

IV. NOTICE OF THE REMAINS OF A MEDIÆVAL CHAPEL FOUND IN  
THE ROMAN STATION AT ARDOCH. By THOMAS ROSS, F.S.A. Scot.

The written evidence for the existence of a chapel in the camp at Ardoch is not quite satisfactory, inasmuch as it is not mentioned, so far as I know, in any chartulary or register of any of the abbeys or cathedrals. There is no mention of a church at Ardoch till "the present parish church of Ardoch, made a parish *quoad omnia* in 1855, was opened as a chapel 25th March 1781."<sup>1</sup> Previous to this event Ardoch formed part of the Parish of Muthill or Mothel, as it was anciently called.

The Church of Mothel, with its lands, tithes, and offerings, was bestowed upon the Abbey of Lindores by Malise, son of Ferteth, Earl of Strathern. It appears among the possessions confirmed to that Abbey by Pope Innocent III. in 1198,<sup>2</sup> and the Abbot continued to draw revenues from the lands of Ardoche, Bennie, Eister Feddellis, and Wester Feddellis, all within the Parish of Mothel, down to the suppression of the monastery.<sup>3</sup> Bennie is situated at a distance of about 1 mile north from the camp, and Easter and Wester Feddellis are about the same distance to the south.

Although there is thus far no reference to a chapel at Ardoch, we know from the confirmation charter by Pope Innocent, just

<sup>1</sup> Private letter from Rev. James Rankin, D.D., Muthill.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of Society*, vol. viii., new series, pp. 151-153, Thomas Dickson, LL.D.

<sup>3</sup> *Lindores Abbey*, by Alexander Laing, LL.D., Edin., 1876, pp. 53, 411, 424, 499.

mentioned, that there were one or more chapels belonging to the Church of Mothel,<sup>1</sup> but they are not further specified. But we would not expect this chapel to be mentioned at that date, as its architectural characteristics show that it belongs to a time about two centuries later.

Coming down to more recent times, we find several writers referring to a chapel as having existed at the very place where the excavations of the Society have unearthed its remains. Dr Anderson has pointed out to me that in 1749, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik visited the camp of Ardoch, which he had seen once before. He says :—"The ditches are large about the prætorium, and there is a square place in the middle where, I believe, they have had a temple, for there was a chapel built here, and the ground about serves still for a burial place to the country people."<sup>2</sup>

The writers of the *Stat. Account* (both the Old<sup>3</sup> and New) concur in regarding the prætorium as having been the site of a chapel, or "place of worship" as they term it, the mound on which it stood having "obtained the name of Chapel Hill from time immemorial."

Dr Marshall, in his *Historic Scenes in Perthshire*,<sup>4</sup> agrees with these writers in placing the chapel in the same place.

The Ordnance map, while corroborating the existence of a chapel at the camp, places it in an entirely different position, at a distance of about 110 yards further to the south, and on the outer defences of the camp, and almost outside of the same. About 15 yards south from this, the map indicates where a stone coffin containing human remains was found about 1825. And it may be that the Ordnance Surveyors thought that this indicated the site of a chapel of which they had heard a tradition, for there is a tradition of a chapel having existed outside the camp, as communicated by the Rev. Geo. D. MacNaughton

<sup>1</sup> *Lindores Abbey*, by Alexander Laing, LL.D., Edin., 1876, p. 469.

<sup>2</sup> *Clerk of Penicuik's Memoirs*, Scottish History Society, edited by John Gray, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> *Stat. Account (Old)*, vol. viii. p. 494.

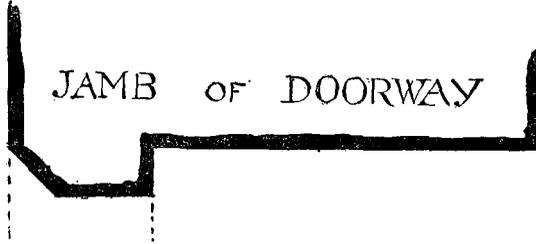
<sup>4</sup> *Historic Scenes in Perthshire*, by Wm. Marshall, D.D., Edin., Oliphant & Co., 1880, p. 314.

of Ardoch; but the finding of a "stone coffin," without having it in evidence, proves nothing, as it may have been a prehistoric burial.

We now come to the evidence disclosed by the excavations undertaken by the Society.

The position of the chapel is shown on the general plan of the camp, prepared by Mr Cunningham (Plate V.).

It consists of the south-west corner of a building, the west or gable wall of which remains for a distance of about 10 feet long by a thickness of 3 feet 3 inches, and the south wall of about the same length by 2 feet 9 inches thick. In this latter wall, at a distance of 8 feet 6 inches from the corner, there occurs the splayed and checked



rybate or jamb of a doorway. The size of the building can only be vaguely determined by a small portion of the east and north walls; these fragments are so scanty as not to include the full thickness of the respective walls—but taking them as they are, they indicate the size of the chapel, measuring over the walls, to have been about 40 feet by 27 feet.

The position of the doorway, near the west end of the south wall, its splayed edge, and check, are features quite in accordance with what is to be found in churches and chapels throughout the whole of Scotland—so much so, that it is needless to bring forward examples in support of the statement that this is the doorway of a chapel, and no one acquainted with the subject of church architecture in Scotland will doubt it.

It must, however, be admitted that the chapel is wider than what one would have expected—considering its short length. There does not

appear to have been any rule for proportioning the width to the length of these chapels. They were doubtless made narrow for simplicity and ease in roofing, and the lengths were adjusted to meet the requirements either of population or ceremonial.

Thus the Chapel of Auld Cathie in Linlithgowshire is 35 feet long by 20 wide, and Gamrie in Banffshire and Bathgate in Linlithgowshire are each 96 feet long by 22 feet and 24 feet wide respectively. Exmagirdle Chapel, about 18 miles from the camp, is 32 feet by 17 feet. Forgan-denny, in the same locality, is 77 feet 6 inches by 27 feet. Moncrieff, also in Strathearn, is 40 feet long by 23 feet 3 inches. Examples might be multiplied to show that while there are no definite rules, the proportion of 27 feet in width to 40 feet of length is, if not quite abnormal, at least unusual. There is, however, a way out of the difficulty. Many of these chapels had a small N. aisle, probably a sacristy, opening into the church by an arch. Now, it may have been that the bit of the N. wall, shown on the ground plan (fig. 1), represents the end wall of such an aisle. The Chapel at Moncrieff illustrates the point. Take the same width for the chapel at the camp as is found at Exmagirdle and there is space for an aisle of the same size as at Moncrieff. In support of the view that the chapel in the camp was of this plan, there was a mound of rubbish, as indicated on the plan, just where the north wall is shown—this was probably the ruins of the wall.

Further evidence for the existence of a chapel here consists in the discovery, within the walls, of two pieces of tracery—wrought and splayed in the usual Gothic manner, and marked  $\times$  and  $\times \times$  in the annexed sketch (fig. 2). One piece has evidently consisted of the springing of the arched form of a window head from a central mullion. The other piece appears to have formed a part of a traceried window similar to what is shown. Of course the exact design of the window is not vouched for; the sketch merely shows the principle on which such forms of tracery can be applied.

The chapel stood within a square area which, as shown in fig. 1, had been enclosed with a stone wall. This area measured about 80 feet square, and the chapel reached to within about 10 feet of the northern boundary, so that it stood within the area as a mediæval church usually

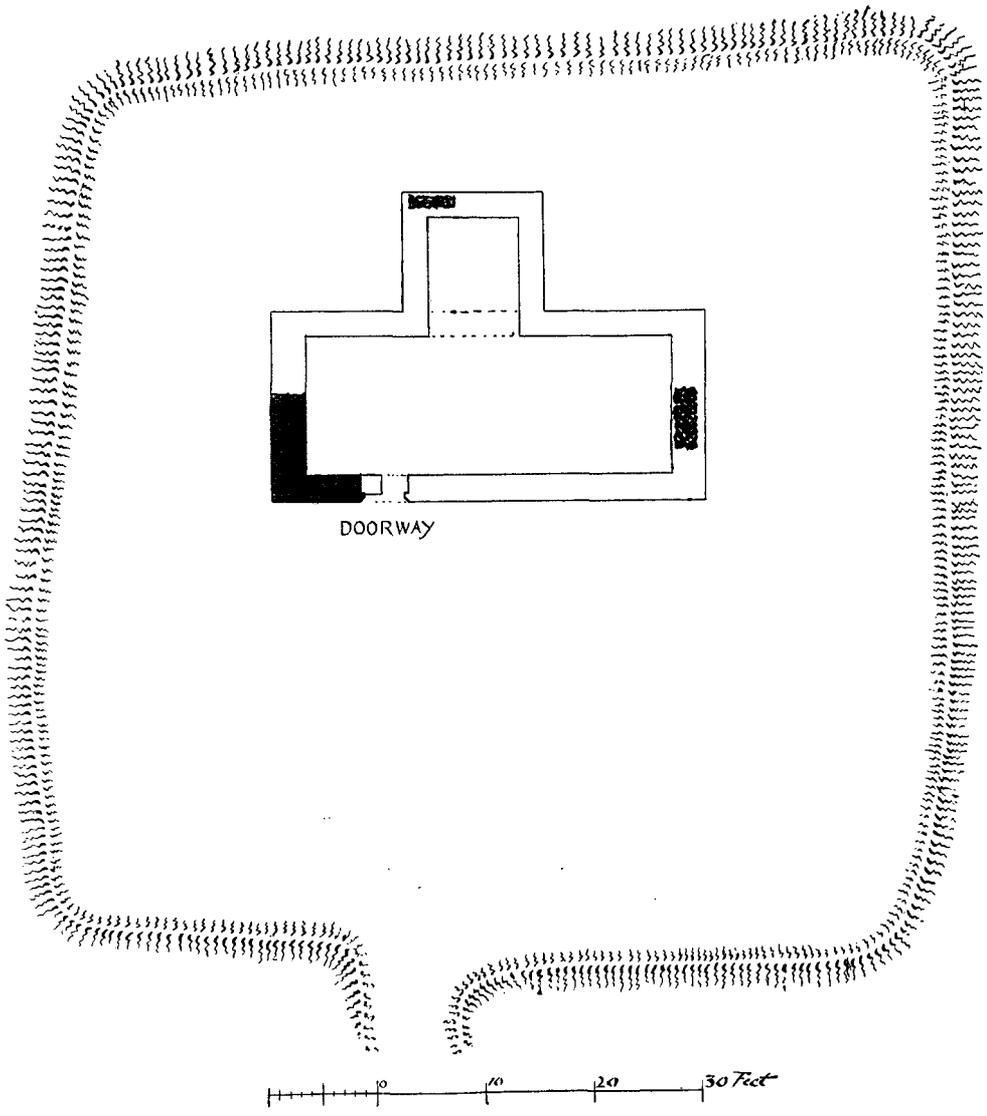


Fig. 1. Ground Plan of Chapel and Enclosure of its Graveyard within the Roman Station at Ardoch.

does within its churchyard. We have had the evidence of Baron Clerk that this area was used as a burial place; Dr Marshall also bears testimony to the same effect; and during the recent excavations the remains of several burials in wooden coffins were found within the enclosed area surrounding the chapel.

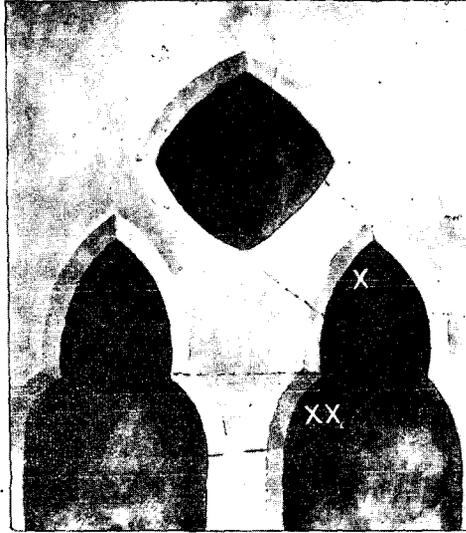


Fig. 2. Sketch showing Window reconstructed.

It only remains to be said, as indicating the growth of the ground at this part of the camp, that the under side of the foundations of the chapel were found at a height of about 2 feet 6 inches above the Roman work.

Since the foregoing was written, my attention has been called to a work entitled *A Week at Bridge of Allan*, by Charles Rogers, LL.D., in which (p. 246), referring to the site of the chapel within the camp, he says, "which, as the present name of the eminence would indicate, had at one period been a place of religious worship." He also refers to burials within the area.