

ART. XXIV.—*Excavations at Holm Cultram.* By MRS.
T. H. HODGSON.

Read at Carlisle, April 5th, 1906.

EARLY in the spring of 1906, Mr. Grainger of Southerfield, Abbey Town, kindly invited Mr. Hodgson and myself to go and see a doorway which had been found whilst some alterations were being made in the churchyard at Holm Cultram. We took measurements and photographs, and I subjoin a detailed description.

The present church occupies the western portion of the ancient nave, two of whose pillars are built into its eastern wall. The foundations of other pillars were uncovered, and in a straight line with the northern row of pillars we found a wall 3 feet 9 inches thick, with a doorway in it 4 feet wide, its centre being 76 feet from the pillars in the eastern wall of the present church.

The lower part of a beautiful doorway of early date has been exposed. Our member Mr. Martindale, who saw it a few days later, thinks it to be thirteenth century work. The remains of the western jamb stand about 2 feet 4 inches above the pavement, and those of the eastern about 3 feet 6 inches. The opening is 4 feet wide, and has a sill-stone $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, its top being $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the level of the pavement. It seems possible that the sill-stone was a later insertion, as it is higher than the base-mouldings of the jambs. (Plate I).

The walls east and west of the doorway are 3 feet 8 inches and 3 feet 9 inches thick. On the north or outer side of the opening they are perfectly plain, splayed from the door at a very small angle, 100° instead of 90° (Plate III). On the south, however, opening into the choir, there is a well and deeply-cut moulding on each side, next the door, and then the bases of two shafts with



PLATE I.—HOLM CULTRAM. THE DOORWAY.

Mrs. T. H. Hodgson, photo.

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PLATE II.—HOLM CULTRAM.
Tiled Floor and Doorway.

Mrs. T. H. Hodgson, photo.

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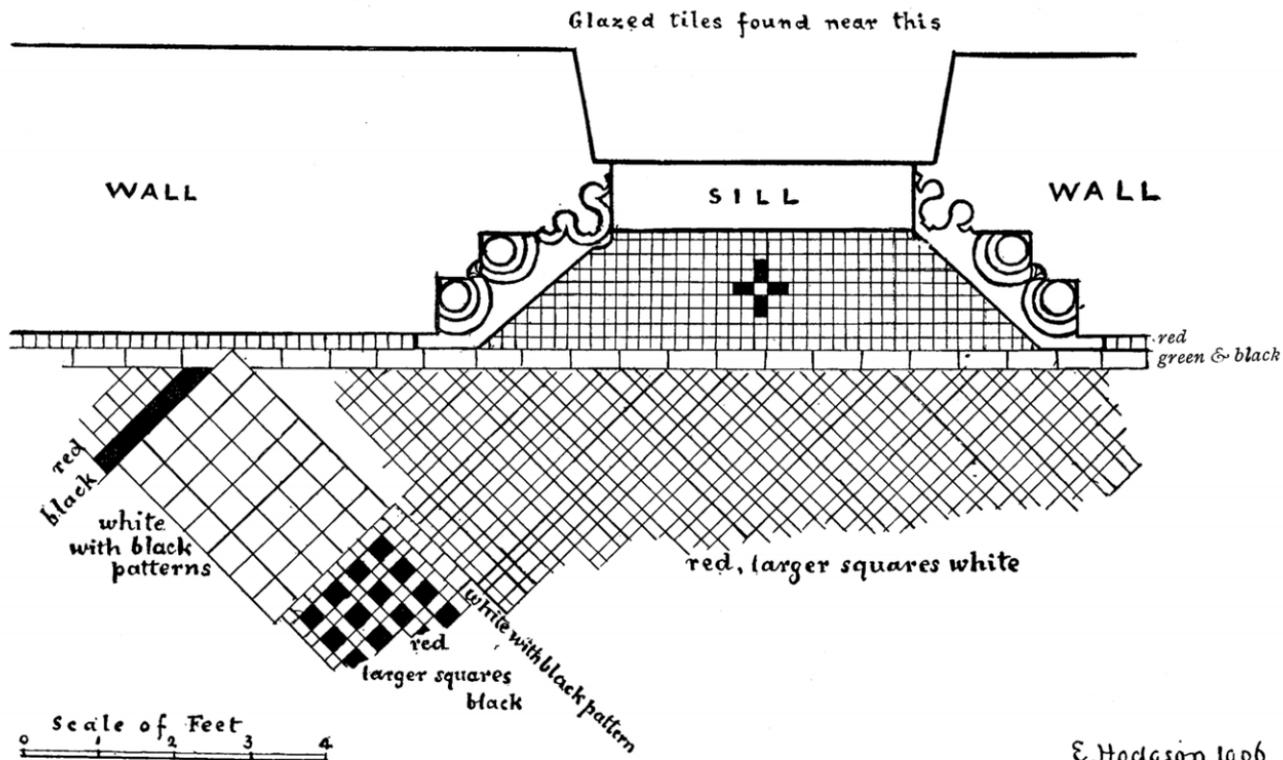


PLATE III.—HOLM CULTRAM. Plan of tiled floor and doorway.

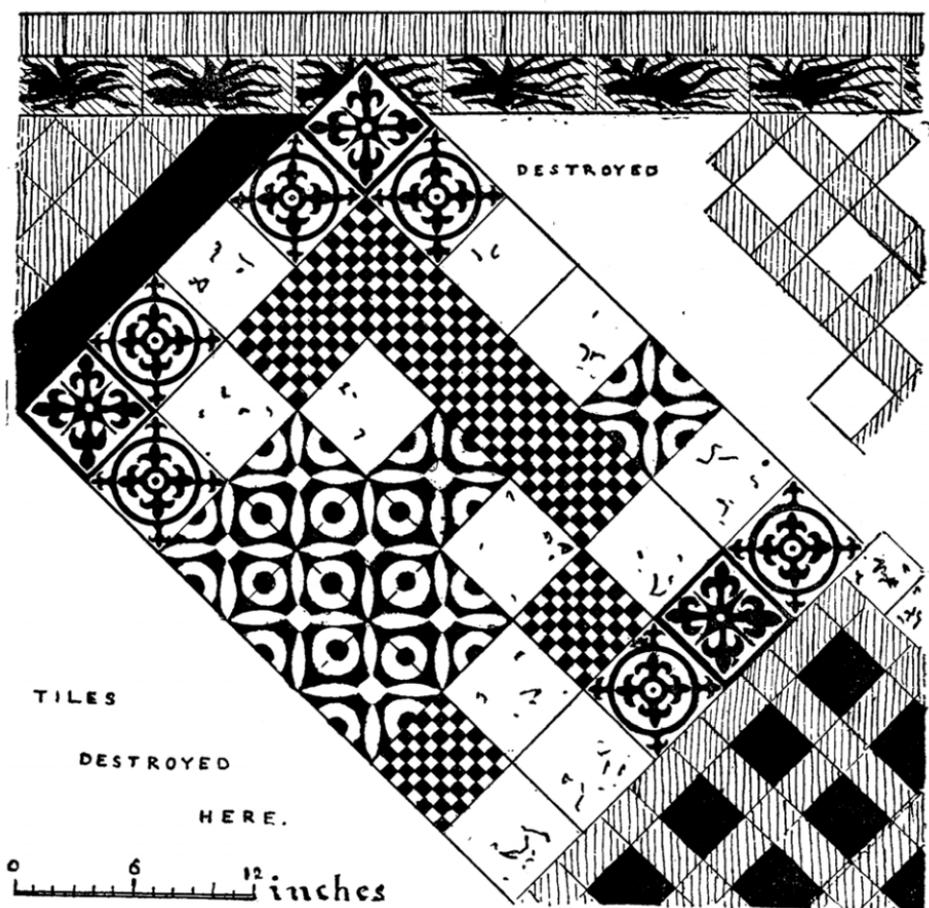


PLATE IV.—HOLM CULTRAM.

Pavement of black, white, red and green tiles recently excavated near the doorway.

Vertical shading *red*, diagonal shading *green*.

dog-tooth ornament between them. The shafts are not *in situ*, but several plain cylindrical pieces, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, were lying about.

In front of the doorway and to the south and south-west of it, a pavement of encaustic tiles was found. (Plates II, III). The surface had very much perished, and in many parts we found it impossible to decide what had been the original colour or pattern, but the annexed plan shows what we were able to make out. A long line of tiles, 3 inches wide by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, forms a border along the walls, passing straight across the doorway. These show chiefly red with a dark pattern, but there are indications that they were originally yellowish green with a black pattern. The space between this line and the door-sill is filled with tiles two inches square, having in the middle a cross with a white square in the centre and four arms of rather longer dark tiles. Most of the groundwork is now red, but I think it was originally all white, as there are numerous white patches. On the inner side of the long line of tiles is a pattern of what have been white 3-inch squares, set in a groundwork of red 2-inch squares and 2 by 3-inch oblongs. These are set diagonally, as are all which I now have to describe. (Plate IV). At 2 feet 9 inches west of the corner of the western jamb, the dark line is broken by the angle of a rectangular patch of white tiles with strongly-marked black patterns. These were $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches square. All had more or less perished, and in some it was impossible to make out any pattern at all. In others it was easy to see what the pattern had been, and I traced a specimen of each. Their arrangement seems rather irregular. The frost was doing constant damage, and in hope of preserving these figured tiles it was decided, as the lesser of two evils, to remove them. The rectangle contained five tiles by seven. On the north-east it came up to the red and white diagonals before described. On the north-west it was bordered by a line of dark tiles 3 inches square, beyond which were

red tiles 3 inches square. On the south-west the tiles were gone. On the south-east the pattern was like the aforesaid red and white, but the 3-inch white squares were replaced by dark (probably black). This pattern was divided from the red and white by a line of white squares with traces of a black pattern, so nearly effaced that I could not reproduce it.

Mr. Grainger told me that some glazed tiles had been found on the north or outer side of the little doorway, and had been removed to the porch of the church in order to preserve them. If I identified them correctly, they were of the pattern already figured in Mr. Gilbanks's book, *Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey*, plate opposite page 58. Mr. Grainger says that when first uncovered they "were alternately bright yellow and blue in colour." They are now dulled in colour, though they show much more glaze than the black and white. The pattern extends over four tiles instead of being complete in one, and seems to be partly incised instead of being due purely to flat colouring.

Part of a stone figure was found standing against the wall near the doorway, but apparently not *in situ*. It is now in the porch. It is the lower half of a figure, carrying a child on the right arm, and surrounded by a border of angels. The slab is about 4 feet by 2 feet, so that the figure must have been rather more than life-size, as all about the waist has been broken off. The feet of the child and a small part of its dress are visible. The position of the hands of the other figure can be seen, but the hands themselves are broken. Surrounding the figures there is a border, 4 inches wide, of wavy lines. Beyond this, and sloping backwards, is a border, 8 inches wide, of small figures of angels. Those on the left (the right hand of the figure) are too much turned away to be seen in the illustration, but another fragment of the same stone, 21 inches by 7½ inches, is standing by the larger slab, and shows one angel completely, and portions of the dress of another and of the wings of a third. (Plate V).



PLATE V.—HOLM CULTRAM.

Figure of the Virgin and Child, figures of Angels, and the
Shield of Abbot Chamber.

Mrs. T. H. Hodgson, photo.

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