

The Medieval Grave Slabs of the Borders



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Peter F Ryder FSA

Medieval Monuments in Berwickshire, Peebleshire, Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire

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Preface

This may seem a somewhat esoteric title for a short publication which is not intended to be an academic treatise, and so it is appropriate to start with a brief explanation. The idea for the book sprang from the writer's interest in decorated medieval grave slabs, particularly cross slabs, which are the commonest form of monument of this period to survive but have received relatively little attention. Monumental effigies and brasses, the highest-status monuments of the period, have received more attention and are not covered here, but are in any case extremely rare in this area. Hopefully this little book will be sufficient to whet the reader's interest in this lesser-known group of monuments, as well as providing a guide to some intriguing pieces of history in little known and delightful places.

Peter Ryder is the author of many hundreds of specialist reports as well as numerous published papers and books on the historic architecture of northern England, with a particular interest in minor defensible buildings and ecclesiastical structures of all kinds, across all periods. His knowledge and understanding of such structures in Northumberland is second to none, based upon his years spent revising the database of Listed Buildings in the county for English Heritage in the 1980s and, since then, working as an independent consultant. His interest in decorated medieval grave covers arose from this profound interest in matters ecclesiastical and has resulted in authoritative publications on the grave slabs of most of the northern English counties. More recently, the scope of his interest has expanded into Scotland, particularly with his relocation into North Northumberland and involvement in the Flodden 500 Project from 2014. This involved visiting many of the ecclesiastical sites on medieval routeways to and from the battlefield north of the Border, and has produced material for the current publication and another on the slabs of East Dumfriesshire.

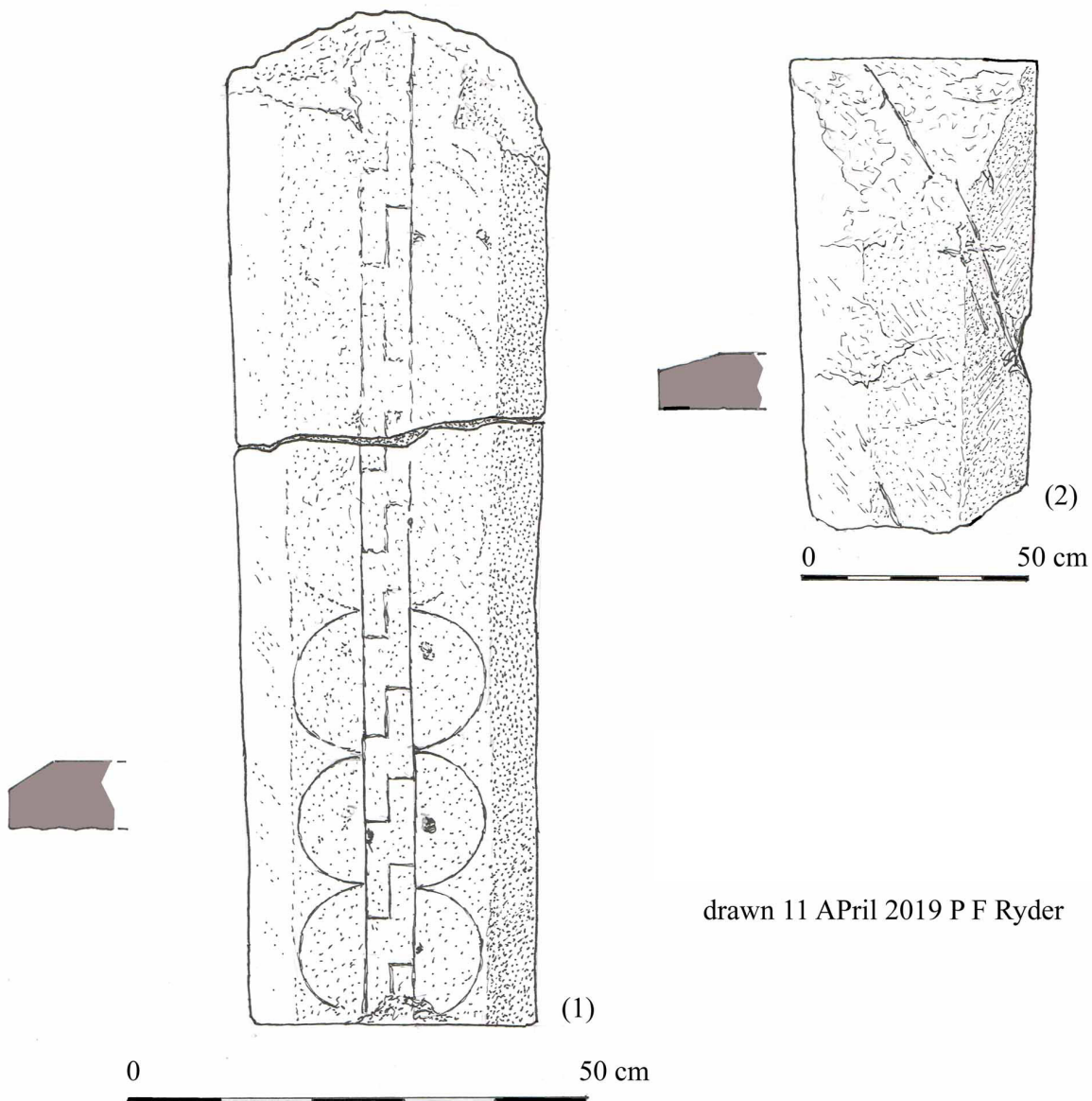
The current volume was edited by Richard Carlton using original content supplied by the author, and prepared for publication by Peter Macdonald, editor of the History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club. The Berwickshire Naturalists' Club has also funded its printing.



The author recording a decorated grave slab in the remains of Ancrum kirk in 2016 (R Carlton)

of the house roof motif is not simply an economy measure. The overall form of the slab with its neat chamfered edges is medieval rather than Pre-Conquest, but it is possible that a later medieval mason simply took his inspiration from an earlier stone.

- (2) The upper part of a slab that has suffered considerable recent damage, with a very broad edge chamfer and fine diagonal tooling, but apparently no other design. Plain slabs like this are not unusual (there is one at Nenthorn and stones of similar section, but with roll mouldings on the angles, at Melrose Abbey) but little more can be said as to its date other than that is of distinctively Pre-Reformation form.



drawn 11 April 2019 P F Ryder

Drawing of the two medieval grave covers at Caverton