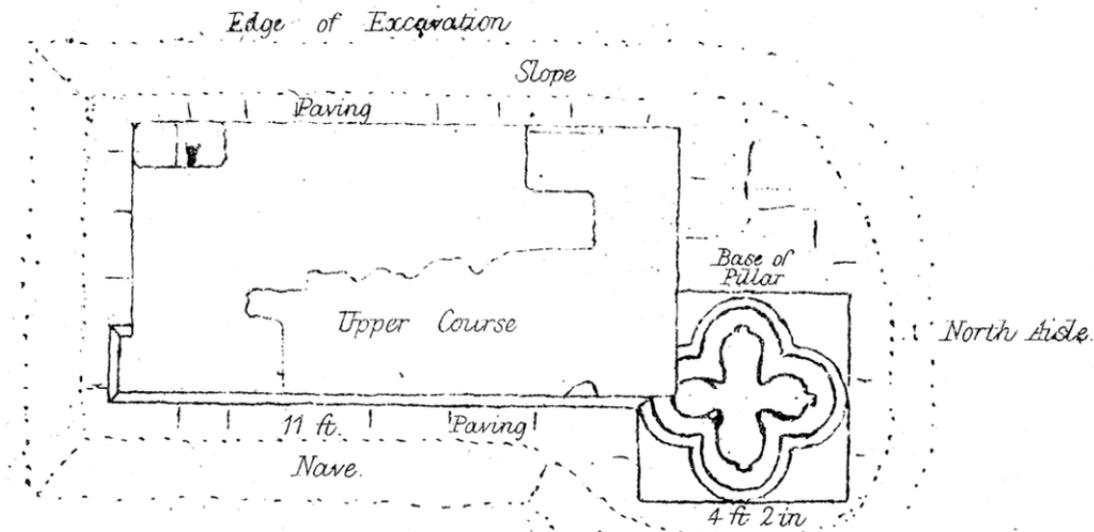


ART. XXXVII.—*Explorations at Calder Abbey.* By the
Rev. ARTHUR G. LOFTIE, B.A.

Read at Keswick, October 5th, 1882.

I have been asked to write a paper, with the above name, for the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society; I fear the title is too pretentious, for a lost abbey has not been opened up, nor to any extent have hidden treasures been brought to light: but, by the work of your hands, assisted occasionally by willing helpers, Dr. Parker and I have, on a small scale, uncovered some interesting remains, and added some little to the interest and knowledge of a picturesque ruin. We were simultaneously struck with the idea, that the visit of the “Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society” to the Abbey, in August, 1881, was an opportunity for carrying out a desire we both had long had, to do something towards the repair of the groined roof of the Chapter House, which was fast giving way; and to unbury the hidden part of the Norman west door of the church. So we at once set to work, the authorities at the Abbey met us with great liberality, and gave us *carte blanche* to do all that was absolutely necessary, to give support to that which was in a dangerous condition, and to rebuild that portion of the roof that had fallen in, and they also supplied workmen to assist in opening up the west doorway, Thus was begun the work, which has occupied many of our spare hours for six months of the last winter. The digging at the west door well repaid our labour, for we found the steps, and the bases of the pillars, in good repair, preserved by the soil which had been heaped upon them when, about a hundred years ago,
the

Fig 2.



Foundation of Screen? adjoining 1st Pillar of Nave. Calder Abbey. Ground Plan.

the ground appears to have been raised to its present height and three feet above the level of the floor of the church. Next we commenced with the door of the north transept a remarkably beautiful early English door with deeply cut arch mouldings. Here also we found the steps, two in number, in excellent preservation, and the bases of the shafts; and within the door one of the flags of the pavement remained in its place; the soil here was not so deep as at the west end, the level of the church being no doubt higher—it was only about 28 inches. On beginning to dig round the north-west pier of the central tower, we found at the depth of a foot a pavement of flat stones which seemed to have formed the floor of the modern outhouses, which, no doubt, covered this portion of the area of the ruins, before the ground was levelled, raised and covered with turf. Going down further we again came upon a pavement, no doubt that of the choir for it corresponded with the bases of the clustered columns of the pier; here we can trace two masons' marks quite sharp and fresh.* In digging at this place a stone head of a bishop or abbot was found: it shows, on much of its surface, the traces of gilding. In the opening up of the next pillar to the pier—the first of the north aisle of the nave—we also unburied a carved head of the same stone, it is that of a monk very small, and very beautifully worked. The uncovering of the base of this pillar, shewed, extending from it southwards, a mass of dressed stone (shewn in the accompanying plan, fig. 2) eleven feet three inches long by five feet four inches broad. The upper surface has plainly been robbed of its dressed stone, and so is of irregular form, most of it being about a foot in height above the pavement which still surrounds it. This structure from its situation and appearance, we judge to be the foundation of one of the chancel screens, the part uncovered being the

* For these marks and others, see *ante* p. 357. N.B. The numbering of the illustrations to this paper begins with "Fig. 2."

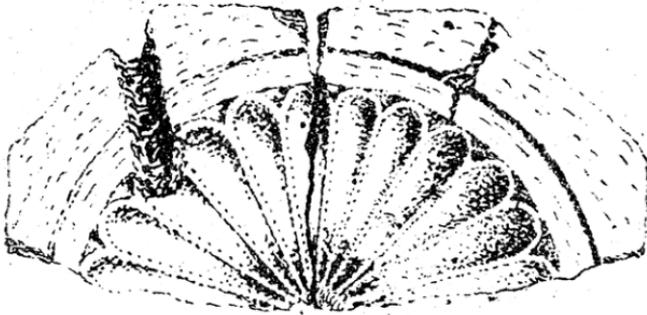
northern

northern half; the other portion, no doubt, being still buried under the grass and soil. There is a kind of groove in the south end of it which seems to have admitted the door of the screen to have been shut back against it. In the old picture of the Abbey, on a panel in the Abbey House, a screen is seen to be in this position, with an opening in the centre. The pillar, at the base of which these remains were found, shews the marks, to above the capital, of the screen which was built against it, some of it having been cut away to make room for it, and also marks of the longitudinal screen, between the nave and the north aisle, can be easily traced.

After the Chapter House roof was repaired, and the premier arch of the large decorated window taken down and rebuilt, we partially excavated the floor space. Here we discovered the seats built of stone, against the north, east, and south sides; from these the dressed stone tops have been removed. We found in this part of the excavations—which are still proceeding—four pieces of fan tracery, which seem to have formed parts of two piscinas or holy water stoups, they are not perfect enough for us to be certain which. (See plate 3.) As in this place the abbots were buried we hope to come across other interesting carved stones, perhaps the rest of the tomb of Abbot Robert de “Wilughby,” now placed in the cell.

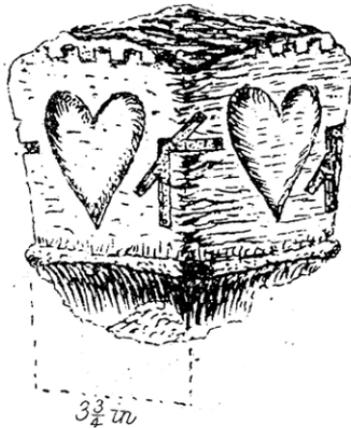
In front of the sedilia, in the chancel, we have excavated a trench to shew the level of the church at this place, the pavement is gone and we find that the walls have no deep foundations, but seem to lie on the earth only a few inches under the floor level. Then digging eastward from this point we traced the south wall of the chancel for nine feet eight inches beyond the end of the existing wall, and here came upon the south-east angle of the sanctuary. Thus shewing the extreme length of the church to be 145 feet from the west door. The rest of the east wall has been removed. The site of the High Altar is occupied by a cart road,

Fig 3.



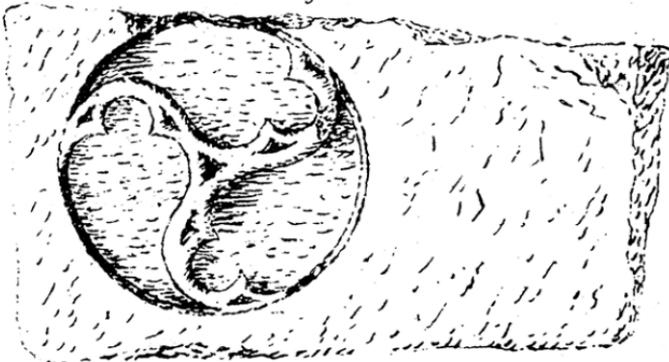
Two fragments of Piscina c.— dug out of soil on floor of Chapter House.

Fig 4.



Found in the wall of the stableyard.

Fig 5.



Found in the Garden.

Calder Abbey

Fred^k Dangerfield Lith, London 4697.

Fig 6.

7 in.



6 in.

Segment of Arch c. 1170,
found in digging out west door.
Transition from Norman.

Fig 7.

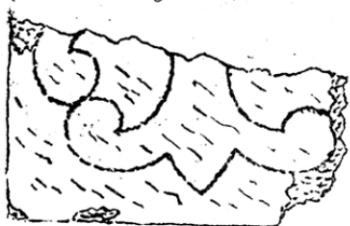


Fig 8.

9 1/4 in.

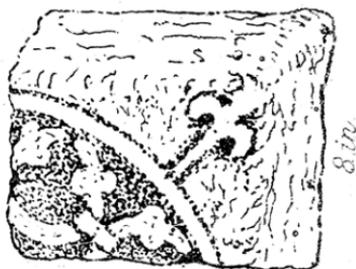


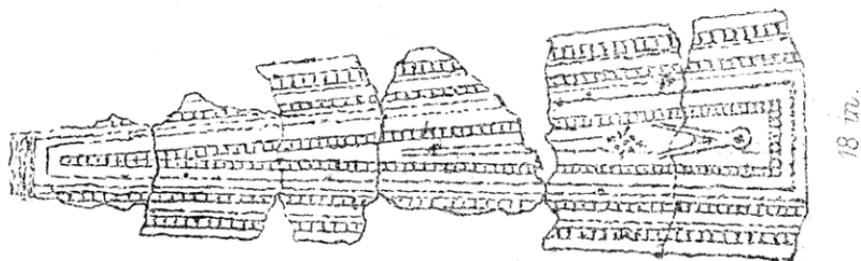
Fig 9.



Calder Abbey.

Fred^{ks} Dangerfield Lith London 4637

Fig 10



5 feet.

18 in.

Fig 11.

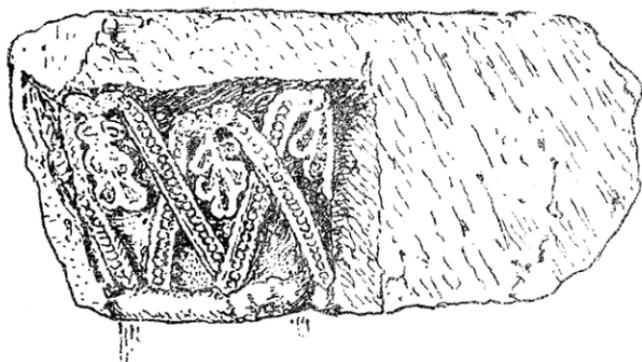


Fig 12



6 1/2 in

5 1/2 in

Fred^k. Dangerfield, Lith. London 4691.

road, and so we cannot as yet open it up. We do not intend excavating eastward, as churches of the Cistercian Order have no Lady Chapel, being themselves always dedicated to St. Mary.

Dr. Parker has made some very accurate sketches of a number of carved stones found during the explorations, one of these stones exhibits peculiar ornamentation of hearts and squares repeated on its four sides. (See plate 4.) No one as yet seems to have given a satisfactory explanation of them, it was shewn in the loan exhibition of the Royal Archæological Institute at Carlisle, together with the portable altar, the large cresset stone,* and the two carved heads.

Perhaps these notes may be continued in some future volume of the Transactions if anything more of interest is discovered. In time we hope to make an accurate plan of the Abbey buildings, as the different features are exposed to sight. Already, in beginning again the digging for this winter, the foundation of another screen has been found cutting off the eastern chapel of the south transept, to make, we suppose, a sacristy, for there is no trace of one in the usual place between the transept and the Chapter House, and in this apartment there is to be seen a door, very probably original, broken through the wall beside the sedilia into the sanctuary; and also a locker in the north wall shewing the marks of the door which fitted into it. In the apartment, over the Chapter House, is a curious instance of a fireplace being introduced into a window in the 14th or 15th century, the tracery of a decorated window can be seen by looking up into the chimney the flue coming through the open tracery at the top. It may be interesting to mention that part of the roof on the present dining-room of the dwelling-house is a remnant of the old refectory which stood with gables north and south in the centre of the south walk of

* For these, see *ante*, Vol. iii., pp. 190, 194.

the

the cloister : the rest of the roof becoming unsafe it was removed by the late Captain Irwin who told me of the alteration. The old picture, already referred to ; shews this gable and the whole cloister garth complete, though the cloister itself seems to have disappeared, buildings surrounding the whole area.