

## III.

NOTE ON THE TOMBSTONE OF ROBERT INNES, 19TH OF THAT ILK,  
AT ELGIN CATHEDRAL. BY THOMAS INNES OF LEARNEY AND  
KINNAIRDY, F.S.A.SCOT., CARRICK PURSUIVANT.

The subject of my remarks is a tombstone in Elgin Cathedral, of which a plaster cast is before you this afternoon (fig. 1). I hope it successfully demonstrates that a tombstone need not necessarily be a gloomy object.

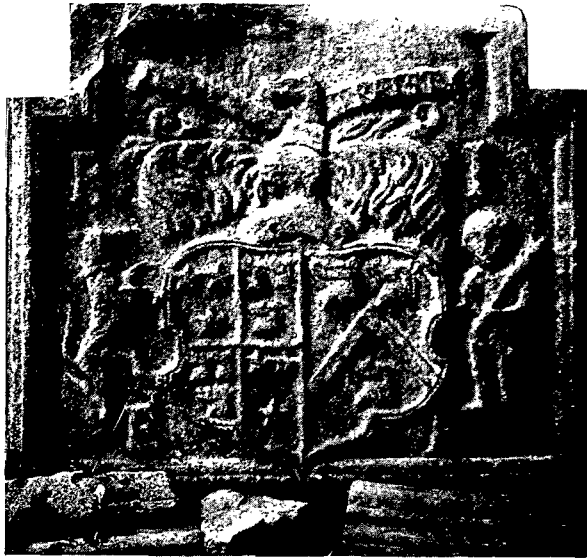


Fig. 1. Tombstone of Robert Innes in Elgin Cathedral.

The original stone has already been incidentally referred to by my official predecessor, the late William Rae Macdonald, Carrick Pursuivant.<sup>1</sup> The old stone is becoming steadily more weathered, so two years ago, by permission of H.M. Office of Works, I had several casts made, including that before you to-day. The stone itself, like most tombstones, is not now a decoratively inspiring production. Nevertheless in the Middle Ages decoration in general, including even tombstones, was thoroughly bright and cheerful. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many people erected their own, leaving only the date to be filled in by their posterity, who sometimes did not trouble to do so.<sup>2</sup> I have an

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv. p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> (a) Monument of Robert Innes of Innermarkie at Elgin Cathedral. H. B. Mackintosh, M.B.E., *Elgin Past and Present*, p. 99. There is no incision of the stone at the place where

impression that the man who had erected "a verie costly lair"<sup>1</sup> with a polychromatic statue of his person, arrayed in the latest pattern of armour, reclining upon a sarcophagus with emblazoned shields, was exceedingly proud of it, and that it was the sort of thing which one took one's friends to admire. By the seventeenth century the attitude had become somewhat more lugubrious, and people did not so often erect their own tombstones. This one was erected shortly after 1613 by Sir Robert Innes of that Ilk, 20th Chief of the family, to the memory of his parents. At that time Elgin Cathedral still had a roof, and the monument of which this stone formed part was under cover in the south aisle of the Cathedral, the burial-place of the Innes family. In the subsequent collapse of the roof and fabric, the whole monument has been dashed to pieces. At the time Monteith wrote *The Theatre of Mortality* another portion of the monument was extant, bearing the inscription:—

Requiescunt hic Robertus Innes ab eodem, et Elizabetha Elphinstone ejus conjux, qui fatis concesserunt 25 Septemb. et 26 Febr. anno. sal. mun. 1597, et 1613. Ideoque in piam gratamque memoriam charissimorum parentum hoc monumentum extruendum curavit Robertus filius.<sup>2</sup>

Monteith's translation is:—

"Here rests Robert Innes of that Ilk and Elizabeth Elphinstone his spouse, who died as above, and therefore Robert their son caused this monument to be erected unto the pious and acceptable memory of his dearest parents."

I am confident that this monument was painted when it was originally erected under the protection of the Cathedral roof. Needless to say, after two centuries of exposure, there is now no trace of colouring on its weathered surface. One has only to compare the flat and uninteresting appearance of this piece of carving, in its uncoloured state, with the emblazoned version now before you, to realise that these carvings were intended, as indeed all heraldry is intended, for display in colour. The result has certainly met with my satisfaction, and this cast of the tombstone of my defunct chief is presently going to take its place as, I venture to suggest, a most suitable, not to say bright and attractive, ornament for the mantelpiece of my entrance-hall.<sup>3</sup>

The shield is the florid but symmetrical pattern popular in the second half of the sixteenth century, particularly during the reign of Lord Lyon

the date should commence, as I have verified personally. (b) Monument to Alexander Irvine of Drum, in St Nicholas Church, Aberdeen. J. Forbes Leslie, *The Irvines of Drum*, p. 49; *Proceedings of Society of Antiquaries*, vol. lxiv. p. 56.

<sup>1</sup> Billings, *Baronial Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Shaw, *History of the Province of Moray*, vol. i. p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> It is quite heraldically correct to display one's chief's arms above one's principal mantelpiece, provided that one's personal arms, if also displayed, shall not be above the chief's. Similarly a Crown vassal displays the Royal Arms above his mantelpiece, with his personal arms below.

Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, *secundus*, the poet's nephew. In this case the shield has been made considerably broader, to suit an impaled coat of arms. Above is the helmet with closed visor. The arms are Innes impaling Elphinstone, namely, *Dexter*, quarterly 1st and 4th, Argent, three mullets Azure, for Innes of that Ilk; 2nd and 3rd, Gules, three boars' heads coupé Or, armed proper and langued Sable, for Aberchirder of that Ilk. *Sinister*, Argent, a chevron Sable between three boars' heads erased Gules, langued Azure, for Elphinstone. Since 1672 the mullets, or stars (as our old heralds blazon them), of Innes of that Ilk, have been depicted with six points. Prior to that time they were always of five points, and most of the cadets of the family still bear them in the ancient form. The six-point stars are an example of the seventeenth-century tendency to complicate heraldry in every possible way. A little later on, not content even with the six-point mullet of 1672, artists sometimes drew them as estoiles with scintillating rays, an unauthorised liberty which appears in the interesting *seize-quartiers* of Sir Henry Innes, younger of that Ilk, in 1698.<sup>1</sup> The arms of Aberchirder have an equally interesting history of heraldic mutation. They have long been borne as boars' heads erased, though the seals of successive chiefs vary between erased and coupé. Earlier heralds, amongst them Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, depict them as *bears' heads muzzled Sable*, but the truth about them is preserved in Pont's manuscript<sup>2</sup> (in Lyon Office) from Dupplin Castle, which tells us they were originally wolves' heads. Now, Gules, three wolves' heads erased Argent, are the arms of the Perthshire Robertsons. Pont, however, tells us something further, that the old Thaness of Aberchirder bore, Argent, two oak branches slipped and fructed in chief, and in base an oak tree, eradicated, coupé at the stem. There is evidence that the Thanage passed by succession through an heiress, Sybil de Aberchirder,<sup>3</sup> to a branch of the Frendraughts of that Ilk, who bore wolves' heads in their arms,<sup>4</sup> and came from Perthshire, being evidently, like the neighbouring Skenes of Skene, both branches of the great clan whose chief is Robertson of Struan. The change to boars' heads was probably made in the fifteenth century in deference to the insignia of the House of Huntly, which, originating on the Borders, shares with Elphinstones, Swintons, and others, the three boars' heads which subsequently passed with the Gordons to Aberdeenshire, and thence to Sutherland. The dexter supporter is the Innes greyhound, here shown with a plain blue colour, but it is usually borne, and is certainly registered, as a collar charged with

<sup>1</sup> The Aberchirder estates had been sold in portions, around 1630, and thereafter the Baronets of Innes ceased to quarter the Aberchirder boars' heads.

<sup>2</sup> P. 44, 46. Also Hamilton of Wishaw's MSS., p. 100 (L.O., Shelf F. 3).

<sup>3</sup> *Familie of Innes*, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> W. R. Macdonald, *Scottish Armorial Seals*, Nos. 1013, 1014.

three stars. The sinister supporter, a man holding a club (here it is a branch—the foliage is evident), is the supporter of Lord Elphinstone. About this time it was a custom that when a man with supporters married the daughter of a family with supporters, their impaled coat was depicted, with one supporter from each family. Nowadays, we should simply show an Innes greyhound on either side. The crest is peculiar, in that it issues not from a wreath but from a species of cap, somewhat reminiscent of continental practice,<sup>1</sup> or of the Cap of Maintenance in its simpler form. An examination in various lights, of the original stone, shows traces of stars upon the Cap, and although I have coloured it as Argent, with three stars Azure, I expect I should have made it Azure with three stars Argent, same as the collar, when the boar's head, instead of being "proper," as it was blazoned in 1698, would have been Or, as given in Nisbet's plates. Of course the Lyon's decision must overrule Nisbet, but it is evidently the golden boar's head of Aberchirder, and the original Innes crest was a plume of feathers, or of foliage, as shown on the seal of Alexander Innes, 13th of that Ilk,<sup>2</sup> and which indeed still survives in the arms of several cadets of the family, in the form of a palm-branch.

I may conclude by telling you briefly the history of the Laird of Innes and his wife, who are commemorated by this tombstone, and of their son Robert, who erected the monument.

Robert Innes, 19th of that Ilk (modern enumeration), was born about 1561-2, and was a somewhat delicate youth of about sixteen to eighteen years<sup>3</sup> when, in 1580, he succeeded his father Alexander Innes, 18th of that Ilk and 3rd of Cromey,<sup>4</sup> who was murdered on 13th April, under particularly brutal circumstances, by his kinsman, Robert Innes of Innermarkie, a bold, bad baron with whose unsavoury career we are not concerned to-day. The young chief escaped his father's fate, was smuggled off to Edinburgh in romantic circumstances, and apparently came of age about 1582, and married to Elizabeth Elphinstone, third daughter of Robert, 3rd Lord Elphinstone, and sister of the Lord Treasurer. A couple of years later he set about avenging his father's murder, and in September 1584 surprised the Laird of Innermarkie in his castle of Edinglassie, where the old murderer met with a well-merited end.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Armorial de Gelre, Proceedings*, vol. xxv. p. 9, Plates i and iii.

<sup>2</sup> H. Laing, *Supp. Catalogue of Seals*, p. 88, No. 526; Macdonald, *Scottish Armorial Seals*, Nos. 1417, 1420; *Familie of Innes*, pp. 89, 126.

<sup>3</sup> Family tradition says about sixteen, but, as he had sasine of Innes in 1582, he would seem to have been a couple of years older.

<sup>4</sup> This name is now spelt "Crombie," but the gaelic *b* is silent and the local pronunciation as well as most old deeds omit it, e.g. Cromee, Cromy, Cromie, Crommay, Crumy.

It is somewhat revolting to learn that the surprise was effected through the treachery of Innermarkie's son, a young man who in 1567, at the age of thirteen, was sent to France with John Douglas, his pedagogue,<sup>1</sup> but apparently came back the worse of his experience at the French Court. At any rate he put himself under interdiction in 1578, on the ground that he had an evil disposition, many wicked friends, and could not control his extravagance.<sup>2</sup> Having contracted expensive debts, in anticipation of the old Laird's "inlaik," he agreed to betray his father to the avenger, due provision being made as to,

"quhow all thingis suld be quyattit and quhow he suld eschew the bruite and sklander of the moyen makeing of the slauchter off his father."<sup>3</sup>

One is rather glad to think that this hush-up provision seems to have been ineffectual.

Having avenged his father's death, through the connivance of the murderer's undutiful son, Robert the young Laird of Innes and his wife settled down to a more or less quiet life, which may have been as much due to the young chief's health as to other considerations, for his death in 1597 indicates that he only attained the age of thirty-six. Elizabeth Elphinstone survived him for thirteen years, and no doubt had to bring up her son, the future baronet.

Sir Robert Innes of that Ilk, 20th chief from Berowald, and ancestor of the Duke of Roxburghe, must have been born a few years after 1582, and he evidently had happy recollections of both his parents, which he has embodied in the inscription he placed upon their monument. He was page to Henry Prince of Wales, and subsequently Member of Parliament for Elgin and Forres. He built the present Innes House, instead of the old Place of Innes, which had no doubt fallen into disrepair, since his father resided principally at Kinnairdy. On 18th December 1611 he married Lady Grizel Stewart, daughter of the "Bonnie Earl of Moray," and a granddaughter of the "Good Regent." Sir Robert was one of the first baronets created on 29th May 1625, and although a strong Covenanter he was a trusted friend and a Privy Councillor of Charles I. He died 17th November 1658, esteemed both by Royalists and Covenanters. Brodie of Brodie says of his disposition,<sup>4</sup> that he was "so happy that we never had more peace than in his time, and good understandings among all the families in our country, more than had been for many ages before."

<sup>1</sup> *Acts and Decs.*, vol. xxxix. p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Deed of Interdiction, registered 23rd November 1579. *Acts and Decs.*, vol. lxxvi. p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> Innes Charter Chest. B-11-2. *Familie of Innes*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> *Familie of Innes*, p. 172.