

YCCCART 2021/Y5

The old stone crosses of Clevedon

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RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

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Clevedon 3 (1822)

'The traveller, who visits this solitary domain is welcomed by no other sounds than the howling of the winds, the roaring of the sea, the lowing of the cattle, and the bleating of the sheep upon the neighbouring mountain!'

John Collinson 1793

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Abstract

At least three ancient crosses were known in the current parish / town of Clevedon, although one (at Walton St Mary) was originally in Walton-in-Gordano, but was included within Clevedon in boundary changes in the early 20th century.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Charles Pooley, for having published 'The Old Stone Crosses of Somerset' in 1877, which encouraged my interest in the subject in the 1970s. Also to the anonymous 'CND' who took so many photographs of crosses from 1955-65, and deposited them in the Somerset Heritage Centre.

Introduction

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCART) is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across northern Somerset, formerly supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

Site location

Clevedon 1 (churchyard cross)



Fig 1: Location of Clevedon churchyard cross

Clevedon 1 is in the churchyard of St Andrews parish church, at West End in Clevedon. It stands at ST3936470805, to the west of the path leading to the church door.

Land use and geology

The site of church and cross is partly on an inlier of Dolomitic Conglomerate into the Black Rock Limestone of Church Hill.

There is open public access in this churchyard.

Site location

Clevedon 2 (market cross)



Fig 2: Location of Clevedon 2 (Chipping Cross)

This cross stood in Old Street Clevedon, at approximately ST41157123 (Dagnall 1975), adjacent to modern 71, Old Street. From its name this was originally a market cross.

Land use and geology

The site lies on a thin skin of alluvial clay over Dolomitic Conglomerate. The site now lies in the public highway, but there is no trace of the cross remaining. A warning to researchers: the name Chipping Cross has disengenuously been applied to some modern roads in the south of Clevedon.

Site location

Clevedon 3 (Walton St Mary churchyard cross)



Fig 3: Location of Clevedon 3 (Walton St Mary churchyard cross)

Clevedon 3 is in the once-disused churchyard of Walton St Mary, at the junction of Castle Road and Channel Road, Clevedon. The cross stands at ST4095972634, to the north of the church.

Land use and geology

This site lies on the Black Rock (Carboniferous) Limestone. There is open public access.

Historical & archaeological context

Medieval stone crosses were a fashionable subject of antiquarian enquiry from the mid 19th century, when Pooley was studying those of Gloucestershire (Pooley 1868) and Somerset (Pooley 1877). Some of the latest work on a whole county was that of Watkins on the crosses of Herefordshire (Watkins 1930). Sequences of reports on other counties have been published, but few have recently been examined using modern archaeological techniques.

Some of the larger and more 'romantick' (i.e. ruinous) were recorded from the late 18th century by antiquarians, and it is by their fortunate attention to the structures that we know of the appearance of (say) Taunton, Axbridge or Bridgwater market crosses, but illustrations of churchyard and other crosses were much rarer.

While Clevedon 1 has seldom been recorded, and no record of the appearance of Clevedon 2 is known, the fact that Clevedon 3 stood for many years in an abandoned churchyard next to a ruined church, captured the attention of 18th and 19th century artists (such as the cover picture, from 1822).

The lack of recent academic study of these structures means that most of the ideas surrounding their construction and use (such as the strange persistence of belief in their being earlier than the church which they serve, which they almost never are) are 19th century in origin, and reflect the academic standards and ideas of that period.

The 'Old Stone Crosses of Somerset' was written and published in the late 19th century (officially in 1877, although his research seems to have been carried out during the previous decade) by Dr Charles Pooley.

Pooley was a doctor at the Weston Sanatorium (now the 'Royal Sands' on Weston-super-Mare sea front) and lived in Raglan Crescent in Weston. He spent much of the 1860s and '70s travelling the lanes and byways of Somerset seeking out these fascinating monuments in churchyards, by waysides, in village centres, on parish or manorial boundaries, over springs: he chatted with the local vicars and rectors, many of whom studied antiquities in their often remote parishes, where often they might be the only well-educated person in the place.

His documentary study seems, by today's standards, very slight, although to be fair his book was never intended as anything but 'notes', and he did achieve his plan, which was to make people far more aware of these structures, and to make certain they were better conserved, and in this, he largely succeeded.

Pooley retired to Cheltenham not long after the publication of his book, and a saddening letter now bound into the copy of the Old Stone Crosses in Nailsea library reveals that at the end of his life, he was completely blind.

The name 'stone cross' covers a multitude of sins (if you'll pardon the phrase): it can mean anything from a crude cross cut into a natural boulder (there is one on the border of

the parishes of Culbone and Porlock, in far Exmoor) to a large complex building erected for a market shelter (such as that in the market place at Cheddar).

The medieval form of cross, which broadly speaking consists of a set of steps, a socket and a shaft (all broadly, but not strictly, radially symmetric), supporting and displaying a small carved head with crucifixion and other scenes, is universal throughout the surviving Somerset crosses (with the exception of the special category of market crosses, which also incorporate a shelter over the steps - still radially symmetric, however).

The heads usually depicted a crucifixion scene on one side, and a second scene, often of the BVM holding the child Christ, on the other. The more ornate often also included figures on each side of the head as well, often figures of a knight and / or bishop.

Because of the religious symbolism of the carved heads, these were ruthlessly destroyed in the iconoclastic times of the Reformation and 17th century civil war. This was carried out so thoroughly that only four survive on their shafts in Somerset – Stringston and Spaxton near Bridgwater, Wedmore and Chewton Mendip. Pooley identified several heads or fragments of heads surviving elsewhere, and my research has raised this total to about 20.

Churchyards crosses are built for complex, inter-related reasons, but briefly, these seem to be

- 1 As a common memorial to all the dead of the churchyard
- 2 As a gathering point for the spreading of news and proclamations
- 3 As the last site of common celebration on the procession around the parish on Palm Sunday (Russett, in prep).

The crosses in churchyards are certainly always connected in the public mind with preaching: at Craswell and Llanveynoe in Herefordshire, Watkins (1930) recorded seats constructed outside the church, apparently for the use of congregations listening to preaching at crosses. Such seats exist at Spaxton and Glastonbury. This seems to have been unusual, and presumably other congregations stood (or maybe just sat on the grass). This was clearly the case with other crosses, such as that in Iron Acton churchyard in South Gloucestershire, where a small railed space is provided for the accommodation of the preacher.

One main function of the churchyard cross, however, seems to have been as the final station on the Palm Sunday procession before re-entering the church (see Watkins 1930, for a discussion of this). The result of such use is that many of the crosses have (and others presumably once had) affixes or drill holes or other features facing the church path, and which would have been used to hold decorations and possibly the pyx on Palm Sunday. Such a use is remembered in the name Yew Cross at Wookey. Unfortunately, since that cross was 'restored' in 1905 (Brass tablet in Wookey church) the socket is the only pre-20th century stone surviving. This also implies that the cross was very likely to have originally been sited beside the path to the church door in use in the medieval period, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the south door. Fieldwork indicates that it

is almost always sited (when in its original position) to the right of the path as the door is approached. This may imply that churchyard crosses not in this position have been moved at some time - this is certainly the case with Orchard Portman, where contemporary drawings during the 1840s document the move. In other cases, the path may have moved away from the cross, although this seems to be less likely to happen often.

Village crosses ('market crosses') are rather more simple to understand, largely being central to trade and exchange (both of goods, and of information and news) in the village.

Many crosses acting as market crosses have an interesting relationship to their market place, and to events there. Both sheltered and open crosses are frequently seen as sites for the sale of small produce, or where stalls can be erected. Frequently, and especially just beyond living memory, they were perceived as the appropriate place for market women to sit, (as opposed to the men who walked around the market trading livestock) and the frequency of the occurrence of the name 'Butter Cross' (supplemented by several occasions where name and records imply the existence of a cheese market) imply that the market function of crosses may have been seen as a domestic / female / enclosed role, as opposed to the agricultural / male / open role of the rest of the market. This is a large subject, and one that might be investigated further. In this context, it is interesting to see a letter of Sir Edward Hext of Low Ham to Ralph Rixdon, vicar of Kingsdon, in 1615, concerning Somerton market cross, and which includes the lines:

'...but also will (at myne owne Chardge) build a fayre Crosse, that the people maye sytt drye to sell their butter, Cheese, Appells, oatemeale, Cabbage, rootes and other such thinges, as are solde at a Crosse...' (Berry 1992: 110)

Time and again, the relationship of village crosses, High Crosses and crosses in suburbs of towns like Wells to markets is unmistakable (examples can be found in Wells, Frome, or Taunton). Presumably, the erection of a market cross would be part of the equipping of a market place, as would the erection of shambles, or allocation of places for stalls.

During the period of the Reformation, a practice known as 'Creeping to the cross' was at first supported by King Henry VIII in 1539, then in 1546, Archbishop Cranmer drafted an edict (which the King never signed) for the banning of the practice along with other major religious festivals. After Lord Protector Somerset's edict for the destruction of all shrines and pictures of saints in July 1547, the blessing of foliage on Palm Sunday and 'Creeping to the Cross' were both banned in February 1548.

The 1643 'Ordinance for the utter demolishing, removing and taking away of all Monuments of Superstition or Idolatry' marked the beginning of a systematic attack on the remaining crosses that had survived the Reformation (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/pp425-426>) (recovered 13 January 2017).

Parish and manorial boundary crosses rarely survive, although they are often mentioned in documents, and locally examples are known at Weston-super-Mare, Cheddar, Wells, Wedmore and a few other places.

A few crosses, of course, have been moved into churchyards to protect them from destruction (such as Bishops Lydeard): others have made the opposite journey (Evercreech, for example), while some have dodged about the village (such as Meare), and in these cases, their original function cannot be readily assumed. Further discussion of origins and meanings of crosses are in (Russett *in prep*).

Survey objectives

The purpose of this report was to bring together all currently known details regarding these structures in Clevedon, and to publish some images that have become available fairly recently.

Methodology

The field work for this report has been carried out over a period of time, with repeated visits since 1974.

The report was written in Libre Office 5 Writer.

Photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

Results

Clevedon 1 (St Andrew's churchyard cross)

The remains of this cross are only a simple socket and around 1m of shaft.

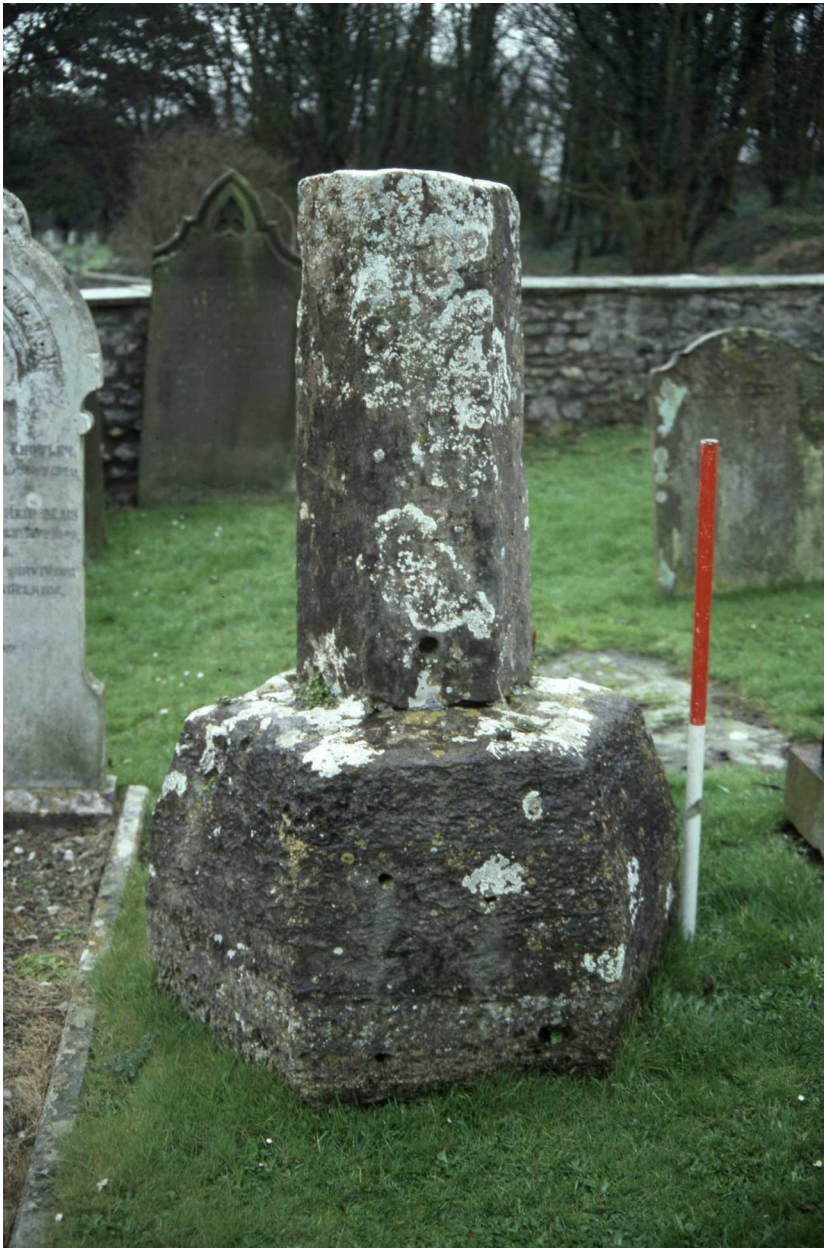


Fig 4: Clevedon 1 (1994). Scale is 2x50cm

This fragment of a churchyard cross is clearly not in its original position: liturgically, it should be on the other side of the path, and there cannot be buried steps below, since the graves each side are so close any such steps would have been destroyed.

The socket is most unusual, with its hexagonal sloping side, steepening towards the base.

As Pooley (1877) noted (an unusual detail from him), the cross has a number of boreholes in it, not least two on opposite sides of the shaft just above the top of the socket: the socket has double drill-holes containing iron plugs leaded in on the top surface of three of its six faces, each about 2cm across. The earliest record of this cross (Fig 5 below) shows it already at this site.

So why would a cross be moved within a churchyard? At Orchard Portman, it is clear that the cross was moved to allow for burials in its place: but at least they didn't cut up the old cross to make new gateposts, as was done in 1820 at Blagdon (Sheila Johnson, *pers comm*).

The churchyard was minute at the time of the Tithe Map, so space was presumably at a premium, and the growth of Clevedon in the early 19th century may have been the reason

for this cross removal.

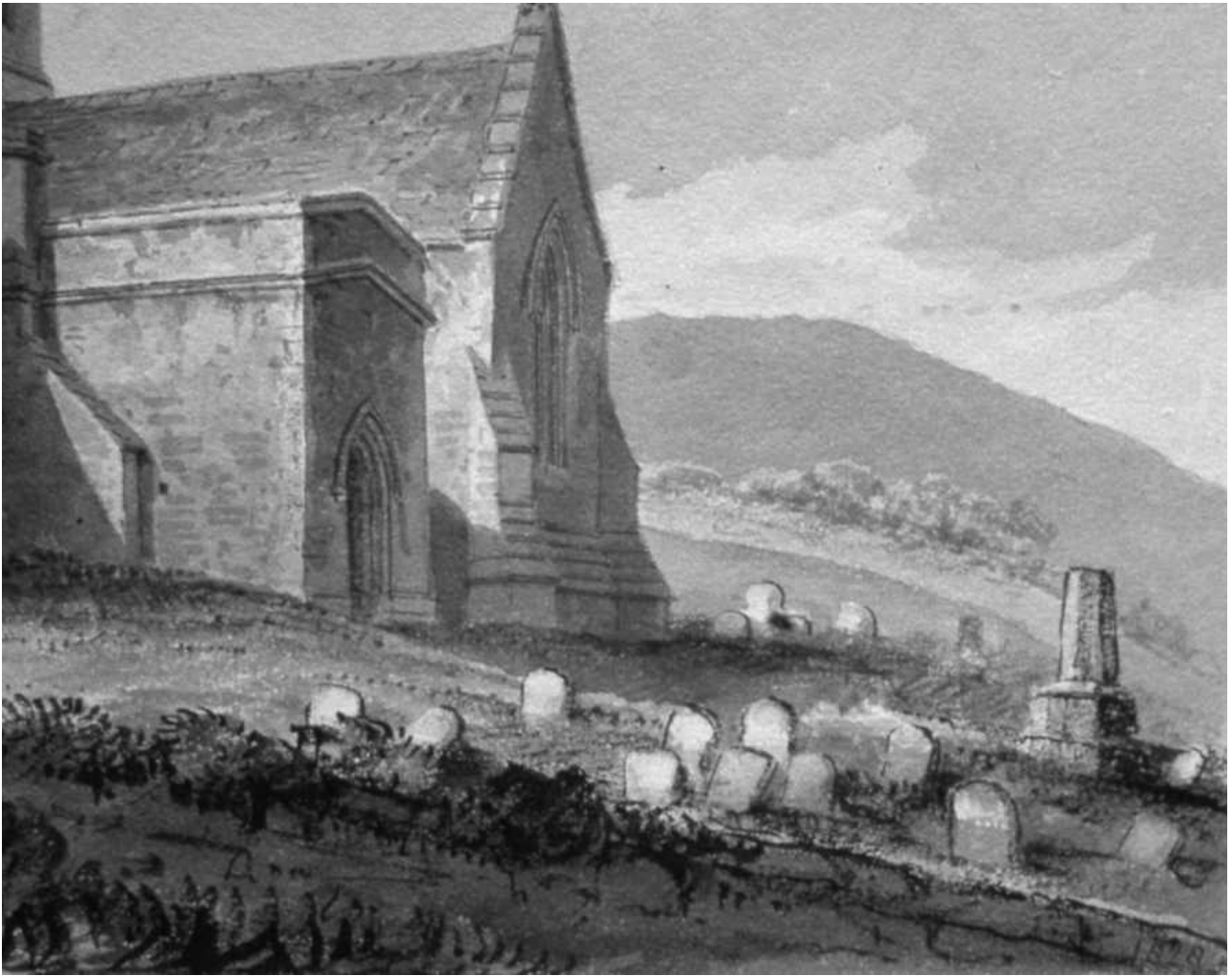
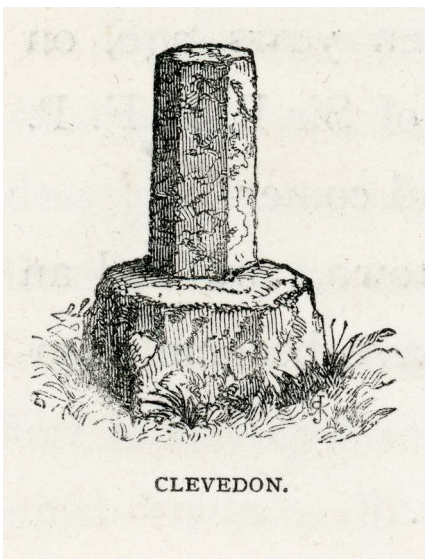


Fig 5: Enlargement of drawing by Buckler (1828)



The unusual nature of the cross socket has caused Buckler to depict it as a two-stage socket, which it clearly has not been. This feature is repeated in a copy of the drawing from 1840.

Fig 6: Drawing by Pooley (1877), also not particularly clear

Unfortunately, I have not as yet managed to track down any early photographs of this cross, the earliest I have found dating from 1955-65: earlier must surely exist (I would be grateful for any tips!).

This monochrome 3 x 5 inch 'snap' is from SHC DD/X CND: in the current ludicrous state of our 'privacy' laws, the Centre will not tell me the identity of the individual who deposited the photographs, among other things.



Fig 7: Photograph by 'CND' (1955-65)

The iron plugs lead into the upper side of the socket are very unusual: if there are affixes relating to (say) Rogation Day, these are usually horizontal on the face of the socket.

The drill holes on the shaft are possibly for affixes, but the upright plugs are something I have never seen anywhere else, except perhaps at Henstridge churchyard cross in South Somerset, where there are multiple iron plogs in the broken off-shaft. (Incidentally, Pooley compares the socket of Clevedon 1 to Henstridge, but they are nothing like each other).

CND's photograph also confirms Pooley's depiction of damage to the upper part of the socket.



Fig 8: The iron plugs on three opposing upper surfaces of the socket and one of the shaft drill-holes (1994)

Clevedon 2: Chipping Cross

This cross doesn't seem to be depicted anywhere, but Dagnall tracked its site down from documentary sources (Dagnall 1975).

As can be seen from the Tithe Map (Fig 9 below), Old Street houses were still fairly sparse in 1840.



Fig 9: Site of Chipping Cross in Old Street (to the top right of land parcel 393)

'Chipping' is defined from *OE* 'ceap' meaning trade, trading place, and is a common enough modern place name (think Chipping Camden, for example).

The riverside land parcel 393 may once have acted as a market place.

There few documented references to Chipping Cross: the latest I know to refer to '*the* Chipping Cross' is in 1714, but the place-name was still recognised as late as 1771 (SHC DD/EN 88).

The road complex in the south of Clevedon called Chippings Cross have nothing to with this site, but are an infamous use of place-names where they do not belong.

Clevedon 3 (Walton St Mary churchyard cross)

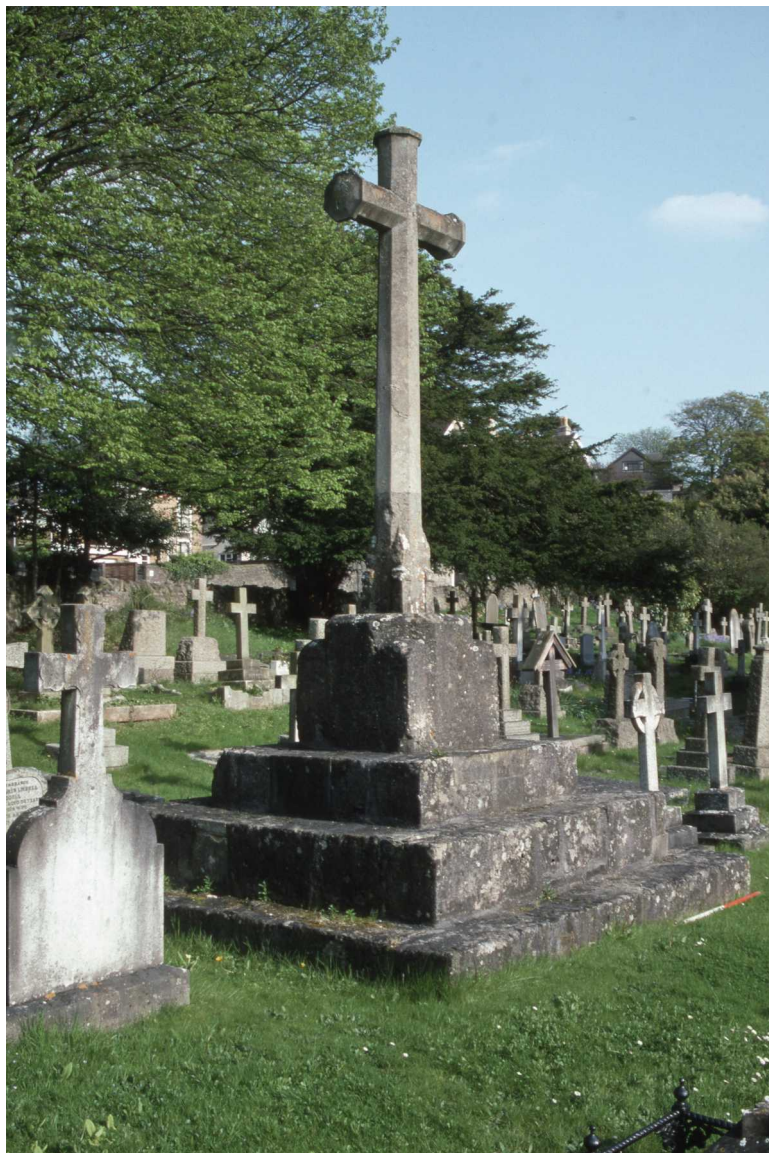


Fig 10: Clevedon 3 (1994)

Walton St Mary church and churchyard has had a curious history. Originally constructed as St Paul's in the 13th century, it went out of use at some unspecified time in the post-medieval period, and subsequently became a ruin, as did the cross.

This attracted 18th and 19th century antiquarians to the site (such as Jackson's 1822 painting - cover), along with an unusual patch of purple prose from Collinson (also on cover).

This was the age of Melmoth the Wanderer, Frankenstein and Castle Otranto, so the ruin of a parish church, overgrown and presumably haunted by bats, alone among the fields inevitably drew attention.

St Paul's was rebuilt (finished 1870), and the cross rebuilt and restored.

In another report (Old Stone Crosses of Wraxall and Failand), I remarked that the drawing attributed to Wraxall and Failand 1 looked remarkably like Clevedon 3. Having looked at this again, I am convinced this is the case.

This means that Grimm's drawing of 1788 is the earliest known drawing of Clevedon 3 (Fig 11 below).

This is a curious drawing, but the brooches at the base of the shaft seem to be unique (in Somerset, at least). And yet, in both his detailed drawing, and the more distant view in his depiction of the church and cross, he shows it with hexagonal plan steps, whereas all other drawings (both before and after the rebuilding) show a cross with square steps and a square-to-octagon stopped socket of 'normal' type.

He also shows the cross on its original site, before the rebuilding elsewhere in the churchyard in the 1860s (Fig 12 below).

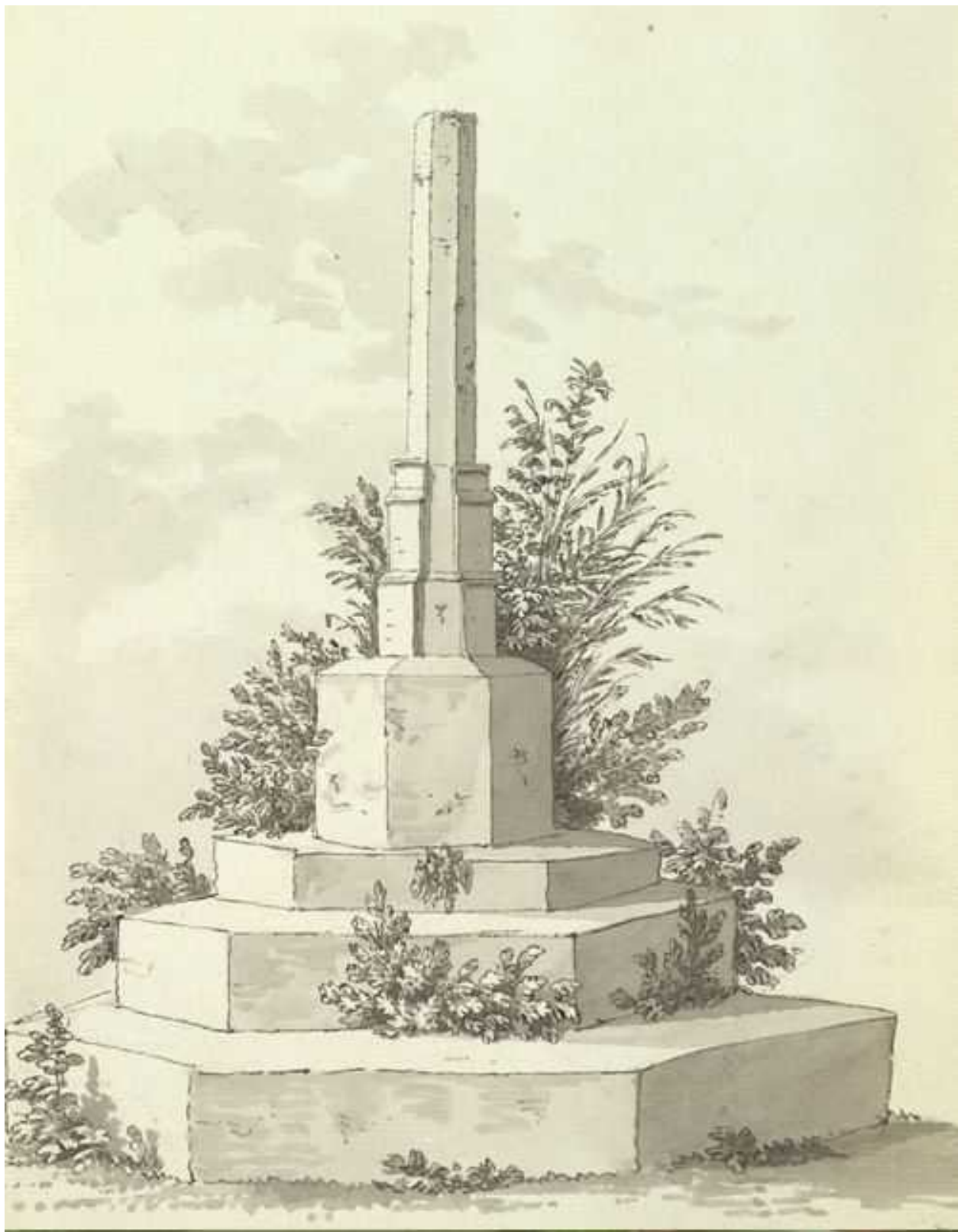


Fig 11: Clevedon 3 by S H Grimm (1788)

Being charitable, the cross does seem very overgrown in Fig 11: perhaps it was difficult to discern the plan form.



Fig 12: Walton St Paul and cross by SH Grimm (8 August 1788)

J C Buckler next drew the cross and church in 1829 (Fig 13 below).



Fig 13: Clevedon 3 and church by Buckler (1829) (the blobs are defects in the original)

He and Pooley (in 1877) both saw and drew the cross before 'restoration',: although Pooley didn't publish until after the restoration, he must have originally drawn it before.



Fig 14: Photograph of cross in new position and restored church c1900 (Photograph kindly loaned for copying by Dave Long)

Note that the new head of the cross was not the one present today: it was a pierced equal-armed ring cross.

In my experience, these tend to be very prone to erosion (especially if the stone has been chosen badly), and today, the chunky cross seen in Fig 10 (above) has replaced it. The occasion for this may have been in 1957, when a faculty was granted for 'works to the churchyard cross' (SHC D/P/walt.g.m/6/3/1).

Clevedon 3 did not emerge unscathed from its centuries in an abandoned churchyard: graffiti of the date 180(?1) can be seen on the shaft (Fig 15 below).

I imagine this was an eerie place at dusk, and whoever made this graffiti may have been looking over their shoulder, since the cross was still in its original place.



Fig 15: Graffiti on shaft from a date when the churchyard was still abandoned (taken 2018)

Recommendations for further work

As always, more documentary work may show up further important material for the history of these three crosses.

In particular, the area around the site of Clevedon 2 should be subject to watching brief when any roadworks are carried out in the vicinity.

References

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Date

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