

THE KING'S CHAPEL AT RESTALRIG AND ST TRIDUANA'S AISLE: A HEXAGONAL TWO-STORIED CHAPEL OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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THE sunken vaulted chamber of a fifteenth-century hexagonal building adjoins the partly rebuilt medieval church of Restalrig. Only fragments remain of an upper chamber of the hexagon. The lower chamber, used as the laird's burial vault in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was cleared out and restored in 1907 by Dr Thomas Ross, and has since been known as 'St Triduana's Well-House'. In 1952 the Church of Scotland Trustees gave the hexagon into the guardianship of the then Ministry of Works. Before repairs could be carried out it was necessary to regulate the water-level in the sunken and flooded interior. An investigation begun to establish the original water-level showed that the presence of water was accidental, and suggested that the lower chamber was not a well-house but a chapel, part of James III's *capella regis*. This paper describes the hexagon, examines its medieval and modern history, and discusses the affinities and inspiration for an apparently unique design.

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I. DESCRIPTION

The ancient village of Restalrig (G.R.: NT 284745) now lies within the City of Edinburgh. A few mutilated houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remain. Its rural setting, admired in the early nineteenth century, has been replaced by housing and the St Margaret's motive power depôt of British Railways. The latter overlies the site of St Margaret's Well, from which the small hexagonal superstructure was largely removed to the Queen's Park in 1859. The parish church, hexagon and churchyard of Restalrig lie a short distance to the N. of depôt and well-site.

Restalrig parish church is a rectangular building of four bays measuring externally 66 ft. E. and W. by 23 ft. N. and S. (figs. 1 and 2). It is a restoration by William Burn in 1836 of the ruins of a fifteenth-century church. Burn erected the

W. gable wall and the western ends of the N. and S. walls. But medieval masonry at the foot of the SW. church buttress and the infilling of the awkward angle between that buttress and the hexagon shows that the W. gable and buttresses were re-erected on the line of medieval structures, which by 1836 must have been in a very advanced state of decay. Thus the present church retains the plan of the original. The rest of the present church is largely medieval with 1836 tracery replacement and fabric repairs: drawings made by James Skene in 1818¹ show the E. end and most of the N. and S. walls standing almost to the wall-heads.

Burn's restoration of the external elevations was faithful. The surrounds and tracery of the three S. windows are competent fabric replacement of originals which survive in detached fragments. In the bay E. of the hexagon, the S. wall has a blocked round-headed door decorated with small tablet flowers. Buttresses at the angles of the E. wall and on the S. wall are medieval. The tracery of the E. window is probably an authentic copy. Burn slapped three lights through the N. wall, hitherto without fenestration. The interior of the church is now plastered and covered by a timber barrel ceiling: no ancient features are visible.

Excavation N. of the church in 1962 revealed a fragment of the footings for a N. sacristy, adjoining the church and contemporary with it. One of Skene's drawings shows the low roof-raggle of the sacristy, enclosing a blocked doorway. These features were visible until 1962. The original northward extent of the sacristy cannot be defined. The remains of the sacristy were hidden in 1962 by the construction of a new vestry.

Excavation in 1961-2 also showed the base of a respond, the plinth of which adjoined the NE. angle buttress of the present church. The respond, with the fragmentary structural remains around it, seemed to be the eastern termination for an aisle on the N. side of a nave of about the same width as the present church. The respond was not set out on the same axes as the present church. The mouldings of the respond were similar to, but not identical with, the mouldings of the base of the central pier of the lower hexagon, suggesting a similar date in the second half of the fifteenth century.

The relationship of the respond to the NE. angle buttress showed that the respond was constructed after the buttress, the foundation of which had been cut away to make room for it. As the buttresses are contemporary with the present church the respond is therefore later than the church. (Although the buttresses are of ashlar and the ancient part of the church is of rubble, the footings show that they are contemporary.)

The only other architectural feature without any obvious structural relevance to either the present church or the hexagon is the base of a small fragment of inner wall-face, projecting from the external face of the NE. wall of the hexagon. The shaft-base has the same moulding as the upper part of the respond found by excavation and described above. The shaft-base and fragment of wall-face are worked from one stone, which is set into the wall of the hexagon. The ashlar face of the

¹ Skene, James, *Old Chapel at Restlerig*, Edinburgh City Library PYDA/2406/2271, reproduced as Pl. XXXVIII; compare Pl. XXXIX, 1.

hexagon is roughly cut away to receive it. The moulding of the shaft-base is stopped on the oblique line at which the hexagon's wall-face cuts across the stone. Its relationship to the hexagon wall shows that it is inserted into the hexagon.

The resemblance of the shaft-base to the respond at the NW. angle of the present church, and the incomplete nature of both, suggest that the two belong to a fabric later than the hexagon and the present church, a fabric ambitiously begun (though perhaps inaccurately set out) and abandoned in the earliest stages of construction. The shaft-base occupies the position of the outer wall of a S. aisle for this proposed building. The latter was designed to have a nave and aisles of unknown westward extent and a chancel of unknown plan.

The hexagon adjoins the westernmost bay of the present church (figs. 1 and 2; Pl. XXXIX, 2). The lower chamber, its floor 8 ft. below present ground level, is intact. The chamber measures internally 35 ft. across between its opposite angles within walls all 3 ft. 6 in. thick except the N. wall which is only 1 ft. 9 in. thick. The S., SE. and NE. walls are pierced by windows of three pointed and cusped lights beneath three-centred arches (an arch form very uncommon in Scotland) externally surmounted by moulded dripstones. The splayed outer sills of the windows open to present ground level. The lower chamber is entered from the churchyard through a doorway set obliquely in the SW. wall, by a flight of steps which continues beyond the wall faces upwards into the churchyard and downwards into the floor area of the lower chamber. The floor of the church is 8 ft. 6 in. higher than the 1907 paved floor of the lower chamber.

There is only one original buttress, at the NE. Three additional buttresses were built in 1907. Two angles, obstructed by burial enclosures in 1907, have no buttresses (see p. 256 below). These two angles, at the W. and SW., are finished by a broad ashlar chamfer. A near-straight joint runs down most of the height of the building at its W. angle, at the arris of the chamfer,¹ and contrasts with well-contrived jointing elsewhere. The chamfers may have been formed and, where necessary, newly faced, in the course of a tidy removal of original buttresses. The wall-heads are finished with a parapet within which rises a pyramidal timber slated roof surmounted by a wooden statue of St Triduana: parapet and roof are parts of Dr Ross's 1907 restoration.

Inside the lower chamber a vault springs from the foliated capitals of angle-shafts and a clustered central pillar (Pl. XL). The usual method by which a polygon with central pier is vaulted is by throwing the principal ribs in semicircular or pointed arcs from central pier to wall-shafts. This was the vault-plan of the upper chamber (fig. 3*b*) of the Restalrig hexagon. In the lower chamber (fig. 3*a*, Pls. XLI, 1, XLII) the principal arcs are thrown from the wall-shafts at each angle to the wall-shaft at the angle next but one, while the mid- or ridge-rib first runs horizontally to an intermediate boss and thence curves downwards to the capital of the central pier.

¹ The joint was revealed in June 1964 when the SW. burial enclosure was demolished. The burial enclosure appears on the photographs, but it is omitted from the plan (fig. 1). A similar joint was observed by Dr Ross in 1907.

A large recess in the north wall is 11 ft. 3 in. wide and 3 ft. 6 in. deep under a segmental arch. There is a small aumbry in the NE. wall of the lower chamber. The lower part of this aumbry was destroyed in the 1907 restoration.

Though little survives in position of the upper chamber, there is enough to establish the main points of its internal design when taken in conjunction with the many associated fragments. A few floor-slabs in position give a floor-level 8 ft. 6 in. above the floor of the church, from which the floors of the two chambers were vertically equidistant. Walling exists in some places to about 18 in. above the floor level. The NE. wall is faced with fine ashlar slabs, and in the middle of this wall is the moulded sill of a recess, either an aumbry or a sacrament-house (Pl. XLI, 2). Its position corresponds to that of the aumbry in the lower chamber. In the E. angle is a mass of mortared rubble, presumably the substructure for an altar.

On the floor a large number of dressed stones were discovered when a mound of earth over the lower chamber was cleared in 1907. These included fragments of window tracery, many rib-stones from the upper vault and parts of the *tas-de-charge*, window ingoes, and six large ornamental bosses.¹ The rib-stubs of the bosses show that the upper vault had no central pier; its ribs sprang from angle-shafts or corbels to a central crown (the boss of the crown, or a ring substituted for it, was not found). Though no evidence was discovered to establish the springing-level of the vault, it may be inferred from the vault construction alone that the upper chamber was much more spacious than the lower.

There were probably large windows on the three S.-facing walls of the hexagon, corresponding to the fenestration of the lower chamber.

No ancient walling survives on the N. side next the church, where it is all 1907 restoration, so there is no way to determine how the upper chamber was entered from the church.

The NE. buttress of the hexagon (the only original buttress) is stopped obliquely against a buttress of the church in a manner which shows that the hexagon is later than the church.

A second hexagon used to stand a little way to the S. of Restalrig church, within what is now St Margaret's locomotive depôt. This was the little vaulted house of St Margaret's Well, the interior of which was dismantled and re-erected in the Queen's Park in 1859, 'happily rescued from the inexorable utilitarianism of the modern railway vandals'.² The removal was carried out under the direction of the then Office of Works, following a recommendation by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.³ The interior is a miniature parallel to the lower chamber of the Restalrig

¹ The bosses may be briefly described as follows: (1) The lower surface of the boss is finished as a flat disc bearing, in relief, the letters 'IHS' surmounted by a crown (Pl. XLIII, 1); (2) On a disc similar to (1) a saltire flory (Pl. XLIII, 2); (3) The lower surface of the boss is finished as a shield bearing, in relief, the letter 'M' supported by birds and surmounted by a crown (Pl. XLIII, 2); (4) In high relief carved with foliage, the rounded under-surface bearing a mullet (Pl. XLIII, 4); (5) The whole surface carved with stylised floriated ornament (Pl. XLIII, 5); (6) A grotesque head with prominent upper teeth (Pl. XLIII, 6).

² Wilson, Sir Daniel, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the olden time*, 3rd ed. (1891), II, 250.

³ Laing, David, 'Statement relative to the removal of St Margaret's Well', in *P.S.A.S.*, III (1858-60), 365-7.

hexagon, with a vault identical in layout but with an internal area less than one-tenth of the interior of the Restalrig building (fig. 3a, d).¹

II. THE LEGEND OF ST TRIDUANA

The chief source of the legend of St Triduana is the *Aberdeen Breviary*, followed by Constantijn Suyskens in the *Acta Sanctorum*.² The substance of the legend is that St Triduana was one of several virgins who accompanied St Regulus to Scotland. She settled for a time at Rescobie in Angus, where she was sought after by Nechtan, the local ruler. In response to an unhappy compliment by Nechtan on the beauty of her eyes, the saint plucked them out and sent them to him impaled on a thorn. Nechtan's attentions ceased, and Triduana removed to Restalrig, where she spent the rest of her life and where she was buried. The *Aberdeen Breviary* notes that her bones lay at Restalrig and were greatly honoured.

The *Acta Sanctorum* describes a miracle wrought by St Triduana in which the saint appears in a dream to a blind Englishwoman, whom she tells to go to her tomb at Restalrig. The woman does so and recovers her sight. Later the woman's daughter loses her eyes in a fall; her mother prays to the saint and her child's eyes are restored by virtue of the prayer alone, without pilgrimage to Restalrig.

David Chambers gives another version of the legend in which Restalrig is not mentioned. Chambers cites 'Hunter the Dominican' as authority for the widespread honour in which St Triduana was once held in Scotland, and for the several shrines dedicated to her.³ But Hunter's work does not now appear to be extant: at least Suyskens could not find it.⁴

The repute of St Triduana continued up to the Reformation. Sir David Lyndsay mentions those who went to the saint 'to mend thare eine'.⁵ This presumably refers to Restalrig.⁶

There is no reference in any of these writings on St Triduana which suggests a well or spring connected with the saint.

III. MEDIEVAL HISTORY

Suyskens thought that the traditional sixth century date for St Triduana might with luck be correct, but was unconvinced.⁷ It is not unlikely that there was a church at Restalrig in the Dark Ages, though there is no evidence for one. Rectors

¹ The Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Scotland, *An Inventory of . . . the City of Edinburgh* (1951), 239.

² *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Bannatyne Club (1854), Pars Estiva, October, fol. cxviii. *Acta Sanctorum*, Octobris, iv, Brussels (1856), 280.

³ Chambers, David (Camerarius, Davidus), *De Scotorum Fortitudine*, Paris (1631), 179: 'Magno fuisse in honore hanc sanctissimam Virginem apud Scotos ob vitae sanctitatem & miraculorum gloriam testatur Hunterus Dominicanus, sacellaque varia in eiusdem honorem extracta fidem faciunt.'

⁴ *Acta Sanctorum*, loc. cit.

⁵ *The Monarche*, l. 2366.

⁶ There are St Triduana place-names at Kintradwell in Sutherland S. of Helmsdale and a St Tredwell's chapel and St Tredwell's Loch at Papa Westray in Orkney: *R.C.A.M., An Inventory of Orkney* (1946), No. 521. The healing of the stabbed eyes of John Bishop of Caithness, c. 1201 at the tomb of the saint, mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga* (ed. A. B. Taylor (1938), 346), may have taken place at one of these northern shrines rather than at the Restalrig tomb. In the saga the saint's name is Trollhcena.

⁷ *Acta Sanctorum*, loc. cit.

or vicars of the church are recorded from the twelfth century.¹ But our immediate concern with the church does not begin until the end of the middle ages.

A charter dated 1477² states that James III endowed a chaplainry in the parish church of Restalrig for the altar founded by the king in the upper chapel, *in capella superiore*; of the same church. The dedication of altar and chapel are not given. An entry in the Exchequer Rolls for 1486-7 records payment to a mason for stone roofing-slabs for the King's Chapel adjoining the church of Restalrig.³

When the parish church of Restalrig was erected into a collegiate church by James III, a papal bull of Innocent VIII dated 1487 stated that James had built a 'sumptuous new work' at his own expense.⁴ It has been inferred from this bull that Restalrig Church was rebuilt in its present form in 1487.⁵ But in the light of the Exchequer Rolls entry quoted above, which refers to work on the roof of a building called the King's Chapel in the year previous to the issue of the bull, it seems more reasonable to identify the 'sumptuous new work' of the bull with the King's Chapel adjacent to the church.

In 1497-1507 John Fraser, Bishop of Ross and sometime dean of Restalrig, founded the chaplainry of St Triduana in St Triduana's aisle (*insula*) in the collegiate church of Restalrig. This chaplainry was erected by James IV in 1512 into the eighth prebend of the college.⁶

The 1515 charter of the college lists the perquisites and responsibilities of this prebendary: 'The eighth prebendary who will be entitled of St Triduana's aisle will have for his sustenance . . . (a list follows) . . . and also all the oblations made to the altar and the relics of St Triduana in connection with the chamber and garden near the college. In consideration of which he will sustain and maintain the lower aisle of the said college and the altar of St Triduana situated therein in ornaments, books, chalices, wax candles, and other necessaries in all honesty at his own charges.'

This lower aisle, dedicated to St Triduana, is situated near (*prope*) the college. The King's Chapel has been described as situated adjoining (*contigua*) the church. The 1477 charter mentions an upper chapel with an altar endowed by James III. It seems reasonable to bring together the upper chapel and the lower aisle as elements of a two-storied building known as the King's Chapel, the sumptuous new work referred to in Innocent VIII's bull. There is no opposition between *capella* and *insula*, used of the upper and lower chambers respectively. *Capella* is a term of status, *insula* a term of structure. The most obvious use of *inferior* and *superior* is to express vertical superimposition, and *ecclesia inferior* is so used of the lower church of Glasgow Cathedral.⁷

The Restalrig hexagon adjoins the church, it had two storeys. Thus the evidence suggests that the hexagon is James III's new work. The lower chamber was known as St Triduana's aisle, containing relics of the saint, an altar dedicated to her, and

¹ Laing, David, *Registrum Domus de Soltre . . . &c* (*Charters of . . . Collegiate Churches in Mid-Lothian*), Bannatyne Club (1861), XLIV.

² *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland*, II, No. 1329.

³ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, IX, 540: '. . . Finlao Fell, latumo, pro certis tegulis lapideis ad capellam domini regis contiguam ecclesie parrochali de Lestalrig.'

⁴ Laing, op. cit., 274.

⁵ R.C.A.M., *An Inventory of . . . the City of Edinburgh* (1951), 253. MacKinlay, James M., *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: non scriptural dedications* (1914), 477.

⁶ Laing, op. cit., 280.

⁷ Eyre Todd, George, *The Book of Glasgow Cathedral* (1898), 317.

appropriate fittings. It probably contained the saint's tomb-shrine also, though this is not stated. The upper chamber was a chapel of unknown dedication endowed by James.

The documents give no firm evidence for dating. James III came to the throne in 1460 at the age of nine, so it is unlikely that his active patronage of Restalrig – to be associated with his unfortunate fondness for architecture – would begin until the following decade. The upper chapel must have been well advanced by 1477 since an altar existed in it at that date, though work was still being done on the roof in 1486.

IV. POST-REFORMATION HISTORY

On 21st December 1560 the General Assembly ordered that the 'kirk of Restalrig, as a monument of idolatrie, be raysit and utterlie castin downe and destroyed'.¹ The parishioners were enjoined to repair to the church of South Leith, and within a few years Restalrig church was being robbed for building stone, which was used to remodel the Netherbow Port in 1571.² In 1609, when South Leith was erected by Act of Parliament into the parish church, Restalrig is described as ruinous.³ But from an unknown date the lower chamber of the hexagon was preserved through its use by the lairds of Restalrig as a burial vault.

The 1596 tombstone of Lady Jonet Ker (second wife of Sir Robert Logan of Restalrig, 6th baron, concerned in the Gowrie conspiracy),⁴ which now lies within the lower chamber, is not conclusive evidence that she was buried there, for it may have been brought in at any time up to the late eighteenth century. William Burnett stated that the lower chamber was used as the family vault of the Logans of Restalrig from the sixteenth century, and that in 1608 the bones of the conspirator Sir Robert Logan were exhumed thence for their posthumous trial.⁵ I have not been able to find the evidence for this statement. The first unquestionable use for burial is in 1633 when John Lord Balermino was 'buried in Restalrig's burial-place, being a vaulted aisle supported with pillars'.⁶

Arnot and Grose in the eighteenth century refer to the building as a burial-vault, without considering whether it may not originally have had another function.⁷ By this date the Earl of Moray was the proprietor: he purchased the estates in Restalrig and Leith, forfeited by Arthur Lord Balermino, when they were sold by the Barons of Exchequer in 1755.⁸

Burials had continued until this date, filling the chamber to a depth of 6 or 7 ft. – about a foot below the capitals of shafts and central pier. When the building was thus used the door in the NW. wall had been blocked, and a door had been formed

¹ *Booke of the Universall Kirke of Scotland*, Bannatyne Club, 1, 5.

² *A diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents*, Bannatyne Club (1833), 241.

³ *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, IV, 442.

⁴ Douglas, William, 'Armorial tombstone of Lady Jonet Ker at Restalrig, 1596' in *P.S.A.S.*, LXII (1927-8,) 27.

⁵ 'Restalrig and its collegiate church', in *Trans. Scottish Ecclesiological Soc.*, II, pt. 2 (1907-8), 274.

⁶ Scot, Sir John of Scotstarvet, *The Staggering State of the Scots Statesmen . . .* (1754), 63.

⁷ Arnot, Hugo, *History of Edinburgh* (1779), 256-7; Grose, Francis, *The Antiquities of Scotland* (1789-91), I, 43.

⁸ Laing, *op. cit.*, lxi.

from the SE. window to give access to the vault. Both the other windows were blocked. The upper surface of the vault was covered by a mound of earth about 10 ft. high with trees growing on it.¹

Speculation on the earliest function of the hexagon begins in the later nineteenth century. David Laing in 1861² states that the 'mausoleum' was often said to be the family vault built by Sir Robert Logan of Restalrig, who died about 1440; and that while it may have been built by him, and was certainly used as a family vault by the Logans and by succeeding proprietors, it was 'undoubtedly attached to the College, perhaps as the chapter-house, or as St Triduana's Chapel'. Laing also suggests that examination of the pile of earth above the crypt might reveal something of St Triduana's upper chapel. Macgibbon and Ross quote Laing's interpretation of the possible function of the building as a chapter-house, and support his suggestion that it be repaired.³

In his *Memorials of Edinburgh*, Sir David Wilson introduces a new conjecture on St Margaret's Well⁴:

not far from the ancient Collegiate Church of Restalrig, on the old road to Holyrood Abbey, stood the beautiful Gothic well dedicated to St Margaret, for centuries an object of attraction, alike by the virtues ascribed to its healing waters and the fine architectural features of its masonry. From its special virtues in the healing of diseased eyes, and even restoring sight to the blind, it was probably originally dedicated to St Triduana, who lies buried not far from the old site.

Then, writing of the removal of the well-house to the Queen's Park:

The actual fountain, once vital with the special virtues of St Triduana's gift of healing, and even in our own day the resort of pilgrims who manifested undiminished faith in its healing powers, could not be transferred with its architectural shrine.

Wilson cites as authority for his penultimate statement *Lectures on the Religious Antiquities of Edinburgh* by a member of the Holy Gild of St Joseph. The Holy Gildsman writes of St Margaret's Well: 'Some of you may perhaps be able to recall a memorable instance of the healing virtues of its waters, within these last few years.'⁵ Dr Thomas Ross knew of Wilson's suggestion that St Margaret's Well had originally been dedicated to St Triduana,⁶ though the point is not mentioned in the *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*.

William Burnett, writing in 1906 (that is, just before Dr Ross's restoration of the hexagon) provides further material concerning the virtue of the waters of St Margaret's Well. He follows Wilson in suggesting that St Margaret's Well was originally St Triduana's Well, observing that the old name may have been lost in an age when there was a tendency to attach to all sacred places the name of David or Margaret.

¹ Grose, *op. et loc. cit.*: 'Over this vault is a high tumulus of earth, planted with yew trees, which, with the surrounding tombs or burial places, all neatly fitted up, and preserved from the depredations of the parson's cattle, and the idle boys of the parish, have a most solemn effect.'

² *op. cit.*, lx.

³ Macgibbon, David and Ross, Thomas, *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland . . .* (1896-7), III, 475.

⁴ 1891 ed., II, 249-50.

⁵ *Lectures . . .*, last series (1847), 126.

⁶ *The Scotsman*, 25th December 1908.

And he continues:

The sacred usefulness of the well is surely testified by the fact that so late as 1840 its waters were carried off in barrels by an ancient tenant . . . , and sold by him in Leith to clarify the vision of the dwellers in that enlightened burgh!¹

I do not know whether this is the memorable instance referred to by the Gildsman.

Wilson and Burnett are the first authors I have been able to find who associate the name of St Triduana with a holy well. And when the association is made, reasons are given for making it with St Margaret's Well, not with the Restalrig hexagon.

V. RESTORATION

After a visit to Restalrig by the Scottish Ecclesiological Society in October 1906 (the visit which occasioned William Burnett's paper referred to above) the sorry state of the hexagon was commented on, and a committee was appointed to present a memorial to the Earl of Moray, the proprietor. Moray directed that the building be put in a state of repair and safety, and work began in August 1907 under the supervision of Dr Thomas Ross.²

Dr Ross has given a description of the state of the hexagon before work began.

[It] was filled with burials and earth to a depth of about six or seven feet. And on top of the vault there was a grassy mound of earth about ten or twelve feet high, covered with bushes and trees of considerable size. This, along with a vigorous growth of bourtrees in the adjoining open vaults, kept the place damp and dank, with a constant oozing of water through the chapter-house roof. The windows had been built up and portions of their tracery destroyed, the east one completely so, and the sill cut away so as to form a wide and high doorway; the angle buttresses were clean shaved away, and altogether the place was in a most deplorable and neglected condition.

At this time Dr Ross was convinced that the hexagon was a chapter-house. He continued in this belief throughout the whole course of the works of restoration, and his mind was only changed by a sequence of events at its close.

The progress of the operations begun in 1907 may be approximately reconstructed.

The accumulation of earth in the interior was removed. As this was being done water impeded progress; it was pumped out, and pumping was continued throughout the succeeding works.

While the works of restoration were going on the existing SE. door (an original window opened out presumably after the Reformation as a door) was used for access. On their completion it was restored as a window and tracery inserted. The NW. doorway, hitherto unsuspected, was discovered in the course of the restoration. The internal and external rybats had been removed when the door was blocked, but five steps, and the facing of the ingoes, were found obliquely set in the thickness of the wall. This door was reinstated as the entrance.

¹ *Trans. Scot. Ecclesiological Soc.*, II, 2 (1907-8), 278.

² Dr Ross's report on the restoration, illustrated by D. L. MacGibbon, is published in *Trans. Scot. Ecclesiological Soc.*, III, pt. 2 (1910-11), 238-46. This is the source for the following account.

The blockings of the S. and SW. windows were removed and those parts of the tracery which had been destroyed were restored.

Some of the voussoirs of the inner arch of the large N. recess were missing and were restored. So were the whole of the rear-arch and the masonry of the panel between the two arches. The back of this recess is now filled by a 1907 brick wall. The whole of the stone bench which runs right round the hexagon is a restoration. Dr Ross does not say how much, if any, of the original masonry existed in 1907. But comparison of the height of the bases of the attached shafts with the height of the base of the central pier implies the existence of a bench or some other horizontal feature at this level. The whole of the floor is also a restoration.

Only the NE. buttress is original. Dr Ross built new buttresses on three more angles of the hexagon. The other two angles were obstructed by modern burial enclosures, so they were left unaltered.

On removing the high overgrown mound of earth above the lower chamber various structural remains for an upper storey were found in position, and fragments of tracery, vault-ribs and six roof bosses were found lying at the bottom of the mound of earth. These structural remains and fragments have already been described. The upper chamber was not restored. The rebuilt buttresses were surmounted by flat caps, the wallheads levelled and a parapet built on their outer face. A pyramidal slated roof was constructed over the hexagon on a wooden frame.

It was decided permanently to exclude the water which was seeping into the cleared lower chamber, by tanking the interior below ground level with coats of asphalt. Both the exterior and interior faces of the walls were thus sealed. Inside, the wall-face was cut back about 6 in. A 4½-in. brick face was then built up to the line of the original wall-face, and the cavity between the back of the brickwork and the cut-back medieval walling filled with asphalt (Pl. XL, 2).

The lower two-thirds of a rectangular aumbry (blocked at an earlier date, perhaps when the lower vault was first used for burials) in the NE. wall was cut away as part of the preparation for the tanking.

The tanking of the floor was left until the last. I quote Dr Ross's account of this operation:

Nothing had as yet occurred to disturb the opinion that the existing building was the chapter-house. A further excavation was made in the natural soil, when a bed of concrete was laid down, through which, however, the water bubbled up here and there in thin jets. A thick coat of asphalt was spread over the floor, but was completely destroyed by the inflow of water. Mr Morgan, the builder, undertook to superintend the relaying of the asphalt. By dint of plugging the jets and other means he succeeded and thereafter laid down thick stone pavement, which was further loaded with heavy stones laid on planks. The inflow of water was now stopped at all points except at the sump, a hole sunk in the floor from which pumping was carried on. This was dried and filled with a bag of prepared concrete, when an iron plate was placed on the top. On the instant, with lightning rapidity, the plate and men on it were thrown to right and left, the water squirting out with violent force in all directions, scattering the concrete like hail. This commotion lasted for a second or so, when the water was seen to ooze gently in the sump as if nothing had happened. Afterwards a well was dug outside deeper than the floor, and was built round in the hope that this would draw off the water, but the same result followed a second trial. It now became evident that the building never was the chapter-house but a well – the long lost well of St Triduana!

We know from other sources that the water reached at first a depth of 2 ft. Thereafter the water-level fell, and seldom exceeded a depth of 1 ft., while it frequently disappeared altogether after a period of dry weather. The fall in the water-level was attributed to alterations to a drainage scheme in the neighbourhood.¹ It will appear from evidence yet to be given that the well-house interpretation did not originate with Dr Ross. But we must first consider the significance of the events which have just been described.

A head of 2 ft. of water would produce a pressure of 124 lb. per sq. ft. This pressure would be sufficient to force the sealing out of position, though it could hardly produce the effect of extreme violence described. In this connection it does not matter whether the pressure is being exerted by a spring rising within the hexagon, or by the general water-table throughout the immediate area. Digging a well outside would not affect the result in either case.

When the site was examined in 1956-7 the water did not flow into the excavations in the floor with the vigour of a spring: it seeped through all the sides of the excavation, including that adjacent to the SW. wall, with a sluggish persistence.

The evidence which seemed to confirm the well-house interpretation for Dr Ross was provided by Major George Logan Home of Edrom. In his *History of the Logan Family*, published in 1934, he deals at some length with the Restalrig hexagon, and at one point with its restoration:

In 1907, by direction of the Earl of Moray, the crypt was restored and the earth and rubbish removed. The architect, who did not know it was St Triduana's Well, had great difficulty in fighting the constantly rising water. . . . Nothing would keep it down, and the story of St Triduana having been brought to his notice, the architect realised that it was the crypt and well of the saint. . . . When finished, clear water rose to a height of about two feet in the well, which covers the whole floor, with the exception of a stone gallery round the sides. Thus the victory rests with the saint. . . .²

Two feet of water would in fact comfortably cover the stone bench, which is 9 in. high.

In a letter printed in the *Scotsman* on 5th December 1931, Major Logan Home makes it clear that he had himself told Dr Ross of the legend: 'I then brought the old legend of St Triduana to the notice of the architect.' The version of the legend which Logan Home would tell Dr Ross appears in another place in the *History of the Logan Family*. Logan Home begins with a translation of the legend from the *Aberdeen Breviary*; and continues by naming Camerarius and Hunter the Dominican as authorities for St Triduana in Scotland.

Camerarius also gives the legend of St Triduana, and Hunter the Dominican, testifies that this most holy virgin was in great honour among the Scots for the sanctity of her life and the glory of her miracles, and that numerous chapels were built in her honour . . . she was buried at Restalrig, and when her body was committed to the tomb, a well of pure water sprang up from the ground which has ever since been renowned for its healing virtues to the eyes.³

The passage about the well of pure water is neither in the *Aberdeen Breviary* nor in Chambers (Camerarius). The context seems to imply that it occurs in the work of

¹ Douglas, W., in *P.S.A.S.*, LXII (1927-8), 34.

² *History* . . . , 28.

³ *History* . . . , 25-26.

Hunter the Dominican. But this work was already lost by the nineteenth century. Logan Home gives no other references.

Yet it is obvious that this version, presented to Dr Ross at the disturbing point when the supposed chapter-house was flooded, would provide a most attractive solution to the new problem. Dr Ross readily accepted it as the true solution. Thenceforward the 'chapter-house' became 'St Triduana's Well-house', and the new interpretation was accepted without question by all subsequent writers on Restalrig.¹

VI. WELL-HOUSES

The closest parallel to the Restalrig hexagon is St Margaret's Well, a building similar in plan, and having a vault which in layout is identical with that of the lower chamber. There are no other examples of this type of vault in Scotland.

This resemblance alone suggests that one hexagon is a copy of the other; and there are several indications (the non-functional reproduction at St Margaret's of the bench at Restalrig, and the clumsiness of the compressed rib-pattern of the St Margaret's vault), that St Margaret's is a miniature, simplified reproduction of the lower chamber at Restalrig. *The little building of St Margaret's is undoubtedly a well-house. Is this not a strong argument that its prototype had the same function?*

But there are two important differences between the hexagons. The first is the scale (fig. 3a, d). The area of the Restalrig hexagon is more than ten times greater than that of St Margaret's Well, which is a simple vaulted cistern. Second, in St Margaret's the water flowed out of the lower part of the structure and thence outside over the sill. It is not clear whether the water rose from the floor as a spring, or fell from a tank above the vault through the mask protruding in relief from the central pillar. The drawing in Billings,² made before the removal of the building to the Queen's Park, does not show water issuing from the mask, though it does issue from it now by way of a modern spout in the mouth of the mask. But there is no escape for the water from the structure at Restalrig. Once inside it would stagnate unless it rose high enough to flow over the sills of the windows at the level of the churchyard.

The lack of an outflow is only one of several problems which at once arise when the use of the lower chamber as a well-house is considered.

If the water rose above a height of 3 in. it would cover the moulding of the base of the central pier, which seems to be meant for display. (St Margaret's Well has no moulding on the base of its central pier.) At any depth water would cover the whole of the interior area except the recess in the N. wall and the stone bench round the sides (unless it rose to a height of 9 in., which it frequently did, when the stone bench would be covered too. The outflow from St Margaret's Well is below the level of its bench.) The stone bench is too narrow to be anything but a bench. It is not a

¹ Michael Barrett may be quoted. In his *Calendar of Scottish Saints*, published in 1904: '[St Triduana's] tomb became a favourite place of pilgrimage. Before the Reformation it was the most important of the holy shrines near Edinburgh'. Barrett follows the authority of the *Aberdeen Breviary* for the tomb. In his *Footprints of the Ancient Scottish Church* published, after the restoration, in 1914: '... St Triduana, a virgin recluse of about the eighth century, was enshrined [at Restalrig], and a holy well, bearing her name, was renowned for the cure of diseases of the eye.'

² Billings, Robert, *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, 1845-52, II, Pl. 30.

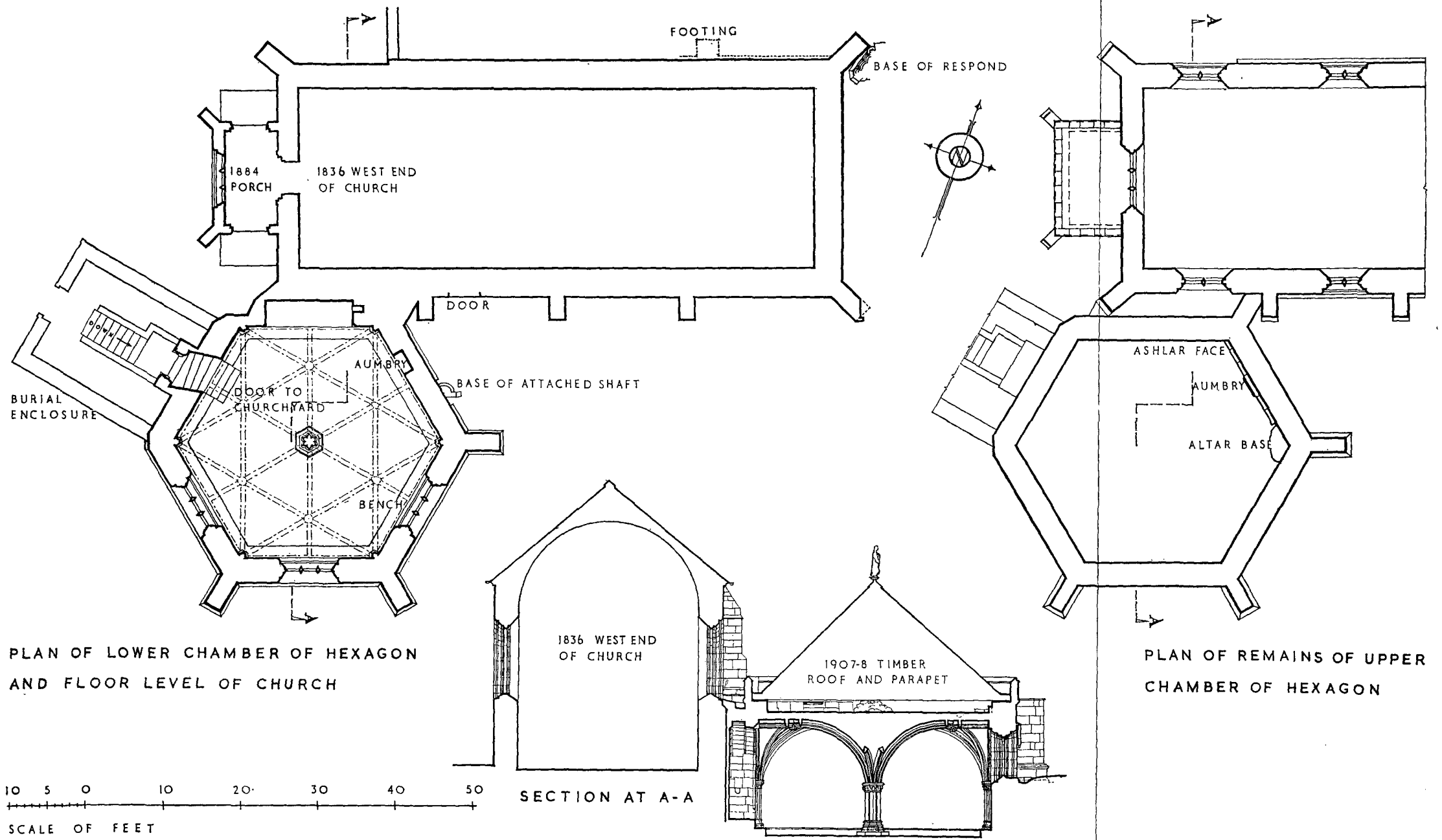


FIG. 1. Restalrig church and hexagon: present state

gangway. The steps from the door into the lower chamber lead immediately to the pool of water.

The force of these objections is emphasised when an extant well-house of similar size is considered. Comparative material for well-houses is scanty: there is nothing relevant in Scotland; English examples are simple and small. I have found no useful continental analogies. But at Holywell, in N. Wales, there is a building with elements strikingly similar to those of Restalrig: St Winifrede's Well is a two-storeyed rectangular structure of which the lower storey, centrally planned, is a well-house; and the upper storey is a chapel. The internal area is equal to that of the Restalrig hexagon.¹

The planning of St Winifrede's is strikingly different from Restalrig's. The well-house is laid out as a functional unit. The spring itself rises into a star-shaped tank, about 9 ft. across. Loose cobbles lie on the bottom of the tank, and the water rises vigorously inside. On the E. side of the tank is a rectangular bath paved with stone, entered by a flight of steps at one end, and left by a second flight at the opposite end. The water flows from the tank into the bath, out of the well-house into a large rectangular bathing-pool outside and finally down a steep slope.

The tank and bath together occupy only about one-sixth of the internal area of the well-house. The rest of the area is taken up by an ambulatory surrounding the tank and bath. It is the ambulatory which is first entered from the door.

Near St Asaph another well-house, St Mary's Well, repeats the planning pattern of star-shaped tank, bath, and ambulatory, though here the chapel is on the same level as the well-house.

In contrast to the Welsh well-houses, there is no evidence of arrangements at Restalrig to deal with the circulation of either water or pilgrims.

These objections are not of course conclusive. The Restalrig hexagon may have been a badly planned well-house. After all, in modern times it often contained water. But the presence of the water may be otherwise explained. Either the water table may have risen in modern times with the development of the Restalrig area, or the water may have been unexpected when the chapel was begun. It has been observed that the water-level fluctuates: sometimes it is several inches below floor level. The subsoil is gravel, not apparently waterlogged. If the foundation of the hexagon and its central pillar were laid down in a dry season, work might have continued for some time before any intrusion of water was observed. When water was found to intrude, the floor would be established at a higher level – subsequently disturbed by the post-Reformation burials. Such a blunder is not unknown in modern building experience, though it would be improper to quote parallels.

VII. ANALOGIES

The argument so far suggests that the Restalrig hexagon is a fifteenth-century two-storied chapel. I have made an unsuccessful search for parallels in buildings in

¹ Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments . . . in Wales . . . , II, *County of Flint* (1912), No. 127. Plan reproduced as fig. 3c by permission.

Great Britain and on the Continent; a true parallel should correspond to the hexagon both in design and in function. I summarise the background of the elements of Restalrig's planning below.

There are three main types of two-storied consecrated buildings.

In the first, the building is centrally planned, and its two stories are united by an open central area, as in the *Doppelkapellen* in Germany.¹

The type stems from the Imperial Chapel at Aachen, which is in turn inspired by San Vitale, Ravenna.² At Aachen the upper storey is a spacious triforium or gallery for the imperial household. There are no comparable buildings in Scotland; the square Bishop's Chapel at Hereford of 1079-95 is the only example in Great Britain.³

This type of two-storied chapel is clearly not relevant to Restalrig and need not be considered further.

The second type, with separate stories, is only occasionally centrally planned. Buildings of this type have an altar in both of their stories. Bandmann⁴ traces its origin from Early Christian mausolea to the two-storied rectangular Camera Santa at Oviedo consecrated in A.D. 802. The latter had two separate stories of which the lower contained the body of the saint and the upper the shrine.⁵ The most outstanding example of the type is la Sainte Chapelle in Paris, built in 1246-8 as a reliquary chapel. La Sainte Chapelle and its imitations are rectangular. And although there are two-storied polygonal examples the type is very rare after the thirteenth century in Europe.

In Scotland there are some late medieval two-storied ecclesiastical buildings in the form of transeptal aisles. The Blacader aisle adjoining Glasgow Cathedral is the lower storey of a late fifteenth-century chapel intended to be of two stories but never completed. The floor of the lower chamber of the aisle is sunk below the floor-level of the lower church - for the nave of the cathedral is itself of two stories. The Blacader aisle is relevant here in that it shows a contemporary interest in two-storied planning in Scotland.

The third type is a two-storied building with the lower chamber used as a burial vault (usually for family burials, though sometimes as a common charnel-house or ossuary) the upper usually containing holy relics and being used as a chantry.⁶ There are several continental examples of the type ranging from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, most being centrally planned.⁷ In this type there is, however, no

¹ Bandmann, Günter, s.v. 'Doppelkapelle, - kirche', in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, edd. Schmitt, O., Gall, E. and Heydenreich, L. H., Stuttgart (1933-) lief. II, col. 196 ff. There is no agreed definition of *Doppelkapelle*. For Bandmann it is simply a two-storied chapel: it may be of two stories conjoined by an open central area (Type A) or two separate stories (Type B). But other authorities would exclude the second type from the definition, e.g. Schürer, Oskar, *Die Kaiserpfalz Eger*, Berlin (1934), 92.

² The ultimate derivation is the Constantinian Holy Sepulchre rotunda in Jerusalem.

³ Drinkwater, Norman, 'Hereford Cathedral, Bishop's Chapel of St Katharine and St Mary Magdalene', in *Arch. Journal* (1954).

⁴ op. cit., col. 201 ff.: Bandmann's Type B.

⁵ See Grabar, André, *Martyrium, Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (1946), I, 574-5.

⁶ Bandmann, op. cit., col. 197. Buildings of this type are not *Doppelkapellen* by any definition.

⁷ e.g. the probably twelfth century 'grand Octagone' at Montmorillon, Vienne: see Charles Grosset in *Congrès archéologique de France* (1951), 199-206; and an example of 1440 in Brandenburg, noted by Heinz Biehn, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Zentralbaues bis zum Jahre 1500* (1933), 76.

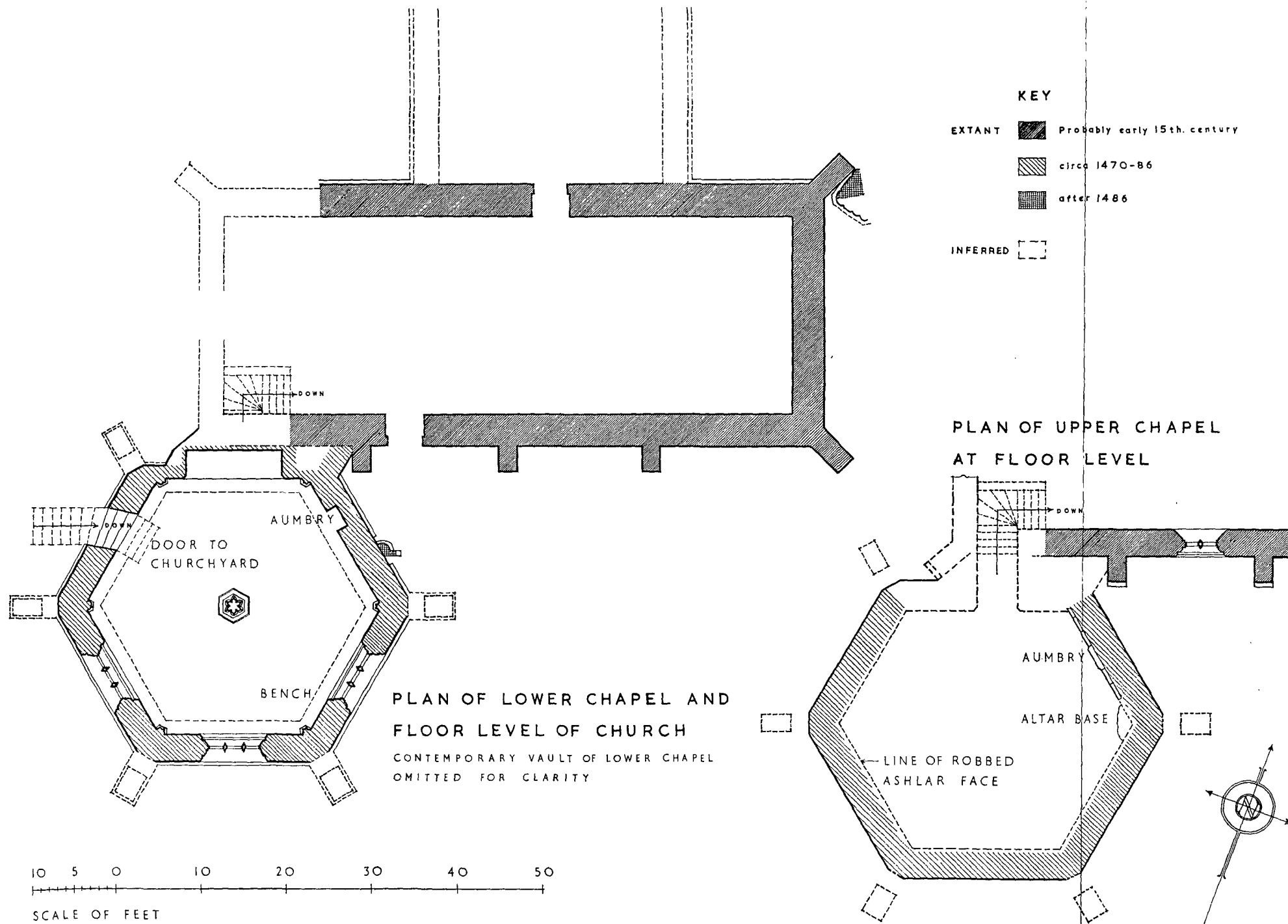


FIG. 2. Restalrig church and hexagon: medieval structures

[to face p. 260

functional parallel to Restalrig, where the employment of the lower chamber for burials represents a secondary use.

These three types are consecrated buildings. There also exists a number of two-storied centrally planned ancillary ecclesiastical buildings, of which the best known are chapter-houses.¹ Most of the chapter-houses are thirteenth-century octagons (none is hexagonal), and most have a single storey, though Lichfield, Westminster and Wells have two stories, of which the lower storey is sometimes sunk below ground level as at Westminster. The series continues into the fifteenth century with single-storied examples at Manchester, Warwick and Elgin, where the rebuilding of an earlier vaulted octagon in the late fifteenth century provides the latest example in the Scottish series. There are also octagons at Glenluce and Inchcolm (thirteenth century) and the foundations of another at Holyrood (c. 1400). The nineteenth-century assumption that the Restalrig hexagon was a chapter-house was thus well-founded on comparative material.

Chapter-houses are found in England at Manchester and Warwick attached to collegiate churches. But no Scottish collegiate church has a chapter-house, though several have sacristies. During the period when the Restalrig hexagon was believed to be a chapter-house no one commented on its size: it is substantially larger than all the Scottish chapter-houses attached to cathedrals or monastic houses with the exception of Elgin.

Though the chapter-houses are the best known, they are not the only British examples of late-medieval polygonal planning. Cloister lavatories take this form, and there is a hexagonal example at Sherborne, Dorset, built 1504-35.²

None of the vaulted examples of centrally planned buildings which I have found have the peculiar design of the lower vault at Restalrig. By far the greater number have variants of the simple plan of radial ribs. The few vaults which resemble Restalrig in plan have no central pillar and are thus not true parallels.³

So far the search for source-parallels has been confined to architecture, and it has been unsuccessful. But there are many late medieval metal objects – reliquaries, censers, ciboria – which have a closer resemblance to the Restalrig hexagon than any building I have been able to find.

The upper part of a German sixteenth-century gilt bronze reliquary in the Burrell collection is hexagonal with large traceried windows and flying buttresses springing from the base of a pyramidal roof which has crocketed and pinnacled dormers. The

¹ A succinct descriptive list is given by Bilston, John, 'On the discovery of some remains of the chapter-house of Beverley Minster', in *Archaeologia*, LIX, pt. 2 (1895), 425-32.

² Godfrey, Walter, 'English Cloister Lavatories', in *Arch. Journal*, CVI supplement (1952).

³ In the vault of the Abbot's Kitchen at Durham the ribs of the octagonal chamber are thrown transversely across the compartment in the same manner as at Restalrig, though at Durham the reason is to leave a central void to act as a chimney. The same principle, with the same object, is seen in the twelfth century octagonal abbey kitchen at Fontevault, Maine-et-Loire, where the whole roof is supported by a series of squinch arches (*Congrès archéologique de France* (1910), 58-60). A closer resemblance appears in the late-thirteenth-century N. porch of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Here a most ornate hexagon of a single lofty storey has a vault which is constructed on exactly the same rib-plan as lower Restalrig. But the absence of a central pillar again makes it valueless as a structural parallel, however close the similarity in design.

relic was held in a cylindrical glass under the hexagon. Two Italian fifteenth-century silver censers in the Royal Scottish Museum¹ resemble two-storied hexagonal buildings with large openings and pyramidal roofs. The principal part of a Spanish fifteenth-century silver gilt ciborium in the same museum is a buttressed hexagonal building of one storey with a pyramidal roof.² The three fifteenth-century St Andrews University maces and the Glasgow University mace are crowned by hexagonal tabernacles.³

These metalwork objects are all variations of a single- or two-storied hexagon. But the variations do not seem to be inspired by real buildings: the hexagon is one of the rarest plans, the multi-storied hexagon rarer still. Had the craftsmen been inspired by anything they had seen in stone and lime, an octagonal plan would have been a more natural choice. These metalworkers were no more imitative than were medieval manuscript illuminators in many of their representations of buildings. The metal objects are an architectural fantasy.

Restalrig's inspiration may not be architectural. The hexagon may be modelled on a comparatively small metal or wooden prototype, which could have been a reliquary or even the ornamental shrine of Triduana.⁴ The suggestion can be no more than tentative, though it would assort well with the enterprising architectural enthusiasm of Restalrig's patron, James III, who 'delytit mair in musik and pollicie of beging [building] nor he did in the government of his realme'.⁵

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this investigation may now be summarised.

There is no sound reason to believe that the lower chamber of the Restalrig hexagon was a well-house. Objections to this interpretation have been discussed in detail.

The combined evidence of the structure and of medieval documents suggest that the hexagon was a two-storied chapel built by James III and known as the King's Chapel. The upper chamber contained a chapel of unknown dedication. The lower chamber, known as St Triduana's Aisle, contained the altar and relics, perhaps also the tomb, of the saint.

The building of the King's Chapel may have commenced at any time in the period 1460-77, though in view of the tender age of James III when he came to the throne, it is more likely in the later part of the reign. The structure was largely complete and functioning by 1477.

When the hexagon was built (fig. 2), it adjoined the present parish church, a simple structure probably of the early fifteenth century, with unicameral chancel and

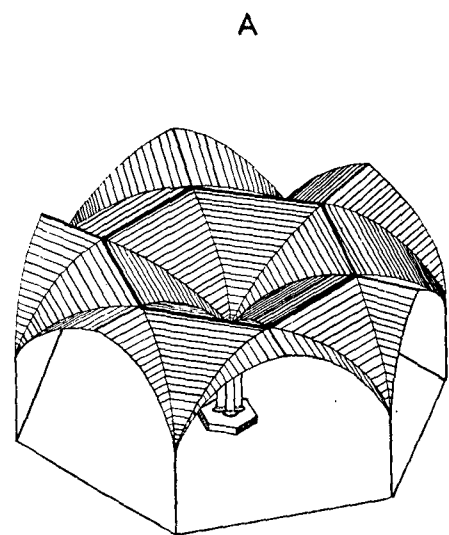
¹ *R.S.M.* (1892), 300, 301.

² *R.S.M.* (1902), 217. Besides the examples noted, there are five other 'two-storied' hexagonal turriform censers (1892: 326, 342; 1896: 329, 330, 343) and a reliquary with a hexagonal turriform cap (1892: 316) in the museum.

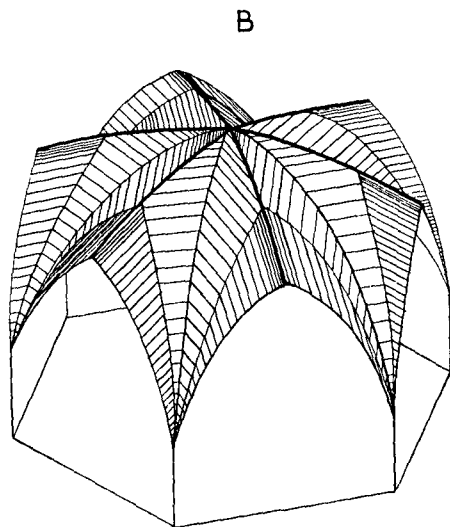
³ Brook, Alexander J. S., 'An account of the maces of the universities of St Andrews, Glasgow, . . .' in *P.S.A.S.*, xxvi (1891-2), 440-82.

⁴ Shrines and monstrances could be turriform as well as the smaller objects noted above.

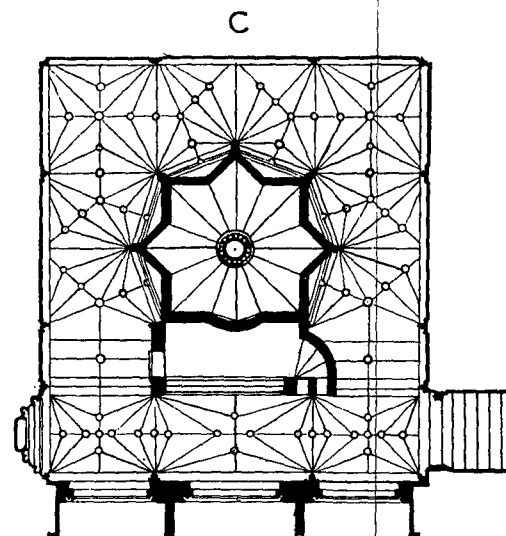
⁵ Lindsay of Pitscottie, Robert, *The History and Cronicles of Scotland*, ed. Aeneas J. G. Mackay (1899-1911), I, 163.



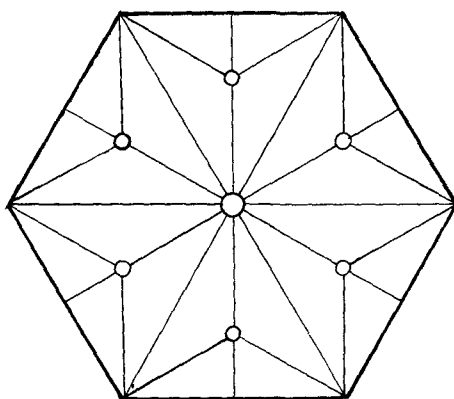
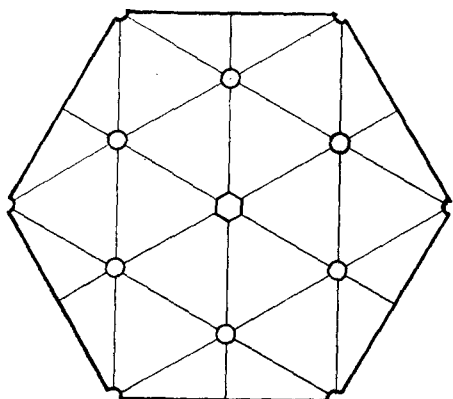
LOWER VAULT



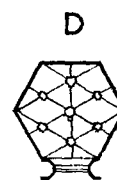
UPPER VAULT



ST. WINIFRED'S WELL HOLYWELL
LOWER STOREY (CHAPEL ABOVE)



PLANS AND ISOMETRIC SKETCHES OF VAULTS



ST. MARGARET'S WELL RESTALRIG.
(NOW IN QUEEN'S PARK)

FEET 0 5 10 20 30 40 50

FIG. 3. Diagrams of hexagon vaults: comparison of hexagon to St Winifred's Well and St Margaret's Well. (Plan of St Winifred's Well reproduced by permission of the Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Wales) [to face p. 262]

nave and a N. sacristy. An ambitious rebuilding of the church with a chancel and aisled nave was commenced and very shortly abandoned. The commencement may have coincided with the completion of the hexagon; the abandonment with the death of James III in 1488 and the consequent loss of personal royal interest.

The buildings of the collegiate church may have been more extensive, but none are known apart from the hexagon, the fifteenth-century church with N. sacristy, and the unfinished rebuilding of the church.

St Margaret's Well may have been associated with Restalrig church and may have been the source of revenue in the garden of the college noted as one of the perquisites of St Triduana's prebendary. St Margaret's is copied from the interior of the King's Chapel.

The King's Chapel is not copied from anything. Its design consciously or unconsciously unites in one building a large number of elements found widely separated in time and place elsewhere. It may have been immediately inspired not by a building but by a ritual object.

As designed and built the chapel would be a much more striking work than the surviving remains immediately suggest. In external elevation, the sunken lower chapel is merely the substructure for the much more spacious upper chapel, whose windows were probably a prominent feature of the facades. The detail of the windows cannot be recovered but their large size is clear from the surviving fragments.

It may be conjectured that the upper wall-faces and wall-heads would be decorated to contrast with the plain surfaces of the lower chapel. The walls would probably be finished with a parapet to conceal the roof, with the buttresses carried up into pinnacles.

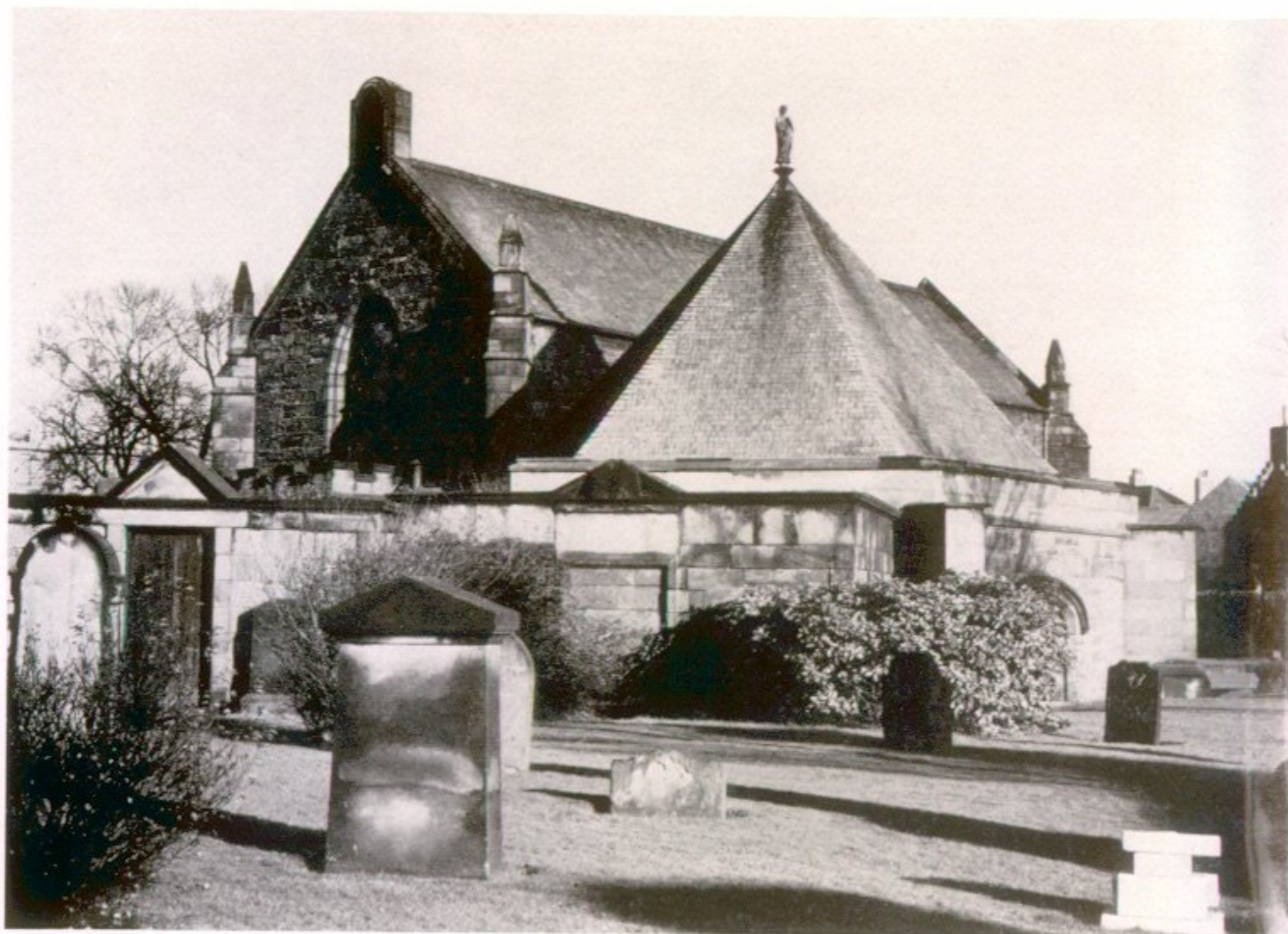
The unknown master-mason who designed the Restalrig hexagon created an imaginative and original composition in the ornate but unadventurous context of fifteenth-century Scottish ecclesiastical architecture.

*The Society is indebted to the Ministry of Public Building and
Works for a grant towards the cost of this paper*

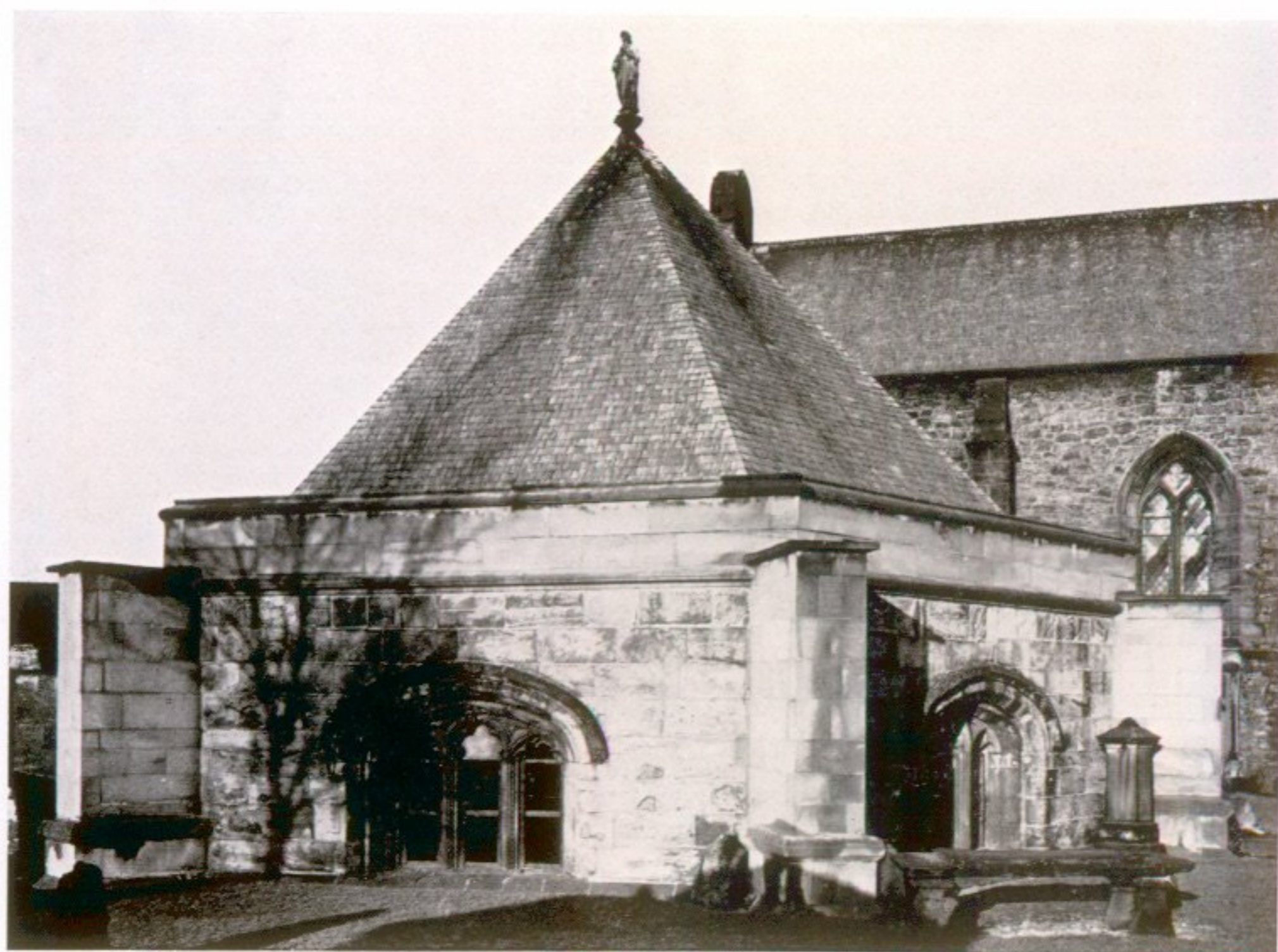


James Skene, *Old Chapel at Restalrig, 1818.* (Reproduced by permission of Edinburgh City Libraries)

MACIVOR: RESTALRIG



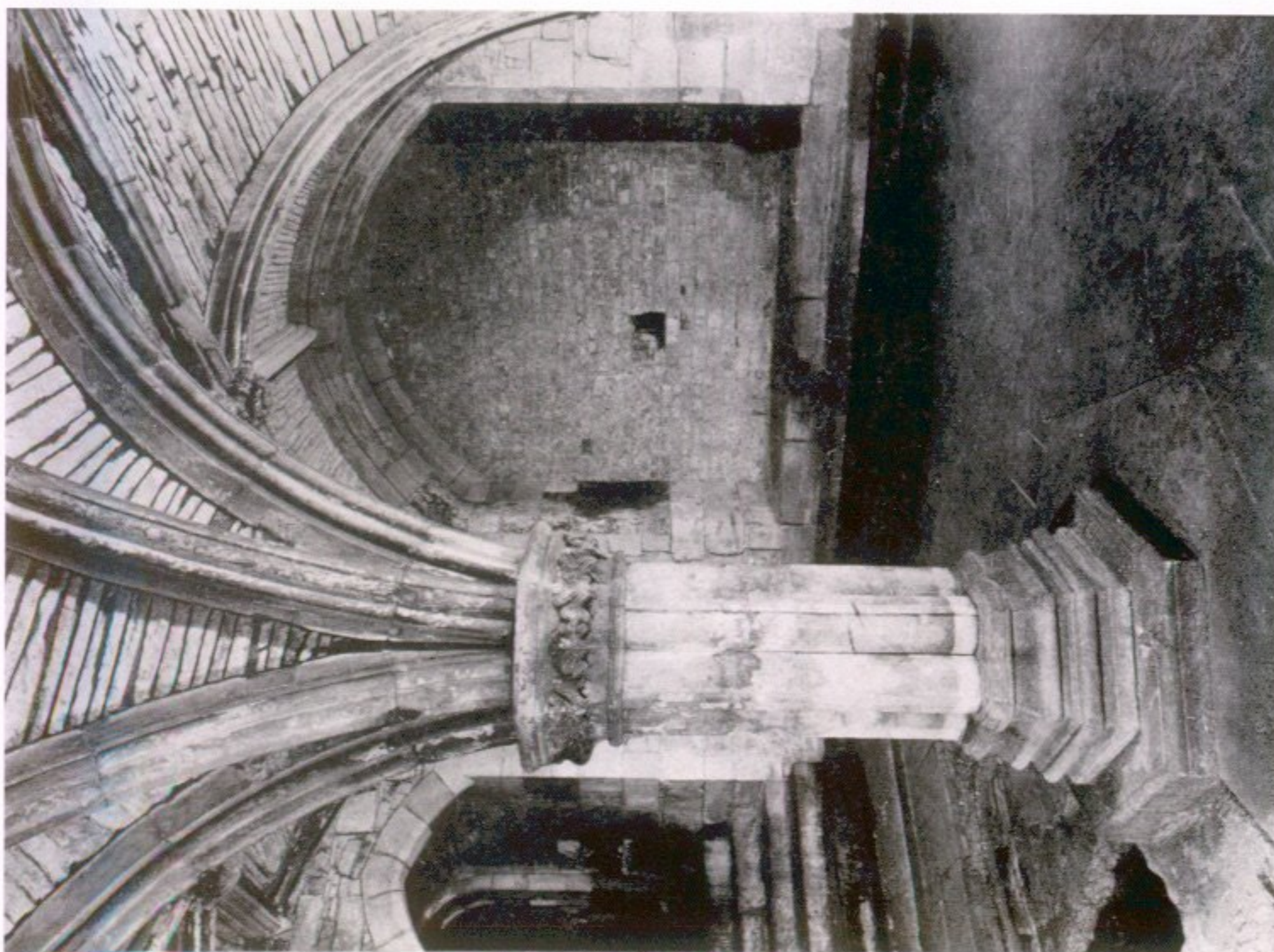
1. Restalrig church and hexagon from the SW.



2. Hexagon from the S.



2. Lower Chamber: bay, showing brick lining of 1907-8



1. Lower Chamber: central pier, door from churchyard (left) and recess in N. wall



1. Lower chamber of hexagon: vault. Interior stripped of harling and consolidated by Ministry of Works



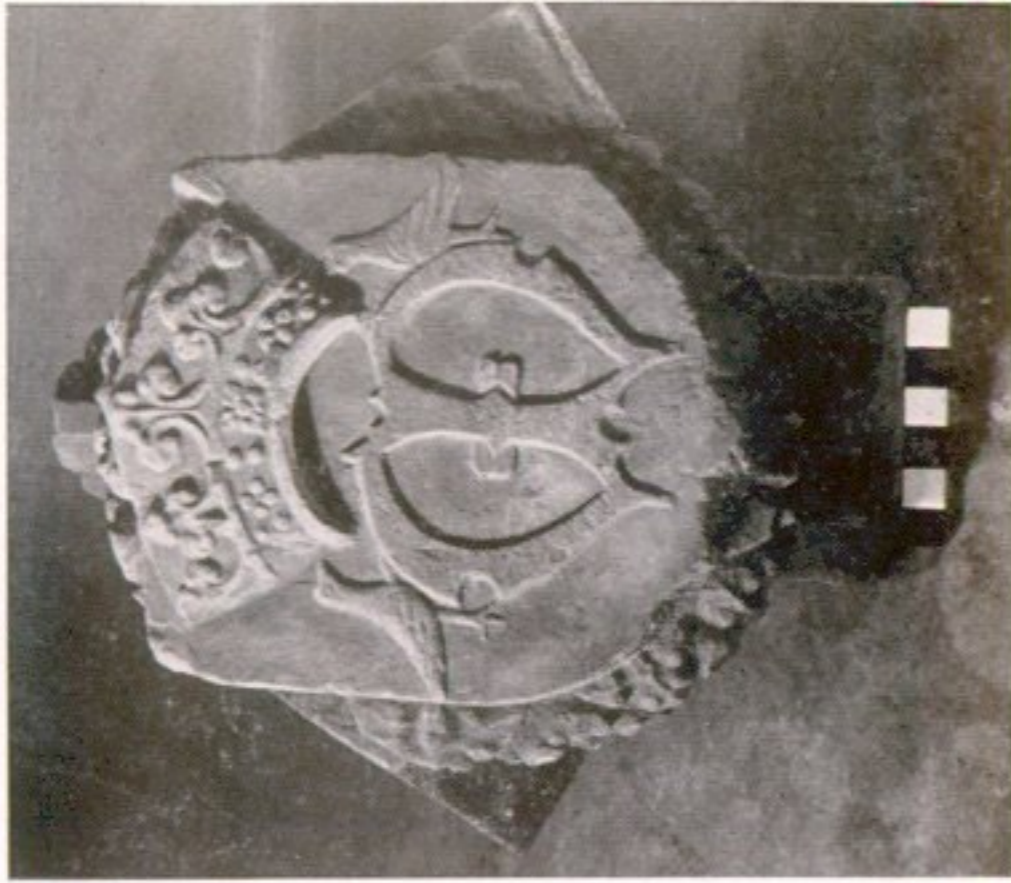
2. Upper chamber of hexagon: ashlar wall face and sill of aumbry or sacrament house in position; ribs of vault on floor

MACIVOR: RESTALRIG



Lower Chamber: vault panels re-harled

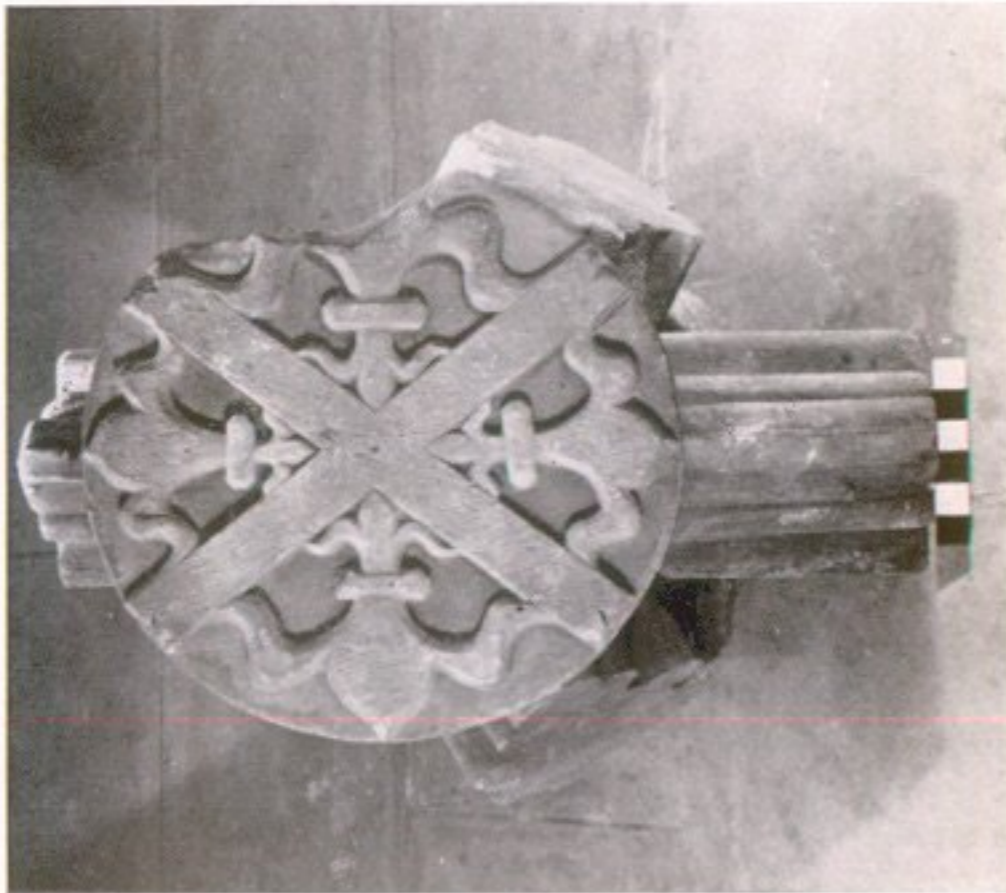
MACIVOR: RESTALRIG



3



6



2



5



1



4

Upper Chamber: bosses of vault