

## V.

NOTES ON A HOG-BACKED AND TWO COPED MONUMENTS IN THE GRAVEYARD OF NISBET, ROXBURGHSHIRE. BY A. O. CURLE, F.S.A. Scot.

The ancient graveyard of Nisbet is situated in the parish of Crailing, a short distance to the north of Nisbet railway station, on the left bank of the Teviot, and from three to four miles north of the town of Jedburgh. The earliest reference to a church or chapel on the spot is in a charter of the reign of David I., wherein the Earl Gospatrick granted to the Canons of Jedburgh the chapel of Nisbet. In the year



Fig. 1. Coped Grave-cover in Nisbet Churchyard.

1606 the parish of Nisbet was conjoined with the adjacent parish of Crailing, and from that date the church, gradually ceasing to be used as a place of worship, fell into disrepair, and has now so entirely disappeared that its actual site is a matter of conjecture. In the south-east corner of the graveyard will be found the three monuments which form the subject of these notes.

1. A large recumbent coped Stone (fig. 1), 5 feet 4 inches in length, apparently imperfect at either end, and tapered towards one extremity. The sloping sides, which are 7 and 8 inches respectively in breadth, are covered by three rows of well-defined scale-like ornamentation, much worn and rounded, and rest on a perpendicular base of 4 or 5 inches in height, which for a distance of 9 inches from the foot of the monument

has been gradually tapered so as to reduce the diameter from 17 to 9 inches. The flat ridge is 6 inches across. At the broader end there appears cut on it, in low relief, a cross, the three arms of which expand towards the edges of the stone—the upper arm terminating  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the centre and the side arms 3 inches. The expansion of the arms is from 2 inches at the points of intersection to 4 inches at the extremities. The outer edges are indented or notched, as in the *Maltese cross*—the

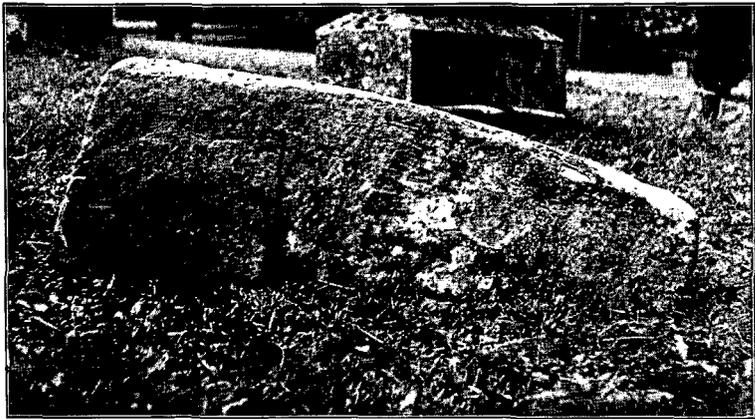


Fig. 2. Part of a Hog-backed Monument in Nisbet Churchyard.

cognisance of the Templars and Hospitallers. The shaft takes the place of the fourth arm and extends for 20 inches along the ridge. Thereafter the ornamentation consists of a diamond pattern, produced by a number of incised lines crossing the surface diagonally from either edge at a distance of from 5 to 8 inches apart. While the cross lines in this case are apparent only on the top of the stone, a hog-backed stone at Abercorn, illustrated in the 19th volume of the *Proceedings*, and described by Mr J. Russell Walker, shows several incised lines towards the higher end, drawn across the sides and top, intersecting each other on the ridge. Further, at the present time there may be seen on the Island of Iona a

modern dwelling, the roof of which, covered with shingles (which presumably are represented on these tombs by the scale enrichment), is crossed and recrossed with ropes to give it greater stability and keep the shingles in place. The stone lies east and west, with the broader end towards the east, and is believed to be in its original position. It was discovered when the churchyard was being levelled and put in order in 1890.



Fig. 3. Portion of a Hog-backed Monument in Nisbet Churchyard.

2. Standing at the east of the coped stone No. 1 is the greater part (fig. 2) of a hog-backed Monument of the usual type. It is 34 inches in length. In section it has a base of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the perfect end and 12 inches at the point of fracture—the thickness at these two points being  $5\frac{1}{4}$  and 11 inches respectively. The ridge varies from 4 to 5 inches in breadth, and has a rudely incised line cut along either edge. Near where the stone is broken, two parallel lines cross the ridge at right angles. The sloping sides are not quite equal, measuring 6 and 7 inches in breadth respectively at the perfect end, and  $11\frac{1}{2}$  and 12 inches at the fracture. Only on the broader side are there any remains

of ornamentation, and that consists of a number of small depressions or punch-marks. The stone is rather decayed on the surface and covered with lichen. Within the memory of man it has stood in its present position. Both these monuments are of white freestone.

3. Lying at the west end of stone No. 1 is a fragment of another coped Stone (fig. 3) of unusual character. It is of red sandstone, 15 inches in length, 10 inches in breadth across the base, and 7 inches in thickness. The flat top measures 5 inches across, and the sloping sides are 4 and 5 inches broad. These are ornamented with a series of incised parallel lines forming ridges, the edges of which are rounded alternately, of 1 and 2 inches in breadth, crossing the sides in opposite direction, and running diagonally across the flat top, thus producing the effect of a combined double chevron.

No one considering these monuments, who is familiar with the representations of houses and shrines in the Bayeux tapestry, can fail to notice the resemblance in many leading features. The roof ridge, rounded or flat, gives the form of the hog-back or the coped monument. The tiles or wooden shingles, either rounded or square, at the extremities are the scale-like enrichment. And following the same analogy, I venture to suggest that the chevron-like pattern on the stone at Nisbet may likewise be a conventionalised representation of a timber roof, such as is indicated on one house at least in the tapestry. From early pagan and Christian times, graves, the houses of the dead, have been covered with representations of the houses of the living, and we have apparently in these monuments the fashion of the houses, or at least of the roofs, of the Early Norman period. The desire for space on which to portray some symbol or inscription probably led to the broadening of the roof ridge, and from this gradually evolved the coped stone of mediæval and more modern times.

I must express my indebtedness to Mr Laidlaw, the enthusiastic custodian of Jedburgh Abbey, for having drawn my attention to these Stones; and to the Rev. C. J. Middleton, of Crailing parish, for much trouble on my behalf.