



CHAPTER VIII

INSCRIPTIONS

As explained in Chapter VI, p. 50, inscribed stones that contain no carved decoration, many of which are pillar-stones, are omitted from the catalogue but are listed in Appendix E (p. 253). Nevertheless, they do give interesting evidence of continuing literacy in the area.

These uncarved but inscribed stones are excluded from the catalogue both on grounds of date and because they contain no sculptured decoration. Two exceptions have been made. One is the inscribed shaft from Lanteglos by Camelford, Lanteglos 1 (p. 164, Ills. 131–5); this stone has been included since the inscribed text suggests a date in the eleventh or twelfth century and the stone was probably not a pillar-stone but the shaft of a cross. The other exception is the cross-base from St Ewe (p. 145, Ills. 81–2). This is included because it clearly formed part of a cross; moreover an eighteenth-century drawing of its now-lost cross-shaft suggests that in layout it resembled Lanteglos 1 (Ill. 350).

Of the fifty-six monuments included in the main body of the catalogue, thirteen are inscribed. There is also one inscribed monument, Sancreed 2 (p. 243, Ills. 316–21), amongst those included in Appendix D, *Continuing Tradition*. The majority of these fourteen inscribed monuments are crosses but there are two altar slabs, both from Camborne, numbered Camborne 1, St Meriadoc's church, and Camborne 2, Treslothan (pp. 128, 130, Ills. 36–8, 39–41).

The distribution of the inscribed monuments is best seen in terms of the distribution pattern of the sculptured stones rather than in terms of those of the inscribed stones as such (compare Okasha 1993, 3–4, fig. 1.1). The fourteen inscribed monuments do not show any clear distribution pattern of their own. The most noteworthy fact is that four of them are located on the Land's End peninsula, Sancreed 1 and 2, Gulval 1 and Penzance 1, while not far away, and still within the old Hundred of Penwith, are the two altar slabs from Camborne (see Fig. 21, p. 84). To these should be added Gwinear 1, which was

originally in Roseworthy, in the parish of Gwinear, but was moved to Lanherne in modern times, some years before 1814. This grouping in Penwith has to be seen, however, in the context of the greater number of sculptured monuments from Penwith than from any other area of Cornwall. Of the remaining seven inscribed crosses, three are clustered around Tintagel, the Tintagel 1 cross and those from Waterpit Down (Minster 1) and Lanteglos by Camelford (Lanteglos 1). Cardinham 1 and St Cleer 2 are not far from each other and the remaining two, St Blazey 1 and St Ewe 1, are also situated quite close to each other.

As noted above, there are two altar slabs from Camborne. The slabs are very similar to each other: both are of a comparable size and both contain an incised T-fret within a margin right around the face of the slab. In both cases, the text is incised in the space formed by the margins (Ills. 36–8, 39–41). The inscribed faces of the slabs could have originally formed either the altar frontals or the altar tops. If they were intended, or used, as altar tops, it is not clear whether the inscribed surfaces would have been uppermost or underneath.

The remaining twelve monuments are crosses. In most cases the texts are inscribed in panels which are set amongst panels of carved decoration on the broad faces of the shafts of the crosses. Occasionally, for example on the Penzance 1 cross, there are also texts incised on the narrow faces of the shafts (Ills. 185–6, 191–2). Not all the inscribed cross-shafts still have an existing cross-head, but in the cases of those that do, the cross-heads are never inscribed. One cross, Tintagel 1, is different in that the shaft is undecorated, with the inscribed text taking up all the available space on the shaft (Ills. 224–8). Only one cross-shaft, Minster (Ills. 140–4), is set in what appears to be an original base. Not all the base is visible but what is does not appear to be carved or inscribed. In one case, St Ewe, only the cross-base survives and it is inscribed (Ills. 81–2). This base is undecorated except for margins on the upper face, within which is incised the text. However an



eighteenth-century drawing survives which suggests that the cross-shaft, now lost, was also inscribed, with the text apparently reading vertically downwards, not set in a panel amongst decoration (p. 145, Ill. 350; Okasha 1993, 131 and fig.). The inscribed monument Lanteglos by Camelford 1 is likely to have been a cross-shaft and the cross-head, Lanteglos by Camelford 2, may well have belonged to it. Lanteglos 1 contains only text with no carved decoration; the text reads vertically down the shaft, with two lines of text on one broad face, face *A* and one on one narrow face, face *B* (Ills. 131–5).

The script used in at least one of the texts of nine of the fourteen inscribed stones is a non-capital script which can be described as ‘predominantly insular’, the term used by Okasha (1993). Three of the texts, on Gulval 1, Minster 1 and Sancreed 2, as well as some of the texts on St Blazey 1 and Penzance 1, are now so illegible that it is not certain which script was used. The remaining two inscribed monuments, Lanteglos by Camelford 1 and Tintagel 1, have texts using a predominantly capital script. The insular letter-forms are clearly derived from manuscript forms but are executed more crudely. Texts using this script may contain the odd capital form, typically *l* but also occasionally, for example, *A* and *E*. Similarly, the texts using a capital script sometimes contain insular forms, for example *G*. The reasons governing the choice of script employed remain unclear. Further discussion and detailed tables of letter-forms can be found in Okasha 1993, 18–28.

Unfortunately, several of the texts inscribed on these fourteen stones are so deteriorated that it is impossible to be sure what language was used. Since most of the inscribed stones of Cornwall, whether sculptured or not, contain texts in Latin, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these illegible texts were also in Latin. Those texts that are certainly in Latin occur on St Blazey 1, St Cleer 2, St Ewe 1, Camborne 1 and Tintagel 1. The Latin used, however, is generally not of a classical nature. The text on Camborne 1, for example, reads *LEUIUT IUSIT HEC ALTARE PRO ANIMA SUA*, ‘Leuiut ordered this altar for his own soul’ (p. 128). In this text we might have expected the spelling *iussit*, not *iusit*, and *haec* or *hoc*, not *hec*; moreover, *iussit* is followed by a direct object rather than by the infinitive of a verb.

Some of the monuments with Latin texts also

contain other texts which consist of a personal name. An example of this occurs on St Blazey 1 which has texts on two different faces of the stone (p. 119). One text probably contains at least part of the Latin word *fili-* ‘son of’ followed by letters now lost, while the other has the name [C]LRORON. Two other monuments, Cardinham 1 and Sancreed 1, contain texts which consist only of one word, possibly a personal name; the text on Cardinham 1, for example, reads [A]R[A]H (p. 131). In addition, Camborne 2 may well have contained only a personal name but it is too deteriorated to be sure. Gwinear 1 might contain a Cornish word (p. 152). One stone, Lanteglos by Camelford 1, contains a text in early Middle English (p. 164). This text, and the texts in Latin, all appear to be commemorative in nature; the same may well be true of those stones whose text consists of only a personal name. However, it is not certain in all cases exactly who is being commemorated, nor whether they were alive or deceased when the stone was carved. For a discussion of the personal names that occur on all the south-western inscribed stones, see Okasha 1993, 43–9.

None of the inscribed stones can be dated with any finesse and the datings are almost always based on the carved decoration not the inscribed texts. Most often, the best that can be suggested is a date-range covering parts of two centuries. The earliest date-range is that of St Cleer 2, the late ninth to the tenth century. Cardinham 1 is likely to be tenth-century in date, while St Ewe 1, Gwinear 1 and Sancreed 1 may date from the mid or late tenth century to early in the eleventh century. The two altar slabs from Camborne, Camborne 1 and 2, are also likely to be tenth- or eleventh-century in date, as are St Blazey 1, Gulval 1 and Minster 1. Lanteglos by Camelford 1, Penzance 1 and Tintagel 1 probably date from the eleventh or early twelfth century. Finally, Sancreed 2, as part of the continuing tradition, probably dates in its final form from the late twelfth to the thirteenth century.¹

1. While this volume was in press, the authors received a suggestion concerning the inscribed stone with an incised cross at St Michael Penkevill church. We are most grateful to Brian and Moira Gittos for drawing this stone to our attention. This stone has always been taken as thirteenth-century, but the suggestion put forward is that it might in fact be early medieval. Unfortunately there has been insufficient time for us to give due consideration to this interesting idea.

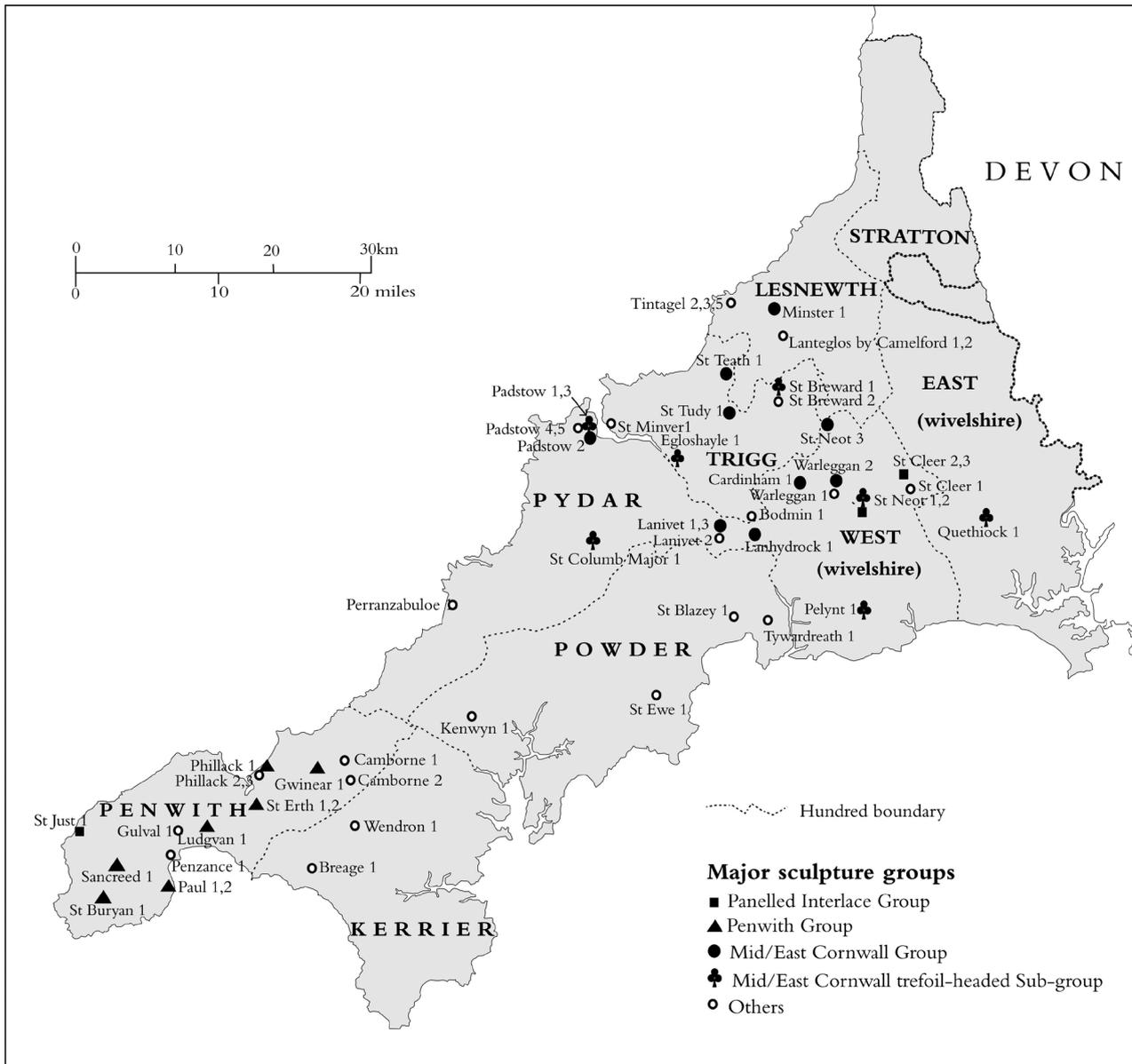


FIGURE 21
Sculpture groups and hundreds in Cornwall