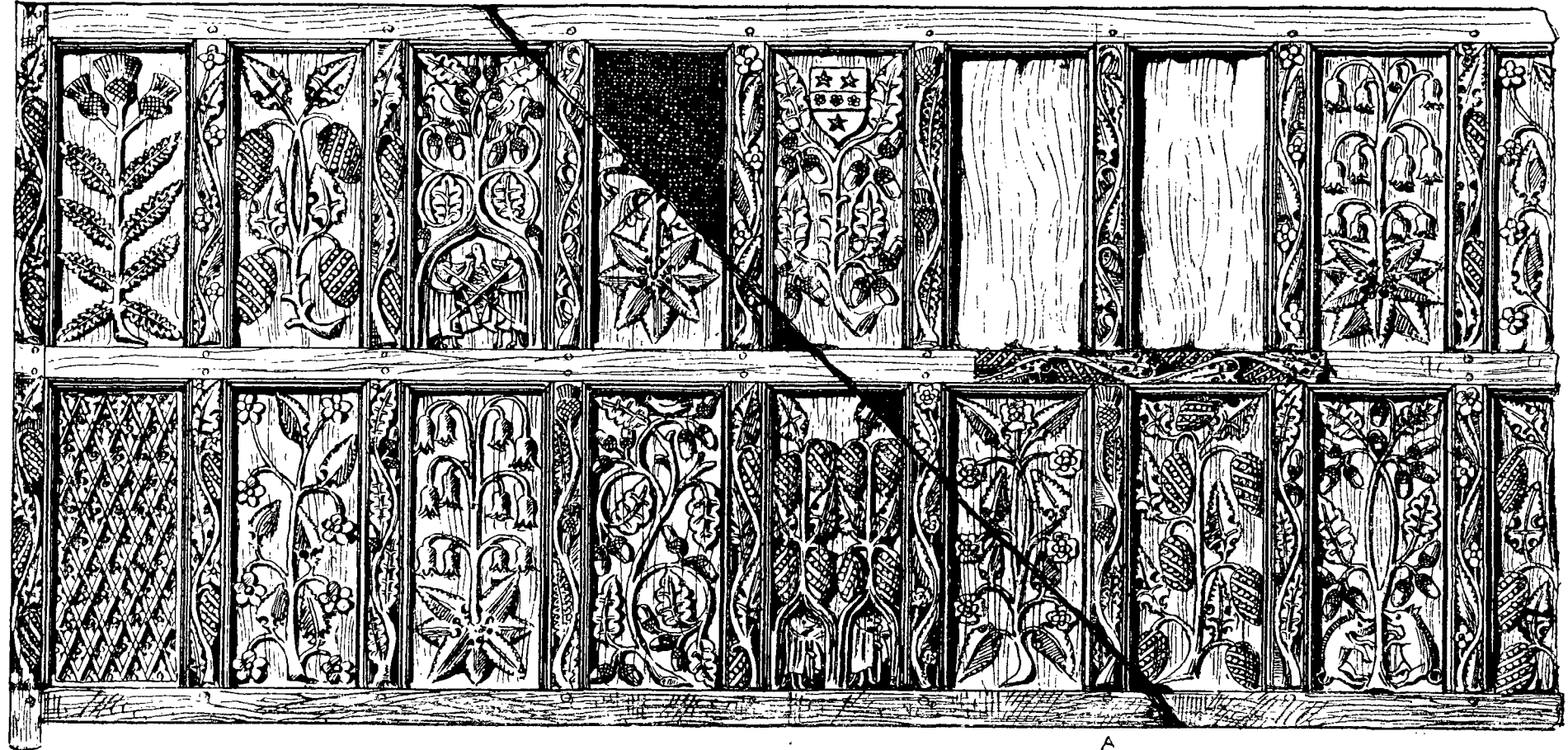


# Old Scots Wooden Panelling.



Scale <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> <sup>6</sup>/<sub>16</sub> <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> 1 2 3 Feet



## I.

### NOTICE OF A CARVED OAK DOOR AND EIGHTEEN PANELS, FROM AN OLD HOUSE IN MONTROSE. BY JOHN J. REID, ADVOCATE, QUEEN'S AND LORD TREASURER'S REMEMBRANCER, F.S.A. SCOT. (PLATE I.)

These pieces of carved oak, when discovered, formed the partition between two garrets in an old house in Montrose, pulled down about three or four years ago. The panels had been severed diagonally to fit the sloping roof on either side, and the door was in the centre. When found they were covered with several coats of paper and whitewash, encrusted with dirt and dust. The house was the property of the late Mr. Barclay, and was sold by him to the North British Railway Company, by whom it was taken down, the carvings being acquired by Messrs. Japp of Montrose, from whom Mr. Campbell, F.S.A., and I purchased them about nine months ago.

The wood consists of—(A.) A long piece of carved panelling ; (B.) A door with six carved and two plain panels.

*Panelling*—(A.) The panelling when it was originally sent from Montrose was in several pieces. The greater part consisted of two triangular portions, and these were found to fit one another, exactly making two rows of spaces for panels one above another. The upper row contained nine spaces, and the lower the same number, but in the upper row two panels, the sixth and seventh, were entirely wanting, and a large portion

of the fourth also. The lower panels were almost perfect except the ninth, of which about one-half was missing along with a similar portion of the corresponding upper row panel. Two other panels (fig. 1) were

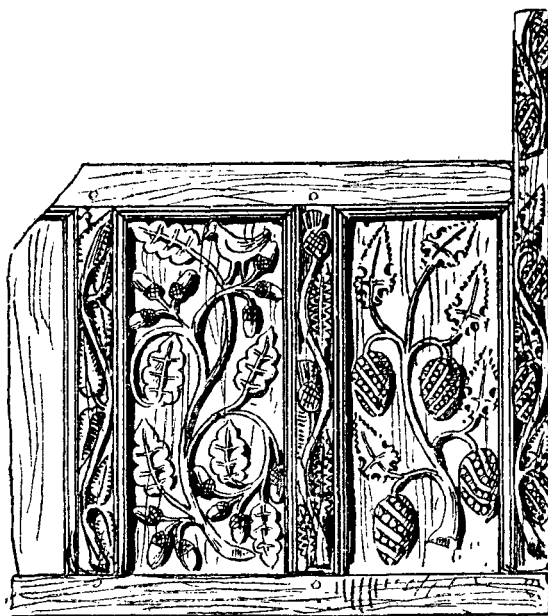


Fig. 1. Additional panels forming part of end of panelling.

found complete, corresponding to the broken end of the ninth lower panel, and this, together with the fact that the end of these two separated panels was manifestly the end of the carvings, leads me to conclude that originally there were twenty-two panels in all, eleven above and eleven below. Mr. Campbell has judiciously placed the two separate panels in the vacant spaces, the sixth and seventh of the upper row, and by an admirable restoration of the other injured panels, a complete length of 9 feet 9½ inches, with a height of 4 feet 6 inches is placed before you to-night. The accurate way in which the pieces, so barbarously sawn asunder,

fitted together, leaves no room for doubt that they originally formed one. Nearly all the beautiful tracery of the interspaces had been torn off when we received the carvings, but fortunately sufficient was left *in situ*, together with small detached pieces, to enable the carver to reproduce very perfectly the original work.

(B.) The door (fig. 2), while in some details differing from the panelling, bears generally a strong resemblance to it. Perhaps the most marked peculiarity is seen in the niched interspaces of the six upper and carved panels, and although I have

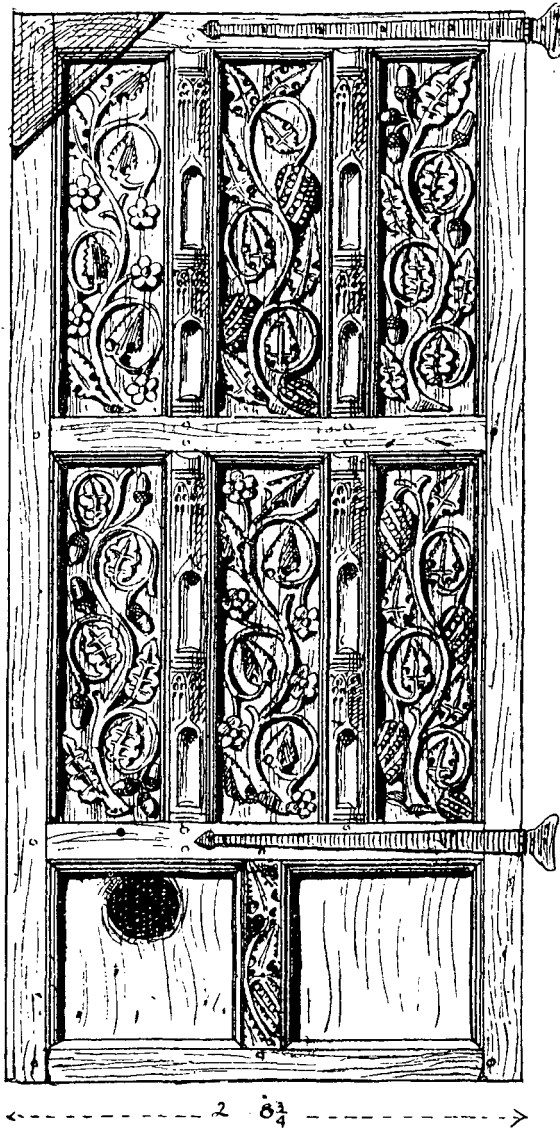


Fig. 2. Door associated with the panelling.

made considerable search, and have either seen personally or examined drawings of the most curious among the old Scots carved doors, I have failed to find anything that corresponds to these unique niches. The scroll-work tracery on the panels is extremely interesting, and in the form of the scrolls bears a decided resemblance to certain carvings that have come from St. Andrews. None of the carvings round the two lowest panels of the door remained except in the centre interspace, and that shows an unmistakable likeness to the carved interspaces of the panelling I have already referred to. From this portion left, and from that on the panelling, it will be possible to restore the carving all round the door, there being evidences on the wood that this had been its original condition. The corner at the top which had been sawn off has also been replaced. On close examination I discovered that the wood of the two lowest panels (one of them having a "cat-hole") was of considerably later date than the rest, and accordingly they will be removed and replaced by a reproduction of the curious checker-work in No. 1 of the lower row of Mr. Campbell's panels.

The difficulty we have now presented to us is that of assigning to these carved woods any satisfactory origin. That they are of a very high order of merit any careful inspection will show, and I have on this point the unanimous opinion of those far better able to judge than I can pretend to be.

#### INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

The best evidence in such cases is that supplied by the objects themselves, and we have here something tangible on which to proceed.

(1) *The Shield*.—Taking up first the examination of the panelling it will be seen that the fifth panel, now the centre one of the restored wood, in the upper row, contains a shield bearing certain arms, and with the kind aid of Mr. William Fraser, I think the question whose arms those are may be deemed pretty accurately settled.

*Description of Arms*.—The arms may be thus described: three roses on a fess, between two mullets in chief, and one in base.

A search among the various coats in that part of Scotland reveals the fact that these arms very nearly coincide with those of the family of Panter or Paniter, once of Newmanswalls, near Montrose, and the history of that family leads, as I hope to show, to the conclusion that it is their arms we see upon this shield.

Jervise gives the arms of Panter with an engraving of them from Arbroath Abbey as "On a fess with three roundels, in chief a crozier between two mullets, with a rose in base." The rose especially constituted a difficulty, but Mr. Fraser has shown me, engraved in his edition of the *Cartulary of Cambuskenneth*, an impression of the seal of Patrick Panter, abbot of that foundation, which places it beyond doubt that the arms were: "On a fess three roundels, between two mullets in chief and one in base." The rose at Arbroath is possibly only a disfigured mullet, and at any rate the seal would certainly be the safest evidence. When we remember how common variations are in early coats, the identity of the arms on the panel with those of the seal can hardly be doubted, for the three roses there given were perhaps only the result of an attempt by the carver to ornament the plain roundels—or, as has been suggested with even greater probability, a "difference" in allusion to Montrose and its arms.

(2.) *The Thistle*.—The left hand top panel contains a representation of a thistle with singular resemblance to the photograph Mr. Anderson has given me of a single remaining panel in the ancient Abbot's house at Arbroath, now town property. A certain *Walter Panter* of the Newmanswalls family was twentieth Abbot of Arbroath, from 11th December 1411–1473, when he died.

(3.) *The Birds*.—Jervise mentions that in the chapter-house or sacristy at Arbroath containing the Panter arms already described, and built it is believed by Abbot Panter, there are on the capitals of two columns "floral ornaments, and the fanciful freak of birds sitting upon trees picking at the branches." A comparison of photographs of these columns I had taken last week with the *third* panel in the *upper* and the *fourth* in

the *lower* row, shows similarity of idea between the Arbroath Panter building and these Montrose panels.

(4.) *The Grotesques*.—Finally, it may be well to notice the grotesques on the *third* panel in the *upper* and the *fifth* in the *lower* row, representing swine dressed as monks, and indicating a date, certainly pre-Reformation, but probably when the spirit of license had become greatly developed.

If, moreover, Panter is the family represented, there are other features in the history of Montrose and of that family that strengthen the case and point to a definite period as the date of the work.

#### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

(1.) *Convent of Black Friars*.—When we turn for corroboration to the *History of the Old Town of Montrose*, we learn that in 1230 Alan the Durward founded and dedicated to the Virgin a Convent of Black Friars close to Montrose, on a site conjectured to be that of St. Mary's Links.

In 1516, this convent or hospital, having fallen into decay, was removed by the authority of an Act of Parliament to a place a mile nearer the town, in the Sandhaugh, where "at no distant date its remains were visible." The monks, however, in a few years prayed to be allowed to return to the former site, as they were disturbed in their devotions by the noise and traffic of "horses and currocks." It is not known whether their prayer was granted or not. Some of the ancient hospital lands are still administered by the town council of Montrose for "the poor in Christ Jesus."

(2.) *Abbot Panter's Hospital*.—It is, however, when we examine into the circumstances of this change of residence of these Dominicans that the interest of the whole history in connection with these carvings arises, for it is found that the influence which obtained the Act of Parliament was that of *Patrick Panter*, Bishop of Ross and Abbot of Cambuskenneth,

chief secretary to James IV., and, after his death at Flodden, trusted adviser of Queen Margaret.

Panter was born at Newmanswalls, near Montrose, in 1470, three years before the death of his relative Abbot Walter of Arbroath. He became Abbot of Cambuskenneth in 1510, and resigned in 1517 in favour of Alexander Milne, afterwards first Lord President of the Court of Session. Panter died at Paris when on a special mission to the French Court in 1519. His signature is given by Mr. Fraser in facsimile.

When Abbot Panter in 1516 built the new hospital of Montrose he endowed it with various lands, and reserved to himself and his heirs the patronage and a burial-place in the choir.

*General Conclusions.*—It seems, therefore, highly probable that these carved panellings are part of the internal fittings of Panter's Hospital, and therefore they would have a date about 1515. From the circumstance of the door being found along with them, its age may be presumed not to be very different, although possibly it may have been brought from the older and ruinous Convent of St. Mary.

The date of the door was pronounced by a good judge, who saw it alone, without the panelling to guide him, to be about 1480, but I will venture merely to say that it is entirely made without nails with wooden pegs, and that the workman who repaired both it and the panels found the wood of the door in appearance and grain older than that of the other carvings.

The conjecture has been hazarded that these panels came from the Old Castle of Montrose, a ruin before 1488, but I had on Saturday an opportunity of examining several panels and carvings undoubtedly obtained from that fortress, and the whole style and appearance of them utterly differs from those forming the subject of this notice. Again, yet another theory has been pressed upon my notice, namely, that the carvings came from the Panter pew in the Old Church of Montrose. Against this there is really no stronger evidence than the actual appearance of the carvings themselves, utterly and entirely differing as they do from any of the



carved wood known to have come from that church. Old persons say they can remember being told that these carvings were from the Old Church of Montrose pulled down between 1780 and 1790, but if this be the case that merely will add another link to their history, as they must have been for some reason placed, probably as lumber, in the Old Church at an earlier date, on their removal from one of the ancient hospitals. It may be added that from the rough unwrought appearance of the back, both of the door and the panelling, there is good reason to believe that both were placed in such a way that the back was against a wall, or at least not facing any conspicuous place.

The date fixed (1515) errs probably rather in being too late than too early, at least the character of the carvings inclines me to think so. One can but regret the absence of the two panels that stood sixth and seventh in the original row of eleven, because, seeing the fifth contains a coat of arms, it is not unreasonable to suppose that upon the central missing panel may have been the arms of the hospital, and on the other perhaps that of some other abbot or princely founder.