

II.

NOTICES OF ST PALLADIUS' CHAPEL, AND OF A COFFIN-SLAB, AT FORDOUN. BY ANDREW JERVISE, Esq., F.S.A., Scot.

Having elsewhere spoken of the tradition concerning the reputed murder of King Kenneth, while on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Palladius at Fordoun, and noticed the more important points of historical and antiquarian interest in the parish,¹ I shall here confine myself to a few observations regarding the alleged antiquity of the present building of St Palladius' chapel, and a sepulchral monument which was recently found within it.

The chapel, which is a plain one-storey building upon the south side of the kirkyard, is about 38 feet in length, 18 feet in width, and 8 feet high. A recess, with circular top and mouldings (6 feet 7 inches by 5 feet 2 inches) is in the east end, and there, according to tradition, was placed the shrine which contained the bones of St Palladius. But, although the owners of the recess cannot now be identified, it is much more probable, if we are to judge by similar objects in other churches, that it had been rather a recess tomb than the receptacle for the shrine referred to.

It is somewhat remarkable, although the Wisharts of Pitarrow were proprietors and residents in the eastern part of Fordoun from earliest record down to the first half of the 17th century,² that the site of their burial-place at Fordoun is unknown.

Whether the recess tomb had been erected by the Wisharts or the Falconers is uncertain; but a vault below the east half of the chapel, and

¹ Proceedings of Society, ii. 464-6; Memorials of Angus and Mearns.

² Reg. Vet. et Nig. de Aberbrothoc.

immediately in front of the recess, is sometimes called the *Glenfarquhar*, more frequently the *Falconers Vault*. It is said that certain of the Falconers of Glenfarquhar lie there, also some of the parish ministers.

If the vault was constructed by the Falconers, which is not improbable, it cannot be of older date than the early part of the 17th century, as it was during that time the Falconers first acquired property in Fordoun.

The Monboddo burial-place is in the north-west corner of the chapel, where a chest-shaped tomb presents bold carvings of the Irvine and Douglas arms, together with mortuary emblems. It also bears the following interesting inscription, the first portion of which is carved in raised capitals round the top or lid, and the latter, or eulogistic part, is incised upon the south side of the tomb :—

C. R. I: E. D.

“1668: In spem beate resurrectionis hic veluti sffitvs thalamo svaviter in Domino obdormit dnx ROBERTVS IRVIN, a Monboddo, Dominvs, qvi pie fatis cessit 6 Ivliv, anno salvtis hvmanæ 1652. et ætatis svæ anno 80.

Conjvge, progenie felix, virtvtis, honesti
Cultor, et antiqvvs exorivndvs avis,
Hoc cvbat IRVINVS monvmento. Cætera norvnt
Mvsa et vitiferis Seqvana clarvs aqviv.”¹

It is clear that no part of the present building of St Palladius' chapel can lay claim to great antiquity. The east gable appears to be the most ancient portion, and may be safely set down as not older than about the close of the 15th century. The aumbry at the north door, with its arched top, is probably the next oldest feature of the building, and it appears to be in much the same style as the aumbries and doors of the old kirks of Fetteresso, Cushnie, Rathen, and some others, which were built during the first half of the 17th century. Still, a very different tale is told by the following inscription, which was recently placed into the west wall, and over the door of the chapel:—

“ST PALLADIUS' CHAPEL.

ERECTED A.D. 452—RESTORED A.D. 1872.”

This piece of *Aiken Drum*-ism, to which there is something similar upon the old kirks of Gamrie, in Banffshire, and Rattray, in Aberdeenshire,

¹ Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Burial-Grounds in North-East of Scotland, 4to. Edin. 1875, pp. 62, 356.

has arisen by mixing up two very different events, namely, the period which tradition ascribes to the settlement of St Palladius at Fordoun, and the time of the building of the chapel.

The notion of "Erected A.D. 452," as applied to any part of the present building, is too absurd to need any comment; and the work of *Restoration* in 1872, which was rendered compulsory by the falling in of the roof, merely consisted in the chapel getting a new fir door with iron bands of antique pattern, and a new, though certainly not a very substantial roof; in the plaster being knocked off the walls, and in the stonework of the interior undergoing the process of a rough chiselling, of which, unfortunately, the piscina has had a share.

The piscina or lavatory, which is cut out of a single piece of freestone, is by far the "oldest piece of furniture" connected with the chapel, and must have belonged to an earlier building than the present. It is built into the south side of the recess tomb, and is here represented :—



Although Fordoun is admittedly one of the earliest seats of Christianity in the north, and called "the mother church of the Mearns," it is curious to find that it was much later in being recognised as a *church* properly speaking, than almost any other in the county.

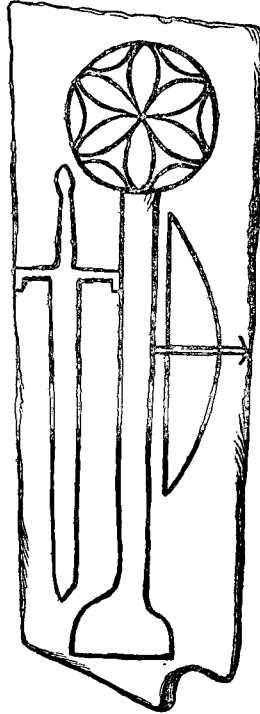
It is frequently mentioned in the records of the Priory of St Andrews,

from about 1183, but only as *a chapel*;¹ and, so far as I have noticed, it had not the designation of *a church* until 1244, when it was dedicated by Bishop David.² It was one of the mensal churches of the diocese, and is said to have been given to the Priory of St Andrews by Robert the Bruce.³

The traditions of Bishop Schevez having presented the kirk of Fordoun with a costly shrine in which to hold the relics of St Palladius, and of its being stolen by Wishart of Pitarrow about the time of the Reformation, are among the points which have been elsewhere noticed;⁴ but it ought to be stated that the sculptured stone, which tradition has associated with the fate of King Kenneth, and which was too long "left out in the cold," has now been placed within the chapel.⁵ It is fixed to the north wall with iron hooks, near the sepulchral slab which was lately discovered there.

It was in 1872, when the chapel was being repaired, that the workmen came upon this slab, which had been used, time out of memory, as the inside lintel of the north door of the chapel. It is about 4 feet 10 inches long, by about 20 inches in breadth.

The figures are all incised, and (as shown by the accompanying woodcut) two of the objects represent a sword and a stringed bow and arrow. The shaft which runs up the middle of the stone, with a curious bulging base and ornamented circular top, are common features in



¹ Reg. Prior. S. And., p. 59 *et sub.*

² Robertson's *Concilia Scotiae*, p. 300.

³ Lyon's *Hist. of St Andrews*, ii. p. 268.

⁴ Mem. Angus and Mearns, pp. 80-90.

⁵ Engraved in vol. i. pl. lxvii. of "*Sculptured Stones of Scotland.*" It may be stated that Boethius' story of "The Murder of King Kenneth," is given in a ballad of that name, printed for the booksellers (8 pp.)

coffin-slabs; and while there is room for conjecturing that the shaft may represent some sort of rest or staff for the soldier or sportsman, and the top or floral portion a target or shield, the whole is possibly meant to represent nothing else than simply a cross.

Although I have seen a good number of these monuments, this is the first I have found with the figures of the bow and arrow. Mr Cutt, who gives two examples of the same objects (one at Papplewick, Notts, the other at Bakewell, Derbyshire), seems to think that the bow and arrow have reference to the office of a forest ranger.¹ But it is quite likely that these objects had adorned the tombs of others who had a taste for field sports, which, in old times, was more a necessity than a pastime; and as the north and east of Fordoun still afford ample scope for those who indulge in the sports of the dog and the gun, its attractions in these points had been much greater in early times when there was but little cultivation and but few residents in the glens. Record informs us regarding the district that the monks of Arbroath employed their great territory of Glenfarquhar for the pasture of cattle and swine, &c.²

In the absence of inscription and armorial insignia, there is no knowing, at this distance of time, to whom the coffin-slab had belonged. It had probably covered the grave of some person of local importance; and, as it is of the same type as the slabs which were common to Scotland during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is just possible that it may have belonged either to the Wisharts or the Strachans, who were contemporary lairds in Fordoun. Being in a rude and late style of art, I am inclined to think that it belongs rather to the latter than to the former period.

So far as now known, the Wisharts were the only resident proprietors in the east of Fordoun before the time of the Bruce; but in 1342 Thomas Strathdwyne had a grant of the greater part of the old Cumin property in the district.³ Among other lands which were subsequently acquired by the Strachans were those of Monboddo, from which they assumed their designation; and it is a noteworthy fact (although it cannot be considered as proving to what period the slab belonged), that it was found in 1872 in close proximity to the Monboddo burial-place.

The Strachans of Monboddo having failed in the male line, the property

¹ Sepulchral Slabs and Crosses, pls. xxvii. xlvii.

² Reg. Vet. de Aberb.

³ Reg. Vet. de Aberb., p. 13.

passed by marriage to one of the Irvines of Drum. In like manner Monboddo came to a son of Burnett of Leys, and the celebrated Lord Monboddo was the last male representative of this branch of the Burnetts. He was succeeded by his daughter, Mrs Kirkpatrick Williamson, grandmother of the present Laird of Monboddo.

I have long been of opinion that the swords and axes, &c., which are represented upon coffin-slabs, as well as the more familiar objects of combs and mirrors, &c., upon the older sculptured stones, are, as a rule, of the natural size; and that these were made by placing the object upon the stone, and carefully tracing its outline upon the surface. By this means a reality is given to the different articles represented—often accompanied by a minuteness of detail—the value of which cannot be overrated by those who care to inquire into the progress of civilization, whether at home or abroad.