

IV.

NOTES ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF COLINTON. By
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In or about the year 1095 (perhaps a few years earlier, certainly not more than one or two later), when the kingdom of Scotland had been extended to both sides of the River and Firth of Forth, and when the old Celtic Church was giving place to a new state of things under Malcolm III. and his successors, what appears to be now the parish of Colinton received its foundation. This was done by Ethelred,—second son of Malcolm III. (Canmore) and his Saxon Queen Margaret,—presenting to the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline, which had shortly before this been founded by his pious mother, certain gifts that were then denominated by the name of “Hale.”¹ The object which this Scottish Prince had in view in doing this was obviously twofold, viz.—first, to enrich the royal church at Dunfermline; and secondly, to secure for the people living in the district of Hale the regular administration of religious ordinances by clergy belonging to and resident at the parent church. The

¹ The other forms of the word in the *Regist. de Dunf.* are Hal. (a contraction), Hala, Hales, Halis, Halys, Heallis. The modern form of the word is Hales, and the name of the church and parish for many years was Hailes or Collington, spelled variously Collingtoun, Colington, or Colinton.

record of this gift is to be found in an early part of the very first charter of the chartulary of Dunfermline Abbey, now in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh, and printed by the Bannatyne Club. The deed in question is by David I., the youngest brother of Ethelred, and a monarch who, as is well known, enriched Scotland with many religious institutions. The statement of the grant is in the following terms, viz. :—"Dona Ethelredi fratris mei Hale,"¹ and it is confirmed, sometimes with slight variations, in other charters by David, as well as in those of successive kings down to the reign of Alexander III.² Besides this, these lands, and the church connected with them, are frequently referred to in the same chartulary in confirmations by bishops and chapters, in the bulls of popes, and in settlements and agreements as to teinds and lands, down to and even beyond the period of the Reformation in the middle and towards the end of the sixteenth century.³

In inquiring into the origin and early history of a civil and ecclesiastical district in close proximity to the metropolis of Scotland, curiosity, first of all, naturally turns to the founder. And here it has to be stated that little is known of Ethelred, as he appears to have died young, although that little is not without interest. His name was Saxon, and he evidently received it after ancestors of his royal mother, for there were three kings of this name in the Saxon heptarchy, and two in the united Saxon kingdom. In the month of November 1093; he had to communicate to his mother, then in Edinburgh Castle, the painful tidings of the death of his

¹ *Regist. de Dunf.*, p. 3, Confirmacio Regis David, lines 9 and 10.

² *Regist. de Dunf.*, p. 5, Reg. Dav.; p. 19, Reg. Malc.; p. 28, Reg. Wil.; p. 40, Reg. Alex. II.; p. 46, Reg. Alex. III.

³ *Regist. de Dunf.*, Ep. pages 56, 57, 59, 62, 63, and 66, cap. 81, ag. 135, 136, 137, and 147. Pont. Rom. Alexander IV., p. 152. Pont. Rom. Lucius, 157. Pont. Rom. Hon^s., 167. Pont. Rom. Gregory (De Villa de Halis) p. 173. Pont. Rom. Greg. IX., Eccle. de Hal., p. 175. Pont. Rom. Greg. IX., de Smithetuñ de Hal., p. 176; Carta de Halis, 190; Taxatio, p. 203. Lra. Sasine Jacobi de Edmonstoñ, Reg. Jac. I., p. 284. Carta de Halis (Easter and Wester), Reg. Jac. II., p. 287. Confirmacio Regis Jacobi Secundi, &c., Reg. Jac. II., p. 321. Conf^o. thome yhar, &c., Abbreviat., p. 371. Conf^o. C. Will. dni Creightoun, &c., Ab. 372, C. d. t. forestare, Ab., &c, p. 379. Conf^o. ter. ac Molendini de estir haillis, Ab., p. 384, Appendix I., p. 418. Rentale, 433, 447, 451, 459. Infcod., &c., 476, 487, 488, 492, 495, 502.

father, and eldest brother Edward, in the battle on the banks of the Alne. This sad event, especially the death of the king, which, as is well known, threw Scotland into confusion, by creating a war of succession, had a fatal effect on the already enfeebled constitution of the queen, for she died on that very day, or soon after; and Ethelred had the painful duty to perform of conveying the dead body of his mother secretly out of Edinburgh Castle, which was then besieged by the usurper (Donald Bane) to Dunfermline, where it was buried before the altar of the Holy Cross.¹ Ethelred evidently did not long survive these heavy trials; for no mention is made of him after the reign of his brother Edgar,² who ascended the throne A.D. 1097; and indeed it is reasonable to suppose that he must have been dead at this date, otherwise, as the second son of Malcolm, he would have been raised to the throne. And, curiously enough, of all the six sons and two daughters of Malcolm and Margaret, Edward and Ethelred are the only ones referred to by Wynton in his chronicle, whose bodies are laid beside that of their mother in the same sepulchre at Dunfermline. When a mere boy Ethelred appears to have been created by his father lay abbot of Dunkeld and Earl of Fife, the former office being ancestral, and implying the possession of large territories in the centre of Scotland. In all probability a considerable portion of Mid-Lothian had been gifted by the king to this son; at all events, he must have acquired the lands of Hale in this way; for in the deeds already referred to they are said to be his gifts to the church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline.³ Farther reference is made to this same prince in a deed recorded in the *Regist. Prior. S. Andrews*, at p. 115. There Ethelred is spoken of as "a man of venerated memory," and he is represented as giving "to God the Omnipotent and St Servanus, and the Keledei of the island of Lochleven Ardmore with its rightful boundaries and divisions," and it is stated "that this possession was given him by his parents while he was yet in boyhood." The Keledei were a community of hermits

¹ Hailes, *Ann.*, vol. i.; Wynton's *Chron.*, vol. ii. pp. 271, 272.

² *Celtic Scot.*, by W. F. Skene, vol. ii. p. 370.

³ Near the site of the church is a place called Kingsknowes.

that then lived at Lochleven, and the terms of this transaction indicates not merely the pious and generous character of the prince, but the source from which he derived those possessions which he subsequently bestowed for religious purposes.

It is impossible to fix the exact date when the church was erected at Hale, as no mention is made of this, although the church itself, as well as the lands, are often referred to in subsequent charters. In all probability this would follow soon after the gift by the pious founder. According to Chalmers (*Caledonia*, vol. ii. pp. 793, 794) the church stood on the spot where the mansion house of Hailes now stands—in all probability a little to the east of it. And from the circumstance that St Cuthbert was the patron saint, perhaps some rude religious house occupied the same spot, or some place contiguous to it, some centuries before 1095. For it is well known that St Cuthbert—who lived about the middle and towards the end of the eighth century, and whose spiritual jurisdiction, as well as that of his successors, extended for years over the Lothians even beyond Abercorn—was frequently in the habit of forsaking his cell at Lindisferne, and wandering for days and weeks among the moors and solitudes of the country, in order that he might preach to the people in these remote districts the words of truth and life. At all events, after Ethelred's gift, a church was erected at or near the spot indicated, and occasional services would no doubt be conducted in it, in the first instance by clergymen from the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline, and subsequently by those monks of Canterbury that were placed afterwards in the Abbey, and their successors. However, in the year 1226, and perhaps long previous to this, it had a resident clergyman; for in a deed dated "die sanctæ fidis virginis," 1226, a Magister Ricard is denominated "Parson" of Halis, and this same person, in another deed about the same time, is called "Rector"; so that by the early part of the thirteenth century, at all events, the church had become a rectory, and the rector, we may suppose, entitled to the fruits of the living.

On the alleged authority of Fordun (vi. 42) it is said that the church and lands of Hales were taken from the monks of Dunfermline and given

to the canons of Holyrood by William de Malvoisin, Bishop of St Andrews, because on one occasion there was a deficiency of wine for supper. But this statement seems to require verification; for as this bishop lived before 1238, and as the grant to Dunfermline is confirmed by Alexander III. after 1250, it seems to be devoid of truth.¹ In the beginning of the thirteenth century—shortly before or after 1226—there was a dispute between St Cuthbert's Halis and St Cuthbert's "Subtus Castellum de Edenburg" in regard to the teinds "de Craggis de Gorgin"; and the Abbey of Holyrood, one of whose churches St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, then was, is ordered by the Abbot of Lindores and the Prior of St Andrews and Lindores—the umpires—for the sake of peace, to pay to the church of St Cuthbert's Halis, at Martinmas (ad festum Sancti Martini) each year, one bezant and eleven shillings to provide lights (luminaria) for the latter church. On the 4th June 1280, an agreement is come to between Lord Randolph the abbot and Lord John of Lastalrick (Restalrig) concerning the land of "Halys" and its pertinents, in which "Symon," son of the latter, is mentioned. On the 7th June 1163, Pope Alexander III., in a bull issued from Quiron in the third and fourth year of his pontificate, refers to Halis. So also does Pope Lucius III. from Verona on the 14th November 1184. In answer to a petition from the abbot and convent of Dunfermline, Pope Honorius III. gives grants from the churches of Hales and Kinglassen for meeting the increasing expenses of the monastery, and the date of the letter is the ides of January, the tenth year of the pontificate. In a letter of Pope Gregory IX. from Reate, 9th August 1232, the town of Halis is mentioned; and the "Smithetun," in a letter by the same Pope, dated 8th October 1234. Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, says that the church of Hales was at one time given to the canons of St Anthony in Leith, and confirmed by Bishop Kennedy in 1445; and the same authority mentions a suit in Parliament in regard to it in December 1482. "It continued," says

¹ The right of presentation to the living was taken away, not the lands; and the deficiency of wine was caused by the bishop's own attendants—not by the servants of the monastery.

Chalmers,¹ “probably with the canons of Anthony till the Reformation. The church of Hailes appears to have been always of great value, and it was rated in the ancient *Taxatio* at sixty merks. As the rectory was monastic property, the cure was of old served by a vicar. Though the church ceased to belong to the monks of Dunfermline, they continued superiors of the lands of East Hailes to the Reformation.” Except that portion of this statement which accurately describes the value of the living, the other parts of it would seem to require confirmation, because, as has already been stated, Mr Ricard was rector and not vicar in 1226, and so also was Thomas de Crechtoun at a subsequent date.

The word Hale is Celtic, and signifies a moor or hillock, and this title would accurately describe the situation of the church and parish towards the close of the eleventh century. Indeed, the whole of the south-west of Edinburgh at that time would be nothing more than a series of moors, rising to the top of the Pentlands, with here and there, perhaps, near to the Water of Leith and the other small streams, patches of cultivated ground. Edinburgh itself, about 1095, consisted of little more than its Castle (*Castellum Puellarum*). There might probably be a few houses outside the castle walls, and perhaps some rude Saxon church near to where St Giles' church now stands, but little else. Of course outside the fortress there was the ancient church of St Cuthbert, which has long since disappeared,² whilst within there was the little chapel, now called St Margaret's, where the members of the Royal Family worshipped whilst staying in the Castle. But Holyrood³ had not yet come into existence, and the Canongate itself was a hunting field abounding with harts, hinds, foxes, and other animals of the chase. On the Water of Leith, where the parish of Colinton now is, there was in 1226 a mill, the property of Thomas of Lastalric (Restalrig), in close proximity to the church property; and the boundaries of this mill and the land belonging to it formed the subject of a dispute between the proprietor and the then rector of the parish, the settlement of which is duly recorded. There was also in the same year a

¹ *Caled.*, vol. ii. pp. 793, 794.

² It is said that the present building occupies the old site.

³ *Regist. Holyrood*, page 12.

mill, called "Dregern" mill, which was teinded, and in a dispute which arose between the brethren of St Leonard's Hospital, Edinburgh, and the parson of the parish, the acting mandatories of the Pope gave the teinds to the brethren of St Leonard's, but ordained them to pay to the church of Hailes three shillings, viz: eighteenpence at Pentecost (Whitsunday), and eighteenpence at the Feast of St Martin (Martinmas), for providing lights for that church.

Almost no vestiges of the ancient church of Hale or Hales and its belongings remain. There is at the west side of the west door of the present church a broken piece of what has evidently been an early grave-stone. Above a doorway in a wall in the garden of Hailes House, to the west of that house, there is a rude stone, with three seated figures on it, evidently representing the Holy Trinity. There is also a square tower, under which, or near to which, is a well, the water of which is forced up by a pump; while over the grounds are parts of old walls. Some time during last century, while digging a foundation for a pigeon-house, in a field to the east of Hailes House, through which the Balerno branch of the Caledonian Railway now runs, the workmen came upon human bones, and the conclusion come to was that this was the burial-ground of the ancient church.¹ More minute inquiries might perhaps result in additional traces and remains of the ancient ecclesiastical establishment. But in all probability the church and its belongings were completely destroyed at the Reformation. It was near the metropolis, in close proximity to the scenes where the greatest excitement prevailed, and when on the 28th March 1561, the Lords of the Congregation "past to Strivling (Stirling) and by the way kest down the Abbey of Dunfermling"² in all probability the nearer and smaller ecclesiastical edifice, attacked by the mob, was before this a ruin.

¹ In the inside of the south wall of the present church, under a window in the area, there is a panelled stone, having this inscription:—"HERE LYIS ANE HONORABIL VOMAN A HIRIOT SPOVS TO I FOVLIS OF COLING TOVN VAS QVHA DIED 8 AVGVST 1593." As there is a burial-ground of the Foulis family immediately beneath this stone, and as the church was removed to its present place in 1636, in all probability there was a burial-ground here for years previously.

² *Regist. de Dunferm.*, Introd. p. xxv.

In all probability the plural form of the word Hale arose from the circumstance that the whole district was of an undulating description—full of moors or hillocks. At all events, there came in course of time to be an Easter and Wester Hailes in the parish. And Chalmers says there was a North Hale and South Haile in East Lothian, while in the diocese of Lincoln, at the present day, in Nottinghamshire, there is a parish called Hale (*magna et parva*), and other places of the same name in England. According to Chalmers, also, the word Hale, as signifying a moor, is still retained in the Cornish, for in Cornwall there is a village of this name. The first mention of the word Colinton in the chartulary is in the Register of Feus, and it is there spelled Collingtoun, and used in connection with a Mr Henrie Foulis, evidently between the years 1557 and 1585. When the parish was first founded, in all probability there were no villages in it and no mansion-houses. The only evidence of a proprietor distinct from the abbot and convent of Dunfermline for centuries afterwards is Thomas of Lastalrick. With the exception of one property that has been added since 1560 (Craiglockhart), the ancient boundaries of the parish must have been the same as they are now.