

III.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF INCHAFFRAY IN
1789, CONTAINED IN A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GENERAL
HUTTON AND MR JOHN DOW, THEN TENANT OF THE ABBEY.
By A. G. REID, F.S.A. SCOT., AUCHTERARDER.

The following correspondence between the eminent antiquary, General Hutton, whose collections as to the ecclesiastical and monastic remains of Scotland are deposited in the Advocates' Library, and Mr John Dow, tenant of the Abbey of Inchaffray, will be read with interest. The ancestors of Mr Dow had been in possession of the Abbey lands from the time of the Reformation, and he was consequently qualified to give information as to the buildings. The letters from General Hutton are in the hands of the contributor. Mr Dow's communication is among the General's MSS., vol. vii., Perth, No. 115. Adv. Lib., Edin.

1. *General Hutton to Mr John Dow, Abbey of Inchaffray, Parish of Madderty.*

KELSO, 26th February 1789.

MR DOWE,—Since I saw you in October last, I have unluckily lost or mislaid the memorandums I made concerning the Abbey of Inchaffray. I write therefore to request you will have the goodness to favor me with as full an account as you can give me of the present remains of the building, and what other parts now destroyed you and your father remember standing, mentioning the times as nearly as you can recollect when they fell or were taken down. I wish you would look carefully about the ruins, to see if there are any inscriptions or carved stones, &c. A plan or ground-plot of the remains laid down from the dimensions of the different parts, with a compass to explain the situation, would be very acceptable to me. Perhaps young Mr Ramsay would do me the favor to assist in making out this plan or ground-plot. Inchaffray is called in Latin, "Insula Missarum." Pray, is there any appearance of the ground on which the building stands ever

having been surrounded with water? I hope you will oblige me so far as to write me as full an account as you possibly can, not omitting the smallest circumstances. Mention anything curious that you or your father, &c., have found among the ruins, either as to carved stones, coins, coffins, tombstones, monuments, inscriptions, &c. Mention, too, whether you have heard anything of the bells of the Abbey since I saw you. I wrote to the minister of Dunning upon this subject, but he has not yet answered my letter.

I will be glad to hear from you as soon as you can, my stay in the country for the present being very uncertain. Be assured I shall not forget your trouble, and if you wish it I will send you a historical account of the Abbey, containing all the circumstances I have collected relating to its Abbots, &c., &c. You will direct your letter to H. Hutton, Esq., of Capt. Dickson's, Kelso. I hope yourself and family have been in good health since I saw you. Wishing you all every happiness and comfort through life,—I am, your sincere friend and well wisher,

H. HUTTON.

I will expect to hear from you in a few days.

2. *Mr Dow to General Hutton.*

ABBEY OF INCHAFFRAY, 5th March 1789.

SIR,—I was favoured with yours of the 26th ultimo, and in obedience to your request shall endeavour to give you as accurate an account as I can of the Abbey of Inchaffray. What now remains of this Abbey is the north gavel of the house where the clergy lived—with the walls in ruins of the area—which formed a regular square, on the east side or north-east side of which stood the Church, having two large ailes on the north, with a small entry in the middle. In these ailes was found a stone, now lying at Abercairney, on which were carved a lion, and the effigy of the Earl of Strathern—in armour and flower de luces. On the north-east corner stood the steeple, formed of carved work. This steeple fell in one night, during the end of K. Charles 2^{ds} reign. On the S.E. side of the church was the burial yard. At the S.E. side of the church stood also a four-square house, the intention of which I cannot now recollect. Within the church are two stone coffins yet to be seen—both entire. But as to the dimensions of the church I cannot now give you an exact measurement—but they are rather longer than what I gave you formerly. The area may be about sixty feet long nearly, as far as I can recollect from memory. On the south side of the area stood the Chapter House, and beyond it another very large building, the use of which I cannot now recollect. On this side also stood the Front House where the Lord Abbot lived himself. To this house was the water conducted from a neighbouring well, still called Lady Well, by lead pipes which emptied themselves into a large stone trough, which still remains. On the west side was the clergy's house, the N. gavel of which stands as above, with

a large vault below—there were other five vaults which are now destroyed. Straight west from this stood another large building, said to be the clergy's— with a wall between the two buildings—and beyond that was a fruit garden, of which my grandfather eat the fruit. On the north or north-west side was an entry which extended to the rising ground on the north. On the south side was the principal entry leading to the Abbey from Madderty side, with a bridge across the Pow or water then standing. On the rising ground on the south was the Pigeon House, with a large building for the accommodation of strangers. With regard to the time at which these various buildings were pulled down, I cannot pretend to give an accurate statement, as they were taken down at different periods to supply stones to modern buildings—but if this be essentially requisite, I might with a little trouble find out the periods accurately. The buildings were mostly formed of carved stones, but there are no inscriptions nor dates to be found. One-half of a stone only remains, with some old characters which cannot now be read. The whole buildings were surrounded with water, narrower on the south and north, but wider and more extensive towards the east and west. I forgot to mention the East Entry, which extended to the north-east rising ground by a stone causeway, 60 feet broad. Around the whole building was a wall of ashler work beyond the outer side of the Precinct in order to keep off the water. To the north, on a rising hill, is a place called the “Scar-Law Knowe,” on which they tried their criminals,—and on the south side is a little mount called “Tillochandie,” on which they were executed, on which the Executioner's Lodge stands to this day. As to the monuments, I have never seen any—it is probable some may be lying in the rubbish. There have been coins found—which my father distributed to gentlemen in the country to whom the forty-five proved fatal—and now lost. With regard to the Bells of the Abbey I can give no certain account. The Seal of the Abbey, as belonging to Lord Madderty, is still in the Library of Innerpeffray; the only exact copy of the Seal is preserved in lead in the possession of Mr Malcolm, in our neighbourhood. My brother keeps the original Seal; Mr Malcolm has the impression taken from it. I have not had time to make out the dimensions—if necessary they may be made out by the assistance of others—and if you choose, Mr Malcolm will send you a perspective draught of the ruins as they at present stand.

I can give you no further account at present. I hope you have been in very good health since I had the pleasure of seeing you. I shall be glad when convenient to see the historical account you mentioned; and you may rest assured that I shall use every endeavour to gain any farther light into the antiquities of this Abbacy; and in case I should find any new discoveries in the course of my investigations, I shall take care to forward them to you, and should be glad to know if this letter shall come safe to your hand.—I am, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

JOHN DOW.

3. *General Hutton to Mr Dow.*

KELSO, 20th June 1789.

MR DOW,—I wrote you a long letter on the 8th of March last, upon receipt of yours, but as I have not heard from you since, I am apprehensive my letter has not reached you.

I would thank you very kindly for an impression of the seal of the Abbey of Inchaffray, which you say is preserved in the library at Innerpeffray. Please to be careful to take a fair impression, as I want it to make a drawing from. I fancy it would be best to take the impression upon wax ; and if you know of any person going to Edinburgh, it might be sent directed to me at Dr Inglis', at the Cross, Edinburgh, where it would be taken care of for me ; but if you cannot meet with an opportunity of transmitting to Edinburgh in this manner, be so good as send it in a letter by post, and I expect it will come safe enough, as I have received other impressions of seals by this conveyance.

Please to present my best thanks to the gentleman who kindly offered me drawings of the Abbey, which will be very acceptable to me, particularly a plan or ground-plot of the remains, showing the dimensions of the different parts. Such a plan of the old church at Tullibardine would also be of use to me, if the gentleman would be good enough to do it for me any time he is in that neighbourhood.

I will thank you to write me as fully as you can with regard to the Abbey ; and if you did not receive my letter of the 8th March, I will send you another containing the same information, and probably some further circumstances.

I hope your wife and children are well. With best wishes for the welfare of yourself and them, I am very truly your sincere friend,

H. HUTTON.

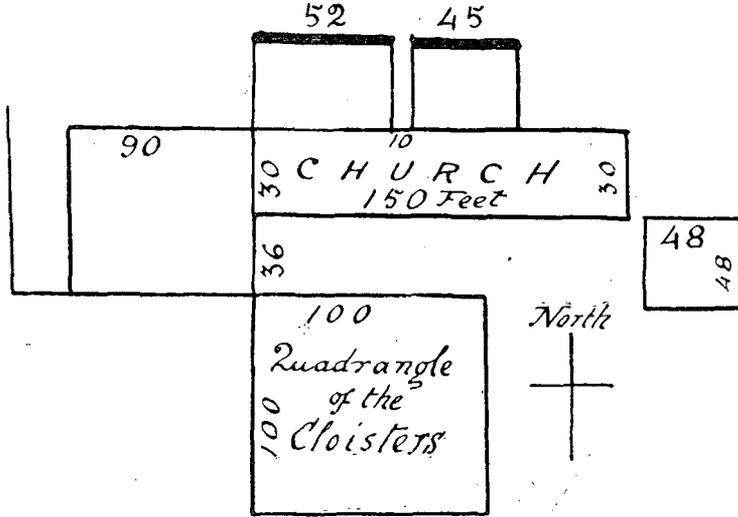
Let us know whether your rent has been made easier to you.

John Dow's letter to General Hutton was written for him by David Malcolm, LL.D., the schoolmaster of the parish of Madderty. He was one of the chaplains for Scotland of George IV., the author of the *History of the House of Drummond*, and a good classical scholar and successful teacher.

It may also be remarked that the allusion to the Abbots exercising criminal jurisdiction and carrying capital sentences into execution is inconsistent with the Canon Law, and the tradition of their having exercised such powers appears to be at fault.

Beyond the ground-plan of the buildings given below, there is no

other document among the General's collections as to the Abbey of any importance.



Plan of the Buildings at Inchaffray, from Hutton's MS.

"Rude sketch of the ground-plan of Inchaffray Abbey, in Perthshire, as described to me in October 1788 (the last time I visited the Abbey) by John Dowe, the tenant, who, and his ancestors, have resided there for many years. He pointed out to me most of the parts from tradition, there being very little remaining. The plan is evidently imperfect, and, I daresay, erroneous in many parts. Length of the church about 150 feet, breadth about 30. North aisle about 38 out and about 52 broad. There was a large building, two stories (*sic*) high, on the west side of the doorpost, perhaps the refectory and dormitories? There was another large building on the south said to have been the Abbot's house. Lord Madderty dwelt in it. The steeple fell down in the last century."—"BARBADOES, 23rd October 1791."