

Lecture summaries

Elginhaugh: A Roman fort and its environs

W S Hanson*

The existence of a fort at Elginhaugh near Dalkeith (NGR NT 322 673) was not suspected until the dry summer of 1979 when the line of the Roman road was revealed from the air as a parchmark. Trial excavation by Gordon Maxwell confirmed the presence of a single-period Flavian fort and suggested that it overlay an Iron Age settlement. Major excavation, funded by Historic Buildings and Monuments, was prompted by the purchase of the site for industrial development. The original intention was to excavate as much of the 11 acre (4.45 ha) field as possible, but pressures of both time and finance resulted in a more restricted examination of the areas outside the fort itself.

The complete fort plan was recovered. All the internal buildings were constructed in timber with one exception, a stone-built workshop set into the rear of the rampart. The central range contained the headquarters building flanked on one side by the commanding officer's house and on the other by two granaries. Accommodation for the troops was provided in seven or eight blocks in the *praetentura* arranged *per strigas* and four blocks in the *retentura* arranged *per scamna*. Despite the complete plan, it is still not possible to determine precisely the nature of the garrison. Nine buildings conformed to the generally accepted pattern of auxiliary barrack blocks. Two others, joined together towards the officers' end, might best be explained as cavalry barracks. No stables were identified. The remaining rectangular building in the *praetentura* probably served some storage function.

Despite its relatively small size, only three acres (1.26 ha) internally, the fort seems to have been designed to accommodate some 720 infantry and perhaps 120 cavalry, which fits no known type of auxiliary unit. Accordingly it would appear that the disposition of troops in garrisons and the general layout of auxiliary forts in the Flavian period may not have been as standard and predictable as is usually assumed.

The fort rampart was turf built, but did not survive well. Cooking ovens were located behind it at various points around the perimeter. The four gates were all double and provided with towers on each side, though three had unique frontal extensions. The fort was also provided with timber corner and interval towers, and surrounded by up to four ditches.

Use of the annexe, situated on the western side of the fort, had been both varied and intensive. Four main phases of activity were recognized in the area alongside the road, which also contained large numbers of pits. Drying ovens, probably for grain, were replaced by timber strip buildings, which were in turn superseded by cooking ovens. Finally, ditches were dug obliquely across the area funnelling-in towards a newly built annexe gateway. At some stage the annexe had been extended to the west beyond the area available for excavation.

Preliminary results from environmental samples raise interesting questions concerning the military diet and the supply of materials to the fort. The quantities of wattlework required, some

*Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow

preserved in the linings of wells, suggest that there was a good local supply of coppiced poles. The preponderance of barley from within the fort, linked with the presence of probable grain-drying ovens in the annexe, hints at the local supply of grain also. The area of the fort had been under pasture at the time of the Roman arrival. No evidence was recovered, however, of any Iron-Age settlement beneath it, though Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-Age activity were all identified.

Coin evidence suggests that the fort was abandoned by AD 87 after deliberate demolition of the internal buildings. There were some signs of refurbishment of the defences, however, possibly linked with the funnel ditches in the annexe and related to a final phase of use as a stock enclosure.

(A brief account of the excavation, fully illustrated in colour, is now available: Hanson, W S & Yeoman, P A 1988 *Elginhaugh: a Roman fort and its environs*, Glasgow.)

The greater medieval burgh kirks

H Gordon Slade*

The lecture considered the 13 greater burgh kirks of medieval Scotland: St Andrews, Cupar, Greyfriars, Edinburgh, Crail, Linlithgow, Stirling, Dundee, Ayr, Elgin, Haddington, Perth, St Giles, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, omitting Inverness and Leith (which did not become parochial until the 17th century, although on architectural grounds it would have merited inclusion).

The kirks represent the largest group of medieval ecclesiastical buildings remaining in continuous use in Scotland, and apart from Ayr which went out of use in 1651, and Elgin, finally demolished in 1826, all display considerable medieval remains. With the exception of St Giles, Edinburgh, which may incorporate remains of the pre-1385 church, and Aberdeen, with its transitional crossing, the churches were largely rebuilt or refounded in the first half of the 15th century, and although it was sometimes a hundred years before they were completed it is clear that in some cases, notably Linlithgow and Haddington, the original design, except for minor details, was adhered to throughout the building period. It was perhaps fortuitous that by 1424 six of these kirks had been destroyed by fire and two re-founded on new sites. This, coinciding with a long period of comparative peace and increasing wealth, obliged and enabled the burghs to embark on large building programmes, in which all effort could be concentrated on one large building. Since the burghs were all founded in the second half of the 12th century they were single, and not multi-parish burghs. Eventually the churches became rich and so large, that at the Reformation they were often subdivided – in some cases between several congregations.

The kirks fall into three distinct plan-types: aisled parallelograms with lateral or axial western towers, cruciform with western towers, and cruciform with central towers. Stirling, although conforming to the second group, was intended to have a central tower, and Greyfriars, Edinburgh, although conforming to the first type in having a medieval plan is post-Reformation in date.

The greatest destruction suffered by the buildings after 1560 was not at the hands of the reformers, but at those of church architects bent on restoration, although the 18th-century re-building of St Andrews and Cupar was done with the intention of providing buildings suitable for

*15 Southbourne Gardens, London SE12

Presbyterian worship. The damage done in the 19th century under the influence of the Gothic Revival and the Ecclesiological movement was immense; the restoration of buildings to their catholic and sacramental form has made them generally unsuitable for the worship of the Church of Scotland, and a great historical tradition has been thrown out along with a wealth of carved woodwork. This is particularly true of St Giles, Edinburgh, where, in spite of the heroic action of Jeannie Geddes, there is now a central altar with wax lights and a Laudian cover.

The greatest losses were: the collapse of the Romanesque nave at Aberdeen in 1742; the removal of the crown at Linlithgow in 1826; the destruction in 1821 of Halkerston's work at Perth; Burn's restoration at St Giles, Edinburgh, which started in 1827 – although the evidence of earlier proposals, and Hay's west door of the 1870s show that it could have been much worse; the demolition of the 15th-century choir at Aberdeen was prompted by nothing but a greedy desire for increased pew rents; and the failure to rebuild fire-damaged Dundee in 1841 was the result of pressure from the building industry. This century has seen the re-building of St Andrews, the erection of the Thistle Chapel at St Giles, Edinburgh, the re-vaulting of much of Haddington in fibre-glass, the introduction of a spire of startling inadequacy at Linlithgow, and the re-ordering of St Giles, Edinburgh, in the worst of good taste.

Of the individual churches themselves a number of points were discussed. Clearly St Andrews and Cupar, founded within a few years of each other by Prior Bisset, were the work of the same mason, who may also have been responsible for the 15th-century additions at Crail. Stirling, like Linlithgow, was intended to have a three-tier elevation in the nave, but this was abandoned; a clerestory was never built on the north side, and the clerestory above the south arcade was built at the triforium level. Haddington and Linlithgow were both completed to the original designs, and received few later additions until this century. In spite of particularly soulless refacing Perth is, internally, largely medieval. It would appear from old drawings that the intention in the mid 15th century was to build a lofty nave with high side aisles and no clerestory in the manner of a 'hall-church'. This was probably the work of John Halkerston, and shows interesting parallels with St Giles, Edinburgh. Of this latter church, by far the most complicated of those considered, it is likely that a considerable amount survived the fire of 1385. In the choir aisles, with their curious domical vaults, and a central vessel of the same height, one is faced with a building curiously reminiscent of some Angevin work. When this is considered in the light of the arrangement of the original west front at Holyrood with its towers positioned in a similar manner to those of Poitiers Cathedral it may be more than pure coincidence. In the rebuilding of the nave aisles and side chapels there is enough evidence to suggest that the intention was to build a 'hall-church' of the type envisaged at Perth. There is a consistency of detail, which develops in the later choir extension – by John Halkerston – and the Preston aisle to suggest that the kirk building was in the hands of one of the most accomplished schools of masons working in Scotland at the time.

The size of the Romanesque kirk of Aberdeen has never been satisfactorily accounted for at so early a period either by parochial wealth or parochial function, and there may have been an intention to make it episcopal in status. Both from its plan, with an apsidal east end, and some of the surviving details it shows an affinity with Kirkwall Cathedral, and may have been the work of Kirkwall masons trained in the traditions of Dunfermline, Carlisle and Durham. In the 15th-century choir there are such obvious parallels with St Machar's Cathedral and King's College Chapel, that it is evident that there was as clearly defined a school of design in church work in the north-east as there was in castle building.

In general, the quality of detail in these kirks seldom rose to the grandeur, scale or proportion of the design. This is one of the few cases where the sum of the parts was not equal to the sum of the whole.

William Elphinstone, bishop and founder of the University of Aberdeen

Leslie J Macfarlane*

For nearly 500 years, Elphinstone's reputation as one of the most notable lawyers, civil servants and bishops in 15th-century Scotland, as well as the founder of its third University, has rested almost solely on the brief sketch of him by Hector Boece in his *Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium Episcoporum Vitae*. A wide-ranging search in European archives, together with a close study of the *marginalia* Elphinstone wrote in the manuscripts and incunables he bequeathed to his University, has now made possible a more critical and accurate assessment of his career. All this fresh evidence throws into sharp relief many of the legal, political, administrative, liturgical and educational problems he was forced to grapple with throughout that career. His training in canon law at Paris, and his later work as a diocesan Official, for example, reflect many of the current social and legal difficulties affecting marriage and handfasting, the taking of oaths, and the need to clarify the proper relationship between the civil and ecclesiastical courts. His studies in Orleans forced him to look closely at the nature of sovereignty and the validity of customary law. The elegance of the Renaissance Latin of one of his ambassadorial speeches, and the mastery of detail involved in the drafting of his Anglo-Scottish treaties would seem to confirm his eminence in the field of public international law. His training programme for the priests of his diocese, his building programme for his Cathedral, and his organizing of the Aberdeen Breviary as the Use for the Scottish Church, display unusual pastoral qualities for a Scottish bishop in the late 15th century. The daily grind of his work as a member of the King's Council and a member of Parliamentary Committees for at least five months in every year, are a silent witness of his conscientious attempt to further the stability and good order of the realm. The production of the country's first land register owed much to his efforts as Keeper of the Privy Seal. But his most lasting achievement must lie in the skill he exercised in the planning and founding of the University of Aberdeen: its financial resources, the thought he gave to its constitution, the selection of its first teachers, and the curriculum laid down for each of its Faculties. The disaster of Flodden must have given him cause to believe, at the end of his life, that much of his work for the nation had ended in failure. The records now available show, on the contrary, that in putting his country's interests before his own, his work endured and is still very much an integral part of Scottish life today.

Scottish graveyards

Betty Willshert†

There is a growing recognition of the importance of graveyards as a historical source. Recordings made by local groups and by Manpower Service Commission teams are producing a pool of information. An increasingly large collection of photographs of gravestones (post-Reformation to the 20th century) is held in the National Monuments Record. Recording involves a study of the foundation of the site, its history, the buildings and the walls, and relics such as those connected with the Resurrectionists. The data from the monuments are of interest to scholars of many disciplines, and research will be facilitated by the use of standardized recording forms.

*Department of History, University of Aberdeen

†Orchard Cottage, Greenside Place, St Andrews, Fife

The gravestones of the 17th and 18th centuries were cut by local masons and each is shaped and carved differently. The variety may be illustrated by considering two of the emblems. First, the winged soul; in England it usually appears as the winged face of a charming young child, like the *amorino* of Italian art or the Baroque putto, and the common name 'cherub' is appropriate. But in Scotland and in puritan New England the masons presented a more serious image of the soul which at the time of death left the body and soared upwards. These soul effigies are infinitely varied in apparent age, sex, facial expression, hair (or wig!) style and in the position and feather-design of the wings. The accompanying emblems, such as stars, hearts, fylfots, roses are all significant of immortality.

The second emblem chosen is the foliate head – 'The Green Man'. Originally a Roman emblem of the second and third centuries AD, it was revived as an emblem in Norman cathedrals and churches in France, Germany and Britain and continued in works of art and as a *momento mori* on tomb sculpture. The essential features are described by Kathleen Basford in *The Green Man* (1978); the face is either in human or cat-like form, the expression is sad or grim, macabre or sinister. Found in Scottish cathedrals, abbeys and churches, the Green Man became a popular emblem on 18th-century tombs. It appears in widely varying forms. From 60 recorded, many in the Lothians, here is a tentative classification. All sprout greenery, and are in human or cat form:

- (i) Those with tongues sticking out;
- (ii) those with ears and fangs – the tongues and ears may be leaf-shaped;
- (iii) weepers who have mournful expressions;
- (iv) peepers who peer malignantly out of another emblem;
- (v) those with cornucopia or wreaths held in mouths;
- (vi) those with snakes.

The Green Man may have been intended as an emblem of dual significance. His ugliness may represent the sins of the flesh, the greenery renewal – the resurrection of the body. This theory is in line with the religious philosophy of the times.

In 25 years most of the huge collection of carved stones will have gone. Many sandstone monuments are almost at the end of their life spans due to exposure to weathering and thousands have been lost by removal. In addition we have the formidable problem of vandalism. In 1901 Dr Christison recommended that the 'Faith, Hope and Charity' stone at Greyfriars, Perth should be taken into the Museum. This may happen shortly. Should we not – *immediately* – take active steps to save some sample stones for posterity? Prime candidates would be the Quarles monuments at Stirling, Alloway and Arbroath. Other selected stones might be taken inside churches or into mort-houses and watch towers; or it might be possible to protect them by boarding them up during the winter. It is a matter for urgent consideration.

A hard-won wilderness: man and environment on Foula, Shetland and Western Faroe

John R Baldwin*

A major difficulty in seeking to explore the relationship of man and his environment in these specific localities, Foula (Shetland) and Gásadalur and Mykines (Faroes), lies in the fact that accurate archaeological evidence is almost non-existent and documentary evidence is sparse. A particular aim,

*60 Craiglea Drive, Edinburgh EH10 5PF

therefore, is to see how far an understanding of earlier settlement patterns, of man in his cultural and natural environment, can be culled from such diverse sources as maps and air-photographs, field survey and ethnological investigation, place-names, field names and other forms of oral tradition.

The principal focus is: to explore how the inhabitants of these settlements structured the use of certain natural resources; to highlight something of the environmental and social concern that these structures reveal; to show the impact of changing levels of population on the community organization of its natural resources, and in so doing to uncover something of earlier layers of settlement.

In examining *structure outside the township area*, discussion concentrated on: the catching of sea birds by hand, snares and nets, and the division of the bird cliffs and the catches; the harvesting of peat, turf and muil for fuel, byre litter and growing medium, and the associated tools and structures; the grazing of livestock, primarily sheep, on the hill – associated fanks and shelters, division of the grazings and systems of animal identification.

In examining *structure within the homefield*, discussion concentrated on: the division and allocation of the homefield, fragmentation and rationalization under fluctuating populations; the extensions of the homefield and the fossilized survival of earlier homefield features; the identification of earlier layers of settlement, both the extent of different elements of landuse, and the location and disposition of dwellings and associated buildings.

In Gásadalur and Mykines, infield holdings are highly fragmented, based on a pattern of individual though scattered holdings from the Crown, and of odal land subdivided in each generation between the heirs. In da Hametoun of Foula by contrast, previously in some kind of scattered rigga-rendal, the land was redivided into crofts in the 1830s/40s so that settlement is now scattered (houses on their individual crofts), rather than nucleated as in the two Faroese settlements.

For da Hametoun evidence suggests earlier nucleated settlements at da Biggins, Kwenister and da Grind, with fossilized loanings also to Goteren, Norderhus and Brekkans; and early 17th-century records name 'North-hus', 'Swenysetter' and 'Gutteron', along with several individual house names where now lie da Biggins. Field name evidence incorporating strong Norse elements helps identify the location of earlier patterns of arable meadowland, wet grazings, common land, cattle pounds and a milking place – which all point to a Norse settlement core on the lands of Goteren, da Biggins and Norderhus, with subsequent early extension around Kwenister, across the burn.

Precious arable and infield grassland, like the hill land and bird cliffs whose allocation was related directly to infield holdings, were shared by the community and sub-divided, or added to, to provide a living for all.

Complex systems were developed over time to share natural resources – in part to ensure the sustainable exploitation of that resource and in part to ensure that benefits reached all members of the community, the weak, the less fortunate and those struck down by natural calamity. And the study of changes in organizational structure over the past century alone underlines the importance of flexibility – to take account of the fluctuating availability of natural resources and of a fluctuating human population. Numbers of puffins or sheep going with particular 'shares' could be changed by community consent.

Only with regard to the 'scalping' of peat muil from the surface of moor and hillside on Foula, did a natural, as it were innate, concern for the environment appear not to have brought about locally-triggered 'conservation measures'; and this may reflect the early effect of an expanding population faced with the problem of strictly limited cultivable land.

A hard-won wilderness? Yes – but in coming to terms with their environment, these communities worked essentially with, rather than against the natural world. Broad overall structures and regulations were agreed at a 'national' or 'regional' level (the Faroese 'Sheep Letter', the Shetland 'Country acts') but implementation and fine tuning were left very much to local communities, fully

literate in the ways and needs of their own natural, social and cultural environments, to determine in the light of local conditions and requirements.

Such studies have a value for modern man in his search to re-establish a responsible relationship with the natural environment. Their educational value is considerable as part of re-discovering an environmental ethic.