

XII.—*Notice of the Chapel dedicated to St Blane at Kingarth in Bute.*  
(Plates XXXVI.—XLI.)

By WILLIAM GALLOWAY, Architect, Corr. Mem. S.A. Scot.

[*Read 12th May 1873.*]

The chapel forming the subject of this notice is situated at the southern extremity of Bute, where, from an early period in the Christianisation of Scotland, a religious settlement appears to have existed.<sup>1</sup> In fulfilment of an intention entertained for several years previously, I visited the locality in the autumn of 1872, and made a careful survey of the existing ruins. Its principal results will be found embodied in the six accompanying plates, embracing all the architectural features of any importance, in so far as the very dilapidated state of the walls admit of their being determined.

My first object, however, is not to describe the building, but to direct attention to certain peculiarities hitherto unnoticed, which, if the inference to be afterwards drawn from them proves to be in any degree correct, must to a considerable extent modify the views entertained regarding the history in its architectural bearings of this most ancient and interesting structure.

As in many similar instances, the Chapel of St Blane, in the various additions and alterations to which it has been subjected, especially towards the east end, exhibits no slight variety in point of style.

The principal part of the building, comprising the nave and western part of the chancel, is indisputably Norman or Romanesque. To the eastward, however, there occurs an elongation of the chancel, from the character of the windows, invariably considered to be an extension due to the thirteenth century or First-Pointed period, and to this extent, necessarily so much *later in date* than the remaining Norman part of the building.

In direct contradiction to this theory, it will be my object in the following paper, to prove—what seems to have been hitherto altogether unsuspected—

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<sup>1</sup> Gleaned from various sources, the leading information regarding this site will be found summed up by Dr Stuart in the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," vol. ii., Notices of the Plates, p. 37.

that to a greater extent than might at first be supposed, there still exist, incorporated in the walls of the present chancel, and constituting in the elongation just referred to really its major portion, the remains of a building older considerably than any of those parts the ages of which are at least approximately admitted, and, therefore, by a period not easily determinable, not *posterior* but *anterior* to the work of those who built in the twelfth century.

Perhaps the simplest and most direct way to bring the points at issue, and the evidence upon which they depend, at once under review, will be to give a brief summary of current opinion upon the subject.

The late Mr Charles Hutcheson seems to have been the first who in recent times directed special attention to St Blane's. A considerable number of years ago he drew up a paper, illustrated by drawings, an extract from which is given in Mr Eaton Reid's "History of the County of Bute" (pp. 28, 29), and the views therein expressed are substantially, and with little or no modification, the same as those held at the present day, with regard to the more recent origin of the existing chancel, and the fact that it is from the four windows in this part of the building that "the character of the architecture is at once fixed."

On the 27th January 1853, Mr John Baird, Architect in Glasgow, at a meeting of the Architectural Institute of Scotland held there, read a paper upon St Blane's Chapel, illustrated by drawings to a large scale, which are of special interest, as showing the state in which the building existed previous to the modern reparations.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, while fully endorsing the previously expressed views of Mr Hutcheson, the thirteenth century extension theory received a still further development, by Mr Baird's suggesting that, in all probability, the chancel of the original Norman edifice had terminated in an eastern gable and apse, which at the date referred to were taken down, and the materials employed in erecting a new gable further to the east.

To these more formal statements may be added such incidental notices as that contained in Professor Daniel Wilson's "Prehistoric Annals," where,

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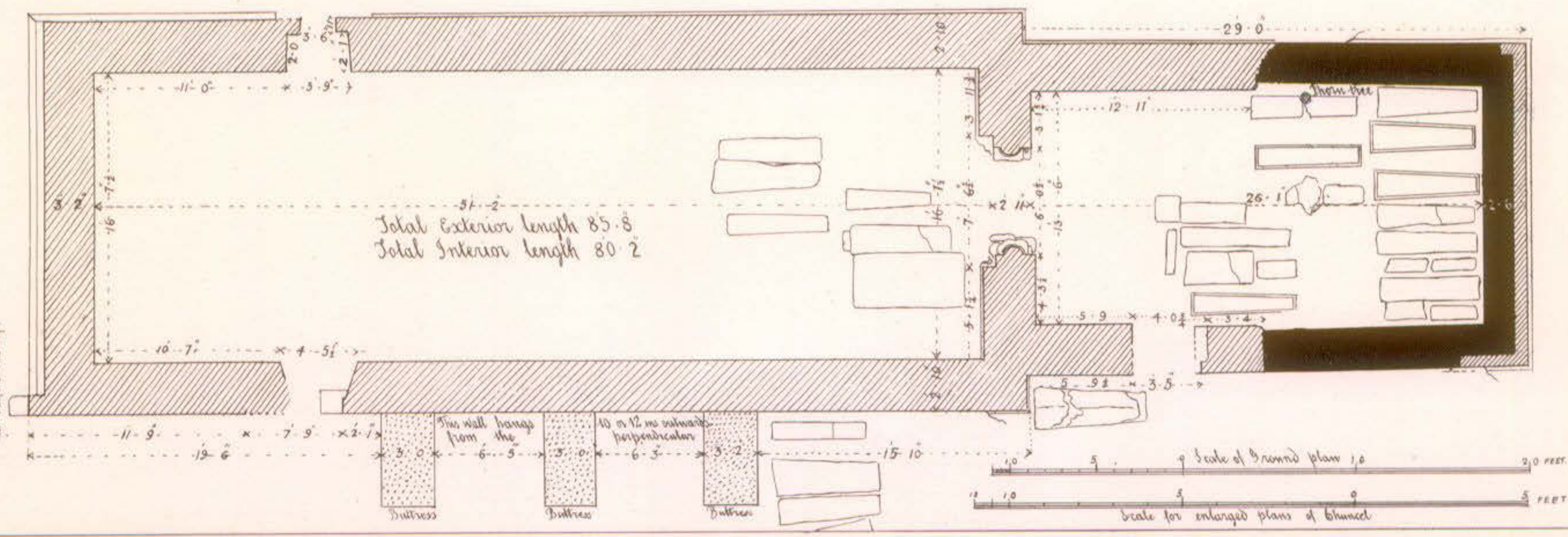
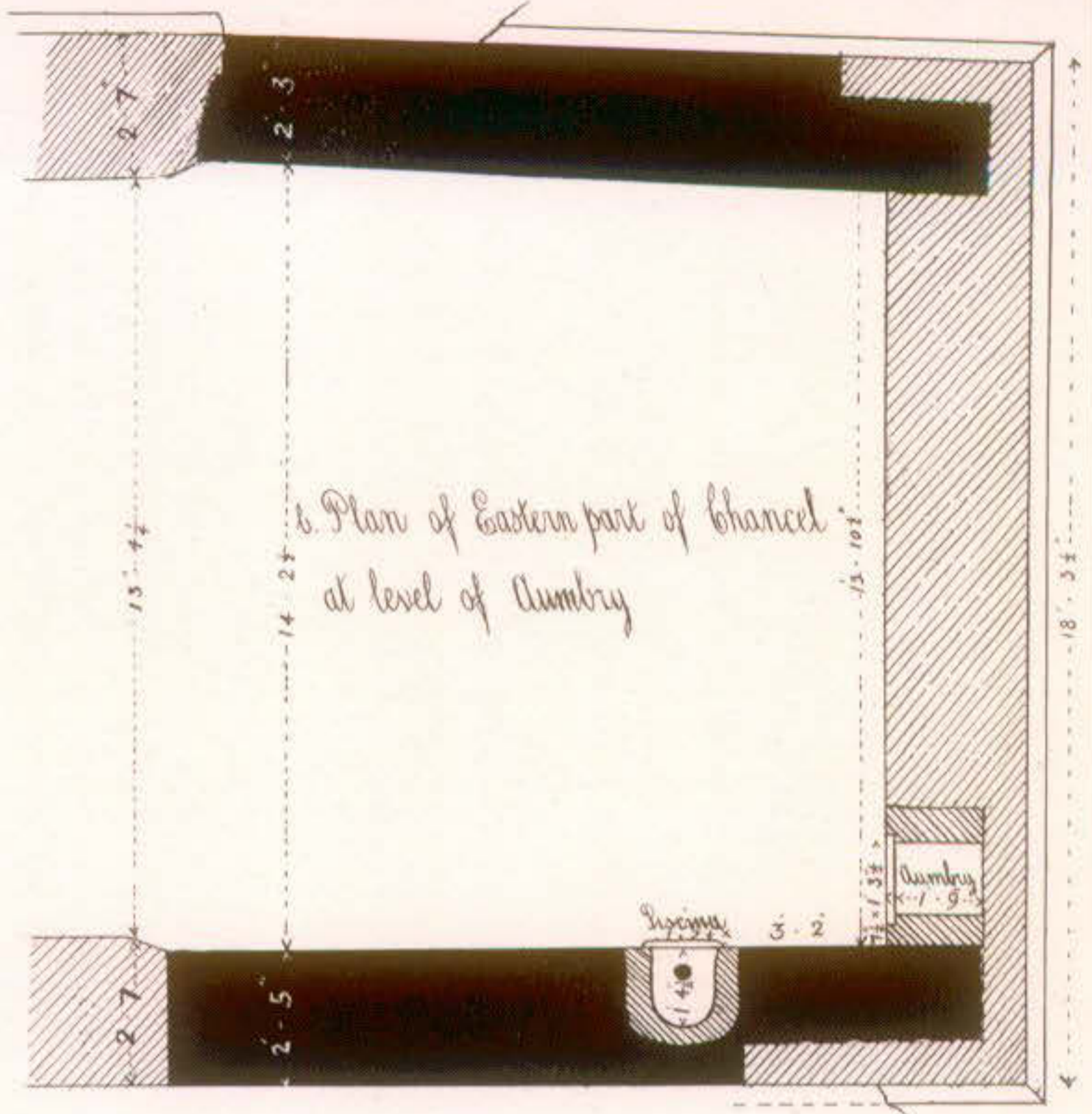
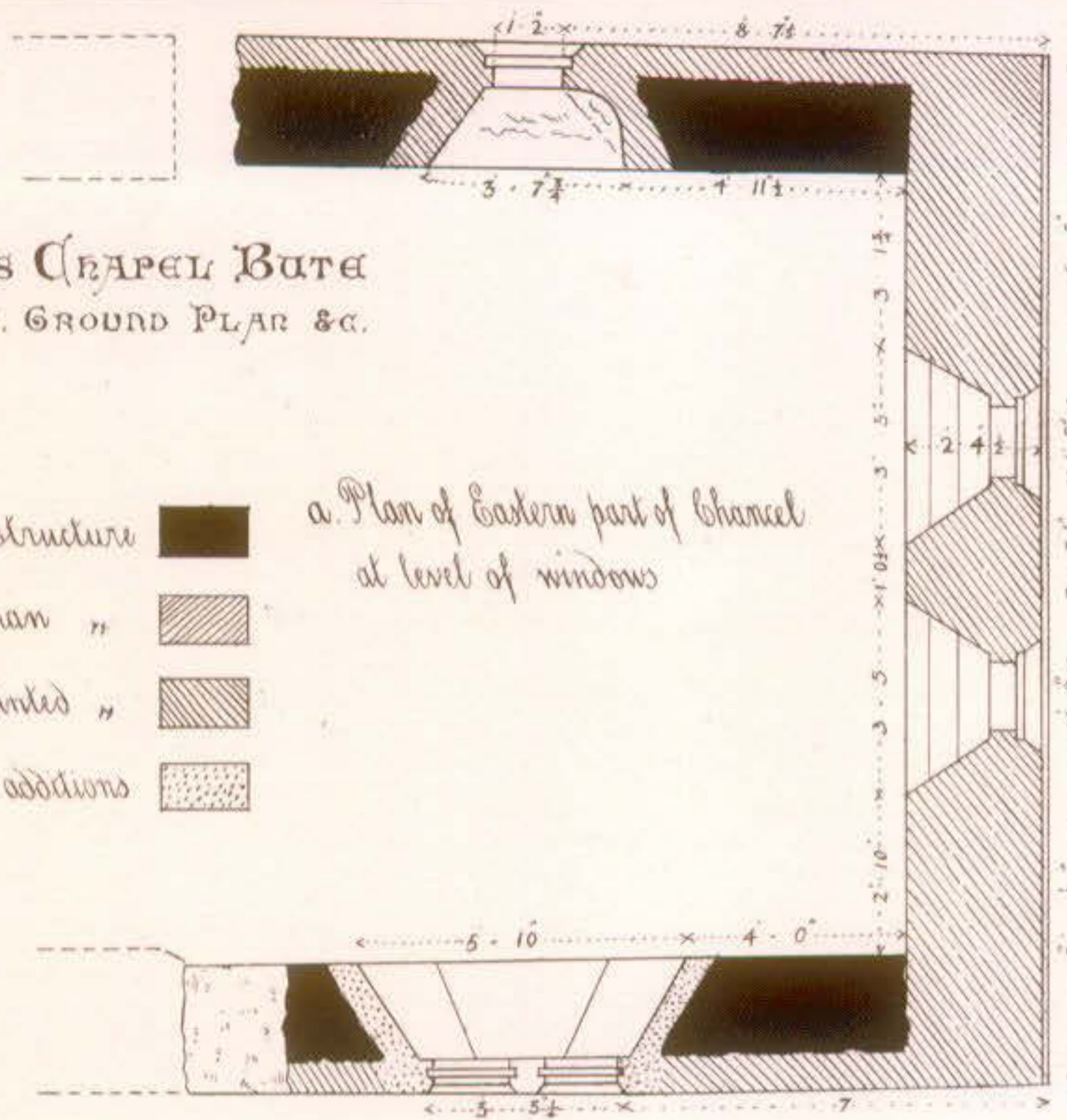
<sup>1</sup> These drawings, consisting of a ground plan, a view of the chancel arch, and eastern part of nave, and an exterior view of the chancel from the north-east, all to large scales, were kindly lent by Mr Baird for exhibition at the meeting of the Society when this paper was read.

S. BLANE'S CHAPEL BUTE  
N<sup>o</sup>. I. GROUND PLAN &c.

- Original structure
- Norman "
- First Pointed "
- Subsequent additions

a. Plan of Eastern part of Chancel at level of windows

b. Plan of Eastern part of Chancel at level of Aumbry



W. Galloway Delt.

ST. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE

enumerating the examples yet remaining of Romanesque architecture, the author mentions: "The beautiful little ruined church of St Blane, on the island of Bute, with its Romanesque chancel arch and graceful First-Pointed chancel;"<sup>1</sup> and at p. 615 (2d ed. ii. 413), it is also stated that "Specimens of pure First-Pointed work are by no means rare in Scotland, ranging from the stately Cathedral of St Mungo, or the ruined Abbey of Dryburgh, to the chancel of the lovely little church of St Blane in the Isle of Bute." In a similar manner Mr Muir defines the style of the building as being "elegant, pure, Norman, except in the extremities where it is First Pointed." This view has also been fully adopted by Cosmo Innes in the "*Origines Parochiales*,"<sup>2</sup> by Dr Bryce in his "*Geology of Clydesdale and Arran*," &c.

From the summary just given, it will easily be seen that a remarkable degree of unanimity has hitherto prevailed in assigning their relative ages to the eastern and western portions of the composite structure of St Blane's.

In adducing these opinions, as conjointly illustrating a particular theory, I do not wish it to be supposed that I regard them as mere consenting expressions to a common idea. On the contrary, in the cases at least of Mr Hutcheson, Mr Baird, Dr Wilson, and Mr Muir, as undoubtedly the result of direct personal observation, their statements must in each case be accepted as conveying an opinion arrived at upon entirely independent grounds. Unfortunately, however, this opinion does not appear to have been so much the result of a minute scrutiny of the building itself as an inference drawn from its more prominent architectural features, in the chancel especially the inserted windows forming the essentially misleading element. On one point all are agreed, viz., that the Norman part of the building is decidedly the oldest work upon the ground, and as previous to the later extension it must have had an eastern termination of some sort or other, under such circumstances Mr Baird's suggestion seems eminently reasonable, as indeed the question could only be whether that termination were square or apsidal.

In dissenting from this theory, then, I affirm, first of all, that however probable such a supposition might otherwise be, in the present case neither an apse nor, in the position in which according to these views it would be placed,

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<sup>1</sup> P. 614, 1st edition; and vol. ii. p. 412, 2d edition. *Vide* also the tabular statement given at p. 649, 2d edition, ii. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii. Part II.; Appendix, p. 831.

an eastern gable ever existed, and could not, therefore, have been taken down and reconstructed; secondly, whatever may have been the dimensions of the structure, which it is admitted in all likelihood preceded the present one, and was by those who built in the Norman style, in so far necessarily demolished, instead of erecting a new chancel of their own *in toto*, they, with certain adaptations, retained in its major portion the old chancel almost intact, which, subject to various alterations, due chiefly to the thirteenth century, still exists, and must, of course, be regarded as constituting the real nucleus of the building. The adaptations just mentioned refer to the east gable, which, in order to accommodate it to the requirements of a loftier edifice, had to a considerable extent to be taken down and rebuilt, and to the heightening of the side walls; beyond these changes introduced in order to provide increased space, and give a structural connection with the new building, the old chancel was merely lengthened westwards, and not eastwards as previously supposed.

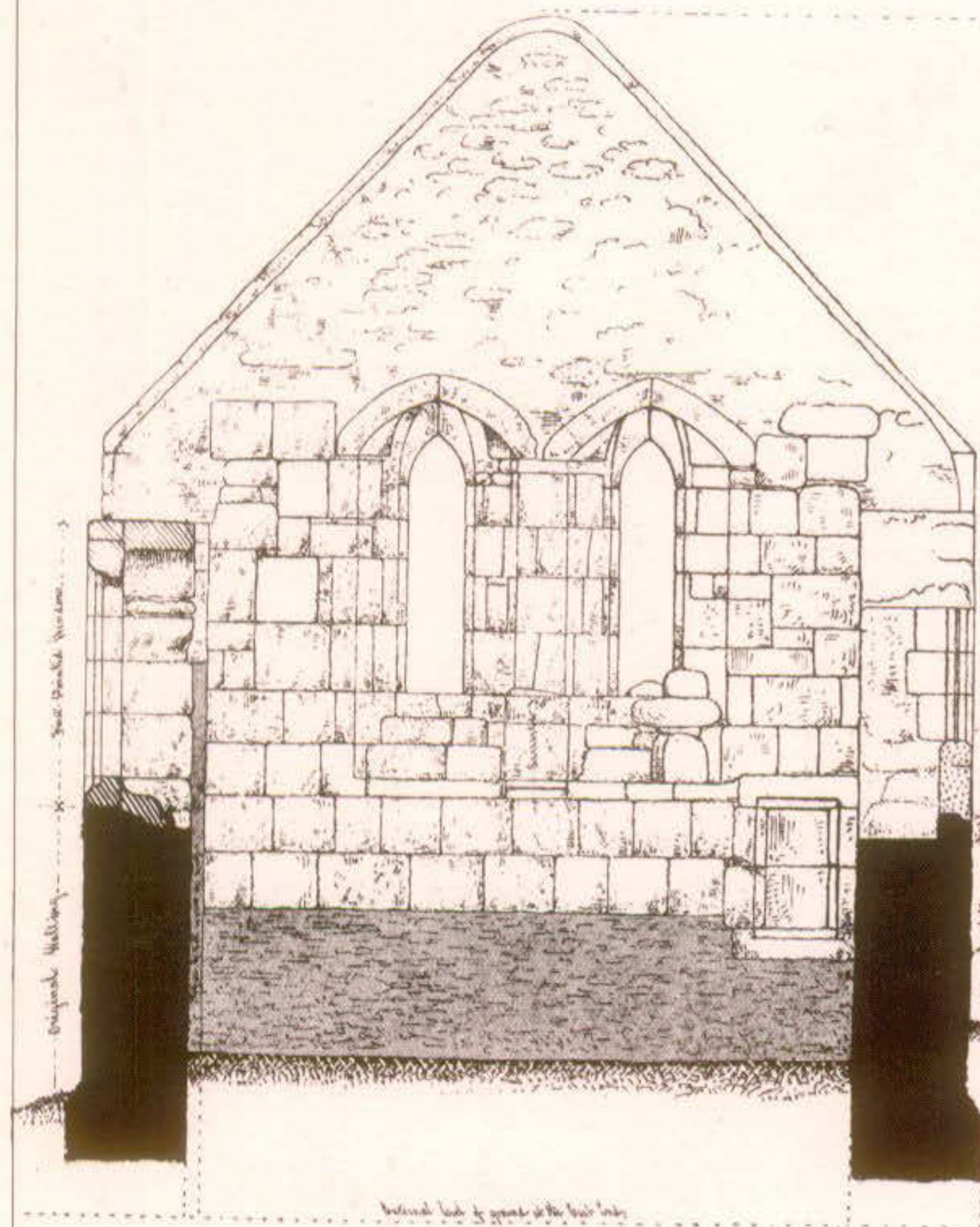
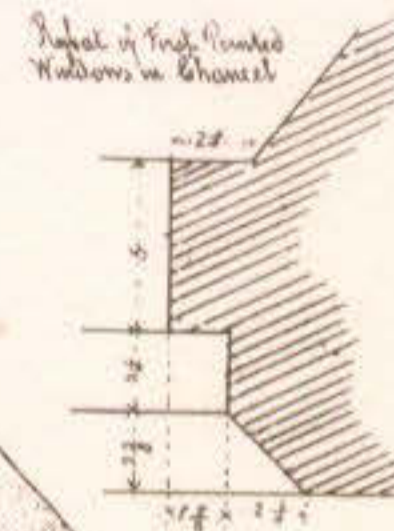
And now, at this stage of the inquiry, as the principal evidence for this question depends not upon architectural features, which, as already mentioned, have hitherto tended only to mislead, but upon the varying quality and materials of masonry, and masonry only, it is necessary to direct attention to the manner in which the larger existing or Norman portion of St Blane's has been built. The character of Norman masonry, especially in early-examples of the style, is unmistakable. This character, in its Norman portion, the chapel dedicated to St Blane possesses to an eminent degree. An inspection of the drawings<sup>1</sup> will show that the stones are all laid in regular and unbroken courses, that they are for the most part carefully squared, and have both their vertical and horizontal joints fitted to one another with the nicest precision, and more especially exhibit an almost entire absence of piecing, pinning, and other unworkmanlike make-shifts which inevitably characterise a more carelessly constructed building. It will also be noticed that they break band with undeviating consistency, and with few exceptions conform to all the rules of sound masonry; and had it been possible for us to have seen St Blane's as it came from the hands of its Norman builders, and before it had been subjected to the faults and settlements, the wear and tear, the dilapidations and decay of more than seven

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* especially Plates XL. and XLI.

# S. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE.

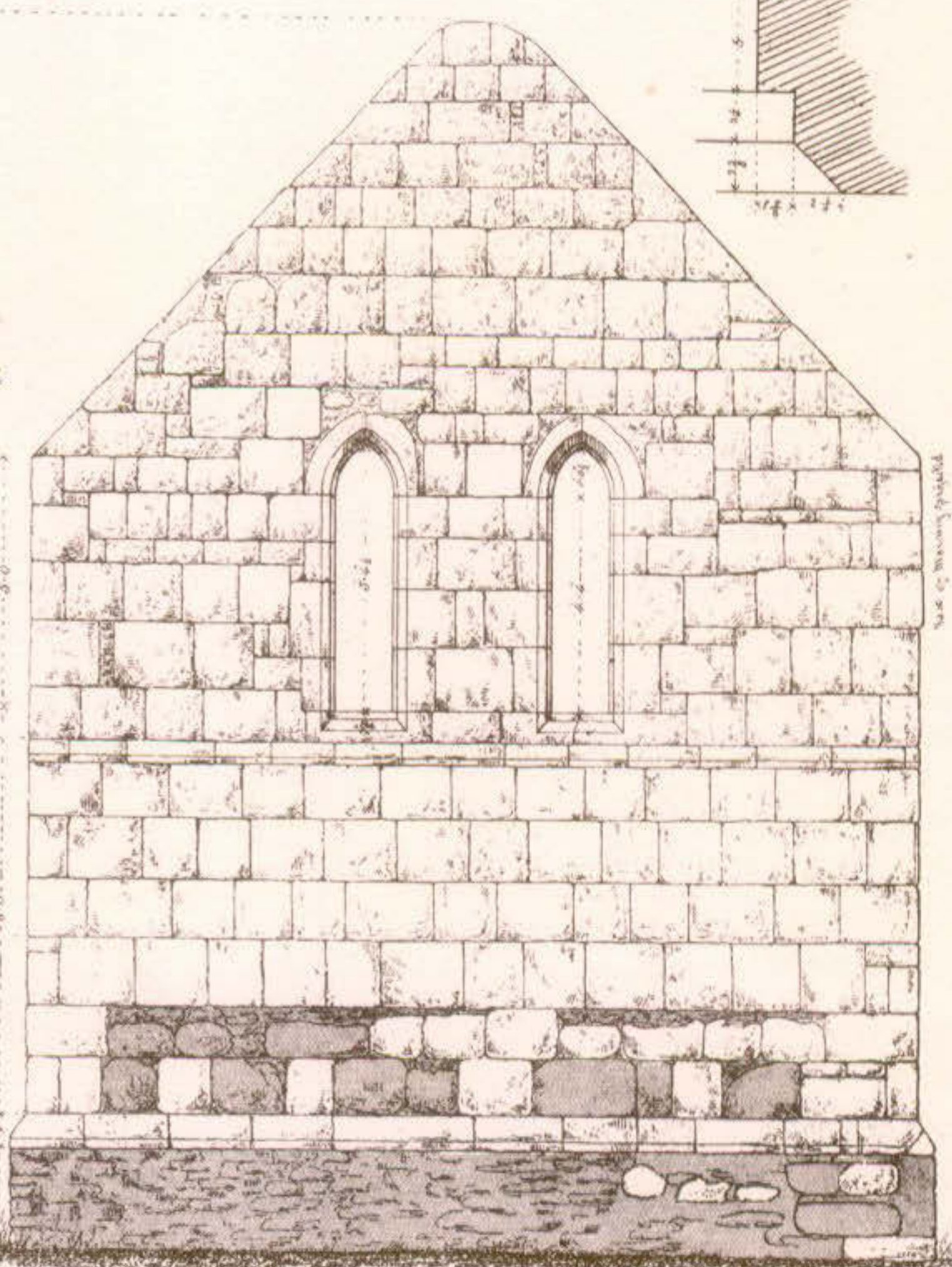
N<sup>o</sup> 2. ELEVATIONS OF EXTERIOR WALL.



High reception of one or two crosses  
 over the windows towards the west  
 which still remain in some parts  
 of the wall. The gable is entirely  
 pointed - the masonry close with the  
 masonry supplied in the space  
 between the walls.

Norman Wall remains  
 intact except about the door  
 internally for the pointed  
 window fill and Gothic

Wall of original structure  
 which remains intact except  
 in the part of the wall between  
 the two windows. The masonry  
 is of the same material



INTERIOR ELEVATION.

EXTERIOR ELEVATION.



W. Galloway Delt.

centuries, I think we would have all agreed that for its age and dimensions it was in every respect an admirably constructed edifice. A style of masonry so distinctly characterised supplies an unfailing criterion, by the application of which we are enabled to determine what, in this special instance, is Norman work and what is not. Let this test, then, be applied to the eastern part of the chancel of St Blane's, and at the same time let it be remembered that, according to the current theory, this portion being a thirteenth century extension, it ought to have been built simultaneously, and to whatever extent it may contain re-used Norman material, it ought to exhibit no trace whatsoever of Norman building.

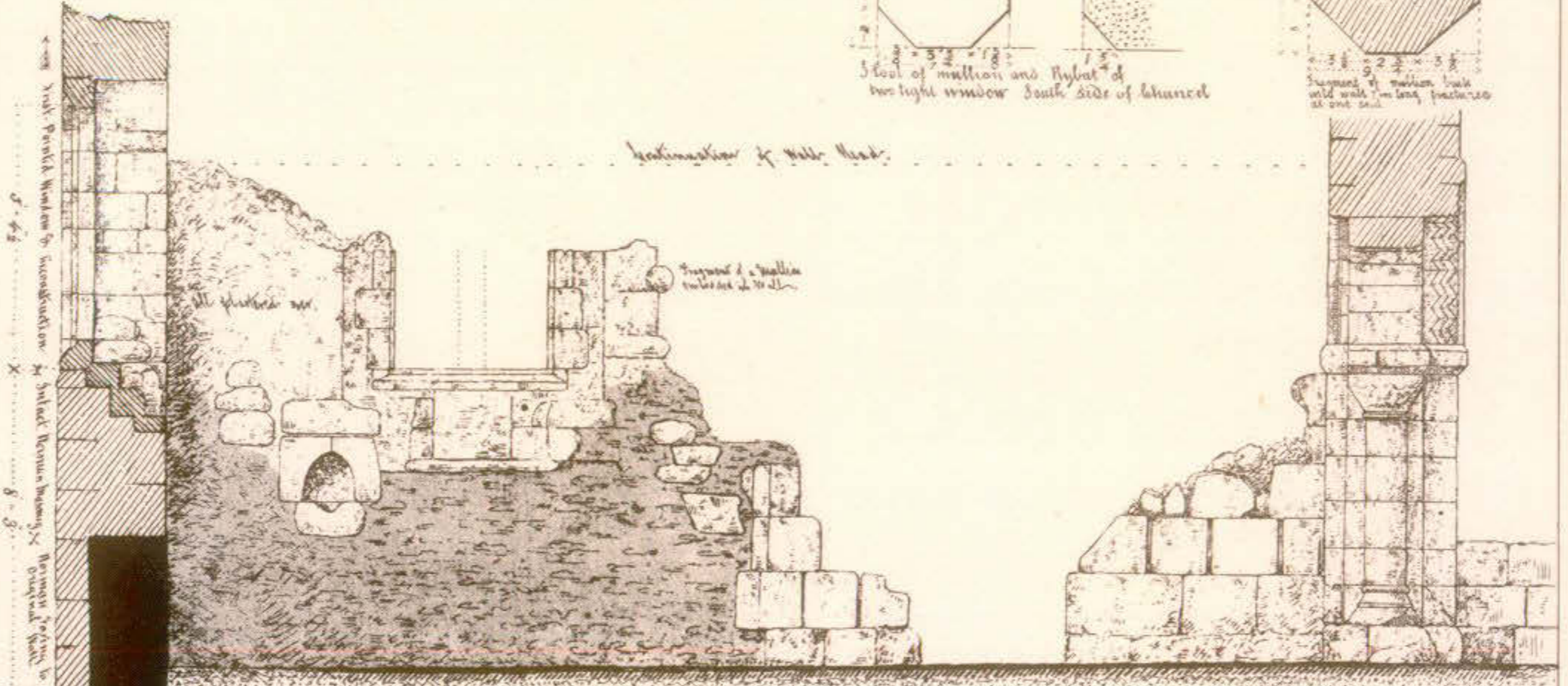
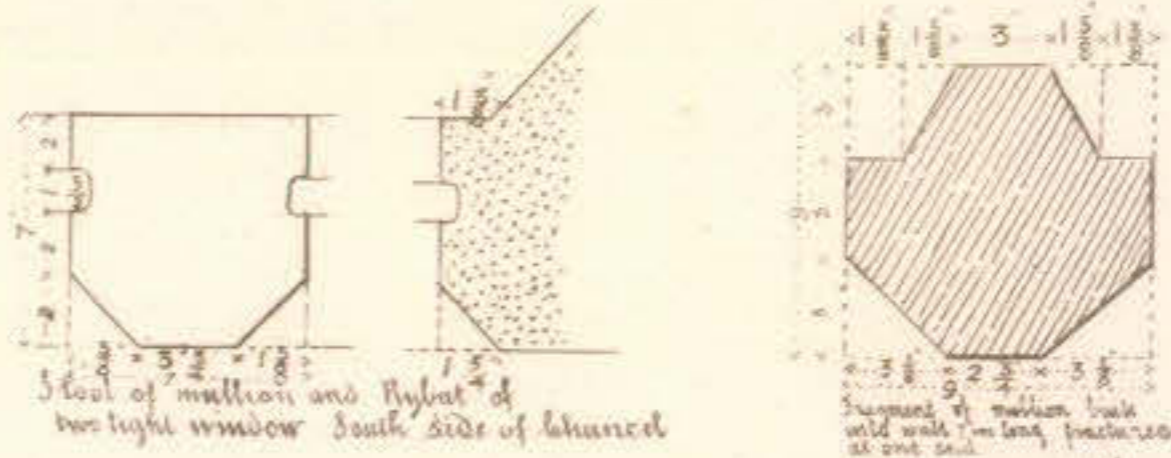
What, then, do we actually find?<sup>1</sup> It requires only an adequately careful comparison to show at once, that in the portion of the building referred to, there are three distinct styles of masonry, differing from one another in the most marked manner, either in the nature of the materials employed, or in the manner of their application. *First*, In the under part of the east wall, and considerably more than the under half of the side walls, we have a rubble masonry, in the great body of which, with exception of the splayed base course, and one or two fragments which may be accidental or otherwise, the only materials employed are the natural undressed trap abundantly supplied in the immediate neighbourhood. In so far as these materials admit, the walls in which they occur are carefully and compactly built. Externally, and especially towards the under part of the walls, a good many large boulder stones or blocks are used, retaining in every respect their natural forms, only with whatever flat or level surface they may present turned to the exterior, so that they may range flush with the rest of the wall. *Second*, In the east gable almost exclusively, and in immediate juxtaposition with the rubble masonry just mentioned, we have a style of freestone building in every respect corresponding with that of the Norman part of the nave and chancel further west. Like it the stones of which it is composed run in regular courses; they are carefully squared, and fitted to one another with great nicety, the joints always "break band," and the identity of the two masonries is unmistakable. *Third*, In the upper part of the walls, and most extensively in the eastern gable, we have a style of building which stands in all the more marked contrast to the preceding, not only in that the same

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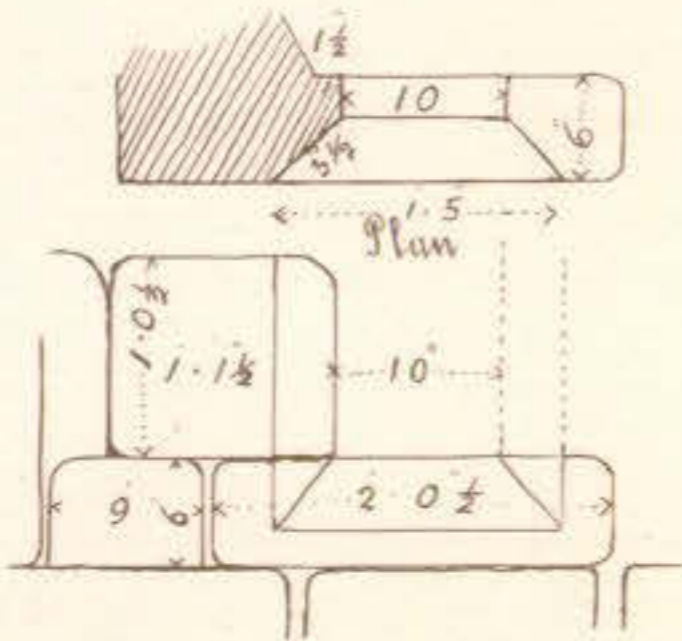
<sup>1</sup> For the various plans, sections, and elevations illustrating this part of the subject, *vide* Plates XXXVI.-XXXIX.

# S. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE.

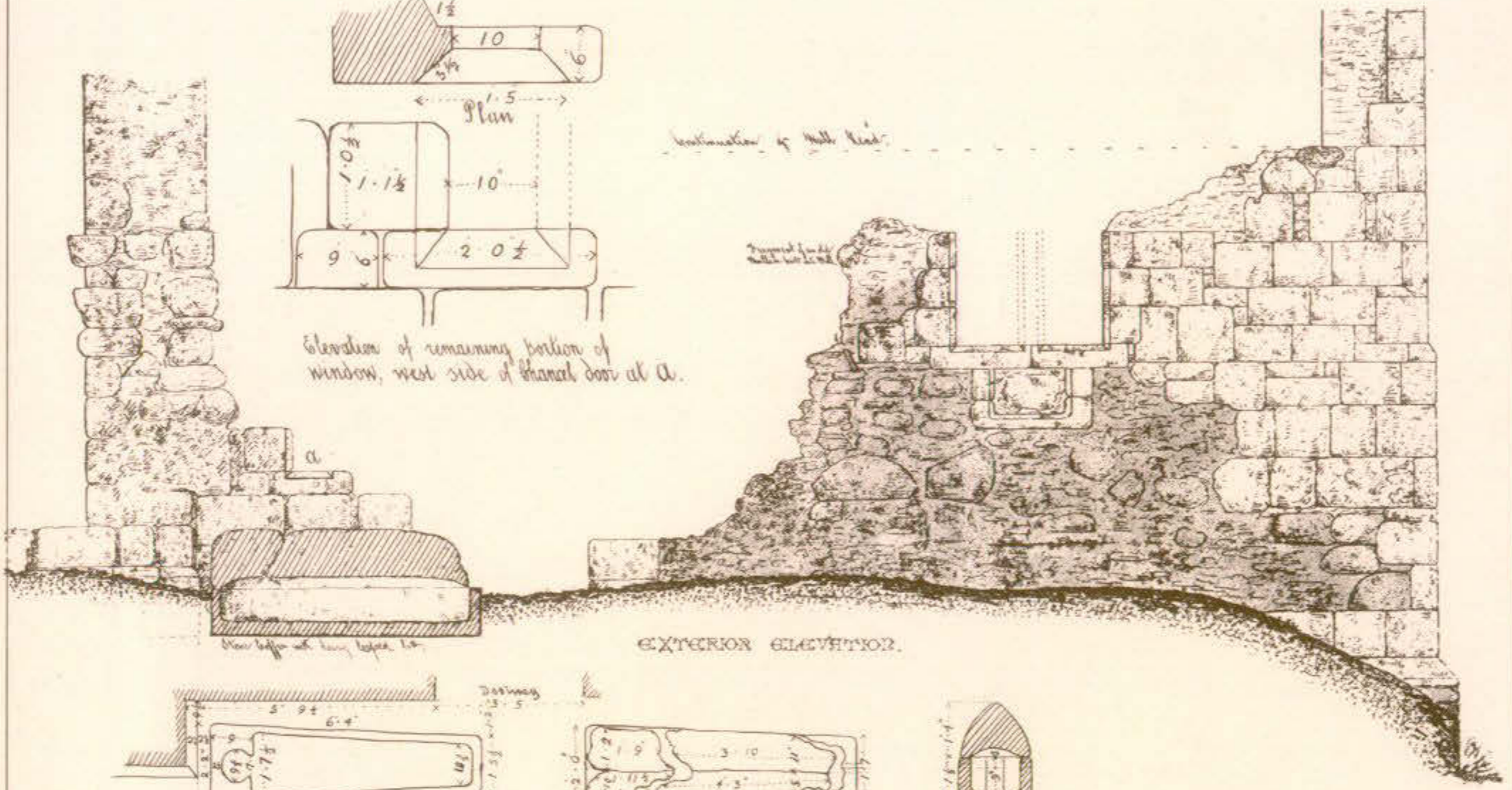
N<sup>o</sup> 3. SOUTH WALL OR CHANCEL.



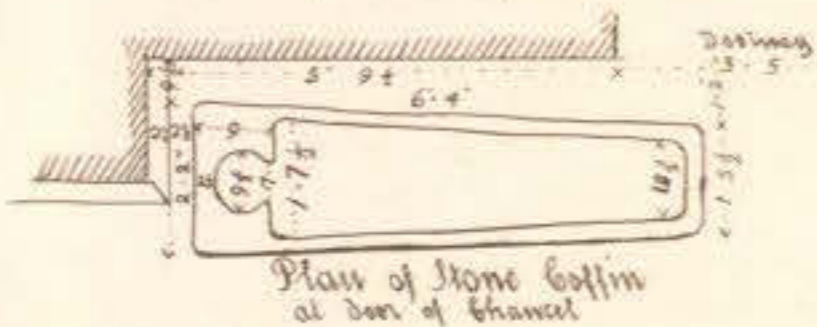
INTERIOR ELEVATION.



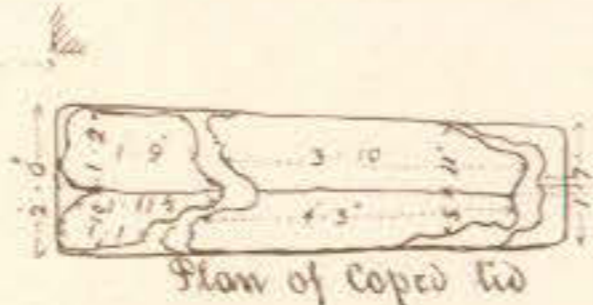
Elevation of remaining portion of window, west side of Chancel door at A.



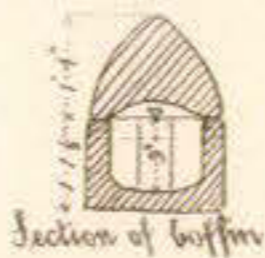
EXTERIOR ELEVATION.



Plan of Stone Coffin at door of Chancel



Plan of Coped lid



Section of coffin

W. Galloway Del.



material—viz., freestone—is employed, but also in great part precisely the same kind of stones as those previously used, the main difference being in a very inferior style of workmanship only. All those rules which were so carefully observed by the old builder are now systematically violated. In so far as the possession of even prior materials would admit, the stones are smaller, more irregularly disposed, and often piled together, as it were, at random. Of course the work which had to be done was for the most part simply that of rebuilding, so that in the present instance these remarks apply rather to the style where the thirteenth century builder's own handiwork is seen than to the net result. Still the difference is such as to enable us to determine, even to the extent of a few stones, what is Norman work intact, and what rebuilt.

From the various styles of building employed, let us now turn to the walls themselves *seriatim*, and first as to the east gable. I have said that the under part is entirely composed of the native whinstone or trap rubble previously mentioned. In the inside this shows itself for about three feet above the present surface of the ground in an unbroken homogeneous mass; on the outside it is entirely faced with Norman masonry, a comparison of the exterior and interior levels, as measured down from the window-sill, showing that this facing includes three courses of about three feet six inches deep in all.<sup>1</sup> It is very curious also to notice the manner in which the more available portion of the old materials have been used up by the Norman builder, in so far as they would apply, in order to save his own more costly material.<sup>2</sup> It has been mentioned that in the early trap-built walls, boulders and other large-sized stones are frequently used. Instead of discarding these, we find that in the first two courses above the basement, interspersed with roughly-squared blocks of freestone, and the irregularities packed up with rubble, the Norman builder has so incorporated them together as to produce a very passable coursing. The third course, which is still facing, is entirely freestone, squared and jointed in the Norman fashion. From above this third course, both externally and internally, the regular Norman walling begins, and, unfortunately, owing to the thirteenth century alterations, there is not much of it left. In the interior, two courses only remain intact, except

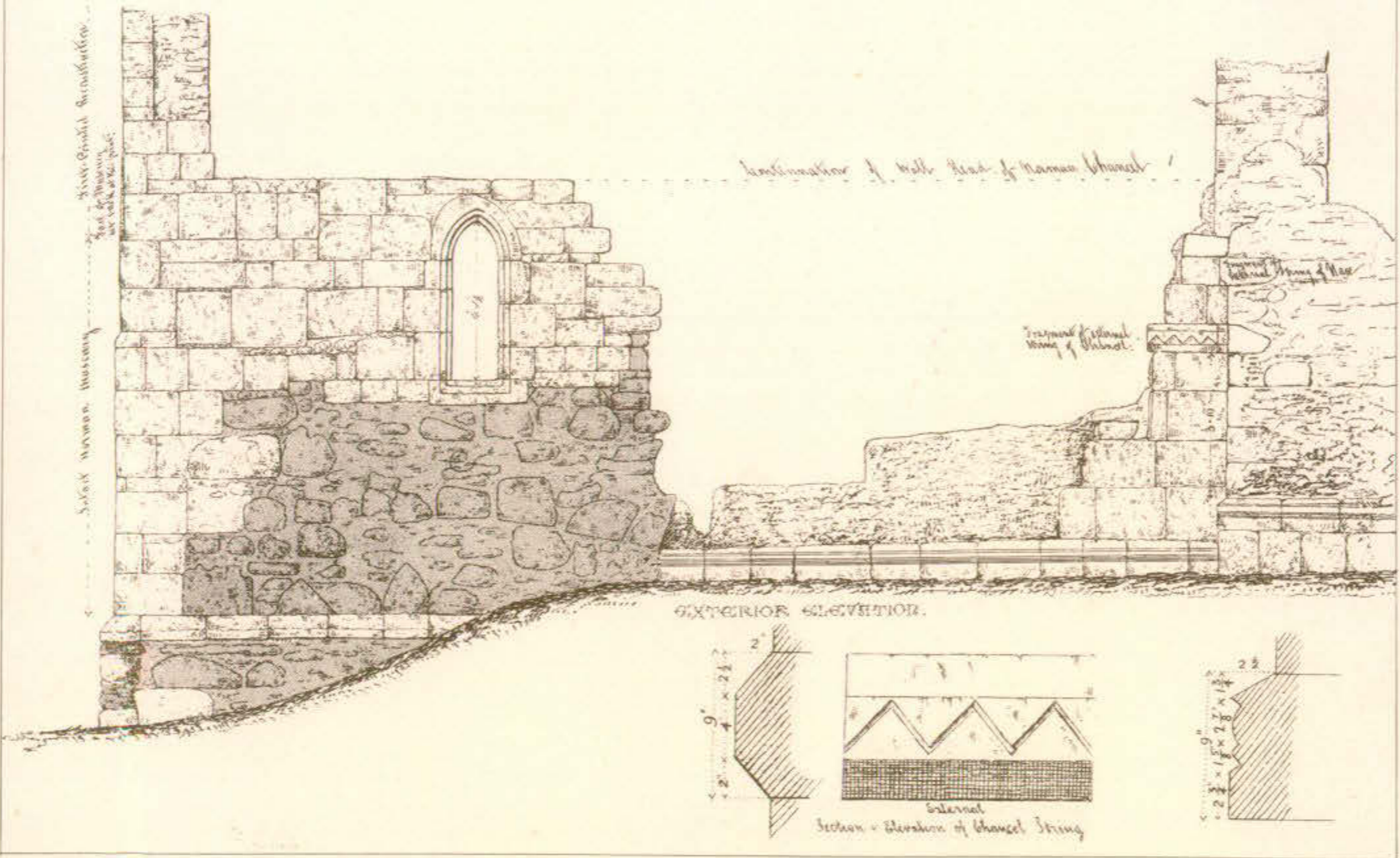
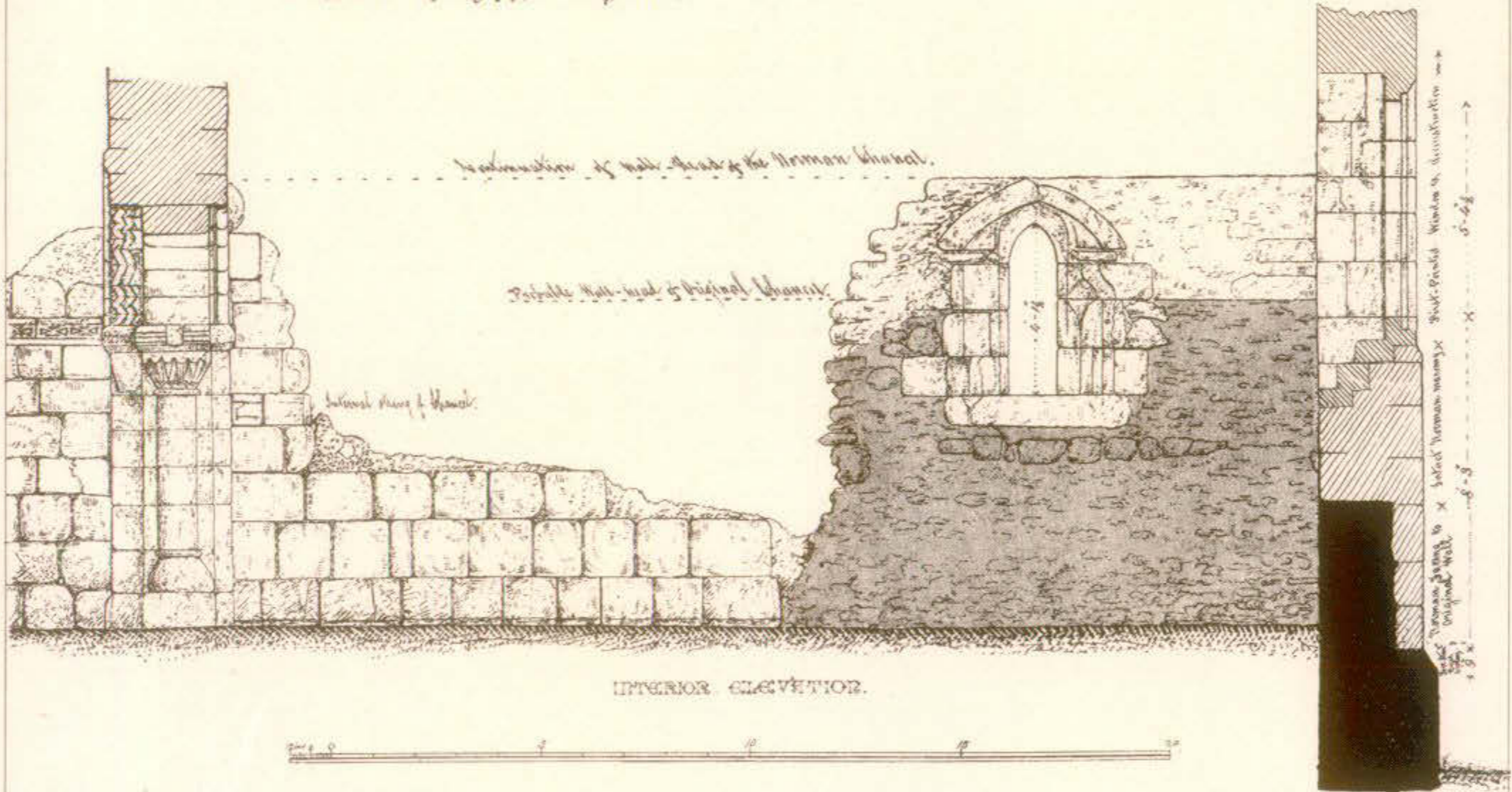
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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* sections in Plates XXXVIII, XXXIX.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Plate XXXVII. Exterior elevation.

# S. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE.

№ 4. ΝΟΤΤΗ ΤΑΧΙΣ, ἢ ΟὐΡΑΝΟΙΣ.



W. Galloway Delt.

where cut in upon at the south end for the aumbry. Two or three of the courses between the angle and jamb of the north window are evidently still *in situ*, above this the wall has been re-faced to the level of the scoinson arches, the rest of the gable, where concealed by the roof, in direct contrast to the mid-gable, shown in Plate XL., being plain rubble.<sup>1</sup>

On the outside the Norman work again appears to be intact up to the level of the string or slight intake, and including several courses above this, towards the angles, the Norman masonry being also carried as a facing partially round the flanks of the gable on to the side walls.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the gable is entirely First-Pointed reconstruction.

As the most perfect of the two, let us now take the north wall of the chancel.<sup>3</sup> On the inside, except where cut down for the First-Pointed window, we find the old rubble wall showing itself for about eight feet above the present surface of the ground, or five feet above the level to which the east gable was taken down. Above this eight feet there is superadded about three feet of what is entirely freestone walling, and at the point of junction there occurs between the two very different materials a line of demarcation so distinct that I think there can be little doubt that it is simply the old wall-head of the original structure, which has been heightened to meet the requirements of a more extended chancel. It will also be noticed that below the present inserted window there is a rude line of stones larger than those ordinarily employed in the interior. These can scarcely be due to a later age than that of the primitive building, and afford an incidental proof that in all probability at this point in the side walls windows were inserted, the centre, however, being further to the east than that of those now extant.

On the outside, the line of demarcation just noticed is quite invisible, the later masonry being carried down as a facing two or three feet below the superadded portion, so that the point of junction is entirely concealed. It may be remarked, however, that towards the angle there occurs a very well-defined fault in the masonry (showing itself also round on the east gable) which in all probability marks the junction between the undisturbed Norman work and the First Pointed reconstruction. This is apparent even in spite of the recent reparations, as the surfaces of the masonry are to an appreciable

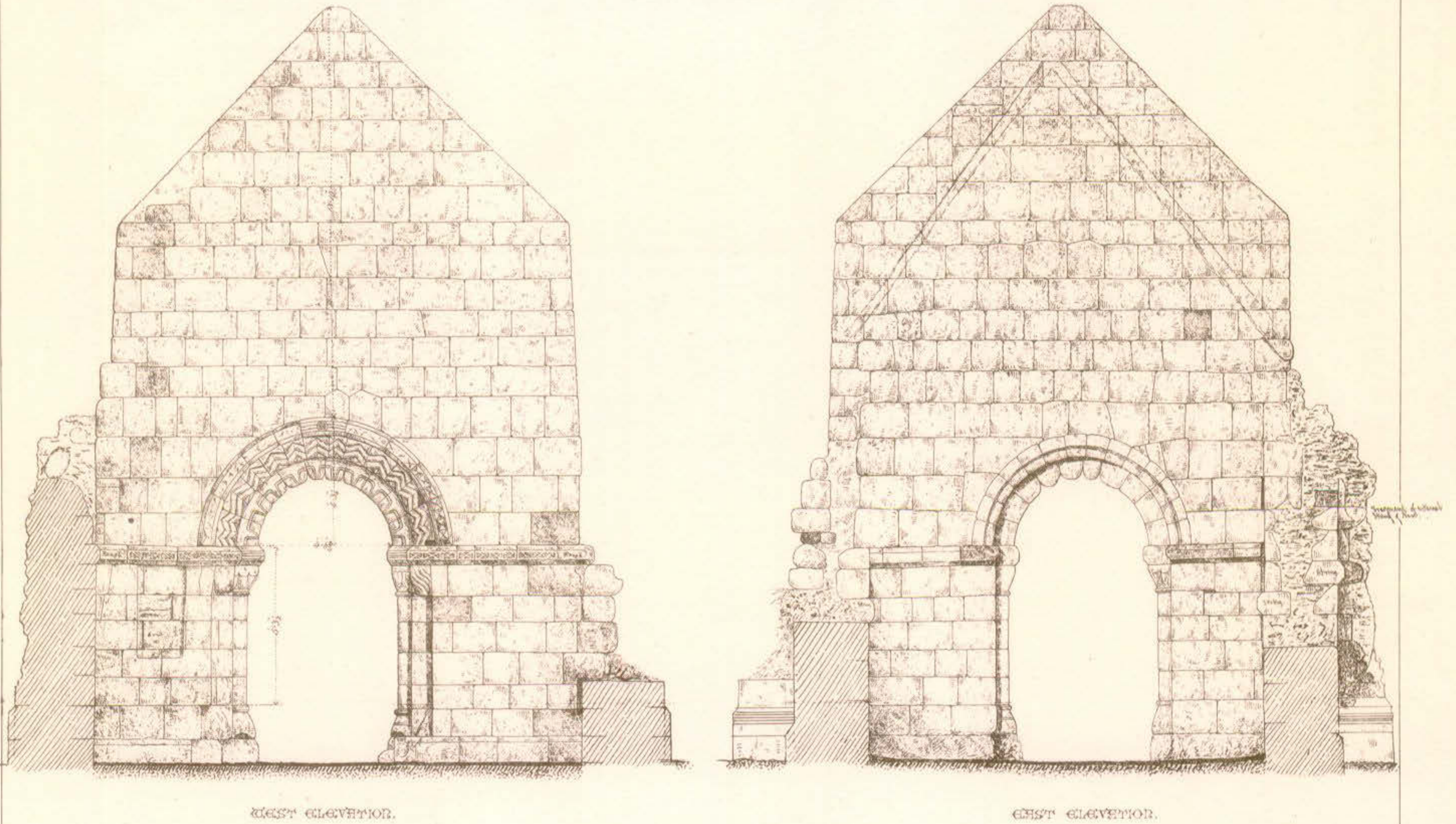
<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Plate XXXVII. Interior elevation.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Plates XXXVIII. and XXXIX.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* Plate XXXIX.

S. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE.

N<sup>o</sup> 5. COPIED FROM THE DRAWING BY W. GALLOWAY.



W. Galloway Delt.

ST BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE

extent relatively recessed or projected; but in views made before these reparations (*e.g.*, Mr Baird's, or even Horatio Macculloch's sketch, in the possession of the Society), it is still more evident as an open fracture. The material used in the external facing of this wall seems to be chiefly the square-dressed blocks of the Norman builders, but put together in the clumsy, misplaced, and irregular fashion of the later workmen.

To the south wall<sup>1</sup> the same remarks apply generally, with this difference, that neither in the outside nor inside is there any line of junction discernible, on the outside for the same reason, in that the old wall is faced to a considerable extent with the later masonries; on the inside towards the angle where alone it could be expected to be seen, the wall is concealed with a thick coat of plaster. Owing to the insertion of a two-light window in place of the First Pointed one, this wall has also been more encroached upon than that on the north. I may also mention that previous to the recent repairs on the building, there seems to have been a very extensive rent close to the eastern gable, or between it and the piscina, but it has been indiscriminately filled up. Still, in so far as the plaster permits it to be seen, and where it has not been interfered with by insertions, all the under part of this wall is of precisely the same character as the rubble work in the north wall and under part of east gable.

From what has just been stated, both with regard to the very distinctive characters by which these several masonries are distinguished, and the order in which they are combined, I think there can be little hesitation in coming to the conclusion already mentioned. All the circumstances are quite consistent with, and in favour of, the theory advanced; while at the same time they present obstacles in the way of that currently received which appear to me to be altogether insuperable, and which must be overcome before its truth can be established.

Of these obstacles, the most prominent is undoubtedly the existence of the mass of Norman masonry interposed between the trap-rubble and the more random freestone building in the upper part of the eastern gable. It has already been stated that if the east part of the chancel be thirteenth century extension, then "to whatever extent it may show the use of Norman materials as these were re-employed, it ought to exhibit no trace whatever of

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Plate XXXVIII.

Norman building," and yet we see it existing distinct and unmistakable from a depth of seven or eight feet in the centre, or six courses and the string-course, to, say, ten or eleven feet at the angles. Only a slight comparison of the two wall-surfaces is requisite to indicate the marked distinction between this middle portion of the gable and that necessarily taken down for the insertion of the First-Pointed windows. Below the string-course the masonry is just as perfect as that in the admittedly Norman parts of the chapel, and, like it, has evidently suffered from no displacement, but has come down to us intact as left by its first builders.

I need scarcely mention the important bearing this fact has upon the theory advocated. If these few courses of masonry be indeed twelfth and not thirteenth century work, then, still less so is the mass of trap-rubble below. To this must be added the building in the side walls of a precisely similar character, and all that we contend for is complete.

It must also be remarked that if the east part of the chancel is indeed a thirteenth century extension, there could be no possible reason why the rubble work in the east gable should be faced up for three courses, viz., two courses of rough stones, trap, and freestone, interspersed, and then a course of carefully-squared and jointed ashlar, and yet that such is the case is easily determined by measuring down externally and internally from the window-sill as an available point of comparison.

The difference between the thickness of the walls in the eastern and western parts of the chancel tells also in favour of the view advocated. That the variation was designed to supply a check to finish plaster on cannot be admitted. That the walls were plastered at all at so early a date is extremely unlikely. The principle upon which the Norman builders evidently went was that at the point of junction the two walls should be flush on the outside, leaving the interior to take care of itself. That the discrepancy could not arise from a provision being made for plaster is evident from the angle at the south side, where alone the junction remains perfect, being not checked but splayed, and showing that the plaster must be a much more modern expedient. The truth is that, owing to their style of building being ashlar, both externally and internally, the Norman builder required a much greater thickness of wall for the proper disposition of his materials, while the thin walls and irregular dimensions of the eastmost portion are precisely

such as would characterise the much smaller and ruder structure preceding that now in existence.

The general disposition of the building itself in relation to the ground upon which it stands very materially favours the theory of an extension having been made, not to the east, but to the west, and that in what Mr Muir very well terms for Scotland, "the great church building era," *i.e.*, the twelfth century. Any one who has seen the actual *locale* of the building will at once understand what I mean. The chapel stands upon a slightly elevated mound, of which the difference between the level of the ground surrounding it on the west is much greater than that upon the east, where the declination is comparatively slight. The consequence is that on the west side there is quite a steep and precipitous face falling down towards the soft and marshy ground below, while towards the east there is an ample extent of firm and level ground. Now, towards the west, the nave or Norman part of the building is carried forward to the very brow of the little precipice or steep bank, and occupying, indeed, every available foot of space that could possibly be got, the foundations of the western gable being carried down on the face of the bank itself. We are thus asked to believe that in what *par excellence* is affirmed to be the oldest part of the structure, and built by those who had the ground at their disposal in an entirely unencumbered state, whereon to plant the chapel as they pleased, while the western extremity of the building was carried so far forward as to require a considerable amount of under-building in the foundations, the eastern portion comprising the chancel and assumed apse actually fell considerably within the present eastern gable, and so leaving a level space beyond, more ample than exists even now.

All these circumstances combined, while they directly contradict the received theory, supply convincing evidence in behalf of that advocated, and leave little doubt that, sufficing the simple requirements of an early age, prior to the twelfth century, a small chapel existed here built of local materials and differing very slightly from the plain and unadorned structures still to be found in the Western Highlands and Islands. In the twelfth century the major portion of this chapel must have been taken down, and the chancel only being retained, a new structure erected extending westwards as far as the limits of the ground would possibly admit.

That this reconstruction took place prior to the acquisition of the

island by the Stuarts there can be no doubt. The insertion of the four lancet windows in the chancel with the partial reconstruction of its eastern gable, was probably the only important alteration made upon the fabric subsequent to the death of Somerled in 1164. That the enlargement of the church was effected during the brief interval which elapsed from the cession of Bute with the rest of the Sudreys in 1156 by Godred the Black to that ambitious and warlike chief is by no means likely. We are thus thrown back upon the earlier half of the twelfth century, embracing, as it did almost through its entire currency, the long and peaceful reign of Olave the Red, as the most probable period for the erection of the Norman portion of St Blane's. A variety of circumstances concur in rendering this conclusion highly probable. Of the united kingdom of Man and the Isles won by his father, and dismembered during the reign of his son, Olave held undisturbed possession for fifty years, from 1103 to 1153.<sup>1</sup> He was thus a contemporary of Alexander I. and David I., kings of Scotland, and of Henry I. and Stephen of England. Not only was this period specially distinguished by great activity in church building, but in Scotland at least, within its limits, the practice of the pure Norman style was restricted. Into the spirit of his age in this respect Olave seems fully to have entered, selecting David of Scotland as his exemplar. From the *Chronicle of Man* we learn that in 1134 he gave to Yvon, first abbot of Furness, lands in Man wherewith to found the Abbey of Rushen. The *Chronicle* further adds that "he gave to the churches of the islands lands and privileges, and was with respect to divine worship devout and fervent."<sup>2</sup>

The "churches of the islands" must, of course, refer to the Sudreyjar, of which Bute was one, with the chapel at Kingarth as its leading ecclesiastical establishment. That Olave exercised a real dominion here we cannot doubt, for the Sudreyjar formed the original kingdom of Godred Crovan, who only acquired Man by conquest, *circa* 1079-80, and so founded the united kingdom of Man and the Isles. Again, it was only as the result of a severe struggle between Godred the Black and Somerled that in 1156 this kingdom was disrupted, and the Sudreyjar included within the Lordship of the Isles. It was in retaliation for the restless ambition of Somerled that

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* the Manx Society's edition of the "Chronicle of Man," vol. i. pp. 166, 171.

<sup>2</sup> "Deditque ecclesiis insularum terras et libertates; et erat circa cultum divinum devotus et fervidus, tam deo quam hominibus acceptabilis."



the Scots were first induced to attempt the conquest of Bute, a task by no means easily effected, its recovery being the object of frequent reprisals, until the failure of Haco's expedition, and the marriage of the Stuarts' son and heir to a great grand-daughter of Somerled, finally established their position. All these considerations prove that Olave's influence over the Sudreyjar must have been very considerable, and although in individual cases like the present it may not be directly traceable, still the peace and the prosperity enjoyed for so long a term of years, the known tendencies of the reigning monarch, backed it may be by the more substantial assistance referred to in the *Chronicle*, must have acted as a powerful stimulus in every part of his dominions. The local magnate who with Olave as his overlord held Bute may be to us unknown, but it is certain that the transformation of the primitive chapel, into what was relatively a large, richly-adorned, and handsome building, constructed not of local materials but with hewn stone brought from across the Firth, must have been, even in the twelfth century, no slight undertaking. The contrast between the little trap-built chapel and the freestone church, 85 feet 6 inches in total length, with its admirable masonry and elaborate carving, marks the advance made during the interval which had elapsed between their respective erections—a convincing proof of the increased population, and growing wealth, which form the natural result of settled times. If, then, with a high degree of probability, the Norman fabric of St Blane's be attributable to the reign of Olave the Red, not less does the small and unadorned chapel it superseded carry us back to the period of the Norse dominion, exercised as it was chiefly through tributary earls. In his notes to the *Chronicle of Man* (p. 33), Professor Munch states that "the islands between Ireland and Scotland were even more completely subdued and subjugated to the Norwegian rule than any part of Ireland itself. Indeed, the Island of Man and the southernmost islands west of Scotland are to be regarded as the centre of the Norwegian settlements in these parts of Europe." Its association with the Norse period would thus be indisputable even if we were to carry the erection of the chapel no further back than the eleventh century. There is no reason why it should not be earlier, but in the entire absence of any satisfactory evidence, the question must always be indeterminate. Still, we must assume that, in all likelihood, it existed for a considerable time before the necessity arose for its enlargement. The really important point is, that, in

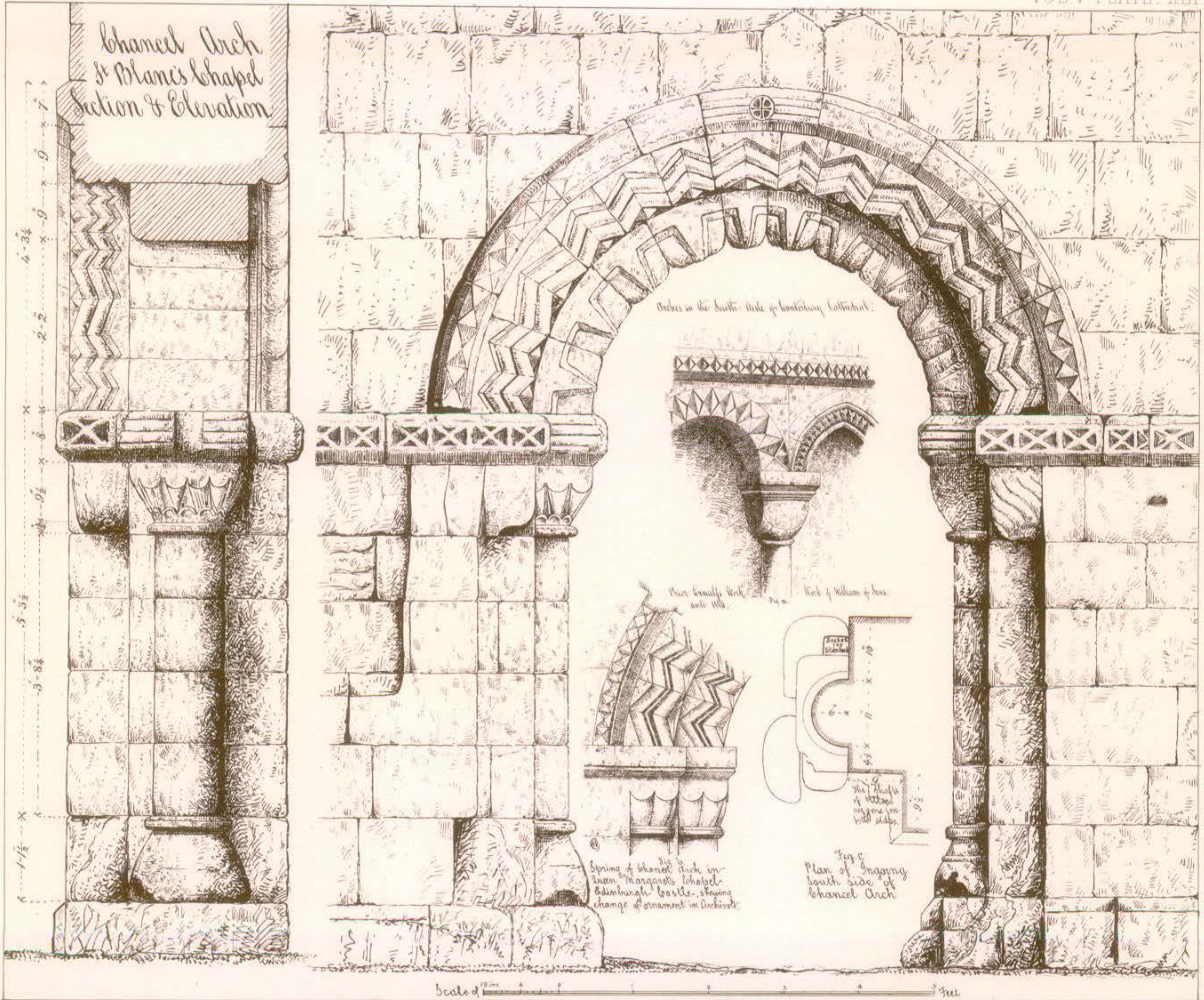
establishing the priority of this trap-built chapel, in point of date to the Norman extension, we add an authentic example to that "little total" of chiefly insular chapels, summed up by Mr Muir as being "nearly all that Scotland has to show of ecclesiastical architecture belonging to a period earlier than the beginning of the twelfth century." Mr Muir, indeed, takes a very desponding view of our primitive architecture in Scotland. "Wander wheresoever we choose, we see no ecclesiastical buildings to which a date can be confidently given more ancient than those of the Norman period."<sup>1</sup> It cannot, therefore, be inferred that such structures did not exist, but with the introduction of a style which, "even in its earliest state" most assuredly "was not a national development," the process was to a great extent one simply of obliteration and supercession.

Owing to its dilapidated state, the architectural features, even of the Norman portion of St Blane's, are comparatively limited. The most prominent and the most ornamental is the chancel arch.<sup>2</sup> It is in two orders, the first carried on jamb-columns having each of the arch-stones decorated with a simple form of the beak-head. In the second, carried on detached columns, the shafts of which are gone, each arch-stone is carved both on the soffit and exterior face, with a division of the double-rolled zigzag or chevron meeting at the apices, and so forming a very rich example of this characteristic ornament. In section the label is semi-hexagonal. In the centre there is a small Greek cross inscribed in a circle about four inches in diameter, the rest of the stone on either side being striated rather than moulded, with lines following the curve of the arch and terminating abruptly without any reference to the adjoining decoration. The ornament on the remaining part of the label forms a peculiar and by no means common variety of that well known feature in Norman work—the lozenge, the pattern in this case being brought out by a series of alternate sinkings of a triangular form. In St Margaret's Chapel, Edinburgh Castle, both of the springers in the label over the chancel-arch are carved in this identical pattern, the only difference being that at St Blane's the design is brought out by a flat sinking of equal depth, while at St Margaret's the sinking is prismatic or run down to a point. At St Margaret's also, after

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* "Characteristics of Old Church Architecture in the Mainland and Western Islands of Scotland," p. 4; *cf.* also p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Plate XLI.



W. Galloway Delt.

ST. BLANE'S CHAPEL, BUTE

the two springers had been so carved, the ornament was immediately changed to the ordinary lozenge.<sup>1</sup> The closest approximation to this ornament I am aware of is in the older portions of Canterbury Cathedral, erected at latest prior to 1110. Here the rhomb or lozenge forms itself the sinking, but instead of its being flat as at St Blane's, or an inverted pyramid as at St Margaret's, it slopes down on each side from a central ridge.<sup>2</sup> The Scottish examples are also distinguished by the alternation of the sinking. Still, all the three are only special varieties of the same ornament. That at Canterbury is figured by Professor Willis in his well known work on that ancient cathedral, and he adduces it as an interesting example of decoration wrought with the axe in contrast to that wrought with the chisel.<sup>3</sup>

The capitals of the columns present considerable variety in their modes of decoration, each one being different from the others. The abaci are continued as a string round the interior of the nave; this string, together with that on the outside of the chancel, being carved on its principal face.<sup>4</sup> The abaci over the jamb-columns are notched vertically on each side for a rood-screen, and the sockets still remain at the base of the columns into which the uprights were fixed.<sup>5</sup> In the chancel, the abaci of the columns are also continued as a string along the centre gable, dropping on the north and south sides of the chancel nearly two feet.<sup>6</sup> At the north-east angle of the nave there also exists a small fragment of an external string, which, together with those just mentioned, seems to have been quite plain.<sup>7</sup> A moulded base, figured in Plate XXXIX., has been carried round the entire Norman part of the building. Of the north and south doors in the nave and the chancel door little more than the lowermost courses remain to indicate their position. Of the Norman windows the indications are still more slight. There is the fragment of a sill apparently still *in situ* in the south wall of the nave, close to the eastmost buttress. It is useful as determining the window levels. In the chancel, to the west of the door, the sill and one rybat-stone of a small window still exist, which may give us, in so far, a correct idea of what the Norman windows originally were.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Plate XLI.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Canterbury Cathedral, pp. 58, 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* Plates XXXIX. and XLI.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide* Plate XLI.

<sup>6</sup> *Vide* Plate XL., &c.

<sup>7</sup> *Vide* Plates XXXIX. and XL.

A comparison of the drawings given to an enlarged scale in Plates XXXVII. and XXXVIII. will show the difference in section between the rybat and sill of the First Pointed windows, and this solitary remnant of the Norman period. In Plate XXXVIII. it will also be noticed that in the upper part of the south wall of chancel to the west of the double-light window, there is the small fragment of a mullion built into the wall. The section of this mullion, shown to an enlarged scale on the same plate, agrees neither with that of the First Pointed windows, nor with the still later double-light window. At the same time, it agrees exactly with that of the small Norman window to the west of the chancel door. There can be no doubt, then, that it belongs to the same period. From its breadth (9 inches) it may have formed part of the division between two coupled windows, and the likeliest position for such windows would be the eastern gable. We know that in the thirteenth century windows were inserted not only into this eastern gable, but also into the oldest portion of the north and south walls of the chancel. The probability is that the Norman builders permitted the rude little windows, which no doubt existed here, to remain. At the same time there must have been windows of some kind in their new gable; and the question is, may this fragment not be a relic of them? As known to us, there is at least no other part of the building to which it is applicable.

In the thirteenth century, probably soon after the acquisition of the chapel by the monks of Paisley, the alterations on the chancel were made, the sole object apparently being to insert larger windows and obtain more light. In this respect we may well imagine the old chancel to have been very defective. In the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, the necessity for a still further increase being felt, a double-light window was inserted on the south side of the chancel, the sill and part of the rybats of the prior First Pointed window being still permitted to remain. This was the last alteration of any importance on the fabric of the building. At a period comparatively late in its history, owing to the thrust of the roof, the southern wall of the nave must have shown a tendency to bulge outwards, and, with a view to its correction, the extemporised buttresses were erected.

*Masonry*, as distinct from features especially characteristic of architectural style, having claimed so much attention in the previous part of this paper, it may not be inappropriate if a few remarks are made on the subject of

*Mortar.* The mortars of the original chapel, and the Romanesque building, are of very much the same character. They are both exceedingly hard and durable.

In the first, owing to the impervious nature of the trap, except where positive violence has been used, the preservation of the walling is perfect, and to all appearance may remain so for an indefinite period. In the latter, owing to the exclusive use of freestone of very various qualities, at the joints the mortar may often be seen standing out in ridges beyond the weathered and sorely disintegrated surface of the stone.

Both the mortars agree in this, that they are a coarse amalgam of lime, sand, and unriddled shingle, composed of shore-pebbles and sea-shells, such as may now be obtained in any quantity on the beach at Kilchattan Bay. The mortar used in the extemporised buttresses, and to a certain extent also in the south-west angle of the building, which seems to have been subjected to some accident, is of quite a different character, the gravel used being very small, and carefully riddled.

In connection with the mortar first mentioned, a striking peculiarity occurs, very seldom to be met with, and for which it is difficult to find an explanation.

My attention was first directed to this point by Mr Joseph Anderson, who, having visited St Blane's shortly after the removal of the soil encumbering the walls, found strewn round the building pebbles of various sizes thickly coated with a pellucid glaze precisely similar to that produced upon earthenware or tiles by vitreous action. His first impression was that this coating was artificial, but even when so prepared it was impossible to conjecture to what purpose the pebbles could have been applied. On my next visit I examined the ground, and obtained ample proof of the accuracy of Mr Anderson's observations. The glazed pebbles, however, occurring chiefly close to the building, and round its exterior, it occurred to me, that they must form part of the *debris* of the walls themselves, the likeliest source being the mortar. Examination proved this to be the case, glazed pebbles, from the tiniest size upwards, being found abundantly, either partially exposed on the surface, or embedded in the heart of the mortar itself. This appearance, then, cannot have been produced artificially, nor is it all likely that it is due to the action of heat, because the sea-shells, which occur as plentifully as the pebbles, are not calcined. The coating varies considerably

in amount on different pebbles, but it is never met with in such quantity as to admit of its being detached and made the subject of experiment. I may mention that I have examined many ancient mortars, and have never, except in one instance, found a similar appearance, viz., in the chapel dedicated to St Cathan in Colonsay, where the glazed pebbles occur in perhaps even a larger proportion than at St Blane's.

In conclusion, I may be permitted briefly to refer to one or two other matters connected with this interesting locality.

In the new statistical account several curious traditions are mentioned as being associated with the burying-ground at St Blane's. These statements have been, without adequate examination, frequently repeated, and are now to be found embodied as received facts in such works as the "*Origines Parochiales*" (vol. ii. part 1, p. 211), Dr Stuart's "*Sculptured Stones of Scotland*" (vol. ii. Notices of Plates, p. 37), &c.

The first tradition is that the mound or knoll upon which the chapel and major part of the burying-ground are placed is artificial, or, to quote the words used, that it is "a level space raised by art considerably above the adjoining ground." Such an arrangement seems, on the face of it, to be highly improbable, nor is it likely that a structure so massive as that of which the ruins still exist, would be founded on no better basis than forced earth. Similar isolated mounds are by no means unfrequent in the locality. Within the same hollow, and immediately to the north, there rises a much higher and more characteristic eminence, to which an artificial origin has never been attributed. The tradition was probably due to the fact that the upper part of the burying-ground has been from time immemorial carefully embanked round, so as to secure the soil from getting dislodged. I was fortunate in having seen St Blane's during the last season in which the old state of things was permitted to exist. With exception of the portion running between the upper and lower burying-grounds, this embankment has been entirely removed and replaced by a turf-capped dry-stone dyke, rising to some height above the interior level of the ground.

Another tradition is that "the whole of this space is found arched or built with mason-work underneath, a distance of two feet from the surface."

Of course, without proof based on actual examination, this statement must be considered still more apocryphal than the former.

Not less erroneous is the idea that the means of access from the higher to the lower level "seems to have been underground." It is certainly nothing more than a very rude flight of steps leading down through a dry-built passage-way from the upper to the lower burying-ground. This flight of steps lands at a short distance from the chancel door, in the direction of which the passage-way runs, and some such communication would be absolutely necessary on the occasion of interments, &c. To these various statements the words used in the statistical account, with regard to the supposed existence of a convent or nunnery, in the lower burying-ground, may safely be applied, viz., that they rest "on no other authority that has been discovered, but that of tradition."

A tradition still more generally entertained regarding this burying-ground relates to the separation of the sexes in burial. So much did this peculiarity strike Pennant, that in the narrative of his tour in Scotland it and the Devil's Cauldron are the only things taken notice of in connection with St Blane's. Under date June 18, 1772, he writes:—"Descended to the ruin of old *Kin-garth* church. Two cemeteries belong to it, a higher and a lower. The last was allotted for the interment of females alone, because, in old times, certain women being employed to carry a quantity of holy earth brought from *Rome*, lost some by the way, and so incurred this penalty for their negligence—that of being buried separated from the other sex."

The separation of the sexes in worship is a well-known custom, extensively prevalent in the East, practised in a more restricted degree both in Romish and Protestant churches, and observed in many parts of England, and also in Ireland, down to the present day. Separation in burial, except in conventual life, has been practised systematically only by the Moravian communities.

Whatever may have been its origin in the tradition regarding this peculiar custom at St Blane's, it is fully confirmed by the Presbytery Records of Dunoon, on examining which I find that a visitation was held at Kingarth by the Presbytery of Dunoon on 9th August 1661. In accordance with the usual custom, the principal feature was the alternate examination, first, of the elders as to the proper discharge of his duties by the



minister; and then, conversely, the examination of the minister in the same respect as to the elders. The first part of this ordeal having been successfully passed by the Rev. Alexander M'Lean, the incumbent of the parish, and "The elders having removit, & he being enquired anent y<sup>r</sup> behaviour in y<sup>r</sup> charge, declared y<sup>r</sup> concurrence w<sup>t</sup> him, onlie wishit y<sup>m</sup> to be admonishit in these things—

"1. Slackness in censures of some vices which would require greater sharpnes, which they declin to exercise.

"2. Neglect of familie worship in some of y<sup>m</sup>selves.

"3. Carelessnes to persuad the people of y<sup>r</sup> severall quarters to attend weeklie sermons.

"4. Ther tollerating y<sup>e</sup> people in a superstitious custome, viz., of burying y<sup>r</sup> men and women in two diverse churchzards, y<sup>e</sup> first rise q<sup>o</sup>f wes superstitione & contineweth to be so in many of y<sup>e</sup> people's minds hitherto."

The elders having been recalled, they were "seriouslie exhortit to amend these particulars," and this part of the visitation brought to a close "with a serious exhorta<sup>one</sup> to the ministers & elders to be fund in the vigorous prosecution of y<sup>r</sup> respective duties, & in particular it is recomendit to y<sup>m</sup> to sie to y<sup>e</sup> executione of this following act relating to the for<sup>sd</sup> custome of burying."

"Act against ye superstitious custome of burieing in ye kirkyard of Kingarth."

"Wheras y<sup>r</sup> hath bin a custome of burying men & women in tuo diverse kirkzards y<sup>e</sup> people refusing to bury promiscouslie in anie one of y<sup>m</sup>, & y<sup>t</sup> this is done superstitiouslie y<sup>r</sup>for it is ordained y<sup>t</sup> men & women shall be promiscouslie buryed in y<sup>e</sup> vpper kirkzard, & for y<sup>e</sup> laigh kirkzard q<sup>r</sup> onlie women wer befor buried, y<sup>t</sup> none such shal be now but men may bury y<sup>r</sup> if they please, and if want of roome in y<sup>e</sup> oy<sup>r</sup> zard so require, & to mak this act effectuall y<sup>e</sup> minister is carefullie to attend burials for a seasone, and if any shall offer to bury contrar to this act, he is to put to his hand for y<sup>e</sup> resystance of y<sup>m</sup>, & they ar to be sumoned to y<sup>e</sup> Presb. as scandalous persons to be censured, & this act to be publishit on a Saboth togidder w<sup>t</sup> ane act of y<sup>e</sup> Sessione declaring y<sup>e</sup> penaltie y<sup>t</sup> shal be exactit from every transgressor of this act."