

III.

EARLY TEXTILES FOUND IN SCOTLAND.

BY AUDREY S. HENSHALL, M.A., F.S.A.Scot., G. M. CROWFOOT
AND JOHN BECKWITH.

PART II—MEDIEVAL IMPORTS.

INTRODUCTION.

The small fragments of textiles dealt with in this paper are from the tombs of Robert Bruce¹ (died 1329) at Dunfermline Abbey, Archbishop Gavin Dunbar (died 1547) at Glasgow Cathedral, and from that of an unknown early or mid 16th-century bishop in Fortrose Cathedral. They form a group distinct from the homespuns dealt with in Part I of this paper² in that they are imports into Scotland, fine textiles of silk and gold, the cloths from the highly skilled and specialised workshops of southern Europe which had mastered the drawloom, the braids hardly less skilful but possibly of convent origin,³ and uncertain provenance.

The textiles are dealt with in four groups, the cloths, the braids, the piece of embroidery and the pieces of knitting, while a note is added on a plain linen cloth from Bruce's tomb. In the case of the braids and knitting, a discussion precedes the descriptive catalogue entries of the textiles which are numbered consecutively through the paper. The section on the brocaded cloth from the tomb of Robert Bruce is by Mr John Beckwith, and that on the embroidery from the tomb of Gavin Dunbar is by Mrs Crowfoot; the remainder of Part II is by Miss Henshall.

THE CLOTHS

37. *From the Tomb of King Robert the Bruce* (1274-1329).⁴ (Figs. 1; 2, *d*, Pl. VII, 1, *a* and *b*. See also the Braids, p. 32.)

When the tomb of King Robert Bruce was opened at Dunfermline on 17th February 1818, "a body was found lying in the vault, inclosed in lead,

¹ There is a very slight possibility that the tomb may be that of Alexander III. See T. H. Bryce, *S.H.R.*, xxiii (1945), 91.

² *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxvi (1951-2), 1-29.

³ A suggestion perhaps slightly corroborated by the tapestry in Rheims Cathedral (see p. 32) which shows the Virgin employed in tablet-weaving.

⁴ The National Museum is most indebted to Mr Beckwith of the Victoria and Albert Museum for carrying the study of the fragments further than Miss Henshall was able to do. She is solely responsible for the drawings.

with an embroidered linen cloth over it, much decayed.”¹ At a second opening, made on 5th November 1819, Jardine reported that “we found the fragments of the embroidered linen cloth already mentioned, which was now entirely reduced to fragments of not more than a few inches in size, and so decayed that it could hardly be touched without mouldering into dust. It had apparently been thrown loosely over the lead as a shroud, after the body had been deposited in the coffin. I took some of the fragments out and have preserved them. . . . This cloth, or shroud was evidently of fine linen, interwoven with threads of gold, and not of silk, as has been ascertained from burning a small fragment of it, which has not the slightest smell of burnt silk, or any other animal substance, and most probably was of the same kind of cloth which, in our old records, is called *Toldour*, *Toldore*, and *Twoldere*—most likely a corruption of French *toile d’or*, or cloth of gold.”²

Two fragments from the tomb are in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh. Both pieces are in a poor state of preservation, and although they have recently been cleaned in the Art Work Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum, it is still difficult to be sure of the pattern.

One of these fragments, KJ 2, is $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins. in length by $2\frac{1}{4}$ ins. in width. The pattern is small in scale and appears to consist of leafy stems, small birds, and possibly winged monsters in gold, pink-tan, yellow and light brown on a green ground. The textile is woven, not embroidered: a brocaded tabby tissue with a tabby ground and a tabby binding for the pattern and the brocade.³ There are three pairs of ground warps between each binding warp; there is one ground weft, one pattern and one brocade weft. The binding warp ties all three wefts. The ground warps are of Z-spun green silk, the binding warps are of Z-spun pinkish-tan silk, with only a slight twist. The ground weft is of untwisted green silk; the pattern weft consists of a gilt metal strip twisted S on a plied or double (Z-spun, S-plied) undyed linen core. The brocade wefts are of untwisted silk, pink yellow and light brown. There are about 208 to 224 ground warps to the inch, and about 56 ground wefts. The textile is very faded and stained; most of the gilt metal strip and its core has disappeared. Two small fragments of pink-tan silk tabby⁴ are attached to a vertical wrinkle in the centre of the fragment.

The second piece, KJ 149, is slightly larger, about 3 ins. in length by 4 ins. in width. On a dark brown ground there is a small-scale pattern of leafy stems in gold and brown. The textile is also a brocaded tabby tissue

¹ Cf. Henry Jardine: “Extract from the Report . . . relative to the tomb of King Robert the Bruce and the Church of Dunfermline,” *Arch. Scot.*, II (1822), 437. I wish to thank Miss Audrey Henshall of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland for giving me this reference, and the Keeper for placing the Bruce fragments at my disposal for study purposes on several occasions.

² *Ibid.*, 442-3.

³ In the analysis of these fragments I owe much to the assistance of Miss Margaret Kerton, Technical Research Assistant, Department of Textiles, Victoria and Albert Museum. It gives me great pleasure also to acknowledge the assistance of Mr J. F. Flanagan.

⁴ Z-spun pink-tan silk warp; untwisted pink-tan silk weft.

with a tabby ground and a tabby binding for the pattern and the brocade. Three pairs of ground warps are between each binder; there is one ground,

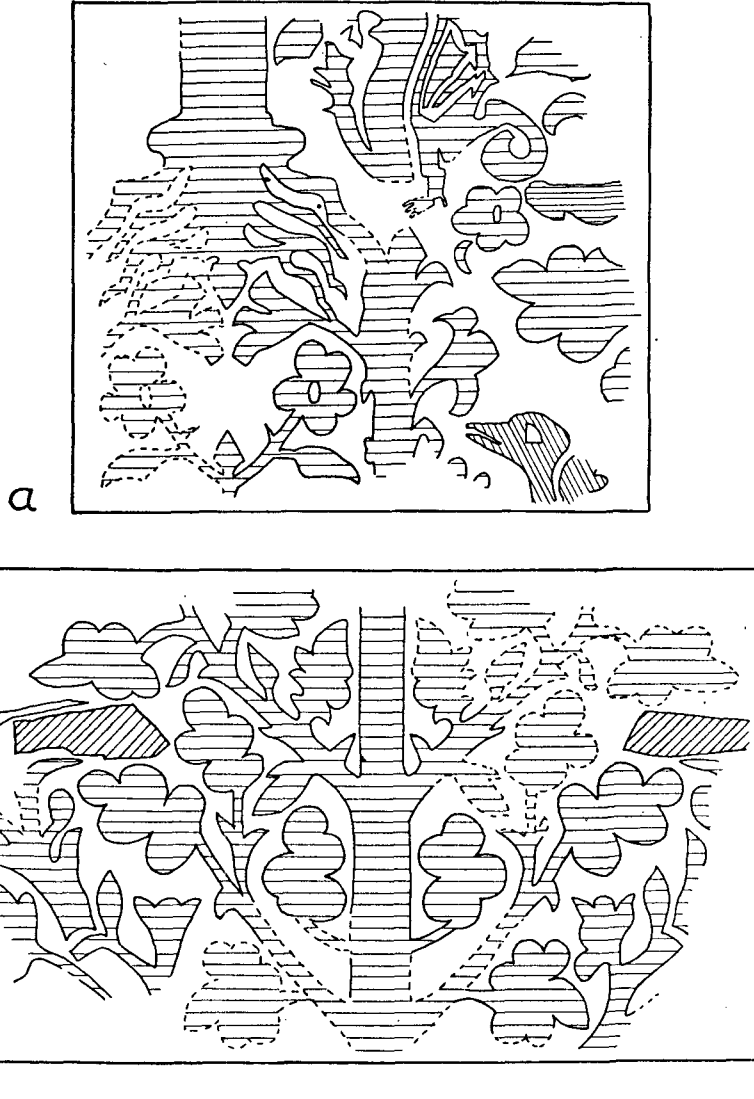


Fig. 1. Brocaded designs on the Bruce cloth (wide-spaced horizontal hatching representing gold brocade, various silk brocade threads hatched otherwise).

one pattern and one brocade weft. The binding warp ties all three wefts. The ground warps are of Z-spun brown silk, the binding warp is of Z-spun brown silk, with only a slight twist. The ground weft is of untwisted brown

silk; the pattern weft is a gilt metal strip, now fused together with age, and the core has entirely disappeared; the brocade weft is untwisted brown silk. There are about 224 ground warps to the inch and 60 ground wefts. The present uniformity of colour suggests that this fragment has suffered more from time and the tomb than the other. The similarity of pattern and technique, in spite of the difference of colour which almost certainly has been transformed by time, the closeness of the warp and weft counts, and the literary evidence lead one to assume that the two fragments were once part of the same fabric.

So deteriorated is their condition that any stylistic analysis must be made with caution. The fragments seem to be related in style and technique to two classes of fabric—one in tabby tissue, the other in brocaded tabby tissue, decorated with a small-scale pattern—which have been attributed to Italian factories in the first half of the 14th century. Perhaps the closest parallel is that of V. and A. 1298.1864, which on a faded purple ground has a pattern in orange and gold of birds, griffons, and small geometric interlace amid foliage; it is a brocaded tabby tissue with a similar warp set-up. The group without brocading is exemplified by the chasuble from Briennon at Sens with a pattern of lions, parrots, cockatrix, griffons, dragons and stags amid leafy stems, brown on a buff ground. The chasuble is embroidered with arms which may be those of Jeanne d'Evreux, who married Charles IV in 1326 and died in 1370, or of Blanche of Navarre (1349-98).¹ A textile with a not dissimilar small-scale pattern of birds and beasts among foliage was found in the tomb of the Cangrande Primo della Scala, who died in 1329 and was buried in the church of Santa Maria Antica, at Verona; the textile is now in the Museo Civico at Verona.² This latter is a tissue woven in silk and flat gilt leather strips (the underside of the strips is silvered); it has a satin ground with the pattern bound in twill, and is, therefore, different technically from the fragment under review. It was almost certainly made in China.

Two technical differences may be observed between the Bruce fragments and the group of textiles typified by V. and A. 1298.1864. The brocading in the latter is confined to the use of gilt membrane wound on a linen core. In the Bruce fragments, gilt metal strip appears to be used instead of gilt membrane and the metal strip is woven throughout the fabric. Jardine was correct in his observations that the fabric was cloth of gold. In this respect they are closer to the textile at Verona. The brocading on the other hand is done in silk, extremely rare for this period. These differences are not of sufficient importance to warrant the consideration of an entirely

¹ E. Chartraire, "Les tissus anciens du Trésor de la Cathédrale de Sens," *Revue de l'Art chrétien*, LXI (1911), 459, No. 52. Cf. O. v. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin, 1913), II, fig. 281.

² Cf. Giorgio Sangiorgi, *Le Stoffe e le Vesti Tombali di Cangrande I° della Scala, Contributo allo studio dell'arte tessile*. Milan-Rome. s.d. pp. 35 seq., but especially p. 41, fig. 6, p. 43, fig. 7. Sangiorgi, unfortunately, does not give full details of the weave.

different provenance for the silk. Tabby tissues of the diasprum texture¹ and brocaded tabby tissues with the setting up of three single or three pairs of ground warps between each binder seem to have been woven in Italy, chiefly at Lucca, in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Silk and gilt membrane tissues, though rare at this date, become common enough in the second half of the 14th century, many of which may have been woven at Venice.² The terminal date, 1329, for the Bruce fragments and the Cangrande textile is the same, and it is tempting to consider Venice as a possible provenance, but unfortunately there is little as yet to justify this hypothesis. It would seem preferable to hazard for the Bruce fragments a more general attribution to a factory in North Italy, and date them towards the end of the first quarter of the 14th century.

38. In the museum there are also two pieces of coarse linen cloth, recently presented, which are not mentioned in the report of the opening of the tomb. The larger is 4 by 2½ ins. with a selvedge. The weave is plain, the yarn is Z-spun, with 36 warp threads and 40 wefts per inch.

39-40. *From a Bishop's Tomb at Fortrose* (early or mid 16th century).
(See also the Braids, p. 32, and Knitting, p. 39.)

There is doubt whether the tomb in which the textiles were found is that of Bishop Fraser (died 1507) or Bishop Cairncross (died 1545).³ However, the account of the discovery tells us⁴ "the body was covered to the knees in a tunic of reddish silk, and the legs were inserted in a long pair of silk stockings similar in fabric to the gloves which were on the hands. A narrow band woven of silk, and either gold or silver thread, was bound round the body from head to foot . . . while a broader band, of a similar sort, was wound round the neck, having attached to it a substance resembling a long seal, lying on the left breast."

Pieces of two different silk cloths have been preserved. One of these fragments, measuring 7 by 5½ ins., is in the possession of Father MacGillivray of Fortrose, by whose kind permission it was examined in the National Museum of Antiquities. The pattern is of fleur-de-lis, the cloth is now a golden-brown colour, probably originally red, and the fleur-de-lis were evidently of another shade, possibly gold or silver (fig. 2, a, Pl. VII, 1, c). The weave of the double

¹ Cf. Falke, II, 31 seq.; J. F. Flanagan, "Early Silk Weaves," *The Burlington Magazine*, LXV (1934), 133-4. A diasprum is a tabby tissue, of which the ground has a warp effect and the pattern a weft effect; this type of textile was woven in the Near East and Spain as well as Italy.

² These later silk and gilt membrane tissues tend to be twill tissues; e.g. V. and A. 8264-1863, which has a 2/1 twill ground with a tabby pattern, or the group typified by V. and A. 756-1875, which has a 2/1 twill ground with a 1/3 twill pattern. (For 8269-1863 see Falke, II, fig. 469, and for 756-1875 see Falke, II, fig. 465.) Both are assigned to Venice by Falke, though perhaps too early in the century. It is possible that this lavish use of gold is the result of the influence of Mongol (Chinese and/or Mamluk) textiles, which begin to make their appearance in Europe in considerable quantities. The impact of this type of luxury article would be likely to be felt at Venice earlier than anywhere else in Italy; as noted above examples were found in the tomb of the Cangrande I° della Scala at Verona.

³ *P.S.A.S.*, I (1851-4), 281-8; M. and R., *Eccl. Arch.*, II (1896), 399-401.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I (1851-4), 283.

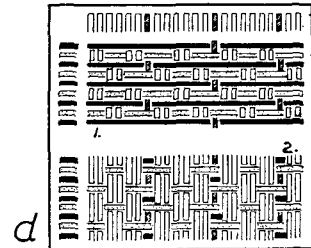
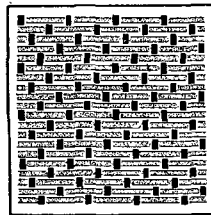
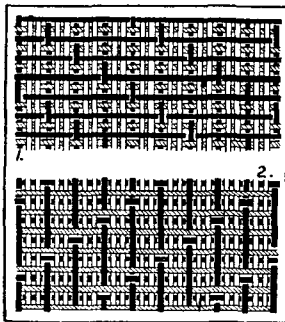
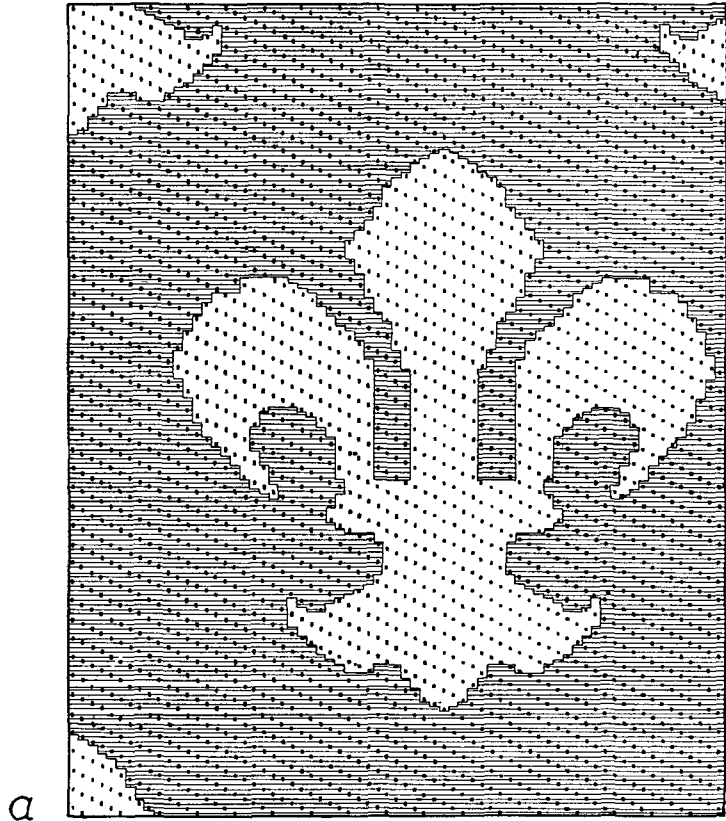


Fig. 2. Diagrams of the cloth weaves. (a) Fortrose, fleur-de-lis (extant silk weft represented by horizontal lines, binder warp by vertical lines); (b) analysis of the weave, 1. the front, 2. the reverse surface; (c) analysis of the weave, Dunbar; (d) analysis of the weave, Bruce, 1. the front surface with gold pattern weft, 2. without gold pattern weft.

cloth is a 3/1 twill worked with two wefts. The warp has two ground (or pattern) warp threads between each binder warp thread. (The binder warps appear on the surfaces of the cloth and actually do the weaving; the function of the ground warp is to keep one weft to the front and one to the back of the cloth; they lie between the two woven surfaces and are never seen) (fig. 2, *b*). Both warps are a fine lightly S-spun silk yarn.

The main weft is a heavier silk yarn, untwisted, while the pattern weft which appeared in the fleur-de-lis on the front surface has almost totally decayed, the merest traces remaining at the back to one side. It appears to be a 2-ply S-twisted yarn, now dark brown in colour, and was probably a vegetable fibre thread. It is possible that it is the core of a metal thread, but every trace of the metal strip which would have been twisted round it has disappeared. The decay of this weft yarn means that in the places where it was on the surface of the cloth (the fleur-de-lis on the front and the background on the reverse side) only a mass of floating warp threads are now visible. There are about 90 warp threads per inch (on the surface the count being 30) and 112 wefts.

In passing it is worth noting that on the Guthrie Bell-shrine one of the bishops is shown with fleur-de-lis scattered on his chasuble. These figures are later additions to the reliquary and probably late 15th- or early 16th-century work.¹ Fleur-de-lis are also used on a purse from the City of London, belonging to the early 14th century.²

The other cloth is represented by three pieces in the National Museum of Antiquities, the largest 1½ by 2 ins., KJ 32, and a small piece in the possession of Father MacGillivray. It is plain weave, the count being 64 threads per inch of a heavier thread by 90 threads per inch of a lighter yarn. One fragment has a turned hem. The cloth has the appearance of having been the lining to a vestment.

41. *From the Tomb of Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Glasgow (died 1547).*

The sarcophagus containing the remains of Bishop Dunbar were found during repairs to Glasgow Cathedral in 1855.³ "Within it were found a border and fringe of rich gold tinsel, on which appeared a figure resembling a quatrefoil . . . and covering a portion of the skeleton, the remains of a fringed silk vestment." These fragments were presented to the National Museum of Antiquities, KJ 31.

The cloth is silk, now a dark reddish brown, and measures 13¾ by 17½ ins. The weave is an unusual form of satin, a variation on a 4/1 twill (fig. 2, *c*). The diagonals in the weave show as only the slightest groove which, owing to the disparity in the number of warp and weft threads, is at a very small angle from the vertical. The probable warp is very fine, about 145 threads per inch, the weft is thicker untwisted and has about 68 threads per inch. Along one of the long edges is a narrow stripe of lighter coloured yarn with double threads set farther apart, which may have been a selvedge of which the very edge is missing. Along this and the opposite edge are rows of stitch-holes, while along

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, LX (1925-6), 416.

² *London Museum Catalogues: Medieval Catalogue* (1940), 160, fig. 49.

³ *P.S.A.S.*, II (1854-7), 327-9.

one of the short edges besides stitch-holes there are signs of wear suggesting the cloth had been gathered, perhaps for the neck or wrist. There are slight traces of braid adhering to the cloth.

THE TABLET-WOVEN BRAIDS.

General.—The principle of this technique has been explained in Part I,¹ where it was pointed out that it is suitable only for long narrow bands or braids which can be used as edgings, belts or tapes. Although the usefulness of tablet-weaving is thus limited, the results are very strong and the pattern possibilities infinite.

Fine, richly brocaded braids seem to have been used widely in medieval times, though comparatively few survive and fewer still have been adequately published. Most of the surviving braids have been or are still to be found on vestments, used as edgings to copes or orphreys or apparels or other items, for instance the Hildesheim cope in the Victoria and Albert Museum, or the mitre of Hubert Walter at Canterbury,² or a green chasuble at Salisbury Cathedral.³ Occasionally tablet-weaving was used for an entire object such as an orphrey or stole (V. and A. Museum, No. 142.1894), the latter one of the most accomplished specimens of this work from the medieval period. The very fine silk tapes, only $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide on the buskins of Hubert Walter, are also tablet-woven. Occasionally braids may have been used by the wealthy laity; a strip from Old Sarum⁴ with a series of shields and lions on it suggests this, and again the straps of the cloak and lining of the belt of Fernando de la Cerda (who died 1211) at Burgos.⁵ The coffins of many of the royal family of Castile (from about 1180 to 1375), also at Las Huelgas at Burgos, were decorated with elaborate braids nailed on to them.⁶

These medieval braids differ greatly from the early woollen and linen tablet-weaves such as the Orkney hood, the scraps from Lagore, Co. Meath, and the Iron Age Scandinavian specimens. Scraps of narrow and comparatively simple bands have been found in England preserved on buckles of Anglo-Saxon and medieval date.⁷ All these braids develop the possibilities inherent in this particular weaving technique, and curious and intricate weaves are produced (using varying numbers of threads in the tablets and turning them backwards and forwards individually), exploiting the freedom which tablet-weaving allows the weaver. A piece from Lagore shows the weaver's preliminary pattern experiments.⁸ Mastery of these methods

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVI (1951-2), 5.

² *Vetusta Monumenta*, pt. 1 (1893).

³ *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Civic and Ecclesiastical Treasures* (Salisbury, 1951).

⁴ *P.S.A. Lond.*, 2 ser., XXIII (1909-11), 515.

⁵ Gómez-Moreno, M., *El Panteon Real de Las Huelgas de Burgos* (Madrid, 1946), 79, 80.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-80.

⁷ Crowfoot, G. M., in *P. Camb. A.S.* (1950), 26-30; *P. Suffolk I.A.*, xxv, 2 (1950), 202-4; *Ant. J.*, xxxiv (1954), 230-5.

⁸ *P.R.I.A.*, LIII, C.1. (1950-1), 216-7. For the continuation of these traditions into the medieval period among the humbler laity, see Mrs G. M. Crowfoot, *Ant. J.*, xxxiv (1953-4), 234-5.

combined with the use of several colours in the warp or a partly exposed weft can produce remarkable results (*e.g.* a band from Mammen, Denmark,¹ or Snartemo, Norway).² An interesting later example of this work is the very fine silk ribbons on the mitre and buskins of Hubert Walter³ at Canterbury (died 1205), which are woven of red, green and buff (? white) warp in an angular meander pattern, and which from utilitarian considerations could not be brocaded. But brocading of metal threads over the tablet weave appears already in the 9th century. Most of them are narrow, and simple foundations are woven for them with two- or four-hole tablets. Technically the most wonderful braids are those where colour patterns in the warp are combined with brocading. This was found on the girdle of the early 10th-century St Cuthbert vestments at Durham when they were examined,⁴ and is also to be seen on a braid from a tomb at Winchester, supposedly that of William II⁵ (died 1100), preserved in the Cathedral library, and again in a wide piece of braid from the vestments buried with Walter de Cantelupe (died 1266) at Worcester,⁶ now in the British Museum, while a particularly fine example of unknown provenance is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 1256.64). However, this class of work has not been found in Scotland.

The Scottish Examples.—The majority of medieval braids forms a distinctive group, which one hesitates at present to subdivide. The patterns are entirely carried out in brocading and the foundation weave is at its simplest. There is always a single colour silk warp with four-hole tablets threaded from alternate sides and turned a quarter round for every weft. The resulting fabric looks very like the right side of stocking-stitch knitting, though the braid is the same on either side. When the weft has entirely decayed, as frequently happens, the warp disintegrates into a series of ringlets (unless held together by the brocading). All the braids found in Scotland are variants on this type. The simpler variant has brocading of one colour only, generally gold, passing across the whole surface of the braid and bound down by passing under a warp thread at intervals. The regular occurrence of these warps on the surface forms the only pattern, an effect like a simple quilting or a decorative couching. The braids from Robert Bruce's grave (p. 32) are of this type, with an all-over mechanical pattern of small diamonds. Technically this is the same as the simple braids from Birka⁷ and Durham. Two random medieval instances are very narrow braids sewn on the headwear of the Emperor Henry VI (died 1197), now in the British Museum, and one of the braids from the supposed tomb of

¹ Hald, M., *Olddanske Tekstiler* (Copenhagen, 1950), 106, 455.

² Hougen, B., *Snartemofunnene, Norske Oldfunn*, VII (Oslo, 1935), 69-70, pl. xiv.

³ *Vetusta Monumenta*, VII, pt. 1 (1893).

⁴ *Ant. J.*, XIX (1939), 59-63, and general discussion, 72-5.

⁵ *Archæologia*, XLII (1869), 309-32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XLVII (1892), 164; *P.S.A. Lond.*, 2 ser., XXI (1906-7), 384.

⁷ Geijer, A., *Birka*, III (Uppsala, 1938), 76-98.

William Rufus. In a second variant the brocaded pattern can be developed by the introduction of other coloured brocade yarns. The patterns are generally geometric designs inspired by the form of the weaving. The second braid from Fortrose (p. 34), which is something more than an edging, is an elaborate version of this type. It employs six different brocade yarns. A close parallel to this braid is one in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 838.1894) which, though considerably wider (about $4\frac{1}{2}$ as to $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins.), has a design of rectangles with different coloured backgrounds, on which are multicoloured designs within a diamond; the motifs are mainly angular meanders except for the fleur-de-lis, which also occurs on the Fortrose braid, though in a different position.

A third way of decorating the braids is to scatter brocaded motifs, leaving the tablet-woven foundation as a background. This is the method in the first braid from Fortrose (p. 32) and in the remnants from the tomb of Gavin Dunbar (p. 35). Another late example is the edging to the green chasuble in Salisbury Cathedral.

Comparisons.—In the second Fortrose braid typical tablet-weave patterns inside diamonds alternate with castles very similar in design to those found on the textiles from Burgos, where they are either embroidered, knitted or woven. An especially close parallel is the tablet-woven braid from the tomb of Fernando de la Cerda,¹ who died in 1211. It must be remembered that these tombs belonged to the royal house of Castile, and here the castle has a special heraldic significance. It also occurs on a woven (not tablet-woven) purse of the early 14th century from the City of London,² along with swans and fleur-de-lis. The stylised castle motif may be Spanish, and it may be that the first Fortrose braid was made in Spain.

One of the braids from Hubert Walter's tomb is worked in a similar way with areas of the foundation weave left uncovered, as is also the background and in places parts of the pattern on the heraldic braid from Old Sarum, probably of the 12th century. Sometimes it is the brocading which forms the background and the foundation weave is left uncovered to form the pattern. This happens on the very fine stole in the Victoria and Albert Museum (of unknown provenance) which is entirely tablet-woven (No. 142.1894). Another example is the Queen Hemma's girdle, of 9th-century date,³ in the cathedral museum at Augsburg, where the design consists of the letters of the dedication surrounded by gold brocading, similar to another at Maeseeyck, Belgium.⁴

Each of these broad classes of brocaded braids seem to cover long periods: the beginnings in the 9th–10th centuries are already very accomplished; the end, in Britain, is the Reformation, and apparently they survive no longer

¹ Gómez-Moreno, M., *op. cit.*, 79, pl. cviii.

² *London Museum Catalogues: Medieval Catalogue* (1940), 161.

³ Braun, J., *Die Liturgische Gewandung* (Freiburg, 1907), 110, figs. 49–50.

⁴ *Bulletin de la Société Royale d'Archéologie de Bruxelles* (Oct. 1951), 3–11.

on the Continent. It seems almost certain that the highest quality work was being produced in England in the 10th century, not only the St Cuthbert braids but also some simpler braids from among the textiles at Maeseyck,¹ Belgium, judging by a comparison of the materials used in these and in some early English embroideries. But there is no real evidence as yet for this work continuing into the Middle Ages, although, as has been noted, unbrocaded linen or wool braids in the earlier tradition were still in use among the humbler classes. Certainly the elaborate silk braids were being made in Spain from the late 12th to the 14th centuries, and probably in France also. There is a 16th-century tapestry in Rheims Cathedral² showing the Virgin making a tablet-woven braid; Peach points out that it is "one of a series of fine tapestries of the life of the Virgin Mary based on illustrations from a twelfth-century MS. which the artists of the sixteenth modernised in detail. The tablet-weaving has a tapestry design and not a tablet-woven type, which suggests that by the sixteenth century it had passed out of common use."

42. *From the Tomb of King Robert the Bruce (died 1329).* (See also the Cloths, p. 22.)

There are two pieces of this braid, not mentioned in the report of the opening of the grave, which are preserved in Dunfermline Abbey, and were examined in the National Museum of Antiquities through the kindness of the Rev. Robert Dollar. They are .7 in. wide and $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins. long. The warp is silk, the direction of the spin is uncertain. The weft has totally decayed, which suggests it was a linen yarn. There were 50 wefts per inch and there are 288 warp threads per inch. There is only one brocade thread, a silk core with a gold strip twisted round it S-wise; the gold has almost decayed away.

The foundation weave, as already explained (p. 30), is like that of the other braids described here. Fifty 4-hole tablets were used. The entire upper surface is brocaded, and the warp threads catching down brocade thread form the pattern of diamonds. The weaving is very regular and finer than that of the other braids. At the edges the brocade thread turns back, leaving a row of loops along the edge which were formerly caught down by the weft of the tablet-weaving (fig. 3, f).

43-44. *From a Bishop's Tomb at Fortrose (early or mid 16th century).* (See also the Cloths, p. 26, and Knitting, p. 39.)

Two distinct braids were found in the tomb. One, which is reported to have been "bound round the body from head to foot," is represented by two pieces, 1 in. wide; the longer is 9 ins. in length and in the possession of Father MacGillivray, while the other, $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. long, is in the National Museum of Antiquities, KJ 32. It is doubtful if these two are in reality the same braid, as the former is woven on 43 tablets and the latter on 45, and they are twisted

¹ *Bulletin de la Société Royale d'Archéologie de Bruxelles* (Oct. 1951), 21-2.

² Illustrated as the frontispieces to Pralle, H., *Tablet Weaving, an Old Peasant Craft* (c. 1920); Peach, M. W., *Tablet Weaving* (1921).

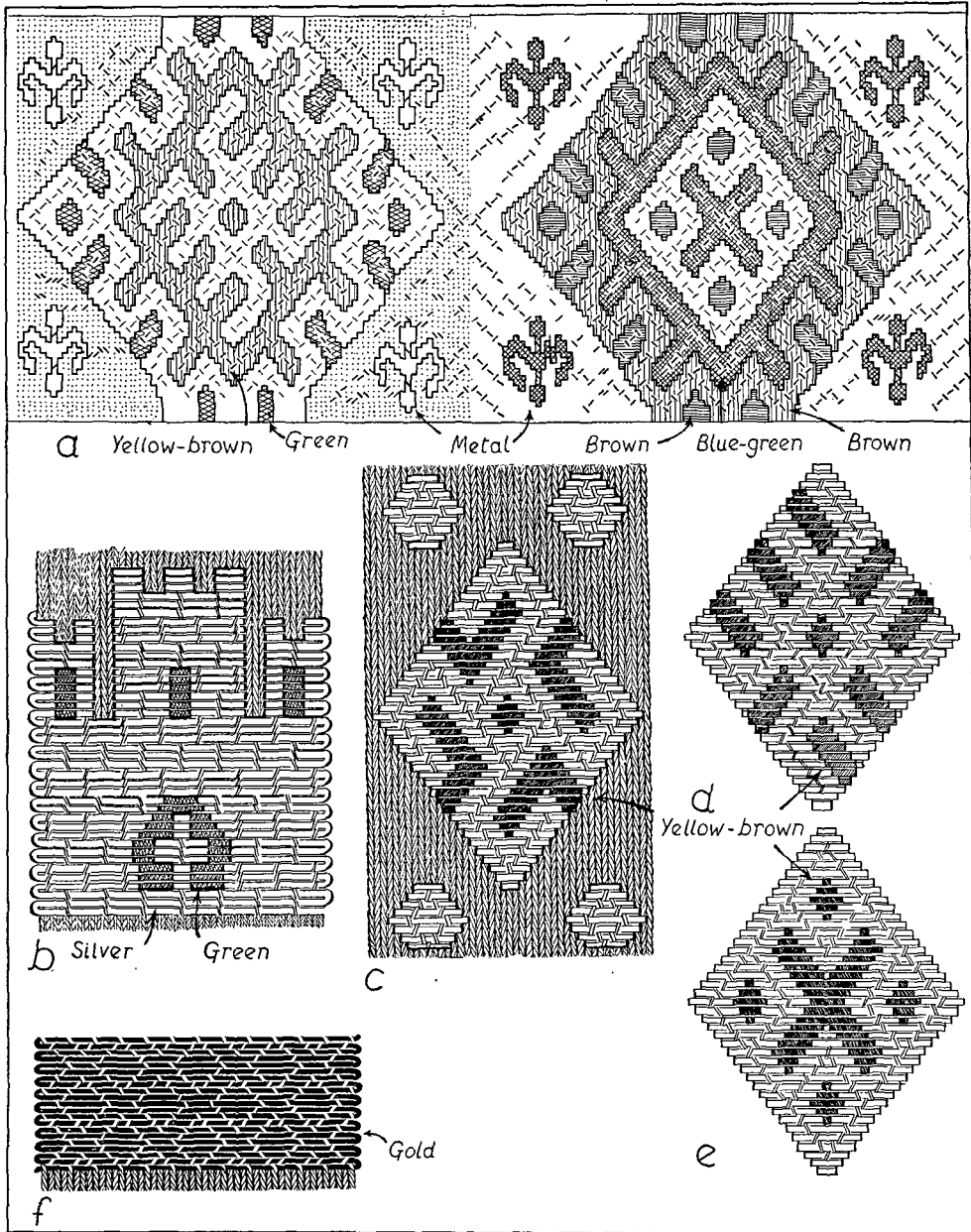


Fig. 3. Tablet-weave designs: (a) Fortrose (No. 44); (b-e) Fortrose (No. 43), the castle, the diamond, alternative diamond motifs; (f) Bruce.

in opposite directions though the direction of the twisting is constant in each piece. In all other respects however they are identical.

The tablet-woven ground is a dull yellow-brown silk, the warp is a fine lightly spun 2-ply S-twisted yarn threaded through 43 or 45 tablets and worked in the same way as the other Scottish braids; thus there are 172 or 180 warp threads in the 1-inch-wide braid. The weaving is very regular but comparatively coarse. The weft has almost entirely perished, but what little remains suggests it might have been linen: it would, of course, have been invisible in the finished braid. There were 38-40 picks per inch.

A brocaded design of diamond and castle motifs is worked in a number of colours, spaced along the braid, leaving considerable areas of the tablet-woven ground to view (fig. 3, *b* and *c*, Pl. VII, 1, *d*). There are three of the large diamond shapes extant and each has a different pattern inside. The main brocade yarn is a metal thread used double, consisting of a silk core S-spun covered by the metal (? silver) strip wound round it S-wise. Only in a few places can the metal be seen, and most of the metal-covered yarn has a powdery grey-mauve colouring. The other yarns used in the brocading are a green silk 2-ply S-twisted lightly spun used 4 or 5 strands together, and a similar yarn of a yellow-brown shade used with a number of strands together. Where the brocade threads reach the edge of the braid they turn, leaving a series of small loops where they were caught down by the weft.

The other braid which was found "round the neck, having attached to it a substance resembling a long seal," is represented by a piece in the National Museum of Antiquities, KJ 32, 1.8 ins. wide and 5 ins. long, showing two complete patterns of similar design and colouring.

The tablet-woven ground is worked in the same way as the other braids. The warp is of a similar but finer yarn to the former braid, with 79 to 80 tablets. But the spacing of the warp threads, unlike the other braids, is irregular and only closely set at the edges. The weft is a comparatively heavy 2-ply S-twisted dull red yarn, probably silk, and it is visible between the warps at the back. It is closely and regularly beaten back—there are about 40 picks per inch.

The brocaded pattern covers the entire surface of the braid (fig. 3, *a*, Pl. VII, 1, *c*). This consists of rectangles with backgrounds of different colours: one is metal thread, one was perhaps white, while the end of a third of green remains. On these is a diamond shape within which are various multicolour angular designs. In each of the four triangles outside the diamonds is a fleur-de-lis set on its side, which indicates that the braid was designed to be seen in a horizontal position. The silk yarns used are green similar in colour and spin to that used in the former braid, worked with three or four strands together; a similar yarn, blue-green in colour; yellow-brown 2-ply S-twisted, used three together; another yarn now a similar colour, 2-ply S-twisted, finer and more decayed than the other yarns, used a number of strands together; a metal yarn similar to that in the former braid used two together; yellow-brown untwisted used singly.

The edges of the brocading are worked in a different way to the other braids, the loop formed at the edge where the brocading thread turns is caught down by the outside group of four warp threads and not by the weft of the foundation weave. The warp threads which catch down the brocade yarns form diagonal lines which follow the pattern formed by the different brocading yarns.

45. *From the Tomb of Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Glasgow* (died 1547). (See also the Cloths, p. 28, and Embroidery, below.)

Two fragments remain, probably pieces of the same braid, preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities, KJ 31. They are extremely decayed; the larger is 7 ins. long by 2 ins. wide. Little of the pattern can be made out though the whole width of the braiding remains. The warp is very like that of the first braid from Fortrose, and threaded and worked in the same manner. Forty-four tablets were used. The weft is totally decayed; there were 30 picks per inch.

The brocading only remains in patches. There are broad diagonal bands dividing the braid into triangles, which seem to have been filled with a more delicate design, and leaving in places a back ground of the foundation weave. The warp threads binding the brocading of the wide bands form a double row of tiny diamonds. The brocading is carried out in a well-spun 2-ply S-twisted yarn used three or four together. At one end of the braid it still retains its blue-green colour. There are also slight traces of a metal thread similar to, though finer than, that in the Fortrose braids, used two together. At the edges the brocade thread seems to have been caught down by the weft as in the first braid from Fortrose. The other fragment is only $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide and comes from the left selvedge. It is brocaded along its whole length, mainly in the metal thread, and a small area similar to the blue-green yarn of the former piece.

THE EMBROIDERY.¹

46. *Fragment from the Tomb of Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Glasgow* (died 1547). (See the Cloths, p. 28, and Tablet-weave, above.)

The fragment of embroidery, measuring 7 by 7 to 4 cm., probably came from an ecclesiastical vestment. Only a small part of the design is left, showing three leaves held by a fillet, with part of a long stem or pillar. The leaves and fillet look like a portion of a fleur-de-lis, but the breadth of the stem, unfortunately broken off short, indicates that it must be a part of some other motif. Three leaves are often used as a finial or a pendant, particularly on architectural canopies, but there is too little left to guess their purpose here (fig. VII, Pl. 2).

The embroidery was carried out in couched work and split stitch. The former was of gold (probably silver gilt) and silver thread; the metal is all worn away except on a few threads (in bands A and B, fig. 4) which still show tiny patches of gold, while the silver is indicated on others by blackish and whitish deposits (parts of F, fig. 4). Examinations made by the Shirley Institute confirmed that the couched threads were originally metal covered, and proved that the core of these threads, the couching thread and the thread from the split stitch were all of silk.

The gold thread, used for the pattern, had a core that was very loosely

¹ The Museum is much indebted to Mrs G. M. Crowfoot for this section.

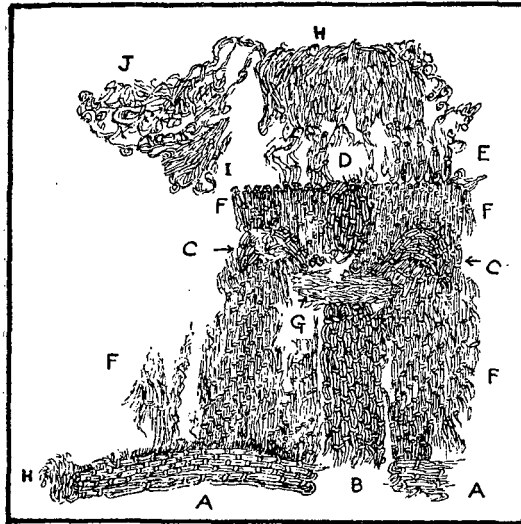


Fig. 4. The Dunbar embroidery.

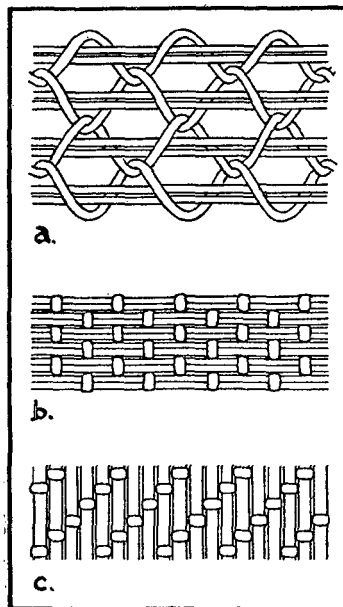


Fig. 5. Couching.

S-twisted; two threads were always laid together, c. 10 pairs to the cm. (count taken over 5 mm.), held by a couching thread, S-plyed, now pale brown which may have been yellow, and worked in a bricking pattern fig. 5, *b*). The silver thread had been used for the background; here the silk core was of Z-spun threads 3-plyed S, the threads were used singly, c. 14-15 to the cm., and held by a Z-spun S-plyed thread; in these parts a (diagonal pattern was used (fig. 5, *c*). The split stitch thread has a very slight Z twist and still shows traces of bluish-green colour. The original foundation material has disintegrated, but possibly remains of S-spun threads seen among the split stitch (in J, fig. 4) may have belonged to it; they also appear to be of silk.

The remarkable thing is that in spite of its extreme disintegration the embroidery still holds together. This is due to the fact that the couching stitches are interlaced with those of the previous row. This was first noticed by Miss A. Henshall in part of the background (F in fig. 4), and it occurs throughout the couching, sometimes perfectly, as in the diagram, fig. 2, *a*, sometimes with a proportion of missed stitches. Even in places where there are many broken threads enough remains to prove that the interlacing existed in all parts, whether the couching was stitched horizontally, vertically or on a curve, as in the leaves. This is very interesting, for I know of only one other case of such interlacing, that of the gold couching on the vestments of St Cuthbert, early 10th century. This peculiarity was discovered by Mrs A. Christie, and described by her first in 1913; she says "the couching thread, when at the back, is always, before passing again to the surface, interlocked with the thread lying upon each side."¹ She regarded it as unique, never having seen another example, and at first suggested that it might have been made by a kind of weaving on warps alone rather than by any usual process of embroidery—a view she modified subsequently when she discovered a few tiny fragments of a fine silk plain weave which must have been the ground material.²

It is always well to be cautious in trying to explain how some curious piece of ancient technique could have been carried out, but it seems to me that in this case the explanation may be very simple. When couching in an alternate bricked design, if the needle, instead of being held straight, is slanted forward and pressed well under the last row worked, it will pass over the slack of the stitch made in that row, and interlacement occurs. Instead of the normal stitches seen at the back of the work, slanting separately, usually in chevrons but occasionally in the same direction, the interlacement can be seen as a kind of network of stitches clasped by each other; and this appearance is recognisable also where the background material is still in

¹ Baldwin Brown, G., and Christie, A. G. I., "St Cuthbert's Stole and Maniple at Durham," *The Burlington Magazine*, No. CXXI, vol. XXIII (April 1913), 17.

² Christie, A. G. I., *English Medieval Embroidery* (1938), 48.

existence. The same way of interlacing can be achieved in a diagonal pattern such as that of the background (F), but there is less slack and the stitch has to be placed accurately to catch it; in more complicated designs, where stitches are crowded one above the other, interlacement can only occur occasionally or not at all.

However it was made, Mrs Christie was quite convinced that the interlacement on the St Cuthbert couching was intentional, the result being that it has survived to the present day in spite of the disappearance of the ground material, and the same argument would certainly also apply to the couching on this fragment from the vestment of Bishop Gavin Dunbar. Perhaps this method of sewing was deliberately employed where the ground fabric was very thin or loosely woven; and it has been found possible to produce very solid and at the same time flexible pieces of couching on a very flimsy silk ground by using this interlacing stitch.

The date of the tomb is given as 1547. The stitches used in the embroidery, couching in gold and silver thread and split stitch in silk, were popular in the 15th-16th centuries. A similar way of making up a pattern with small motifs couched in bricking and diagonal pattern is to be seen on the Scrope shield (V. and A., Cat. No. 38), early 16th century. One difference noticed seems to be that usually where patterns are made up of details in couched or laid or split stitch they are outlined, while in our fragment such lines are absent. Taking, for instance on fig. 4, the straight edge in the background work between E and F, one would expect from 15th- to 16th-century examples to find the joining stitches covered with a silk stitching or at least a couched line of silk. It is possible that these once existed and have disappeared with usage; there seems to be a trace of silk that might have been outlining in the curve of the centre leaf (D), and another at the base of the split stitch portion (H).

Apart from the St Cuthbert embroideries, probably early 10th century, practically all English couching seems to have been done by the underside method (*point couché retiré*) till the end of the 14th century, only one other example of surface couching, that of the Felbrigg Psalter, being mentioned by Mrs Christie.¹ In the 15th century surface couching was usual. De Farcy describes both methods,² but it is obvious that he had never seen couching done with an interlacement; examination of early French 16th-century pieces in the Victoria and Albert Museum has so far revealed only normal couching.

It may seem strange that only two examples of interlacement, both from these islands, but very far separated in period, should have been noted; but further study of the back of embroideries and vestments in museums and cathedrals may well reveal other examples.

¹ Christie, A. G. I., *English Medieval Embroidery* (1938), 65, pl. lxxv.

² de Farcy, Louis, *La Broderie du XI^e Siècle jusqu'à nos Jours* (Angers, 1890), 7.

THE KNITTING.

The bishop at Fortrose is reported to have been found wearing knitted stockings and gloves. In the 16th century knitted garments were still a rarity even in the royal wardrobes. The knitted garments of Edward IV and the stockings of Princess Mary, sister of Henry VIII, are among the earliest recorded, though knitted silk stockings, in some cases known to have been imported from Spain, appear in inventories later in the century.¹ The earliest extant pieces of knitting in Britain are probably the gloves of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, worn in 1386,² worked in crimson silk in stocking stitch with a green and gold pattern worked into the wrist and a gold sun and IHS worked into the backs. In the Cathedral at Prague there is a glove in stocking stitch with a chevron colour pattern in the wrist, also of late 14th-century date.³ The design on the cuffs of William of Wykeham's gloves is strangely like that on the knitted cushion from the tomb of Fernando de la Cerda at Burgos,⁴ who died in 1211, which with a similar slightly older cushion at the same place is probably of Moorish origin. Also at Burgos there is a glove of white silk worked in an openwork pattern of small diamonds, dated to the mid 14th century,⁵ in its turn similar in appearance to a glove in the Musée Cluny, Paris, which belonged to Pierre de Courpalay, who died in 1334.⁶

47. *From the Tomb of a Bishop at Fortrose* (early or mid 16th century).⁷
(See also the Cloths, p. 26, and the Braids, p. 32.)

Two small pieces of knitting survive. That in the possession of Father MacGillivray measures $1\frac{3}{4}$ by 3 ins., while the other is in the National Museum of Antiquities, KJ 32, and measures $1\frac{3}{4}$ by 2 ins. The yarn is a 2-ply cream-coloured silk. They are worked in a very regular stocking stitch with 18 rows and 29 stitches per inch. On the larger piece one end is a cast-on edge, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins. above is a decrease of one stitch.

APPENDIX

No. 27 in Part I of this paper, a description of a knitted bonnet from Tarvie, Garve, Ross-shire, mentions another bonnet found at the same time. This is in Inverness Museum, and appears to be identical with that belonging to the Scottish United Services Museum.

¹ Hartley, M., and Ingilby, J., *The Old Handknitters of the Dales* (1951), 4.

² *Archæologia*, LX (1907), 483-4, pl. L.

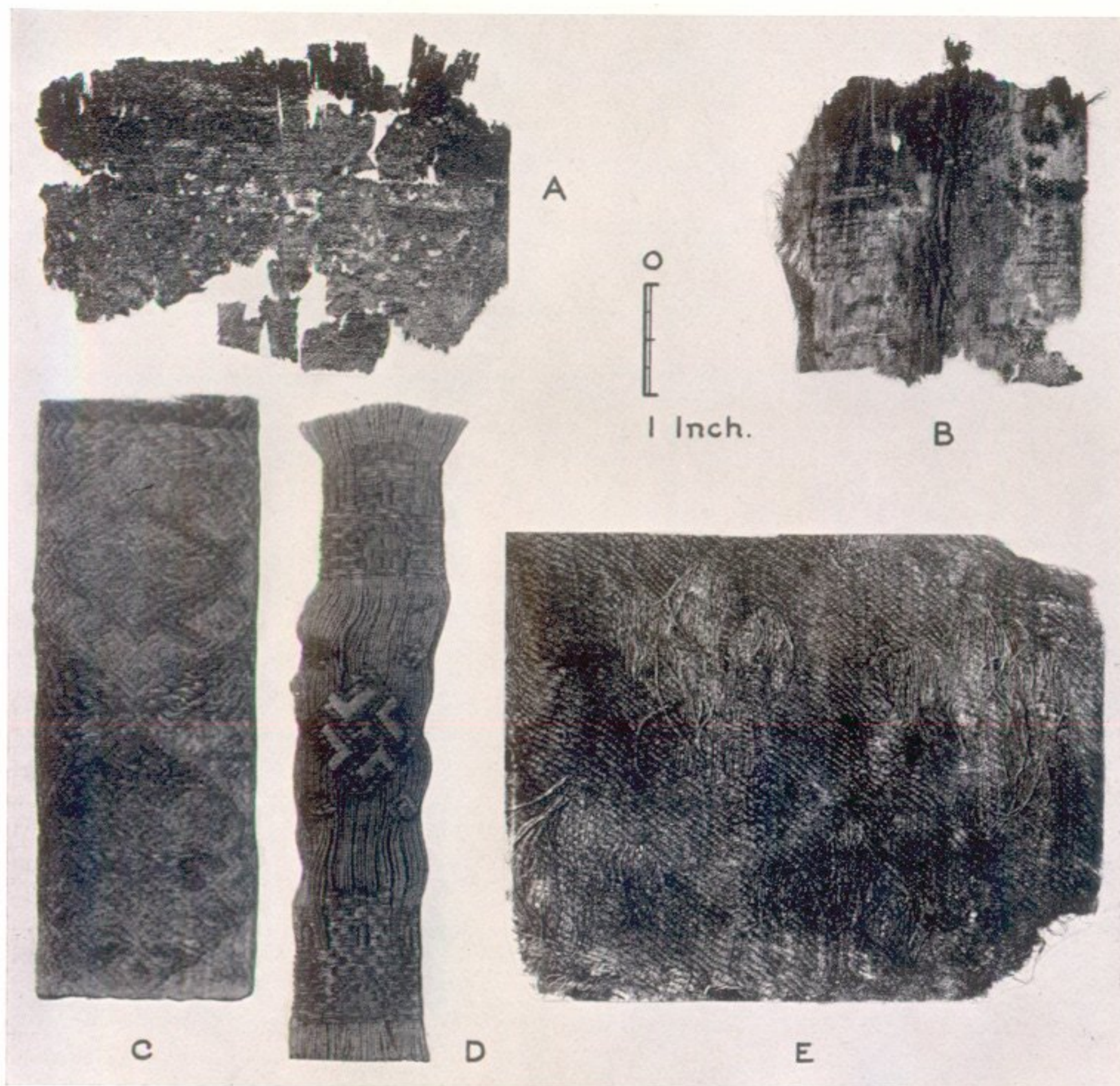
³ Braun, J., *Die Liturgische Gewandung* (Feiburg, 1907), 370.

⁴ Gómez-Moreno, M., *El Panteon Real de Las Huelgas de Burgos* (Madrid, 1946), 85, pl. 121.

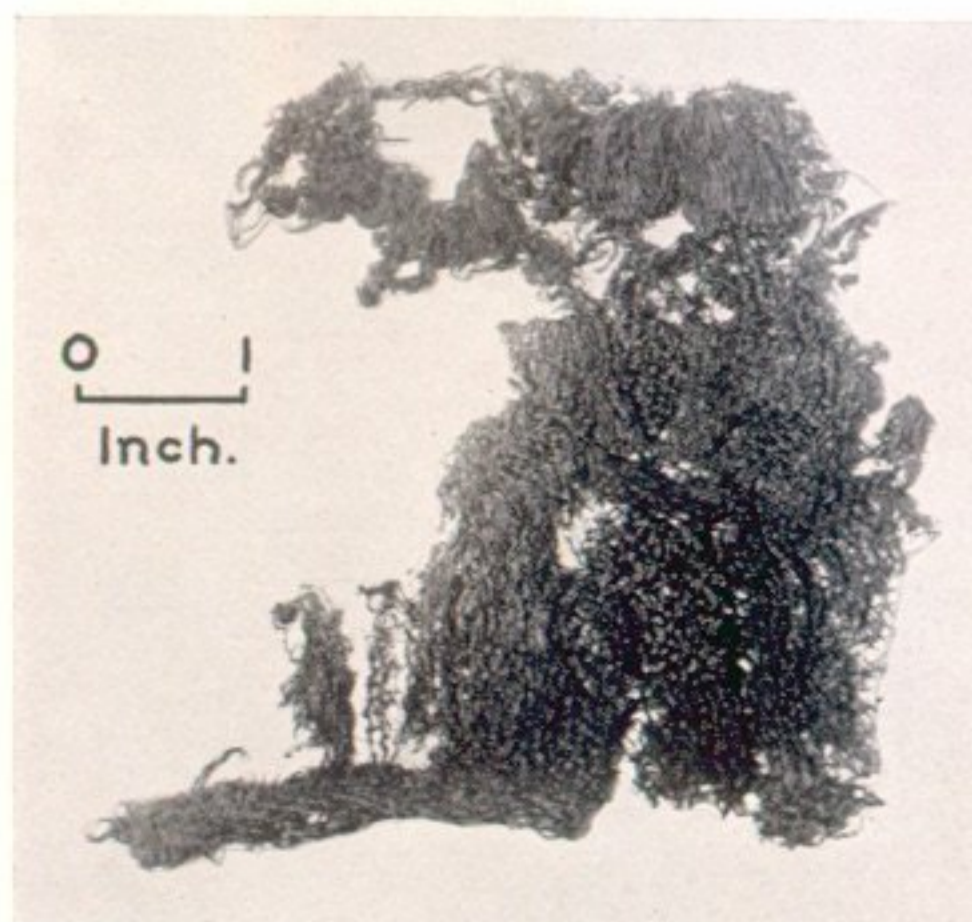
⁵ *Ibid.*, 85, pl. 122.

⁶ *Ciba Review*, VI, pt. 61 (1947), 2207, and Braun, J., *Die Liturgische Gewandung* (Freiburg, 1907), 370, note 3.

⁷ Hartley, M., and Ingilby, J., *The Old Handknitters of the Dales* (1951), 4.



1. Cloths from the grave of Robert the Bruce (A and B) (No. 37) and Fortrose (E) (No. 39); tablet in woven bands from Fortrose (C and D) (Nos. 43-44).



2. Embroidery from the tomb of Bishop Gavin Dunbar (No. 46). The fragment measures $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins. square.

AUDREY S. HENSHALL.