

# Archaeological excavations at Cockpen medieval parish church, Midlothian, 1993

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with a contribution by Nicholas M McQ Holmes

## ABSTRACT

*Archaeological excavations at Cockpen church were conducted in the course of a programme of conservation works on the building. The original church was a small Romanesque building, but it was modified by the reconstruction of its east gable, probably in the 13th century, and by extension of the nave at a later date. Other modifications included the addition of the Dalhousie Aisle, post-Reformation galleries, several external stairs, a vestry and belfry. Numerous burials were found within the church and are probably of late medieval or post-medieval date. A period of pre-church settlement activity was also recorded, represented by a buried topsoil overlying rubble, midden material and a possible wall remnant.*

## INTRODUCTION

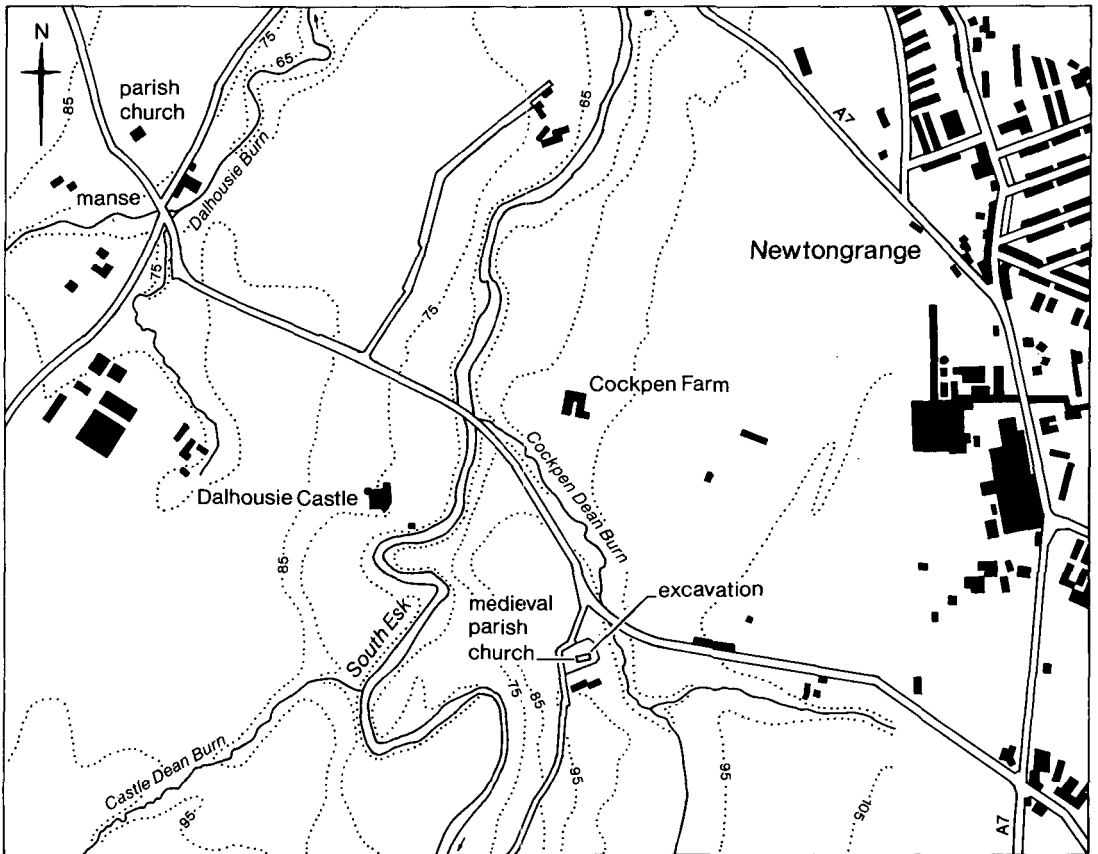
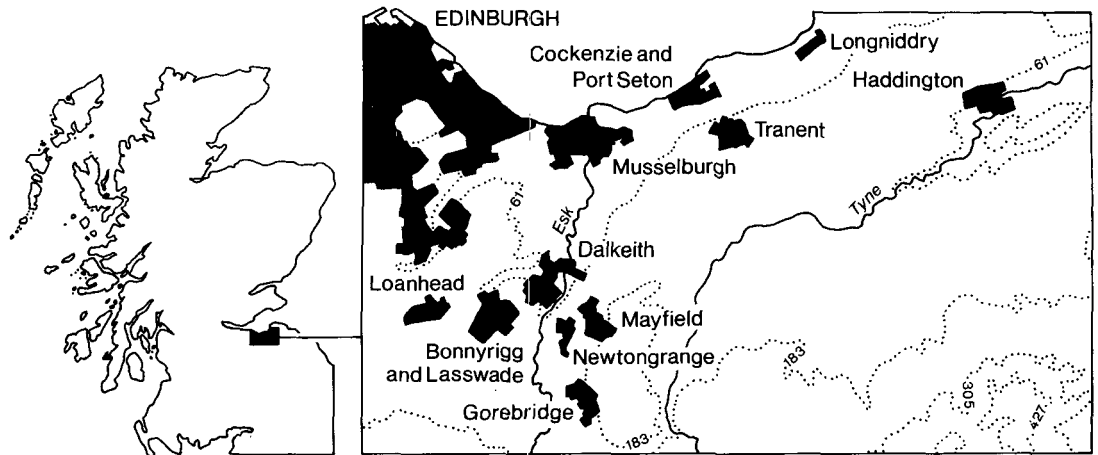
### CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE EXCAVATION

Archaeological excavations at Cockpen medieval parish church were conducted by AOC (Scotland) Ltd in March, September and October 1993. The excavations were commissioned by Edinburgh architects Simpson & Brown and were one element of a programme of conservation work on the building. The work was sponsored by Midlothian District Council. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The name Cockpen has been variously interpreted as Red-hill, from the Gaelic *Coch-pen*, or Cuckoo-hill, from Scots *Gowk-pen* (Finlay 1960, 104). The church itself is situated on the brow of a broad, north-facing spur which overlooks the wooded valley of the South Esk river to the west, and to the east, its smaller tributary, Cockpen Dean Burn (illus 1). Dalhousie Castle occupies a prominent site on the opposite, or west bank of the river. The picturesque character of this setting was praised effusively for its 'wild and natural beauty' by the Revd Ebenezer Marshall in 1790: 'Everywhere within the parish the banks of the river are bold and beautifully fringed with natural wood' (Stat. Acct. 1796, 124–5). Nature

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100 0 500 metres

ILLUS 1 Location map (Based upon the Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright)

yields some credit, however, to landscape management by the Earls of Dalhousie, who had cultivated these woodlands over a century before. Blaeu's map of 'Lothian and Linlithgow' (*Atlas of Scotland* 1654) represents the church as lying within an extensive park or demesne, possibly one of the deerparks which were enjoying a revival amongst wealthy landowners at the time (Lasdun 1991, 51). The topographic setting of the church in earlier years is undocumented, and it is not known, for instance, whether in previous centuries there had been a medieval manor village anywhere in its vicinity.

A mortared stone wall encloses the churchyard today, an irregular area of c 2400 sq m. Prior to conservation, the churchyard was densely overgrown and the church ruins were host to strongly rooted ivies, weeds and scrub. The vegetation has since been cleared and several headstones, grave-slabs and table-tombs of Early Modern date may now be seen in its environs: clearly the churchyard on all sides has been used as a cemetery.

The present parish church, built c 1820, is located a kilometre to the north-west (illus 1).

## THE CHURCH

The medieval church is a unicameral structure, oblong in plan, c 20.15 m in length by 4.7 m in width, within walls 0.8–0.9 m thick (illus 4). The masonry consists of both squared and undressed freestone blocks, concentrated in the east and west of the building respectively. The walls of the east end are raised on a simple chamfered plinth or basal course. Plain, clasping buttresses stand at the angles of the east gable, which is pierced by two narrow lancet windows (one survives intact) with a circular window above. The windows of the side walls have been considerably altered and ultimately featured large, plain openings with square heads. These intrusive secondary features provoked a complaint from MacGibbon & Ross (1896, vol 2, 303): 'the walls of the old church are in tolerable preservation, but they have been so much altered, probably soon after the Reformation, so as to render them suitable for Presbyterian worship, that the original features are almost obliterated.' The principal additions are the Dalhousie Aisle, an adjacent burial enclosure appended on the north wall of the church, and a third enclosure, possibly a vestry, on the south wall at the west end. Galleries or lofts occurred at either end, as well as over the Dalhousie Aisle, and were accessed by external stairs. The west gable is surmounted by a belfry. Dates in the 16th (MacGibbon & Ross 1896, vol 2, 303) and 17th centuries (RCAHMS 1929, 12) have been suggested for some or all of these secondary features.

Archaeological excavation exposed other, previously unrecorded structural features: remnants of a porch or vestry were appended on the south wall and the foundations of the primary west wall of the Romanesque church were discovered at the midpoint of the church interior. This latter feature constitutes the clearest evidence that the entire western part of the building is of secondary construction.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### *The Ramsays of Dalhousie*

The patrons and founders of Cockpen Church were the Ramsays of Dalhousie. The Ramsays were amongst the Anglo-Norman families settled in the Lowlands by David I and were to become one of Scotland's foremost aristocratic families. The pageant of their affairs is recalled briefly, but colourfully, by Finlay: 'The name of Ramsay appears in nearly every great event in Scottish history: at Bannockburn, among the signatures appended to the Declaration of Arbroath, among the slain at Halidon Hill and at Flodden. Sir John became Lord Ramsay for his services to James VI at the Raid of Ruthven, but the Earldom of Dalhousie did not come until 1633 ... and in the mid-nineteenth

century appears the first marquis, who made the name of Dalhousie famous in the East by his term as Governor-General ..... This most celebrated of viceroys lies buried in the little ruined church of Cockpen' (Finlay 1960, 103). Neighbouring Dalhousie Castle had been the Ramsay seat since at least the 13th century and the parish boundaries have been largely co-extensive with the barony.

### *Parsonage and vicarage*

Appropriation, by endowment, to the chapter of a religious house was the common status of medieval parish churches in Scotland. Patrick de Ramsay granted the church at Cockpen to Newbattle Abbey in 1356, 'both parsonage and vicarage were thus annexed, provision being made for a vicar pensioner who henceforth served the cure, the fruits of which remained with the abbey' (Cowan 1967, 33). The specific form taken by this provision for a vicar in 1455 is identified in a notarial instrument by Robert Ramsay, which refers, amongst other affairs, to the maintenance of a chaplaincy at Cockpen by revenues from a tenement in Edinburgh's Canongate (SRO GD45/16/306).

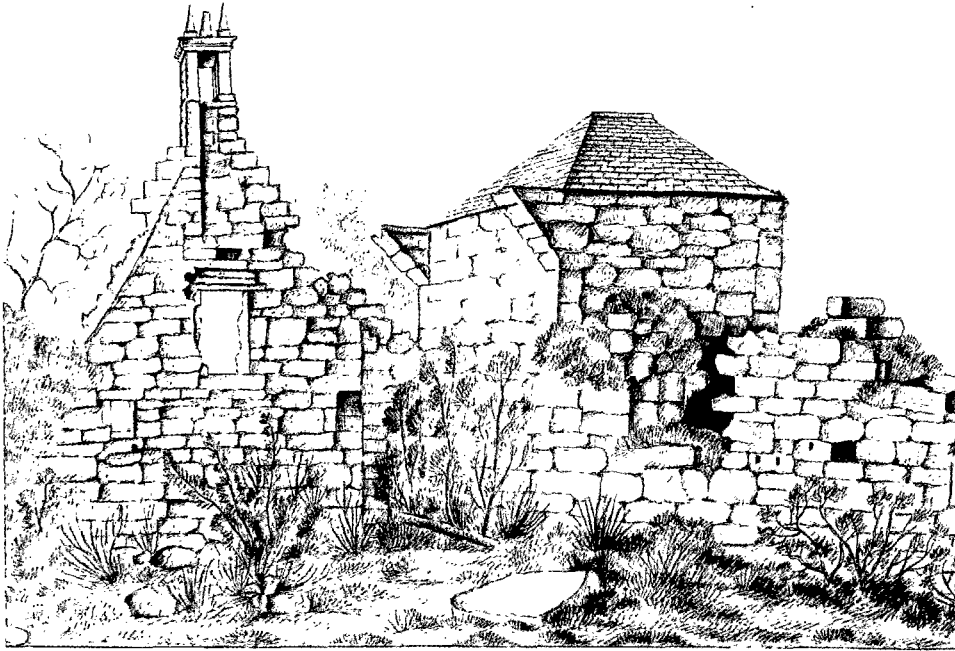
There is no evidence that the dissolution of Newbattle Abbey resulted in any significant break in the continuity of organized worship in the parish and, in 1567, the first post-Reformation minister to hold the tenure at Cockpen was William Knox, a brother of John Knox, the reformer (Scott 1915, 306).

Cockpen is one of the small number of parishes from which there is an extant report to the Royal Commission of 1627 on the state of the parishes of Scotland (McGrigor 1835, 45–9). The parties convened by the minister, Mr Adam Penman, reported that at that time 'communicants wer between fextein and fevintein score', and that the minister's lot was 'twa hundreth merkis money two chalderis victuall and vicarage quhilk was allowed to be the plat for ane hundreth pundis quhilk never was worth the halfe of it to him' (McGrigor 1835, 46). At least this last complaint was redressed in 1629 when the minister renounced the tithes in favour of Lord Ramsay and accepted instead a stipend of £100 (SRO GD45/13/106).

Elsewhere, the report of 1627 casts a backward glance at the condition of the parish in the pre-Reformation years: 'the vicar ferved the cure and dwelt at the kirk befor the Reformatioun' (McGrigor 1835, 46). Presumably this information means that the priest's house, like the Early Modern manse, was situated conveniently close to the church. The report is possibly inaccurate in its account of the vicar's material standing, however: 'there is no prebendaries nor frierlandis There is some vther kirklandis as namely a great croft of land callit the Kirkhill lyand beyde the kirk poffest of old by the vicaris quhilk served the cure now by my Lord Ramfay of Dalhouffie' (McGrigor 1835, 46). It is doubtful whether the pre-Reformation vicar really did have the substantial croft at Kirkhill at his disposal. In fact, it was certainly in the gift of Newbattle in 1558 when Mark, Commendator of the Abbey, is found granting these same kirklands to Patrick Quhitelaw in Dalhousie and his wife Janet Broun (SRO GD45/16/317).

### *Renovation and repair*

None of the medieval or Early Modern adaptations is closely dated, and it is not until 1739–40 that any major construction work at the church is actually documented. An account amongst the Heritors' Records of 1740 (SRO CH2.452/vol 28) details the expenses incurred by renovations in the previous year. Costs included both building materials and the carters' fees to Dalkeith and Edinburgh. The bill of goods – at a total cost of over £270 – represents a fairly thorough renovation of the building and includes quantities of timber dales, scaffolding boards and poles, slates, flooring and slate nails and over 30 cartloads of lime, 13 of which were used upon the Dalhousie Aisle. The tall, pyramidal, slate roof which surmounts the Dalhousie Aisle in Archer's drawing of the church



*View of Old Cockpen Church,  
 as to the site where the Dalhousie  
 gate was built. Drawn for  
 the Hon. Secy. of the Ordnance  
 1834.*

ILLUS 2 Archer's drawing of the church ruins at Cockpen, 1834

(illus 2) may date to this period (NMR MLD/125/2). More minor repair and maintenance works are documented in the succeeding decades, including re-plastering in 1776 (SRO CH2.452/vol 28), but the works of 1739 appear to have been the last renovation on a major scale.

### *The new church*

The first suggestion that the church should be abandoned for an entirely new building does not appear in the Heritors' Records until 1815 (SRO CH2.452/vol 29). At first, it was the dilapidated manse which was thought to be beyond salvage, and repairs to the church were thought likely to be 'very inconsiderable'. However, further meetings heard new complaints against the church, and these soon outweighed the case for further renovation: drainage problems were caused by the higher surrounding ground level in the churchyard, the location was thought inconvenient, and it was increasingly difficult to accommodate the growing population of the parish. Eventually, the Earl of Dalhousie proposed an excambion of the existing glebe for a new site to be supplied by himself 'at or near the seven mile stone in the centre of the parish'. A design was approved and in 1817, John Dickson, a mason in Edinburgh, was contracted to start work on the new church at an ultimate cost of over £2260.

*Two cemeteries*

It was not until the 1840s that regulations for the use of the new graveyard were drawn up, but there is no evidence that the older cemetery continued in regular use after the abandonment of the church. Only the Ramsays persisted here, and the remodelling of the Dalhousie Aisle as a sealed and barrel-vaulted burial chamber probably dates to this period.

In the cemetery of the new church the dead were less secure. Dr James Grierson, the minister, proposed to the Heritors in 1825 that iron safes should be erected in the new graveyard 'to prevent corpses being taken from the Churchyard as used Newbattle parish' (SRO CH2.452/vol 29). Though the Heritors consented, the theft of corpses evidently remained a cause of anxiety to Dr Grierson, who requested in 1828 that a watch-tower should also be erected (*ibid*). A watch-house seems to have already existed in the cemetery of the older church. At least this is the most likely identification of the small structure within the churchyard gate represented on 'A Plan of the Old Glebe of Cockpen' made by William Crawford in 1821 (SRO RHP.35163). There are now no visible remains of this structure.

*A new era*

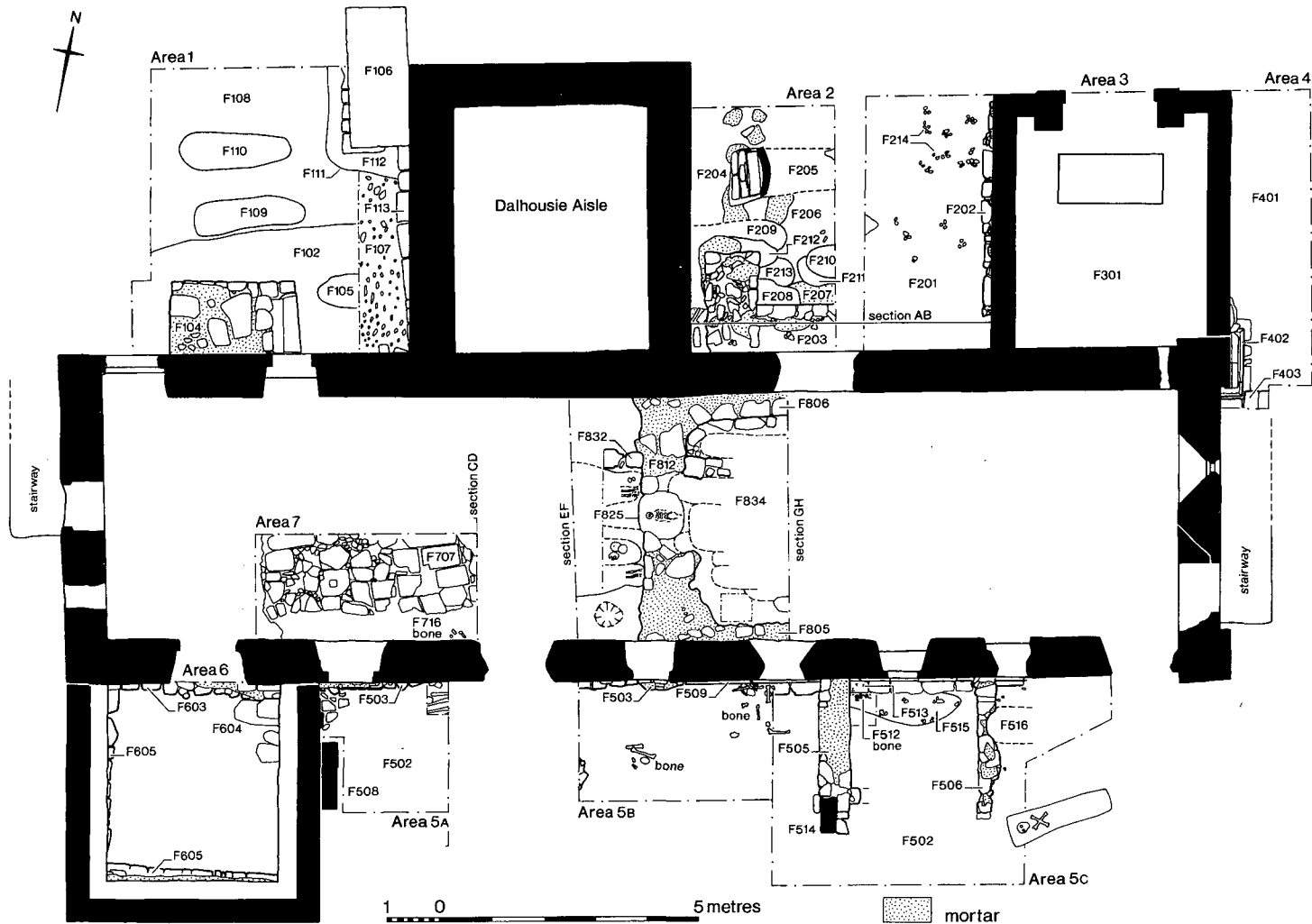
Proudfoot (1983, 231) described the medieval parish church as 'a material constant among the changing features of rural life', and to some extent, this is also true of the church in the Early Modern parish. By the mid-19th century, Cockpen parish had changed out of countenance. Abandonment of the medieval parish church for a newer building may have been simply a pragmatic move, but in retrospect, it acquires a symbolic aspect in which abandonment of the building appears to have been commensurate with other, more fundamental changes in the parish. Local industrialization and the growth of coal-mining, in particular, had been accompanied by a doubling of the population in the first half of the 19th century. The expanding social sphere fostered a new diversity of religious practices and, by the 1840s, the Revd William Davidson could number a Free Church, a Morrisonian meeting house and a Baptist meeting house, as well as his own church, amongst the places of worship (NSA 1845, 610).

The Ordnance Survey (ONB 1853) records that within a few years of its abandonment, the old church was 'dismantled'. Presumably structural timbers, slates and any remaining furnishings were salvaged at this time and only the stone shell of the building allowed to remain. Indeed, by 1828, a *Map of the County of Edinburgh* (Sharp *et al* 1828) could represent the abandoned buildings as derelict antiquities, identifying them only as 'old manse' and 'Kirk ruins'.

## EXCAVATION RESULTS

## AIMS AND METHODS OF THE EXCAVATION

The purpose of archaeological work at the site was threefold. Initially, excavation was undertaken to remove rubble and soil accumulations against the outer wall faces of the building and to excavate areas where underpinning of unstable walls was required. In the course of the project, the excavation programme was broadened to include an investigation of the primary west wall foundations within the building. It was intended that human remains *in situ* would not be disturbed unnecessarily. Ultimately, only two graves were excavated, and, in general, the presence of undisturbed remains determined the depths to which excavations were limited.



ILLUS 3 The church and excavated features, all areas

## AREA 1 (ILLUS 3)

Topsoil removal in Area 1 exposed a spread or dump of mortar (F105), and, under the mortar, a compacted, mixed soil layer (F102 & F108) which was evidently a buried surface. Underlying this layer, a layer of small angular stones and stone chips (F107) is interpreted as building debris, but may have been redistributed to form an earlier, roughly cobbled surface. The stony layer abuts, and evidently post-dates, the projecting foundation course (F113) of the Dalhousie Aisle.

Remnants of a stone stair (F104) was found to abut the north face of the church, ascending to a doorway overhead. The stair is abutted by, and thus predates, the compacted soil surface (F102 & F108).

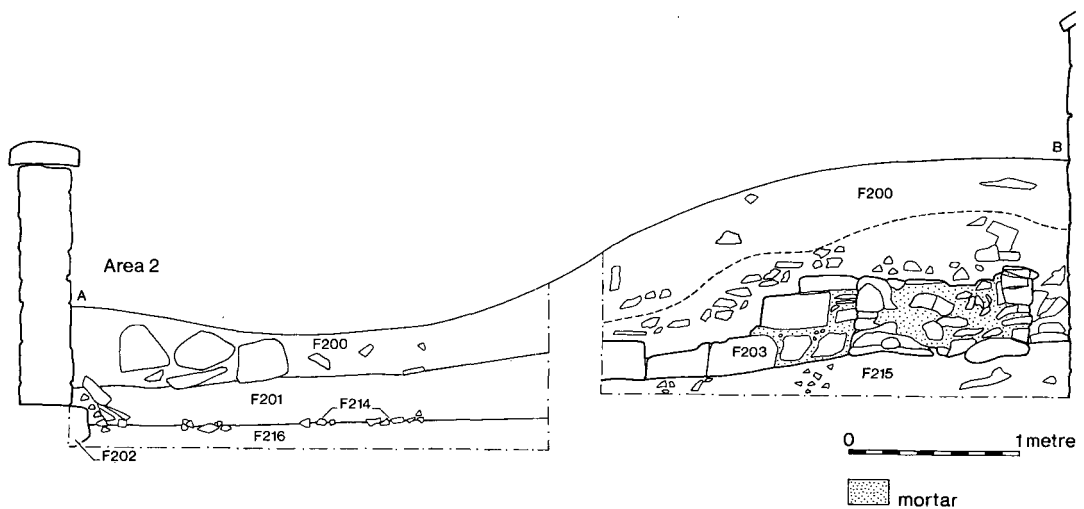
The compacted soil surface (F102 & F108) was cut by two dug graves (F110 & F109) and by a mortared stone tomb (F106). The tomb is set in a trench foundation (F111 & F112) which abuts the Dalhousie Aisle to the west and, unusually, is oriented north/south. None of these graves was excavated.

## AREA 2 (ILLUS 3 &amp; 4)

Topsoil and rubble layers (F200 & F201) were removed in the east half of Area 2 to expose a stony surface composed of small sandstone debris (F214). This stony layer abuts the projecting foundation course (F202) of the adjacent burial enclosure and overlies a deep, mixed soil layer (F216) with bone fragments and mortar debris. The stony deposit closely resembles the layer (F107) in Area 1 which was interpreted as a surface composed of redistributed building debris.

In the west half of Area 2, topsoil and rubble layers (F200 & F201) overlay the remnants of a mortared stone stair which ascended in two flights to a doorway in the north wall of the church. The stair was built directly over a mixed soil layer (F215).

The mixed soil layer (F215) in the west half of Area 2 sealed several unmarked graves (F208, F209, F210, F211, F212, F213) and one (F205) with a surviving headstone (F204) which protruded from the layer. The graves themselves were cut through the surface of an underlying mixed soil layer (F216) and through patchy spreads of white lime mortar (F206, F207).



ILLUS 4 North-facing section through steps and stratified deposits at the north side of the church (Area 2)



## AREA 3 (ILLUS 3)

Topsoil was removed to expose the surface of a disturbed soil layer (F301) with bone fragments and frequent mortar inclusions. No new structural features or graves were recorded, although the lower portion of a table-tomb within the enclosure was exposed to reveal ornate pillars, a plain pedestal, and figure carving at either end.

## AREA 4 (ILLUS 3)

Topsoil and rubble were removed in Area 4 to expose the surface of a disturbed soil layer (F401) and the foundation plinth (F402) of the buttress at the north-east corner of the church. Large, squared sandstone blocks (F403) which abutted the plinth in the southern margin of the excavated area are the lowest members of the remnant stone stairs abutting the east wall of the church.

## AREA 5 (ILLUS 3, 5 &amp; 6)

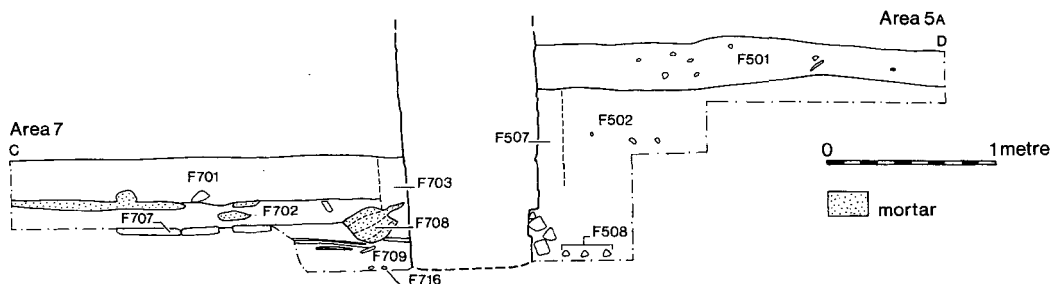
Excavation in Area 5 was divided by narrow baulks into three adjacent areas at the south face of the church (illus 3). In all three areas, architectural features were exposed by the removal of topsoil (F501) and deep spits of the underlying disturbed soil layer (F502 & F511).

*Area 5A: foundations and grave*

In Area 5A, the mortared rubble foundations (F503) of the south wall of the church were exposed (illus 3 & 5). No foundation trench or fill could be defined for the church wall in this area, and a loose, intermittent fill of sandy soil (F507) at the wall-face is interpreted instead as root disturbance (illus 5). A small test-pit at the wall-face partly exposed the long-bones of a burial (F508) *in situ* at the foot of the wall (illus 5). No attempt was made to excavate these remains and it is not clear whether they predate the extension of the church into this area.

*Area 5B: primary and secondary foundations*

Excavation in Area 5B exposed the conjunction of the roughly laid, mortared foundations (F503) of the secondary walls with the earlier, chamfered plinth (F509) ascribed to the primary phase of the building.



ILLUS 5 West-facing section through the south wall of the church (west end) and abutting stratigraphy (Areas 5A & Area 7)

### Area 5c: abutting wall remnants

In Area 5c, remnants of two mortared walls (F505 & F506) of random-rubble construction were found to abut the south wall of the church on either side of a blocked doorway (illus 3). These enclosed an area c 2.3 m wide and extended to c 2.5 m from the south face of the church. A return is suggested at the terminus of the western wall (F505) by a single, large, sandstone block which is keyed to the wall and projects towards the companion eastern wall (F506). Unfortunately, on this slender evidence, it is impossible to say whether the walls are remnants of an enclosure completed by a third wall to the south, or even of a roofed structure. Nonetheless, it is quite likely that they represent a small porch or vestry. An inscribed headstone (F514) erected over the remnants of the western wall (F505) provides a *terminus ante quem* of 1699 for its demolition (illus 6).

### Area 5c: graves

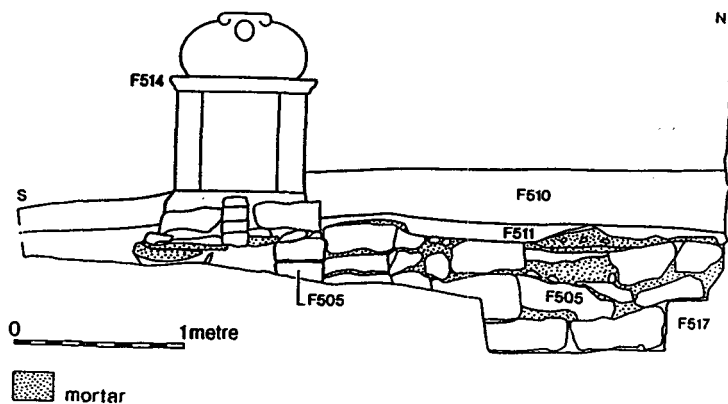
Other features recorded by excavation in Area 5c included three graves. Two of these appeared as unmarked grave-fills (F515 & F516) and remained unexcavated. The third was the grave of an infant which had been laid in shallow topsoil over the projecting primary foundation course (F517) of the church wall. The grave was identified as a concentration of disturbed and disarticulated skeletal remains (F512). The remains were accompanied by several modern dress pins; iron nails (F513) occurred at regular intervals about the burial. The presence of dress pins and the arrangement of the iron nails suggest that the infant was wrapped in some sort of burial shroud within a simple box.

### AREA 6 (ILLUS 3)

Within the enclosure which delimits Area 6, a topsoil layer 0.5 m deep contained thin, intermittent lenses of building debris. The topsoil layer was removed to expose the surface of a layer of mixed sandy soil with mortar, charcoal and bone inclusions (F602), the foundation plinth (F605) of the enclosure wall as well as rubble foundation material (F604) beneath its east wall and the disturbed foundations (F603) of the adjacent church wall.

### AREA 7 (ILLUS 3 & 5)

Topsoil and rubble (F701 & F702) were removed in Area 7 to expose an intact floor (F707) of large, irregular, stone flags (illus 3). Locally, spreads of mortar, compacted silty-sand and charcoal overlay the flags. The



ILLUS 6 East-facing elevation of appended porch or vestry wall and 17th-century headstone (Area 5c)

flagged floor does not extend to the church wall, but is bordered by a margin of compacted soil lenses (F709) and by mortar lenses (F708) which have collapsed from the wall face (illus 5).

There is some evidence from Area 7 that the church wall was erected within a shallow foundation trench, but this is not well defined, and the fill of loose, sandy soil (F703) recorded at the wall face is more likely to be a product of root intrusion and water-sorting.

A grave was partly exposed at the base of the south wall, represented by a group of extended long-bones (F716). No attempt was made to excavate these remains and it is not clear whether they predate the extension of the church or, like burials recorded in Area 8, were interred at a later date within the building.

#### AREA 8 (ILLUS 3, 7, 8 & 9)

Excavation to a limited depth in Area 8 was particularly productive and recorded a complex stratigraphic sequence which included early settlement, primary foundations, burials, later floor remnants and layers of topsoil and rubble.

#### *Floor remnants*

Topsoil (F800, F803) and rubble layers (F801, F802, F804) were removed to expose a number of very poorly preserved floor remnants. These were of various materials (illus 7 & 8) as described here individually:

F807 Several large stones (diameter 0.2–0.5 m), both rounded and angular, are set in a bedding layer of dumped soil (F809).

F808 Stiff, plastic, mottled clay with occasional charcoal inclusions forms thin, irregular spreads.

F813 A mortar spread exhibits no obvious wear or smoothing, but includes a few slate fragments which may have formed the floor surface. The mortar is white, soft and friable.

F814 Several, large (0.1–0.4 m), irregular stones have a loose, humic, wormcast soil in the interstices. Mortar adheres to a few of the stones, and presumably these derive from reused masonry.

F815 A group of thin, angular, sandstone flags (length 0.15–0.30 m) forms an uneven surface. A few are perforated, indicating their earlier use as roof tiles, in this, or in some other building.

F816 A smaller group of thin sandstone flags is identical to those described by F815.

F820 A thin spread of fine, white mortar has a distinctly smoothed or worn surface. It underlies clay floor layer F808 and is cut by a grave. This is a significant relationship, indicating that this floor remnant predated the numerous burials which occurred within the church.

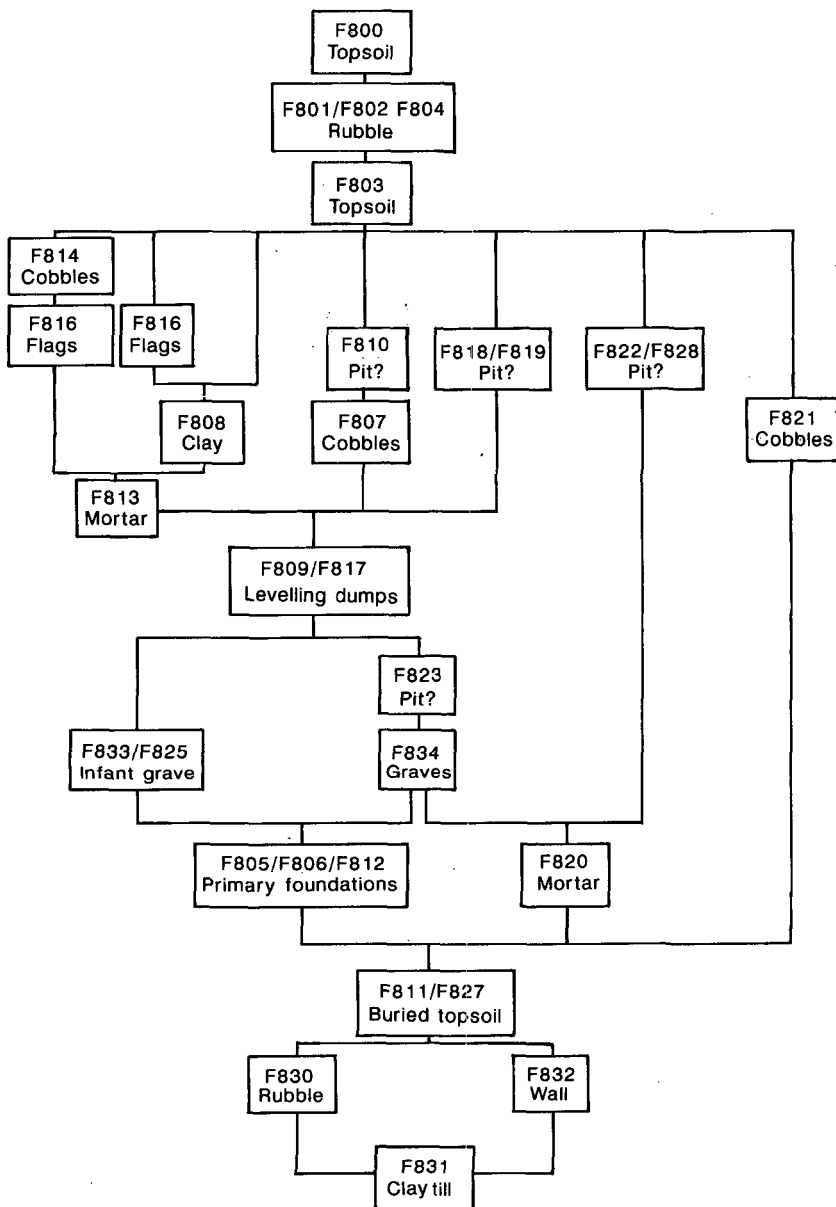
F821 A group of several stones of various sizes may represent a remnant stone floor and is tentatively identified with stone floor F807. The stones are irregularly rounded cobbles up to 0.4 m long, and include a fragment of a large perforated stone object.

#### *Graves*

Beneath these remnant floors and levelling material, numerous intercutting graves were recorded. In illus 8, F834 refers collectively to the unexcavated burials and, in this area, only grave F825 was excavated. This grave contained the articulated skeletal remains, supine and extended, of a small child or infant. At least some of these burials were interred within the church some time after its westward expansion, as some were cut through the robbed foundations (F812) of the demolished primary west wall.

#### *Primary foundations*

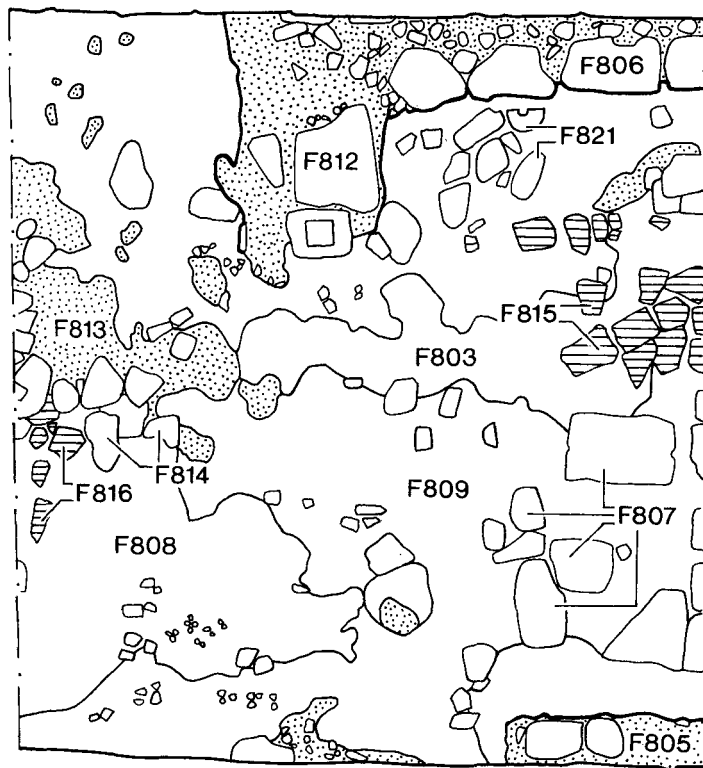
Topsoil removal in Area 8 exposed the primary foundation courses of the north (F806) and south (F805) walls of the church. These consisted of a single course of large sandstone blocks (0.2–0.5 m) containing a rubble core upon which the wall was erected. The kerb and rubble core were bonded by a strong, creamy, lime



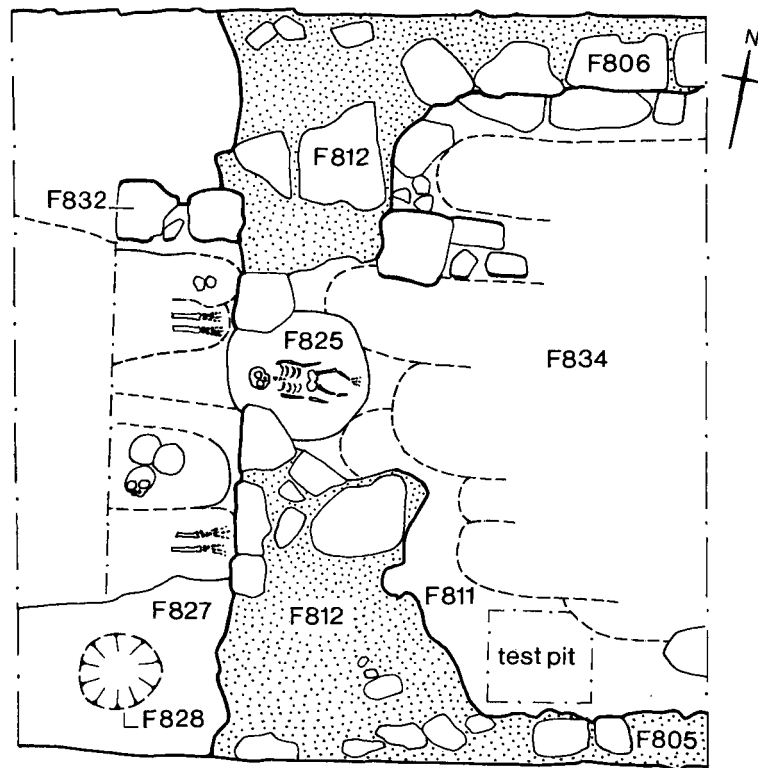
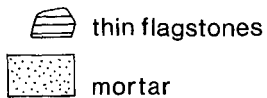
ILLUS 7 Schematized diagram, or matrix, of the stratigraphic relationships in Area 8

mortar which had also been liberally applied as a bedding material beneath the stones. This foundation projected up to 0.2 m from the wall line proper.

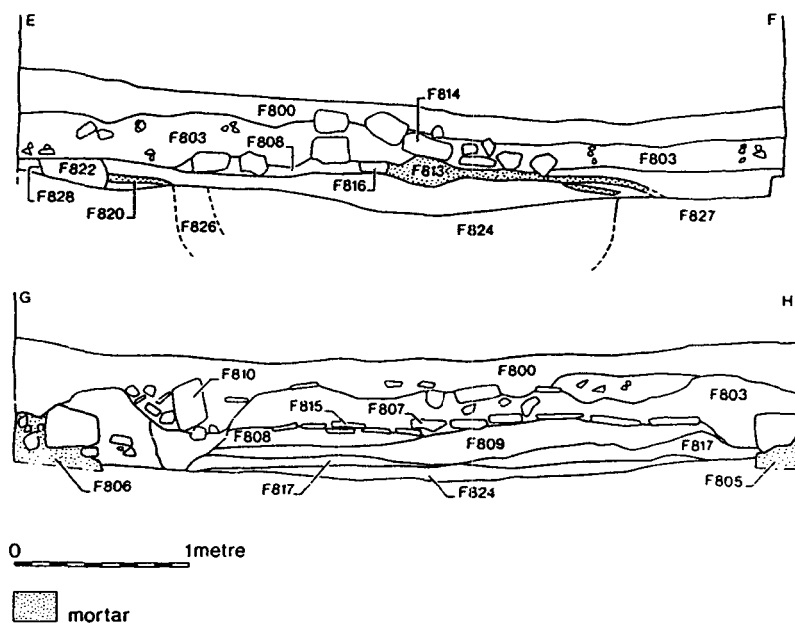
The demolished west wall of the primary church is represented in Area 8 by the foundation remnants which traversed the cutting (F812). An infant's grave (F825 & F833) cut directly through the wall foundation at its mid-point was excavated and afforded the sole opportunity to examine the primary foundations in depth.



1 0 1 metre



ILLUS 8 Two stratigraphic levels in Area 8: successive floor remnants (left) which overlay earlier burials within the church (right). The foundations of the primary west wall (F812) traverse the cutting from north to south



ILLUS 9 East-facing (above) and west-facing (below) sections at the limits of excavation in Area 8, showing topsoil, floor remnants and primary foundations

A deep fill of coarse rubble, in a loose, sandy matrix, lay within a foundation trench 0.95 m wide and at least 0.4 m deep. The trench was cut through earlier layers of topsoil (F811 & F827) and rubble (F830) and into the underlying glacial clay till. Over the rubble trench-fill, a strong, creamy mortar was liberally applied to form a bedding layer for the wall or wall plinth. Unfortunately, only a few stones survive *in situ*. These are large, irregular, undressed, angular blocks, up to 0.65 m in maximum length. There is, thus, inadequate evidence to suggest how the primary west wall was coursed and faced, though it may be said to have been c 0.9 to 0.1 m in width. No threshold, steps, jambs or any other indications of a western entrance survive at this level.

### *Pre-church settlement*

Beneath these primary foundations of the church, evidence was recovered for an earlier period of activity, perhaps settlement predating the building.

A buried natural topsoil layer (F811 & F827) had developed over a layer of mixed rubble and occupation debris in a dark, loose soil matrix (F830). The occupation debris consisted of butchered animal bone and fragments of iron objects, heavily coated in corrosion products.

A linear stone feature is interpreted as a possible pre-church wall remnant. The feature consists of several large stones, extending ESE/WNW over a span of 2.4 m. The stones are not bonded in clay or mortar, but are interpreted as a wall remnant because their axes are aligned and they are arranged to present a fair face. This feature is cut by the primary foundation trench (F812) of the west wall; it rests directly on the underlying clay subsoil layer (F830) and is abutted and partly overlain by the pre-church topsoil layer (F811 & F827).

### *Scaffold pits*

Other features recorded in Area 8 included several small, rubble-filled pits (eg F828, illus 8) which are interpreted as post-pits for temporary works or scaffolding of various periods.

## DISCUSSION: PHASING AND CHRONOLOGY

Excavation at Cockpen Church has recorded a long and complex history of activities on the site, including pre-church settlement, remodelling and expansion of the primary church, its use – internally – as part of the parish cemetery, its renovations in later periods and its ultimate abandonment in the 19th century. The limited scope of excavations has meant that, to some extent, the recorded evidence is piecemeal and in all areas the evidence is incomplete.

### PRE-CHURCH SETTLEMENT

The layer of rubble and midden material which predates the church (Area 8) almost certainly represents some form of earlier settlement. Its date may only be surmised. It is unlikely that iron objects and butchered animal bone would survive from a remote prehistoric period in such a small sample area (a single test-pit within Area 8) and this pre-church settlement was probably itself of medieval date. Clarke (1984, 76) attests that English parish churches were commonly founded on the sites of pre-existing medieval crofts or tenements.

### PRIMARY CHURCH AND EARLY BURIALS

A primary phase in the construction and use of the church is represented in the excavated areas by the early foundations and chamfered plinth on which the north and south walls were raised, and in particular by the early foundations of the demolished west wall (Area 8). These excavated features correspond to the fine, squared and coursed masonry visible in the east half of the standing remains of the building and, collectively, they represent a short, unicameral, primary structure c 10 m long by 4.7 m wide (or about half the length of the present ruins). The chamfered plinth (Area 4 & Area 5) and short proportions of this building suggest a primary phase of distinctly Romanesque character. This assessment is confirmed by the occasional appearance in secondary masonry of the voussoirs of a substantial round arch with chevron mouldings. These stones almost certainly derive from an ornate, Romanesque doorway which was destroyed when the primary west facade was demolished to extend the building. Thus, Cockpen church may be added to the number of early parish churches in Scotland which Cruden (1986, 127) described as being represented by fugitive and fragmentary examples of Romanesque work. Previously, the church has been assigned a 13th-century date (MacGibbon & Ross 1896, vol 2, 303; RCAHMS 1929, 12), but, on this present evidence, the primary phase of the building is most likely to be of 12th- or even late 11th-century date.

The partly exposed skeletal remains near the west end of the present building (Area 5A & Area 7) were not excavated and their relationship with the building is unclear. There is a high likelihood that these are early burials, dating to a period when the immediate environs of the primary building were first in use as a burial ground. In general, it is clear that the church environs have been used as a cemetery on all sides, and earlier burials are represented everywhere by the numerous fragments of disturbed human skeletal remains which occurred in all excavated areas.

### REMODELLING OF THE EAST GABLE

Collateral Romanesque and Gothic features are not unknown in Scottish ecclesiastical architecture and round-headed features, for instance, are found to persist in Gothic churches until the late medieval period (MacGibbon & Ross 1896, vol 1, 46–7). None the less, the suite of circular and

lancet windows in the east gable of the present church are clearly at odds with the primary Romanesque phase which was proposed above. I am grateful to Simon Green (RCAHMS) for the suggestion that not only are these windows secondary features, but that the entire east gable of the church was rebuilt in the 13th century. This would account for the unusual clasping buttresses which have been applied to consolidate the rebuilt gable, and the conspicuous fault lines which have developed at the angles, where the keying of the old and new masonry has begun to fail.

#### EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

The enlargement of the nave by a westward extension of the church is evident in the poorer masonry at this end of the building and in a clearly defined masonry scar at the mid-point of the south wall. Below ground level, excavation has supplied even more concrete evidence. On the south side, a clear disjunction is recorded between the cut-stone plinth of the primary building and the rubble-built foundation courses of the secondary wall (Area 5B). Within the church (Area 8), the foundation remnants of the demolished primary west wall supply unequivocal evidence of enlargement.

Proudfoot (1983) has argued the direct correlation between increase in the area of the nave and increase in parish population. A period of local economic prosperity might be expressed in purely ornamental terms, for instance, by refenestration or the erection of a tower. In contrast, an increase in the space available for public worship may be interpreted to reflect a basic need for more room to kneel and stand by a growing population. In these terms, the enlargement of the medieval nave at Cockpen must be regarded as a significant point in any more general history of the parish. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say when this enlargement of the church was carried out. The quality and character of the work is inferior to the 13th-century workmanship which appears in the rebuilt east gable, and almost certainly belongs to some later episode of remodelling. On the other hand, as several graves are cut through the demolished, primary west wall foundation, the enlargement demonstrably predates the period – possibly in the mid- or late 14th century – in which burials began to occur within the church.

The excavated evidence in Area 7 does not record a history of floor replacements and the flagged floor recorded in the extended west end of the building may be an original feature. In contrast, excavation in Area 8 recorded evidence for several, successive floors in various materials. The earliest floor remnant recorded in Area 8 – mortar spread F820 – may represent a primary floor: it is cut by a grave and is certainly a relatively early feature. Several of the other floor remnants appear to be late or post-Reformation features. The clay floor spreads (F808) contained a fragment of clay pipe stem. Two 16th-century coins were sealed by the sandy bedding layers (F809 & F817) which underlay both the clay spreads and several stone floor remnants (F805, F814, F815 & F816). The coins, a billon penny (Mary) and billon hardhead (James VI), appear to supply *terminus post quem* dates of 1556 and 1588 respectively for the later floors.

#### INTERNAL BURIALS

The numerous burials recorded within the church (Area 8) overlie the foundations of the primary west gable and clearly post-date the enlargement of the building in the medieval period. They also underlie a series of floor remnants of post-Reformation date. These stratigraphic relationships have some importance in terms of dating the fashion for public burial within parish churches. Clark (1984, 73) suggests that burials within English churches became common from the 14th or 15th century. Rodwell (1981, 146), however, while agreeing that burial within churches was a later medieval



phenomenon, suggests that it was a restricted privilege until after the Reformation, enjoyed by the clergy and their patrons, and did not become a universal fashion until a much later period. 'In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the desire for indoor burial became an obsession. Merchants, farmers, architects, physicians and a host of others managed to buy their way into the church' (Rodwell 1981, 146). The stratigraphic relationships of the internal burials at Cockpen would seem to address this question directly. However, in view of the constant upheaval and replacement of floor materials during frequent grave-digging inside the church, this stratigraphy may not be as straightforward as it appears. Rodwell (1981, 147) characterises the effects of grave-digging on church floors as 'a dreadful patchwork of materials, sinking and uneven'. The mosaic of improvised floor materials in Area 8 implies that the clay pipe fragment and 16th-century coins found in floor layers in this area may have been deposited in their final positions after numerous upheavals and the *terminus ante quem* dates they appear to supply for the underlying graves may not be secure.

#### LATER BURIALS

All of the remaining graves recorded by the excavation represent relatively late use of the church environs as a cemetery. In stratigraphic terms, they are divided into those burials which predate and those which post-date appended post-Reformation structures.

At the north side of the church (Area 2), several graves were recorded which are demonstrably earlier than the appended stairs. One of the graves is marked by a late 17th-century headstone (the inscription is weathered and indecipherable) and an Early Modern date is suggested for this group of burials in general. In contrast, several burials were recorded which post-date structures appended to the church in the respective areas of excavation. In Area 1, these are two unmarked graves and a stone tomb, and in Area 5c, the infant burial, several unmarked graves and the burial marked by a 17th-century headstone. In purely stratigraphic terms, these constitute a discrete group of late burials. In practical terms, however, these graves are simply the latest surviving examples of continuous cemeterial use of the church environs until early in the last century.

#### APPENDED STRUCTURES

No evidence has been found to invalidate the late dates previously assigned to the upstanding structures appended to the church.

The Dalhousie Aisle has been transformed and renovated several times. It is quite likely that it was originally erected, not as a burial vault, but as an aisle – perhaps in the 16th century – which opened to the nave. A plain arch which spans the width of the aisle may be traced in the fabric of the north wall of the church interior. Later put-logs in the same wall-face indicate that there has been a gallery at this point within the church, though an earlier gallery or loft may have existed over the aisle itself.

The wall remnants appended on the south face of the church are most likely to have been a porch or, more probably a vestry, suggesting a post-Reformation date for their construction. The alternative, that they may have been built to house a sacristy during some episode of renovation in the medieval period, is considered a possible, but less likely interpretation. As described above, a headstone erected on one of the wall remnants supplies a *terminus ante quem* of 1699 for its demolition.

The burial enclosure on the east end of the north side is symmetrically arranged about a late 17th- or early 18th-century table-tomb (the weathered inscription cannot be read) and is likely to be of similar date.

In contrast, there is little evidence with which to date the structure appended to the south side of the church near its west end. This structure has also been described as a vestry (NMR 36 SW no 3), but the walls appear to be of two phases and it may originally have been a burial enclosure or vault.

#### ABANDONMENT AND TOPSOIL DEVELOPMENT

The abandonment of the site is represented in all areas by the development of a deep, loose, strongly rooted, humic topsoil with frequent inclusions of rubble, slate, mortar and other building debris.

#### ARTEFACTS CATALOGUE

##### COINS AND COIN-WEIGHT

N M McQ Holmes

##### *Scotland*

MARY: billon penny, second issue (1556), as Stewart (1967) no 164. 15.0 mm x 14.5 mm, 0.53 g, die axis 3.5. Slightly bent; some very light pitting; slight to moderate wear. From Excavation Area 8, F809, Find No 810.

JAMES VI: billon hardhead, second issue (Nov 1588), as Stewart (1967), no 200. 19.0 mm x 18.5 mm, 1.03 g, die axis 7.0. Some surface corrosion and accretion; moderate wear. From Excavation Area 8, F823, Find No 809.

##### *Ireland*

JAMES II: brass 'gunmoney' shilling (May 1690). 23.0 mm x 24.0 mm, 4.10 g, die axis 12.0. Slight corrosion and accretion; green patina; slight wear. From Excavation Area 8, F800, Find No 800.

GEORGE III: copper halfpenny (1805). 7.90 g, die axis 6.0. Damaged green patina, very worn. Excavation Area 5, F511, Find No 526.

##### *Netherlands*

Zeeland; brass coin-weight (1601), as Pol (1990), Type 95ae. 16 mm square, 4.09 g, die axis 9.0; obv: lion seated to left beneath Gothic canopy, between two groups of three columns; representation of stone slabs (?) below; rev: shield bearing arms of Zeeland (lion rising from water); M on either side; tower between 0 and 1 above; D below; all within wreath. Slight surface damage and accretion; slight to moderate wear. From unstratified context: stray find on site.

The coin-weight is for a gold *gouden leeuw* or *lion d'or*, a coin first issued by Philip III (the Good), Duke of Burgundy, during the period 1454–66 for use in the Burgundian Netherlands (van der Chijs 1858, 445–6). The theoretical mass of these coins was 4.25 g (Pol 1990, 99). The denomination reappeared, with similar designs, in the late 16th century, both in Flanders, where they were minted at Bruges in 1583–4 (Bastien & Duplessy 1975, 53–4 & Plate XII, no 166), and in Brabant, minted at Anvers in 1584–5 (de Mey 1976, 123, no 613). The theoretical mass of these later issues was 4.14 g (Pol 1990, 99). The coin-weight found at Cockpen was made by Maarten du Mont at Middelburg in 1601 and presumably was intended for

weighing the late 16th-century coins of Flanders and Brabant, although it is not impossible that some of the earlier Burgundian coins were still in circulation. If so, they would have been fairly worn, and the minimum acceptable mass may have been adjusted to allow for this. At 4.09 g even today, the weight corresponds acceptably to the 4.14 g of the later issue, at which the earlier coins may conceivably have been allowed to pass by the beginning of the 17th century.

#### MISCELLANEOUS ARTEFACTS AND OTHER FINDS

##### Jerry O'Sullivan

A detailed catalogue of all finds recovered during the excavation may be consulted in the *Stratigraphic Report* (O'Sullivan 1993) which has been archived with other records from the excavation in the National Monuments Record, Edinburgh. The archive includes radiographic photographs and conservation reports relating to selected metal objects. The following is a short summary drawing attention to the principal categories of finds.

##### *Human skeletal remains*

Quantities of disturbed human skeletal remains were found in all areas. Bones were retained from an individual burial only in the case of the infant burial excavated in Area 5c (F512). Though a second grave was excavated in Area 8 (F825), the bones were left in situ.

##### *Animal bone*

Butchered animal bone occurred in only two contexts: in the topsoil layer in Area 1 and in the pre-church occupation layer (F830) recorded in Area 8.

##### *Stone*

Stone objects were chiefly masonry fragments or perforated slates and stone tiles, but a stone floor remnant (F821) in Area 8 included part of a large, perforated object, possibly a net-sinker, a roof-weight or a quern fragment.

##### *Metal*

Metal objects include numerous iron nails as well as several coffin handles and other coffin furnishings, a possible window bar (from topsoil in Area 7) and a lead came fragment (from topsoil in Area 2).

##### *Ceramics*

Clay pipe fragments were recovered from several contexts, chiefly from topsoil and spits in disturbed soil layers, though one fragment was found within the clay floor remnant (F808) in Area 8. Other ceramic artefacts included miscellaneous pot sherds, with glazed and sponged white ware, china ware and green-glazed medieval ware, all of which were recovered from topsoil or from disturbed contexts.

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