

VII.—THE EARLY MONUMENTAL REMAINS OF TYNEMOUTH.

By SIDNEY STORY CARR.

[Read on the 26th day of August, 1903.]

Up to the present no complete account and few brief notes have appeared relating to the early monastic remains of Tynemouth. Mr. W. Sidney Gibson, the chief historian of the priory at that place, did not refer to those the existence of which was known at the time he brought out his account of that important Benedictine house.¹ This article, therefore, is intended to furnish a complete catalogue of them. Of pre-Conquest date there are parts of crosses which served as memorials or for the rarer purpose of marking the bounds of sanctuary; while the medieval sepulchral remains consist of an effigy, grave covers, and matrices of brasses.

THE PRE-CONQUEST STONES.

The fragments of Anglian crosses are four in number; three of these, discovered at different times, are now in the museum of the society at the Blackgate. They have an especial interest for us as the only remnants of the earlier monastic institutions at Tynemouth. In the workmanship of these stones there is an entire absence of the treatment which characterized the school usually termed the Hexham,² the chief feature of which is the very graceful conventional treatment of branches and foliage. The Tynemouth crosses follow the more beautiful though at the same time later and more general style of treatment in the north of England, of which the principal feature is the curiously interlacing designs.

¹ *The History of the Monastery founded at Tynemouth*, by W. S. Gibson, F.S.A. 2 vols. W. Pickering, 1847.

² A designation given to it owing to some of the stones discovered there in connexion with St. Wilfrid's church being supposed to be executed by the men he brought from Rome in the latter part of the seventh century, or at any rate under a strong Italian influence, of which the chief is the cross of Acca, for descriptions of which by the Rev. W. Greenwell, D.C.L., see either *A Catalogue of the Sculptured and Inscribed Stones in the Cathedral Library, Durham*, p. 53. T. Caldcleugh, Durham, 1899; or *A History of Northumberland*, III. 181.

When it is remembered that the county of Northumberland was in so wild a state at the time of the Conquest that the lands constituting it were not recorded in Domesday book, we may fairly conclude that the arts of the Angles would linger longer than in many other parts of England where it is difficult to distinguish between certain pre- and post- Norman work. Although, therefore, the writer names these stones pre-Conquest, as they belong to the class

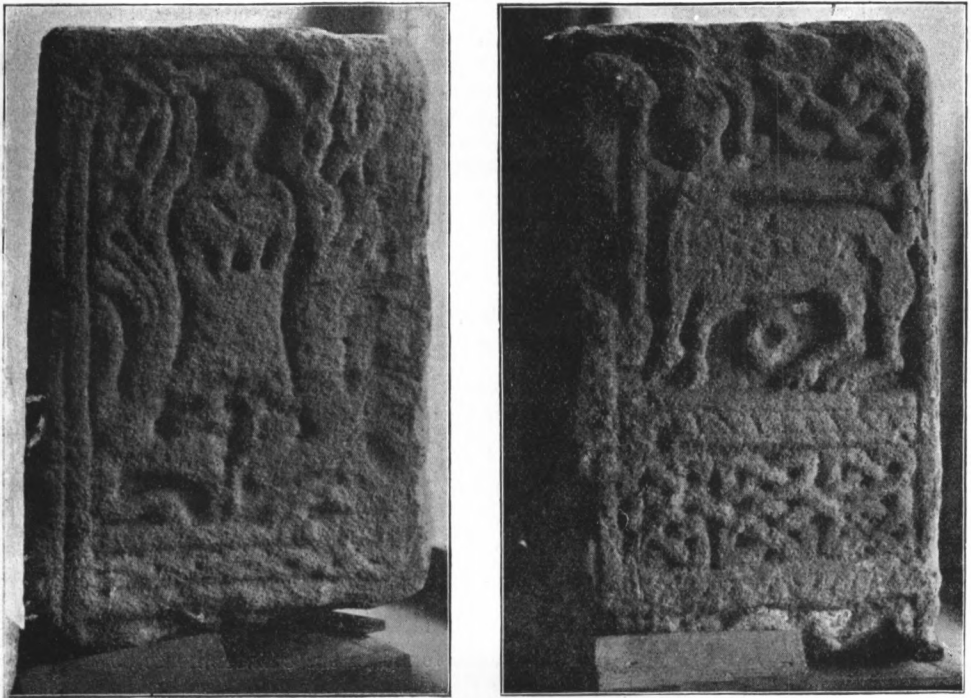


Fig. 1.

so termed, it is not absolutely clear that they were all sculptured before 1066.

The following stones are at the Blackgate :—

1.—A fragment of a cross head with one perfect limb : measuring 14 inches high, $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. The carving is the same on both faces. A boss surrounded by a raised ring, the limbs being filled with interlacing work ; radius from centre of the boss 11 inches ; the sides are not decorated (see fig. 10, page 132).

2.—A fragment of a cross-shaft measuring 17 inches high, the faces tapering from 11 to 10½ inches, the sides from 9½ inches to 9 inches. All the edges have a single roll moulding, while the faces are divided into panels by a horizontal cable moulding between two roll mouldings. This cross presents interesting and elaborate subjects. In a letter to Mr. Blair, the editor of the society, Mr. Romilly Allen writes :

‘The subject on one side appears to be an ecclesiastic or saint holding a book and standing on the heads of a pair of dragons. I presume that this symbolises the triumph of good over evil, as in the case of Christ trampling on the asp and basilisk (see *Christian Symbolism*, p. 274).³ The tails of the dragons merge into foliage in a remarkable manner. The centaur, holding a staff or club, is very like the one at Aycliffe. The exaggerated length of the centaur’s left arm, which is extended so as to grasp his tail, as compared with the extreme shortness of the right arm, is worthy of notice. Centaurs occur frequently both in Anglo-Saxon and in Norman art (see *Christian Symbolism*, p. 360). The interlaced work is derived from a six-cord plait. There are other examples of the same pattern at Meigle in Perthshire, and on the large cross-shaft at St. Andrews.’

The carving on one side has been destroyed ; and the panels on the other side are of different heights from those on either face ; they contain two vertical rows of knots of single cords (see fig. 1).

3.—A fragment of a cross-shaft 14 inches high, the face tapering from 12 to 11 inches, the sides 8 to 7½ inches, sculptured on one face and two sides, the design on the other face having apparently been chiselled off. The face of the cross has been divided into panels ; the fragment only shows part of one of these, which contains two rows of Stafford knots made with double cords. This is perhaps the most beautiful form of Keltic ornament and is to be seen on the St. Oswald cross,⁴ a coped grave-cover found in the chapter house at Durham,⁵ the Bewcastle cross, and on various other stones and in manuscripts. The sides are decorated with two vertical rows of knots of single cords. This stone was first noticed by Mr. M. Phillips, F.S.A., when some excavations were being conducted during 1895 in Tynemouth castle yard, within which the priory ruins stand. It

³ *Christian Symbolism*, by J. Romilly Allen, 1887.

⁴ See *A Catalogue of the Sculptured and Inscribed Stones in the Cathedral Library, Durham*.

⁵ See *The Transactions of the Durham and Northumberland Architectural and Antiquarian Society*, iv. 132. 1896.

was discovered in front of the south west gateway of the large magazine, due south of the west front of the ruins; the mortar clinging to the stone when found showed it had been used as building material⁶ (see fig. 2).

At first sight we ponder over these fragments and ask, if they with their symbolic and beautiful designs once formed the greater part of one cross? The whole would then have resembled one of those from Gainford, now in the cathedral library at Durham,⁷ more than any other the writer has seen. It seems, however, that the stones have belonged to different crosses. This appears very evident upon examining the mouldings: those on the cross head are narrower and more angular than those on figures 1 and 2, while the roll-mouldings on the latter two also differ from one another in size.



Fig. 2.

4.—The monolith known as the 'Monk's Stone' stands in front of the farmstead called Monk House, which is to the north of Tynemouth priory. Above the socket it stands 6 feet 2 inches high, the faces taper from 18 inches to 14½ inches, the sides from 11½ inches to 9 inches. The stone is clearly of pre-Conquest date; it has been unsculptured to the height of about 16 inches, then decorated on all faces and sides. No design can now be traced on the former. The illustration of the

⁶ For a fuller account of the discovery, see *Proceedings*, VII. 163.

⁷ See *A Catalogue of Sculptured Stones in Durham Cathedral Library*, 97, No. xxxi.

south side has been reproduced from a recent photograph by Dr. Stephens of North Shields, enlarged. This shows the design with a clearness with which it has not been seen before. It consists of a somewhat angular interlacing pattern interspersed with geometrical figures, divided by a moulding from the top ten inches of the stone, which contains two fabulous creatures; they face one another, their spiral tails curving inward. What is left of the design on the north side is wholly different; it is to be traced by standing at a short distance from the cross, and appears to consist in the centre of double cords crossing in the usual way (see plate VI.), their lower extremities twisting back and forming circles, within which other circles have been carved, interlacing the cords. The pattern has been repeated up the shaft, forming ten sets of concentric circles, the treatment resembling that on the upper part of the St. Oswald's cross which has been referred to, the cords then continued forming four sets of Stafford knots. The edges of the stone are so worn that the return of the cords by the circles is conjectured by the writer in order to construct a known Anglian pattern, thus utilizing the groups of concentric circles. The interlacing has been carried up to within seven inches of the top of the stone, where there is a moulding, above which is interlacing work. A roll moulding has also run up each corner of the stone (see plate VI.).

A tradition concerning the stone, relating to mediæval times, seems first to be told by Grose in volume iv. of his *Antiquities*:—

'A monk of this monastery, strolling abroad, came to the house of Mr. Delaval, an ancestor of the ancient family of that name; that gentleman was then absent on a hunting party, but was expected back to dinner. Among dishes preparing in the kitchen, was a pig, ordered purposely for Mr. Delaval's own eating. This alone suiting the liquorish palate of the monk, and though admonished and informed for whom it was intended, he cut off the head, reckoned by epicures the most delicious part of the animal, and putting it into a bag, made the best of his way toward the monastery. Delaval, at his return being informed of the transaction, which he looked upon as a personal insult, and being young and fiery, remounted his horse, and set out in search of the offender; when, overtaking him about a mile east of Preston, he so belaboured him with his staff, called a hunting gad, that he was hardly able to crawl to his cell. This monk dying within a year and a day, although, as the story goes, the beating was not the cause of his death, the brethren made it a handle to charge Delaval with his murder; who, before he could get absolved, was obliged to make over to the monastery, as an expiation of this deed, the manor of Elsig,



THE MONK'S STONE, TYNEMOUTH.

[From a Photograph by Dr. D. H. Stephens of North Shields.]



in the neighbourhood of Newcastle, with several other valuable estates
 "Yf perchance one offend a freere's dogge, streight clameth the whole brother-
 hood, an heresy, an heresy".'

In another part of the same volume Captain Grose gives a plate from a drawing made in 1774 and first published in 1785, showing the face of the stone now towards the east: another piece and the socket are lying on the ground. The latter is inscribed, 'O Horror to Kill a man For a Pige's Head.' The authenticity of this story must be a matter of pure conjecture, though the manor of Elswick belonged to Tynemouth; the story, if true, must be given an early date, as during the parliament of 1376 a petition was presented to king Edward III. and his council, by the mayor and commonality of Newcastle, who said that in 1357 the prior of Tynemouth had claimed Fenham as part of his manor of Elswick.⁸ Even earlier, in 1330, a colliery is alluded to, as the prior and brethren of Tynemouth demised to Adam Colewell, from the feast of St. Martin until the same feast a year turned, the colliery at Elswick, called the Heygrove. Numerous other references connect Elswick with Tynemouth.

Another eighteenth century account of the stone is given in Boswell's *Antiquities*. The plate accompanying it is similar to that given by Captain Grose except that it does not portray two gentlemen in the picturesque dress of the period sketching and examining the remains. With regard to the part of the stone shown standing, he says the part 'measuring about three feet and a half has been set up again.' This is probably the piece now standing, though it is 6 feet 2 inches high. The pattern the artist shows is one of which some portions can still be seen on the east face of the cross, but the mistake the artist made was trying to construct a pattern out of the indents, which resemble volutes, instead of following the parts in relief. Boswell does not tell the story of Delaval and the monk. In later times, Hodgson writes, 'I have no doubt the cross was set up, like the *cippi* or shafts of the Romans, as a boundary between the lands of Monkseaton and Tynemouth, or else as an index or guide to travellers.'

⁸ Welford's *Newcastle and Gateshead in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 187.

⁹ *Ibid.* 74.

More recently still Mr. George Rippon of North Shields stated: 'This curious relic has undergone frequent changes and removals. The original site was a field to the east of where it now stands, towards Tynemouth, on the ancient road leading to the priory. It was afterwards altered to thirty yards west of its present situation. The potato crops suffered so severely by the trespasses of visitors to view the relic, that the farmer attached horses to the shaft and pulled it from its socket, and split away the side of the pedestal, as it now remains. . . . Mr. Blacklock, in building his farm house, again removed what was still unbroken to the position where it now is to serve as a rubbing stone for cattle. The remaining parts were built into one of the arches of the threshing machine.' The threshing machine was taken down some years ago and the stones from it used for building foundations, and can be no longer seen.

Though romantic and interesting as the medieval and modern history of the stone its chief interest is that it is pre-Norman.

To whom were these memorials erected? Perhaps one looked down upon the grave of St. Oswin, or some Northumbrian saint or king. As is generally the case there is no inscription to inform us to whom these crosses were raised.

From these early and beautiful crosses we turn to

THE MEDIEVAL MONUMENTS.

5.—The monumental recess in the north choir wall of the ruins of Tynemouth priory church was occupied, until recently, by a recumbent effigy. The stone figure lying with the feet towards the east so fitted the recess that although not fixed with mortar it may be concluded that it was *in situ*. The stone was decaying so rapidly that after being moved to be sketched to scale for this article it was placed in the chapel east of the choir (see fig. 3).

The slab, from 3 to 7 inches thick, is of the same soft sandstone as that with which the priory is built. The carving is in low relief, the monument has the appearance of being about the date of the choir, which is Transitional or Early English. It is much worn and has often been wrongly described. The effigy is of a lady; the head rests within a trefoil-arched canopy, the pointed top of which projects

slightly beyond the top of the stone, the features being now hardly recognizable. The figure is clothed from head to foot in a long garment reticulated over the head, there is no wimple or coverchief, and the garment is draped in loose folds and unrestrained by a kirtle. The hands are not raised in prayer in the usual way; probably they have held some object which is now worn away. Viewed in a light bringing out all the shadows, the appearance of the drapery and the general treatment of this the only monument of its class at Tynemouth appears very dignified and graceful.

6.—Since placing the effigy in the chapel its segmental arched recess has been occupied by a grave cover. This slab has been cut out of harder material and is broken transversely across the centre. It is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick and is here shown drawn to scale. It bears a cross in relief, the head of which is in the form of a cross patée. The stone is much worn, like many of the medieval remains, having been more exposed to the weather than the later discovered pre-Conquest stones (see fig. 5).

7.—Another grave cover has been placed within the monumental recess on the south side of the choir. This slab is cut out of soft stone and is also broken. It is much decayed, which is to be the more deplored as it has been much the finest grave cover within the priory. The monument is from $6\frac{1}{4}$ to $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. It bears a cross, the shaft of which is plain. The four arms forming

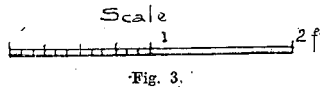
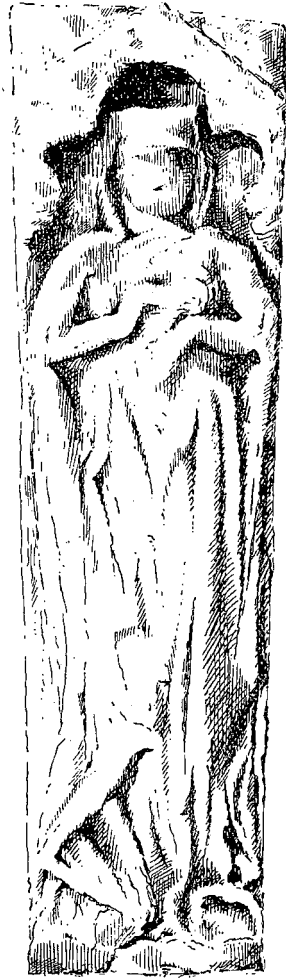


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

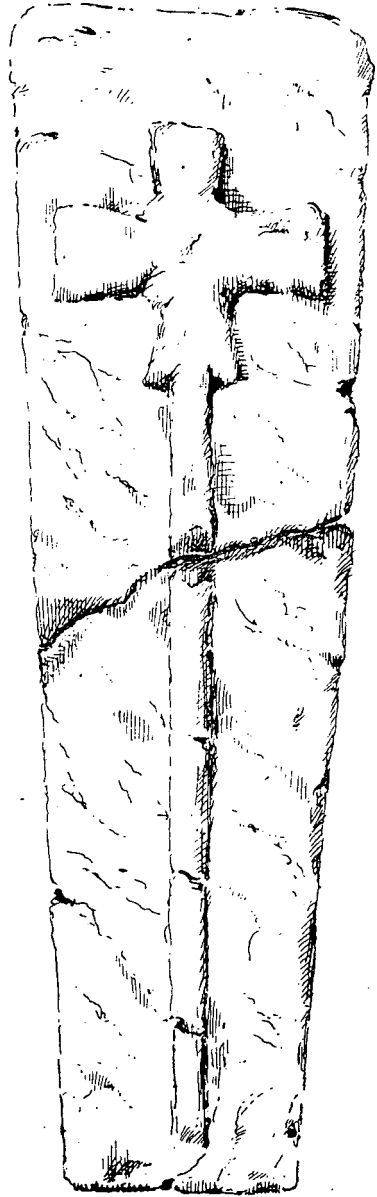
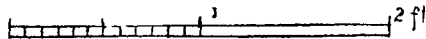


Fig. 5.

Scale.



the head are floriated. It closely resembles many in this neighbourhood, for instance, those at St. Helen's Auckland,¹⁰ Barnardcastle,¹¹ and Chester-le-street.¹² From part of the shaft being broken and worn away it is now impossible to say whether this has been a Calvary cross or not (see fig. 4).

8.—A small grave cover of sandstone, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick, having a chamfered moulding, and here shown drawn to scale, is now within the priory chapel. It is usual to consider a memorial of this size as the monument of a child, but this is not always the case. The slab is in excellent preservation, though cracked. The floriated cross is similar to that just described (no. 4), except that the shaft is divided at the bottom. The grave cover also bears a sword of a plain ordinary type, indicating it to be the monument of a male (see fig. 6).



Fig. 6

¹⁰ A drawing of this grave cover may be seen in *The Sepulchral Slabs, Grave Covers, etc., of the Middle Ages now remaining in the county of Durham*, by C. C. Hodges. Privately printed, 1884, plate 7, No. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, plate 10, No. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, plate 23, No. 61.

9.—A fragment of a grave cover $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick now lies

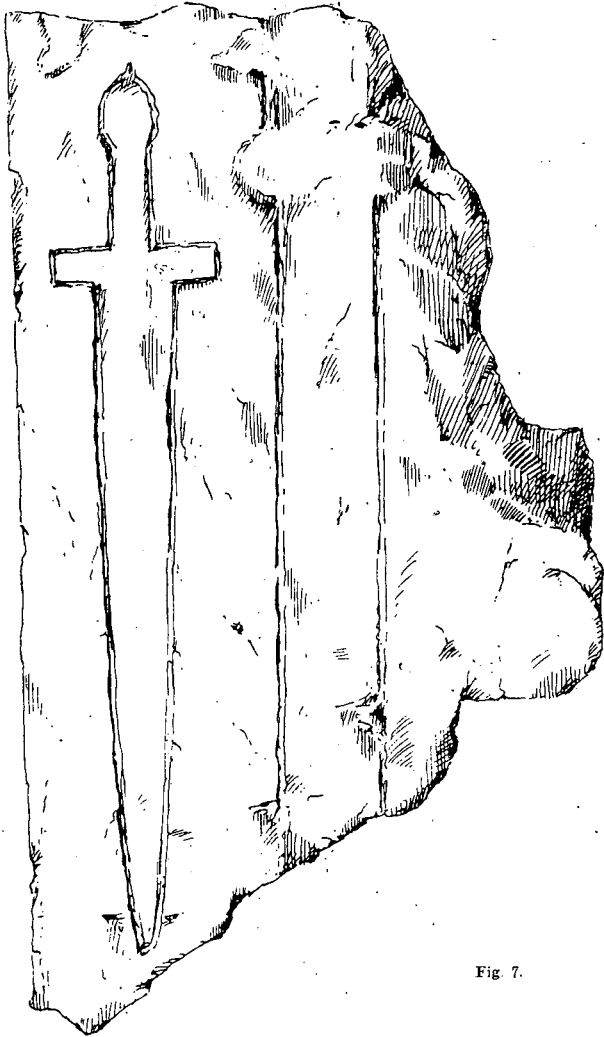
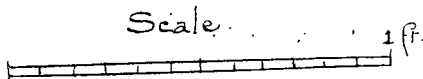


Fig. 7.



in the south transept. It was found on the south side of the

largest magazine within the castle walls, about a foot below the surface, during the excavations made by the government in 1896,

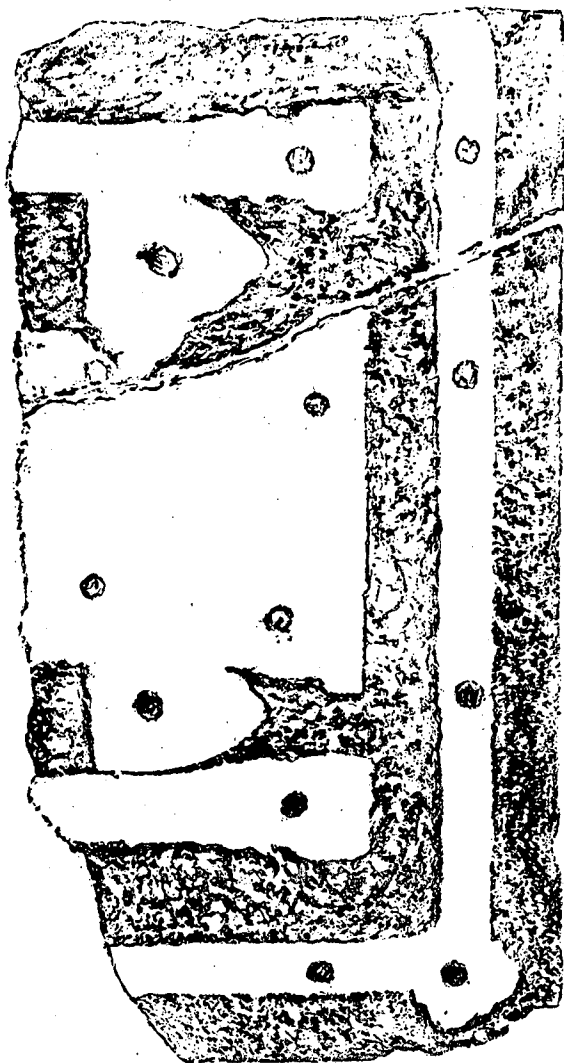


FIG. 8. FRAGMENT OF THE MATRIX OF A BRASS.

which have been already referred to in describing the fragments of pre-Conquest crosses. When the writer rescued it at the time of

discovery in the month of February of that year, the mortar then clinging to it showed the stone had been used as building material. The slab bears part of the shaft, and a point of one of the arms of a floriated cross, also a complete sword. These symbols are formed by incised lines, unlike those on the other grave covers, which are carved in relief (see fig. 7.)

10.—A portion of a matrix of limestone broken into two pieces, which, when fitted together, measure 1 foot 8 inches high, and 3 feet $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. The indents are the lower quarter of a figure and what seems to be an outline, on the dexter side of the foot, of part of a dog's breast. Between the figure and the shafts, which have supported the canopy, are two shields, and round the outside a border inscription fillet, one of the angle pieces of which is to be seen. The brass and studs have all disappeared. The date is probably the middle of the fifteenth century (see fig. 8).

11.—In the Spital-dene, now known as the Northumberland park, between North Shields and Tynemouth, there is the matrix, of tufa limestone, measuring 5 feet 9 inches in length, by 2 feet 7 inches in breadth, of a civilian and his wife. Below them is the hollow for an inscription, and below it the indents for the smaller figures of their children, one daughter and four sons. The indent for the brass of the dexter figure, that of the civilian, is 2 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. He appears to have worn a long tunic with long loose sleeves, and a hood round the neck, and he stood on a small mound. The incision for the lady is 2 feet $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Her costume would be a long gown with deep sleeves. She wore a crespine head-dress with small side cauls, and a kerchief thrown over it. The small indents are $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The four sons seem to have been attired like their father, and the daughter like her mother, except that her head dress was simpler. The date of the matrix is early in the fifteenth century, probably 1400 to 1420. It is in capital preservation. All the brass has been stripped off, though the rivets by which it was fastened remain. The treatment is quite plain, there being no canopy or border fillet (see fig. 9).

This stone was discovered in 1885 in the Spital dene, which is within the borough of Tynemouth and on the left hand side of the road from Tynemouth to Preston. When the park was being

laid out the excavators bared the foundations of St. Leonard's hospital from which the dene derives its name. The first stone found was this large slab, which was lying face down where it now rests, obviously as it had been laid for a flooring stone in one of the rooms. The writer was present at the discovery, but it was not until about two years afterwards that the stone was turned over and its monumental character revealed.

The earliest reference to the Spital is in 1320,¹³ and the earliest existing register of a burial 1656. The registers of Tynemouth however do not go back beyond 1607.¹⁴

The matrix may either be *in situ* or have been brought from the priory.

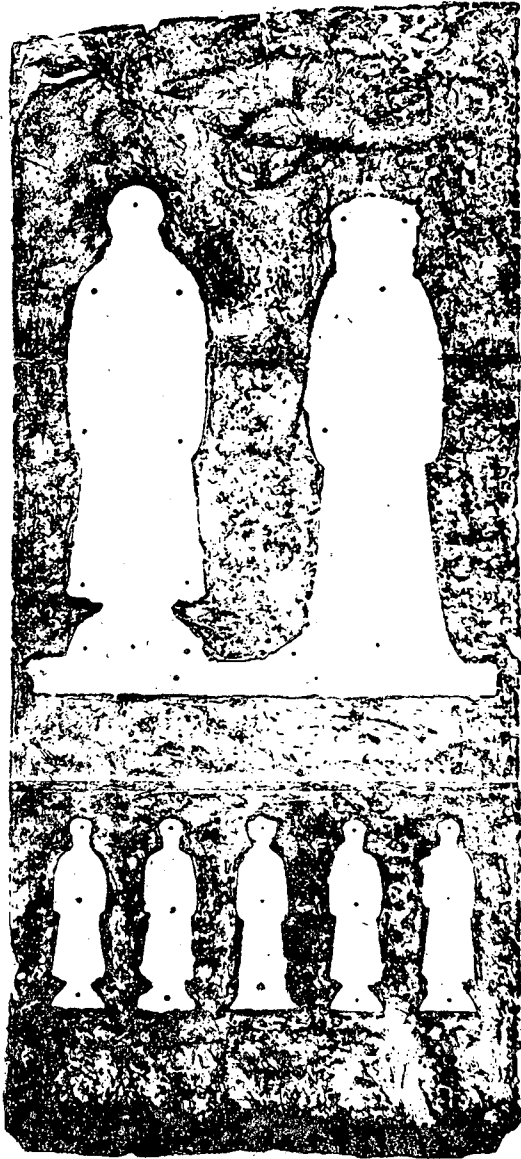


FIG. 9. MATRIX OF BRASS, NORTHUMBERLAND PARK.

¹³ See *Proceedings*, III., 35.

¹⁴ See 'Tynemouth Parish Registers,' by H. A. Adamson, *Arch. Ael.*, XIX.

Not one of these seven medieval stones bears an inscription. They are testimony of the work of past days, but to whom they were erected we know not. The drawings of effigies and grave covers must always have a greater interest for us than descriptions, and we are much indebted to our member, Mr. Henry Clarke of North Shields, and his son Mr. H. F. Clarke, for the drawings which accompany this paper. The writer also wishes to thank another member, Mr. Oswin J. Charlton, LL.B., for an account he supplied him of the matrices from which their description is chiefly taken.



FIG. 10. PRE-CONQUEST CROSS HEAD, TYNEMOUTH.