

I.

NOTICE OF REMAINS FOUND IN AN ANCIENT TOMB RECENTLY OPENED
IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF FORTROSE. BY JOHN STUART, Esq.,
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The ancient church of Rosemarkie is said to have been founded, under King Nectan, by St Boniface, an Italian, who, in the seventh or eighth century, is believed to have come into Scotland for the purpose of inducing the church there to conform to the practice of the Church of Rome ; and after founding churches in many parts of the country, to have settled at Rosemarkie, and to have built there a church, in which he was afterwards buried. It is also related of this

missionary that he baptized Nectan, King of the Picts; and that he first settled at Restennet, in Angus, which was certainly the site of an early ecclesiastical settlement.

The foundation of Rosemarkie is thus related by Wyntoun:—

“Sevyn hundyr wynter and saxtene,
 Quhen lychtare wes the Virgyne clene.
 Pape of Rome than Gregore
 The Secund, quahm of ye herd before,
 And Anastas than Empryowre,
 The fyrst yhere of hys Honowre,
 Nectan Derly wes than regnand
 Owre the Peychtis in Scotland.
 In Ros he foundy Rosmarkyne,
 That dowyd wes wyth kyngys syne,
 And made was a place cathedrale,
 Be-north Murrave severale;
 Quhare Chanownys ar Seculare
 Wndyr Saynt Bonyface lyvand thare.
 The tyme of this fundatyown
 Wes eftyre the Incarnatyowne,
 To be reknyd sex hundyr yhere.
 Quheter mare or les bot thare-by nere,
 Quhen Schyre Morys wes Emperoure,
 And held that state in gret honowre.”—(I. p. 138.)

Of course it is not now possible to speak precisely as to the connection of St Boniface with Rosemarkie as its founder; but the tradition is a very old one, and doubtless has a certain amount of fact as its foundation. The ancient seal of the Chapter of Ross has, at the dexter side, a figure of St Peter holding the keys in his right hand, and probably a chalice (?) in his left; at the sinister side is a figure of St Boniface in pontifical vestments, with a crozier in his left hand, the legend being S. CAPITOLI SCI. PETRI BONEFACII DE ROSE MARKIN. It is stated, in the Breviary of Aberdeen, that St Moloch was buried at Rosemarkie.

The bishoprick of Ross was founded, or re-founded, by King David I., between 1124 and 1128, at which time, and for about two centuries afterwards, the bishop was styled “*Episcopus Rosemarkensis*;” and it seems probable that during this time the bishop’s church was on the site of the old foundation of St Boniface.

The Cathedral Church of Ross, of which the ruins still exist, stood close to the town of Fortrose, or Chanonry; and, from the style of its architecture, seems to have been erected about the beginning of the fourteenth century.

“The style,” says Mr Neale, in his *Ecclesiological Notes*, “is the purest and most elaborate Middle-Pointed. The material, red sandstone, gave depth and freedom to the chisel; and the whole church, though not 120 feet long from east to west, must have been an architectural gem of the very first description.” (P. 53.) Soon after the Reformation, active steps were taken for hastening the ruin of this beautiful fabric. In 1572, King James VI. granted in heritage to his Treasurer, William Lord Ruthven, “the heill leid quhairwith the cathedrall kirk of Ros wes theikit, als weill principal kirk as queir and ilis thairof ellis tyrvit, tane of, and disponit vpoun as to be intromittit with and in place vnhandillit,” formerly belonging to the bishop and canons, and now in the king’s hands “throw being of the said cathedrall kirk na paroch kirk, but ane monasterye to sustene ydill belleis, and forfeiture of the bishop.”—*Privy Seal Records*.

The part of the cathedral yet remaining consists of the south aisle to the chancel and nave, and the detached chapter-house. In the arches which separated the aisle from the centre were several tombs. In one of them is a canopied tomb for a lady, said to have been Countess of Ross, “of which,” Mr Neale says, “this must have been one of the most beautiful monuments I ever saw.” In the *London Chronicle* of 12th October 1797 is an account of the discovery of the body of a bishop in the cathedral of Fortrose, supposed to have been buried more than 300 years.—*Keith’s Scottish Bishops*, p. 569, Notes.

In the most easterly arch is a canopied tomb (evidently formed at the building of the arch, as it is incorporated with the pillars on each side), on which are the remains of a bishop’s effigy. This tomb was recently opened, under the inspection of Mr Keith Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth. It was found to contain the remains of a full-grown man; these were deposited on a shelf of stone, from which two round holes, one at the nape of the neck and the other at the lower part of the body, descended to a lower shelf, about 6 or 8 inches beneath the upper one. The skeleton was quite entire, as well as the vestments in which it was enveloped. The body was covered to the knees in a tunic of reddish silk, and the legs were inserted in a long pair of silk stockings similar in fabric to the gloves which were on the hands. A narrow band woven of silk, and either gold or silver thread, was bound round the body from head to foot, a portion of which is shown (Fig. 1.); while a broader band (Fig. 2.), of a similar sort, was wound round the neck, having attached to it a substance resembling a long seal, lying on the left breast. This last band reached down to



Fig. 1.

the hands, which were joined on the breast. The bands are figured, of half the actual size¹ The bones were quite complete, of a yellow, smoked colour; only two teeth remained in the skull; but the right foot, with the exception of its being blackened and dried, was perfect, and was remarkably small. On the left side of the skeleton was a small piece of wood, which is conjectured to have been the crozier of the bishop. Through the kindness of Mr Stewart Mackenzie, specimens of the silk tunic, silk gloves and bands, are now laid before the Members for inspection; and portions of them are presented to the Museum of the Society.

I have thought it worth while, at the same time, to exhibit to the Society lithograph engravings of a sculptured cross recently exhumed from the cathedral at Fortrose, and of another stone, which seems to have formed part of a tomb. Both are of the richest character of sculpture, and resemble in style of ornament several of those curious monuments found on the north-east coasts of Scotland, and not unfrequently in connection with the sites of old religious establishments.

Fig. 2.

