

Abbey, market and cemetery: topographical notes on Coupar Angus in Perthshire, with a description of archaeological excavations on glebe land by the parish church

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ABSTRACT

A general review of the topography and archaeology of Coupar Angus in Perthshire attempts to draw together several strands of information. The chief focus of interest is in the site of the former Cistercian Abbey. The possibility of settlement in earlier periods is considered. The history of the Abbey is briefly outlined. An evolution of the modern town is proposed, centred on a market place at the Abbey gates. The final section describes identification of an early cemetery by recent archaeological excavation on glebe land by the present parish church. Excavation and publication were funded by Historic Scotland.

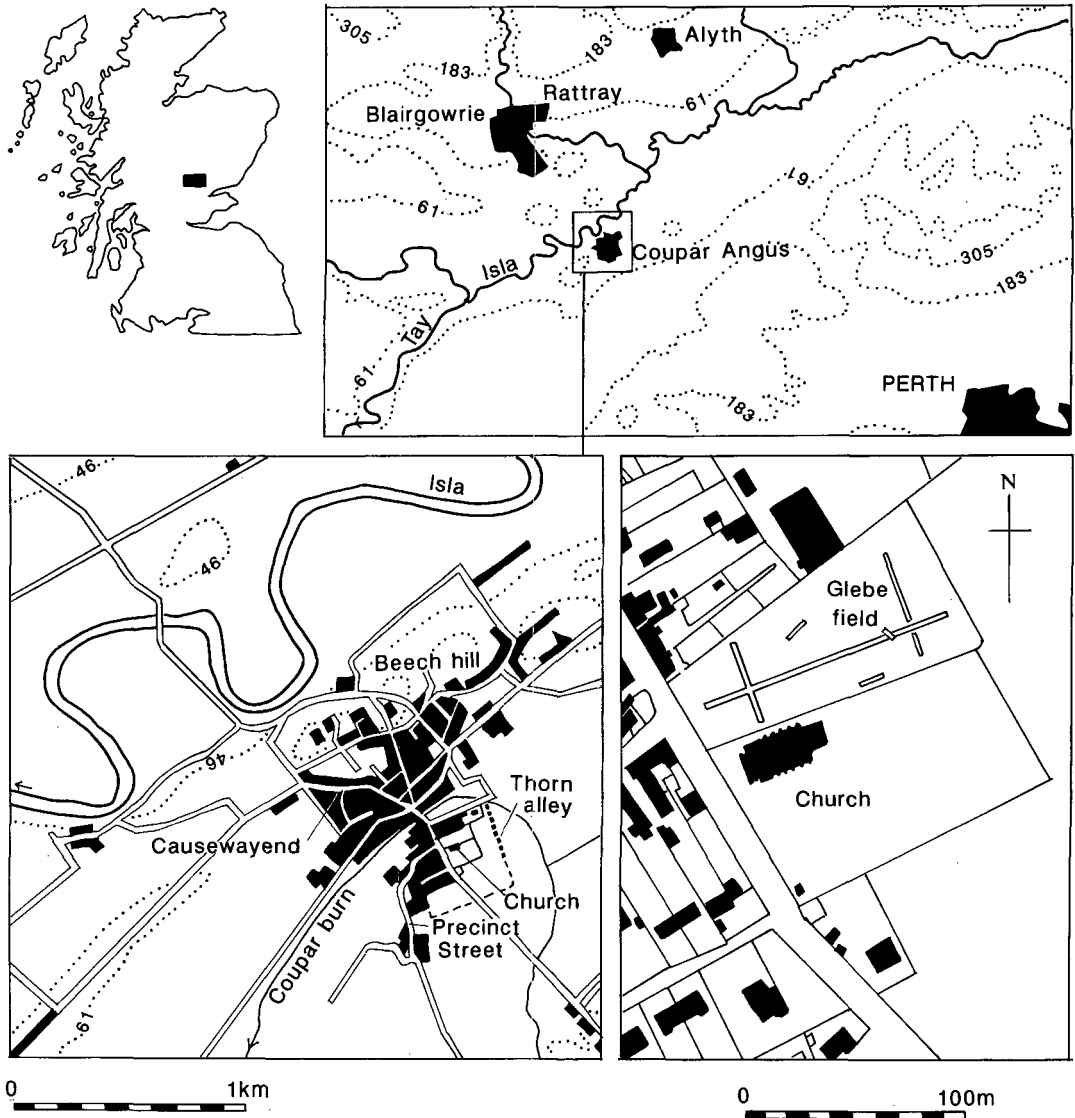
INTRODUCTION

The name Coupar is possibly derived from the Gaelic *Cul-Bharr*, or rear-of-the-ridge (Warden 1882, 129). The Cistercian Abbey of Coupar Angus was sited on a slight prominence in an area which is generally low-lying and poorly drained. To the north, a long ridge rises from the modern town to overlook the Isla river valley from its northern suburb at Beech Hill (illus 1).

Coupar Angus Abbey was the fifth house of the Cistercians in Scotland. It enjoyed a long period of growth until the mid-14th century, and though its fortunes were more mixed thereafter, it remained, until the Reformation, one of the wealthiest of Scottish monastic houses. In 1606–7, the Abbey, with its estates and privileges, was established as a temporal lordship for James Elphinstone, Lord Coupar. The modern town evolved in the Abbey's environs and appears to be centred on the site of the market cross which stood before the monastery's main gate. The town has grown, however, while the Abbey has long since disappeared. In the post-Reformation years the material dissolution of the Abbey appears to have been gradual, but relentless, and almost nothing remained of the church and conventual buildings by the late 18th century.

Today there is little evidence of the former monumental character of the site, and the ground is occupied by a modern cemetery and Victorian parish church. These probably occupy the site of

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

the original church and cloister. Immediately to the north of the parish church, the Glebe Field was the subject of the recent archaeological assessment described below.

In contrast to the paucity of architectural evidence, numerous documents relating to the Abbey survive. Charters, rentals and leases give an often detailed, though chronologically uneven account of the foundation and fortunes of the convent over four centuries. The documents assembled by Easson in his *Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus* are described by that editor as 'an assemblage of Cistercian writs ... second only to the volumes containing the Melrose charters' (*Charters* 1, v). A work of equal breadth is Rogers's *Register of Coupar Angus Abbey*, containing a breviary of the Abbey register, records of leases of lands and churches from 1443 to 1538, of feu charters from

1538 to 1559 and rentals for the years 1542 and 1561–2. Rogers was justified in heralding the publication of these documents as a remarkable 'illustration of the condition of Scottish husbandry and rural life in the century preceding the Reformation' (*Register* 1, xxvi). In fact, these documents are the principal source for Franklin's classic study of monastic estate management in *A History of Scottish Farming* (1952). Both Rogers's (1880) and Franklin's (1952) accounts are recommended for descriptions of all aspects of the Abbey's estate management: animal and plant husbandry, the exclusion of pests, strategies for the enclosure, fertilizing and drainage of fields, the exploitation of peat mosses, the carriage of goods, conditions of feu-tenure and even details of the stock, food, furnishings and appurtenances of the monastic household itself. Easson's 'Introduction' (1947) offers an analytical history of the Abbey, whilst general histories have also been published by Warden (1881, 91–123), Cochrane (1964) and Sievwright (1983) amongst others.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN REMAINS

Little is known about the organization of the cultural landscape of Coupar Angus in any age or period preceding its monastic years. A kerbed cairn of Bronze Age date was excavated at Beech Hill, in the northern outskirts of the town, and, in remarking on other prehistoric burials in the area, the excavator expressed regret that the whereabouts of a 'Roman urn' found thereabouts in the 18th century were now unknown (Stevenson, this volume).

The designation 'Roman urn' is probably inspired by the tradition that Coupar Angus is the site of a Roman camp. The present parish church and cemetery are centrally located within the remains of a large, rectilinear earthwork (illus 1). Opinion is divided, however, as to whether this feature delimited some part of the Cistercian precinct or is indeed a Roman camp which was exploited by the Abbey's founding convent. Maitland supplies the earliest detailed description of the enclosure: 'The military way running through Coupar Moor, passed on the northern side of the beautiful Roman camp at the southern end of the town of Coupar of Angus, about nine miles from Bertha. This camp, in which was situated the Abbey of Coupar, the remains of which are still to be seen; this camp, I say, appears to have been an equilateral quadrangle of 400 yards, fortified with two strong ramparts and large ditches, still to be seen on the eastern and southern side, and on part of the northern; but the western, by agriculture, is demolished' (Maitland 1757, 199). Crawford verified the accuracy of Maitland's measurements, though the intervening decades had levelled almost all but the eastern rampart, but was cautious in his interpretation of the enclosure and preferred to say that 'the existing state of the remains is such that no opinion can be formed about their age' (Crawford 1949, 82). The Royal Commission comments that the earthwork may be of either Cistercian or Roman construction, but observes that it compares well with Flavian-period marching camps elsewhere in Strathmore (RCAHMS 1994, 86). Mechan & Burnett (1974, 53) excavated a portion of the southern ditch and suggested that the enclosure resembled a Roman camp of the Stracathro type. In favour of this interpretation, it should be pointed out that the half a carucate described by William the Lion's endowment of a site for the Abbey (*Charters* 1, 3) is approximately twice the area of land that is contained by an enclosure of 400 yards square; whether or not the earthwork is of Cistercian date, it cannot have enclosed the entire area of the primary precinct.

The question of a Roman presence at Coupar Angus can be directly addressed only by further excavations within the enclosure. No identifiable Roman features were recorded by recent excavations in the town (Rees & Duffy 1994; O'Sullivan 1993, and below). However, the absence

of excavated features of Roman date does not constitute strong negative evidence in this case. The interiors of Roman marching camps are notoriously unrewarding for field archaeology: pits and peg-holes often being the sole dividends of excavation (Keppie 1986, 27).

PRE-MONASTIC MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

Whether some form of settlement more immediately predated the monastery at Coupar Angus is also unclear. The Cistercian preference for *Novalia*, or unbroken ground, is enshrined in the statutes of the order. Such sites would have afforded not only spiritual isolation, but the more material benefit of freedom from parish tithes which might otherwise be incurred. Easson assumes this general preference as a rule, and urges that, in reconstructing the landscape of 12th-century Coupar Angus, it is necessary to imagine wild and uncultivated country (*Charters* 1, xxiv). However, the historical evidence calls for a more guarded view, and the traditional view of the Cistercians as pioneers or reclaimers of wastes is now widely challenged. According to Alfonso (1991, 8), local studies reveal that Cistercian settlements in Europe 'were almost entirely located in previously inhabited areas'. In England, Walter Map, in about 1190, complained that the Cistercians 'raze villages and churches ... and level everything before the ploughshare' (Donkin 1988, 39); of all recorded Cistercian granges in England and Wales, only 40% were established on territories that were previously waste or marginal (*ibid*, 40). However, Cistercian colonization need not have involved total displacement of existing populations, and it has been suggested (Platt 1969, 134; Franklin 1952, 51) that, on previously settled land, reorganization rather than expulsion may have been the norm: 'Here they were able to carry out their custom of acquiring all the rights over the villages and land around them, then turning them into granges by collecting the bondmen and their families there and pulling down their original cottages' (Franklin 1952, 51–2).

The site assigned by Malcolm IV in 1159 for the projected foundation at Coupar Angus is described as 'the Royal Manor of Coupar in Gowrie' (Cowan & Easson 1976, 72). Evidently then, a settlement in the valley of the river Isla was already recognized by the name which it still bears. The designation 'Royal Manor' suggests that some form of pre-existing agrarian community may have been displaced to make way for the direct labour system preferred by the Cistercians in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Clear evidence for the existence of an earlier parish church or chapel in the neighbourhood of the monastery would help to establish the case for pre-existing settlement. Unfortunately, the evidence is far from clear. Cowan offers succinct and apparently forthright information in this regard: 'The Bishop of St Andrews surrendered any rights which he may have possessed in this church to the monks of Coupar Angus on the foundation of their house by Malcolm IV (1161 x 1162)...[the] church was evidently earlier than the Abbey, but thereafter its parochial existence was co-existent with it' (Cowan 1967, 36). Unfortunately, it is not at all clear which church is the subject of Cowan's statement. Easson's information in the matter is directly opposed to Cowan's. Easson considers a purported bull of Celestine III confirming the endowment of lands and a church at Coupar Grange, but dismisses both its details and authenticity in the following terms: 'Hitherto there had probably been no church in the area between Bendochy to the north and Kettins to the south; and the mention of a church situated in the grange of Coupar is in all likelihood a somewhat clumsy piece of 'common form'. Such territory as that in which the Cistercians made their colony was, ecclesiastically, a 'no-man's land', not over-run by the development of the parochial system and – unproductive and without inhabitants – as yet without the incidence of teinds' (*Charters* 1, 33). A solution tentatively advanced by the Royal Commission suggests that an early parish church may have been located at Bendochy, the royal manor of Coupar Angus having embraced a joint parochial area comprising both Bendochy and Coupar Angus (RCAHMS 1994, 127).

More locally, the abbreviates of the Abbey register record the Bishop of Dunkeld's confirmation to the monks of a church at Keithick in 1211 x 1214 (Register 1, 351). The present-day 'Mains of Keithick' lies within two kilometres of Coupar Angus to the south-west. In the early 13th century 'Keithick' probably designated a monastic grange and associated settlement in that locality.

Clearly, though there is little positive evidence for pre-Cistercian medieval settlement in the environs of Coupar Angus Abbey, the possibility should not be dismissed outright. Certainly Easson's depiction of a 'wild and uninhabited country' seems ill at odds with the likely density of rural settlement in a fertile area which already supported a developing parochial system.

THE CISTERCIAN ABBEY

Unfortunately, the material remains of the Abbey are scarcely more in evidence than any settlement which may have preceded it. The dispersal of known architectural fragments is described by the Royal Commission (RCAHMS 1994, 128–30), a notable group being reused at neighbouring Arthurstone Farm. In the south-west corner of the present graveyard, c 60 m south-west of the parish church, there is an impressive fragment of standing masonry (a plain arch in a massive, angle-buttressed wall) known as the 'gate-house'. From these meagre remains it is difficult to imagine that the Abbey was once the dominant monumental feature in the medieval landscape of Strathmore. The Abbey does have a monument none the less in the rich documentary legacy from which its history has been traced by Easson (*Charters*), Rogers (*Register*) and others.

EARLY DECADES: PROSPERITY AND GROWTH

Coupar Angus was a daughter-house of Melrose. The Abbey was the fifth house of the Cistercians in Scotland, following foundations at Newbattle (1140), Dundrennan (1142), Kinloss (1150) and Melrose (1163). Coupar Angus may ultimately have been the wealthiest of these houses and enjoyed considerable royal patronage in its early years. Waltheof, abbot of Melrose and an uncle of Malcolm IV, is attributed with the ambition to establish a Cistercian house at Coupar Angus. He died in 1159, only a few years before the ambition bore fruit, and Malcolm IV's foundation charters are generally assigned to the years 1161–2. These charters are not extant, but their abbreviates describe the first as a confirmation to the monks of all the king's lands at Coupar and the second as a grant of privileges in the royal forests with charcoal (*carbones*) for their own use (*Register* 1, 319–20).

The surviving endowment charters of William the Lion are more explicit. The first of these (1166 x 1170) bestowed lands in Aberbothrie to the north of Coupar and Campsie to the south-west (*Charters* 1, 1). William's second donation (1171 x 1178) refers specifically to the half carucate provided as a site for the Abbey as well as to rights in the forests and waste of the king's chase at Campsie.

According to the *Chronicle of Holyrood*, a full convent was established at Coupar in 1164 (*Charters* 1, xxiv). It is not known how many pioneers there were in the company of Fulk, its first abbot. A general statute of the order specifying that a new house would be established by 12 monks with their abbot (and an equivalent number of *conversi*) was not made until 1204 but may reflect numbers which were already preferred in practice.

A charter of 1190 x 1214 confirms Peter Polloc's grant to the Abbey of rights in his woods and is attributed by Easson to the ongoing need during this period for building materials (*Charters* 1, 28). A charter of Malcolm, Earl of Atholl, grants construction timbers from his forests and specifies that they will be used for that purpose (*Register* 1, 331).

The church was dedicated to the Virgin in 1233 by the Bishop of Dunkeld, but had evidently been in use by 1186. In that year, the *Chronicle of Holyrood* describes a disturbance in which an outlaw was beheaded before the altar by the Duke of Atholl, and 58 others burned in the abbot's quarters (*Charters* 1, xxviii).

For the century and a half following its foundation, charters of donation measure the steady growth of the Abbey's wealth and prosperity. Donors included successive Scottish kings, and amongst landed families the Hays of Errol and the earls of Atholl were notable benefactors.

Donations were of a variety of forms, the most common being (a) land and associated privileges, such as rights to grazing, peat, water and fishings; (b) granting of rights of way and similar non-portable benefits; (c) the patronage of churches and their revenues (though donations of this form are more characteristic of a later period); (d) road-making facilities; and (e) occasional donations of money.

Easson attributes the bounty of the Abbey's patrons to a universal and earnest faith in the efficacy of the monks' petitions on behalf of souls in purgatory (*Charters* 1, xxx). Candlewax, measured by the stone, is a constant item in the records of this period, and probably reflects these devotional transactions as much as the more mundane need for light. Burial within the monastic precinct was also perceived as a source of grace, and, although the ordinary laity were almost certainly denied this privilege, wealthier patrons could purchase a posthumous fraternity in the Abbey. Thomas of Lundy gifted a silver merk to the Abbey annually and was rewarded according to his own preference in 1231 when he was buried 'in the cloister before the door of the church, in the spot I have chosen' (*Register* 1, xv). Similarly, a charter of 1305 by William de Hay requested that his body be brought for burial in the chapter house of the Abbey, regardless of 'wherever on the north side of the Forth Death shall have closed my last day' (*Charters* 1, xxx).

Ultimately, through acumen and bounty combined, the monks of Coupar Angus came to establish granges at Aberbothrie, Balbrogie, Carse Grange, Coupar Angus, Drimmie, Keithick and Tullyfergus in Perthshire, and at Kinreich and Airlie in neighbouring Angus (RCAHMS 1994, 127) as well as sundry other endowments, both in these counties and in Aberdeenshire (Murthly) and Banffshire (Alveth).

THE LATER MEDIEVAL PERIOD: STRAITENED CIRCUMSTANCES

From about the period of the reign of David II (1329–71) the Abbey began to experience more uncertain fortunes. Straited circumstances become the constant theme of grants and supplications in the mid-14th century (*Charters* 1, xxxv). Amongst the charters, donations are much less frequent from this time, and such benevolent grants as do occur are sometimes specific responses to the material dilapidation of the monastery. In 1320 x 1328, Maurice, Bishop of Dunblane, consented to the appropriation of a church in Fossaway because 'we have observed with the eyes of pious compassion that the monastery of Coupar ... through diverse hazards of wars and other chance occurrences, will be very greatly bereft in its buildings and other things needful for divine worship and this life' (*Charters* 1, xlvi). A similar formula figures in the bull of Clement VI in 1351, granting the church of Errol to the Abbey. Here it is described as 'exceedingly impoverished in its buildings without and within and in other things necessary for Divine worship and human life and irretrievably deprived of many of its accustomed revenues' (*Charters* 1, xlvi). Several forces may have been at work to deplete the resources of the Abbey: the successive wars of independence, weak government, plague, general lawlessness and, perhaps, too, the gradual demise of the direct labour system throughout this period. Whatever the reasons, it is apparent that the convent of Coupar Angus seems to have failed to maintain either the pattern of growth which

characterized the earlier decades, or the monumental buildings which had been bequeathed to them by that prosperity.

Despite the loss of its earlier vigour, it would be wrong to characterize all of the later medieval period as one of unremitting neglect. It may be noted that, even in the absence of an energetic building programme, there is some evidence of intermittent maintenance and repairs. A frequent stipulation governing the entry of tenants into new leases of the 15th and 16th centuries is a payment towards building maintenance (variously *ad fabricum* or 'to the fabric of the Abbey'). Whether or not this occasional source of revenue was literally contributed to a building maintenance fund, carpenters, slaters and masons appear amongst the skilled artisans whose services were contracted by the Abbey during these decades. The provision of bulk draught for building materials and other goods is a commonly stipulated service in leases of the period, so that, typically, at Whitsun in 1541, Helen Hutsoun gained entry to a tack at Wester Balbrogy and was enjoined thereafter to provide 'draucht zerlie of four oxin and tuay hors, to lyme, sclait, tymmer, colis or salt, fra Dundee or uthir placis' (*Register 2*, 61).

THE LAST DECADES

The closing decades of the Abbey are chronicled in the long career between 1526 and 1562 of Donald Campbell, the last regular abbot of the house. In his early career, Campbell appears as a prelate of commendable orthodoxy. For instance, appointed a commissary of the Chapter General of the Order in 1531, he was empowered to chastise the abuses of other Cistercian houses in Scotland (*Charters 1*, 223). Again, as late as 1553, a solemn instrument appears in his name confirming the resolution of his convent to lead an orderly and abstemious life (*Register 2*, vii). Campbell's later career as abbot underwent an apparent sea-change: perhaps, as a scion of the House of Argyll, his heartfelt sympathy was with more radical reform than simply the enforcement of the Cistercian rule. The report by Camerarius that the Abbey was assailed by a reform mob from Perth in 1559 is uncorroborated (Cowan & Easson 1976, 74), but the Chamberlain's account of 1563 (towards exaction of the Queen's thirds of benefices) suggests that an assault had taken place, and cites a litany of expenses incurred in repairs and make-shift measures to secure the buildings: slates were gathered in the cloister, doorways blocked to safeguard the timbers of the church and steeple from scavengers, repairs were made to the granaries and stables and the abbot's windows were replaced, 'quhilk wer all brokin' (*Register 2*, 280).

Whether or not the impetus for reform did take a dramatic and violent form at Coupar Angus, some form of public pressure prevailed on Campbell to agree that he should 'reforme his place of Coupar, putting down and burning openly all idols and images and tabernacles therein, destroying and putting away the altars. And that no mass be done thereafter, whether privately or openly. And that the superstitious habit of his monks, with their other ceremonies ... and service be removed. And that no prayers be used in the kirk but in the English tongue. And there according to the scriptures of God' (*Charters 2*, 190). Campbell himself is reported to have literally abandoned his ecclesiastical mantle – at least Croft's report of 1559 on the progress of the Scottish Reformation observes dryly that Campbell had 'put on secular weed' (*Charters 1*, 278) – and he subsequently participated in the Convention of Estates which abolished papal jurisdiction in Scotland in August 1560.

Campbell presided over the material as well as the spiritual dissolution of the Abbey. His policy of leasing the Abbey's holdings in feu is characterized by Easson as a 'reckless alienation of church land' (*Charters 1*, lxiii) and, in anticipation of the dissolution, his own relatives received outright gifts of Abbey properties, notably an estate to each of his five illegitimate sons.

THE REFORMATION AND BEYOND

Donald Campbell was succeeded in 1563 by the first secular appointee to the abbacy, the abbot-commendator Leslie Leonard. Leonard's long tenure extended to his retirement from the position in 1603. The last commendator of the Abbey was Andrew Lamb, James VI's own chaplain. One of the last writs of the Abbey is Lamb's procuratory for resigning his title, properties and privileges to the king's hands in 1607, 'the convent of the said Abbey being all now deceased' (*Charters* 2, 251).

In 1606 the remaining lands and baronies were converted by an Act of the Estates into a temporal lordship in favour of James Elphinstone, second son of the first Lord Balmerino. His properties were constituted a Burgh of Barony in 1607. Lord Coupar appears to have kept a household at the Abbey, presumably in the abbot's quarters. At least it is certain that the minister's residence in these years was not at the Abbey. A contract of 1635 between Lord Coupar and the minister, Robert Lindsay, describes the arrangements that were to be made for a manse and glebe: 'The noble Lord binds and obliges him and his successors to design and appoint to the said Mr Robert Lindsay or his successors four aikers and ane half of land lyand beside the town of Coupar as ane manse and glebe to the said Mr Robert and his successors ... but [meantime] the said Mr Robert shall dwell and remain in the dwelling house and yard presently possessed by him at Coupar' (SRO TE5/218). Lord Coupar was fortunate enough to have been absent when the town was sacked by a company of Lord Montrose's Highland Regiment in 1645. Robert Lindsay was less fortunate and received a fatal wound in the defence of his church. Lord Coupar's part in the sequel to these events was not so illustrious, and, in keeping with the parsimony for which he was infamous, he is found suing for his losses in *Parliament* in 1649, and in particular for the recovery of 'an aquavitee pott worth ane hundreth merkis' (*Register* 1, liii).

Elphinstone was the first and last Lord Coupar. He died heirless in 1669. In accordance with his own wish, he was buried 'in his burial place at Coupar without any ceremony' (SRO 217 Box 32/294). Given the combined agencies of time, war and neglect, it is unsurprising that his residence in the Abbey did little to stem the decline of its fabric. His ultimate inheritor, John, third Baron Balmerino, issued letters of charge against Coupar's widow, Marion Ogilvie, 'to repair and put in order the manor place of Coupar' (SRO 217 Box 32/292). Evidently repairs were not effected to any significant extent, as by the mid-1680s, the remains could provoke a blunt elegy from Ouchterlony of Guinde: 'It has been a very sweet place and lyes in a very pleasant country [but is] by now nothing but rubbish' (Mitchell 1907, 35). The dispersal of these remains was rapid and thorough, and it has been ruefully remarked that fragments from the Abbey are to be seen everywhere in the modern town of Coupar Angus, 'showing that the whole place has been built out of the ruins of the monastery' (MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 492). Regarding the Abbey church itself, the final episode in the history of the building is recorded in a note in the Kirk Session Minutes of 1686: 'This week bypast on Friday being May 7th Alex' Rae, Patrick Brown & William Archer masons began to lay the foundatn off the new church being served by two barrowmen John Barrlay hyred to load the stones from the old church, James Simson got to throw down the walls. Ja: Gourlay to digg and carry the mortar – so this work at length after four years obstruction was happily begun' (SRO CH2/395/1).

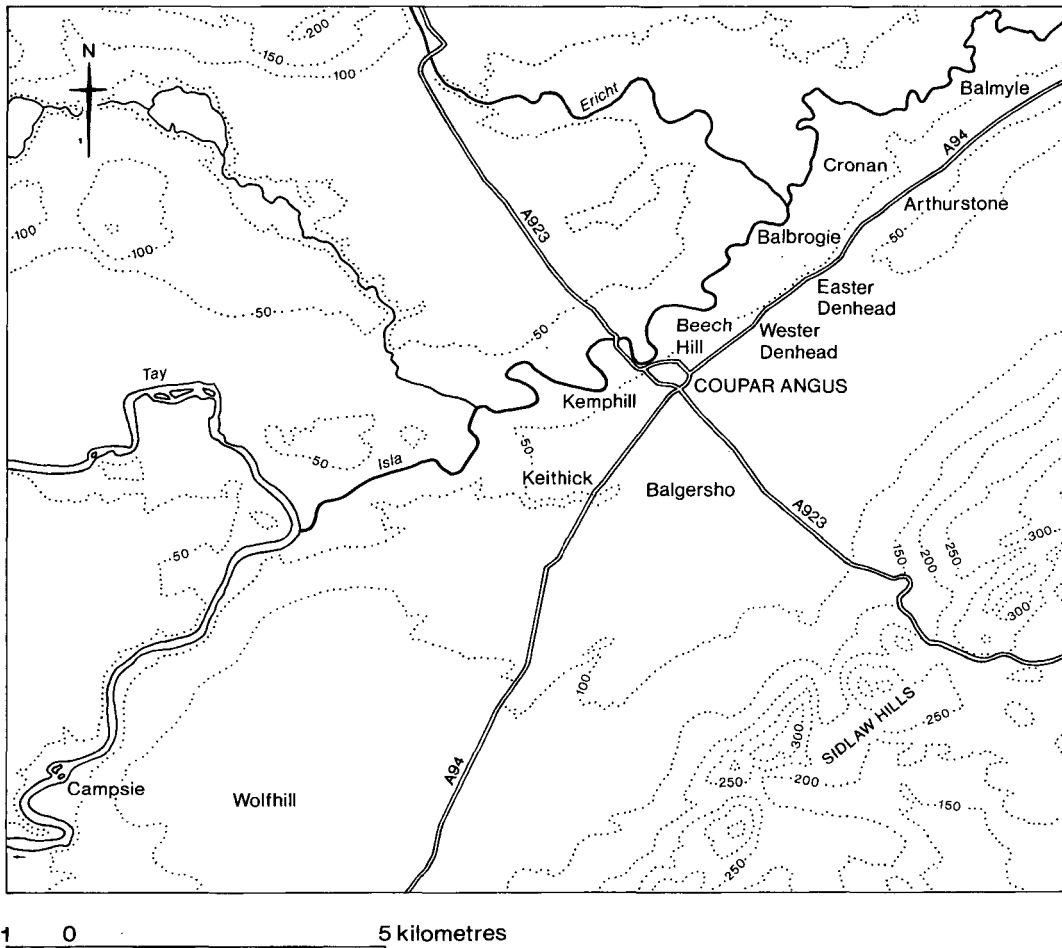
The congregational use of either the original church or its successor is not well documented in this period. Cowan believes that the Abbey church was already in use for parish worship by the time of the Reformation (Cowan 1982, 190). Thereafter, Scott's *Fasti Ecclesiae Scotianae* (1925) identifies no ministers before Henry Guthrie in 1611 and David Leitch in 1622. Cochrane was unable to add to the number and complains of the general paucity of early parish records (Cochrane 1964, 13). After Robert Lindsay's fatal defence of the church in 1645, a successor was not appointed until 1648, and the organization of parish affairs does not acquire visible momentum until the early 1680s, when George Hay's tenure as minister saw the construction and dedication of the new church as well as the start of a largely continuous parish register (Cochrane 1964, 13).

Hay's church was substantially rebuilt in 1780. Ultimately, it was replaced by the present Victorian church, built to the design of local architect John Carver in 1859.

ABBEY, MARKET AND TOWN

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Lord Coupar's newly acquired seat at the Abbey may already, by 1607, have overlooked a nascent urban settlement at Coupar Angus. Despite the purported antipathy of the Cistercians to urban environs, a minority of the Order's Scottish houses became the nuclei of medieval towns. A town developed around Culross, and Kinloss was styled a free Burgh of Barony in 1497 (Donkin 1988, 162). Similarly, an urban settlement at Coupar Angus may have begun to develop in the environs of the Abbey in the pre-Reformation period. The development from rural medieval manor village to Early Modern town was probably constant and gradual. It had begun in the years when the Cistercians still held the Lordship of the burgh and was probably not accelerated significantly by James Elphinstone's tenure as Lord Coupar.



ILLUS 2 The Barony of Keithick – surviving placenames from the rental of 1562 (Based upon the Ordnance Survey map © Crown Copyright)

KEITHICK AND BEECH HILL

The Abbey's township at Keithick was created a free Burgh of Barony by James IV in 1492 (*Charters* 2, 96–8). It is true that the Abbey's records continue to identify Keithick variously as a township or grange, but from this date the name also refers to a much larger area with Coupar Angus itself at its centre. A rental of 1562 divides the Barony of Keithick between those places 'fra the reid croce west' as far as Campsie and Wolfhill, and 'fra the reid croce east', as far as Balmyle (*Register* 1, 353–4), with the area designated 'Baitscheill' being centrally located nearest the pivotal Red Cross (illus 2). Contemporary Beech Hill is a suburb on the northern outskirts of the town (illus 1). The name appears frequently in the records of the Abbey from the 15th century and may once have designated the larger area of settlement between the two poles of the Abbey and the river.

Something of the character of this settlement may be roughly sketched. Both the Abbey's ferryman on the Isla and the hereditary porters of its northern gate made Baitscheill their place of residence. A tradition has been recounted that the Abbey's Regality Court convened on an ancient mound in Beech Hill (Warden 1882, 134), presumably the Bronze Age barrow which was excavated by Stevenson (this volume). The emerging urban status of medieval Baitscheill should not be overstated. The settlement is designated *Ville Baitscheill* in the rental of 1562 (*Register* 2, 184), but the rental applies this description indiscriminately to all centres of settlement on Abbey lands. Furthermore, numerous writs of the Abbey attest to the abiding agrarian character of the area in this period, citing its acres, tofts, gardens, houses and yards, as well as areas of common grazing. On the other hand, the border between town and country in the medieval and Early Modern periods does not always admit strict definition. Whyte has observed that a sizeable proportion of the population of Scottish towns remained actively involved in agriculture throughout the Early Modern period (Whyte 1987, 228). Lynch makes the same point at greater length, citing the burgh of Dumfries, where even in the mid-17th century 'the burgesses reared animals and grew both vegetables and grain inside the town' (Lynch 1987, 13).

THE MARKET AT THE GATES

It is as a centre of trade, as much as of worship and administration, that the Abbey may have created the conditions for urban development. Already, in the mid-14th century, an unofficial market at Coupar Angus was enjoying a volume of trade sufficient to arouse the hostility of competitors in much larger, neighbouring, Royal Burgh markets. The burgesses of Dundee were empowered by David II to send his sheriffs to 'personally go to the town of Kettins, the church of Alyth, the town of Kirriemuir and the monastery of Coupar and there to proclaim that nobody might hold a market of things for sale in these places or have access to them for buying and selling' (*Charters* 2, 98). Presumably, the market was legitimized by the establishment of the Burgh of Barony of Keithick in 1492. Franklin thought that the burgh market was located in the township of Keithick itself, but this was not necessarily the case (Franklin 1952, 56). Evidently a burgh market was held at Coupar Angus or Baitscheill, more specifically at a market cross at the Abbey gates. The scene of the market-place is glimpsed in a late charter of Leonard Leslie in 1581, allocating to his son Alexander lands in Boghall and Baitscheill, together with 'the privileges and liberties of the Burgh of Barony of Keithick, as in the case of the tenants of Baitscheill and Calsayend, with the whole custom of the fair at the gate of the monastery every Friday, of weights and measures, with the custody and use of these, which are to correspond with those of the principal Burgh of Perth, for the custody of which is assigned a piece of land now lying waste on the north side of the market cross' (*Charters* 2, 241).

It has been very adequately demonstrated that a market-place does not always imply associated urban development (Everitt 1976, 178; Unwin 1981, 245; Dyer 1992). Dyer has catalogued the variety of temporary or informal outlets through which the irrepressible life of 'hidden trade' could find expression in the rural landscape of medieval England (Dyer 1992, 146). But at Coupar Angus, the presence of the Abbey must always have pitched the odds in favour of established trade and associated permanent settlement: not only was it the local judicial and administrative centre, but also a major consumer of goods and, from some uncertain date in the later medieval period, provided the principal public church in the parish.

STREET-PLAN

The Red Cross was synonymous with the market-place and appears to have been the focus of a number of threads in the landscape: it is the heart of the burgh (*Register* 1, 353–4); it stands before the north gate of the Abbey (*Charters* 2, 241). Quite probably the river road from the ferry passed through this place, and it is almost certain that the cross marked the intersection of the Perth and Dundee roads which now quarter the modern town, and on which several minor streets and lanes still converge. The dominant plan of Scotland's medieval towns is the arrangement of long, narrow burgh plots about an axial high street, with parallel back lanes. Adams contrasts this plan, which is typical of the planned towns of the 12th and early 13th centuries, with the convergent street patterns of Strathaven, Cumnock, and Coupar Angus, and suggests that in these towns the convergent plan dates from the 16th and 17th centuries (Adams 1978, 33). However, in the case of Coupar Angus the market cross at the Abbey gate was a focal-point which may already have begun to determine the radial pattern of route-ways and associated settlement around a market which was established by at least the 14th century.

POPULATION AND OCCUPATION

The population growth of Coupar Angus would supply a useful gauge of its emerging urban or proto-urban status at a given time, but there are no figures available in any form before the late 17th century.

Whyte regards a total population of c 450 as the threshold at which Scottish towns and villages in the 17th century begin to support the array of mercantile, professional and manufacturing activities which truly constitutes a town (Whyte 1987, 239). Dyer would allow a somewhat lower figure, at c 300 (Dyer 1992, 142).

The earliest reliable figures available for Coupar Angus are found in the statistical account of the parish compiled by the Revd John Ritchie in 1793 (Stat. Acct. 1976). Here, the population of the parish is given as 2076, having increased from 1491 in the year 1755, with an annual average of 60 births. The population of the town itself is given as 1604 (Stat. Acct. 1976, 92) or about three-quarters of the total. Unfortunately, no Parish Register for Coupar Angus survives from before 1684, and no records of deaths are extant until 1747 (GRO OPR-279/1). The annual average number of recorded births in the parish in the 1680s and 1690s was approximately 58, which compares with the figures for the late 18th century given above, and suggest a similar population level in the parish as a whole. However, only one-fifth of these entries are ascribed birthplaces in Coupar Angus. This may indicate that the proportion of the population which lived in the town itself increased substantially throughout the 18th century, to become the much higher proportion of the total population which was recorded by the Revd Ritchie in 1793. In general, however, these early figures must be regarded as an unsatisfactory basis for estimating the population of the town:

the records are damaged and occasionally interrupted; birthplaces are not given in a significant number of entries; and, in any case, not all births would have been formally recorded in this period.

What is potentially more relevant to the assessment of urban development is the variety of occupations already present in the town in the last decades of the 17th century. Those recorded in the Parish Register include carpenter, tiler, glazier, dyer, mason, shoemaker, weaver, fishmonger, baker, tobaccoman, several maltmen or brewers and innumerable fleshers or butchers, as well as the clerks, bailies and clergy representing the institutional life of the town and burgh (GRO OPR-279/1).

THE ABBEY PRECINCT

The erasure of a strict spatial division between the town and Abbey in this period is an intriguing question, and a key one in terms of any further archaeological investigations in Coupar Angus. One form of encroachment by urbanization on the Abbey took the form of leasing or granting of properties within the precinct. Ironically, this encroachment may have been facilitated by the division of parts of the precinct into 'monks' portions' in the last decades of convent life.

Courtney suggests the range of agricultural and industrial buildings which might have augmented the more formal conventual arrangement of Cistercian houses generally, and includes 'guest-houses and stables, as well as a range of structures linked to economic activities such as brewing, baking and metal-working' (Courtney 1989, 102). Excavations in outer precinct areas have identified guest-houses at Tintern, Kirkstall and Waverly (Courtney 1989, 99) and a possible wool-house at Fountains (Coppack 1986). In contrast, documentary sources are generally unhelpful in adding precise information about ancillary buildings within precinct areas. This is true of Coupar Angus, too. A charter of 1565 by Mary, Queen of Scots, established Leonard Leslie in the role of commendator. The policies and privileges of the Abbey on the eve of the Reformation are described in a manner which is at once vague and formal: 'the place houssis yardis orcheardis with all and sundrie landis rentis teindis fruitis emolumentis proffittis casualiteis privilegis and dewities quhatsumevir quhilkis in ony tymes bigane hes pertenit or may pertene to our said abbacie and benefice etc' (*Charters* 2, 213). The litany of properties in this document may well be an example of common form, but there were, none the less, gardens, yards and orchards within the Abbey precinct, and, in one instance, the rental of 1542 records a contract with George Tailzeour for maintenance and produce in the Abbey's own gardens: 'the said Georde sall labour and graitht in all sortis our garding, herbe garding, orcheat treis and alleris thairin, haldin the stankis [fish tanks] clene begynnand at the new dyke quhill it cum to the est syd of the mustard zard, mercheand with David Tailzouris zard, quhilke wes Dene Thomas Wychthirponis, and grubband the treis tharof ... and in fruit tyme sall walk and keip the sammyne, quhilke we reserve alhaillie to our self, and sall furnis the abbot caill [kale] and herbis, and help vnit the laif of the gardenaris efferand to, and have sall have his meat with the laif of the gardenaris' (*Register* 2, 211).

Unfortunately, these glimpses within its gates are rare amongst the Abbey's records. Of all its properties, those which lay in the immediate environs of the church and cloister were least likely to become the subjects of transactions. Specific references to structures and to the organization of space within the precinct become common only when the convent is diminished and the Abbey is already in the process of dissolution. Thus, Leonard Leslie is found allocating lots which included a meadow at the east side of the Abbey to John Stewart of Atholl in 1569 (*Charters* 2, 237), the outer yard of the Abbey at the west side of the outer gate to John Leslie in c 1573 (*Charters* 2, 238), the transfer of the porter's lodge with its pension and privileges to

William Ogilvy and his heirs in 1590 (*Charters 2*, 246), and in 1592 allocating the chamber and yard which were formerly Dean John Foggo's to his own son, Alexander (*Charters 2*, 247).

To some degree, the precinct allotments which had become the 'monks' portions' may have persisted as allotments in the Early Modern town. Warden records the traditional name for a southern suburb of Coupar Angus as the 'Kirktown', though he is unsure of its precise location (Warden 1882, 128). The 17th-century Parish Register records numerous births in Coupar Angus 'in the precinct' or 'in the precinct of the Abbey' (GRO OPR-279/1), and the configuration of long, narrow properties fronting onto 'Precinct Street', west of the present church and cemetery (illus 1), may well date from this period.

A recent archaeological assessment (Rees & Duffy 1994) was conducted on a site which probably lies within the north-west sector of the former precinct, at the sawmill located north of present-day Precinct Street and south of Coupar Burn (illus 1). Unfortunately, the site has been heavily truncated in the Modern period and few features of archaeological interest were recorded. The most significant of these was a shallow, north/south ditch. A sherd of green-glazed medieval pottery was recovered from the ditch fill.

EXCAVATION OF THE GLEBE FIELD, COUPAR ANGUS PARISH CHURCH

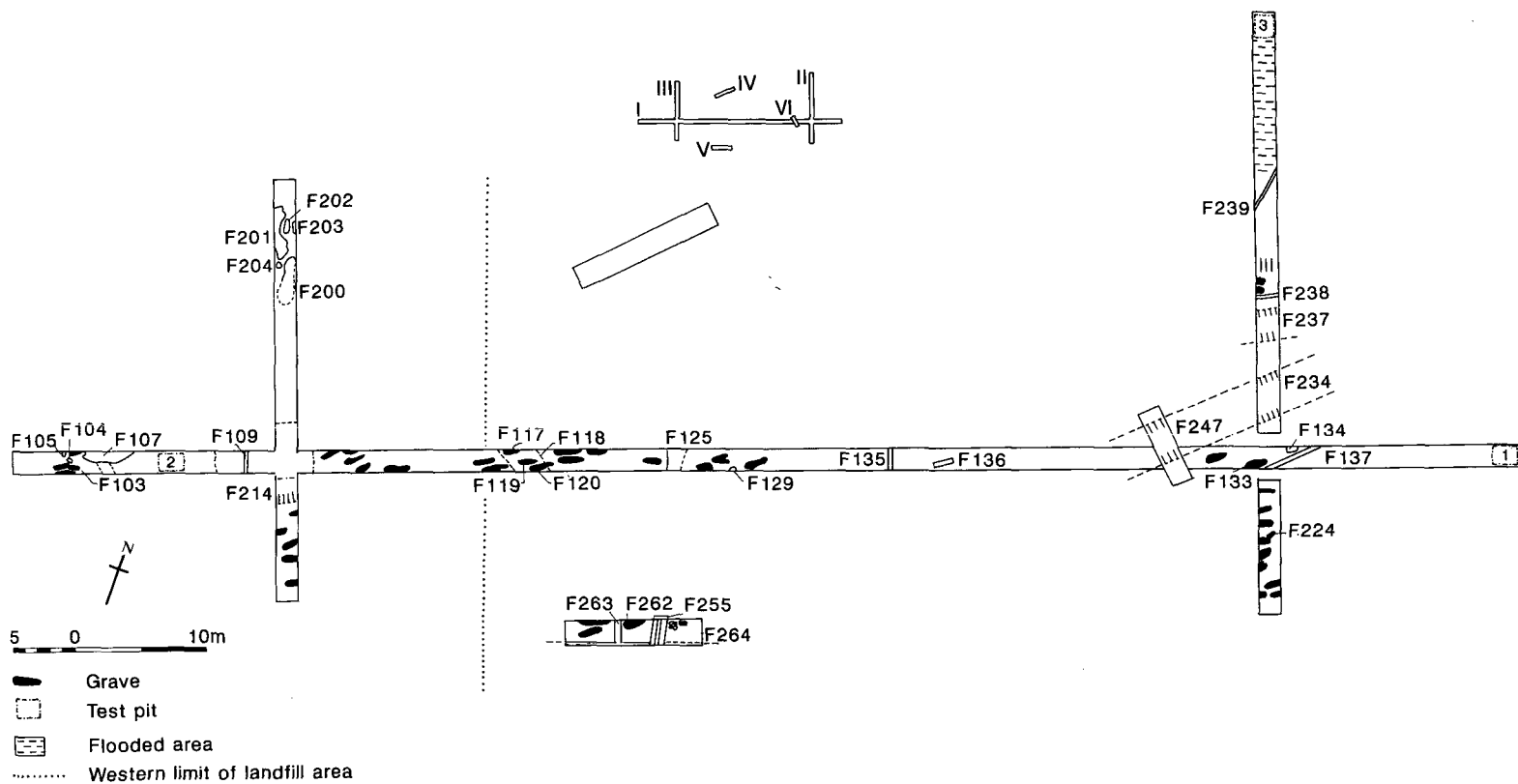
SITE LOCATION AND CIRCUMSTANCES

One area of the Abbey precinct which may be ascribed a specific and detailed archaeological history is that land parcel now known as the Glebe Field and located immediately north of the present parish church and graveyard (illus 1). The field is bounded on the east by agricultural land, on the south by the present churchyard wall, on the west by the main Dundee road, and on the north by modern property lots occupying the lower slope which descends gently to Coupar Burn, beyond. Prior to excavation, the site was most recently under pasture.

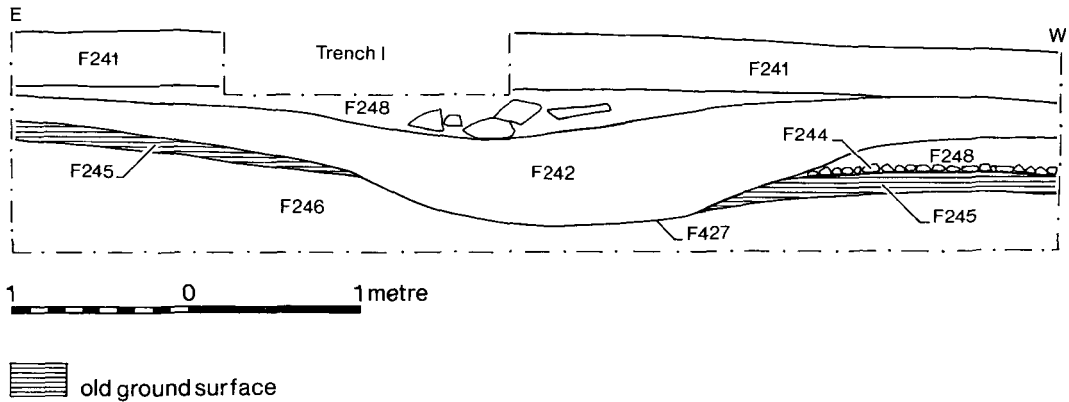
Archaeological assessment of the Glebe Field by AOC (Scotland) Ltd in 1993 was commissioned by Historic Scotland in advance of a proposed housing development on the site by the East Perthshire Housing Association (O'Sullivan 1993). A series of trial trenches and test-pits was excavated across the field, comprising a total area of c 400 sq m (illus 3). The trenches were opened by mechanical excavator to the base of the topsoil and cleaned by hand to the surface of recognizable archaeological deposits. Trench locations were dictated by several factors, including the need to sample all areas of the site and the need to characterize geophysical anomalies which had been identified by magnetometry and resistivity surveys (GSB 1993). The emphasis of the assessment was on detailed but unintrusive recording and individual features were generally allowed to remain undisturbed.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

A magnetometer survey identified a large number of small anomalies in the southern or upslope part of the field. Most of these were investigated by Trench I. Correspondence between the magnetic anomalies and recorded archaeological features was low, and in general was found to characterize late features such as rubble pits (Phase 5) or drains (Phase 6). The resistivity survey identified an extensive area of high resistance which extended from the centre of the field towards the east boundary, where it gradually petered out. Trenches I and II determined this area of high resistance to have been produced by an extensive spread of upcast stony subsoil (Phase 3).



ILLUS 3 Plan of assessment trenches showing all excavated features



ILLUS 4 West section face in Trench VI

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Excavation was undertaken in the expectation of various possible outcomes: the site might be found to contain evidence for a Roman presence, evidence of pre-Cistercian settlement, burials or structures associated with the Abbey (perhaps ancillary buildings or drains directed towards Coupar Burn) or structures associated with Lord Coupar's tenure and the development of the modern town. In the event, the principal outcome was the discovery of a cemetery containing an estimated 600 oriented inhumations. The cemetery is of uncertain date, but post-dates both an extensive layer of landfill dumps ascribed to the period of primary construction work at the Abbey, and also an earlier horizon of ditched features associated with a buried medieval ground surface. No structural features whatever were recorded by the assessment. Small finds were notably few, comprising a few medieval pot sherds, assorted modern crockery, two butchered animal bones, an iron nail and a single architectural fragment, apparently part of a narrow column. These results are described below in order of successive stratigraphic phases.

PHASE 1: SUBSOILS

The natural subsoils encountered on the site were either sandy alluvial sediments or compact sandy tills with frequent small stones. The till underlies the sandy alluvial sediments at depths of 0.3 m to 0.9 m below the present turfline (eg F246, illus 4).

PHASE 2: PRE-LANDFILL FEATURES

Beneath the stony landfill dumps described by Phase 3 (below) are relics of what is apparently an earlier, potentially pre-Cistercian landscape, represented in the Glebe Field site by a buried topsoil and by a variety of linear negative features.

The buried topsoil layer (F245, illus 4) extends over the entire eastern part of the Glebe Field. It consists of a stone-free, grey loam sand, from 0.15 m to 0.25 m deep. This buried topsoil is broadly co-extensive with the stony landfill dumps under which it is preserved. The two layers appear in sequence in all cuttings except in the westernmost 50 m of Trench I. In all, the extent of this buried topsoil is estimated as c 3500 sq m to 4000 sq m.

In Trench VI, a broad, shallow ditch (F247, illus 3 & 4) traverses the cutting from east to west. The

feature is 2.45 m wide and 0.35 m deep. The surface breaks are gradual and the sides slope gently to a rounded base. The feature is entirely filled by the landfill dumps (F242 & F248, illus 4) described by Phase 3. A corresponding cut (F234, illus 3) was recorded in the adjacent Trench II, confirming the overall east/west orientation of this feature.

Also in Trench II, a few metres to the north, a second broad, shallow, rounded cut (F237, illus 3) traverses the cutting from east to west. This cut is 2.2 m wide and 0.4 m deep. Again it is filled by landfill dumps (Phase 3). As no corresponding cut was identified elsewhere, it is not possible to confirm the east/west orientation of this second ditch or furrow.

In Trench V, a shallow rounded cut (F263, illus 3), poorly defined and c 0.5 m wide, traverses the trench from north to south and, again, is filled with (Phase 3) stony landfill dumps.

These three features may be furrows or elements of an enclosure system. Of these alternatives, the first seems less likely, as a broad furrow system would certainly have been observed elsewhere in the Glebe Field, and ridges as well as furrows should have survived beneath the extensive (Phase 3) landfill dumps. The question of date may be more closely addressed. There is no evidence of a gradual infill by silting or by deep topsoil development in the bottoms of any of these cuts. Therefore it is assumed that the features were made or were being maintained shortly before being infilled by the (Phase 3) landfill dumps. As landfill dumps are interpretatively associated with a major building programme on the adjacent site of the Abbey itself, a mid- or late 12th-century date is implied both for the underlying linear negative features and for the associated buried topsoil horizon.

It need not be assumed that these features represent pre-Cistercian activity. The monastic community may have been established in a temporary settlement at Coupar Angus for some years before construction of the major conventual buildings was undertaken, and the ditches described here may represent their first seasons of agriculture on the site.

Finally, a fourth, early, linear feature (F118, illus 3) traverses Trench I from north to south. The feature is 2.7 m wide and, unlike the ditches recorded in Trench II and Trench VI, the fill is a medium brown, stone-free, sandy loam. Therefore, the feature cannot confidently be described as predating the landfill which was found elsewhere to overlie early, linear cuts. It certainly predates the cemetery, being cut by graves F117, F119 and F120.

PHASE 3: LANDFILLS OR CONSTRUCTION DUMPS

Immediately beneath the present topsoil, a layer of redeposited, stony subsoil overlies the eastern part of the site. The layer is 0.3 m to 0.6 m deep and covers an estimated area of 4500 sq m. It is found throughout Trench II, Trench V and Trench VI (F242, F243, F244 & F248), and is absent only from Trench III and from a span of 36 m at the west end of Trench I. The layer contains no finds and may be generally characterized as anthropically sterile. It is attributed to an early episode in the history of the site, and is interpreted as the upcast spoil of site-levelling or of foundations on the adjacent site of the Abbey church and conventual buildings. For convenience, this layer has hitherto been referred to as 'landfill', implying a systematic effort to reclaim or re-landscape the area north of the former Abbey church. In fact, this may not have been the case. For instance, there is no evidence of any particular effort to secure the low-lying, north-west corner of the field from flooding or water-logging by especially deep dumping there. Dumping increases in depth downslope, but the increase is insignificant, and in general the layer is spread fairly uniformly over a large area, conforming closely to the pre-existing contours of the slope. The main aim appears simply to have been to dispose of a large volume of spoil as conveniently as possible, by spreading it evenly over the nearest open ground.

PHASE 4: MEDIEVAL OR EARLY MODERN BURIALS

Distribution of burials

Burials are not uniformly distributed throughout the field and their locations clearly favour the area nearest the present church, on the upslope or southern part of the site (illus 3). In the areas where burials and the landfill layer coexist, the burials are seen to cut that layer. No burials are recorded in Trench IV or in the

northern half of Trench III. In the northern half of Trench II, no burials were clearly identified, but disturbed graves may be represented by the incidence of unarticulated bone fragments at two points on the surface of the stony landfill layer. In general, the absence of burials in these northern areas may reflect not merely a preference for burial in proximity to the church, but avoidance of the wetter, low-lying area of the site.

No evidence for a formal boundary or cemetery enclosure was observed. In the south, a limit may be assumed at the site of the present church. In the west, the cemetery may have been delimited by an earlier routeway on the line of the present Dundee road, although local witnesses report the occasional discovery of human remains beneath the present road during maintenance of local services. In the east, the cemetery may extend beyond the Glebe Field, and again bones are reported to have been found in the adjacent agricultural land. It is noted, however, that no burials were recorded in the east end of Trench I, and that bones discovered in the adjacent field are at least as likely to derive from cleaning and maintenance of the modern graveyard as from disturbed burials in the area now under tillage. In the north, the cemetery certainly does not extend as far as the present field boundary.

The number of burials

The total area of the field is c 7200 sq m. Within the assessment trenches, 48 burials were identified in a total area of c 400 sq m. These figures cannot be used to derive an average or representative figure for the density of burials across the entire site without weighing several other considerations. First, although burials post-date the landfill layer, they are not easily visible in its surface. Therefore within the assessment trenches (particularly the east half of Trench I) some burials will have been masked in those areas where the landfill layer was not fully removed. Thus a more accurate estimate of the graves occurring within the sample area of 400 sq m is probably 60 burials. This density of burials is unlikely to occur throughout the whole site, however, and may be assumed to represent only that part of the field nearest the church, or an area of c 2500 sq m to 3000 sq m. Within this area, there is only slight evidence that the density of burials increases in proportion to proximity to the church, but this increase should be assumed in any case. In all, there are likely to be between 400 and 600 burials in the Glebe Field.

Grave orientation and other characteristics

All the graves appear to be extended, oriented inhumations. In plan, most are broad at the west end, narrowing from the mid-point to taper towards the feet at east. It is deduced from this dominant outline that the burials were generally uncoffined. No grave markers were found. A group of small angular slabs with a pebble surround (F262, illus 3) may seal a burial in Trench VI, but occurs at a depth which suggests that the arrangement was sealed by grave-fill. The majority of the graves measure between 1.5 m and 2 m in length. There is considerable variation within this range, but it is clear that most of the burials are of adults. Notable exceptions are the diminutive graves recorded as F224 (Trench II, illus 3) and F103 (Trench I, illus 3), which appear to be the graves of infants or children.

There is variation, too, in the grave orientations. The dominant orientation ranges between WSW to ENE and south-west to north-east. It cannot be assumed that this orientation reflects the alignment of the original Abbey church since the precise alignment of that church and of successive Early Modern or pre-Victorian churches on the site is not known. The present church, built in 1859, is orientated WSW to ENE, but is noticeably different in its alignment to earlier 19th-century graves in the churchyard and may be the first in the succession of churches to occupy this orientation.

In general, the aim of the assessment was to record burials unintrusively and only two burials were excavated (from graves F130 and F133). These burials were chosen for excavation partly because they had already suffered some machine disturbance, and partly to provide a sample from which to assess the quality of bone preservation. The remains are described in detail below.

The scope of the assessment does not allow any conclusion about the nature or status of the cemetery. The apparent absence of building debris in the grave fills may signify the use of the cemetery in a relatively early period in the history of the site. It may be a monastic cemetery for the choir monks or *conversi*, though

some potentially juvenile or children's graves were observed. Alternatively, it may be a lay cemetery which served the needs of the townspeople of Coupar Angus, either during the later medieval period, when the Abbey church is likely to have acquired a quasi-parochial status, or during the Early Modern period, when successive parish churches were erected on the same site.

PHASE 5: RUBBLE PITS AND DEMOLITION SPREADS

No evidence for structures of any period was recorded in the Glebe Field, and only a single unstratified architectural fragment was recovered (Find 4). None the less, some evidence was recorded for the demolition of the Abbey buildings which occupied the adjacent churchyard site. At the west end of Trench I, the fills of two large pits (F214 & F107, illus 3) included a high proportion of stones and mortar. Closer to the present church, in Trench V a layer of mortar debris beneath the present turfline overlay a buried topsoil that contained stony rubble and mortar fragments. The close proximity of rubble pits and burials in Trench I is noteworthy, and in Trench V the mortar debris and rubble layers appeared to overlie earlier burials. This relationship may signify that the cemetery, or that part of it which extended into the Glebe Field, may already have become defunct by the time the Abbey was demolished in the Early Modern period. On the other hand, any of these features may relate to the episodes of demolition or repair associated with the successive repair and reconstruction of later churches.

PHASE 6: MODERN AND MISCELLANEOUS FEATURES

The features described by this phase include not only conspicuously modern features, but a miscellany of features which, on present evidence, cannot be attributed to any chronologically defined phase.

Several modern drains traverse the site, generally from south to north or north-east. These are identifiable either as exposed tile-drains (F135, F238, F239 & F255, illus 3), or as linear trenches with sharply defined edges and loose fills containing a high proportion of loam soil (F109, F125, F137 & F264, illus 3). Two other cut features are clearly modern: F136 (Trench I, illus 3) has the loose fill and rectilinear plan of a machine-cut pit and F104 (Trench I, illus 3) is a small pit fill containing fragments of modern glass.

Several other features cannot be assigned any obvious interpretation, including three small, mixed pit fills in Trench I (F105, F129 & F134, illus 3) and several large, amorphous, sandy loam pit fills in Trench III (F200, F201, F202, F203 & F204, illus 3).

The site is overlain by a deep, sandy loam topsoil to a depth of between 0.3 m and 0.4 m. While recently under pasture, local sources say that the field was used for soft fruit cultivation earlier in the century and that several beech trees once stood on its southern margin. Less recently, the Church Heritors' Records (SRO HR/492/8) refer to leasing of the field for cereal cultivation in the early 1900s.

SOIL SAMPLES ANALYSIS

Stephen Carter

Twenty-four soil samples were analysed, derived from archaeological features and layers, as well as from the natural soil profile. All samples were subjected to four analyses, using soil in a field moist condition, to determine Ph, loss on ignition, phosphate presence (after Hamond 1983) and calcium carbonate content (after Hodgson 1976, 57).

The results reveal considerable variation in soil properties. Ph varies from weakly acidic (5.1) to alkaline (8.1) with most values between 6.0 and 7.0. Lowest values are found in the modern topsoil (Phase 6: F205 & F227) and highest values in the landfill layer (Phase 3) and fills containing mortar (Phase 5). Natural soil profiles, developed in parent materials similar to those on site, have been assigned to the Forfar Association (Laing 1976). They have acidic A and B

horizons overlying neutral to alkaline parent material. The high Ph of the landfill which forms the B horizon over much of the site reflects its origin as subsoil whilst mortar has generally raised Ph in samples taken in proximity to the modern parish church (Trench V). As a result, Ph is sufficiently high for bone preservation in all samples except some modern topsoils.

Although most samples are alkaline, only four contexts are actually calcareous. Three of these are fills containing mortar (F215, F250 & F251) and the other is part of the landfill (F252) directly underlying mortar spread F251.

Loss on ignition is less than 2 % in all except the modern topsoil samples where it reaches 5.1 %. Values in the buried topsoil (F229, F233 & F253) lie between 1% and 2 % indicating substantial loss of organic matter from this layer. The subsoil and subsoil-derived landfill both contain very little organic matter.

Levels of easily exchangeable phosphate are generally high and do not present clear patterns of distribution. Neutral Ph combined with the use of the land as a cemetery has ensured these high levels.

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

Tanya O'Sullivan

The excavated bones consisted of the lower limbs (tibia, fibula and femur remains) of two individuals and fragments of the lower arm and hands (ulna, carpal, metacarpals and phalanges) of one of these individuals.

The soft friable condition of the bones from grave F130 and the absence of diagnostic features prevented any analysis apart from a tentative identification to element. The intact bones from grave F133 provided some morphological information about the skeleton, but the lack of any skull or pelvis fragments made a definite attribution to sex difficult. However, the robust nature and length of the lower limb bones and the size of the hand bones suggest that the skeleton was male.

The proximal epiphysis of the tibia and the distal epiphysis of the femur fuse to the diaphysis or shaft between the ages of 16 and 23 years (Brothwell 1972, 60). The Coupar Angus specimens had completed this process of ossification, but a more exact estimation of age was not possible without an examination of the pubic symphysis or dental remains which were not present.

An estimation of stature was calculated using the formula described by Trotter & Gleser, given by Brothwell (1972, 102), based on the greatest length measurement of the one complete and intact tibia. This resulted in a height of 1.74 m or almost 5 ft 9 in. It should be noted, however, that the tibia has a high standard error rating (Brothwell 1972, 103) and this height should be considered approximate. A similar calculation based on an incomplete skeleton of a male under 30, from the Observantine Friary site at Kilmun Court, Jedburgh, resulted in a height of 5 ft 6 in (Lorimer 1992, 1).

No pathological abnormalities were evident on any of the Coupar Angus bones.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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buted in various ways: the project was managed by Chris Lowe and Coralie Mills; responsibility for fieldwork was shared with Alan Duffy; the report was illustrated by Chris Unwin and prepared for publication by Jenny Shiels.

APPENDIX 1: MODERN ACCOUNTS AND IMAGES OF COUPAR ANGUS

1 The earliest extended description of the site features in the Revd J Ritchie's account of the 'Parish of Coupar Angus' in the first *Statistical Account of Scotland* of the 1790s. Ritchie deduced the considerable scale of the Abbey from the evidence of 'the pavement, and bases of pillars, and subterranean passages that have been discovered' (*Stat Acct* 1976, 95). Unfortunately, he gives no more precise idea of where these were found. His observations may relate to features of the original Abbey church uncovered during the reconstruction work of 1780 (*Stat Acct* 1976, 93). The perpetuation of churches on the same site is confirmed to some degree by another observation that 'Lately, in digging at the west end of the church, there were found upwards of a dozen of stone coffins ... Several small figures, cut out of stone, and representing warriors, have been also dug out from among the rubbish' (*Stat Acct* 1976, 96). It is very likely that at least some of these sepulchral remains found within the parish church originally lay within the much larger medieval church of the Cistercians.

2 The account of the Revd P J Stevenson, in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* (NSA 1845), describes the few surviving fragments of medieval architecture with more helpful directions to their locations: 'In 1780, a part of the Abbey, consisting of an arch, of beautiful architecture, situate near the centre of the present churchyard, was demolished for the purpose of furnishing stones for the present church. Till within these few years, the base of a pillar was to be seen to the eastward of the present church. The northern wall of the oldest part of the present church rests on part of the foundation of what appears to have been the northern part of the Abbey' (NSA 1845, 1144).

3 MacGibbon & Ross offer the first illustrated, authoritative account the architectural remains on the site and describe miscellaneous sculptural and sepulchral fragments of the 13th to 16th centuries (MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 491–7). They suggest that the extent of the original conventual buildings is reflected in the boundaries of the modern graveyard, a key point of reference being the surviving so-called 'gatehouse' in the south-west corner of the present cemetery: 'The churchyard extends for a distance of about 400 feet from east to west, by about 280 feet from north to south, and these dimensions in all probability give an idea of the extent of ground formerly occupied by the monastery' (MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 491).

Collectively, these observations by Ritchie (*Stat Acct* 1976), Stevenson (NSA 1845) and MacGibbon & Ross (1897) have two significant implications. The first is the apparent consensus that later parish churches were erected on the site of the original Cistercian church. The second is that conventual buildings are vestigially represented by the 'beautiful arch' which formerly stood in the graveyard, by the surviving 'gatehouse' and by the graveyard boundaries themselves. The arch and gatehouse would ordinarily constitute good presumptive evidence that the conventual buildings occupied the generally preferred south side of the church, and archaeological assessment in the Glebe Field has found no evidence to the contrary.

4 Coupar Angus is featured on a number of Early Modern maps. The earliest of these, Edwards's *Shire of Angus* (1678), offers a stylized representation of the town and Abbey – a block of buildings symmetrically arranged about a cross, with the Abbey to the south – indicating only that there was some density of settlement at the time. It is not until Ainslie's *Map of the County of Forfar* (1794) that the radial street plan is represented. The Abbey appears as 'Abbey in ruins' and the surrounding earthwork is crudely depicted. This map also identifies 'Bich Hill', apparently a house, and 'Keithick', which appears to have still been a sizeable village at the time. Thomson's *Southern part of Angushire* (1825) simply duplicates Ainslie's images of the town and Abbey, but Keithick is omitted and perhaps no longer exists as anything more than a fermtoun. Copies of these maps may be consulted at the National Library of Scotland.

5 de Cardonnel's *Picturesque Antiquities of Scotland* (1788; 2nd edn 1802) offers a sketch depicting an overgrown and ruinous wall fragment with a simple round arch at ground level, adjacent to a plain, rectangular doorway. The aspect and location of the structure are not identified, and its details do not correspond to any surviving or reported remains.



ILLUS 5 A pastoral view of Early Modern Coupar Angus from the south

6 A plan entitled *The Estate of Keithick*, 1802 (SRO RHP 306118) shows part of the town and its hinterland north of Coupar Burn, but a second sheet, which would have depicted the Abbey and its environs, south of Coupar Burn, has been lost.

7 Another early plan of the area is described as a *Town plan of Coupar Angus, 1756, 1802* (NRA 0217) in the catalogue of the National Map Library. The catalogue records that the plan is in the possession of the Earl of Moray and directs further inquiry to the Earl's Edinburgh agents via the Registrar of the Scottish Records Office. According to information from the Deputy Keeper at West Register House, Andrew Broom, this reference does not correspond to any known plan, and the reference in the National Map Library is likely to be a catalogue error dating to 1967.

8 A bucolic pastoral etching of Coupar Angus is on view in the present parish church (illus 5). The view is from the south and depicts, amongst other things, the parish church and the Cistercian gatehouse. The toll-booth steeple which was erected on the site of the old Court of Regality in 1762 (*Stat Acct* 1976, 90) is clearly recognizable. The church depicted is that which was reconstructed in 1780 and replaced in 1859.

9 A photograph on display in the present parish church of Coupar Angus represents (illus 6) the building which was demolished in 1859. Again the view is from the south.

10 An architectural plan simply entitled *Coupar Angus Abbey* was prepared c 1820 by one William Mitchell. This purported to be 'a true and just plan of the outlines of that pile of building' but is more accurately described by MacGibbon & Ross as 'a work of pure imagination' (1897, 496).

11 A sketch plan entitled *Plan of Coupar Angus parish church and churchyard, 1880* (SRO RHP.8153) shows the church, the walks and boundaries of the graveyard and the locations of some monuments within it, as well as the Glebe Field to the north.

12 An outline drawing entitled *Plan of Drainage of Coupar Angus parish Church, 1927* (SRO RHP.8154) by



ILLUS 6 The church demolished in 1859; view from the south

George Tudhope, surveyor, shows a circuit of drainage pipes about the building exterior. The drains converge on a single outlet towards the public road at west. None issues northwards across the Glebe Field, though archaeological assessment has recorded a number of modern drains traversing that site, where a fall in ground drains naturally in the direction of Coupar Burn.

APPENDIX 2: PRIMARY SOURCES

Attention has already been drawn to the publication of numerous charters, leases and rentals of the Cistercians in Rogers's *Register of Coupar Angus Abbey* (1880) and in Easson's *Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus* (1947).

A few leaves survive from the *Court Book* of the Regality and Lordship of Coupar in the years 1585–6; 1589–1626; 1616 and 1682 (Scottish Records Office GD 16/36). These were not consulted.

The church in the modern period is not well represented by surviving documents. Neither a *Parish Register* (General Records Office OPR-279/1) nor records of the *Kirk Session* (Scottish Records Office CH2/395) are extant before 1682, and no *Heritor's Records* (Scottish Records Office HR/492) survive before 1859. Modern Coupar Angus is very poorly represented by its surviving municipal records. Continuous records of the Town Council are extant only from 1912 onwards, though a minute book of the Town Committee survives from 1826–52. These may be consulted at the Sandeman Library in Perth.

The largest body of unpublished material relating to the town and its environs comprises the relevant

papers of the Balmerino and Elphinstone families. On the death of James Elphinstone, Lord Coupar, in 1669, his lands and titles devolved on his nephew John, third Baron Balmerino. Arthur, the sixth and last Lord Balmerino, was beheaded for his role in the Jacobite rising of 1745. His confiscated estates were redeemed to the family by his nephew James, seventh Earl of Moray, in 1755 and papers of the Balmerino and Elphinstone families may now be found amongst the *Moray Muniments* at Dornaway Castle. Selective use has been made here of these documents, but any more extended history of Early Modern Coupar Angus should certainly attempt a comprehensive study of this source material.

APPENDIX 3: FINDS CATALOGUE

- 1 Skeletal remains from burial F130 (See Human skeletal remains).
- 2 Skeletal remains from burial F133 (See Human skeletal remains).
- 3 A single iron nail, heavy accretion on surface, square or angular flat head. From unstratified machine spoil in Trench I (east end). Length 60 mm.
- 4 A stone column fragment, circular in section, plain, broken at both ends, red sandstone. No other architectural fragments were discovered by assessment in the Glebe Field site, and this fragment may have been introduced as an improvised grave-marker. From unstratified machine spoil in Trench II (south). Length 330 mm; thickness 130 mm.
- 5 Seventeen sherds of miscellaneous modern and medieval pottery. Most of these are modern and exhibit assorted glazes and fabrics. Five sherds are probably medieval: these all have an external green glaze, though they vary in fabric, colour and thickness. No further identification was attempted. From unstratified machine spoil at various finds locations throughout the site.
- 6 Two fragments of butchered animal bone, unidentified. From unstratified machine spoil in Trench I.

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