V-RTI Report: Millom District and Local History Society
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ANTEF Stone



Description

The ANTEF stone, discovered in 1930 during reconstruction, was placed inside Holy Trinity Church in the north wall above the aumbry niche. The stone is situated on the right side of the altar. It was originally interpreted as Roman; however, Tomlin rejects this claim. Elsworth (2024) has suggested that the stone may be part of an early Christian post-Roman inscription. Other interpretations include an Egyptian reference to Intef I, II and III, or to Antef the Good Shepherd (Franke 2007). To narrow down these interpretations, V-RTI was carried out with the aim of identifying features on the stone that could help to correctly determine its context.

V-RTI Results

The small size of the stone significantly limits the scope for V-RTI analysis. Nevertheless, the technique revealed a feature not visible to the naked eye: an interpunct positioned between the letters ‘E’ and ‘F.’ An interpunct is a vertically centred dot, served in antiquity as a marker of interword separation, since inscribed texts on stone were typically written without spacing. Accounting for the interpunct, the inscription can be read as ‘ante.f.’ Abbreviated Latin formulae were common, particularly where space was constrained. One possible expansion is the administrative formula ‘curante f[lavio/austus],’ meaning ‘under the supervision of Flavius/Faustus.’ A second possibility is ‘ante finitum,’ meaning ‘before the end/before it is finished.’ Given Tomlin’s assertion that the stone is unlikely to be of Roman origin, the latter interpretation ‘ante finitum’ is the more likely reading. Within the Christian context of the stone’s reuse in a church wall, the phrase may have carried eschatological significance, potentially alluding to the period before the end times and before Christ’s return.



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Crescent and Star

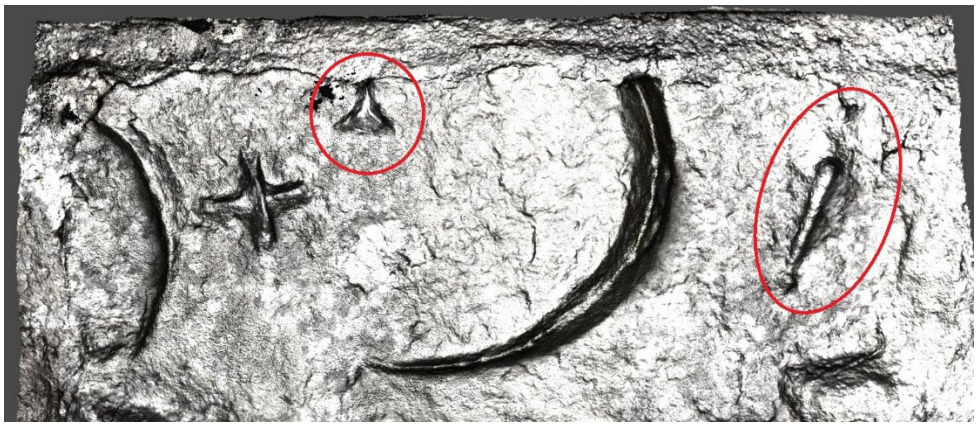


Description

The crescent and cross engraving was placed below the sill of the south-western window of the Hudleston aisle. It has previously been interpreted as a crescent and a cross. On initial analysis, the main crescent (right) abruptly stops, and due to the deep inscription, it appears this was intentional. The beginning of a crescent (left) appears to mirror the same shape. A cross has been engraved between the two crescent shapes. V-RTI was carried out with the aim of identifying features on the stone that could help to correctly determine its meaning.

V-RTI Results

The small size of the stone significantly limits the scope for V-RTI analysis. Nevertheless, the technique revealed a feature not immediately obvious: a triangle that resembles a star positioned to the top right of the cross. The crescent and star motif appears across numerous historical periods, but in the early Roman period it was specifically associated with deities such as Hecate and Selene. During the second century AD, the emblem was engraved on Roman coinage issued under Hadrian (117-138), Septimius Severus (193-211), Caracalla (198-217) and Geta (209-211). In the Medieval period, the crescent and star functioned as a common heraldic device. The cross positioned between the two crescents may represent a later addition to the stone. Although the right-hand crescent terminates abruptly, its identification as a crescent is supported by the accompanying star. The shallowly engraved ‘i’ shaped mark to the right of the main crescent was likely not part of the original composition, given its noticeably lighter incision compared with the star, cross and crescents.



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Cross



Description

On initial analysis, the engraving appears to be that of a cross. The cross pattern appears to be cut off at the edges of the building and to the top right-hand corner. V-RTI was carried out with the aim of identifying features on the stone that could help to correctly determine its meaning.

V-RTI Results

The fragmentary nature of the stone significantly limits the scope for V-RTI analysis. However, it was noted that two shapes on the far left-hand side was a continuance of the cross pattern which is consistent with a cross-knot pattern. This art movement was particularly popular between the 7th and 10th centuries AD. V-RTI did not expose any features that cannot be seen with the naked eye.



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Knob



Description

The knob was placed above the cross, surrounded by a pattern which was damaged/weathered. V-RTI was carried out with the aim of identifying features on the stone that could help to correctly determine its meaning/function.

V-RTI Results

The fragmentary nature and the small size of the stone significantly limits the scope for V-RTI analysis. However, it was noted there were two perforations on the right-hand side of the knob. Although the knob is in close proximity to the cross (discussed above), it was likely not connected to it. The knob may have served as attachment points due to the presence of perforations, however it cannot be conclusively determined what this knob may have represented.

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