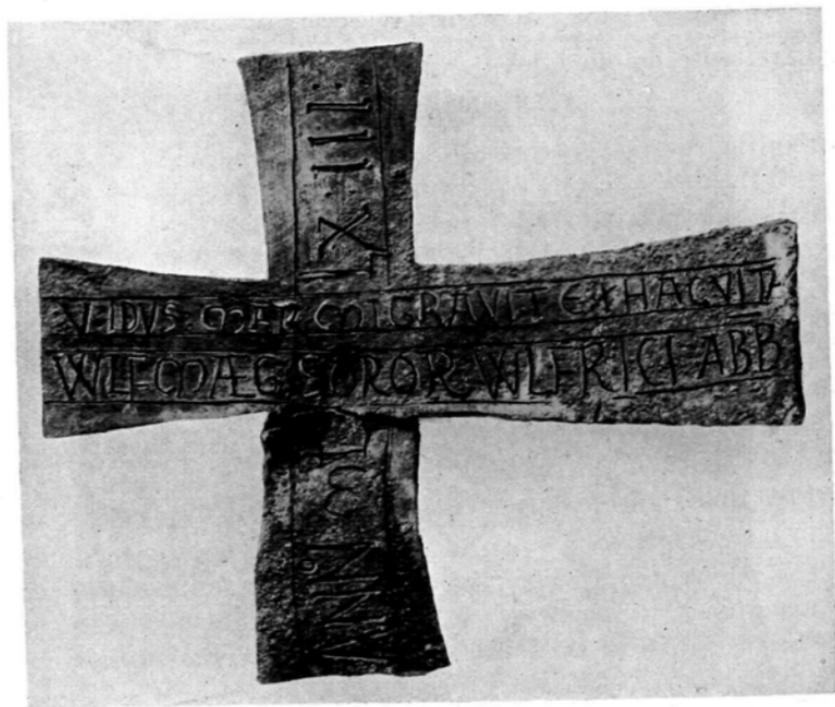
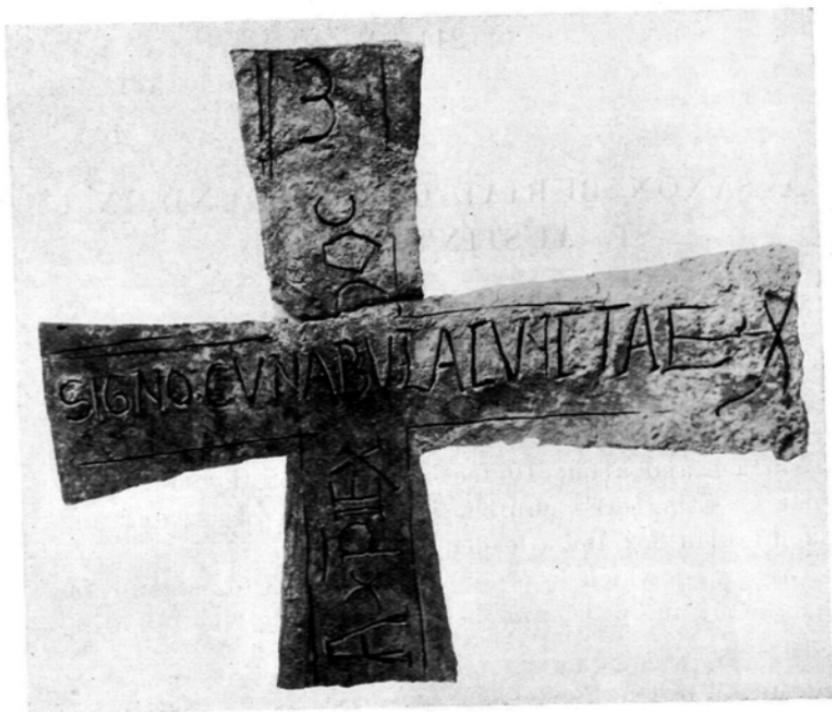
The translation is as follows:—

“On the eleventh of March 1063 departed out of this life Wlfmaeg sister of Wlfric the Abbot.”

“By this sign of Christ (*i.e.*, the Cross) all the resting places (are blessed?)”

The Alpha and Omega are at the beginning and end of the cross-line.

The special interest of the discovery of this cross is that



ST. AUSTIN'S ABBEY
 Wulfmaeg's Burial Cross, obverse and reverse.

it gives the name of Abbot Wulfric's sister, who is mentioned in Gocelin's *History of the Translation of St. Augustine and his Companions*, Book II., ch. 4, and described as a very devout person (*bene religiosa*), and is one of the actors in the story of Abbot Wulfric's death.

Gocelin relates that the Blessed Virgin was offended at the rough treatment her chapel had received at the hands of Abbot Wulfric. The Abbot had cut off the west end and made it a mere adjunct to his new circular church, instead of leaving it alone in its original dignity and sanctity. The Blessed Virgin therefore appeared to an old woman, and told her to warn the Abbot that death should be his punishment for destroying her chapel. It was only after the vision had appeared thrice that the old woman dared to bear the message, and even then, fearing the Abbot himself, she told his sister, a very devout person (whose name this cross now reveals was Wulfmaeg). Wulfmaeg told her brother, but though full of respect for the power of Our Lady, on account of the meanness of the messenger he treated it as an old wife's tale and would not believe it. He went on with his work, and on the following Easter Tuesday night died suddenly before the brethren could be called together. The Augustinian Chronicle and Thorn say this was in the year 1059, but the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says 1061. Now we have learnt the name of his sister, and that she died in 1063 and must have been buried in the cemetery just to the west of the first church.

The inscription on the obverse of the cross is beautifully clear and well written, that on the reverse is more irregular and the end is not certain. This is the earliest dated (1063) relic we have found; the next, Abbot Scotland's coffin-plate, being 1087.

The following is the original of the chapter I have roughly paraphrased above:—

Gocelin, *Hist. Translat. S. Augustini*, II., iv.

Vulfricus ob dirutam S. M. ecclesiam punitus.—At
offensa est Regina poli de injuria templi sui: hoc suum

sacrarium ; hoc, juxta Anglicum elogium, suum vestiarium ; hoc multorum sanctorum sinus erat et gremium. Hic, ut in consequentibus patebit, audiebatur concentus angelorum, hic organa virginum, hic assiduabatur virtus miraculorum. Hæc rerum Domina per visum apparere dignata cuidam anui ; “Vade, inquit, et dic Vulfrico abbati, quia morte punietur ob destructionem oratorii mei.” Hoc semel, hoc denuo, hoc tertio mulier admonita, tandem per sororem abbatis bene religiosam, quia illum verebatur, mandat sibi cœlica mandata. Ille reformidans ad tantæ Dominæ majestatem, sed renuens credere quasi aniles fabulas ad nuntii vilitatem, tenuit propositi intentionem, et sidereæ querelæ neglexit satisfactionem. Ruit enim plerumque humanis impetus irrevocabiliter juxta illud Nasonis :

Difficiles aditus impetus omnis habet.

Incidit itaque reus in sententiam divinam, percussus est letali sagitta ægritudinis circa Cœnam Domini : quotidie tamen et in ipsa Cœna et in Parasceve, et Sabbato sancto, et die Paschæ, secunda quoque ac tertia feria, majores missas in congregatione seipso et ipsa infirmitate fortior complevit ; subsequenti vero nocte, repentino transitu, priusquam fratres accurrere possent, decessit, et festos dies suos eis in lamenta convertit : opus autem suum, innumeris sumptibus et laboribus frustratis, ad destructionem aliis reliquit. Nemo tamen judicet tantum virum post ultionem Dei misericordia destitutum, nec bonæ voluntatis suæ fructu exinanitum. Prophetæ inobedientiam quæstor leo punivit, sed de extincti cadavere, quasi jam purgati, jam justificati, non comedere, nec ipsum ejus asellum lædere præsumpsit.