

## III.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON JOHN KNOX'S HOUSE. By P. MILLER,  
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In a previous paper<sup>1</sup> on the tradition of John Knox having resided in the old mansion at the Netherbow, which belonged to James Mosman, jeweller, in Edinburgh, from 1556 until he was executed in 1573, I showed from documentary evidence of undoubted authority that John Knox never could have occupied that house while he was minister of Edinburgh, from 1559 till his death in 1572. In that paper the question was left doubtful whether he occupied only one house during that period of time, as the rent of his manse was paid to two different landlords; first to Robert Moubray, for his house situated on the west side of Turing's Close (now Trunk Close); and afterwards to John Adamson and his spouse Bessie Otterburn, who were described as joint fiars of the house occupied by Knox. Recently I have had an opportunity of going over the record of sasines applicable to that time, and from additional research I have obtained evidence that proves very conclusively that the house for which rent was paid to John Adamson and Bessie Otterburn was a different one altogether from that of Robert Moubray, and was situated on the east side of Turing's Close, between that close and Leith Wynd, at the lower end of that wynd.

It is necessary, in order to make this matter more easily understood, that I should go back a little on my former narrative of the case. John Knox was married to his second wife, Margaret Stewart, daughter of Lord Ochiltree, in March 1564, while he occupied Moubray's mansion. The *Diurnal of Occurents* says, that on the 17th March 1566, a few days after the murder of Rizzio, when the parties implicated left Edinburgh in a body, "John Knox in likewyse departit of the same burgh at twa hours afternoon, with ane great muryning of the godlie of religion." The exact time of his return is not ascertained, but it was sometime in July 1567, as he was present at the coronation of James VI. at Stirling. He was thus absent from Edinburgh sixteen months. On

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xxv. p. 138.

his return to Edinburgh he appears to have taken up his abode in another house from that which he had previously occupied, as his rent was afterwards paid by the Town Council to John Adamson and his spouse. There is an entry in the Council record, 25th September 1566, to the effect that Knox had been craved by Robert Scott's spouse for his Martinmas rent for the year 1565. The treasurer was ordered to pay the same. Robert Scott and his wife were in possession of Moubray's property by virtue of an heritable bond referred to in my former paper. Robert Scott's son and widow intromitted with that property for at least sixteen years after the last payment of rent for John Knox. There is a sasine in 1579, and another in 1582, when Robert Scott, son and heir of Robert Scott, was married to Margaret Acheson, dealing with this property. This proves beyond question that Knox on his return to Edinburgh in 1567 did not return to his old home. He found a residence elsewhere, not in James Mosman's house at the Netherbow, but in John Adamson's and Bessie Otterburn's house. On the 20th February 1568 the treasurer was ordained to pay to Mungo Bradie, goldsmith, cautioner and surety for John Knox's house mail, 10 merks. The rent paid for the first house occupied by Knox was 50 merks; the rent of John Adamson's house was only 40 merks. On the 19th March 1568, on complaint to the Council by John Knox that John Adamson and Bessie Otterburn had repeatedly refused to make certain repairs on his dwelling-house, the Dean of Guild is instructed to make the necessary repairs, and to deduct the expense from the rent due in March 1569, as stated in my former paper.

Where was this house of John Adamson situated? There is a series of sasines regarding this house from 1559 down to 1623, that fixes its exact site in a way that is quite demonstrative,—in a sasine of Alexander Makalzeon and his spouse Mariot Ker, of a tenement lying in the said burgh on the north side of the High Street, between the tenement and land of the late Patric Ireland on the west, the fore tenement of the late John Sympson, the lands of Patric Crichton of Lugton, and the lands of the late Alexander Adamson on the east, and the North Loch on the north, and the High Street on the south. The date of this sasine is April 1559. Alexander Adamson died before

1563, as it is known that his spouse Euphemia Dundas was his widow in that year. In 1564 there is another tenement of the late — Young, lying on the north side of the High Street, but now belonging to Thomas Makalzeon, provost, and the tenement and lands of Mungo Tennand and Alexander Adamson on the east. In April 1568, John Robertson and his spouse has a tenement between the tenement of John Sympson on the west, the tenement of Alexander Adamson on the north, the said eastern tenement on the east, and the common highway on the south part.

Nine years after John Knox's death, on the 3rd of January 1583, there is a sasine in favour of John Fairlie and his spouse Margaret Jousie, in which the subject is described as the western tenement of Francis Tennand, burges of Edinburgh, lying in the said burgh on the north side of the High Street, between the eastern tenement of the late Mungo (Tennand) on the east and the tenement of John Sympson on the west. At the same time, John Adamson, son and heir of the late Alexander Adamson, burges of the said burgh, with the consent and assent of his spouse Elizabeth Otterburn, give sasine for an annual rent of 40 merks Scots to John Fairlie and his spouse, secured on all and whole their lands, built and waste, super and subtus, with the garden and waste land of the same, and its pertinents, lying below the said tenement, between the land of Patric Crichton of Lugton on the south, and the North Loch of the said burgh on the north.<sup>1</sup> In Hay's *Protocol*, 1615, there is another sasine that gives us almost the precise site of this tenement in which John Knox lived from 1567, and for which his rent was paid by the Town Council,—that tenement of Robert Spittal, lying in the foresaid burgh on the north side of the High Street of the same, near the Netherbow, between the passage of Leith Wynd on the east, and the land of the late Alexander Adamson on the west, the lands of the late Patric Barron on the north, and the Netherbow on the south. In corroboration of these sasines, and proving the identity of the subjects referred to in them, there is the following one in February 24, 1585: when John Adamson's son and heir was about to be married, Alexander Adamson, son and heir of John Adamson,

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie's *Protocol*, July 3, 1882.

settles an annuity on his future spouse Agnes Flockhart, secured on that property, built and waste, of the late John Adamson, son and heir of the late Alexander Adamson, lying within the west tenement of Francis Tennand, between the lands of Patric Crichton of Lugton on the south, and the North Loch on the north.

From what remains of the lower portion of Leith Wynd on the east side, and the aid of Edgar's or Kirkwood's plans of the city, the exact site of John Adamson's house can be easily made out. When the City Improvements acquired the property in that quarter, there stood two houses close by Leith Wynd, the one in front of the other, at the lower end of Trunk Close; both of these houses were surrounded with a wall; had each a garden; that of the northmost lay on the north side of the house, and overlooked what was then known as Ireland's Woodyard. These two houses stood a few feet above Macdowall Street, still in existence, on the east side of the wynd; the lower end of Turing's Close was opposite this point, and abutting on this close, or perhaps at its bottom, on the east side, stood John Adamson's house, in which John Knox lived after his return to Edinburgh in 1567. That site is just at the east end of the Goods Sheds of the North British Railway. The evidence contained in my former paper fixed the site of the house occupied by Knox up to 1566; and after his return to Edinburgh in 1567, he occupied this house of John Adamson.

Most of the recent descriptions of the closes of Old Edinburgh fail, in my humble opinion, with one exception, that of Mr Skelton in his work on Maitland of Lethington and Queen Mary, to give a correct description of what they were in very early times. There can be no mistake as to the accuracy of those saines applicable to this block of Old Edinburgh bounded by Leith Wynd before and during Queen Mary's time. These descriptions show that it was quite a secluded part of the city, and owned and occupied by the wealthy and aristocratic portion of the community, and consisted of detached villas, most of them having gardens attached, and surrounded with walls. Such was the case in both houses occupied by John Knox, minister of St Giles' Church: they both had gardens, and a *cauda* or tail-piece of waste land running down to the North Loch: both of these houses were quiet and secluded from the

noise and turmoil of a busy thoroughfare, and eminently suited for the residence of a clergyman; while the house of James Mosman at the Netherbow, with St Michel's fountain, that supplied the lower half of the city with water, was only a few feet from the window of Knox's supposed study, where crowds of water-caddies and "Rebeccas at the fountain" must have kept up a gabble of irrepressible chatter for the live-long day. And on the south side of the house there was the narrow gorge of the Netherbow Port, through which the entire traffic of one half of the city had to pass outwards and inwards, and where stood the telonium, or toll-house, where all customs and tolls were collected. With such surroundings the parish minister of St Giles' must have felt himself in something like unto a pandemonium had he lived there.

The narrative of facts I have given from authentic historical documents clearly proves that John Knox occupied Robert Moubray's house on the west side of Turing's Close (now Trunk Close) from 1560 to 1566, when he left Edinburgh. On his return, about 15th July 1567, he then occupies another house, not James Mosman's, and the rent is paid to John Adamson. Within a few months after Knox's last rent was paid in 1569, James Mosman's wife dies; and in February 1570, Mosman marries his second wife, Janet King, daughter of Alexander King, advocate, who was stigmatised by some of Knox's friends as a "malicious papist." Mosman, previous to his marriage, buys back from his son John, then a lad of thirteen years of age, the fee-simple of his house at the Netherbow, the family mansion; he is seized in the subjects, and immediately infests his future spouse in the same. In sixteen months thereafter, May 1571, John Knox is compelled to leave Edinburgh for St Andrews, where he lived until August 1572, when he returns to Edinburgh, and dies three months after. That Mosman and his friends, who were in the ascendant most of this time, sheltered John Knox in his town-house, and kept it empty for him when he returned in 1572, is too absurd for belief. From these facts it is obvious that Knox could not have occupied Mosman's house before he left Edinburgh in 1571; and when he returned, before his death, he went to his usual residence at the foot of Turing's Close. After this additional evidence respecting the "tradition" of John Knox having lived in James Mosman's house at the Netherbow,

most people are likely to concur in the opinion expressed by Sir Daniel Wilson in a letter to me of date 11th January 1891, after I had furnished him with the evidence in my former paper in disproof of the "tradition" respecting the old house at the Netherbow. "I find," he says, "as you have already hinted, there is no evading the fact that Knox never did live in John Knox's House."