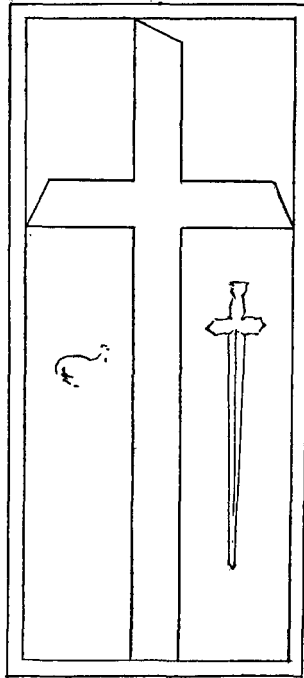
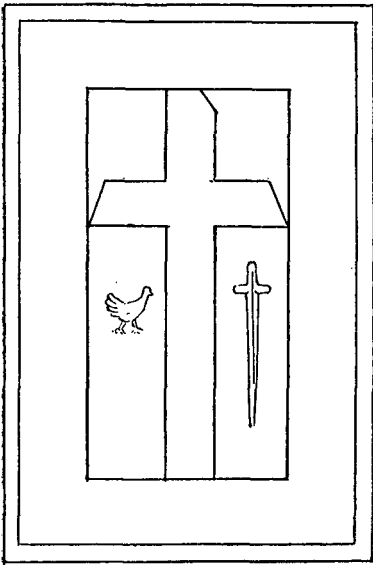
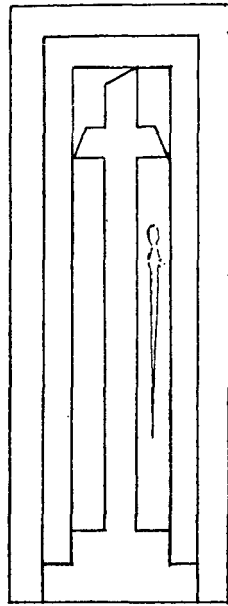
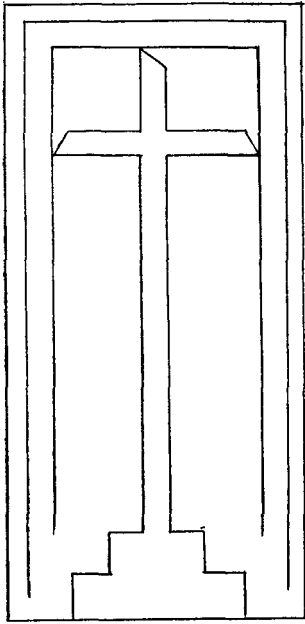


IV.

NOTES ON RECUMBENT MONUMENTAL SLABS INCISED WITH A PECULIAR FORM OF CROSS AT COLDINGHAM AND ELSEWHERE IN SCOTLAND. BY ANDREW THOMSON, F.S.A. Scot.

Recumbent slabs or grave-covers, sculptured or incised with crosses of various forms, and other designs, were a common style of sepulchral monument in Scotland from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries till the period of the Reformation. Slabs that were sculptured in relief were usually placed in the churchyard, while those which were incised, being more suitable to mark the place of burial when that took place within the church, often formed part of the pavement of the interior. The Latin or long-shafted cross was most suitable and most generally adopted for this class of monumental slab, because its form admitted of extension so as to occupy the whole face of the stone as a central design, to be supplemented by smaller designs or emblems placed in the quadrants, or inscriptions placed round the margin of the stone, and enclosing the whole of the designs as with a border. These Latin crosses were usually of the calvary form—set upon a base with steps—and might be more or less plain or more or less decorated as to their upper portions. Usually the plain form of incised cross has all its members rectangular in outline, but there is another form in which the extremities of the arms and summit are not rectangular, but cut off obliquely, and the object of this paper is to call attention to various examples of this latter form in different parts of Scotland.

There are several examples of incised slabs bearing crosses of this form (figs. 1-4) which have been found in the floor of the Priory at Coldingham, and have now been placed against the wall of the south transept. They are in a fair state of preservation, and fragments of others have been found. Two of them have been adorned



Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4. Recumbent sepulchral slabs with incised Crosses at Coldingham.

with some kind of symbolism—sword, hunting-horn, or figure of the domestic cock—which last has led some to suppose that here we have the grave-slabs of the Cockburns of Langton Tower, the ruins of which are still pointed out a few miles from the priory. About the middle of the fifteenth century Helen, daughter of Reginald de Reston, was married to William Cockburn, Baron of Langton, who succeeded to the lands of East Reston, and as late as 1606 the property was held by Alexander Cockburn.

Various conjectures have been hazarded as to the significance of the cross with obliquely pointed members. The most satisfactory would seem to associate it with the "cross of suffering," described in Audsley's *Christian Symbolism*, plate iv. fig. 2. It has, however, been suggested that this treatment of the cross has no symbolical meaning; that it is merely a fashion introduced for the sake of variety or supposed improvement in appearance. While one is bound to respect such a suggestion, it is at the same time interesting to note that wherever it is possible to fix a date for such crosses it may presumably be given as that of the sixteenth century. Moreover, this particular form of the Cross seems to be sufficiently rare to demand further investigation as to its origin and meaning. As far as one has been able to ascertain, it is only to be found elsewhere in Scotland as stated below.

In Lady Chapel, Pluscardyn, there is a monumental slab (fig. 5) having in the centre an incised cross, with its arms cut in a somewhat similar manner to those found at Coldingham. It bears a marginal inscription of the early part of the sixteenth century, commemorating Alexander Dunbar of Durris, whose death in 1527 and burial at Pluscarden are recorded in the Chronicle of Ferne.¹

In the course of the restoration of Longformacus parish church several years ago a grave-slab (fig. 6) ornamented with an incised cross was found. Its length is 6 feet 4 inches, its width 2 feet 7 inches

¹ *History of the Religious House of Pluscardyn*. By Rev. S. R. Macphail, 1881, p. 172.

at the upper end and 2 feet 9 inches at the lower end of the stone. It has been placed in one of the entrances to the church.



Fig. 5. At Pluscarden.

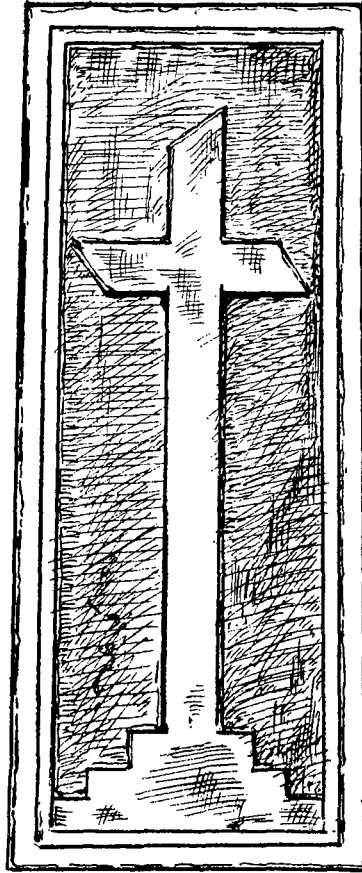


Fig. 6. At Longformacus.

During the renovation of Greenlaw parish church a stone slab (fig. 7) with an incised cross of similar form was found in one of the

aisles, 4 feet below the present floor. It has recently been placed in an upright position at the base of the tower of the church. It is locally supposed to have been a memorial of one of the sixteenth century priests, who were at that time interred within the building, but the use of such an emblem is not confined to ecclesiastical office.

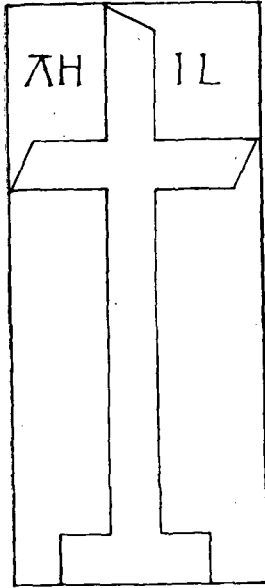


Fig. 7. At Greenlaw.

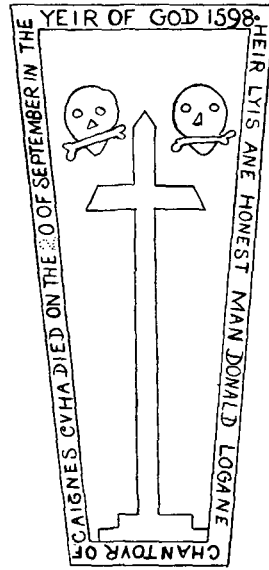
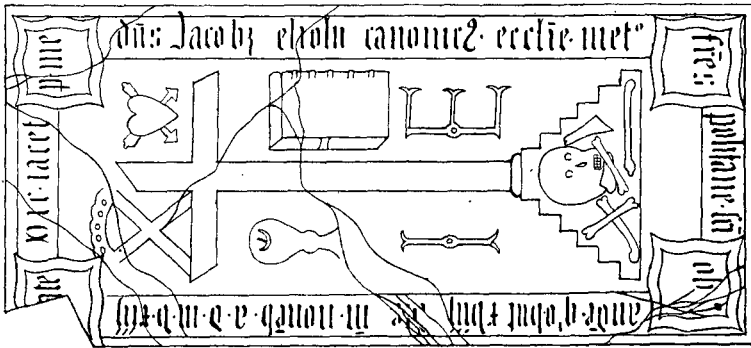
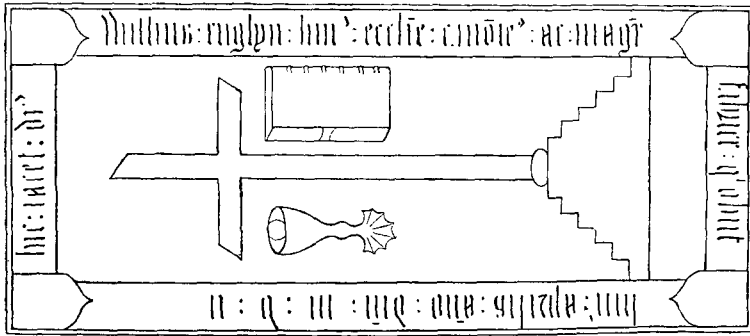
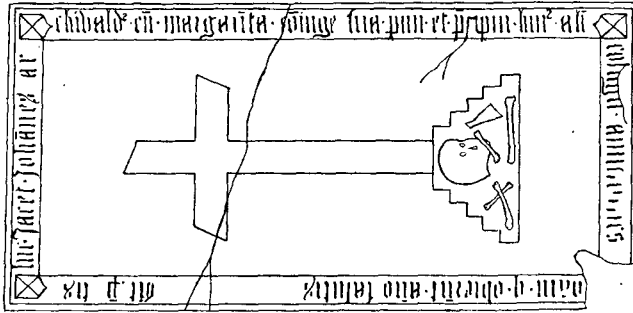


Fig. 8. At Creich.

Towards the upper end of the stone appear the initials A. H. and I. L. It may be pointed out that in 1622 the lands of Greenlaw Redpath Barony were confirmed to Sir Alexander Home of Manderston, which property in 1623 passed into the hands of Andrew Logane of Coitfield.

A very fine example of the same kind of incised cross at Creich, Sutherland (fig. 8), having its upper arm pointed symmetrically at its



Figs. 9, 10, 11. At St Andrews.

termination, has been quite recently examined by a local antiquary, to whom we are indebted for a sketch, measurements, and inscription. The stone is red sandstone, and the length of the cross is 4 feet 4 inches. It bears the following inscription on the surface of the stone, round the margin:—"Heir lysis ane honest man Donald Logane Chantour of Caitnes, who died on the 20 of September in the year of God 1598."

Lyon, in his excellent, but by no means impartial, *History of St Andrews* (1843), makes reference to the incised cross, and four examples are figured in his *Ancient Monuments* (1847). Three of these are here reproduced (figs. 9, 10, 11). The writer speaks of the "cross having the limbs cut obliquely," and significantly adds, "the reason of which I have not ascertained." Translations of the inscriptions are also given as follows:—(a) "Here lies James Eliol, canon of the metropolitan church of St Andrews, who died the 18th day of the month of November A.D. 1513." (b) "Here lies William Ruglyn, canon of this Church, and Master of Works, who died 8th April A.D. 1502." (c) "Here lies John Archibald, with Margaret his wife, — — — who died in the year of salvation — — —." It is recorded of this Archibald that he founded an altarage in St Leonard's College in the year 1525.

Other crosses with pointed limbs, but varied in a much more elaborate way, have been noted at Balmerino and Tranent. These, undoubtedly, may be associated with the Coldingham incised crosses.

[The Society is indebted to Mr Thomson for the first eight blocks used in illustration of this paper.]