

of Cornwall; they may, it is hoped, induce other enquirers to communicate notices of similar traces either in the west, or other remote parts of the British Isles, and especially in Ireland. The zealous efforts of the missionaries of that country, at a period when the light of Christianity was almost extinguished by the barbarous invaders who overran other parts of England, appear to have been instrumental in preserving the more secluded and tranquil regions of the west from paganism and infidelity. This consideration may cause the simple and rude remains, which have been enumerated, to be regarded with interest and veneration.

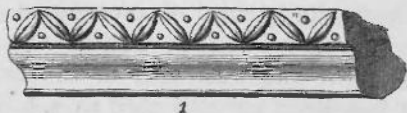
OBSERVATIONS ON THE CRYPT OF HEXHAM CHURCH, NORTHUMBERLAND.

THE ancient crypt on the west side of the abbey church of Hexham, beneath the ground once occupied by the nave, was discovered in the year 1726, in digging the foundation for a buttress to support the west end of the church; and since that period it has been appropriated as a burial-place for the successive Lecturers of Hexham. At the period of its discovery it was examined by Stukely and Gale, who made known two Roman inscriptions contained in it: one built into the wall, and another into the roof of the north passage leading to the body of the crypt. It was, subsequently, explored by Horsley, who detected the fragment of a third inscribed stone in the arch of one of the doorways. These inscriptions are engraved in the "*Britannia Romana*," plates 35, 36, figs. cviii., cix., cx.

In the year 1775 this crypt was again examined by the eccentric Hutchinson, who gave a meagre description of it in his "*View of Northumberland*^a;" he recopied the inscriptions, and fancied he had detected some errors in Horsley's transcripts of them; but it is needless to enter into this part of the subject, further than to observe that a recent copy of one of these stones proves that Horsley was correct in his reading.

^a Vol. i. p. 102.

Together with the inscriptions, fragments of apparently Roman mouldings were found embedded in the walls, and their presence led Horsley to suppose that Hexham had been a Roman station^b. He thought it improbable that with quarries at hand the builders of the church would have brought stones either from Corbridge, the supposed CORSTOPITUM of Antonine's Itinerary, or from the Roman wall; and therefore conjectured it to have been the EPIACUM of Ptolemy^c; although Ebchester, in the adjoining county of Durham, is now considered to represent the station so designated. But however this may have been Horsley's inference, drawn from the existence of quarries in the vicinity of Hexham, it is not entitled to much weight, as the county of Northumberland affords numerous instances of Roman remains having been used in building, in places where abundance of stone was to be had nearer than the spots from whence such relics must, unquestionably, have been procured. With these remarks we may take leave of the Roman antiquities of Hexham. The engravings 1, 2, and 3, are copies of fragments of mouldings extensively



1



2



3

used in the walls of the crypt. No. 1. is certainly Roman; and though some doubt may be entertained respecting the other two, we are inclined to consider them relics of that debased style of art, which marked the works of the Roman legionaries in Britain.

None of the antiquaries referred to bestowed much attention

on the crypt itself, which remained unnoticed from the time of Hutchinson until the month of June in the present year, when Mr. Fairless of Hexham, having an opportunity of examining it, drew the accompanying plan from correct measurement, and obligingly communicated it to the Central Committee of the Institute.

The history of the church of St. Andrew in Hexham presents almost as many vicissitudes as the life of Wilfrid, archbishop of York, who founded it about the year 673, and subsequently became the first bishop of Hexham. The building of Wilfrid was continued or improved by Acca, his successor in the see, c. 709, and a glowing description of the early edifice is given by Richard, prior of Hexham, whose testimony of its grandeur is not to be lightly regarded; for although he wrote at the distance of nearly three centuries from the period of its destruction by the Danes, in 875, there can be little doubt his relation was founded both on written authorities and respectable tradition, to say nothing of relics of the pristine church still existing in his time, which confirmed the story of its ancient magnificence. The church and monastery continued in ruins from the time of the Danish spoliation until about 1113, when it was restored by the second Thomas, archbishop of York, and given to a body of Austin canons, whose successors held it at the dissolution. The nave of the new foundation was destroyed by the Scots in 1296, and has not since been rebuilt. We may believe that the edifice, as it now exists, is chiefly the work of Thomas. There are additions of a later date, not the least remarkable being a modern doorway, for which the church is indebted to the liberality of the Mercers' Company, who are patrons of the Lectureship, founded in the 17th century by a member of their corporation.

Without advancing a positive opinion on the subject, it may be observed that it is more than probable this curious crypt is the identical subterranean oratory constructed by Wilfrid^d; a crypt, of which it would be desirable to have a plan, exists in a similar position, viz., beneath the nave, in Ripon cathedral^e, originally one of Wilfrid's foundations, and a comparison of the arrangement and construction of

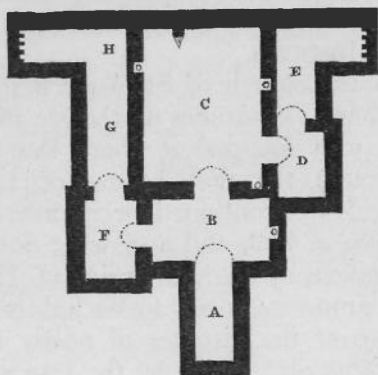
^d "Igitur profunditatem ipsius ecclesiæ criptis et oratorii subterraneis, et viarum anfractibus, inferius cum magna industria

fundavit." Ricardus Hagustald., apud Twysden, 290.

^e History of Ripon, 12^o. 1801, p. 122.

these buildings would materially assist in determining the question of their antiquity. T. H. TURNER.

T. H. TURNER.



REFERENCES TO THE PLAN.

A. Present entrance, a square pit 7 ft. long by 2 ft. 7 in. broad, and about 18 ft. deep to the bottom level of the crypt.

B. An arched chamber, 9 ft. 2 in. by 5 ft. 7 in., height to top of roof 9 ft., recess in the wall, cavity at the bottom.

C. An arched chamber, 13 ft. 4 in. by 8 ft., same height as B, three square recesses in side walls, with a cavity in the bottom stone, (perhaps for holy water,) and a funnel-shaped hollow above; a stone bracket at the east end, as shewn in plan.

D. A small chamber, (pointed triangular roof, formed with large flat stones,) 5 ft. 4 in. by 3 ft. 6 in.; height to apex of roof 8 ft.

E. A passage, 2 ft. 6 in. broad, length to angle 8 ft. 6 in., elbow 4 ft., flat roof covered with large stones.

F. A small chamber, 6 ft. by 3 ft. 6 in., with a pointed triangular roof, same as D.

G. A passage, 2 ft. 6 in. broad, 6 ft. 6 in. high, length to angle 13 ft. 6 in., elbow to north 4 ft., walled up with dry stones.

H. A Roman inscribed slab, forms the cover to this angle of the passage.

The dotted half circles, at the openings, from one chamber to another, are arched doorways about 6 ft. 3 in. in height.