

III.

FOUR PIECES OF CARVED WOODWORK FROM STIRLING CASTLE.

By C. E. WHITELOW, F.S.A.Scot.

Of the original fittings and furnishings of Stirling Castle very little now remains. It is therefore of interest when fragments that have disappeared are recovered.

The four pieces of woodwork that are the subject of these notes were acquired by me between the years 1903 and 1912, and may be described as follows.

No. 1 consists of the central board of three, originally forming a circular panel (fig. 1), measuring 1 foot $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height and $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth. It is carved out of native oak, and bears a full-length figure of a man dressed in a long overall; on his head he wears a broad, flat bonnet with a curling ostrich feather, and on his feet are "bear paw" shoes. In his right hand he holds a knife or sword of iron, and in his left the fragment of some object whose character cannot now be determined, as only the terminal part remains. There is a water leaf border, and on either side of the figure a floral swag. Those who are conversant with the stone statues decorating the front of the palace will recognise in the curious, clumsy proportions of the figure represented on this panel the handiwork of the same artist.

A small booklet published in 1817, and entitled "A Collection of Heads Etched and Engraved after the Carved Work which formerly Decorated the Roof of the King's Room in Stirling Castle," illustrates all the fragments then surviving. This magnificent ceiling, becoming insecure, was torn down and thrown out in 1777. The piece shown to-day is illustrated as No. 36, but as it is evidently not part of the ceiling, it must have formed part of an overmantel or panel over a doorway. The booklet states that in 1817 it was in the custody of the Provost and Magistrates of Stirling. The Catalogue of the Naval and Military Exhibition, Edinburgh, 1889, shows it as an exhibit (No. 1065) lent by

John Dick of Craigengelt, at one time, I understand, Provost of Stirling. It was purchased from a dealer in Edinburgh, who apparently obtained it from some connection of Mr Dick. At this time the surface was covered with paint to imitate oak, but this has been removed and the whole oiled and waxed.



Fig. 1. Wooden Panel from Stirling Castle.

The date of the carving may be put at the middle of the sixteenth century.

No. 2 is a carving in native oak of the Scottish Lion marchant (fig. 2). It measures 1 foot $8\frac{3}{8}$ inches in breadth and $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, and is said to have come from Stirling Castle, where it doubtless formed part of a frieze in the King's Audience Chamber. It has been stripped of a thick coat of paint and the surface oiled and waxed. An illustration of it is seen in MacGibbon and Ross's *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, where it appears as a tail-piece to one of the chapters. This panel was obtained at the dispersal in 1912 of the effects of Miss Stewart, Fernbank, Dunblane.

Nos. 3 and 4 are the doors of a French cabinet elaborately carved out of walnut, showing a figure-subject in the centre framed in a heavy enriched moulding, measuring $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The first of these (fig. 3) illustrates the first labour of Hercules—the slaying of the Nemean lion; the other (fig. 4) illustrates the tenth labour of Hercules, in which he drives the herds of Geryon to Argos. The whole door is carved out of one

piece except the moulding at the ends, which is dovetailed in.

They are evidently French work of the late sixteenth century.

The panels were obtained from the same dealer as No. 1. They were shown at the Naval and Military Exhibition, Edinburgh, 1889 (Nos. 1041 and 1048), on loan from John Dick of Craigengelt. At that time they were covered with black varnish, which I removed and treated in the same way as the others.

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The late Mr Wm. Christie, watchmaker and curio dealer in Stirling, informed me that he sold No. 4, possibly also No. 3, to Mr Dick, having

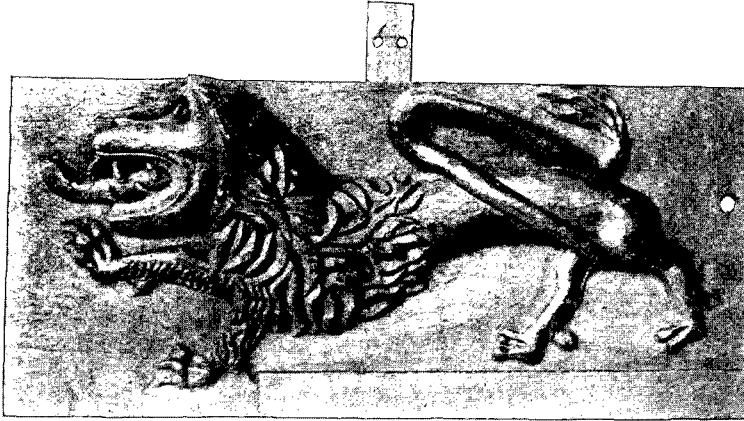
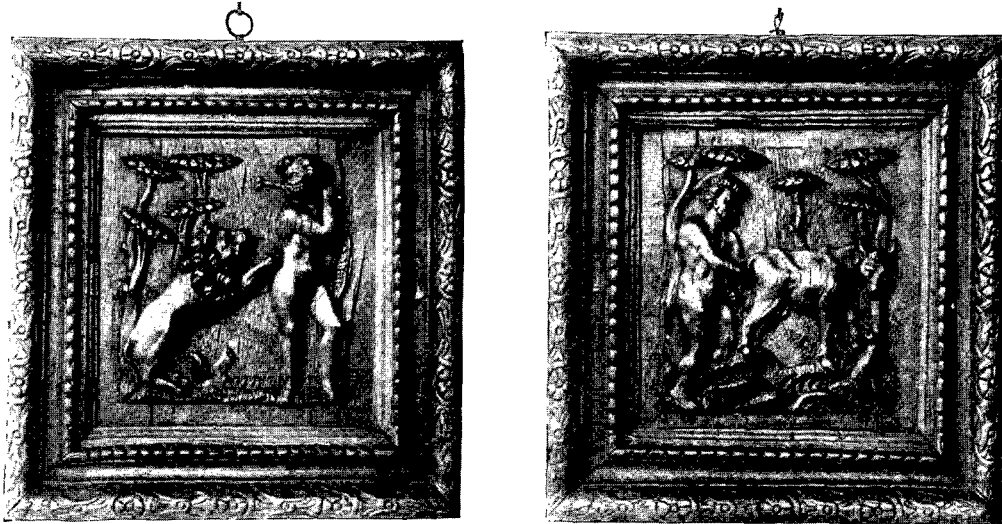


Fig. 2. Wooden Panel from Stirling Castle.

previously obtained it from a man who ran the canteen in Stirling Castle before the army took that work into its own hands. This man's wife



Figs. 3 and 4. Wooden Doors of Cabinet from Stirling Castle.

also looked after the Douglas Room. When he left the Castle he claimed as his property several old carved Jacobean high-backed chairs.

Fortunately the then commanding officer refused to believe his story and they are still in the castle.

The above notes suggest that down to a comparatively recent time there must have been a considerable amount of old furnishings of the castle still in the building, and that vandalism and systematic pilfering have caused nearly every piece to vanish.

The fragments exhibited to-day have been presented to H.M. Office of Works for permanent preservation within the Castle of Stirling, in the hope that others in possession of similar relics may follow the lead here given.