

# Holyrood Abbey: the disappearance of a monastery

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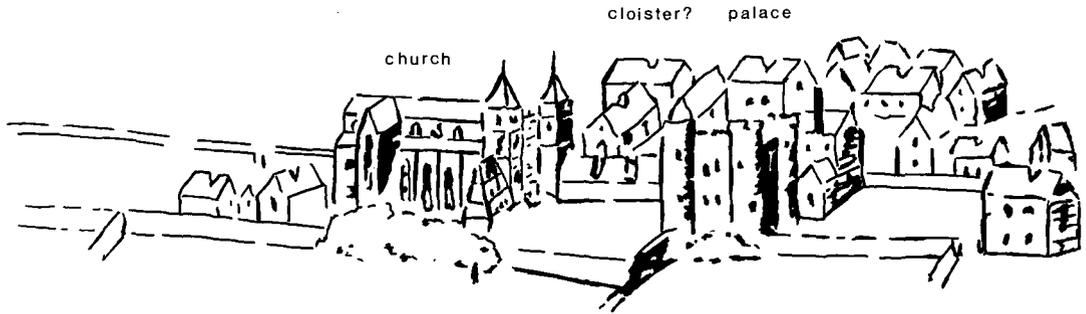
## ABSTRACT

*Holyrood Abbey was one of the major monasteries of Scotland. Its spiritual function, the celebration of Mass and the spiritual office, stopped with the Reformation parliament of 1560, but the existing Augustinian community remained in place, each canon having a legal right to residence with the monastery and a pension. This paper examines the documentation and archaeological evidence for the structural form of the Abbey over the Reformation period, its relationship with the expanding royal palace within its precinct, and the adaptation of the Abbey church to secular use.*

## INTRODUCTION

Holyrood Abbey, founded in 1128 by David I, was the second Augustinian monastery to be established in Scotland. Its position, close to the royal castle of Edinburgh, encouraged regular visits by the Scottish kings. The Augustinian chronicler, John of Hexham, tells how David I was 'devoted to divine services, failing not to attend each day at all the canonical hours, and at the vigils for the dead also' (Barrow 1992, 48). The generosity of the founder was a mixed blessing to the community for it brought with it obligations, both spiritual and material. While a degree of hospitality to guests was obligatory for the Augustinian canons, the high expectations of a royal patron, as at the Abbey of Holyrood, could lead to great demands in the provision of suitable accommodation. The guest houses within the monastic precinct were situated in the more secular area of the monastery, between the cloister and the western edge of the precinct. One guest house may have occupied the position where the north wing of the palace is now sited; it has been suggested that the latter's spine wall was originally the north wall of the guest house (Gifford *et al* 1984, 125 & 145), although there is no firm evidence for this early date. A 'new' hospice is recorded in 1387 when David Bell, on his resignation as abbot, was allowed to continue using it as his residence. It was described as having 'upper and lower storeys and kitchen, and garden on its east and west sides' (CPL Clement VII, 126–7). In the 15th century the Scottish kings used the accommodation at Holyrood increasingly as a purely secular residence. James II was born at Holyrood in 1430 and building works were undertaken there before his marriage in 1449 (Fawcett *nd*, 4) and by this date the royal accommodation could be said to function as a secular residence having a symbiotic co-existence with the Abbey. The Auchinleck Chronicle relates how, in 1450, James of Levingston escaped whilst held in royal custody at 'the abbay of halyrudhouss' (McGladdery 1990, 62). There are references to the chapel, the hall, the mansion and the close of the hospice of the abbot 'near the Abbey' in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, when they were

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ILLUS 1 View of Holyrood 1543–4 (from north), from the so-called English spy's map (after *Bannatyne Club Miscellany I* (1827) 184 & *BM Cotton mss, Augustus i.ii.56*)

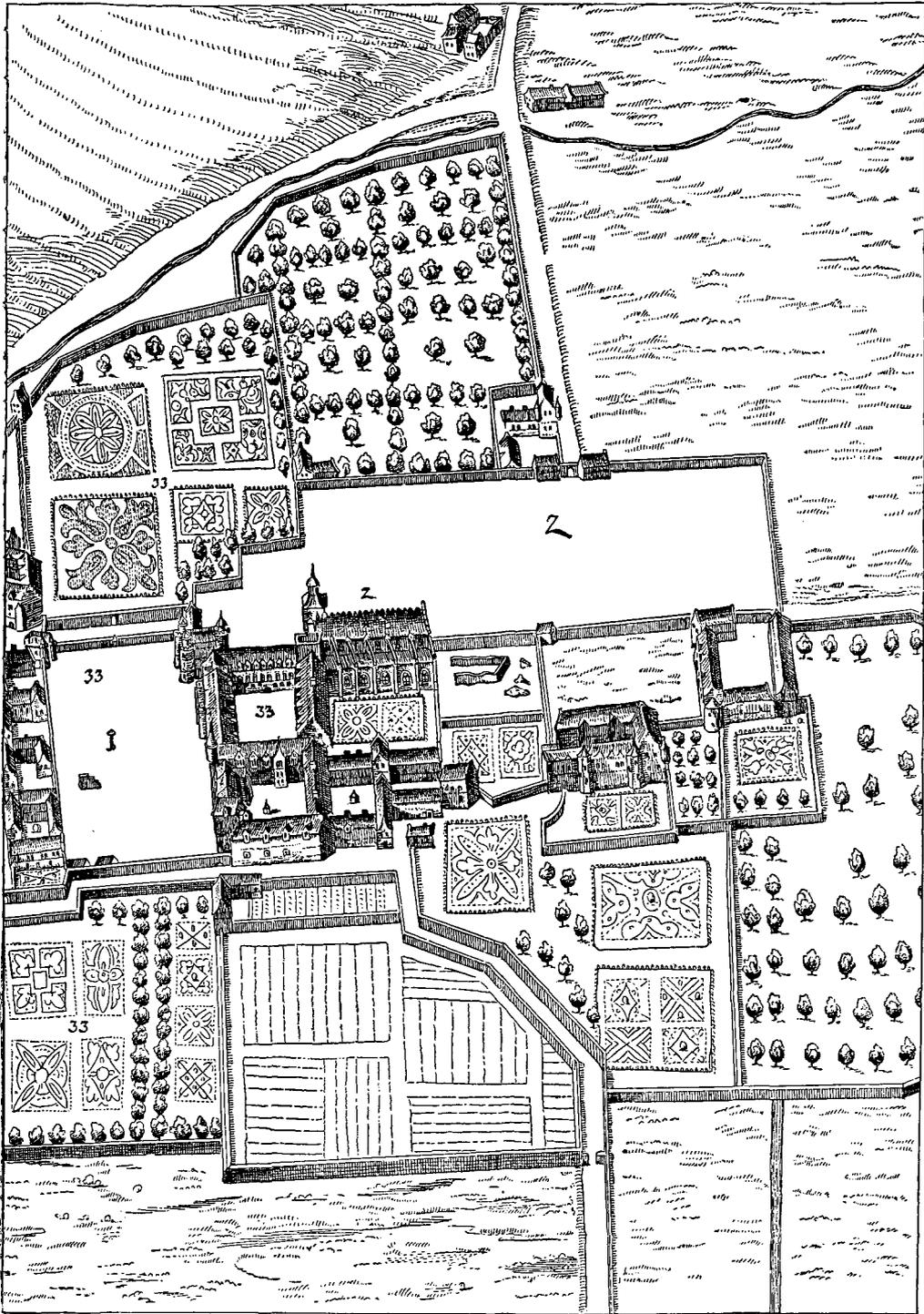
the location of a number of legal transactions (Prot Bk Young, 62, no 267; 374, no 1678; 420, no 1934; 434, no 2018).

With James IV's decision, in 1501, to build a separate royal palace at Holyrood adjacent to the monastic cloister, the secular presence became increasingly pervasive. Royal influence over the Abbey was extended when Robert Stewart, a son of James V, was created commendator in 1538, a position he was to hold until 1568 (Dilworth 1986, 64). During this period the Abbey suffered from both war and religious reform. The community fled in advance of invading English armies in the 1540s, the Abbey suffering structural damage. Despite this it appears to have continued as a community. A lease of 1542 was signed by the commendator and 21 other members of the community (SRO GD430/28), and over 20 canons are recorded in the 1550s (Dilworth 1994, 174; Dilworth 1995, 49). The total transfer of power into the hands of the commendator was given physical expression in July 1559; the prior and canons were gathered in the former's chamber to witness a charter when the commendator entered and seized the common seal of the chapter (Prot Bk Gilbert Grote, 40, no 183). After the Reformation parliament of 1560 the canons ceased to function as a religious body and recruitment stopped; as corporate members of the monastic community, the canons continued to have a legal right to a pension and live in the Abbey, but without further recruitment their numbers gradually dwindled. The prior and five canons, probably the whole resident community, were cited in a confirmation of rights by Queen Mary in 1565 (Dilworth 1994, 174) and again in 1567 (SRO RD13.195). One Holyrood canon, Andrew Blackhall, survived into the 17th century, dying in 1609 at the age of 73 (Shire 1969, 69).

While there are plentiful references to the 'Abbey' in the surviving royal documentation of the 16th century, these almost always seem to refer to the palace rather than the monastery, a practice which continued into the 18th century (Jamieson 1994, 20). The term 'convent' is used on a few occasions when there is a specific reference to the monastic community.

#### CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATIONS

There are a number of contemporary illustrations of Holyrood during this time of change; unfortunately, those of the 16th century give little evidence of the appearance of the monastic buildings, apart from the Abbey church. A near contemporary sketch of the English assault on Edinburgh in 1544 (BM Cotton MSS, Augustus I.ii.56; illus 1) shows Holyrood viewed from the north. The Abbey church is clearly depicted, as is the great tower of James IV's palace; the low connecting range between the church and tower is likely to be the north range of the palace. The



THE PALACE OF HOLYROOD HOUSE (33), THE SOUTH AND NORTH GARDENS (33), THE ABBEY KIRK (2) AND THE KIRKYARD (2). (After Gordon of Rothiemay's Plan.)

ILLUS 2 The palace in 1647, from James Gordon of Rothiemay's plan of Edinburgh (from south)

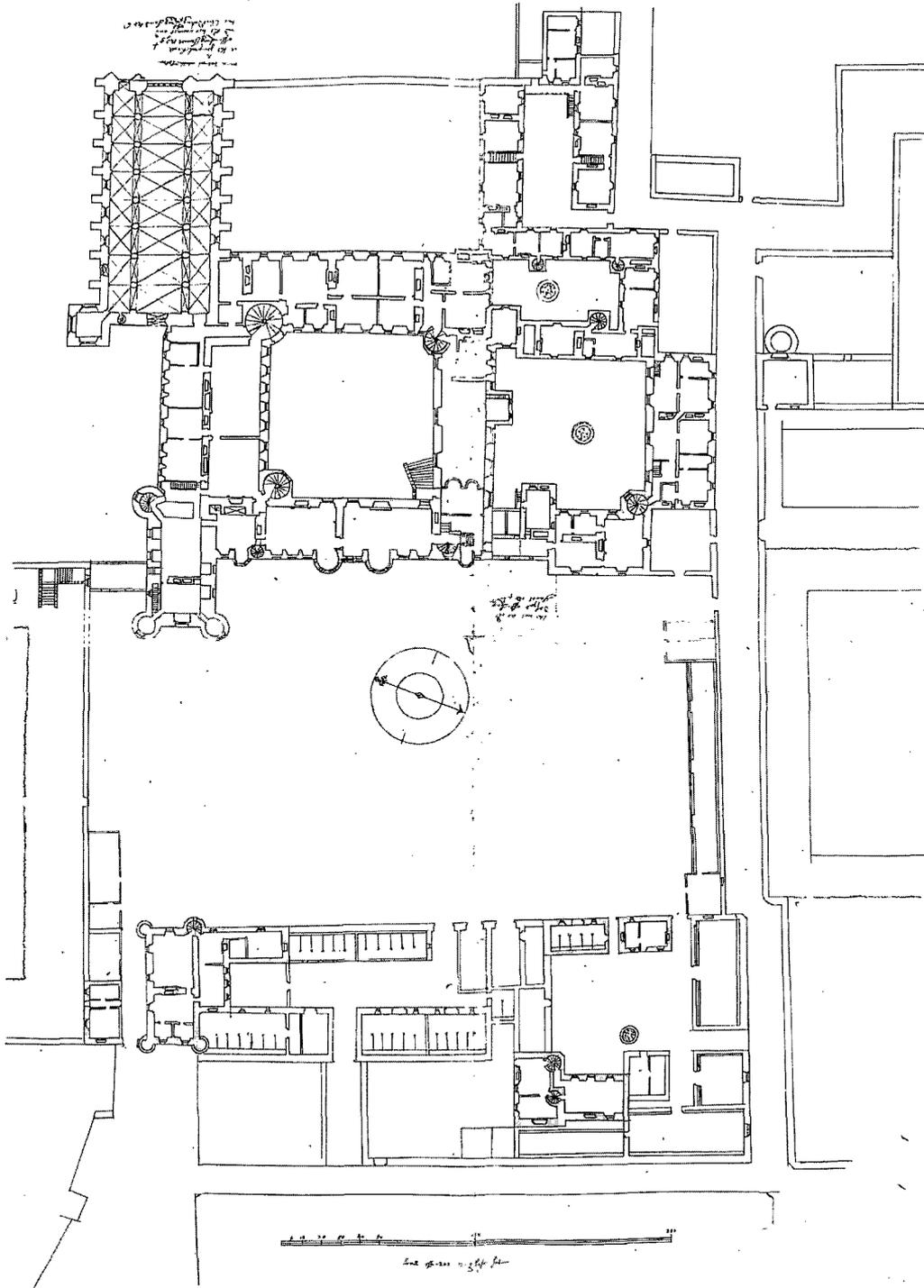
remaining buildings are more problematic in their identification. From the viewpoint of the artist, the monastic buildings ought to be obscured by the bulk of the church, so that the range drawn as extending south from the west end of the church should be the former claustral west range. It is possible, however, that this depicts the dormitory with a tall building across its southern end, transposed to the west in the drawing for the purpose of visibility. Another drawing, which is now in Petworth House, illustrating the 1560 siege of Leith, also shows the palace and Abbey from the north (not *illus*) (Steer 1962, 280). In addition there is a mid 16th-century view of Edinburgh and Leith included in the *Cosmographie* of Sebastian Munster (Gordon 1985, 185); unfortunately, while its broad topographical framework is accurate, the detail of individual buildings is a product of fantasy (not *illus*).

There are a number of illustrations of 17th-century date which give accurate depictions of Holyrood. A detailed view of the palace and its surroundings is included in James Gordon of Rothiemay's bird's-eye view of Edinburgh from the south, commissioned by the town council in 1647 (*illus* 2). This is to some extent complemented by John Mylne's 1663 survey of the palace (*illus* 3). Shortly after this, in 1670, the palace was depicted in a view of Edinburgh attributed to Hollar (not *illus*). The buildings depicted to the east of the palace in Hollar's drawing, however, do not correspond with other contemporary evidence and the accuracy must be doubted.

#### ABBHEY CHURCH

The Abbey church followed the Augustinian norm in consisting of two distinct sections: a monastic east end and a nave which functioned as a parish church. The main monastic services took place at the high altar and the adjacent choir, but throughout the church there were various subsidiary altars for the celebration of individual masses. These included the altar of the Lady Chapel, behind the high altar (Eeles 1914, lxiii) and St Katherine in the south aisle adjacent to the high altar, and St Andrew (ADCP 3, 23; Eeles 1914, lxxxv). While access to the choir enclosure was confined usually to the members of the monastic community, the laity would be admitted to the nave and, possibly to a lesser extent, the subsidiary altars of the east end. The parish altar, served by its own chaplain, was situated in the nave. This altar benefited, in 1507, from a grant from John Eistoun, 'chaplain and curate of the monastery of Holyrood' donated from the revenue of lands in Canongate. On the day of his requiem five shillings was to be spent on four candles, each weighing two pounds; two were to be placed on the parish altar and two on his tomb. A further 13s 4d was to be spent on the upkeep of a lamp at the parish altar. The prior and convent were to receive 40s each year for a mass on the date of the donor's death, while the 10 secular canons of the monastery should receive 10s for masses at the parish altar and 'at three other altars in the parish aisle'. By 1560 there were at least three others (Wood 1955, 33). There is a reference, in 1490, to another altar 'in the nave of the parish church' dedicated to St Sebastian (Prot Bk J Young, 87).

The number of nave altars increased in the 16th century with the introduction of chantries supported by the trade guilds of Canongate. The Hammermen erected an altar dedicated to St Eloi in 1536 (RSS ii, no 3948; Wood 1956, 36). The Shoemakers had an altar dedicated to SS Crispian and Crispinian (Wood 1956, 27; Holyrood Chrs, 290, 292) and the Baxters had an altar dedicated to St Hubert (Wood 1956, 27). In 1554, the tailors were granted an 'augmentation of divine service' at an altar in Holyrood Abbey 'qhair Saint An thair patrone now stands' (Ross *et al* 1922, 127). Other altars in this part of the church included one dedicated to All Saints, which was supported by land on the north side of Canongate (ECA Canongate charters no 9).



ILLUS 3 A survey of the Palace of Holyroodhouse in 1663, by John Mylne (after Mylne 1893)

A charter of 1399 mentions the altar of St Nicolas in the Abbey where David Fleming, Lord of Biggar, was to be buried. He donated annual income for a canon to sing at the altar and for perpetual prayer for his soul, this being emphasized by a further donation which provided the windows by the altar with glass bearing his arms (Grant 1910, 4).

The Abbey suffered during the English invasions in the 1540s when lead was stripped from its church, the bells were removed, and the interior plundered. Items lost included a brass eagle lectern, now in St Albans (Caldwell 1982, 115–16). Later, it was one of a number of Edinburgh churches which suffered damage motivated by religious reform. Knox (I, 391) relates how its altars were ‘cassin down’ before 1560. With the abolition of the Mass and the cessation of monastic services, in 1560, the east end of the church became redundant. It was with this in mind that, in 1569, Adam Bothwell, the commendator of Holyrood, told the General Assembly of the reformed Church that the east end was in such a state of disrepair that it ought to be demolished. The bishop claimed that the church had been ruinous for the previous 20 years ‘through decay of two principall pillars, so that none were assured under it, and that two thousand pounds bestowed upon it, would not be sufficient to ease men to the hearing of the word, and ministratioun of the sacraments’. It was proposed to remove ‘the superfluous ruinous parts, to wit, the Queir and Croce Kirk’ and that the stone be used ‘be faithfull men’ to repair the nave, which was retained for parochial use (BUK 167). A detailed contract was prepared in 1570 for the necessary structural changes to adapt the church to the needs of the reformed religion (SRO CS7.61, f35–6). This involved the erection of a new east gable closing the east end of the former nave and the demolition of the old east end. The work was to be carried out over three years. In the first year the new gable was to be erected, the width of the wall being carefully specified in the contract. For the first foot of its height it was to be 7 ft thick. From there to the height of the ‘place of repentence’ it was to be 6 ft thick, and then 5 ft thick from the ‘place of repentence’ to the height of the window sill. The wall above the window was to be 4 ft thick. The window itself was to be 3 ells (2.82 m) high and 2 ells (1.88 m) wide. The side aisles also were to be blocked with gables and the roof of the nave made watertight. All the windows in the nave were to be blocked with the exception of two on the south side and the west window. The latter was to be reduced in size to 2 ells square.

Public repentance played an important role in the reformed Church. The normal place assigned for repentance was a stool below the pulpit, in this case evidently the former rood loft of the Abbey church. Actual, as opposed to spiritual gloom would seem to have been a feature of the remodelled church, although the blocking of windows may have been partly motivated by an attempt to strengthen the fabric.

In the second year, the aisles were to be made watertight. The remainder of the work was to be completed in the final year. The commendator was to pay for the removal of the royal sepulchre to the nave. The east end of the medieval church was to be demolished to the ground, then a burial enclosure built on the site, to the height of the sills of the former windows. The east end of the nave was to be closed to the high vault and the adjacent aisles blocked. Many of the existing windows were to be sealed, all the windows on the north side of the church and all except two on the south side were to be closed. The west window was to be built up except for the insertion of a new window. The interior was arranged to the needs of the reformed Church; a pulpit replaced the altar as the focal point of services and galleries were fitted.

By the 1630s the church was in urgent need of major repairs, especially the buttresses and the west front, movement of the latter having caused it to be ‘severed and disjoyned’ from the roof (Laing 1854, 105). The impetus for further work arose when the Abbey church was chosen as the venue for the Scottish coronation of Charles I, in 1633. Royal support was compelled, in

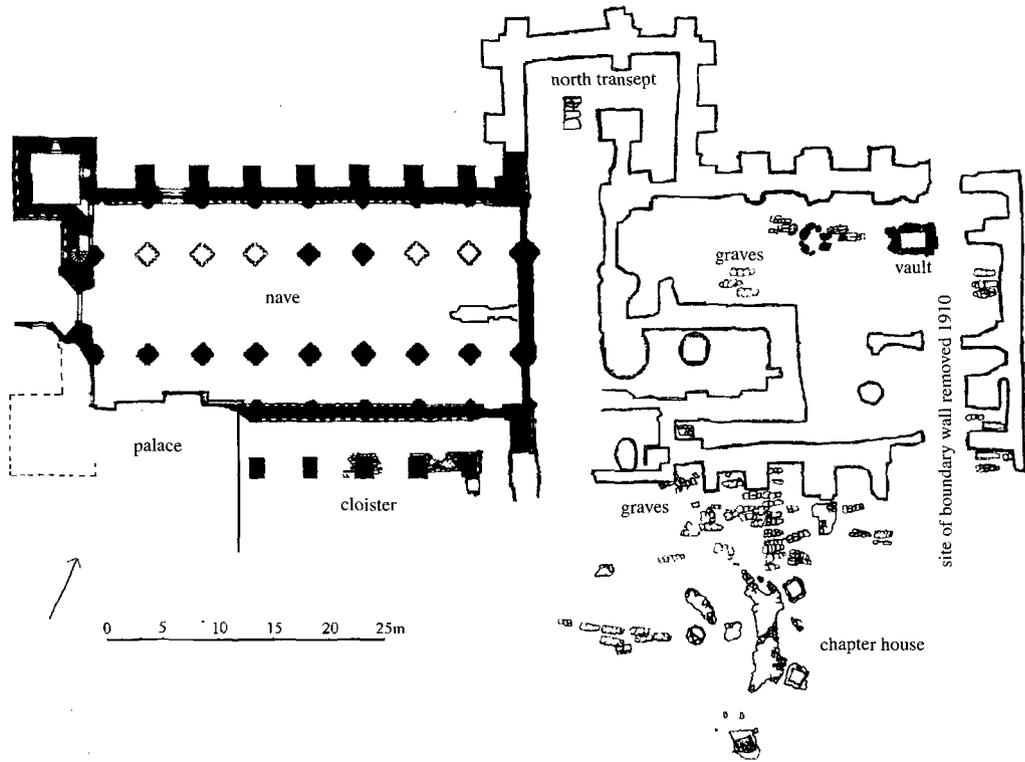
1626, by the danger that the west front of the church might collapse, damaging the gallery of the adjacent palace. Royal funds were eventually found for the required work and the upper part of the west end was rebuilt (Gifford *et al* 1984, 137–8). The eastern wall of 1570 was taken down and rebuilt with a ‘faire new window of good stone werk’. Some of the windows that were blocked after 1570 were opened again, providing light to what must have been a very gloomy interior (Laing 1854, 111). The interior, that had for half a century been a place of worship for the burgh, now needed to house a more aristocratic congregation. It was proposed to move three ‘lofts’ (galleries) from the north side of the church and replace these with a ‘great loft’ at the east end, as well as seats at ground level which would provide seating for ‘noblemen and thair ladeis and uthers persones of good qualitie who now for want of seates ar forced to goe ellis where altho they dwell within the parish’; there also would be a ‘large seat’ under the royal gallery, near the pulpit, on the south side of the church (Laing 1854, 108–9).

The coronation over, the demands of the burgh again had the ascendancy. The various crafts, the Hammermen, Tailors and Weavers, had ‘high lofts’ erected on each side of the pulpit in the 1640s (Acts of the Bailies of Canongate 1623–52 II, 45, 46 & 49). The interior changed again in 1687 when, under James VII, it stopped being the parish church and became the Chapel Royal and Chapel of the Order of the Thistle (Burnett & Bennett 1987, 7). The church was given an east orientation and was fitted with elaborate thrones and stalls for the individual knights, carved by William Morgan and Grinling Gibbons. This conversion was shortlived, as in the following year the church was ransacked by the Edinburgh mob. In 1758 its high vault collapsed. The restoration of the church has been proposed on a number of occasions since that date — in 1835 as a hall for the General Assembly and, in 1906, as a chapel for the Knights of the Thistle — but all were rejected and it is only as a roofless ruin that it survives today.

#### OLDRIEVE’S EXCAVATIONS 1910–14

The 1906 proposals for the restoration of the Abbey church as a Thistle Chapel were rejected partly on the grounds that such a scheme would cause to the historic fabric. The subsequent publicity served to heighten interest in the monument and inspired the Board of Works to undertake archaeological investigations in the area of the church, under the direction of its Chief Architect, W T Oldrieve. Excavations in 1909–10 exposed the foundations of the east end of the former Abbey church, consisting of a presbytery, five bays long, together with side aisles, a crossing and a north transept (illus 4). The total length of the east end from the nave was 42 m. Oldrieve failed to find any surviving foundations of the south transept or of the north-west crossing pier. Part of the presbytery had been damaged by the removal of a north/south boundary wall in 1910, during which operation three stone sarcophagi were uncovered and removed to the nave of the Abbey church for storage. A replacement boundary wall was erected some 10 m to the east, lying contiguous with the foundations of the east wall of the church. This later boundary wall appears to have overlain the buttresses of the east wall of the church, explaining their apparent absence on Oldrieve’s original plan (1911, 192). The excavations of 1911 also uncovered the fragmentary remains of a chapter house of octagonal form, with a central octagonal pier. Three small clumps of upstanding masonry, visible before excavation, were identified as buttresses.

Excavation within the east end of the church exposed the remains of the choir and transepts of an earlier church, whose foundations were constructed with water-worn stones in contrast with the ‘rough hewn stones’ used in the later structure (Oldrieve 1912, 329; *Scotsman* 4 June 1911). Further excavations within the east end of the nave, in April 1924, exposed part of the foundations of an east/west wall, 5.8 m in length. An ashlar-faced course, 1.3 m in width, survived for 2.5 m of



ILLUS 4 Holyrood Abbey church, excavations 1910–11 and 1924, based on Oldrieve 1911 and Historic Scotland plan no 032/131/43

its length (*ibid* 1951, 129; HS 032/131/43). This wall was interpreted as part of the north wall of the nave of the earlier church.

A number of burials were recorded inside and to the south of the church, all of the long cist type. Many of the capstones had collapsed allowing Oldrieve to observe that the skeletons were 'in a good state of preservation' (Oldrieve 1911, 194). As the time allowed for excavation was limited by a forthcoming royal visit, he proposed to examine only two selected graves. This limited exercise appears to have been stopped by the enlightened comment of Thomas Dyce, professor of anatomy at Glasgow University who advised that, while a large group would provide interesting data, 'to disturb two interments would be merely to gratify idle curiosity and would serve no useful purpose' (SRO MW2/38). Within the church there was also an empty burial vault, situated in the second bay from the east of the north arcade. The only recorded find, apart from burials, appears to have been a boar's tusk found 'under the foundations' of the chancel in October 1910 (SRO MW2/1).

The relatively small size of the earlier church and the existence of long cist burials led the excavator to date this structure as 'Early Christian' (Oldrieve 1911, 193; Oldrieve 1912, 329). However, this criteria for dating can no longer be taken as valid, for cist graves as a form of burial are found throughout the medieval period, as well as earlier; they have been excavated, in a context similar to that of Holyrood, at the Augustinian Abbey of Jedburgh (Grove 1995, 125). This earlier structure was later identified as the first Augustinian church, dating from the early 12th century (RCAHMS 1951, 130). It is comparable in size with other unaisled cruciform

churches constructed by the first generation of Augustinians, such as Kirkham (Coppack *et al* 1995, 64) and Norton (Greene 1989, 80). The length of the early east end is similar to that of the post-1138 Jedburgh Abbey (Lewis & Ewart 1995, 135), although from the limited excavated evidence it appears to lack the complex plan of the latter.

Although the excavation offered no internal dating evidence for the rebuilding of the east end of the church, it is likely that its construction, as normal, preceded that of the nave, which was begun probably in the 1180s. It had a large aisled east end similar in plan to certain late 12th-century churches in northern England, such as Ripon Minster, Byland Abbey and York Minster (Stocker 1995, 85) and Augustinian Hexham. It is also likely to be no coincidence that the grand scale of the rebuilt east end of Holyrood rivalled, in its dimensions, the east end of the cathedral church of St Andrews, although lacking the projecting eastern sanctuary of the latter. The octagonal chapter house is one of three known in Scotland, the others being those of Elgin and Inchcolm.

#### CLAUSTRAL BUILDINGS

The basic claustral buildings are cited in a grant of August 1537 in which Thomas Peebles, glazier, undertakes to maintain in good repair the church, frater and chapter [house] of the Abbey (RSS ii, no 2360). It is not known how the claustral buildings fared during the English invasions of the 1540s, but a lack of later references to the chapter house after this date may indicate that it received severe damage.

The size of the cloister can be estimated from the position of the two surviving processional doors in the south wall of the nave, one of which is now partly hidden by the west wing of the palace. With a measurement of approximately 27.4 m from east to west, it was comparable in size with the cloisters of several other Augustinian monasteries in Scotland, at Jedburgh, Cambuskenneth, Inchcolm and Inchaffray (Gallagher 1994, 179–80). The north walk appears to have survived after the demolition of the rest of the cloister, providing access from the palace to the west end of the church; it may be identified with the ‘butteries [buttresses] pend’ which was described, in 1626, as ‘verie ruinous’ (Laing 1854, 105). The flooring of the north walk was discovered during restoration of the upstanding masonry of the church, in 1909, and subsequently the ground was lowered to that level (SRO MW2/38). A grave slab, with the inscription SIBELLA DE STRATUN in Lombardic lettering, was found in this area ‘between the pillars of the cloister’, although it was thought not to be *in situ* (*Scotsman* 7 Oct 1910; RCAHMS 1951, 139).

In the late medieval period there was a move away from the communal life of monasteries as envisaged in the 12th century, and an emphasis on the individual. One manifestation of this was the system, common in Scottish monastic houses, by which each member of a particular community received a personal allowance, paid both in cash and kind; what amounted to a legally recognized salary (Kirk 1995, 92–3). It had long been common practice for the abbot and other main officials of a community to have their own apartments, and there was a tendency for lesser members to have their private rooms. This could be created either by the subdivision of formerly common living space, or the creation of separate houses. As early as 1420 in St Andrews Priory, Thomas Purick was allowed to retain possession of ‘a house he had built, with a garden, within the precinct (Duff 1977, 116). The little houses of the canons are mentioned in a visitation of Pittenweem Priory, in 1554 (Ross 1962, 225). Individuals also could have their own ‘yards’, or gardens within the monastic precinct (Dilworth 1995, 29). These appear to have been regarded as the personal property of the individual, rather than owned by the community as a whole. In 1558

James Abercromby was paid £20 'for his yeard lyand on the north-west side of the pallice of Halierudehous' which was made into a garden for the Queen (TA x, 394). About the same time Abercromby engaged William Broune, gardener, to do some work on a garden and walls 'pertening' to him; Broune was paid for his labours 13 years later (Wood 1937, 112). The canons did, however, seem to have had common access to the services of 'Francie', the 'closter servand', at this time (Kirk 1995, 92–3).

#### NEW FRATER AND 'CROCEHOUS'

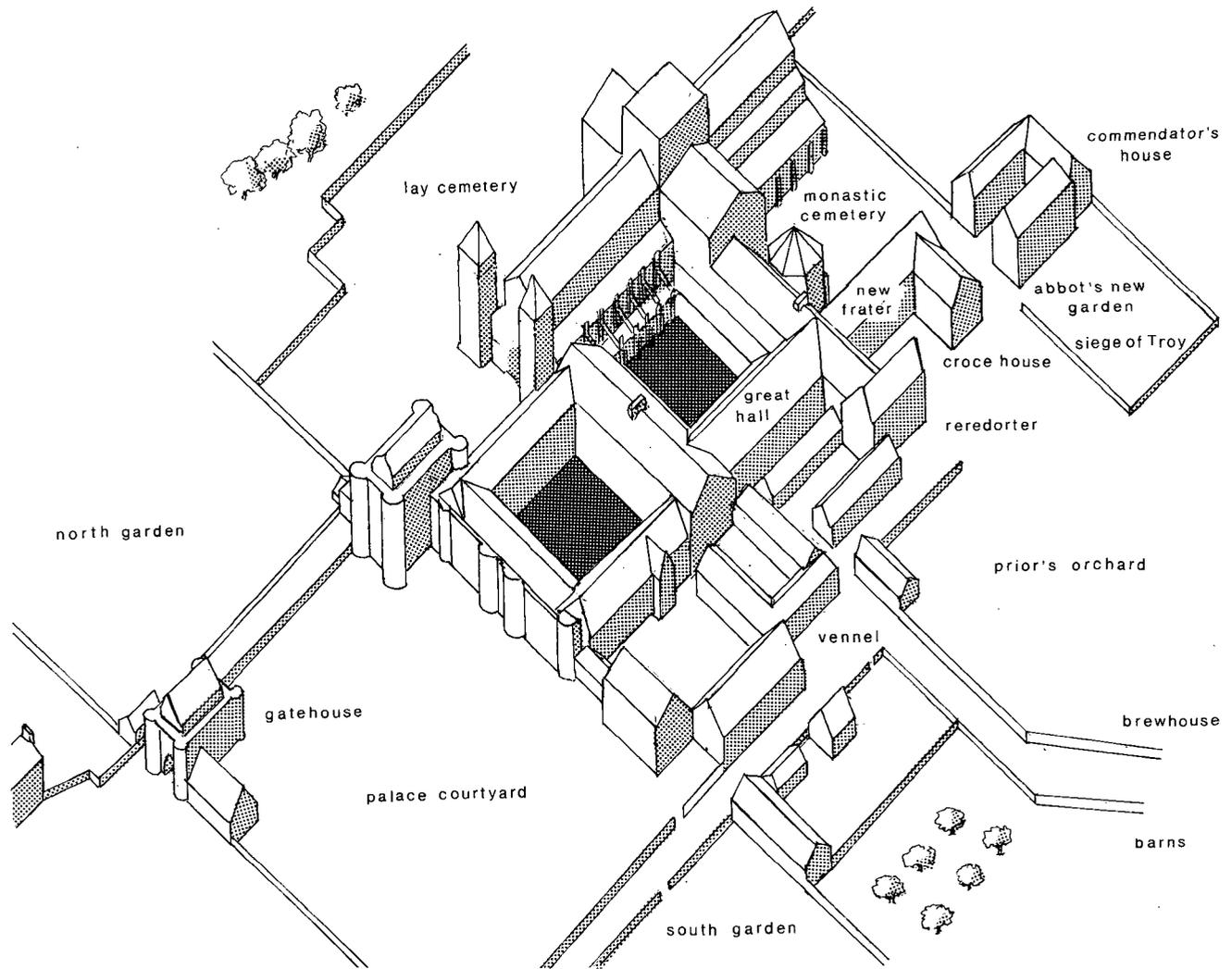
A feature of the post-Reformation development of the Abbey was the creation, in 1564, of a residence within the claustral buildings for Patrick, Lord Ruthven. Ruthven was an influential figure at court and a close associate of Queen Mary and Lord Darnley. The Queen had commanded Patrick and Janet Stewart, his wife, 'to remain by her side as well in the Palace of Edinburgh, as elsewhere where she may dwell' (Harrison 1919, 125; RMS iv, no 1567) and the Abbey provided convenient accommodation. Patrick Ruthven did not enjoy his new property for long. In 1566, following his part in the murder of the Queen's favourite, David Rizzio, he fled to England where he died in the same year. His son, William Ruthven, was also implicated in the murder, but was soon back at court following a royal pardon. He was Treasurer of Scotland from 1571, during the minority of James VI, and was created Earl of Gowrie in 1581. William Ruthven regained control of the property at Holyrood held by his father. A charter of 1580 (RMS v, 38, no 120) mentions the house (*domum*) of Lord Ruthven in this area, although this may have been a reference to its former occupant. In a charter of 1582 William, Lord Ruthven, was granted parts of the Abbey (SRO E14/2. f179; RMS v, 142, no 456). Like his father, William did not possess the property at Holyrood for long; in 1584 he was beheaded for treason and forfeited all his property to the Crown. Other parts were leased to lay persons. The documentation associated with these changes provide information about the main structures of the Abbey in the period before the Reformation and their building history subsequent to 1560 (illus 5).

The charter of 1564 granted Patrick, Lord Ruthven, and his wife that part of the monastic buildings known as the 'New Frater' (ie refectory), with the 'Crocehous' against the south part of the same, and the easternmost vault of the New Frater.

*∴ domn vastam et muros consistentes ad orientalem finem domus nuncupate New-Frater de Halyruidhous, cum lie Crocehous super australi parte ejusdem (haben. novum ortum abbatis ex orientali pomerium prioris et venellan ex australi partibus), cum lie eistmest volta sub dicta New-Frater, jacen infra bonda monasterii de Halyruidhous (RMS iv, no 1567)*

In a charter of 1582 William, Lord Ruthven was granted the 'New Frater' and the monastic kitchen (SRO E14/2. f179; RMS v, 142, no 456). It describes the property, noting its former residents:

the conventis new fraterie twa chalmeris of the quhilk the south chalmer was occupiit be umquile Alex[ander] Smebaird vicar of Ur quhilk wes new biggit be umquhile Patrick lord Ruthven, and the eist of the said chalmeris wes occupiit be umquhile Sir Hugh Lamb chanoun of the said abbay of new biggit up be the said W[illiam] lord ruthven, and the c[on]ventis kitchening now occupiit be donald morisoun, and the twa yards on the north [and] eist [par]tis, of the quhilk the north yard wes occupiit be umquile Sir W[illiam] Heslop, and the uther eist yard be umquhile Sir Alex[ander] Harcas.



ILLUS 5 A reconstruction of Holyrood in the mid 16th century

The erection of a new refectory indicates that, despite the development of private accommodation within the monastery, there was still some demand for communal meals in the late medieval period. Possibly the New Frater was a replacement for an older room, but it is also possible that there were two refectories. This was the case in Arbroath Abbey, one being used for common days and the other for feasts. This duplication of refectories was used in some monasteries as a way of avoiding strict dietary rules (Harvey 1993, 41).

In 16th-century usage the term 'Crocehous' designated a building at right angles to another. The precise nature and location of this 'Crocehous' against the south part of the New Frater cannot be determined from the description. The reference to a vault below the New Frater implies that this refectory was a first-floor chamber, following the normal Augustinian practice (Fergusson 1989, 350–1). The New Frater is described as ruined or derelict (*vastam*), although this may be an exaggeration.

The exact nature of the two chambers associated with the refectory at Holyrood is unclear. There is structural evidence for the creation of chambers within the end of refectories in the late medieval period, for example, at Easby Abbey (Fergusson 1989, 337) and Bushmead Priory (Sherlock 1985, 16). That these chambers were described as newly built may indicate extensions for domestic use adjoining the east end of the refectory. The south chamber may have been a replacement or adaptation of the 'Crocehous' which was described, in 1567, as being situated against the south part of the New Frater (RMS iv, no 1567).

Alexander Smebaird, Hugh Lamb, William Heslop and Alexander Harcas, who occupied chambers in the Abbey before 1582, were all Augustinian canons. William Heslop had been a canon since at least 1542. He appears to have supported Queen Mary during the troubles of 1571; when the opposing forces occupied Canongate he was found guilty of treason in his absence and forfeited his property (Dilworth 1980, 206; RSS vi, no 1571). It was granted to Margaret Murray, wife of Adam, Bishop of Orkney, then Commendator of Holyrood. This forfeiture appears to have been short-lived; he was again resident in the Abbey at the time of his death in 1576 (SRO CC8/8/4.f96). While Donald Morisoun has not been identified, several persons of that surname were included among the servants of the previous commendator, Robert Stewart (Anderson 1982, 137). Rubbish was dumped at 'Moresouns yett' (gate) following work at the palace in 1579 (WA i, 305).

The same charter of 1582, to Lord Ruthven, describes the location of the kitchen and New Frater as being:

boundit and limitit betwix the dorter and the common place on the west, the commendatis dwelling place and the yard callit the seage of troy on the eist, and the [common way to] the west yeit of the said yards in the south and the south wall of the conventis kirkyard on the north (SRO E14/2. f179).

#### GREAT HALL

It can be seen from the above that the New Frater lay to the east of the dormitory. The previous refectory was situated in the normal position on the south side of the cloister, west of the dormitory (illus 5). The original refectory seems to have been absorbed into the royal palace. It has been identified with a great hall, aligned east/west and situated to the east of the new royal chapel (Dunbar 1963, 250). James IV used the great hall of the palace, during inclement weather in February 1508, to practise firing his new culverin. Fortunately for the fabric of the building, this was followed the next day by outdoor practice in the yard of Sir George Newton, who was

possibly one of the canons of the Abbey (TA iv, 98; Macdougall 1989, 107). Royal money was spent on the great hall in the early 1530s, when it was in urgent need of repair. During 1531 the craftsmen engaged on building the new palace used it as a workshop and store. Shortly before Christmas of that year the carpenters vacated the hall, carrying floorboards to the 'convent werkhouse' where they 'wrocht the tyme of Yule' (WA i, 69), presumably freeing the hall for festive celebrations. The holes in its lead roof were repaired before Christmas and, later in the following year, a lock was placed on the door leading from the hall to the cloister (WA i, 103). This latter action may be seen as completing the process of its separation from the monastery. This work was undone during the English invasions of 1544 and 1546 when the Abbey and palace were sacked. In 1546 the lead was stripped from the 'great hall of the Abbey' (TA ix, 44). The Master of Works' Accounts describe the erection, in 1579, of a wall 'on the end of the frater' that was designed to block two doors of the cloister. This wall was 1 ell (0.94 m) in height and 12 ells (11 m) in length. (WA i, 103). The area of the cloister later became a bowling green. A 'bowling allay' is listed in a 1633 Rental of the Lordship of Holyroodhouse (ECA Edinburgh City charters, iii, 740) and is depicted on Edgar's map of 1742 (Maitland 1753, 1).

In Mylne's plan of 1663 the area which was then the bowling green, and formerly the cloister, is shown as a rectangular space (illus 3). It is probable that the first refectory, or great hall, occupied the southern part of this area, which would conform with its being east of the royal chapel (Dunbar 1963, 145). A major cross wall in the east quarter of the palace, shown on Mylne's plan, may be a continuation on the alignment of the north wall of the refectory. With the refectory in this position, the cloister would have been a more normal square shape, with sides of approximately 27.4 m. The refectory had been demolished by 1647, as it does not appear in Gordon of Rothiemay's view of that year (illus 2).

The kitchens associated with the early refectory may have been situated to the south-west of the latter building and thus may have been absorbed in the ancillary buildings to the south of the main palace area. There are various references to these in late accounts. Maitland (1753, 154) states that formerly there was a laundry to the south of the bowling green which was then 'fallen down'; this was possibly part of the kitchen complex. In 1736, £100 was paid for demolition of various kitchens and bakehouses and for repairs about the Abbey (EUL La II.38/3). A vignette on a plan of the grounds of Holyroodhouse, prepared for the Duke of Hamilton in 1770, shows an irregular mass of buildings immediately to the south of the palace with evidence of partial demolition (SRO RHP 1674/1).

#### COMMENDATOR'S HOUSE

In 1539 Robert Stewart, infant son of James V, was made commendator of Holyrood, holding the office of abbot (Cowan & Easson 1976, 90). In 1568 he was succeeded by Adam Bothwell, Bishop of Orkney (Donaldson 1987, 41). From this date the abbot's, or commendator's, house was virtually a secular mansion, and was for a long period acting as an adjunct to the royal palace. It was sited to the east of the frater, south-east of the cloister (RMS v, 456). The commendator's house may be identified with the large building in that position on Rothiemay's plan of 1647 (illus 2). It appears to have been demolished by 1663, for the building does not appear on John Mylne's plan of that date (illus 3); it may have been destroyed by fires started during the occupation of the Abbey by Cromwell's army in 1650 (Jamieson 1994, 21). There is little evidence concerning the interior of the house. Bishop Bothwell's chamberlain, William Lauder, was imprisoned there in October 1569, 'in a cauld fast house . . . qhair wes na fyre nor

eisement', but this cannot have been typical of the remainder of the accommodation (Donaldson 1987, 45).

Other buildings in the vicinity of the commendator's house appear to have survived into the later 17th century, as they appear both on Rothiemay's view of 1647 and on Mylne's plan of 1663 (illus 2 & 3). Among these was the building complex near the south-east corner of the palace, to the south of the bowling green, described by Mylne as a 'plot of ground where the Bishop's house now stands ruinous'. This is likely to have been the residence of the recently deposed Bishop David Lindsay, whose brief episcopate lasted from 1631 to 1638 and who had been granted 'ane hous at the palice of Halyrudhous' (Lees 1889, 303). Another building that appears on both sources was that described in 1663 as the house of the dean, situated near the eastern perimeter of the precinct.

The abbot's new garden (*novum ortum abbatis*) lay in the general area of the commendator's house (the commendator having the title of abbot). To the south lay the prior's apple orchard and the vennel. The vennel acted as a route from Canongate to the southern part of the Abbey precinct and it also led to the royal park. The vennel appears clearly on Gordon of Rothiemay's plan of 1647 (illus 2). It continued in use as a route until the reorganization of the grounds in the early 19th century. There was a minor gate or postern from the vennel into the palace, known as the 'bak yett of the kingis palice' (RMS v, 38, no 120).

There was a 19th-century tradition that the commendator's house was a building adjoining the north side of James V's tower (Sinclair 1899, 239; Harrison 1919, 254; Donaldson 1987, 46). This was demolished in the early 19th century. It appears to have originated as a timber gallery bridging the public road from Canongate to the Abbey church; this allowed private access from the royal apartments to the north gardens. Its insubstantial nature is apparent from Mylne's survey of 1663 (illus 3) and in a view of the west front of the palace c 1649, after Gordon of Rothiemay. This structure may be identified with a reference of 1670 to the timber gallery opening from the king's antechamber (MacIvor & Petersen 1984, 262). It was demolished in 1676 and a stone wing erected in its place to house the bedchamber of the reorganized Queen's Apartment, soon to be occupied by the Duke of Hamilton in his position as hereditary Keeper of the Palace. The wing was refurbished in 1740 by William Adam for the Duchess of Hamilton (I MacIvor, pers comm). It is shown in its final form on a plan of 1822 (Fawcett nd, 14) and in a Blore drawing of 1826 (Brown 1840, 54), shortly before its demolition by Robert Reid, the King's Architect and Surveyor in Scotland, as part of his work 'tidying' the environs of the palace.

The charter of 1582 (above) refers to a 'yard' known as Siege of Troy, which lay adjacent to the commendator's house (illus 5). This 'yard' or garden has not been identified by this name in any other documentation. Its name may have been derived either from a pageant performed in the earlier part of the century or from a decorative feature in the garden. The story of the Trojan Wars was popular with James IV; among tapestries he purchased in 1503 those hung in the Great Chamber and in the King's Hall depicted the history of Troy (RCAHMS 1951, 144).

#### YARDS WITHIN THE PRECINCT

Royal gardens were situated to the south of the palace, separated from the Abbey grounds by a stone wall (RMS v, 118, no 378). This southern part of the monastic precinct was bounded on the east and south by 'stanks', or fish ponds fed by a small river. The stank in the 'Abbot of Halyrudhous yard' is recorded in March 1502, when the king gave 4s to a boy who, for some unknown purpose, leapt into it (TA ii, 142). Another payment was made in 1537–8 to the royal gardener and others for 'casting and clenging of the hale stankis about the garding' (WA i, 223).

Shortly after this, the king paid for the cleaning of the main drain, the 'gret lang conduitis', that ran from the 'uter crofts' to the Abbey yards and closes. Beyond the stanks lay the royal park. This was enclosed in 1540, various persons losing part of their land in the process. The newly enclosed area included the 'Abbot's Meadow', presumably former property of the Abbey (ADCP, 540); in 1530 it had provided grass for the cart horses used by the palace builders (WA i, 43); in 1544 it was gifted by the king to John Crummy (RSS iii, no 806).

A charter of 1580 shows that the southern area of the precinct was subdivided into a number of yards or gardens, each apportioned to a member of the monastic community. These were known as 'the south yairdis of the channonis'. There was the garden (*hortum*) of St Anne, occupied by David Gudson (RMS v, 38, no 120). It may have been intended to support the altar of St Anne, which was situated in the nave of the Abbey church; although this would have become unnecessary after 1554 when the altar was adopted by the Guild of Tailors (Ross *et al* 1922, 127). The charter of 1580 lists other gardens which belonged to James Abercromby, William Heslop, Alexander Forrester and the prior. James Abercromby, who had sold land in the northern part of the precinct to the Queen, displayed further entrepreneurial flair by renting his garden to Alexander Howisoun (RMS v, 38, no 120). The gardens of David Gudson and James Abercromby were described, in 1570, as lying to the south of the commendator's yard; Abercromby's garden was to the east of that of Gudson, next to the dyke forming the boundary of the royal park. In 1570, the yard that belonged to David Gudson was illegally occupied by John Wilson (Wood 1937, 212).

#### ST ANNE'S YARDS

In 1647 the Duke of Hamilton was given the heritable office of Keeper of the north and south garden of Holyrood, as well as of the palace (Hamilton MS I.150). St Anne's Yard was added to this in 1693 (Hamilton MS I, 274). With the removal of internal boundaries in the post-medieval period, the place-name of St Anne's Yards was applied to a wide area to the south and east of the palace. A small suburb developed in the south quarter, outside the jurisdiction of the burgh, and by 1687 there were 62 households living within the Abbey precinct, many in the area of St Anne's Yards. These included 14 vintners and two brewers (EUL La II 493/2); the brewing industry was encouraged by the freedom enjoyed within Holyrood from the trade restrictions exercised by the burghs of Edinburgh and Canongate. By 1770 the prominent dog-leg route of the road from the palace to the park had been obscured. An old wall on a prominent NW/SE axis, revealed during building operations in October 1770, was probably part of this earlier boundary (SRO RHP 1674/1). In 1843 the various properties in St Anne's Yards consisting of houses, stables, a malt barn and kiln, and a brewery, were demolished as part of the landscaping of the immediate environs of the palace (SRO MW2/26).

In the 16th century the southern area of the precinct also contained a number of buildings or their remains. The convent brewhouse is cited in the accounts of the King's Master of Works of 1529 when it supplied grain for the team of cart-horses used to haul stone for the palace masons (WA i, 8). This may be identified with the 'Abbey brewhouse' which appears in the same accounts for September 1529. The steep house ('gilehous') of the brewery was taken over as accommodation for the cart-horses when it was thatched, turf being placed on the roof ridge and the tops of the wall-plate sealed with clay (WA i, 7). The monastic barn and brewhouse are cited in a charter of 1568, when they were described as ruined (RMS v, 118, no 378). The property in this area may have been damaged during one of the English invasions of the 1540s or 1560. Another piece of 'waist and bu[rn]t land' with an adjoining yard, in the same area appears in a charter of 1561

(SRO E14/1 f30r). This was described as lying between the 'common gait' on the north, the 'common passage' that passes to the commendator's and convent's brewhouse and the park on the east, the 'eister brewhousis' and waste land on the south and the Queen's garden on the west. This would have been situated in the northern part of the southern area of the precinct, but its exact location is difficult to define. This land was described, in 1561, as that formerly occupied by the wife (unnamed) of James Aikenhead, an interesting example of a female tenant within the monastic precinct. There is a further reference to a brewhouse in a dispute arising from the building of a dyke in 1569 'on the south side of the passage gangand to our sovenis park sumtyme callit the brewhouse' (Wood 1937, 211). While no firm documentary link has been established, it is possible that there was some continuity between this property and those which later existed in the same locality, then known as St Anne's Yards.

A charter of 1617 granted to William Chalmers a property containing *antiquas domos edificatas et vastas*, situated in the north-east corner of the south garden of Holyroodhouse (RMS vii, no 1609). These ruined buildings were described in the charter as measuring 19 ells (17.86 m) east/west and 8.5 ells (8 m) north/south, and having a plot of waste land on their east side, measuring about 10.5 ells (9.8m) square. The property was then occupied by Andrew Caldwell. The buildings would seem to correspond with those depicted at the north-east corner of the south garden on Gordon of Rothiemay's plan of 1647 (illus 2), the measurements thus describing the two wings of an L-shaped structure. From its description as *antiquas* one might assume that it dated from pre-1560.

#### PARISH CHURCHYARD

North of the Abbey church was the parish churchyard, access to which was either from Canongate or from the north. A public way led from Canongate to the church and the churchyard and from there, northwards, towards the Quarryholes and Leith (RRS vi, no 748). Like the rest of the Holyrood precinct, this area was affected by building work on the palace. The lodges for the large team of palace masons were erected in the churchyard in the early 1530s, as well as a 'litell hous' for their tools (WA i, 17-21; 24-5). When the work on the great tower of the palace was completed, in 1532, the churchyard and the outer close were used as dumping grounds for the builders' waste. Soon after the Reformation there were moves to restrict public access in this area. The Edinburgh Council complained, in 1574, that the abbot was closing up the passages in the churchyard and, in doing so, was closing a route to the town (Marwick 1882, 31). The 17th century witnessed further moves to restrict public access to this area. The Privy Council agreed, in 1619, to the erection of a small house on the east side of the northern approach to the churchyard for a servant who would prevent animals from entering the cemetery (ECA Canongate charter no 27). Ten years later it was thought desirable to stop the use of the cemetery as a public thoroughfare, so close to the palace, and access to the east of the cemetery was blocked (Laing 1854, 108). The area north of the churchyard, close to the royal palace, was a desirable residential area; a house here was described in a charter of 1567 as being newly built by John French, an Edinburgh merchant (SRO E14/2 f19v; RMS iv, no 2557). Another 'great mansion' was built, on the north side of the churchyard, by Edward Marshall before 1664 (ECA Moses Bundle 261, no 8115). This may be identified with the present Croft-an-Righ. Further east was the Knock (flax) mill, later known as the Clockmill. Straw fodder was obtained from here in 1531 for the eight palace cart-horses, which were omnipresent in the Holyrood locality in the early 1530s (WA i, 57).

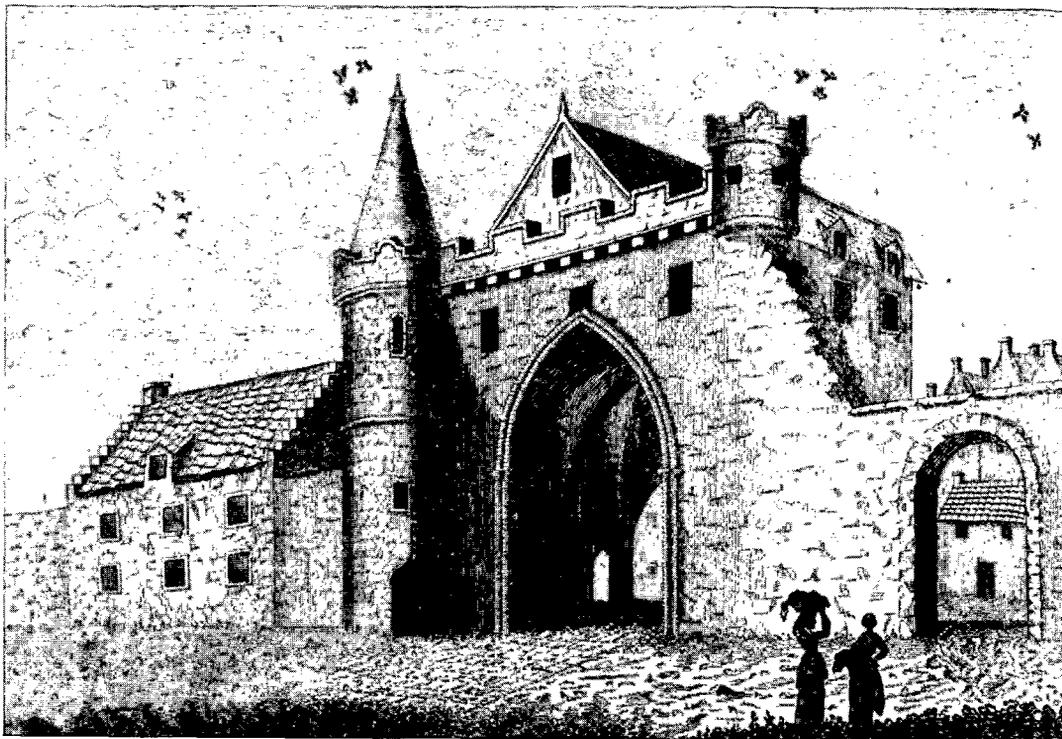
There were other gardens situated to the west of the parish cemetery. A sasine of 1514 locates the 'garden of the abbot and convent' and the 'garden of the sacrist' in this area (Prot Bk Young, 443, no 2071); in 1570 this latter was described as a yard 'sumtyme pertenant' to the sacristan (Wood 1937, 180). In 1558 James Abercromby was paid £20 'for his yeard lyand on the north-west side of the palice of Halierudehous' which was made into a garden for the Queen (TA x, 394). There also was the 'abbotis yaird to the west of the kirk stile' where 'certane grete treis of esche' [ash] were felled in 1541 (TA vii, 495). This area was distinct from the abbot's new garden, which was near the commendator's house (RMS iv, no 1567).

#### GATEHOUSE AND ABBEY STRAND

The main entrance to the Holyrood complex was from the west (illus 6). In 1502–3 James IV created a gateway that would grace the entrance to his expanding palace (TA ii, 269; Robertson 1892, 182). This may never have been completed to its intended height for, in 1535, it received the addition of a 'gret hous', which was erected above the gate passage. At the same time, crenellations were added to both gables of the gatehouse, with windows under, together with a turnpike stair providing access. The house was occupied by the glazier, Thomas Peebles, who two years later relinquished his rights to the property in favour of the king. The house was described at this time as the most prominent (*umest*) house in the property 'callit the Abbay Yet [gate]' above the vault and 'foir entre' of the Abbey (RSS ii, no 2360; WA i, 166). The Abbey seems to have retained some financial responsibility towards the gatehouse; a payment of £14 6s 8d 'for the foir entres' is recorded in the Books of Assumption in 1562 (Kirk 1995, 92). This gatehouse was partly demolished in 1753 and only the south wall of the pend and a much-altered stair tower survive today (Gifford *et al* 1984 141–2; Arnot 1788, 305). To the west of the gateway is a group of buildings now known as Abbey Strand. The westernmost building, dated on stylistic grounds to the late 15th or early 16th century, was originally a three-storey structure with attic (RCAHMS 1951, 156–7; Gifford *et al* 1984, 218). This may be identified with the 'greit mansioun' situated on the north side of the High Street near the Abbey gate, described as 'new biggit' in 1570 (Wood 1937, 243). It then belonged to Andrew Chalmers, chamberlain of the Abbey; in 1613 it was granted to William Chalmers (ECA Canongate charters no 7). Its position, within the monastic precinct, yet projecting to the west of the main enclosure, suggests that it was the almonry. The buildings in Abbey Strand may have been associated with the almonry or, more probably, were part of the almonry yards leased for commercial use, as happened at Westminster Abbey (Harvey 1993, 5). The buildings, which were owned by the Earl of Rosebery in the early part of the 20th century, were in multiple occupancy until 1933, when they were declared unfit for human habitation. This facilitated the removal of tenants prior to their purchase by the Crown and subsequent restoration (SRO MW2/71).

The boundary of the Abbey precinct was marked in Canongate by the girth cross, which stood in the centre of the street until its removal in the 18th century (Maitland 1753, 154). It was said to consist of a 'shaft surmounted by a cross patée', on a stepped base (Mackie 1830, 118). This marked the legal limit of the area of sanctuary; it is referred to in a charter of 1609 as the *cruce asiliu*, the asylum cross (Laing chr no 1545). The precinct continued to provide sanctuary for debtors until the late 19th century, when the abolition of imprisonment for debt rendered this practice obsolete (Ewan 1988, 65). Notable residents after 1796 included the Comte d'Artois, brother of Louis XVI, and other members of the French royal family.

To the south of the Abbey gate, near the girth cross, was a property which supported the chaplain and altar of the Virgin Mary in the parish aisle of the Abbey church (ECA Canongate



ILLUS 6 The gatehouse of Holyrood in 1788 (*Arnot 1788*)

charters nos 1 & 2; Cowan & Easson 1976, 178). West of Abbey Strand, on the north side of Canongate, there was a further building associated with an aspect of charity: the hospital of St Thomas. This was founded in 1541 by Bishop Crichton of Dunkeld, a former abbot of Holyrood from 1500 to 1526, for the support of seven men and two chaplains; the latter were also to serve the altars of St Andrew and St Catherine in the Abbey church. It is possible that the hospital was developed around an already existing chapel as there is a reference, in 1489, to the lands of St Thomas in Canongate. There were proposals, in 1558, to repair the hospital (RMS v, 1242). In 1617 the chapel, said to be 'decayit', was again ordered to be repaired, before the visit of the king to Holyrood (RPC xi, 40). The hospital was still in existence in the mid 18th century, when it was said to have 12 rooms, though very ruinous (Maitland 1753, 154–6).

## CONCLUSION

In a large abbey such as Holyrood there must always have been a dichotomy between its spiritual function and its role as major social and economic unit. This was aided to some extent by traditional monastic planning, which separated the spiritual functions of cloister and church from those of the secular outer court. But the growing secular presence of the palace must have strained the already present tendencies towards a more lax approach in monastic observances. The Abbey suffered a more sudden setback with the devastation resulting from the English invasions of 1544 and 1547 and again in 1560. The so-called 'English spy's drawing' shows what appears to be a building with a damaged roof in the area of Abbey Strand. Later charters refer to waste land and

ruinous structures both within the precinct and in the adjacent Canongate. The 'New Frater' was described as *vastam* in 1564. In 1561 there was 'waist and bu[rn]t land' in the southern part of the precinct (SRO E14/1 f30r). Land to the south of Abbey Strand was described, in 1556, as having been totally laid waste at the time of the English invasion and never rebuilt (ECA Canongate charters no1). It is apparent that, 20 years later, the Holyrood area had not recovered from the effects of the English invasion. More settled conditions during the 18th century witnessed the growth of a suburb within the Holyrood precinct, its population benefiting from the right of sanctuary from debt. The area finally took on its present appearance following the accession of Queen Victoria, when it again assumed a real, if somewhat occasional, role as a royal palace, which had been lacking since the early 17th century.

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