

7. ST MARY'S CHURCH, ST ANDREWS, FIFE.

Discovery of Early Christian Cross-slabs.

The decision was made by the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works in 1953 to tidy up the ground east of the Cathedral outside the precinct wall, including the site of the Culdee Church of St Mary of the Rock. Consolidation of the much weathered remains of this church was part of the project.

It is on record that many stones of interest were recovered from this ground at various times in the past. Particular watch, therefore, was kept on the building stones which it was found necessary to re-set during this operation. In the course of this work three more sculptured cross-slabs of Early Christian date were recovered. Two of these were found at the western end of the visible remains of the church. They had been utilised as building stones on the inner side of the west wall, where it adjoins the north-west buttress.

The first stone (Pl. LXVII *a*) is the upper part of a cross-slab measuring $20 \times 18 \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. One narrow side is badly weathered by exposure. On the front there is a cross within a narrow margin, the shaft and arms of which were filled with interlaced work. A diagonal key design is discernible within the panel to the right of the shaft. The reverse side displays a cross with circular interstices enclosed within a rectangular panel, all without ornamentation.

The second stone (Pl. LXVII *b*) appears to be more or less complete in length. It is 2 ft. long and tapers from 12 ins. wide at the top to 10 ins. at the bottom; its character implies a probable recumbent use. Only the front has been worked, the back is rough hewn and the stone measures about $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. thick. A narrow margin runs round the contour of the stone, and inside this is a cross occupying the full length and width of the stone. The limbs of the cross are connected with four incised quadrant lines, suggesting a nimbus with a central bead. The field of the nimbus is recessed and a square check is cut out at either side of each arm at the intersection.

The third stone (Pl. LXVII *c*) was discovered in the following season in the ground on the outer side of the doorway in the north wall of the sanctuary. When found, this stone was lying flat, under a covering of clean soil at approximately 9 inches below the level of the threshold. Despite its situation, however, its general condition indicates weathering and suggests abandonment rather than use as a flagstone. It is a complete upright cross-slab, sculptured on both sides, and measures $41 \times 20 \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ ins., the carving covering 2 ft. of the length. The surface of the monument is badly eroded, particularly the top edge. The front is in fair condition showing a plain cross, with circles at the angles of intersection and set against a field of zig-zag pattern. On the back, it is still possible to distinguish the characteristic cross, with its nimbus and diaper pattern on either side of the cross-shaft at the base of the panel.

Another stone of a different character, but none the less not without interest,



Front.



(a)

Back.



(b)



Front.



(c)

Back.

[Photo: Ministry of Works.]

St Mary's Church, St Andrews, Fife.

W. NORMAN ROBERTSON.

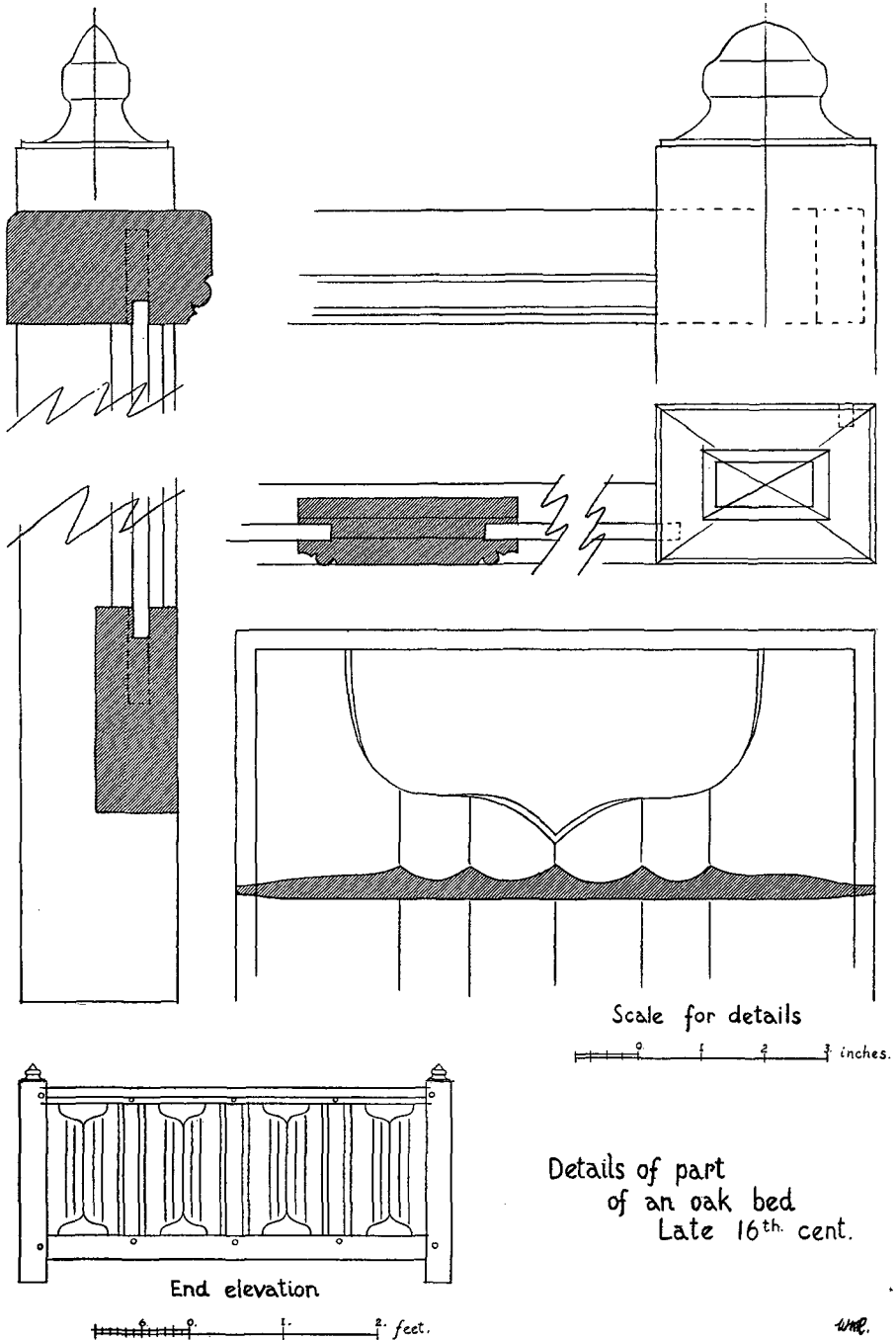


Fig. 7. Crichton Castle, Midlothian.

was extracted from the east wall of the quire at the crossing. It can be described as the moulded plinth of a respond shaft. In detail it resembles the bases of the 12th-century piers existing in the quire of the Cathedral.

All these stones have been placed in the collection in the Cathedral Museum.

W. NORMAN ROBERTSON, *Ministry of Works.*