

## III.

PRESENT CONDITION OF LINDORES ABBEY. By ALEXANDER LAING, Esq., F.S.A. SCOT., NEWBURGH, FIFE. (PLATE XX.)

My object in addressing the Society at present is to bring under their notice the plan and drawings of Lindores Abbey, executed by Thomas Ross, Esq., architect, Edinburgh, which are now laid before them, and to mention what has been recently done for the preservation of what remains of the buildings of the abbey.

At the time the Chartulary of Lindores was printed by the Abbotsford Club in 1841, the ruins were a shapeless mass; they were so completely hidden under mounds of their own rubbish, that even the most experienced in ecclesiastical structures could with difficulty make out the plan. The author of the "Characteristics of Old Church Architecture" says, in that very interesting work, "nothing beyond one or two broken details of first-pointed character are discoverable among the almost erased walls." The walls were covered with ivy of ancient growth, tending by its luxuriance to bring them down; and the mounds referred to were overgrown with hazel, holly, and other trees, so tangled and thick, that the place, from this cause and its utterly neglected condition, was known in the neighbourhood by no other name than "The Wilderness." This is now all changed. The whole rubbish has been cleared away down to the basement course; the ground has been levelled and laid down in grass, in a manner similar to that which has been so well done to the grounds of *St Andrews Cathedral*. The ground plan of the buildings is now distinctly seen, and the style of the architecture is apparent even to the uninitiated. For this we are indebted, in the first place, to the late Peter Hay Paterson of Carpow, Esq., the proprietor, who caused the ruins to be enclosed with a wall, and began the clearing out of the rubbish; and latterly to T. Stuart Anderson, occupant of the abbey, and a Fellow of the Society, who has continued the good work with praiseworthy zeal and excellent taste.

The extreme length of the church is 195 feet; the nave measuring 132 feet, and the choir 45 feet. The transepts measure 110 feet from north

to south. The nave had only an aisle on the north side; the north wall of the cloister court forming the south wall of that portion of the church, a peculiarity which is observable in the plans of Hexham, Lanercost, and Bolton. The absence of a pier at the south-east corner of the nave shows that there could not have been a central tower. The aisle was separated from the nave by arches supported on piers of the same design as those exhibited in Mr Ross's drawings, but not a vestige of them remains, and the north wall of the aisle has also been entirely removed; those which have been removed are distinguished by a lighter shade on the plan. The walls of the choir to the height of about 15 feet still stand; it appears to have had two narrow lights on each side, but no vestige *in situ* of the mullions of these or of the great eastern window remains. About 8 feet in height of the walls of the great western tower still stands. Judging from what remains, it appears to have been, both in respect to its position and design, a counterpart of the existing square tower of Brechin cathedral, but far more massive; the buttresses are of much greater width and solidity, and the great thickness of the walls shows that the tower must originally have been of great strength. About twenty years ago, eight or ten steps of a spiral stair leading to the top of the tower were uncovered, but shortly afterwards the most of them were removed. A heavy iron key of antique shape was found at the foot of the stair, but it too has disappeared. In clearing out the interior of the tower about four years ago, Mr Anderson found an iron cannon ball and several of stone; also two iron keys, one large and the other smaller, of antique design: they are now presented to the Society.

Before the lands of the Abbey farm came into the occupation of Mr Anderson, much of the lime rubbish was carted away for the enrichment of the neighbouring fields. In doing this large portions of the building which had long been buried, and had thus escaped the early depredators, were laid bare; among others, the piers of the pillars already referred to as running betwixt the north aisle and the nave; some of them had five or six courses remaining, and were as sharp in outline as the day they left the workman's chisel; their massive strength and the beauty of their clustered shafts must have formed a feature of marked grandeur in the church; but these, and a large portion of an elegant arch of wide span

between the north transept and the small chapel on its east side, were sacrilegiously removed.

The only entire arch remaining, excepting the gateway of an outer court, is the eastern arch of the slype, which formed the entrance to the cloister court from the east, and the main entrance to the Abbey. This arch (which is figured from Mr Ross's drawing, see Plate XX.) having recently shown symptoms of giving way, the Honourable Mrs Paterson of Mugdrum, with a care deserving of commendation, caused the superincumbent rubbish which was weighing it down to be removed, and the arch to be so protected as to secure its preservation. A very accurate photograph of this arch is exhibited and presented to the Society.

When Mr Anderson was proceeding with the work of clearing out the ruins, he noticed, in the south gable of the chapel on the east side of the north transept, alongside of an aumbry, an opening that had been partially built up; on removing the building, he observed two *piscinas* side by side, one of them round and the other fluted, both as sharp and clean as when newly hewn. The mason-work which concealed them was so rude, that it bore no mark of a tradesman's hands, but had the appearance of having been executed for the purpose of concealing the sacred receptacles, evidently to preserve them from profane uses. Both of these *piscinas* are also shown on Mr Ross's plan.<sup>1</sup> (See Plate XX.)

Another *piscina*, concealed by accumulated rubbish, has been discovered in the south end of the transept; it is round, and was not so clean as the two others. Close by it on the same wall a portion of a mural monument has also recently been laid bare; what remains of the arch is of red sandstone, and is of a fluted design. No part of the monument itself remains, unless a fragment of a winged horse, found at its base, be reckoned so.

The two small coffins, marked in Mr Ross's plan lying side by side in the choir, are the coffins of two children of David, Earl of Huntingdon, the founder of the abbey. They are hewn out of solid red sandstone: the largest measures  $30\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches at the widest part; and the smallest,  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. When discovered, infants' bones were found in them. Seven other coffins have been dis-

<sup>1</sup> A photograph showing the position of these *piscinas* in the church is presented to the Society; also a photograph of the remaining arch of the slype, shown in Mr Ross's plan and drawings.

covered from time to time, but on none of them was there any inscription to indicate who was buried in them. The most elaborate is the one marked in the plan at the north end of the transept inside; it was the only one exposed before the recent clearances, and for this reason, perhaps, has been popularly assumed to be the coffin of the unfortunate first Duke of Rothesay, who was buried in the abbey.

The broken slab having the figure of an ecclesiastic sculptured in relief upon it (see Plate XX.), is part of the lid of the coffin near the door of the chapter-house.

About thirty-five years ago, a massive signet ring of gold, having a finely cut gem set in it, was discovered among the ruins; it was, if I am not incorrectly informed, retained by the person who found it. He shortly afterwards left for another part of the country, and is since dead, so that in all likelihood the ring has fallen into hands ignorant of its history. A small fragment of a glass chalice has also been found among the rubbish, and is now presented.

Such are the more recent discoveries at Lindores Abbey. The ruins are now carefully protected, and all further devastation stayed. Instead of being an unsightly mass, they are now objects of intelligible contemplation, open to all who take an interest in the relics of the past. But the devastations in our own time, mentioned in this brief narrative, show how necessary it is to keep a watchful eye, if we would preserve even the fragments of the great ecclesiastical structures of a former age.

A photograph of one of "the vastly big pear trees" of the abbey, mentioned by Sir Robert Sibbald in his "History of Fife," published one hundred and sixty years ago, is exhibited. The trunk measures 17 feet 10 inches in circumference, one foot from the ground, and doubtless is of an age anterior to the Reformation. It is believed to be the largest pear tree in Scotland, if not in Britain, and still bears abundant crops.

I have recently had put into my hands, by the kindness of Mr George Wilson, S.S.C., Edinburgh, factor for Edmund Paterson Balfour Hay, Esq., proprietor of the abbey, a rental of the abbey possessions. The manuscript is not dated, but it is signed "Jo. Nicolson," and I am informed by David Laing, Esq., of the Signet Library, to whom the manuscript was submitted, that it must have been drawn up about the year 1580. It is far more minute than any rental of Lindores hitherto known; but as I

hope to have another opportunity of publishing it, I will not trouble the audience with it at this time.

I have only to add, that the thanks of the Society are specially due to the Honourable Mr Paterson and to Mr T. S. Anderson for their care and preservation of the ruins, and also to Mr Ross for making the accurate plan and drawings which have been exhibited.



FURN. at A on Plan.



View of Niche



Broken figure lying against West End.



Door at B on Plan



Sketch of Door Jamb.



Plan of Base

