
4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lands of Rayne were granted to the bishops of Aberdeen in 1137. Construction of the bishop's residence there was thought by Boece in *Historia Gentis Scotorum* (1527) to have been begun by Alexander Kinninmund (Kinninmonth, Kyninmund), bishop between 1329 and 1344, and the evidence from the 2008 excavation suggests that there were already high-status buildings on the site at least by the early 14th century.

Boece also records that Bishop Kinninmund regularly spent the winter at Mortlach, summer and autumn between Fetternear and Old Rayne and spring in Aberdeen (RCAHMS 2007, 162). This confirms that there were buildings on the site suitable for Kinninmund to occupy and that his own building works, if ever completed, should be regarded more as rebuilding or additions rather than as the earliest buildings on the site.

In May 1349 the bishop's court was held at the Old Rayne stone circle (*apud stantes lapides de Rane en le Garuiach* ('among the standing stones of Rayne in the Garioch') Innes 1845, i, 80). It could be argued that this indicates that there was at that time no suitable meeting place at the manor. By the late 14th century there was a chapel on the manor site, as it is mentioned in 1383 as *capella dicti domini manerio suo de Rane* ('the chapel of his aforesaid manor of Rayne') (Innes 1845, i, 164).

The bishops of Aberdeen had widespread landholdings; by the 15th century and possibly before, the administration of the lands in Clatt and Tullynessle was centralised at Old Rayne (Innes 1845, i, 217–8).

The position of the site beside the road perhaps suggests that the rather odd straight edge of the manor enclosure as shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (OS 1870), may in fact be the original boundary line on this side, following the line of the road.

Old Rayne became a burgh of barony in January 1492/3 (Pryde 1965, 54) and there are elements of a later planned village layout with a 17th-century market cross in a small square at the junction of the St Lawrence Road and the road to the bridge to Pitmachie on the other side of the River Urie (Shepherd 2006, 105–6). Old Rayne was part of the lands of the bishops of Aberdeen annexed after the

Reformation under the Act of Annexation of 1587. It is not clear if any of the buildings on the manor site were in use in the late 16th century or in the 17th century. The lack of clay tobacco pipe fragments and of post-medieval pottery suggests that the excavated buildings on the north side of the manor were not in use at this period and may have been demolished. This does not preclude the possibility that buildings survived elsewhere on the property at that time.

Roy's military map of 1747–55 shows the village of Old Rayne as a cluster of eight buildings gathered to the south of a larger building with an enclosure. It is tempting to interpret this as the bishop's manor site with its enclosing ditch, although all the buildings may have been dismantled by the mid 18th century. Building foundations were visible on the site in the 18th century, but it has been under cultivation since the late 18th or early 19th century. The New Statistical Account of Scotland (NSA 1845, 12, 424) mentions the bishop's manor and notes that, 'the residence referred to, the foundation of which was discernible in the last century, but has since been effaced, and the ground brought under tillage'. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1867 (published in 1870) shows the 'Site of the Bishop of Aberdeen's house' as a truncated oval, in the angle between the road through the village and the road up to Cromwellside Farm. No ruins are shown, but the ditch is depicted. The primary school and schoolhouse were built on the south-west part of the mound in 1880. According to Groome's *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, first published in 1882, 'traces of former buildings and certain remains were found' during the excavation of foundations for the school (Groome 1896, 239).

There is no record of foundations which may have been discovered when the school extension was built c 1960. Information from local inhabitants, particularly Geordie Cameron, indicated that, in the past, the whole site, including the mound, had been ploughed. In the course of cultivation (in the 1960s?), Mr Cameron remembers ploughing up a number of red sandstone blocks and some bone from the top of the mound, directly behind the school. Many of the blocks have been re-used in the village as dyke stones, and one shaped block from an arch has subsequently been traced in Elgin and recorded.