

IV.

NOTES (1) OF THE DISCOVERY OF A GLASS CUP IN A STONE COFFIN AT PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL, AND (2) OF ENCAUSTIC TILES WITH INTERLACED PATTERNS, FROM FORDINGTON, ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, DORCHESTER, AND MILTON ABBEY CHURCH, DORSET. By J. T. IRVINE, F.S.A. *Scot.*

1. The account given in the *Proceedings* of the Antiquaries of Scotland for 1885-6, p. 136, &c., of the finding by Mr Taylor at Airlie, in Forfarshire, of the glass vessel there described, is so interesting that I am induced to send you an account of a like discovery made in a stone coffin at Peterborough, in 1876. Towards the end of that year, the Chapter had drainage made through the Cathedral Close. To this the rain water from the stack pipes of the building was to be led by smaller branches. During excavations round the east end of the New Building for one of these branches, the workmen came across a number of stone coffins, which of necessity had to be removed. The space here was part of the site of the cemetery of the monks, though not of its most ancient portion which lay to south of the choir. In one of these coffins, said to have been placed nearly central to the east end of the "New Work," the cup was found, and within a few days afterwards was seen by the Rev. Canon Marsham Argles, and by him placed for safety in the case in the Cathedral library wherein "Swapham" and their other valuable MS. are kept. Lapse of time, together with the death of the principal workman employed, now, I fear, renders hopeless the recovery of evidence to discover the particular coffin in which the cup was found. The coffins themselves, with such of their covers as remained, were placed outside the east wall of the south transept, where they now remain. None present marks sufficient to fix a date with safety, nor do they differ from that class intended for use entirely below the surface. Their material is the Barnack stone, whose quarries were used in Roman times, and which was known prior to the Conquest for its admirable tenacity and durability, well exemplified in the Saxon tower of its parish church, the most richly ornamented and remarkable tower of that date in England.

From the earliest times these stone coffins appear to have been kept

in stock at Barnack, to supply the demand for them. Those of Roman date only differ from those of the Gothic Age in being mostly about equally square at both ends, having somewhat greater inside depth; and wanting the Christian cruciform stems, or keel ridges on their massive lids, as seen in Roman specimens placed for preservation in the churchyards of Chesterton and Waternewton Churches.

The cup, as shown by the engraving in fig. 1, is in very good preservation, which curious circumstance marks the discovery of all. Its colour



Fig. 1. Glass Cup, from a Stone Coffin at Peterborough
($2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height).

is a beautiful clear cobalt tint (slightly greenish), differing in so far from the fine clear glass of that found in Orkney. The size differs little from that found at Airlie schoolhouse. The Peterborough cup, however, has a handle on the one side, twisted so as to leave two small holes through which a cord might pass. The bottom has no rim or rings, merely a slight trace of the junction with the glassblower's rod, apparently *cut* while the glass was hot. The twist of the glass material during formation is very distinct. Its texture also contains abundant small air bubbles. The height outside is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches to the $2\frac{1}{8}$ of the Airlie one, and an overall width of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches to its 3.

A few further notes possessing possible bearing on the consideration of dates may be added.

Medes-ham-Stead Monastery is said to have been founded in A.D. 655.

Destroyed by "the Danes," 870.

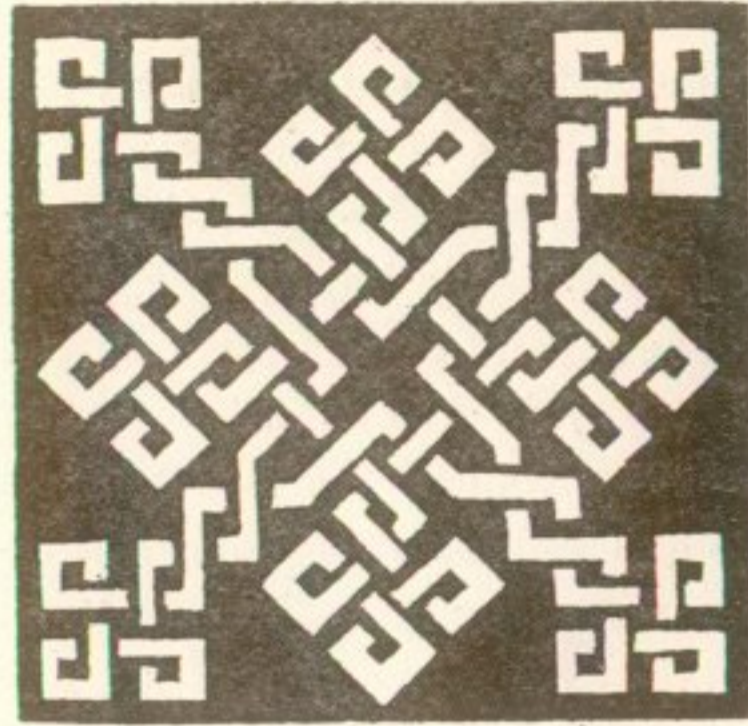
Rebuilt by Bishop Athelwold of Winchester about 972.

Completely burnt, 1116.

The present church was commenced (on a site mostly over the general cemetery) in 1117. Strong reasons exist for believing that the east boundary wall of the Saxon monastery agreed with the present line of the east wall of the above mentioned "New Work." The site of the discovery, therefore, is outside such wall. That space, however, was certainly an intake of Norman Age, whose extended wall still forms the boundary of the Close, and is farther eastwards. It was, however, no part of the cemetery until the time of Abbot Robert Lindsey (who sat 1214 to 1221), which abbot "gave part of his vineyard to enlarge the burial-ground of the monks." Apparently this is the very piece of ground, for the garden and ground eastward of the cathedral garth wall, and extending on to the close boundary along this portion, is still called "The Vineyard."

2. *Encaustic Paving Tiles from Fordington, St George's Church, Dorchester, and Milton Abbey Church, Dorset.*—The tiles here figured are remarkable from giving probably the very last appearance of those interlacing patterns (which were so marked a feature of Saxon work) in English mediæval architecture. Old suggestion assigned such designs to copyism of leather strap work, but before the Saxon Age they were already found on pavements of Roman date in England. In good and early Saxon work the ornament usually occurs as a double flat strap; but shortly prior to, and about the time of the Confessor it often in section becomes a *single* flattened half roll.

In not very early Norman times, there was a curious recurrence to a very similar class of design, mixed with birds, dragons, &c., passing off into intricate interlacing work, often accompanied by a sort of natural foliage. This is very well seen on the shrine at Peterborough Cathedral, erroneously termed the "Tomb of Abbot Hedda," and other like examples.



Encaustic Tiles from Fordington St George, and Milton Abbey Churches, Dorset.

In some such cases animals are very naturally represented bound together by (single) serpentine straps, as on the singularly spirited design round Melbury Bubb Font, in Dorset. The natural foliage very often present on such work will generally date the period of the object. The tiles illustrated are curious from suggesting that the intention at first may possibly have been to rather imitate wicker-work than leather straps. For these tiles were no doubt specially designed for the pavement of the church of Milton Abbey, and the borrowed hint of their design taken from the arms of that monastery, which was, on a ground sable, three wicker baskets filled with bread, all proper. A most beautiful and perfect representation of these arms yet remains in stained glass in a (south) chancel window of Iberton Church, a few miles from the above Abbey, lying just inside the Vale of Blackmoor. They have been excellently illustrated in a recent volume of the *Archæologia* of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

The colours give the tile patterns as a rich yellow on a deep red ground. The narrow tile border slip is also subdivided to form intersections to red strips of like width, dividing (as usual in the Perpendicular style) the design into squares of nine or sixteen tiles, by which the four interlacing designs here given could be made to form several richly varied patterns.