

IV.

NOTICE OF THE BELL AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES AT THE CHURCH
OF KETTINS, FORFARSHIRE. BY ALEXANDER HUTCHESON,
F.S.A. SCOT., ARCHITECT, BROUGHTY FERRY.

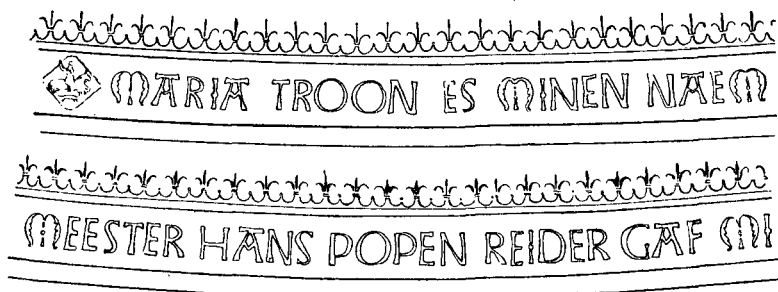
The parish church of Kettins is situated in Forfarshire, about a mile and a half south from the town of Cupar-Angus. The name Kettins appears anciently in different forms, none, however, differing greatly from its modern spelling. It appears in the Rental Book of Cupar Abbey, in 1463, as "Ketnes" (Grampian Club), while 1555 it is written "Caitnis." It is mentioned as the "Kirk of Ketnis" in a deed of assignation, dated 1537. The church, which was dedicated to St Bridget, belonged to the diocese of St Andrews, and ("Ecclesia de Ketenes") was consecrated by Bishop David de Bernham on 18th April 1249.

No portion of an earlier church can be traced in the present structure, which bears the date 1768 on a shield within a rectangular panel inserted externally in the south wall. The same date appears on a weather-vane surmounting the belfry.¹ In the belfry hangs an ancient bell bearing a Dutch legend. The late Mr Andrew Jervise (*Epitaphs and Inscriptions*, vol. ii. p. 97) supplies an erroneous transcription of the legend and a translation. The following is the text of Mr Jervise's remarks on the bell:—

"The legend in old Dutch shows that it had been originally accompanied by another bell, which bore the name of a female:—POFEN . REIDER . GAF . MARIT . TROON . AS . MINEN . MATEN . MEESDER . HABIS . ANNO . DOMINI . M . CCCC . XIX . [Priest Reider gave Margaret Troon as my mate (wife) Master Habis. A.D. 1519]."

¹ Since these notes were written an alteration has been made on the church, involving the removal of the belfry. See additional note at end of this notice.

It is almost needless to remark that if the above transcription is wrong, the translation is equally so. But in justice to Mr Jervise, who was a most painstaking antiquary, it is only fair to say that it is understood he procured the transcription from a working slater whom he got to make the ascent to the belfry. The Rev. James Fleming, minister of the parish, had on his own account made the ascent, and was convinced Mr Jervise's transcription was wrong. Some correspondence passed between them, but no further attempt was made to clear up the matter during the lifetime of Mr Jervise. In 1891 my friend, Mr J. W. Munro, H.M. Inspector of Schools, happened to be at the manse, and had the matter mentioned to him, when he proposed that I should be asked to examine the bell, of which a figure¹ is given in fig. 2. As the question seemed interesting, I readily agreed, and in July of that year, in company with Mr Munro, I visited Kettins and took a rubbing from the bell (shown in fig. 1), which clearly shows the legend to be as follows:—



ANNO DOMINI MCCCCCXIX

Fig. 1. Legend on the Bell of Kettins, from a rubbing.

The legend is mainly in Roman capitals in one line, that extends right round the bell, the date being in a second line. The translation is simple—Maria Troon is my name: Master Hans Popen Reider gave me. Anno Domini 1519. At the commencement of the legend is a

¹ From a photograph obligingly taken by Mr Robert Smith, F.S.A. Scot., Broughty-Ferry. The enlarged view of the legend is from my rubbing.

seal or stamp containing the figure of a man on horseback, probably intended for St Michael attacking the dragon. There is here no ground for the theory that the bell "had been originally accompanied by another bell, which bore the name of a female."

Rev. Mr Fleming has directed my attention to a reference to one Hans Popenruyter, who was principal gun-founder to King Henry VIII.



Fig. 2. The Bell of Kettins showing part of its legend and date.

of England in 1509 (see p. 8, Smiles' *Men of Invention*. 8vo. John Murray, 1885). The dates nearly correspond, and it seems extremely probable that the King of England's gun-founder was the donor of the Kettins bell, but to whom or where did he give it, and who was "Maria Troon," after whom, or to whom, he named his bell?

The traditional origin of the bell, as given by Jervise, is that it originally belonged to the Abbey of Cupar-Angus, had been removed from there, and lost or hid in a bog or myre at Baldinnie, a short distance south of Kettins, whence the bell was rescued by one Ramsay, and by him presented to the Kirk of Kettins, and he, in respect of the gift, acquired for his family a right of burial within the church. In proof of this story, Rev. Mr Fleming states that the burial-place of the Ramsays was immediately underneath the belfry.

I have not been able to connect the gun-founder with the Abbey of Cupar; but another link is suggested by the above tradition if the words "Maria Troon" are to be read as a title of the Virgin Mary, and it may not be without significance that the Abbey Church of Cupar was dedicated to the Virgin. In later times, before the Reformation, the Virgin was usually represented as the Queen of Heaven, gorgeously attired, and crowned and seated on a throne.

A bell bearing the date of this one might well be inscribed to "Maria Troon," literally Mary of the throne, or Mary enthroned. The baptising of bells and naming them by Christian names was a custom in early times.

In Brand's *Popular Antiquities* (vol. ii. p. 129), it is stated that in A.D. 968, Pope John XIII. "consecrated a very large bell in the Lateran Church, and gave it the name of John." English examples are to be found in "Tom of Lincoln" and "Great Tom," at Christ Church, Oxford. The inscription on a bell at Nuremberg has thus been translated by Barnabe Googe:—

"By name I Mary called am, with sound I put to flight,
The thunder crackes and hurtfull stormes and every wicked spright."

The author of the *Bee Hive of the Romish Church* says—"Belles are not onely coniured and hallowed, but are also baptised: and have appoynted for them godfathers, which hold the rope (wherewith they are tied) in theyr handes, and doe answere and say, Amen, too that which the Suffragane or Bishop doth speake or demaund of the Bell," p. 18.

The foregoing suggestion, however, as to the meaning of the words "Maria Troon" does not find favour with a friend who is a Dutch

scholar, and he inclines to regard the term "Maria Troon" as a proper name.

It has been suggested that the bell may have been cast by the gun-founder as a ship's bell for a vessel of the name "Maria Troon." A similar tradition ascribes the bell of Lundie Church to one of Admiral Dunearn's ships—a tradition which the date on that bell—1617—sufficiently refutes (see Jervise's *Memorials*, vol. ii. p. 64). The Kettins bell seems too large for a ship's bell of the period. It measures $17\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter across the lip, $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter at top, and 13 inches high.

If the gun-founder was the donor, and did not present the bell to Kettins or Cupar, he may have given it to some church in England with which, while resident there, he may have had a connection; and, as is well known, bells were frequently sold or otherwise carried off—in some such way this bell may have been brought to Kettins.

The Dutch population in London was numerous enough to have a church to themselves, and the Registers of births, marriages, and deaths connected with that church have been published; but while the prefix "Popen" and the surname "Troon" occur more than once, the full names of Hans Popenreider and Maria Troon do not appear in these Registers.

Trusting this question may yet receive elucidation, I pass on to notice certain other antiquities in connection with this church.

During a recent alteration in the church, several hewn stones—probably portions of the older structure, or perhaps brought from the ruins of the neighbouring Abbey of Cupar—were found embedded in the walls. Amongst them were fragments of a window sill, splayed outside and inside, an Early English capital, or moulded jamb, and a portion of a small memorial slab bearing a cross with three steps at base, and a pair of shears incised. This fragment measures 9 inches in breadth at the foot where the slab is entire, but only 16 inches long is left, the top part having been broken away.

This class of small slabs is peculiar, and has not, so far as I know, been noticed before. I have only once come across an example. It was quite perfect when I saw it in the summer of 1889. It lay in Kildrumny churchyard, and measured 26 inches in length by 13 inches

wide at top, and 11 inches wide at foot. It bore, in addition to the cross with arms enclosed in a circle, and having three steps at base, a pair of shears differing in form from those on the Kettins stone, and placed on the other side of the cross. For comparison, drawings of both

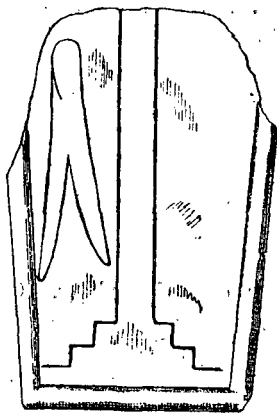


Fig. 3. Fragment of Small Monumental Slab at Kettins.

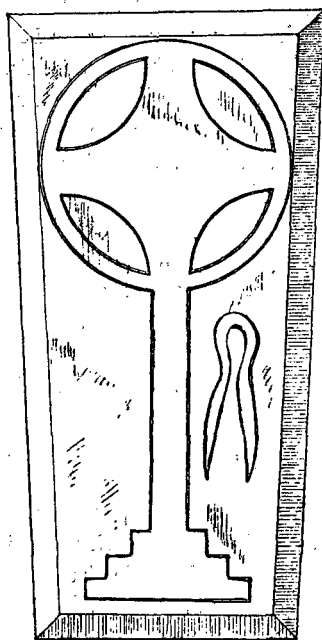


Fig. 4. Small Monumental Slab at Kildrummy.

stones (figs. 3 and 4) are annexed. They may be memorial stones for infants or children. The shears as an emblem is supposed to indicate a woman,—and other interpretations have been given.¹ These slabs are unlikely to be later than the 14th century, and are probably earlier. The tapering form common to both indicates a type, and is also indicative of an early date. No lettering appears on either of them.

¹ See Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii., for interesting remarks on this emblem.

The Parish possesses two fine silver communion cups of beautiful and graceful proportion, bearing the inscription "FOR THE KIRK OF KETINIS . . . 1636 . . . EX DONO M^o IACOBI AUCHINLECTI," and a shield and the arms of Auchinleck, three bars sable, and in base a bugle horn stringed.¹ These arms occur on a stone at Woodhill, Forfarshire, along with the initials $\begin{smallmatrix} W. A. \\ M. D. \end{smallmatrix}$ and the date 1604. Stodart mentions the stone and the arms but gives no initials, and for the date says only "probably executed early in the seventeenth century." The stone is in fairly good preservation and bears also the motto "I HOP TO SPELD." (Stodart's *Scottish Arms*, vol. ii. p. 62.) The Auchinlecks were an ancient Forfarshire family. The Auchinlecks of that Ilk were hereditary *armigeri* of the Earls of Crawford (*Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. i. p. 114, note). James Auchinleck, M.A., was admitted minister to the church of Kettins in 1618; he was accused of defending the doctrine of universal grace, but he disclaimed the charge and satisfied the General Assembly of his orthodoxy, on which he was acquitted, December 1638. (*Scott's Fasti*, part 6, pp. 703, 751.) The cups bear the Dundee Hall mark—a pot and lilies, and the maker's initials, A.L. This was no doubt Alexander Lindsay, Goldsmith, who was entered as a burgher of Dundee in 1628.

The church also possesses two old pewter collection plates. One of them is stamped with the initials "A.C." and "I.L." The other has inscribed in rude lettering on the upper rim—FOR. THE. CHUCH (*sic*). KATINS . . . 1723, and is stamped on the under side with the name "Thomas Forrest" within a circle, and in an oblong panel stamp "DUNDIE." I learn from Mr A. C. Lamb, Dundee, that there was a Thomas Forrest, "Peutherer," in Dundee in 1710, as shown by the following inscription on a tombstone in the Howff burying-ground there:—

"Here lyes Christian Webster, spouse to Thomas Forrest, Peutherer, who departed this lyfe, ye 22nd of Aprill 1710, and of her age 38 years."

One "Thomas Forrest," Hammerman, was admitted a burgher of

¹ Since these notes were written the Rev. Thomas Burns has issued his magnificent work on *Old Scottish Communion Plate*, where the Kettins cups are described and illustrated, see that work, p. 384.

Dundee in 1717 by "privelege of Beati Lyon his spouse, daughter of unquwwhile James Lyon, Merchant." Thomas Forrest was convener of the Nine Trades in the years 1716, 1717, and 1720; but whether the Pewterer and the Hammerman were the same person or not, there is no farther evidence to show. We have seen that the Pewterer's wife, Christian Webster, died in 1710, and if the first supposition be correct, Beatrice Lyon may have been a second wife.

[Since the foregoing communication was made to the Society some interesting particulars have come to my knowledge, through the kindness and assiduity of Mr David MacRitchie, F.S.A. Scot., Edinburgh. Mr MacRitchie having seen in the *Scotsman* a notice of the foregoing paper when it was read to the Society, about the same time, by a singular coincidence, came across a reference to the name "Maria Troon" in a short article in a Flemish folk-lore journal (*Ons Volksleven*, 1893, No. 3), entitled "De Maria-Troon," which contained the following statements, obligingly communicated to me by Mr MacRitchie:—In the valley of the small river called the Kleine (or Petite) Nethe, in the province of Antwerp, and at about half an hour's walk from Grobbendonck, there is a small hill which gives its name to the surrounding farm, viz., "De Troon" or "The Throne." The farm-steading is part of an old monastery known as "Maria Troon." The Priory of Canons-Regular of *Maria Troon* was founded in the year 1414 near the village of Ouwen, now Grobbendonck, on the river Nethe, one hour's journey from Herenthals, by Arnold Van Craeynhem, lord of Grobbendonck, and his wife Johanna Van Steyvoort. But in the year 1578 it was attacked by the Dutch soldiers of the province of Herenthals, and burned to the ground. The monks were dispersed, and ultimately, in 1587, united themselves with the monks of St Martin's Priory at Louvain.

Since sending me the foregoing, Mr MacRitchie has been in communication with a correspondent in Antwerp, and through this medium has learned that a history of the Monastery of Maria Troon is now being written by the Rev. Mr Goetschalckx, vicar of Grobbendonck, who has in turn been communicated with, and who, as may well be supposed, was much interested in the Kettins bell. That gentleman immediately instituted an inquiry as to the bells of the monastery, with

the view of establishing, if possible, a connection between them and the bell of Kettins, with however no success, so far as the following extract from a letter from the Rev. Mr Goetschalckx will show :—

“In none of the documents in my possession relating to the Monastery of Maria Troon, near Grobbendonck, is there any mention of the bell ; nor does the name of Hans Popenreider occur anywhere, whether among the names of the canons, of the lay brothers, of the *oblats*, of the *donati*, or of the benefactors, who are buried in the cloister, not even among the names of the persons whose anniversary was annually celebrated in the abbey. And yet I have, I believe, all these lists complete. I cannot, therefore, give you any *precise* information regarding the Flemish bell discovered in Scotland. But it is by no means necessary to conclude therefrom that the bell in question may not have belonged to the Abbey of Maria Troon. On the contrary, I am of opinion, for more than one reason, that the bell really belonged to the ‘Convent of the Throne.’ My reasons are these—

“1. Nowhere do I know of, or have found mention of, an abbey, convent, or church bearing the name of Maria Troon, except the Abbey of the Throne at Grobbendonck. As this bell, then, bears the name of Maria Troon, it is more than probable that it belonged to the only abbey so named,—all the more since tradition says that it is a bell that came from the Netherlands.”

(This is a misconception of Mr MacRitchie’s statement that several Scotch bells were cast in the Low Countries.)

“2. From 1513 to 1530, during the priorate of Pierre Vordels, great changes took place in the Convent of the Throne, and new buildings were erected. There would therefore have been nothing astonishing if a new bell had then been cast and presented to the convent by Hans Popenreider, living (presumably) in or near Herenthals.

“3. If, as I believe, the bell really belonged to Maria Troon, it is more than likely that the heretic soldiers had sent it to Antwerp by the river Nethe, and thence to England. In point of fact, the soldiers who destroyed the Monastery of the Throne were riff-raff (*gueux*), who were garrisoned at Herenthals ; they were also friends and partisans of the wasters of Lierre and Antwerp. The Convent of the Throne was situated on the shore of the Nethe, which river was then perfectly

navigable ; nothing, therefore, was easier than to convey their plunder in this way to Antwerp. What further confirms this idea is that at that time the English carried off to England all the money they could lay hands on, and all that could be coined into money. The soldiers of Herenthals having stolen the bells, or the bell, of Our Lady's Convent, would sell it at once, so that it might be sent to England or Scotland, thus getting rid of the evidence of their theft, and obtaining the wished-for money at one and the same time.

“All this is not *certain irrefutable* proof that the bell in question came from the Maria Troon ; but it nevertheless proves that it is more than probable that this may have been the case, and that, in the absence of proof to the contrary, we can quite well admit that the Flemish bell in Scotland came from the destroyed Convent of the Maria Troon.”

I have given Mr Goetschalckx's interesting letter and arguments without abbreviation ; but I may be allowed to say that his frank confession of being unable, after the most searching inquiry in the complete lists and documents in his possession, to establish any evidence to connect the bell with the Convent of Grobbendonck completely neutralises his arguments. The simple fact of the church of the monastery and the bell having been alike dedicated to the Virgin Mary in one of her well-known attributes establishes no necessary connection between them, more particularly when they are found hundreds of miles apart, with no evidence forthcoming of any nearer connection. The fact of a Dutch inscription in itself is no evidence of a connection. Many of the bells of Scottish parish churches were made in Holland, and bear Dutch legends ; and while no connection has as yet been traced between the donor of the bell and Kettins or Cupar—and the Session Records are silent as to the origin of the bell—there may have been other churches nearer home dedicated to the Enthroned Mary. But it is not necessary to go elsewhere for an origin. We have seen that the church of Cupar Abbey was dedicated to Mary, and this bell may have been presented to the B.V.M. of Cupar in her attribute as the Queen of Heaven, Mary Enthroned. The fact of the legend being in the Dutch language does not necessarily imply that the bell was presented to a Dutch church, but only that the donor wrote the legend in his own language.

The erection of a tower, with other improvements, to the Church of Kettins, through the munificence of the Misses Jane and Susan Carmichael, in memory of their deceased brother, Peter Carmichael, Esq. of Arthurstone, seemed to render it desirable to dispense with the belfry, wherein hung the ancient bell, and the belfry was accordingly removed; but happily, through the intervention of the Rev. James Fleming, minister of the parish, the belfry has been preserved, and is now erected, with a neat enclosing railing, in the burying-ground near to the base of the gable which it formerly surmounted; and a new bell having been hung in the tower, the ancient bell, now relieved from duty after well-nigh four centuries of service, has been hung in its old place in the belfry, and being now within 4 feet of the ground, may be easily examined, and its ancient legend scanned by all who may visit this very interesting and beautiful place of worship.]