During the repairs and restorations of Old Aberdeen Cathedral, presently going on, the old roof had to be removed, the accumulations of earth from the outside, and the lining of lath and plaster which covered the whole of the interior. Thus a great part of the walls had to be laid bare, which afforded a favourable opportunity for obtaining a very complete collection of the mason marks existing on the walls. These were found to be very numerous where the old surface of the stone had been in any way protected from decay. The accompanying plate shows
all the different varieties observed; but of most of the varieties there are
a great many repetitions, amounting in all perhaps to several hundreds.

The first seven marks given in the plate are those that are on the
freestone part of the cathedral, and it will be observed that, except in
two cases, these are not repeated on the granite. Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 6 are
from the walls of St John's Aisle, which Orem, a local historian who
wrote about 1725, says was built by Bishop Leighton about 1430, but
which Mr Gilbert Scott, with greater probability, attributes to the
period of the Kininmounds, 1340 to 1380, judging by the "character and
great beauty of the mouldings and foliated capitals of the columns which
supported the great tower,"¹ and which forms a part of it, as compared
with the like features of the nave, the undoubted work of Leighton, as
his epitaph, still preserved in the cathedral, states that "he built the
fabric of the church from the choir as high as the summit of the walls."

Very little, only a few feet, of the walls of this aisle now remains. A
good part of the materials of it was taken away by Cromwell for the
purpose of building a fort at Aberdeen, and its destruction was completed
by a tempest of wind in November 1719, and the debris have been used
for building purposes. The same marks, however, occur on several loose
stones of the same freestone lying about. No. 4 is one of these stones
which has been built into the wall of the nave, in the inside near the
east end, probably during the work of reparation in 1808 or 1823, when the
north aisle was restored to its present unseemly state. No. 5 is on one
of the great freestone pillars formerly mentioned; it is the only example
of the mark observed. No. 7 is on the south wall of St Machar's aisle,
at the east end, which was rebuilt with old materials in 1800.

All the other marks are on granite, and it may be remarked that they
are in contrast to those on freestone, which were sharp and well defined,
very indistinct, except where the wall has been protected from the
weather and damp. For although the outside of the wall had evidently
been covered with them, it now requires very careful observation to trace
them, except on sheltered spots about doorways and buttresses.

Marks Nos. 8 to 19 were on the walls of the western towers, erected
between 1430 and 1460, on the outside, but protected by the roof of the
nave from the weather. On the other sides of the towers, near the top,

traces of others could be discovered, but so much was the outer surface of 
the stone decayed that they could not be identified. Nos. 20 to 40 were 
in the middle of the western towers, principally on the steps and newels 
of the winding stairs and doorways. Nos. 41 to 49 and 52 to 58 were 
on the outside of the western towers, near the ground, and north or con-
sistory aisle wall, and about the western doorway, No. 50 is on a corbel 
in north tower inside, and No. 51, which only occurs once on the building, 
is at the lower entrance to stair in interior of north-west tower. Nos. 
59 to 68 were on the outside of the south or St Machar’s aisle, and about 
the door of the south or marriage porch.

Besides the above there are several marks, undoubtedly old, but which 
have been partly recut and added to by ignorant persons employed about 
the cathedral, which it may be well to note. Two of these are on the 
freestone part of the parapet of the north-west tower, access to which 
can only be got by climbing from the roof of the nave, as the top part of 
the stair has long been built up. This part of the tower was erected by

Gavin Dunbar about 1522. The third was observed when the plaster 
was taken from the inside walls of the south porch.
MASON MARKS FROM OLD ABERDEEN CATHEDRAL.