

the same church, CATVC, which may, perhaps, refer to Cadoc, who was a king and martyr in Brecknockshire, and died in the year 492.

SUCH are the the observations I have the honour of laying before the learned Members of this Society ; and if thought worthy of their approbation, the trouble which attended the collecting them will be amply compensated.

LII. *An Extract relating to the Round Tower at Ardmore, in Ireland : By Mr. Peter Collinson.*

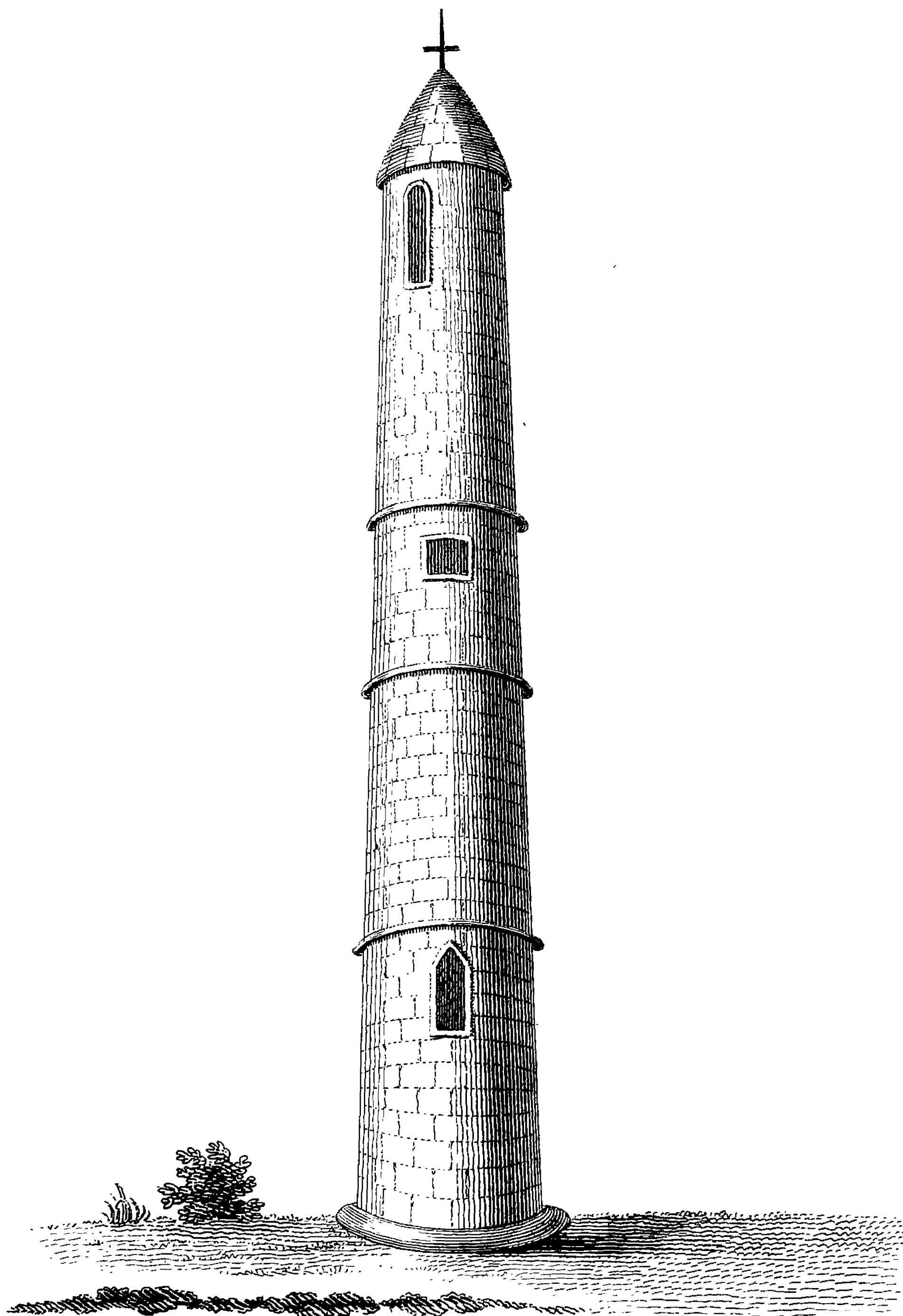
Read before the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, December 7, 1763.

IN the parish of Ardmore, and county of Waterford, in Ireland, there is a round Tower built of hewn stone, upwards of one hundred feet high, and forty five feet in circumference at the base ; the door is fifteen feet from the ground ; the roof is pyramidal, being of stone, very well cut, and closely joined together, and well plaistered within side, from top to bottom, as clean and white as if newly done. The whole fabric is divided into four unequal belt-ings or stories, with a window to each ; having four windows in the upper story. On the top is a kind of Cross.

SIR James Ware mentions a round Tower which stood near the cathedral of Cork, and another near the church at Brigonne ; but these no longer remain.

THERE is one, however, now standing at Cloyne ; and another, much more remarkable, near the old ruined church at Kinnith ; as this is different from all others, it may deserve a description. It is seventy feet in height ; consisting of six stories, each eleven feet

The Round Tower at Ardmore in Ireland.



nine inches high. The first story is a regular hexagon, each side being ten feet four inches. From this story to the top, it is quite round, all built of hewn stone; it stands one hundred and twenty four feet from the West end of the church. An ancient MS containing some annals mentions, that this tower at Kinnith was built about the year 1015.

In the County of DOWN,

ARE two round Towers now standing; that at Drumboe, twenty four feet distant from the North West door of the church, is thirty five feet high, and forty seven feet in circumference. The other at Down Patrick stands forty feet from the old cathedral: it is sixty six feet high, the walls are three feet thick, and its diameter, measured on the inside, is eight feet.

In the County of KERRY,

STILL remain two ancient ecclesiastical round Towers; one opposite the West end of the cathedral, near an hundred feet high, built mostly of a dark kind of marble; the door faces the West entrance of the church. Another round Tower is now standing near the ruins of the cathedral at Rattoo.

GENERAL REMARKS.

THE round Towers are spread through divers parts of Ireland; they differ from each other in degrees of height, some thirty seven feet, others fifty and more; that of Kildare is one hundred and thirty two feet high; and that at Kilkenny is little less.

THEIR outward circuit at the base rarely exceeds forty two feet; walls three feet thick; diameter within seldom more than eight feet; they gradually diminish from the bottom to the top, which is covered with a stone roof. Within side are abutments to rest the timbers upon, for the several floors or stages, to which they ascended by ladders; every story had a little window; the upper four windows looking different ways. The door for entrance from eight to twelve and to fifteen feet from the ground, without steps or stairs.

VARIOUS

VARIOUS and uncertain have been the conjectures of the time of building, and use of the tall round slender Irish Towers. The application of their scanty dimensions hath puzzled our modern antiquaries.

SOME imagine them to have been places of security from dangers of an enemy; others, that they were watch-towers; some took them for beacons: Sir Thomas Mollyneaux concluded they were built for belfries, as they were always near the church; but no bells of any size could hang in them. Some plausibly enough fixed them for habitations of a set of Anachorets, called *Stelites* from their living on pillars. Thus their real use lay in the dark; so great is their antiquity, and so long hath their original purpose been forgot!

UNTIL about the year 1750, Mr. Charles Smith, author of “The ancient and present State of the Counties of Down, Waterford, Kerry, and Cork,” who with great industry was searching ancient records for materials for those histories, met with some ancient MSS which clear up this long-disputed subject; and from these histories all the above abstracts are taken.

THESE ecclesiastical round Towers were built in the darkest times of superstition, about anno 900 or 1000.

THE ancient Irish MSS relate, that these Towers were used for imprisoning penitents; some other writers name them *Inclusoria*, et *arēti Inclusorii Ergastula*, the prisons of narrow inclosures: particularly the MS of the Life of Dunchad o Braoin, of whom it is said, that he betook himself into such a prison, wherein he died anno 987.

THE MSS add, that these penitents were placed in the uppermost story of the Tower; where having made probation, or done penance, such a limited time, according to the heinousness of their crimes, they then were permitted to descend to the next floor; and so on by degrees until they came to the door, which always faced the entrance of the church, where they stood to receive absolution from the Clergy, and the blessings of the People.