

III.

NOTICE OF A SCULPTURED SARCOPHAGUS, AND OTHER SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS, RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN THE CHURCHYARD OF GOVAN. BY JAMES C. ROGER, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

On the 7th of December last, while the sexton of Govan was digging a grave at the south-east corner of the churchyard, which had not been previously disturbed within the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the parish, he came in contact with a stone of large dimensions, which was discovered to be a sarcophagus. This interesting relic rested about three feet below the surface, and between two elms of large growth, the roots of which, to the thickness of a man's leg, completely surrounded it. One of these trees, it may be remarked, is known by the name of the "Bell-tree," from the circumstance of the church bell, during the existence of the former place of worship, having been suspended on it. The sarcophagus, which is formed of a species of sandstone, was en-

¹ *Comptum Custumariorum burgi de Edinburgh, 27. Julii, 1508.—27. Junii, 1509.* (*Rotuli Scaccarii Regum Sctorum, no. 340*).

² *Bishop Lesley's History of Scotland, p. 80. Pinkerton's History of Scotland, vol. ii., pp. 68, 457, 458.*

³ *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Sctorum, vol. iii., fol. 207 (18th Feb. 1508-9).* (*MS., Gen. Regist. House, Edinb.*)

compassed with a brown mould, and rested on a substratum of sand. It was placed in a slanting position; the head, which pointed directly west, being elevated to within two feet of the surface, and the foot inclining downwards to the depth of three feet. It was without cover, and contained no human remains, or anything whatever, save the soil and a number of the smaller elm roots, which had gathered into it. Portions of the sides have been broken off in the process of removal to another part of the churchyard, where it has been meanwhile inclosed with a wooden railing, to preserve it from farther injury. The exterior of the sarcophagus presents traces of elaborate sculpture. It is divided into different compartments; the central division of the left side representing a hunting scene. This is the figure of a man on horseback, the upper portion of whose body is broken off, in front of whom is a stag, and the remains of the figure of another animal, probably that of a dog. Another panel, on the same side, at the head of the sarcophagus, has the figure of a horse (?) in the attitude of trampling upon another animal of smaller dimensions extended on its back. At a corner of the panel is the representation of a reptile coiled up. The figures of two compartments on the right of the sarcophagus represent (one in the position of the shoulder) four animals, but of what species it is difficult to determine,—two rolling on their backs, at the base, and two in a counter-position occupying the upper half of the panel. The division terminating with the length of the sarcophagus, on the right, evidently contains the representation of two horses. Other six compartments, alternating with those described, and including the panels of the head and foot of the sarcophagus, are decorated with rich carving, resembling two cords interlaced into a kind of fretwork, a style of sculpture known in architecture by the term *guilloche*. The figures of the respective compartments are slightly in relief, the space between being hollowed out, while the animals have been left flat, of the height of the original surface of the stone. On the hind quarter of the horse on which the rider is mounted appears a mark resembling the ancient form of the letter A, but which is probably only an indication of a caparison. Some fragments of the sarcophagus, sufficient to complete the figure of the horseman, have been preserved. These, when placed in their position, exhibit the figure of the rider cased in mail, with a sword depending from his girdle. The sarcophagus measures 6 feet 11 inches in length, 2 feet 2½ inches in breadth across the outside of the head, the breadth at the foot being 2 feet and 1 inch. The length of the cavity is 6 feet, and the width at the head, 16½ inches; centre 14½ inches, and at the foot 13 inches, slightly contracting as it descends. The depth of the cavity at the centre is 14½ inches. About the centre of the base, and two feet from the foot, the sarcophagus is perforated by a circular opening, measuring about 2½ inches in diameter, the upper

edges of which are hollowed out for the purpose of facilitating the egress of decomposing matter. In the angle formed by the end and left side of the sarcophagus (at the head) is a small cavity about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, and about 1 inch in diameter, within an inch of the upper edge of the coffin. As a work of art this sarcophagus is inferior to the one lately discovered at St Andrews, and would seem to be of greater antiquity. Another stone coffin was discovered, upwards of a century ago, in the gable of the old church of Dalziel, a limited description of which is to be found in the Statistical Account of that parish.

The interest excited by the discovery of this monument of early sculpture having led to further investigation, several other monuments, differing in kind, though scarcely of less interest, have been brought into view. The first of these (fig. A) consists of a solid block of freestone (placed upon its edge), measuring about a foot in thickness and 6 feet 9 inches in length at the base. The upper portion of the stone forms the representation of a marine animal, the idea of which has probably been taken from the walrus (?). The body, traversed by lines indicating plates or scales, and terminating at the lower part of the belly (about the centre of the stone), by a horizontal line falling into a slight curve towards the animal's posterior extremities, is furnished with rudely sculptured legs, disposed in the manner of an animal *couchant*. This monument, which presents the appearance of a fish's back (being rounded on the upper edge and tapering towards the animal's neck and posterior extremities), measures, from the base to the highest point on the line of the vertebræ, 2 feet 4 inches. The lower half of the stone, which seems to have been intended to fit into a pedestal, probably as the cover of a sarcophagus, is destitute of ornament, but bears evident marks of the chisel. On the reverse side less pains would seem to have been bestowed in the formation of the animal's legs, a circumstance which would lead to the supposition that this monument may have been intended to rest by the side of another of similar construction. Fig. B, another relic similar in character, somewhat resembles the appearance of the *tortoise*. The head is imperfectly defined, but the scales, particularly those of the right side, are elaborate. Round the lower edge is a border of cordwork, inlaid and interlaced, of which the workmanship is extremely beautiful. The reverse side is precisely similar, except the knot-work, which is differently disposed. This stone measures at base 6 feet 7 inches in length, 2 feet 5 inches from the base to the highest point on the curve of the back, and is in thickness about a foot. When viewed from above, it has the same fish-like appearance as the former, and like it rests upon its edge. Fig. H. consists of a block of stone larger in dimensions than either of the two former. It represents the memberless trunk of some imaginary monster. It measures 7 feet 8 inches in length, 2 feet 4 inches from

the base to the highest point of the ridge, and in girth over the top (beginning at the base on one side, and terminating at the same point on the opposite side) 5 feet 8 inches. Along the curve of the back is a ridge terminating at each end of the stone in an unhewn projection. On each side of the ridge a flat ledge or step intervenes between the ridge and the uppermost tier of scales. There are four tiers of these scaly representations formed along the curve, descending from the upper portion of the stone, to its base. The lower tier is skirted by a plain round moulding. At the termination of the tiers on each side, and proceeding from within a few inches of the base, and uniting with the unhewn projection at the top, is a border of interlaced knot-work. At each end of the stone is a kind of sculpture (see sketch) which may be expressed by the heraldic term *fretty*. The sculpture of this monument, it may be remarked, has been more carefully executed than that of the two former, as will be observed in the drawing. A portion of the top of the stone has been broken off.

A *fourth* relic¹ represents a scaly monster similar to the first, with head and members defined. At the posterior extremity, on both sides of the stone, and proceeding from the base of the monument to the top, is a border of runic knot-work. This stone, which measures about 18 inches in breadth, is superior in point of execution to the stone first described. Its situation within a private burying-ground, in close proximity to a modern sepulchral monument, precludes a more minute description. Regarding a fifth stone, known only to exist by its extremities projecting from beneath the erection referred to, no definite statement can be made.

These monuments, with the exception of the first (which stands by itself), are placed parallel to each other, at the distance of a few feet, their disposition being in the line of east and west. It would seem very doubtful, however, if they had originally rested in their present position.

Fig. C. of the sketch represents another variety of these relics. This stone has been exposed on the surface of the churchyard for upwards of sixty years. The sculpture, which, like the others, has been in the form of scales, is almost effaced. It may be remarked that the design of having been made to fit with another stone is in this instance more distinct. It has a cavity in its base of the depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, 6 feet 11 inches in length, and 7 inches wide; the outside length of this stone at the base being 7 feet 11 inches, and $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches across. This monument in form resembles an inverted boat, both ends being sterns. With the exception of the monument just described, these relics were sunk almost on a level with the surface of the churchyard, only a small portion of the ridge appearing above the turf.

¹ No sketch made of this monument.

Two stone *pillars* have also been discovered about the centre of the churchyard. One of these is shown on the sketch. It measures 6 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, in breadth at top 11 inches, and 14 inches at foot, its thickness being 6 inches. On one side is sculptured a cross, with a plain border; the reverse contains the figure of a man mounted on a mule (?). The other pillar (fig. I.) contains the time-worn representation of an equestrian figure, over which, and occupying the whole of the upper portion of the pillar, is a cross of interlaced knot-work, the whole within a plain border skirting the edge of the stone. Permission to raise this slab to the surface having been delayed, has prevented the reverse side from being examined. This pillar measures in length 5 feet 7 inches, and 2 feet 1 inch across the broadest part of the slab. It seems of greater antiquity than the former.

Another pillar of the same character, now set up in the grounds of Jordanhill, was taken out of the old kirk of Govan during the removal of that structure in 1762, in which it is probable these had also had a place.

Remains of sculptured stones, and covers of sarcophagi, being representations of the cross, in every variety of workmanship, lie scattered over the surface of the churchyard; others, ornamented by representations of swords and knights in full armour, have disappeared since the beginning of the century.

Excavations are at present being proceeded with, in the progress of which farther discoveries may be made.

Govan, January 12, 1856.

[Sketches of these different sculptured stones were exhibited, and presented to the Society; but, as drawings of them have since been included in the Spalding Club volume of Sculptured Stones, collected and edited by John Stuart, Esq., it was not thought necessary to have them re-engraved.

A cast of the Sarcophagus, executed by Mr Henry Laing, has been added to the Museum of the Society.]