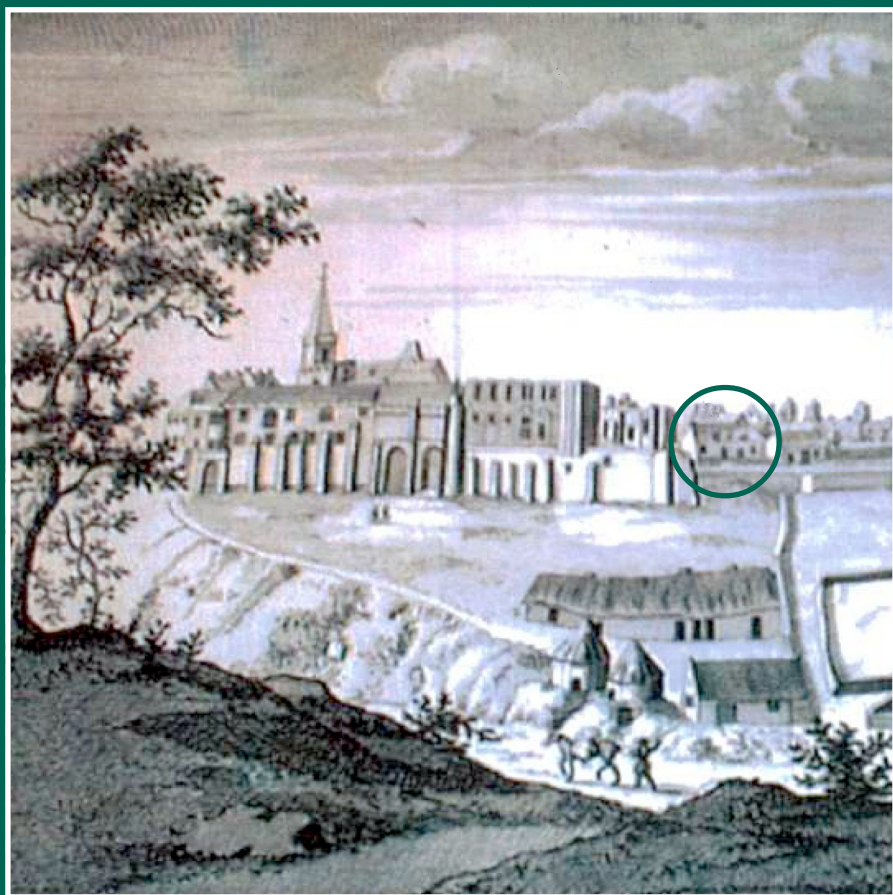


THE ABBOT HOUSE DUNFERMLINE

REV. JAMES MOIR WEBSTER

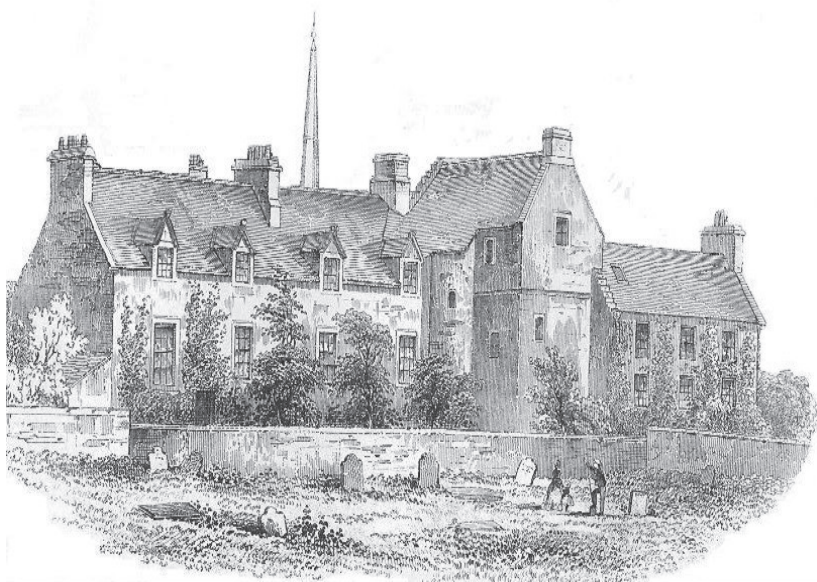


Compiled by Sheila Pitcairn

THE ABBOT HOUSE DUNFERMLINE

By

REV. JAMES MOIR WEBSTER



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THE ABBOT HOUSE DUNFERMLINE

BY

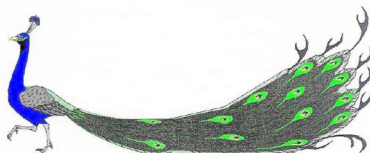
JAMES MOIR WEBSTER

FROM

NOTES HE LEFT WHILE WORKING ON HIS
DUNFERMLINE ABBEY

Published in 1948

Compiled by Sheila Pitcairn F.S.A. Scot., L.H.G.



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James Moir Webster (1875-1957)

M.A., B.D., J.P.

Historian.

Educated: Fordyce Academy; King's College, Aberdeen.

Honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity [D.D.], Aberdeen University. (1950)

Minister, North parish, Dunfermline. (20.11.1902)

Chaplain to Volunteer Force during First World War.

Clerk to Dunfermline Presbytery. (1919; demitted 7.9.1948)

Joint Clerk. (1919)

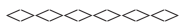
Minister, Carnock. (5.2.1920; demitted 26.8.1945)

Moderator. (1945)

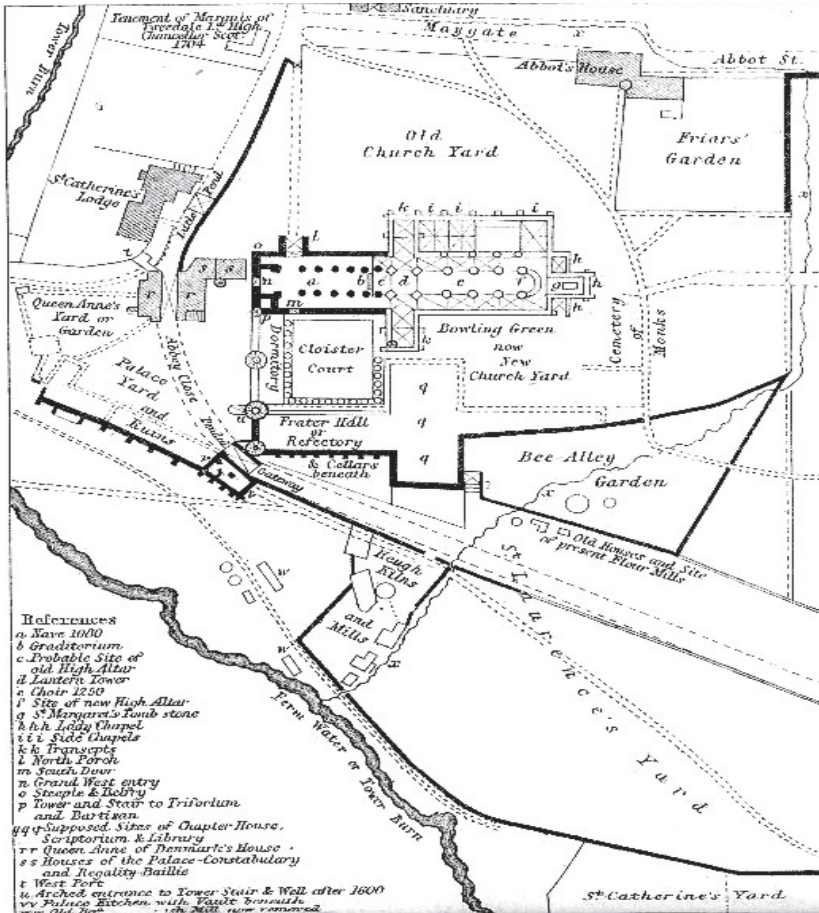
Throughout his life Dr Webster evinced the greatest interest in the historical background of Dunfermline and the immediate surrounding neighbourhood. His literary works included "History of the Parish of Carnock" and more recently, "Dunfermline Abbey." In a tribute to Dr Webster's authorship of the latter work the minister of the Abbey, the Rev. Robert Dollar, B.D., said, shortly after its publication: "He has brought all previous histories of the church up to date—and corrected a great many previous misconceptions."

Dr Webster was also responsible for an introduction and notes, in conjunction with Mr A. A. M. Duncan, M.A. (Hons.), lecturer in History, Queen's University, Belfast, to a transcript of the Regality of Dunfermline Court Book, 1531-1538, which was published by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trustees in February 1953. He was also a frequent and informative contributor to *The Dunfermline Press* on a variety of topics related to the history of the burgh and its environs.

In November 1952 his jubilee as an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland was marked when he was the guest of honour at a Presbytery lunch where he was made the recipient of a gift subscribed to by fellow Presbyters. When he received his Doctorate degree from Aberdeen University in 1950 members of the Presbytery and friends in the parishes of Carnock and Dunfermline North presented him with a D.D. hood and cap to mark the honour conferred upon him.



PALACE, ADJACENT EDIFICES, ENCLOSING WALLS, &c.
GROUND PLAN OF THE ABBEY, MONASTERY,



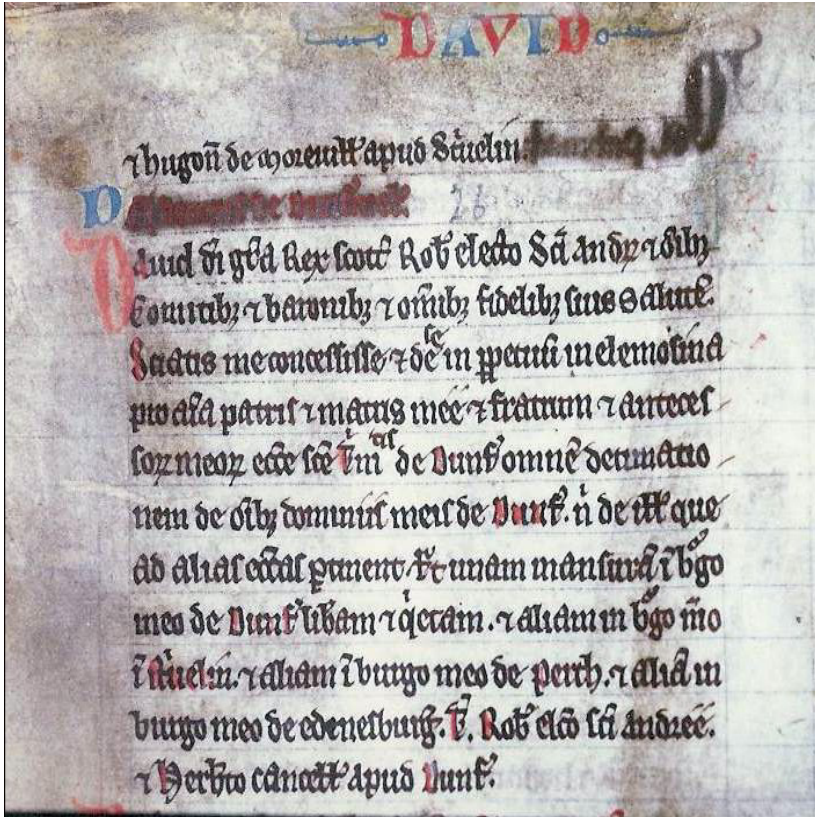
Peter Chalmers. *Historical and statistical account of Dunfermline.*

2 volumes. Edinburgh, 1844-59, volume 2, p. 122.

Tenement of Marquis of Tweeddale, 1st High Chancellor of Scotland. 1704. Continued:

Sanctuary House, Maygate	Gateway
Abbot House and Friars' Garden	Heugh Kilns and Mills
75 feet of Abbey Wall remaining in Canmore Street	St Laurence's Yard
St Catherine's Lodge in Little Pend	Bee Alley Gardens
Queen Anne's Yard or Garden close to Palace Yard and Ruins	Old Houses, site of present Flour Mill
Abbey Close Pended	St Catherine's Yard

CHARTER OF DAVID I



King David addressing Robert Bishop (elect) of St. Andrews and his earls, barons, and liegemen, informs them that he has given for ever in alms to the church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline the tithe of all his demesne lands of Dunfermline except of those which belong to other churches, and also a house (mansura) in the burgh of Dunfermline, another in Stirling, another in Perth, and another in Edinburgh. (*Registrum de Dunfermline*, dated circa 1126-27).

These Charters which have survived are in the National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.

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Chapter I

THE FREE GIFT BY KING DAVID IN 1125 TO THE FIRST ABBOT OF DUNFRMLINE OF A 'LITTLE MANSE, FREE AND QUIET', AND THE CONTINUOUS USE OF IT, OR A SUCCESSOR, TILL THE REFORMATION IN 1560.

The story naturally starts with the first-known Benedictine monks to have reached Dunfermline.

The little church in which King Malcolm III and Princess Margaret were married, by Bishop Thurgot of St Andrews - the foundations of which are still to be seen under the Nave - was a Celtic one, and the form of worship in it would naturally be that in use throughout the Celtic Church.

Princess Margaret, who, both in Hungary and England, had been accustomed as the Roman form of worship, did not take kindly to the change. So much so, that, soon after their marriage, she prevailed upon her husband to build another church in which she could worship as she had been accustomed to.

This, after having secured the services of a Saxon Master-mason of the name of Aelric, Malcolm eventually did (c.1072-74) - giving him, by way of payment, the lands of Ledmacduuegil - afterwards known as Masterton (the place where the Master-mason lived).

The foundations of this church too are to be seen under the Nave.

To strengthen her hands in trying to reconcile the Celtic clergy to the new conditions, Queen Margret appealed to Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who sent her three monks, under the leadership of Goldwine. These were, almost certainly, the first Benedictine monks to set foot in Dunfermline.

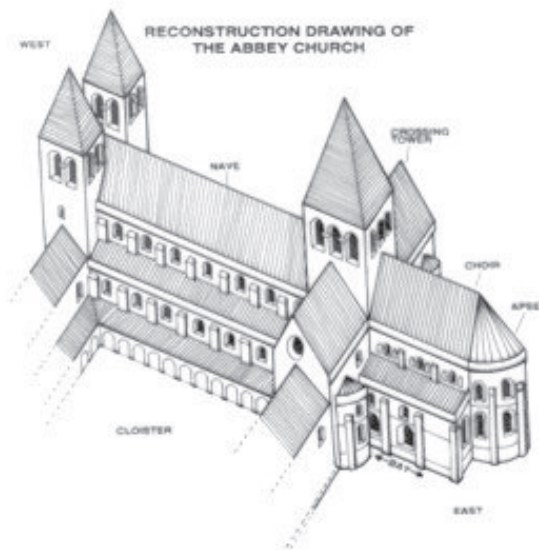
Where these monks were accommodated we do not know. Nor can we say with confidence how long they remained.

It may be that they did not all return to England immediately a settlement was reached, but remained to serve the church built by Aelric - which would explain why it was that, later, King David asked only for 'two' or three monks' in addition to the abbot whom he was so anxious to obtain.

ABBAY CHURCH (CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY)



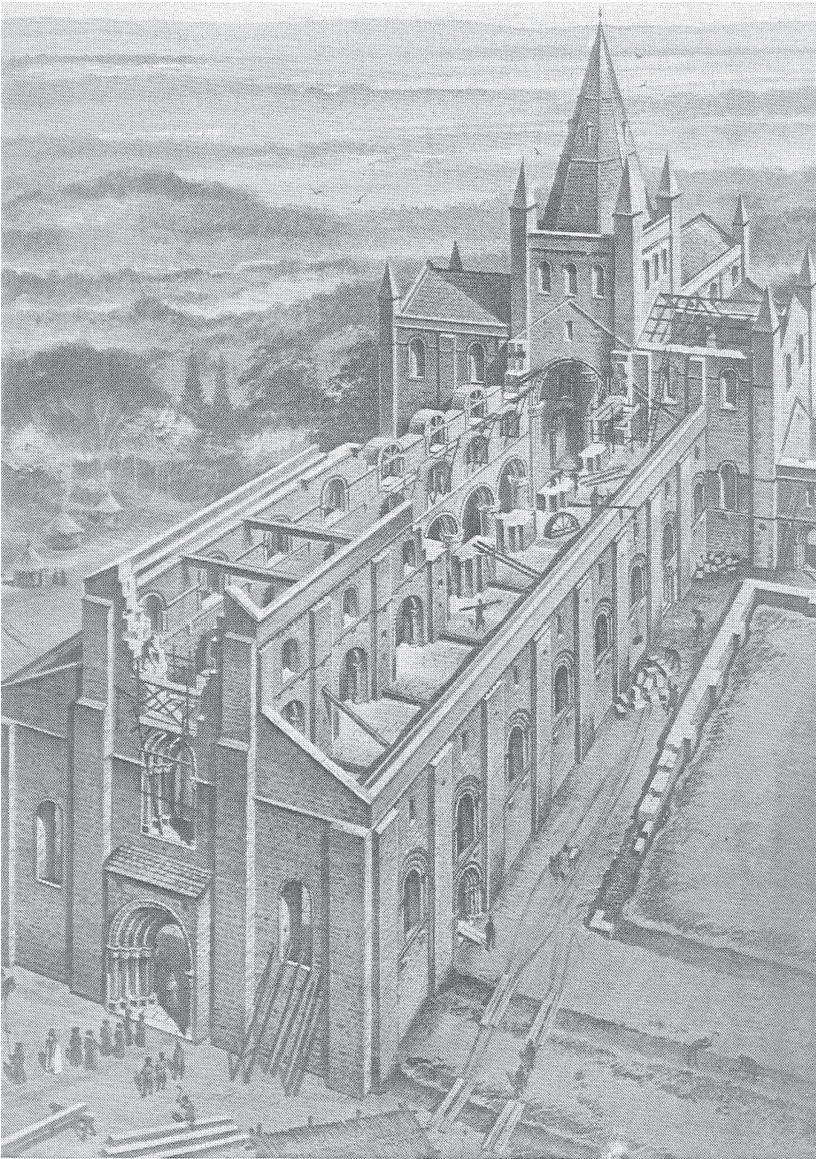
Completed 1115.



Completed 1250.



Mitered Abbot of the
Order of St. Benedict.



An artist's impression of the construction of Dunfermline Abbey,
From Moffat, William. "A History of Scotland".

During the reign of King Edgar (1098-1107) there is evidence of another appeal to Canterbury for monks... This is not difficult to understand.

Whilst the Celtic successors of Malcolm – Donald and Duncan – were in power (1093-1097); the presence of English monks in Dunfermline was not likely to be tolerated. They would, almost certainly, be driven out – even if no worse fate overtook them. Hence the need for a fresh appeal.

Alexander I, brother of Edgar, wrote two letters to Ralph d'Escures, Archbishop of Canterbury, and in one of them occurs a passage which may be translated thus:-

“For relying on the counsel of a person of such discernment I do not doubt that I am able to carry a good design with the utmost efficiency to the (final) execution of good work, if God wills it.”

And in a letter of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109), to the same king there is another passage worth noting:-

“With regard to our brothers whom we sent to Scotia in accordance with the wish of your brother (Edgar), who from the toil of this life has, as we believe, passed over to his rest, we have not deemed it necessary to request your kindness, because we are not ignorant of your good will.”

Which shows that the men sent in response to Edgar's appeal were still in Scotland after Alexander's accession to the throne.

But the most interesting, as well as the most informative, of all the letters that passed between Canterbury and Scotland relating to monks is that of David I of Scotland to William of Corbeil, the archbishop, and the convent of Canterbury Cathedral Church.

Whilst engaged in research work in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury, Mr. G.W.S. Barrow, a graduate of St Andrews, later attached to the Department of History in University College, London, discovered a copy of this letter – the only letter of David I, as distinct from a writ or charter, of which we have record...

Following this discovery, Mr. Barrow contributed an article to the *Scottish Historical Review* (Vol.XXXI, No.111.) – from which much of the information above recorded is derived and to which we are indebted for a translated copy of the letter.

It runs as follows:-

“David, by God’s grace King of Scots, to the most reverend W(illiam), by the same grace archbishop of Canterbury and not undeservedly Legate of the holy mother church of Rome, and to the venerable convent of Holy Trinity; may you stand manfully and loyally in the contest of the Christian battle!

Through the early care of our predecessors, the church of the Scots was friendly and intimate with the church of Canterbury; from which circumstance the first foundation of the monastery of Dunfermline took from the church of Canterbury, with the advice and assistance of monks of that church, both its way of life and the pattern of its order.

Following up the very admirable piety of my predecessors, since I find in you more especially, and in yourselves the monks, love and counsel proffered from loving motives, and embracing your kindly encouragements, I desire to fulfil the plan of good hope as far as my ability allows, and your fatherly advice permitting.

Whence I very respectfully entreat your admirable excellence (whose goodness, fruitful and bountiful, redounds on every side) to deign to send a suitable person of the aforesaid church whom your examination and choice shall have judged worthy of abbatial prelacy, who entirely free and quit of subjection and obedience to your church, save for the brotherly love which ought to be common to all churches, shall, God willing, rule as abbot of the church of Dunfermline; appointed on this understanding and agreement, viz., that thenceforward the Dunfermline monks shall elect and take for themselves a person, when the need shall arise, from themselves in their own chapter.

If, however, they cannot find one sufficiently suitable and profitable, they shall take one from the church of Canterbury, always, however, independent and quit and completely free from all exaction.

We also ask both you and your saintly (odoriferum – lit. ‘scented – the reference being doubtless to the odour of sanctity) convent, since we trust in you in absolute confidence, that, in order that a good end may follow a good beginning, the aforesaid person may

take with him two or three monks from his chapter who, devoted and professed to his rule, and obedience, shall, as long as they survive, remain in his church inseparably as his coadjutors in his work.

May the fervour of the divine love burn within you”.

Like so many ancient documents, the letter is undated, and the copy of it found by Mr. Barrow is comparatively late; but there is no reason for questioning its authenticity, and the historical value of it is unquestionable.

That King David’s appeal to the archbishop was successful may be gathered from the following extract from an early writer:-

“Geoffrey, prior of Canterbury, at the request of David, King of Scots, and with the assent of archbishop William, was elected abbot for the place in Scotia which is called Dunfermline, and was consecrated by Robert, leader of the church of St Andrews.”

The fact that the Prior was asked and agreed to go is in the highest degree suggestive of goodwill on the part of the Canterbury authorities.

The journey from Canterbury to Dunfermline in the year 1124 was not one lightly to be undertaken; but there was one thing in their favour. When, in the course of their journeyings, they came to a church or monastery, they had only to explain the nature of their mission to be assured of a hearty welcome and reliable guidance as to the best route to follow.

When, eventually, they did reach Dunfermline, it is possible that the people there were taken by surprise. Even King David may well have been unaware of the success of his appeal till the prior and monks appeared, so slow were the means of communication in those days. In any case, nobody could have foretold the exact time of their arrival.

That they would be welcome goes almost without saying; but where and how they were accommodated can only be a matter of conjecture.

Till the Dormitories and Fraternity were erected, we have no idea of where and how the monks were provided for.

As early as 1125, King David – as already indicated – provided a manse to secure a little privacy for the abbot; but the residence of the monks in these early days is utterly unknown.

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That there must have been some provision for them from the time that Lanfranc sent Goldwine and three monks from Canterbury is, of course, accepted; but it can only have been of a very meagre and temporary nature; and there is nothing whatever to indicate its location.

When Geoffrey arrived in 1124, it was to find, almost to a certainty, no official residence for himself and no adequate provision either for himself or for his monks. Some, in his place, might have taken this amiss. The abbot of a monastery was, in those days, a man of unquestionable standing and entitled to consideration.

But that, we gather, was not the spirit animating Geoffrey. His overriding concern was that of getting a start made with the work to which he and his Monks had dedicated their lives. Worship was of the very essence of that life; and the provision of worship must be their first consideration.

As for themselves, they were prepared to ‘rough it’; and there can be little doubt that for long they had to.

St Margaret’s Church – the only one in Dunfermline when they came – was quite inadequate for their purpose. One had only to look at the outline of it on the floor of the Nave to realise how very small it was.

The more he studied the situation – by himself, and in consultation with the King – the more convinced did he become that the line to be followed was that of erecting a larger temporary church to the east of it, which would be available for worship till the day came when the Nave – the first of the two great churches contemplated – had reached completion.

This, then, became the clear-cut policy of all concerned – the first task to be undertaken.

Once a start was made, even in this tentative way, gifts began to flow in, from members of the royal family and from others who could afford it.

Almost invariably these gifts took the form of lands, ready money being a very scarce commodity; and the condition invariable attached was that prayers

would be offered up in the church for the soul of the donor, or for those of his deceased relatives and friends. For one reason or another, churches, too, came to be attached to the monastery which was thus taking shape; and some of these churches – Perth and Stirling, for example – had schools under their management.

This, as can be easily understood, involved the abbot in much travelling, for purposes of administration; and as, in some cases, the distance was too great to allow of his return on the same day, the situation soon became serious.

As usual, King David came to the rescue.

In the Chartulary of Dunfermline we find the following entry:-

“Know ye that I have granted and given for ever in alms, for the soul of my father and of my mother and of my brothers and ancestors, to the Church of the Holy Trinity of Dunfermline one dwelling place in my burgh of Dunfermline, free and quiet; and another in my burgh of Striuelin, and another in my burgh of Perth; and another in my burgh of Edinburgh.”

Here, then, is the first reference on record to the “**Abbot House of Dunfermline**” and the approximate date of its erection, viz. c.1125.

In theory, the land within a King’s Burgh belonged to the King, the burgesses being his immediate tenants. Sometimes the recipient of a gift like this was exempted from such duties as ‘watch and ward’ and even from payment of rent. It may safely be assumed that both exemptions applied to the gift of the Abbot House.

Before saying anything more about it, it may be well to ascertain what is on record concerning the other three.

In Dunfermline Abbey, published by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust in 1948, we find the following:-

“In 1463 we find one man at least – Thos. Bully, Canon of the Cathedral Church of Glasgow, who was so moved by gratitude for all the good that Richard de Bothwell had done to him and others that he left all his goods to make provision for the abbot and his successors in their house at Stirling, and to ensure that, when they do go there, they shall be absolved and free from all claim, demand or payment.”

Clearly, the Abbot's House provided by King David at Stirling in 1125 was still flourishing in 1463 and an indefinite continuance reckoned on.

By the time of the Reformation, all that remained to the Abbey of Dunfermline of its rights and possessions in, or near, Stirling was the church and its teinds. In 1561 the glebe – probably the old ploughgates of land – yielded £10 and the teinds were leased to the laird of Garden for £8 per annum.

Concerning the Abbot of Dunfermline's house at Perth there is very little on record. There were, it seems, four such houses in Perth – one belonging to the Priory of Scone and other two to the abbeys of Aberbrothoc and Cupar.

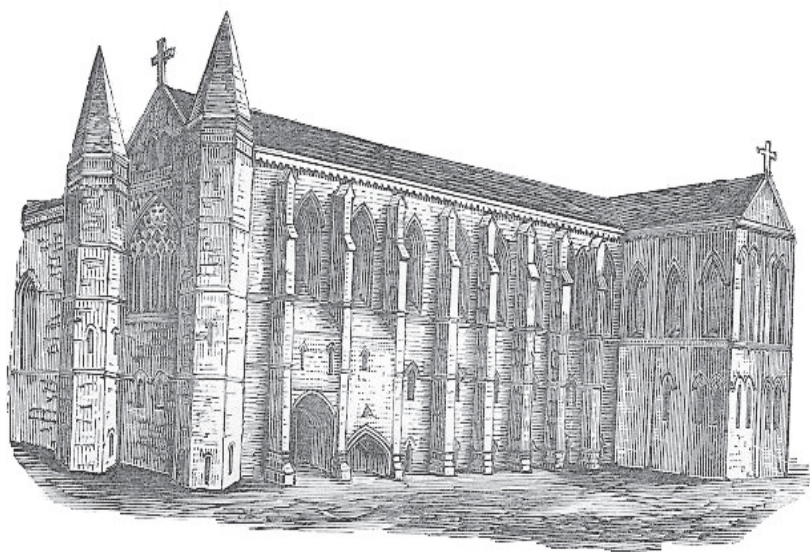
Relations between the Church of St. John the Baptist at Perth and the monastery at Dunfermline seem, for a time, to have been none too happy.

In the Dunfermline Chartulary we read of complaints being received from Perth that the vicars provided for the church by the abbot and convent of Dunfermline were not adequately remunerated; and so keen did the contention grow that eventually the Bishop of St Andrews had apparently to intervene.

This is a little difficult to understand.

Every monastery, one imagines, would be within the diocese of a bishop, and it was only natural that, when an abbot had to be consecrated, the bishop of the diocese – as happened when Geoffrey, the first abbot of Dunfermline, had to be consecrated, - the bishop of St Andrews was called upon to perform that duty.

THE MONASTERY



Ebenezer Henderson. *Annals of Dunfermline*. Glasgow, 1879.

But, with every church gifted to the monastery, the status of the abbot was enhanced – often at the expense of that of the bishop – so that frequently the abbot was a man of much higher standing than the bishop. There were, naturally, opened the door to possibilities of friction between them, and, when this became acute, the one might appeal to the King and the other to the Pope.

But there is a material difference between this sort of thing and the suggestion that the bishop had control over the abbot.

The church of Perth remained in subjection to Dunfermline Abbey till the Reformation.

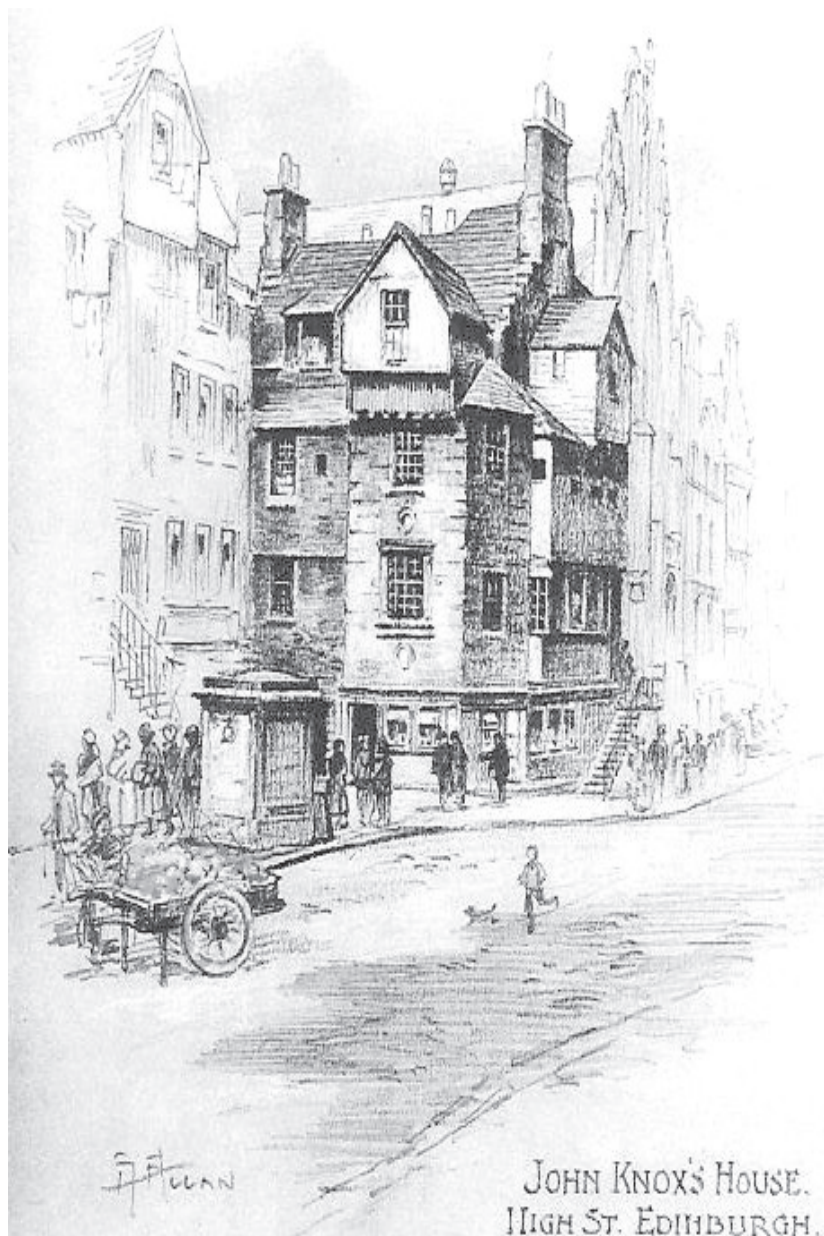
With regard to Edinburgh, we find the following in its Burgh Records, under date 4 Sept. 1560:-

“Abbots Lodging, Edinburgh:- John Durie, tailor, removed ‘for the eis’ of John Knox, minister, with promise that, as soon as the bailies and council can provide the said minister with another lodging, he will regain possession.”

From this we gather that George Durie, the last Abbot of Dunfermline, on the approach of the Reformation, either gave the house to a relative of his, or left him in charge. The Town Council did not redeem its promise to make other provision for John Knox. He continued, in fact, so long in possession that, today the building is almost invariably referred to as John Knox’s House – apparently in utter forgetfulness of the fact that, since 1125, that house, or a predecessor, had been the official residence of the Abbot of Dunfermline within the capital.

A picture of this house by John Terris R.S.W. was purchased by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust in 1953 and is now in the Youth Centre.

In addition to the burghs above-mentioned in which the Abbot of Dunfermline had an official residence as early as 1125, four others became available between 1147 and 1150, viz. Berwick, Roxburgh, Haddington and Linlithgow; and it is a traditional belief that there was still another – Abbotshall in Kirkcaldy.



Houses of the sort in connection with a monastery are not at all uncommon, and it is easy to understand the need for them.

Apart altogether from the necessity of making provision for the abbot when visiting outlying possessions or attending to the claim of national business in the Capital, there was the almost equal need for securing a certain measure of privacy at home. With so many men confined, day and night, to so limited a space, it is difficult to see how discipline could otherwise have been maintained.

Nor can the need for a certain measure of recreation, both for him and for them, be ignored.

It is significant that in so many of the gifts of houses conferred on monasteries these various considerations are in evidence;

Alexander II (1214-1249) gifted a house in the Forest of Elgin to the monks of the Priory of Pluscarden – so long associated with Dunfermline Abbey – a house quite evidently of the nature of a Hunting Lodge. (MacPhail, *Relig. House of Pluscarden*, p.199).

The Abbot of Cupar had two country-seats.

In one of them resided, as a rule, the *granger* or steward, who enjoyed that privilege on the understanding that he would entertain the abbot when called upon to do so, or convert the house into a retreat for the benefit of the monks.

The abbot's other 'house' occupied a romantic site upon a crag at Campsie.

On one occasion (1538) it was let for a period of years on the condition that the lessee must find 'ane sufficient rowar to the fishing of Nether Campsey, with ane carriage man to bring hame the fishe frae the samyn' – which is definitely suggestive of a Fishing Lodge. (Rogers, *Register of Cupar Abbey*, p.xlv).

In his Scottish Abbeys and Social Life, Mr. Coulton gives at least one instance of an abbot employing an artist to adorn the walls both of his church and of his abbot-house:-

“About the year 1538, the lord abbot (of Kinloss) summoned to himself a painter, Andrew Bairhum, excellent in his own art, but a contentious man and ill to deal with, whose mind was as unstrung as his body was crippled; for he was lame of both feet. Yet the abbot kept him at Kinloss for a full three years, with all possible kindness, and here he adorned three chapels in his church with

three diverse pictures painted graphicall on the flat; to wit, the chapels of the Magdalene, John the Evangelist and St Thomas of Canterbury.

Moreover, he painted – but in that lighter painting which is now more common in Scotland – the abbot’s bed-chamber and chapel and the great chamber before the stairs that mount to the Abbot’s Room.”

We know that George Durie, the last abbot of Dunfermline, employed an expert to adorn the north-east corner, at least, of the Nave. If he did any similar work in the Abbot House, no trace of it remains.

In the light of the above reference to a chapel in the Abbot House at Kinloss, it seems highly probable that there would be similar provision in the Abbot House in the Maygate.

At the Reformation, the altar would be destroyed and, as a result of the reconstruction of the Abbot House that followed, the location of the chapel can now be little more than a matter of conjecture.

But there can be little doubt that it was there.

In the Calendar of Papal Registers (xii. 422) there is an entry as follows:-

“27 March 1465 – To William Hakat, nobleman, lord of the place of Pecfuren, and Elizabeth his wife, noblewoman, of the diocese of St Andrews, an indult (privilege) to have a portable altar.”

This was a definitely unusual privilege, but a portable altar in a private house is quite understandable. An altar in the Abbot House, on the other hand, would, much more likely, have been stationary.

AFTER THE REFORMATION.

DUNFERMLINE ABBEY, c. 1650



W. Thomson. Dunfermline Abbey as in c.1650.

Chapter II

IT'S SURVIVAL – PROBABLY ON A LARGER SCALE – BOTH AS A DWELLINGHOUSE AND OFFICE FOR THE SO-CALLED COMMENDATORS AND BAILIES OF REGALITY WHO SUCCEEDED THE ABBOTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROPERTY STILL BELONGING TO THE ABBEY.

And now we come to the question so easy to put, but so difficult to answer:-

- (1) Who built the Abbot House in Dunfermline in 1125?
- (2) Who designed and built the temporary Church which was to be available for worship till the Nave was ready?
- (3) Who designed and built the Nave itself – which was completed and consecrated in the life-time of both King David and Abbot Geoffrey?

It is easy to say that we do not know. That, unfortunately, is only too true. But it would be a mistake to conclude that no evidence whatever is available for building in Scotland at so early a date.

In Mr John Harvey's monumental work on "[English Mediaeval Architects](#)" (Batsford, 75/-), the story somewhat tentatively advanced in "[Dunfermline Abbey](#)" – that the little church built (c.1072-74) to replace the still smaller one in which Malcolm and Margaret were married was probably the work of a Saxon mason of the name of [Aelric](#) – is accepted as an undoubted possibility.

From the Register of the Great Seal, under date 19th October 1488, we learn further that the king confirmed four charters granted by his predecessors, and, among the witnesses to one of them, issued at Brechin in the year 1153, is a man designated [Gulielmus Carpentarius](#) (William the Carpenter).

From these two instances – even if nothing else were available – one would seem to be entitled to claim that qualified builders are known to have been operating in Scotland about the middle of the 12th century.

The following notes – based largely upon the introduction to Mr. Harvey's Dictionary – may help to clarify the situation somewhat.

In the first place, let it be said that he dismisses as a gratuitous assumption the long-held belief that most of the early building in this country was the work of travelling craftsmen, mostly from the continent.

In the same way he treats with grave suspicion any suggestion of churches having been built by the churchmen who presided over them. A churchman might order a church and pay for it; but the men who designed and built it were unquestionably craftsmen.

These craftsmen, differed in rank. We read of Master-masons and masons; Master-Carpenters and carpenters.

As to how one became a Master-mason or a Master-carpenter, Mr Harvey offers the following suggestion:-

“It seems that most of the great Mediaeval Architects sprang from families of “masters” who handed on their specialised knowledge to their sons; or else they had been so fortunate as to become the pupils, or at least the articulated apprentices, of ‘masters ‘of importance”.

He also emphasises that fact that, whilst an artist, for example, finishes his job to the last stroke of the brush, the architect has to rely on others. The ‘Master’ prepares the moulds or templates, but leaves it to craftsmen to shape the stones in accordance with them, and lay them in position.

As an instance of long-term association of a family with the craft of masonry, Mr. Harvey refers to the family of Mylne – Master-masons to the Crown of Scotland for seven generations.

Local tradition is not particularly helpful as to where the stones for Dunfermline Abbey came from.

One hears suggestion as to quarries in the neighbourhood – about the S.E. corner of the Public Park, for instance. But whether these quarries were in operation at so early a date or their product of the same nature as the stones of which the monastery was built is a somewhat different matter.

The same applies to lime.

Limekilns and Roscobie are both believed to have been early in operation; but there is no reliable evidence of their having been in use as early as the 12th century.

With regard to Timber, one can speak with much more confidence. It is true that in the Nave, as it stands, timber is not particularly in evidence. But one has only to think of the amount of scaffolding that must have been required in the course of its erection – to say nothing of the requirements for the roof – to realise the part it had to play.

Here was a matter in which King David could, and did, help materially. In the Chartulary we find two entries, the one confirming the other, whereby he granted to the monks of Dunfermline the right, under the Sheriff, to draw upon his woods for such timber as they found necessary. It was a timely gift; but, as in the case of the stones, one is confronted with the immense difficulties as to transport in a country virtually without roads.

One of the King's forests ran, approximately, from Clackmannan to Dunfermline – Woodhead Street in Dunfermline is rather suggestive of its proximity and it is almost certain that this was the source of timber supply for the erection of the Abbey.

As to labour, in connection with the erection of the monastery, we have some definite, but disappointing, information.

About 1126—the time, that is, when the erection of the Abbot House, the Temporary Church and the Nave was in so many minds – King David issued a charter notifying all and sundry that he had gifted to Dunfermline Abbey three 'men' – Ragewin, Gillepatrick and Ulchil, by name – with their families, to be held by it in all time coming in the same way as he held his 'men'.

Commenting on this, Mr. Lawrie in his Early Scottish Charters writes:-

“Presumably these men were serfs, the personal property of the King, passing by grant and delivery; men more servile than the ‘nativi’ and ‘adscriptii glebae’, who could not be sold except with the land on which they were born, lived and laboured.”

Soon after, another charter follows, headed “Concerning run-aways, called Cumerlache” – the tenor of which follows:-

“David, King of Scots, to his faithful in Scotland and in Lothian –
GREETING.

“I order that Cumerlache be quickly restored to the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline, and all the slaves whom my father and mother and brothers gave to it, and their cumerlache from the time of King Edward until now, with all its goods wherever these may be found, and I forbid that these be unjustly retained.”

When the erection of the Conventual Church was under consideration we are confronted with the same situation – William the Lion (1165-1214) issuing the following charter:-

“Be it known that I have gifted Gillandreas MacSuthen and his children to the abbot and monks of Dunfermline and that, as far as I and my heirs are concerned, I have by proclamation assigned them to the Abbey as its undisputed property for ever.”

The idea of Queen Margaret gifting serfs to the Abbey for work in connection with the building programme must come as a surprise to many – and an unwelcome one at that. No doubt it happened eight or nine hundred years ago, and, in the meantime, men have reached, in some respects at least, a truer sense of their responsibility towards their fellow men; but the facts are incontestable, and to all admirers of these historic marvels of architecture it will remain a source of genuine regret that they should have owed anything to slave-labour.

There can be no mistaking the significance of these gifts. Building required labourers as well as craftsmen, and for the next hundred years, if not more, the call for labour must have been insistent.

About 1130 David granted to the Church of Dunfermline, and the monks serving there, exemption and freedom from all work on castle and bridges and other like work.

Malcolm IV repeated this, with a qualification:-

“Wherefore I forbid that anything be exacted of them, either abbots or monks, unless they choose to do it of their own free will.”

King William adds:-

“Be it known that, whereas I caused my fortresses in Ros (Ross?) to be strengthened, the serfs of the abbot and monks of Dunfermline have in conformity with my request, of their own free will, laboured with my honest serfs to strengthen the same fortresses.

Wherefore I will and command that what they, in the performance of that service, have, in consequence thereof, done in conformity with my request, may not be regarded as a precedent, by reason of which they are in future bound in such circumstances to do other than they have done in my time (of office) and in the times of my predecessors.”

Mr. Lawrie, in his “Early Charters”, adds the following comment:-

“It is probable that the liability to repair castles and bridges was laid on all lands in Scotland in early times.”

It will be noted, however, that the Dunfermline Abbey serfs were working on the King’s castles in Ross of their own free will.

A charter issued by King David c.1130 strikes a very different note. It is addressed to the serfs of Dunfermline Abbey and runs as follows:-

“I command that, without objection, you duly fulfil all the customary obligations which you rightly owe to the same church, and do ye (imperative mood) apply yourselves to the work which has been begun there without delay.

If you disdain to do so, I command Suuene, my prefect, not to suffer this and to support the prior, in order that the church may have service from its dependents, just as I have from mine.”

(Note: - Dunfermline was at this time a King’s Burgh, and Swain was the King’s representative, or agent, within it.

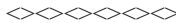
It seems that the serfs working on the Abbey buildings had staged some sort of 'strike', refusing to render to the church its dues and thus hindering the building of the monastery.

What action Swain took in the circumstances is not on record, but it seems to have been effective.)

History is disappointingly meagre in its information about such buildings; but we do know that the Nave was completed in the year 1150 – three years, that is, before King David died and four years before the death of Geoffrey, the first abbot.

The day of its consecration must have been, for both, full of thoughts unutterable.

THE EARLY CHURCH



Until the Reformation, the bulk of the work connected with the oversight and administration of the possessions of the monastery had probably been centered in such buildings as the Chapter House and the Scriptorium.

Now that these were gone, other provision had to be made to meet the need.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the amount of work was as great as ever. There had been far too many encroachments made on these possessions for that to be the case.

In the Introduction to his Thirds of Benefices Dr. Gordon Donaldson writes as follows:-

“For at least two generations the crown, in collusion with the papacy, had profited substantially from the church revenues; partly through the allocation of benefices and pensions to royal nominees and partly by the exaction of heavy taxation.

The clergy in possession in 1560 included prelates whose relationship to the most powerful families in the land was sufficient protection against deprivation.....

Certain noble houses had established a right of hereditary succession in abbeys and priories and had already gone far towards converting them into secular lordships. Laymen of lower rank were enjoying ecclesiastical fruits through their feus of lands and tacks of teinds.

In short, the division of the spoils was already far advanced.....”

In the case of Dunfermline Abbey there is unmistakable evidence of lands and possessions belonging to the monastery having been gifted by George Durie, the last abbot, to his unofficial wife and family at Craighluscar and to relatives far and near.

“Dunfermline was a wealthy monastery, but even on its resources such transferences must have made a considerable inroad. Small wonder that when King James annexed Dunfermline Abbey he complained bitterly of the prejudice to the “fruits and rentis” that had been caused by so many tacks and gifts.

So keenly did he resent it that an Act was passed annulling all disposition made after 16th April 1578.....

Most of the Durie holdings, however, had been secured before that time, and were thus unaffected.” (History of Carnock. P.336.)

But, though the possessions of Dunfermline Abbey were, unquestionably, materially reduced, there still remained enough to make the work of administration almost impossible unless provision was made for adequate accommodation; and one of the first tasks that confronted ROBERT PITCAIRN (Commendator, 1560-1583/4) was that of erecting suitable buildings - the only thing in his favour being that there was no lack of dressed stones lying ready to his hand.

According to the Report of a Royal Commission, the buildings that were erected consisted of two adjacent tenements, constituting a single structure; one of them presumably intended as a residence for the Commendator, the other of the nature of an office for the transaction of business.

Born about 1520, of a well-known Fife family, Robert Pitcairn was educated at St. Andrews for the ministry of the Roman Church, but, prior to his appointment, or soon after it, he turned Protestant, and is said to have been given a ‘heighe’ seat in the Parish Church.

For the greater part of his period of office he must have been so preoccupied with building and administration as to have time for little else; but, later, he became immersed in political activities involving frequent visits to England and long periods of residence there - with results that were nothing short of disastrous for himself.

For a time, he was ‘warded’ in Loch Leven Castle, but was eventually set at liberty upon caution to remain in Dunfermline, or within six miles of it, under pain of a fine of £10,000.

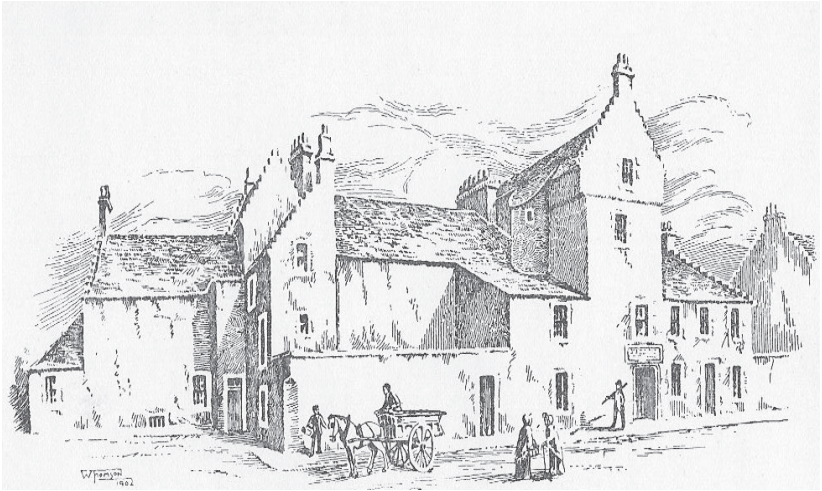
Later, he went to Flanders, from which he returned in a precarious state of health and died at Limekilns, 18th October, 1584, in his 64th year. In addition to the lands of Limekilns, formerly belonging to the Abbey, he is known to have had, at least, Butt-acre, Limekiln-hill, or Langbank, and Windmillhill.

After his death, the grants made by him out of the Abbey possessions were revoked, on the ground that he was ‘suspect culpable’ of treason and had greatly dilapidated his benefices. The lands of Limekilns, however, went to two sons of his sister - Phins of Aberdour.

In the Burgh Records of this period he is occasionally referred to as ‘Lord Dunfermline’ or ‘Lord Commendator of Dunfermline’. It is needless to say that there was nothing to justify such titles.

His name is traditionally associated with the somewhat cynical inscription over the doorway of the Abbot House:-

SEN VORD IS THRALL AND THOUGHT IS FRE
KEIP VEILL THY TONGE I COINSELL THE :



In the Nave there is a monument to his memory, on which he is referred to as a 'hero' and 'the hope and pillar of his country'.

Dr. Chalmers describes this 'as more laudatory than just'.

The second Commendator was PATRICK, MASTER OF GRAY, (1585-1586). Concerning him, it is sufficient for our present purpose to quote a passage reproduced by Dr Chalmers from Tytler's History of Scotland:-

“The same convention (at Edinburgh) was signalled by an event which brought a merited punishment on one of the basest of men.

This was the fall of the Master of Gray, who was tried for high treason, condemned, and on the point of being executed, when his life was spared, and the sentence changed to banishment, at the intercession of the Earl of Huntly and Lord Hamilton.

His accuser was Sir William Stewart, now about to proceed on the French Embassy; and in his dittay, or indictment, which has been preserved, were contained various points of treason.

But his most flagrant offence, which was completely proved, was the base betrayal of his trust in his recent negotiations in England, where he secretly recommended the death - instead of pleading for the life - of the Scottish Queen.

At first, with his wonted effrontery, he attempted to brazen out the matter and overawe his enemies; but in the end, he pleaded guilty, and, as abject as he had been insolent, threw himself on the King's mercy.

None lamented his disgrace; for, although still young in years, Gray was old in falsehood and crime.

Brilliant, fascinating, highly-educated and universally reputed the handsomest man of his time, he had used all these advantages for the most profligate ends; and his life, which, to the surprise of many was now spared, had been little else than a tissue of treachery.

He retired to France; and although after some years, he was again permitted to return to Scotland, he never recovered the commanding station from which he fell”.

His successor, as Commendator, was the man who made such unexpected intercession for him at his trial - GEORGE, EARL OF HUNTLY (1587-1589).

It is difficult to think of a great Scottish Chieftain, with not a few clanfeuds in hand, committing himself to an appointment of the kind. No doubt there were

definite ‘possibilities’ associated with it. None the less, it is far from easy to envisage him as presiding over business meetings in the Abbot House, or residing there for any length of time. Two years, or thereby, appear to have been about the limit of it; and two years after that comes the pitiful story of his attack upon the House of Donibristle and the slaughter of the “Bonnie Earl of Moray”.

It cannot be said that the appointment of Commendators to wind up the secular affairs of the monastery was a conspicuous success; and, at this stage, it is evident that the matter came under reconsideration, of which the outcome was that the work should be entrusted to the Bailie of Regality.

From the earliest references we have to such meetings, it is evident that the Regality Court had always been presided over by a so-called Bailie of Regality. Now it seems that the offices of Commendator and Bailie of Regality were to be combined - the appointment to be made by the Crown, and the office to be Hereditary.

The first appointment under the new conditions is recorded in the Chartulary as follows: - “Charter to Alexander Seton, Lord Urquhart, as Heritable Bailie and Justiciar of the Lordship of Dunfermline, north of the Forth, 15 February 1596” and another follows of the same date by Queen Anne with consent of the King - appointing him to the Constabulary of Dunfermline.

Born c.1555, ALEXANDER SETON (1596-1622), 4th son of George, Lord Seton, who afterwards became the first Earl of Dunfermline, was a man of unusual ability. Belonging to a family of pronounced Roman Catholic sympathies, he was meant for the service of the Roman Church and studied in Rome at the College of Jesuits, making a specialty of law.

On his return to this country he received from Mary, Queen of Scots, - who was his Godmother - the Priory of Pluscarden, and, on taking his seat as Prior, was chosen as an extra-ordinary Lord of Session. Later, the lands of Pluscarden and Urquhart were united to constitute a barony, in his favour, with the title of Lord Urquhart, and he became an ordinary Lord of Session under that title. On 28th May 1593 he was appointed Lord President of the Court of Session.

Keenly interested in the art of building, he is supposed to have been architect of various mansions that came under his control. Fyvie Castle he in great part rebuilt. The same applied to Pinkie House - a residence of the

Abbots of Dunfermline. Amongst his local possessions were the lands of Dalgety, and not only was he himself buried in the church of Dalgety, but his son and grandson – Second and Third Earls of Dunfermline were buried there too. So was his first wife, and although his third wife, as a widow, married the first Earl of Callander, she also was buried in the church of Dalgety.

Calderwood in his History says of him:-

“he was a good justicier, courteous and humane, both to strangers and to his own country people, but as no good friend to the bishops”.

It is unlikely that he lived much in the Abbot House. The foundations of the old house belonging to the Bailies of Regality can almost certainly be identified in the retaining wall between the Garden of Honour and the churchyard. After the Reformation, it was replaced by a ‘Bailie” House’ at the west door of the Nave. But Dalgety House was, as we have seen, the home, and it was doubtless there that he lived when in the neighbourhood.

He was succeeded by his son CHARLES SETON (1622-1673) – 2nd Earl of Dunfermline, 16th June 1622. His ecclesiastical sympathies may be inferred from the recorded facts that he was one of the leaders of the Scots Covenanting Army at Duns Law and that he was appointed Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly in 1642.

Like that of his father’s, his appointment as Heritable Bailie was accompanied by a Crown lease of the feu-duties and teinds of the lordship of Dunfermline. This was ratified by Act of Parliament 1663.

The following extract from Sir James Burnet’s Annales dealing with events that happened during the second Earl of Dunfermline’s tenure of office is of definite local interest. (Sir James Balfour, it should be noted, was Lyon King.)

“Vedinsay, 24 Julij (1650) his Maiestie went from Perth to Dunfermling.

He visited the Lord Burlie by the way, quher he wes welcomed with a banquet; he visited the L. Burlie cabinett of rarieties, and at his departure, my Lord presented his Maiestie with a falcon. His Maiestie stayed all this night at Dunfermling, and dynded to morrow one (on) my the Earle of Dunfermlinges charges.

Thursday, 25 day of Julij, his Maiestie, after dinner, departed from Dunfermling to his auen housse, Streueling castle.”

The first comment one has to make upon the above extract is that there was no King of Great Britain at this time.

Charles I was executed 30th Jan., 1649, and his son, Charles, was not crowned till 1st Jan. 1651. It would seem that the young Charles had been paying a flying visit from the continent to Scotland to stir up opposition to the Cromwellian party; and if it took some courage for him to make the visit, it took no less courage on the part of those who so openly committed themselves to his support.

The second question that naturally suggests itself is as to where the Earl of Dunfermline entertained the royal visitor to dinner at his own expense.

One takes it for granted that the King had spent the previous night in the Royal Palace, which, as we shall see, was still in commission. But where was the complimentary dinner held.

The Earl, it is true, had his own house at Dalgety; but that was something like five miles away, and it seems scarce likely that it would have been held there. Can it be that it was held in the Abbot House? The Bailie of Regality had, at this time, two houses in Dunfermline under his control - the so-called Bailie House already referred to and the Abbot House. From what one knows of both one is inclined to think that the latter was the more likely of the two for a purpose of the sort. But that is as far as one can go.

That the Palace of Dunfermline was still in use for royal purposes may be gathered from the following extract from Sir James Balfour's *Annales*:-

“At Dunfermelin, the 5 day of Julay (1633), at the creatione of the Earle of Ancrum, ver dubid Knightes:-

Sr. Alexander Suytone of that Ilk;

Sr. Ja. Monepeney of Pitmilley, zo;

Sr. Jo. Dundas of Fingaslie, zo;

Sr. Tho: Ker of Kedden;

Sr. Edmond Boyer of Camberwell, ane Engliche gentleman.

“5 Julij, 1633. At Dunfermelinge, the place of his Maties birth, was Sr. Robert Ker of Ancrum Knight, Gentleman of his Maties Bed Chamber, and Keiper of his Priuie Purse, created, with all solemnity, aboute 9 a clocke one (on) Fryday in the morninge, Earl of Ancrum, Lord Ker of Nisbett Langneuton and Dolphingstone.

He wes brought into his Maties chamber of presence, betuix the Earle of Morton, Lord Thesaurer, one the righthand, and Charles, Earle of Dunfermeling, one the left; hes robes wes borne by Ross, heraulde; hes coronet by Iylla, and his patent be Lyone K. of Armes.

In his Maties presence his tytilles wes proclaimed by the Lyone, quho lykwayes did administrat him the othe; and his patent wes rede by the Clerke of Counsaill, in respecte of the Secretaries absence. The heraulds vent to the windowes of the grate chamber, and ther did proclaime the same, the trumpets sounding.

He had by his Matie 5 knights dubid to him; the Lyone did administrat them.....

LYONE.”

This second Earl of Dunfermline was succeeded in the office of Bailie of Regality, with tenure of the Abbot House, by JOHN 2nd Earl and 1st Marquis of Tweeddale (1665-1697)

The story of this succession - ignoring, as it does, the hitherto heritable nature of the appointment - is told in the Introduction to the Regality of Dunfermline (p.27) published by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust:-

“In 1665 John, Earl, afterwards Marquis, of Tweeddale, in consequence of a debt due to him by the Earle of Dunfermline, obtained by a decree of apprising a right to the office of heritable bailie and also to the lease of the feu-duties and teinds.

The right was confirmed by charter under the Great Seal, dated 12th February 1669, and in 1693 he obtained in his own name a prorogation of the lease for three periods of nineteen years after the expiration of the grant to which he had formerly acquired a right.”

The debt must have been considerable, if we are to judge by the fact recorded in Douglas's Peerage that, in the year 1686, the Marquis of Tweeddale, finding himself greatly oppressed with debts, chiefly occasioned by cautionry for the Earl of Dunfermline and others, sold his whole estate in Tweeddale.

This 2nd Earl and 1st Marquis was succeeded in office by his son JOHN (1697-1713) 2nd Marquis of Tweeddale, who was succeeded by his son.

CHARLES, 3rd Marquis (1713-1715), and he, in his turn, was succeeded by his son.

JOHN, 4th Marquis (1715-1748) - during whose term of office heritable jurisdictions, such as Regalities, came to an end, and, according to the valuation of the Court of Session, he, the last holder, by way of compensation for loss of office, received the sum of £2,672: 7/- his clerk, William Black, of whom we shall hear later, receiving £500.

What happened to the two houses - the Bailie House and the Abbot House - the latter of which had been so closely associated both with the Commendators and Bailies of Regality?

All that we know about the first-mentioned is that William Black, the last Clerk of Regality, acquired it by purchase from the Marquis of Tweeddale - presumably John, the 4th Marquis - and sold it in 1768 to George Chalmers,

proprietor of Pittencreeff (Dr. Chalmers, Hist., i.109).

The later story of the Abbot House will have to be dealt with by itself.



**CONJECTURAL DRAWING OF WHAT ABBOT HOUSE
LOOKED LIKE IN 1570 - WITH THE GREAT LUDGING
RUINS ON THE RIGHT.**



Drawn by Michael Donnelly.

Chapter III

IT'S TRANSFERENCE TO CIVILIAN OWNERSHIP AND ITS EVENTUAL ACQUISITION BY THE CARNEGIE DUNFERMLINE TRUST.

THE ABBOT HOUSE

To facilitate understanding of the sequence of events to be recorded, it will be well to remember that the property so long known by this name really consisted of two adjacent tenements - that on the West representing what had been the Abbot's private residence (which later became the residence of the Commendators and Bailies of Regality) and that on the East representing the offices erected after the Reformation for the transaction of monastic business.

For a time, the two portions were owned and occupied separately. Later, they were combined and occupied as a single property.

(1) THE WEST PORTION.

The first known owner, after the Reformation, was: -

ANDREW WALKER - The first known owner, after the Reformation, was described as a merchant and burgess of Dunfermline, he received possession 27 Oct. 1704, and disposed it, with consent of his wife, Marion Young, to-

JAMES McBEATH - also described as merchant and burgess of Dunfermline and his wife, Helen Thomson.

These two had no family, but Helen Thomson had a brother John Thomson, tenant of Pitdinnie, and the succession went to his son,

JOHN THOMSON - 28th January 1744. This John Thomson, described as 'Tailor in Dunfermline', disposed the property, 22 Nov. 1768 for £92 to-

JOHN CRAWFORD - also described as 'Tailor in Dunfermline'. He was succeeded by his only surviving son,

ADAM CRAWFORD - Master in the Royal Navy, resident in Montrose, 30 August 1826, who sold it to-

JOHN SUTHERLAND - Manufacturer in Dunfermline, for £95, 4th Dec 1828. On the sequestration of John Sutherland's estate, the property fell to his brother,

RICHARD SUTHERLAND - Merchant in Birmingham, as Trustee, and he sold it to-

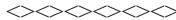
ADAM STENHOUSE - Tailor in Dunfermline, for £60. 1st Nov 1836. He was succeeded by-

ROBERT BUCHANAN - Junr. - Wright in Dunfermline, who paid £100 for it, 25 Dec. 1844. He, in turn, disposed of it to-

MARY AND MARGARET SUTHERLAND - sisters of John Sutherland, of North Fod, above referred to, 8 August 1846, for £105.

These two were already in possession of the East Portion, so that, from this time onward, the two portions were re-united.

From a later deed we learn that when the Misses Sutherland acquired the property from Robert Buchanan a ruinous house at the West end was taken down and a Coach House and other erections built thereon.



(2) THE EASTERN PORTION.

The first known owner of this portion (after the Reformation) was-

DAVID BLACK of the HILL HOUSE - When or how he came into possession of it we do not know. Nor do we know when

JOHN LINDSAY - Bailie of Dunfermline succeeded him.

The first of whom we can speak with confidence is-

WILLIAM BLACK of the HILL - who was not only Clerk to the Regality of Dunfermline, but Clerk also to the Admiralty Court.

As Clerk of Regality, he would have to deal with all questions affecting the lands in Fife still belonging to the monastery and the people residing on them.

As Clerk to the Admiralty Court, he would have to do with all differences and disputes affecting the lands in Fife still belonging to the Monastery, and the people residing on them.

As Clerk to the Admiralty Court, he would have to deal not only with all crimes committed n the high sea, but on all firths and rivers up to the first bridge. Not only was he a man of some standing in the community, it is evident that he made considerable changes in the East portion of the Abbot House. Purchasing from the Marquis of Tweeddale, Bailie of Regality, a piece of land to the south and west of his recently acquired property, including the Friars' Garden of monastic days, later known as the Bowling Green, with a 'spot' of grass, he proceeded to erect upon it a number of buildings, - a small tenement and lodging, possibly for a man-servant; a stable, a barn, a meal-girnel and a milk-house - which suggests a byre – with a passage three-feet wide connecting the newly acquired ground with the Maygate.

William Black was still alive in 1748 when heritable jurisdictions, such as regalities, came to an end and, as already indicated, received £500 in lieu of loss of office.

His widow, Elizabeth Moubray, sold the East Portion in 1779 for £260 - the highest figure so far recorded for either of the portions, to-

DAVID WARDLAW - Described as a Merchant in Dunfermline, David Wardlaw, of the Wardlaws of Wes Luscar, ws the son of James Wardlaw of Netherbeath, also a merchant in Dunfermline - his mother being Margaret Erskine, fifth daughter of the Revd. Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling, and granddaughter of Margaret Halcro of Orkney.

Born 8 February 1747, he was served heir to his father in Netherbeath in 1767, married Susan Steedman, daughter of Dr John Steedman, Physician in Edinburgh, and had two daughters. He died at Dunfermline 6 August 1790, at the age of 43.

He also made additions to the Eastern Portion; but the exact nature of them is not recorded.

In his Will, dated 23 December, 1790, Mr. Wardlaw made provision for one-tenth part of his estate to be applied to the building of an Academy in Dunfermline upon a scale to cost not less than a fourth more than the said tenth to be raised by the Town of Dunfermline, as they shall judge proper.

The site, or area, of said building to be both well-aired and capacious for the scholars' recreation, to be fixed upon by the Town Council with the approbation and consent of a number not less than four, and not exceeding six, of the principal heritors of the parish, with the two ministers of the Established Kirk thereof, and

two ministers of the Burgher Secession of Dunfermline. The building to contain at least three classes, or schools, with a dwelling house for each Master.

Presumably it was this gift that made possible the erection of the last of the three Grammar Schools that stood on the Post Office site.

In Dunfermline Abbey, published in 1948, there is a reference to the earliest date on which it is known that this pre-Reformation school was in existence, viz. 1525. Since then, a still earlier reference, 7 Nov. 1496, (D.B.R.323.) has been discovered.

This school would be destroyed in the Great Fire of 1624. In 1625 another was erected on the same site. The third on the site was opened in 1817 – 27 years, after Mr Wardlaw made his will.

In 1794 The Trustees of Mr Wardlaw disposed the Eastern Portion of the Abbot House to-

WILLIAM AND JOHN SUTHERLAND - for £525.

The property so transferred is described as:-

“All and whole the Eastmost part of that Old Tenement of Land and Lodging and that part thereof fitted up and lately occupied by the deceased William Black, Clerk of the Admiralty of Dunfermline, as a Meal-Girnal, which are all parts and pertinents of that great old Tenement of Land and Lodging, at the east end and upon the south side of the street called Maygate, with free ish and entry by the present close from the Maygate into and from the said Girnal House, now the Kitchen, by the present door thereof.

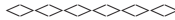
And, in like manner, ALL and WHOLE that large Yard or Garden, called the FRIARS’ GARDEN.... Together with the new Tenement and Lodging built on the said garden ground by the said William Black adjoining to and immediately on the East of the Old Tenement of Land and Lodging first above disposed, with the other houses built on the said Garden Ground by the said David Wardlaw.

Reserving always the Servitude of an Entry or passage of three feet breadth along the west side of the said yard from the Westmost part of the said Old Tenement and Lodging

In 1821 the Trustees of the sequestrated estate of the above-mentioned John Sutherland sold the East Portion by public auction to his sisters -

MARY AND MARGARET SUTHERLAND at the upset price of £225.

Twenty-five years later, 8 August 1846, these two sisters purchased the WEST PORTION of the Abbot House for £105; so that the two portions were again united under a common owner.



TWO POTIONS REUNITED.

On 21 April 1857, Mary and Margaret Sutherland, now in Edinburgh, sold both portions to-

ROBERT BOYLE WATSON - Glass-stainer in Dunfermline, for £300. He had a loan of £325 from the Trustees of the Fife Property Investment Society, and, in February, 1859, they sold the property to-

WILLIAM JOHNSTONE - for £320. - He disposed of it in 1878 to-

DAVID ANDERSON - Druggist in Chalmers Street, who, in view of his going abroad for an uncertain period, appointed James Turner, Edinburgh, as his Factor.

In 1879 David Anderson borrowed from Mrs. Margaret Young Currie or Macbeth - then residing in Abbot House - relict of Alexander Macbeth, Solicitor, Dunfermline, the sum of £500, which he bound himself and his executors to repay and disposed in her favour the Abbot House. On 1st January, 1880, she received repayment of £500 and issued a discharge in his favour.

That same year, James Turner, as Factor for David Anderson, granted a Disposition of the property to-

ROBERT KNIGHT - senior. V. S. who, in 1901, issued a Notarial Instrument in favour of his wife, Mrs. Jean Reid or Knight.

ROBERT KNIGHT - junior, succeeded, 13 July 1918, and he, on 9 Oct. 1934, disposed in favour of his wife,

MRS JANET GILMOUR ERSKINE or KNIGHT, as her own absolute property, his whole means, estate and effects.

In 1947 she disposes the Abbot House in favour of-

DAVID CROSBIE MARSHALL FOGGO - Grocer, residing at Kingskettle,
for the sum of £3,000. He sold it to-

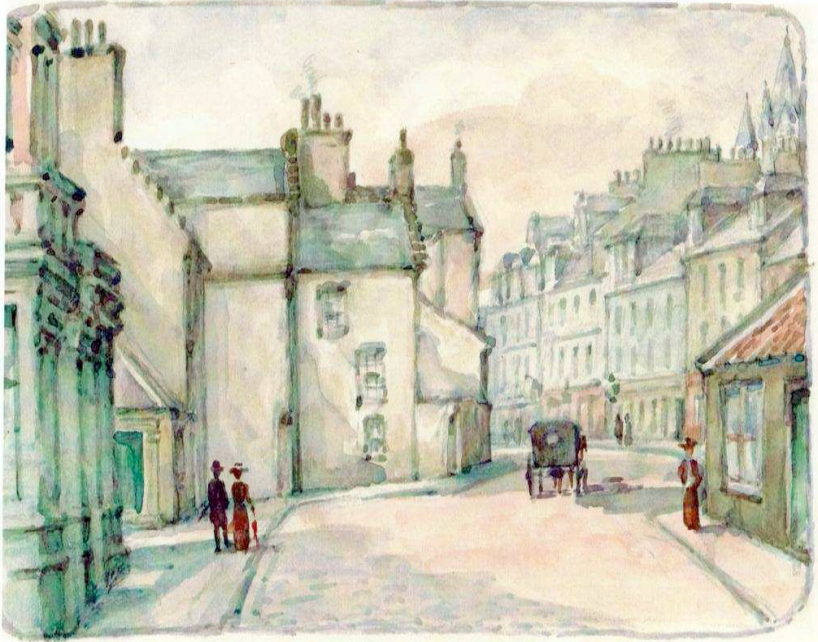
ALEXANDER MITCHELL - Joiner, Dunfermline, who, in 1948 disposed of
it to the-

CARNEGIE DUNFERMLINE TRUST.



Chapter IV

THE BUILDING AS IT STANDS TODAY
AND THE IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE UPON IT.



Painted by Adam Westwood.

From the Daily Record May 15, 1931.

PUNISHMENT FOR GOSSIPING – By Sadie Younger.

There is an old house in the Maygate, in the “Auld Grey Toon,” situated some forty or fifty yards from Dunfermline Public Library. It is dull and secretive looking and boasts of a tiny tower. Nevertheless, a passer by could not guess that this house dates back to the fifteenth century.

But perhaps someone, prompted by curiosity to know the origin or the strange words above the oaken door, would inquire into the

history of the place. He would be amply rewarded, for it is whispered many strange and dastardly deeds were enacted within its precincts.

The dwelling, as its name implies, was the abode of the Abbots of Dunfermline.

STERN WARNING.

It is first mentioned as the residence of Robert Pitcairn, who was made Abbot and Commendator of Dunfermline at the Reformation in 1560. A person of some consequence, he afterwards became Secretary of State to James VI under the Regency of Lennox.

But his reputation was none too good, and this is where we come to the story of the couplet above the door. Not many years ago the body of a woman, clothed in a wedding-dress, was taken out of one of the walls in the house.

This is a confirmation of a story about a maid who revealed to the neighbours some of the "scandalous on-goings" which took place in the Abbot's House.

She disappeared suddenly, and it was said that, to punish her for gossiping, the wicked Abbot nailed her to the wall on her wedding day.

Shortly afterwards the Abbot Pitcairn, as a warning to all against discussing other people's affairs, had these words carved above the door;

Sin vord is thral and thocht is free,
Keip weil thy tongue I counsel thee."

The old "Dunfermelyn" was ruled by these all-powerful Abbots, the last of whom was one, Robert Durie, ancestor of the Lairds of Craig luscar, near Dunfermline. In Beveridge's "Between the Ochils and the Forth," there is a short account of the Abbot's House, but the exact date of erection is not given.

Rumour has it that our Bonnie Prince Charlie rested here and escaped through the dining-room window to continue his weary wanderings till his flight to France.

SECRET PASSAGES.

The rooms of the house are long and low, and some of the walls are three and four feet thick. Below, the cellars are dark and dungeonlike.

There are one or two secret passages, and an underground causeway to the Abbey, which is now blocked.

The old grey house is well steeped in history, and still guards many secrets which we will probably never learn. Walls have ears, we know of what use are ears to walls when they have not tongues with which to tell their secrets.

NOTE: - Miss Sadie Younger (who wrote the above Article) was invited to Abbot House along with the Duke of Hamilton who was representing the II45 R.A.F. Squadron many of who attended, at the opening of the War Room. Sadie served with the R.A.F. in Command Headquarters in London during the II World War. She was a very eminent lady and lived in Aberdour.

I took the opportunity to ask her regarding her article written in 1931, on the woman who was said to have been built into the wall of Abbot House and asked where she had got the story. Miss Younger replied that she could not remember!

During refurbishment of Abbot House, in 1991 each room was taken back to the bare stone original walls. No evidence of anything having been bricked up within the walls came to light.

On our open day to the public, showing the artefacts of the Archaeological dig in the garden visitors poured to see what had been discovered and to watch the dig. We, at Abbot House that day, were asked which was the window Bonnie Prince Charlie jumped out off.

We were also asked about the secret passages from the Abbot House to the Abbey Church buildings.

To this day, no, sources, or answers to these questions have been found, but Archaeology is still discovering new evidence of underground buildings within the area.

By Sheila Pitcairn. - (Further research reveals)

**PART 1. THE HISTORY OF TITLES OF ABBOT HOUSE
OF THE EASTERN PORTION
(In below the Waa's)**

1560 ABBOT HOUSE – Friary, then Abbot's House.

At the time of the REFORMATION – Abbot House belonged to the Abbey
In 1560 – ROBERT PITCAIRN was appointed Commendator. He lived in the Abbot's House and added the Advice Stone above the Door among his alterations of the house. He married in 1577 Euphemia Murray, widow of Stewart of Rosyth and sister to James Murray of Perdewis.

1584 Robert Pitcairn died, in Abbot House.

1592 Abbot House being the property of the Crown. The Crown by an Act of Parliament in 1592 appointed JOHN GIB, Groom of H.M. Chamber, to take it over.

1593 The Abbacy was perpetually annexed to the Crown in 1593

1596 Queen Anne, by a Charter in 1596, appointed Alexander Seton, Lord Urquhart.

1605 LORD URQUHART, President of the Court of Session, and heritable bailie of the Lordship was created EARL OF DUNFERMLINE, in 1605.

1665 In 1665 JOHN EARL, (there-after MARQUIS) of TWEEDDALE, in consequence of a debt due to him by the Earl of Dunfermline, obtained a right (by a decree of apprising) to the office of Heritable Bailie and also to the lease of the feu duties and teinds.

1693 CHARLES I. granted the EARL OF DUNFERMLINE a lease of the feu duties and teinds.

1699 LADY ANN HALKET, once again it was her old friends the SETONS and their son in-law the MARQUIS OF TWEEDDALE, now in possession of the Lordship of Dunfermline, who came to her rescue by offering the vacant ABBOT HOUSE to her as a Dower House. (She died in Abbot House 22nd April 1699, aged 76.)

LADY HALKET'S PAPERS - at the time of her death were deposited in the Yester Writs GD28/2257 as Abbot House belonged to **THE MARQUIS OF TWEEDDALE, EARL OF DUNFERMLINE**.

The first person known to have been in possession of the house was David Black of Hill House.

Then John Lindsay, Bailie, but it is not known when he owned it.

Then William Black of the Hill, Clerk of Regality of Dunfermline and Clerk of The Admiralty Court.

1779 Disp. of the late Clark in favour of William Black, David Wardlaw

1780 In favour of John Wardlaw.

1790 Disp & Set. By David Wardlaw.

1793 By David Wardlaw's Trustees

1794 Trustees of David Wardlaw in favour of Wm & John Sutherland.

1820 In favour of James Farquhar Gordon, John Sutherland.

1820 In favour of James Farquhar Gordon.

1821 In favour of John Sutherland.

1821 In favour of Misses Sutherland.

1821 In favour of David Black

1821 Discharge and Renunciation by James Farquhar Gordon.

1821 In favour of John Sutherland.

1821 Disp. by David Black to Mr John Wilson Sen. In Liferent and Mrs Wilson and John Malcolm.

1821 In favour of Mr John Wilson (a part of Friars Garden) to Catherine Wilson his daughter and John Malcolm her Husband.

1826 Bond & Disp. In favour of Adam & John Wilson.

1829 And 1839, In favour of John Wilson heir to his brother Adam Wilson.

1849 By the Trustees of John Wilson in favour of Robert Malcolm

1857 Robert Boyle Watson, Glass-stainer, owned both portions.

1887 In favour of Mrs Janet Johnston and Catherine Malcolm.

1888 Disp. by Jane Malcolm or Johnston and Catherine Malcolm. 1888 In favour of Alexander W. Bonnar. Disp. in favour of Thomas Buchanan.

1896 In favour of the Trustees of Thomas Buchanan.

1902 Disch. by the Trustee of the late Thomas Buchanan in favour of Alexander Walker Bonnar and Miss Margaret Fisher

1907 Disch. by Miss Margaret Fisher in favour of Alexander W. Bonnar.

1909 Disp. by Alexander Walker Bonnar in favour of the Carnegie Dunfermline Trustees.

**Part II. HISTORY OF TITLES OF ABBOT HOUSE AND OF
THE WESTERN PORTION KNOWN AT ONE TIME
AS THE GREAT LODGING
(Magh-gate, May-gait, may-gate, water Gait)**

- 1550 Thomas Stewart, sasine given 5 December 1550 on resignation by William Couper in favour of-
- 1550 John Boswell, who is here (9th January 1532) described as almoner, was sacristan of the monastery 6th December 1550 and on that date purchased 'The Great Ludging of Dunfermline. The purchase, though contrary to the monastic vow, had been effected with the consent of Abbot George Durie and was later legalised by Commendator Robert Pitcairn. The sacristan, who died not long before the Reformation, gifted the house to his cousin Andrew Boswell, son of John Boswell, burgess of Dunfermline. Andrew Boswell, finding that it was partly ruinous and that it could not be repaired without the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, sold it to Anthony Rutherford, notary, being then in occupation of the Ludging, which was mostly old and ruinous. Anthony Rutherford died before 1575.
- 1571 James Murray, of Perdews, purchased the above, with additional lands (purchased 1574) and land 'now waste and not built upon', as far east as Abbot House where the street then ended.
- 1577 Lady Euphemia Murray (widow of Sir Robert Stewart of Rosyth and sister of the above James Murray) married Robert Pitcairn, Commendator.
- 1578 Euphemia Murray in a sasine from her brother in her favour, of a tenement in Maygait.
To Patrick Murray, of Perdews heir to his father James Murray above and nephew of Euphemia Disposed of the Great Lodging
- 1616 To Sir William Seton, of Kylesmure, who was the brother of the Earl of Dunfermline. Sir William was acting on behalf of his brother the Earl, who failed to implement a Bond in favour of the Marquis of Tweeddale. S.R.O. GD28/2257.

**“THE GREAT LODGING” - passed into the possession of the Family of
THE MARQUIS OF TWEEDALE, EARL OF DUNFERMLINE.
(Inventory of Yester Writs 1699) S.R.O. GD28/2257.**

The Great Lodging “History of Titles” The first entry we have is of the Alexander Earl of Dunfermline Disp. to-

John Chalmer. Disp. to-

Andrew Walker, Merchant in Dunfermline thereafter to-

James McBeath, then to-

Helen Thomson

1744 Disp. by Helen Thomson in favour of John Thomson.

1747 Disch. by Helen Thomson and Thomas Baxter in favour of John Thomson.

1768 Disp. by John Thomson Tailor in Dunfermline in favour of John Crawford and spouse.

1769 Disch. by Janet Thomson and James Gold in favour of John Thomson.

1779 In favour of John Crawford and spouse.

1821 Disp. by James Farquhar Gordon Trustees, in favour of Mary and Margaret Sutherland.

1826 In favour of Adam Crawford Master in the Royal Navy resident in Montrose.

1828 Disp. by Adam Crawford in favour of John Sutherland.

1836 Disp. by Richard Sutherland in favour of Adam Stenhouse.

1844 Disp. by Adam Stenhouse Tailor in Dunfermline in favour of Robert Buchanan Wright.

1846 Disp. by Robert Buchanan to Mary & Margaret Sutherland.

Mary and Margaret Sutherland were already in possession of the eastern portion so that, from this time onward, the two portions were re-united. From a later deed we learn that when the Misses Sutherland acquired the property from Robert Buchanan, a ruinous house at the west end was taken down and a Coach House and other erections built thereon.

1857 Disp. by Misses Sutherland in favour of Robert Boyle Watson.

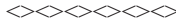
1857 In favour of Robert Boyle Watson. (Has property in both portions of Abbot House)

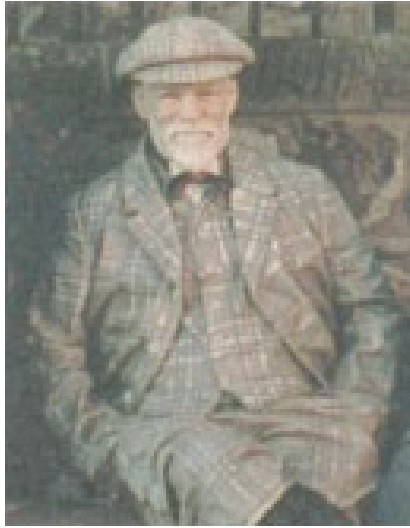
1857 Disp. by Robert Boyle Watson in favour of Fifeshire Property.

1859 Disp. & Asg. By the above in favour of William Johnstone.

1859 Asg. By Robert Boyle Watson in favour of George C. Warden

- 1868 David Anderson in favour of Fife Property.
- 1878 Disp. in favour of David Anderson.
- 1879 By David Anderson in favour of James Turner.
- 1880 Disp. by James Turner as Factor, in favour of Robert Knight.
- 1901 Disp. & Set. by Robert Knight Senior.
- 1901 Disp. & Set. by Mrs Jean Reid or Knight.
- 1918 Disp. by Mrs Jean Reid or Knight.
- 1918 In favour of Robert Knight (Veterinary Surgeon) (Abbot House).
Disp. other portion 1946.
- 1934 Disp. by Robert Knight Junior.
- 1947 Disp. by Mrs Janet Gilmour Erskine or Knight.
- 1947 In favour of David Crombie Marshall Foggo.
- 1948 Disp. by David Crombie Marshall Foggo in favour of The Carnegie Dunfermline and Hero Fund Trustees dated 1948 of Ground flat and 3 flats above (this is central tower block) forming eastmost portion of 21 Maygate. Disp. by David C.M. Foggo in 1949 the west-most portion to-
- 1949 Carnegie Dunfermline and Hero Fund Trustees of the west-most and remaining portion of the Abbot House. (Abbot House West)

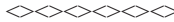




Andrew Carnegie.

With great foresight the Carnegie Dunfermline and Hero Fund Trustees acquired the eastern portion of Abbot's House in 1909 and the whole property in 1948. Later the Trustees would donate to the Dunfermline Heritage Trust for the creation in Abbot House of a Heritage Centre for the benefit of future generations in Dunfermline.

The discovery of the tracery window in the Abbot's presence chamber, and in that same room the discovery of two wall murals, one found above the fireplace and another in a corner on the south wall of the house, are tantalising as to their dates, possibly, 16 century. The corner south wall mural is similar to paintings found on the roof rafters at Pitfirrane House, Crossford and at Culross.



The front cover by John Slezer (d. 1714), *Theatrum Scotiae*. London, 1693. is a view of 'The Prospect of the Abbey of Dunfermline' it shows the Abbot House within the walls of the Monastery of Dunfermline. It also shows the ruins of the Great Lodging next-door to the Abbot House.



ABBOT HOUSE

As Scotland's ancient capital Dunfermline, set close to the north shore of the Firth of Forth, occupies an especially important place in the nation's history.

Dunfermline succeeded the Hebridean Island (Iona) as the Royal Sepulchre.

As the last resting place of over 20 of Scotland's Royals ...kings, queens, princes and princesses ... the great Abbey of Dunfermline houses the tomb of one of the greatest heroes in Scottish history, King Robert the Bruce.

Before shouting from its rooftops the name of the victor of Bannockburn, the mighty Abbey was already a place of pilgrimage, venerated since the 11th century as the burial place of Malcolm Canmore and his saintly queen Margaret. The remains of her shrine – a simple sarcophagus of Frosterly marble – stands today to the east of the Abbey Church.

Once the administrative headquarters of the first and richest Benedictine Abbey in Scotland, the Abbot House in Dunfermline's Maygate had taken time to yield up its secrets. In fact, it was as recently as 1992 – during the building's restoration as a heritage centre – that an original tracery window was discovered, which dated the building back to around 1460.

The spirit of a ghostly monk whose origins may go back even further, to around 1124 – has also been sighted once again within the walls of this venerable building ... but this time with a difference. The rustle of his robe and the flap of his sandal have been replaced by 20th-century developments, which have given life to the apparition through the wonders of high-tech computer technology.

Visitors can now journey back in time on a personal guided tour introduced by none other than the ghost himself...grumbling, as only a ghost can, about the inclement weather, and his long sojourn in these barbarous northern lands.

In fact, these lands were originally the most southerly of the Pictish

Provinces (known as Fib, from which comes Fife) and were strategically and politically a very important location, long before Abbot House existed.

Today, staffed by the dedicated Volunteers of Dunfermline Heritage Trust, the House – complete with its Abbot's Kitchen café, shop and herb garden, where the time traveller can eat and drink yards from the great Dunfermline Abbey – it offers a warm and welcoming visitor experience.



**THE CASTELLATED AND DOMESTIC
ARCHITECTURE
OF
SCOTLAND
IV p. 17
ABBOT HOUSE DUNFERMLINE.**

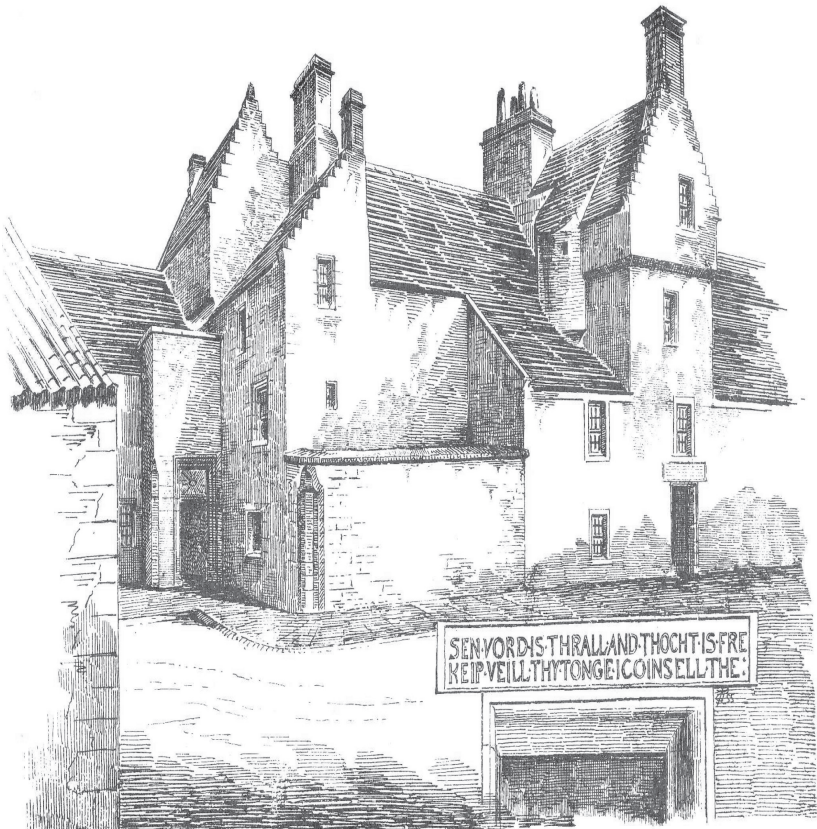


Fig. 601. - Abbot's House. View from North-East.

This house is situated in May Gate, about twenty to thirty yards north from the east end of the abbey. In Henderson's *Annals of Dunfermline*, p. 219, it is stated tht Robert Pitcairn, Commendator of Dunfermline, appears to have resided

here during is brief sojourning on the business of the dissolved abbey. That event happened in 1560, and Pitcairn died in 1584. Not much confidence can, however, be placed in Henderson's conjectures regarding the house, as may be judged from the following remark. He says, "The house appears to have been a friary - probably a convent of Blackfriars - and may date back into the thirteenth century." He further states that its cruciform plan can still be traced, and that "the doorway in May Gate appears to be struck out in the lower part of the north transept." This transept doorway is the one with the inscription over it shown in Fig. 601. He supposes its "advice-stane" to have been inserted by Pitcairn. It is quite obvious that most of these surmises are entirely imaginary. There is nothing of a cruciform plan about the house, and to suppose it to have been an ancient church with transepts is certainly to allow the imagination full play. It is clear from the Plan, as tinted black (Fig. 602) that we have here an ordinary Scottish house of about the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century. It is a structure designed on the principle of the Z Plan (with shot-holes in the projecting towers), to which additions have been made at a subsequent time.

The main block of the house contains four apartments; three of these are still vaulted, and the fourth - the parlour - has had its vault taken out and a flat ceiling put in instead. The porch indicated on the south side of the Plan is modern. There is a wheel-stair in each of the projecting towers. These stairs terminate at the first floor, whence the ascent is continued in the usual angle stair turrets.

The additions are shown by the hatched portions of the Plan, and judging from the style they probably date from the seventeenth century. These consist of a large wing at the east end, with a scale and platt stair, and a series of low buildings placed against the older house towards the street on the north side. It appears to us that the doorway on the north side, with its large curved ingoing (see Fig. 601), and the lettering on its "advice-stane," belonging to the later period. This, however, is merely a conjecture; but it is supported by the fact that the additions to the house seem to have been made, not so much for the purpose of increasing the accommodation of one house as of converting the structure into two houses. The above door appears to have been then inserted or altered as the entrance to the west house. The original entrance was probably in the re-entering angle. The kitchen in the west house is the original one, as it shown by its old arched fireplace. The other kitchen has been created when the division into two houses took place.

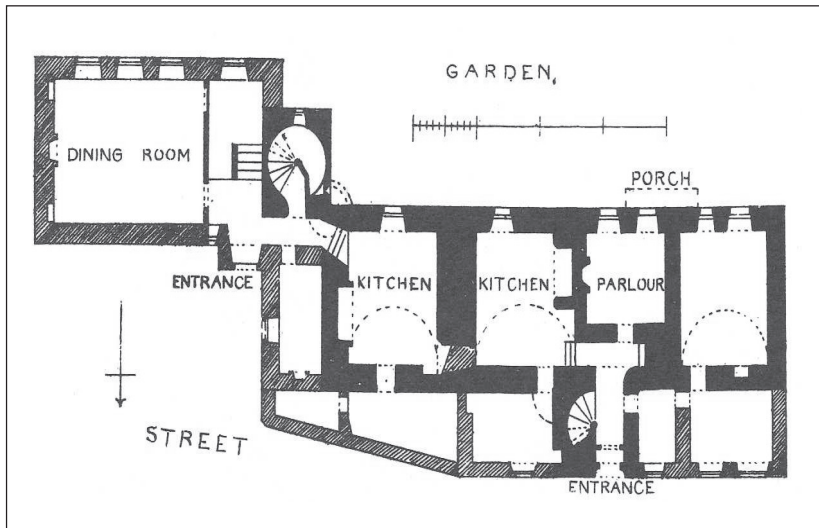


Fig. 602. - Abbot's House. Plan.

The inscription over the entrance door, which is carved on a stone about 6 feet 4 inches long by 11 inches in breadth, is well known, and often quoted.

It occurs in *The Fair Maid of Perth*, chapter xxv., where it is said to be taken from an abbot's ruined house, but the locality is not state. It is as follows:-

SEN ' YORD ' IS ' THRALL ' AND ' THOCHT ' IS ' FRE
KEIP ' VEILL ' THY ' TONGE ' I ' COINSELL ' THE:

In the "Ballad of Good Counsel," at the end of the King's Quair, will be found the original of this advice, as follows:-

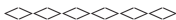
"Sen word is thrall and thocht is only fre,
Thou dant they tung," &c.

Professor Skeat, in the notes to *The King's Quair* (Scottish Text Society), observes that "the author contrasts speech with thought, and calls it a 'thrall,' by comparison with the freedom of thought."

Fig. 603 shows the south elevation, being that towards the churchyard of the abbey.



Fig. 603. - Abbot's House. South Elevation.



DIGGING UP THE ABBOT HOUSE

Extract from
THE CAPITAL IN
THE KINGDOM
THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
MEDIEVAL DUNFERMLINE
P. 16.

In December 1991 the Dunfermline Heritage Trust began to restore and transform the Abbot House as a major Heritage Centre for Dunfermline. Up until then the house was always thought to have been a 16th century town house built by Robert Pitcairn, Commendator of Dunfermline. Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly of the Heritage Trust, stripped away the modern interior and uncovered a previously unknown, two storey high façade wall complete with decorative windows and doorways. This wall was set back within the present day Abbot House, and would have fronted directly onto the medieval Maygate.

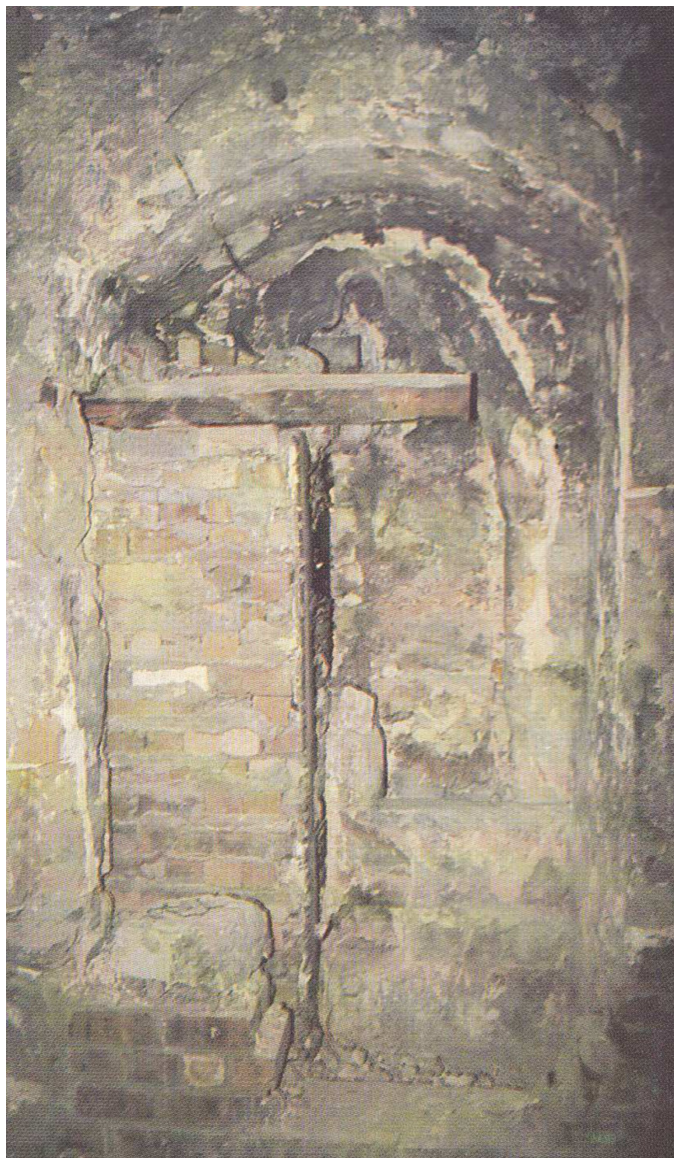
One of the newly discovered windows caused a great excitement. It is similar to those found in churches and abbeys, dated to the mid-15th century. This pushed the date of the house back more than a century. Could this building within a building have been the original lodgings of the abbots of Dunfermline Abbey?

The excavations aroused considerable interest and were generously funded by Fife Regional Council, Historic Scotland, the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust and Dunfermline District Council, with grant aid from the European Regional Development Fund. The work could not have taken place without the encouragement and support of Elspeth King, Michael Donnelly and Margaret Dean of the Dunfermline Heritage Trust.

The work was carried out by the Scottish Urban Archaeological trust between April and September 1992. The dig was a great success, revealing over 700 years of history on the site. The results of the dig many of the finds will be incorporated in the displays within the Abbot House.



Abbot House West, Gable showing 16th century addition to north.



Unbricking of 15th century traceried window within the original north wall of the Abbot House.

Documentary research by the Heritage Trust has indicated that the name Abbot House given to the property does not appear before the 19th century.

However, the setting of the house, at the junction between the abbey grounds and the town, would have been the natural location for the abbot's lodgings.

Here the abbot would have administered the financial and business affairs of what was an extremely wealthy organisation, with one foot firmly planted in the commercial town and the other within the holy precinct. Research has also suggested that the house was neither built nor even owned by Robert Pitcairn as stated on a plaque by the main door although he certainly was a powerful figure in the late 16th century.

The earliest documentary reference to the building (The Great Ludging see page 50) dates back to the mid 16th century when it was in the ownership of William Couper, the Burgh Treasurer. The land remained the property of the abbey and the link here was through William Couper's brother John Couper, a monk and lawyer. It was then sold on in 1550 to John Boiswell, sacristan, who had responsibility for the fabric and contents of the Abbey church.

After the Reformation the fortunes of Boiswell declined and on his death the house was transferred to his nephew, Andrew Boiswell. The deteriorating condition of the property prompted his guardians to sell it in 1570 to James Murray of Perdieu. His purchase of the house appears to mark the second major phase of construction.

By the early 17th century the property was in the ownership of the Earls of Dunfermline, and referred to as the Great Ludging. Its thick stone walls and slate roof saved it when the great fire of 1624 swept Dunfermline. Financial difficulties forced the Earls of Dunfermline to sell the property in the late 17th century. Between 1672-1699 the house was rented by Lady Halket, and it was here that she wrote her autobiography charting her extraordinary life as a herbalist, physician and supporter of the Royalist cause. In the 1770s, the property was in the possession of William Black, Clerk to the Admiralty Court. He was the last of the owners who significantly altered or extended the house from its original plan. Various outbuildings were attached to the gable walls of the property in the 19th century including a stable, a barn and a dairy.

More recently the house has been used as a doctor's surgery and a temporary home to the Tourist Information Office.



National Monuments Record of

John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Ed
Tel: 0131-662-1456 Fax: 0131-662-1477/149

DUNFERMLINE, 21 MAYGATE, ABBOT'S HOUSE DUNFERMLINE HERITAGE CENTRE

Type of Site: Residential House; Heritage Centre
NMRS Number: NT08NE 1.08

Location

Map reference: NT 090 873
Parish: Dunfermline
Council: Fife

Archaeology Notes

NT08NE 1.8 0904 8737.

(NT 0904 8737) The Abbot's House, Dunfermline: Two adjacent tenements, 21 Maygate and 11 Abbot Street, lying N of the churchyard, are together known as the Abbot's House. They were built in the late 16th c and originally formed a single structure which consisted of a long, rectangular, main block, three main storeys in height. Towards the close of the 17th c, there was some alteration and addition. The space on each side of the northern stair-tower was filled in and the present entrance to 21 Maygate formed in the tower itself. The masonry is of rubble, harked. Both the original house and the additions have to some extent been modernised.

RCAHMS 1933.

An undated deed granted by David I (1124-53) provided a residence for the abbot of Dunfermline in Dunfermline.

The first authentic reference to this house (Abbot House) is when, following the Reformation, Robert Pirie became commendator of the abbey (1561).

J M Webster 1948.

"The Abbot's House" is as described.

Visited by OS (DWR) 18 February 1974.

For 1992 excavation details, see NT08NE 1.12.

Architecture Notes

The house, formed from two adjacent tenements, is a most admirable piece of work of 16th century date. There are 17th century extensions and alterations.

Architect: James Shearer

<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/news-bin/owa/details?innumlink=49325>

