

III.

NOTES OF THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF PAVEMENT AND FLOORING
TILES AT THE ABBEY OF COUPAR-ANGUS AND THE CATHEDRAL
OF ST ANDREWS. BY ALEXANDER HUTCHESON, F.S.A. Scot.,
BROUGHTY FERRY.

A very interesting discovery was made at Coupar-Angus burying-ground in December last. While William Spiers, sexton, was engaged in making preparations for an interment, he came upon what was supposed to have been the original floor of the abbey. The supposed floor lay at a depth of about 4 feet below the surface of the burying-ground, and was formed of neatly squared small red paving stones, which had been carefully jointed, and bedded with lime mortar. The stones were alternated into each other, and very smooth on their upper surfaces.

On raising a portion of the pavement, it was found to be covering and indeed resting upon two coffins, each containing a full-grown skeleton in apparently undisturbed and tolerably well-preserved con-

dition. The coffins had no other covering than the pavement, and were each formed from a single stone, measuring in outside dimensions about 7 feet in length, 3 feet in breadth, and 1 foot 6 inches deep, hollowed out for the body, and shaped for the shoulders and head, and lay east and west. The coffins and pavement were of the ordinary red sandstone of the district, of which the abbey itself was built.

The sexton lifted one of the coffins, which was unfortunately broken in the operation, the other was left in the ground. Mr Charles Boyd, banker, Coupar-Angus, who has taken much interest in the discovery, tells me that the coffin when discovered was filled to the top with a fine mould. This was doubtless the effect of the percolation of water through the overlying soil, carrying down with it the finer particles of earth, a feature generally observed in old interments. The contents of the coffins were carefully examined, but nothing of interest was discovered. Similar coffins have previously been discovered during digging operations in the same burying-ground, and several of them are preserved in a corner of the ground.

It may not be without interest to mention, as possibly evincing in this instance an example of continuity of occupation for long periods of time by successive races of particular sites for worship and burial, that during last summer Mr Spiers discovered, at a depth of about 6 feet from the surface, and apparently beyond the limits of the abbey walls, but inside the burying-ground, what seems to have been an ancient burial. The cist or coffin was about 7 feet long by about 2 feet in breadth. No covering stone was apparent, but it was paved in the bottom, and had slabs set on edge for the sides, and was described by him as having been formed of blue slabs, similar to the paving stones of East Forfarshire; and a month or two thereafter, at about a similar depth, and several yards to the south of the last mentioned discovery, he found a small Bronze Age whetstone of quartzite, which is now deposited in the Museum of the Society.¹

The above notes are written from personal observation and inquiry, the writer having visited the site of the abbey on the day after the discovery of the pavement.

¹ See the figure of the Whetstone, *ante*, p. 8.

The writer was also present in September last, when a part of the original floor of the cathedral of St Andrews was uncovered. The floor lay at a depth of about 5 inches below the present surface of the gravel walk immediately in front of the site of the high altar, and was formed of burned tiles of a reddish clay, each 10 inches square and about 1 inch in thickness, laid diagonally, and bedded and jointed with lime. The tiles, one of which is deposited in the Museum, had been originally coated on the upper surface with a greenish and yellow-coloured glaze, without, so far as seen, any pattern. Small portions of the glaze still adhered round the edges of the tiles, but on the upper surface it had been apparently worn off by foot wear, some of the tiles, where of softer material, being much hollowed out and worn down.

One interesting feature brought out in the discovery when the floor was uncovered may be noticed. All the tiles were found to be broken, and many of them deeply indented into the soil, as if by the fall upon them of heavy masses of material,—doubtless a record of the fall of the walls and roof of the cathedral.