

Blackfriars of Stirling

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ABSTRACT

This paper assembles the documented history of the Stirling Blackfriars (Dominicans). In particular it provides answers to some previously outstanding problems. It explains why the dispute over ownership of their lands in the post-Reformation period persisted for 92 years, and why the Burgh Council, which had claimed ownership, finally had to agree to purchase the lands and the town mills from the nephew of the Earl of Kellie. The precise location and extent of these lands, hitherto uncertain, has been traced in detail up to the present day by examination of the collection of sasines in Stirling Council Archives. Finally, the position and size of the church of the Blackfriars has been confirmed by excavation.

INTRODUCTION

The Blackfriars (Dominicans) were founded in 1214 at Toulouse by a Spaniard, St Dominic Guzman (1170–1221), and received Papal approval the following year. They followed a rule based on that of the Augustinian Canons, of which Dominic himself had been a member. They slowly became established in England in the years between 1221 and 1230. In the latter year there were five houses in England, and a mission is said to have come to Scotland at the invitation of Alexander II.¹ The head of the mission was Clement, who apparently so impressed Alexander with his ability that in 1233 he was made Bishop of Dunblane,² becoming the first Dominican Bishop in Britain. Arrangements for the introduction of the Dominicans to Scotland were said to be made by William Malvoisin, Bishop of St Andrews,³ who died in 1238. The first friaries were established under royal patronage in Edinburgh (1230)⁴ and Perth (1231).⁵ In the next decade, further friaries were founded at Stirling (c 1233); Elgin (1233); Inverness (1240); Aberdeen (1230–49); Berwick (1240–1); Ayr (1242) and Glasgow (1246).⁶ By 1286 the number of houses in Scotland was at least 12.⁷

The detailed histories of some of the Blackfriars' houses have been published, for example Edinburgh (Moir Bryce 1911) and Perth (Milne 1893). In Glasgow the greater part of the buildings and property passed to the University, and the muniments were published with some additional documents in 1846, as the *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Glasgow*, presented to the Maitland Club by the Marquis of Bute. Unfortunately no similarly reliable account of the Stirling Blackfriars has been available. The extent of their lands, and even the location of their priory, has been uncertain. An attempt by Shirra (1890) to tell the story of the Stirling friars contains a number of errors. For example, it argues for a location of the Blackfriars monastery which is incorrect and indeed impossible; it does not show adequately the extent of their property within the burgh; and it admits that it fails to explain why the Town Council was unable to obtain possession of the lands of the Blackfriars

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immediately after the Reformation, and why the Council had to buy back the lands to which they were supposed to have had a legal claim. This paper represents our effort to assemble all the available evidence, and to provide a coherent account with answers to these outstanding questions.

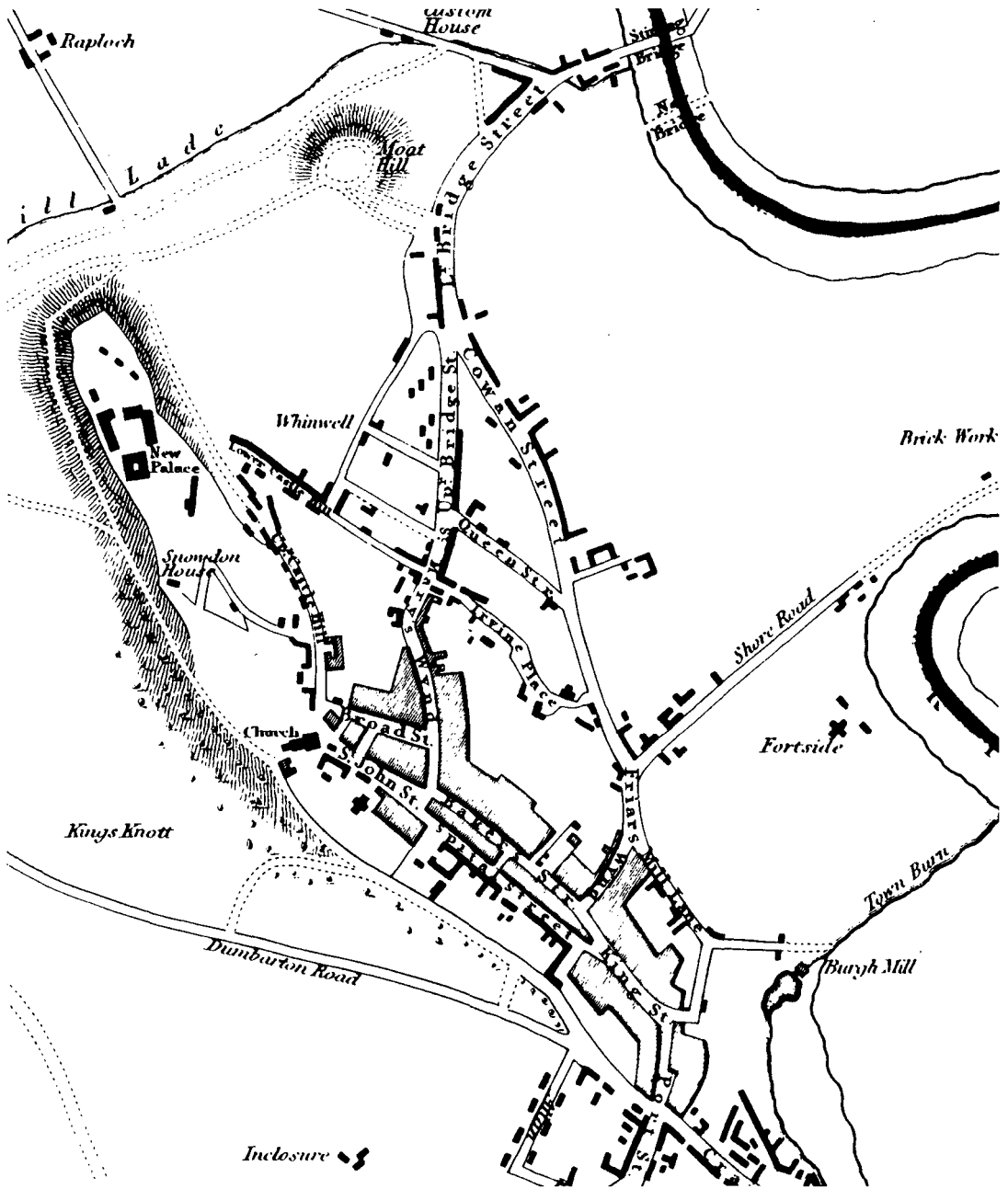
The Blackfriars were so called because for formal occasions and for travel they wore a black mantle over their white woollen tunics. They were preaching friars; they acted as confessors, ministered to the poor and sick, and collected alms. In general the friars were zealous opponents of heresy wherever they detected it, and in Spain the Dominicans eventually were placed in charge of the Inquisition. Preaching the Catholic faith demanded study, hence there were schools in many friaries. The leading Scottish Dominican school was in Perth; there are no records of a school in Stirling, although one may have existed.

Medieval Stirling was dominated by its Royal castle, the favourite resort of the Scottish court of that time, built on a great crag of volcanic rock. The castle commanded the crossing of the River Forth, the vital link between the south and the north of Scotland. Below the castle a wynd descended to the Holy Rude Church, and to Broad Street, the market place of the Burgh. From there Upper Bridge Street dropped down to the bridge, or to the ferry which replaced it when the bridge was destroyed in 1297. Below Broad Street, Bakers' Wynd and the Meal Market extended to Port Street and then to the Barrasyett, the Town gate of the road to the south. On each side of Broad Street and the other streets leading to the Town gate burgage plots were set out, which may still be traced in the modern property boundaries of that part of the town (illus 1). Near the foot of Bakers' Wynd a narrow street, Friars' Wynd, ran between burgage plots to the Dominican Friary, which, as usual, was situated on the edge of the medieval town.

LANDS AND OTHER ENDOWMENTS

The friaries were established in Royal burghs, with endowments from the Crown.⁸ The extent of the original Blackfriars foundation of 1233 in Stirling is not on record, but by 1298 they probably had a substantial stone-built monastery. In that year Wallace, retreating from the battle of Falkirk, burnt the wooden buildings of the town to deny shelter to the English army. But Edward I, who had been trampled by his horse, was able to remain 15 days in the friary recovering from his injury. Edward stayed again in the friary in 1304 during the siege of the castle, and it is interesting to note that one of the friars, Brother William Keith, was with the defenders.⁹

The first evidence for the endowments of the Blackfriars in Stirling emerges in the reign of Robert I. In 1327–8 the burgh accounts record an annual gift by the king of £10.¹⁰ Thenceforward until 1332 the Exchequer Rolls record this annual gift, except that in 1328 the June account shows £5 only, the December account being missing. The Exchequer Rolls from 1332 are lost, including those for the period when David II was a captive in the hands of Edward III. David was ransomed in 1357, and the Rolls resume in 1359, showing a payment to the Friars Preachers of Stirling of 10 merks. Amounts of subsequent payments varied throughout the 1360s, from 40s to £5, the latter being a payment from the proceeds of the mill in 1366 and 1367. In 1327 when the first records of the annual alms from the king were recorded, 40s was allowed to the friars 'for the multures of Cragorth' abstracted from the mill of Stirling, 'which is in the hands of Reginald More [the king's chamberlain] on which let the King be consulted'.¹¹ In 1361 the accountants allowed 10s to the friars, against multure for 2 chalders and 2 bolls of corn, and 10 chalders and 2½ bolls of malt, as they were free from owing multure on their corn 'by concession of old of the King of Scots'. In 1363 and 1365 they similarly received sums of 16s 2d and 12s 7d respectively. This seems to indicate that the burgh mill was not yet owned by the Blackfriars. In 1367 the Exchequer Rolls depart from the usual formula and state 'Note that the mills of the said town are not included in the aforesaid assessment,



ILLUS 1 Part of a map of Stirling, from 'Reports upon the boundaries of Several Cities, Burghs and Towns in Scotland . . . 1832', showing some of the surviving features of the medieval town, and the extent of Mill Lane

but are assessed by the chamberlain in the year of this account at £5, which sum the Friars Preachers of Stirling possess as annual alms of our lord the King'. This would seem to be the first mention of 'mills', as previous references are to 'the mill of the said town'. There is no mention of the mills in the Rolls for 1369, 1372, and 1373, but the friars could not have assumed direct possession of them, because it was only in 1475 that Pope Sixtus IV in the Bull *Considerantes* authorized Blackfriars to hold lands, annual rents, and other kinds of moveable property. The Bull *Nuper nostras* in 1478 granted them the right to purchase. The changes were accepted by the Chapter General on 10 May 1478.¹² In 1375 and 1376 the mill (and the ferry at the site of the bridge) were specifically excluded from the accounts. Nevertheless in 1405 the Rolls record a payment for building a house 'newly constructed' at the mill.

In 1456 James II made new arrangements, and thenceforth the Friars Preachers of Stirling were to receive £10 yearly in perpetuity from the rents of Easter and Wester Row and the Banks of Row in Menteach. The payments continue through succeeding reigns, including that of James IV, in spite of his preference for the Greyfriars, until the last was recorded in 1513. Apparently they were stopped by James V, and we know only that on 2 April 1526, the Lord High Treasurer paid 19s 'to the blak freris in Striveling'. There is, however, an entry in the Rolls for 1541 (*Rentalia Domini Regis*) referring to 'Westir Row': 'Ane part thair of clamit be Janet Symsoun in auld few, payend yeirly viij li vj s viij d, quhilk was pait to the Blakfreris of Stirling'.

Not only did the friars receive these fairly regular subventions of alms from the king, they also from time to time were given sums of money for specific purposes. For example, in 1327 the Exchequer Rolls record 'And for the building of a certain house for a kitchen for the use of the King, 53s 4d'. In 1394 the Rolls record £10 alms by the king 'for the repair of their houses', in 1397 44s 'for the repair of their church', and in 1398 40s 'for the repair of their monastery'. Other payments recorded in the Exchequer Rolls relate to audits held in the accommodation provided by the friary. In 1384 26s 8d was paid to the friary, with 13s 4d to Brother Richard Tarduff, 'for the use of his room in which the audit was held'. In 1388 there were two payments by the auditors, one of £3 6s 8d, the other of £5. Presumably this was a more lengthy audit! Further grants of £10 were paid in 1469, 1471 and 1473. These were instalments of a grant of £50 which was promised to the friars for repairs to their church and convent buildings.

In addition to these money payments, there are occasional (but much rarer) mentions in the Exchequer Rolls of donations in kind. In 1330 two bolls of grain are recorded, then there is a long interval until 1499, when the friars were given 14 chalders of oat flour, presumably as allowances for previous years, since in 1505 one chalder was allowed for that year, with five chalders for five past years. Thereafter, one chalder¹³ per year seems to have been supplied until 1513. The next mention is in 1541 'except j chalder meile to be pait zeirlye to the Blakfreris of Stirling'. In 1561, after the destruction of the Blackfriars buildings during the Reformation, we read 'eight bolls of grain from the lands of Bokennar, previously due to the Friars Preachers of Stirling, and now belonging to the Queen'. But there was also '1 chalder of barley in the hands of the Friars Preachers'.

All these subventions to the Blackfriars from Crown resources clearly would have provided only a part of their income. Most of it would have been derived from alms, including those derived from their founding grant, or from lands which they had acquired subsequently, or from fees for services, as in '. . .sex schilings yeirlye, usuale money of Scotland, customit and usit to be tane and payit to the Blakfreris as obit silver . . .'.¹⁴ Unfortunately we know nothing of the original foundation grant, nor do we have details of later augmentation, apart from a small garden with an annual rent of 3s 6d, which had belonged to the Founded Chaplains of the Parish Church. The Blackfriars obtained it on 10 March 1523¹⁵ in exchange for the rent of a house in Myddill Raw (beside Baker Street). This garden adjoined the south side of the Friars Orchard, and lay beside the croft of Gilbert

Brady, later known as Berkhou Croft (illus 2). The croft was mentioned again in a charter of 1531, then owned by John, presumably the son of Gilbert, and described as 'lying between the orchard and croft of the Preaching Friars on the north and east sides and the public street descending by the said friars and leading to the mill of the same on the west and south sides'.¹⁶

We can also perhaps deduce something about how ownership of the mills was obtained by the friars. An attempt was made under James V in 1537 to legitimize their ownership, and is worth quoting at length:

The King – because his predecessors gave as alms two mills near the Burgh of Stirling to the Friars Preachers and their monastery of the said place (which mills they have possessed since time immemorial), and because the memory of the gift fades that all *le suckynnis*¹⁷ of the grain should come of old to the said Brotherhood, as the confirmation by King James II of the mills and all other rents to the said Brotherhood has shown – has confirmed to the prior, the convent, and the place of the said brothers – the aforesaid mills; with confirmation of all other annual rents, farms, etc, of which they have been in peaceful possession, following the tenor of the said charter of King James II:

Revoking all gifts made or in process giving privilege to whatsoever persons to build any other mills, in common speech *le water-myllis, wynd-myllis, horse-myllis, man-myllis*, in injury of the said Brothers.¹⁸

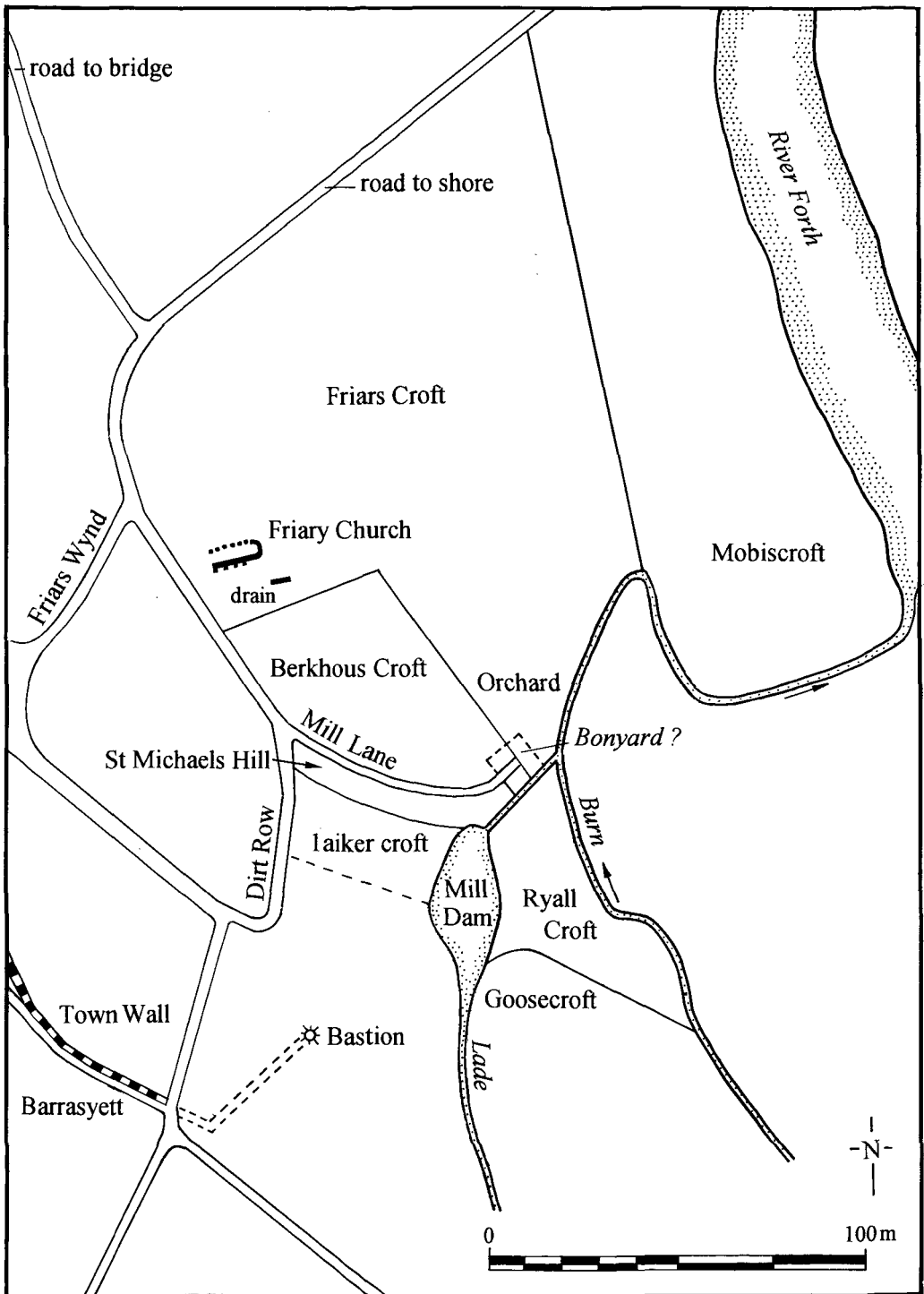
Occasionally there are glimpses of the extent of the lands of the friars when boundaries of other properties are described. For example, in February 1450, Robert Norry for his service to the king was given 'a tenement between the church of the Friars Preachers of the said burgh on the north and the land of John Brady on the south'.¹⁹ Then in a grant of February 1541²⁰ to Sir William Robeson, Chaplain of the Altar of St Michael, we have '*de tenemento Johannis Aitkin jacente apud locum Fratrum Predicatorum, duodecim denarios*'. [for the tenement of John Aitkin, lying near the place of the Friars Preachers, 12 pence].

The Blackfriars also owned property outside the burgh. There were 'the acres of the foresaid friars lying near the town of Dunfermling called the Hawank'.²¹ There were lands in Dalgonogane near Gartcharon (Gartocharn? or Gartacharn Farm near Drymen?) in Lennox which were gifted to John Makneill, burgess of Edinburgh, by Prior Andrew Makneill of the Stirling Blackfriars in 1559, immediately after the destruction of their friary in the Reformation.²² It seems likely that John was a relative, perhaps the brother, of Andrew. Then there were lands in Gargunnoch: '*5 libratas terrarum de Gargannochquhan antique extensus*' [land in Gargunnoch worth £5 by old valuation]. In February 1566 Francis and Mary granted these to Matthew, Earl of Lennox, Lord Darnley.²³ In 1572 James VI granted these same lands to Lord Charles Stewart,²⁴ and then later in March 1580 to Esme Stewart, Lord Aubignie.²⁵ In each case the annual rent was one silver penny.

To obtain a description of the boundaries of the property of the Blackfriars in the burgh of Stirling it is necessary to refer to the documents relating to its disposal after the Reformation.

STIRLING BLACKFRIARS AND THE REFORMATION

The Blackfriars, like other Catholic religious orders, suffered in the tumultuous events of the Reformation. In June 1559 the preaching of John Knox and others inflamed the populace of Perth to such an extent that they attacked and destroyed the monasteries there. In an attempt to control the violence the Lords of the Congregation, as the reformers among the nobility were called, sent the Earl of Moray and the Earl of Argyll south to Stirling, Linlithgow and Edinburgh. They arrived in Stirling on 26 June, but were too late to prevent the destruction of the friaries in the town. Knox



ILLUS 2 The lands of the Blackfriars in Stirling

reported that 'the rascall multitude had laid hands on the thieves, I should say Friars, places and utterly destroyed them'.²⁶

Buildings destroyed in this way might well become a useful stone quarry for other building projects, until most of the above ground remains were dispersed. The Burgh Records of 2 November 1562, for example, describe provision for the re-use of stones from St James' Chapel, which had also been destroyed by the mob: 'It is condiscendit be the counsall that all the stanis of Saint James Chepell be brocht to the vtility and proffit of the commoun werk, and that nane thairof be disponit to ony singular persoun except thai obtene licens; and gif ony dois in the contrar to pay for tham'.²⁷ It has been said that the Earl of Mar in 1570–2 built Mar's Wark, his great town house beside the Holy Rude Church in Stirling, with the stones of Cambuskenneth Abbey. As Ronald (1904) pointed out, instead of bringing the stones across the river from the Abbey, it would have been much more convenient for him to get the stones from the Blackfriars buildings and Church, situated only 600 yards away, especially as at that time his brother, Alexander Erskine of Cangnoir, claimed ownership of them, even though this was disputed by the Burgh council.

Following the attack in 1559 by the 'rascall multitude' the Friars Preachers of Stirling must have decided that radical measures were necessary. In 1560 the Prior of the Convent of Stirling, Father Andrew Makneill, granted the whole of the property of the Blackfriars, including the Burgh Mill and the Bridge Mill, to Alexander Erskine (*sic*) of Cangnoir, better known by his later designation as Alexander Erskine of Gogar. (We have noted above that already in 1559 lands of the Blackfriars in Lennox had been transferred to a burghess of Edinburgh, John Makneill, for safe-keeping.) Alexander Erskine was an important figure, not only locally, but nationally. On the death in 1572 of his nephew, the seventh Earl of Mar, he succeeded him as guardian of the young James VI. He became a member of the King's Council in 1578.²⁸ No doubt the Prior felt that the property of the Blackfriars could be in no safer hands while better times were awaited. Knox, not surprisingly, did not share the Prior's opinion of the Erskine family. He wrote of Alexander Erskine's nephew Lord Erskine (before he became the seventh Earl of Mar) 'some had greedily gripped the possessions of the Church. . . The chief great man that professed Christ and refused to subscribe to the Book of Discipline, was the Lord Erskine. And, no wonder; for besides that he had a very evil woman to his wife, if the poor, the schools, and the ministry of the church had their own, his kitchen would lack two parts and more of that which he now unjustly possesseth'.²⁹

TRANSFERS OF THE BLACKFRIARS' LANDS AFTER THE REFORMATION

Alexander Erskine and Prior Makneill took the precaution of obtaining a precept by King Francis and Queen Mary ratifying the property transfer, dated May 1560.³⁰ At that time Mary was in France with her husband, and the Regent, Mary of Guise, not only had immense civil unrest to preoccupy her, but was also seriously ill (she died of dropsy in June of that year); nevertheless the precept could not be regarded as other than a valid legal document.

The Town Council realized the danger of losing the opportunity to claim the estate of the disestablished Church. On 24 February 1561³¹ they considered the situation:

For the mylnis The provest, baillies and counsall, hes condiscendit to spend thair commoun gude upon the defens of the burrowmyllis and landis aganis Alexander Erskyn of Cangloir and otheris quhatsumevir personis that will persew the samyn; and in cace of inlaik of thair commoun gude, to spend of thair awin geir accordingly as tyme sall requyre, and to that effect to be taxt with avis of the counsall gif neid beis.

The Council's determined opposition to Erskine's appropriation of the mills was reiterated by subsequent entries in October³² and December³³ 1561, and again in March of the following year.³⁴

A dispute of this importance was unlikely to be settled quickly. It would seem, however, that the town, in adding to the widespread pressure to gain possession of the property earlier held by the unreformed Church, had fortuitously chosen a propitious time. Professor Donaldson has pointed out³⁵ that in 1566 Mary began to take the initiative to gain allies to strengthen her position against Darnley. She gave money and privileges to the reformed Church, and some months later ecclesiastical properties in burghs were assigned to town councils. One of these was Stirling. The Council must have been delighted to receive a charter dated 15 April 1567 granting to them the church property and revenues within the burgh for the support of the ministry and the maintenance of hospitals for the poor and infirm (although, amongst the properties listed, there was no specific reference to the mills).³⁶ But it would seem that the precept granted by Francis and Mary in 1560 to Alexander Erskine was nullified by the clauses which stated 'Besides, considering how dishonestly a great number of the said prebendaries, chaplains and friars aforesaid have, since the change of religion, disposed, alienated and given away into the hands of certain private persons the lands, annualrents and emoluments previously mortified to their chaplainries, prebends and other places respectively . . . we, by these presents, rescind and annul all and sundry such alienations, dispositions and sasines.'

Apparently a charter given by Mary only two months before her defeat at Carberry did not carry sufficient weight to persuade Alexander Erskine to give up the property he had gained from the Blackfriars. His brother John was in a strong position as tutor to the young King James VI; indeed he became Regent in September 1571. When John died in 1572 the care of the young king was entrusted to Alexander. In the circumstances prevailing at that time in Scotland it is not hard to understand the delay in settling the dispute. It would seem that Alexander Erskine decided to sell at least part of the lands to one Mungo Grahame (*sic*), who would appear to be the same Mungo Graham of Ratherine who was later one of the masters of the king's household. The Town Council contested Erskine's right to sell by an Instrument served to Grahame on 8 March 1567:³⁷ 'this sasing. . . of the landis callit the Frers landis, with the medow lyand contigue thairto, lyand within the terretorie of the bruch of Striuiling, sall hawe na maner of effect nor warrandice'. The instrument had the desired effect: 'and the said Mungo anserit agane: I am content thairto and will seik na forder.'

In spite of this victory the town seemed unable in succeeding years to assert its ownership of the Blackfriars lands and the mills. Meanwhile, Thomas Erskine, son of Alexander Erskine, born in 1566, and brought up with the young James VI, increased in power and influence. He became a great favourite of the King. In 1601 he became a Privy Councillor. In 1604 he was created Baron Erskine of Dirleton, and in March 1606 he became Viscount Fentoun. In June that year the king granted him³⁸ 'a croft which before was an orchard, and the Freiris-croft adjoining it, the lands of Bonyaird. . . the Borrow-mylne near the burgh of Striviling, . . . and the lands called Sanct- Michaelis-hill and Ryelliscroftis beside the said mill, and the grain mill, [called] the Brig-mylne . . . [these were incorporated into the free tenantry of Ryell Croft] . . . the lands near the town of Dunfermline called Halbank, . . . which previously belonged to the Friars Preachers of Stirling'. In 1619 Thomas Erskine was honoured further, and was created Earl of Kellie, Viscount Fentoun and Lord Erskine, and a charter of 16 July 1622³⁹ confirmed the previous grant to him of the lands and mills of the Blackfriars.

Thomas Erskine had a sister Jean, whose second husband was John Leslie of Balquhan, by whom she had a son William. In 1635, at the age of 69, Thomas Erskine transferred ownership of what had been the property of the Blackfriars of Stirling, including the two mills (plus some lands in Cambusbarron) to his nephew William Leslie.⁴⁰ (Thomas Erskine's only son, Alexander, had predeceased him; two of his grandsons, Thomas and Alexander, became second and third Earls of Kellie in 1639 and 1643 respectively.) Perhaps encouraged by the change of ownership, the Town Council continued its campaign, and succeeded in obtaining a charter from King Charles in 1641⁴¹

confirming the charter of 1567 by Queen Mary. Again, however, there was no specific reference to the mills in this document.

After another 11 years the end of the contest seemed to be in sight. In August 1652,⁴² delegates of the Council met with William Leslie's brother Alexander to negotiate the purchase of the mills. An item in the Burgh Accounts in September 1652 showed that reaching agreement had involved prolonged and arduous bargaining: 'Item debursit to Jonet Kilbowie for wyne succar ail bread tobacco and pypes at severall tymes before and after the closing of the bargain with Mr Leslie anent the lands . . . £15-13s-0d'.⁴³ The deal was finally settled in the next month. The minutes of Stirling Town Council for 28 September 1652 read:

| | |
|--|---|
| Agreement with Alexander Leslie of Tulloe for the milnes | The same day the baillies and Counsall hes transactit and agreit with Alexander Leslie of tulloes factor and in name of Williame Leslie esquire his brother ffor the said William his richt of the brig and burrowmylnes. The lands callit the ryall croft mopiscroft and uthers conteanit in the securaties of the same and are to pay to him in the name of his brother for his said richt mylnes lands and others particularlie. . . the sowme of sextene thowsand merkes money. ⁴⁴ |
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The lands of the Blackfriars within the Burgh were described in an entry in the Protocol Book for 2 October 1652⁴⁵ giving sasine to the Town Council. It seems, however, that the Town Council had insufficient funds to pay the 16,000 merks, because on the same day there was entered an instrument of sasine in favour of John Schort, Provost of Stirling,⁴⁶ for an annual rent of £280 Scots from the proceeds of 'the Brig and Burrow Milnes, the croft which was the Orchard, Frier Croft and Bonyaird, Ryall Croft and St Michaells Hill and Mobiscroft', under reversion of payment of 7000 merks by the Town Council.⁴⁷ In November 1652 the Council also raised money from the Guildry of Stirling,⁴⁸ making over to them an annual rent of £120 Scots from the property. The Council took steps to ensure the income from the mills by obtaining an Act of Thirlage dated 27 March 1654,⁴⁹ astringing the inhabitants to the Brig and Burgh mills. The financial difficulties of the Town Council continued, and in 1654 they were compelled to borrow money from Cowane's Hospital⁵⁰ and Spittal's Hospital.⁵¹ (Both hospitals were philanthropic institutions founded in the 16th and 17th centuries for the benefit of the poor of the Trades and Guildry of Stirling.)

Eventually, on 29 June 1708, the Town Council partly settled its debts by transferring to Cowane's Hospital the lands lying between the shore causeway and the Burgh Mill dam (ie the friars' lands).⁵² On 25 April 1741⁵³ Cowane's sold the land in three parts: the northern division to Robert Leckie, acting for John Watson and James Wallace, the 'middlemost' to James Watson, and the 'southmost' to Patrick Stevenson.

The Wallace family occupied the land for five generations. The house of Forthside was built in 1821 by Mrs Wallace, who died, aged 90 years, in 1864. The land was sold by her heir to the Government to build an Ordnance Store.⁵⁴ (The Forthside land constitutes a part only of the present Ordnance Depot.)

James Watson's portion passed to Alexander Russell in 1744.⁵⁵ His two daughters inherited, and eventually the land went in 1847 to Lt-Col James Baird⁵⁶ and was sold by him to the Scottish Central Railway Company in 1848.⁵⁷

The land bought by Patrick Stevenson in the south passed to his son John⁵⁸ and was described as 'lying at the foot of the Friars Wynd, whereof part is that croft commonly called the Fryars Croft . . . and part of the lands formerly purchased by the said hospital [Cowane's] from James Baird . . .'. (As will be seen later, this latter part, comprising two acres Scots, was previously known as Berkhus Croft.)

John Stevenson sold his land in 1790 to Alexander Wright.⁵⁹ After the latter's death the land was divided into plots, as shown on the *Plan of Spring Garden 1834*.⁶⁰ This plan enabled us to determine accurately the boundary of Stevenson's land, and hence Berkhou Croft, which comprised Plots 1–7. Station Road was later taken through Plot no 7.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE BLACKFRIARS' LANDS IN STIRLING

Our determination of the boundaries of the lands of the Blackfriars (illus 2) began with the description of the territory in the precept by King Francis and Queen Mary of 10 May 1560, confirming the grant by Prior Makneill to Alexander Erskine:

all and whole their late orchard, now waste lands, and all and whole the lands or croft called the Friars Croft lying near the said late orchard, between the mill lade which flows from the mill called the Burrow Mill on the east, the public road which leads from the burgh of Striveling to Cambuskyneth on the west and the croft called Bawenis Croft⁶¹ on the north and the monastery of the said friars on the south side; also of all and whole the lands of Broun Yards . . . and the mill of the said friars called the Burrow Mill lying near the said burgh of Striveling, and all and whole the lands called Saint Michaels Hill and Rials Crofts lying next to the said mill; also of another mill of the said friars lying there called the Brig Mill.

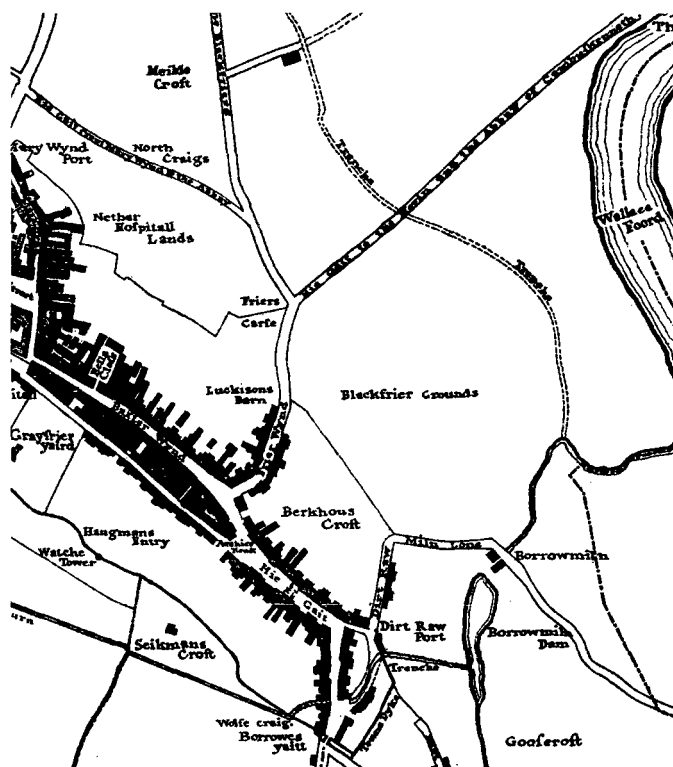
MOBBIS CROFT

The mill lade and the road to Cambuskenneth, now Shore Road, are easily identified, and Orchard Place, now almost hidden by the Thistle Centre, commemorates the Friars' orchard. Using Burgh records, and with the collaboration of Baillie Ronald, Master of Works for the town, A B McDonald in 1889 produced a *Map of Stirling about 1700*⁶² (illus 3). Ronald (1890) correctly identified Balbenis Croft (which he took to be spelled as Bawenis Croft from the printed version of the Charters of Stirling) as Mobbis Croft. It was called 'Mobiscroft or Dukedubs' in an instrument of sasine to Robert Cunynghame dated 20 December 1615,⁶³ and described as the 'croft of land callit balbeane croft' in the sasine transferring the Friars' lands from William Leslie to the Town Council. Mobbis Croft was given to Cambuskenneth Abbey by a charter of David I (about 1150)⁶⁴ and was retained by the abbey until the Reformation. In 1610, when King James VI raised Lord Erskine, John seventh Earl of Mar, to become Lord Cardross, he granted him the lands of Cambuskenneth, including 'Mobescroft'.⁶⁵ The grant was confirmed to him in 1620.⁶⁶ We have not been able to trace how Mobbis Croft came into the possession of William Leslie, nephew of Thomas Lord Erskine, Earl of Kellie, Viscount Fentoun, who was cousin of the seventh Earl of Mar. Mobbis Croft alias Balbenis Croft alias Duik Dubs equates to Forthside, and never belonged to the Blackfriars, but does give us the north-eastern boundary of their lands.

BERKHOUS CROFT

The southern boundary of the friars' lands can be deduced from the position of Brady's Croft. In March 1523 the Friars exchanged their right to the rent of a tenement in Myddill Raw for 'a certain garden . . . annexed to the south side of their orchard, lying contiguous to the croft of Gilbert Brady'. This croft, as the property of John Brady of Estir Kennet, presumably Gilbert's son, was described in 1531 as 'called the Berkhou Croft. . . between the orchard and croft of the Preaching Friars of the said burgh on the north and east sides and the public street descending by the said friars and leading to the mill of the same on the west and south sides'.

Unfortunately Berkhou Croft is misplaced on the *Map of Stirling as at about 1700*. McDonald



ILLUS 3 Part of map of Stirling about 1700 as drawn up by McDonald in 1889, showing his suggested locations of Berkhous Croft and the lands of the Blackfriars

omitted most of Mill Lane,⁶⁷ which should have been continued on his map northwestwards, along the boundary of the area shown there as 'Berkhous Croft', to join Friars Wynd. The omission is hard to understand; Mill Lane was clearly shown on the map accompanying the 'Reports upon the Boundaries of Several Cities, Burghs, and Towns in Scotland, 1832' (see illus 1). McDonald placed Berkhous Croft between King Street and the western side of Mill Lane. That area was, and still is, divided into narrow strips, typical burgage plots. Berkhous Croft would not have been divided in this way. It was on the eastern side of Mill Lane, and can be identified clearly in a sasine of 1667⁶⁸ to Andrew Baird and his spouse from John Blair, minister at Mauchline. John Blair had obtained the land through his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Walter Neishe.⁶⁹ The evidence showing how Neishe derived his ownership from Brady has not yet been found. Berkhous Croft was 'All and haill that croft of arable land consisting of Two acres or thereby commonly called the meikle croft and of old the Barkcroft . . . betwixt the Stonewall of the year or Orchard of old the ffrriars yaird and the Strype of the Stank thereof and croft of the said ffrriars on the one part, and the Stripe descending from the said croft on the north and the highway descending to the Burrowmilt on the south'. A sasine of 1726⁷⁰ transferred the land to Cowane's Hospital from James Baird and his spouse. Once the correct position of Berkhous Croft is recognized there is no problem with the charter from the king conferring land on Robert Norry in 1450: 'also a tenement between the church of the Friars Preachers of the said burgh on the north side and the land of John Brady on the south'.⁷¹ Brady⁷²

presumably obtained his land similarly from the king, but there is no record in the Register of the Great Seal, and we have been unable to trace any earlier charter.

THE BARNYARD

The precept of 1560 by Francis and Mary confirming the grant of the Blackfriars land to Alexander Erskine, after listing the orchard and Friars Croft, referred to 'all and whole the lands of Broun Yards'. In 1606, when the Friars lands were granted to Thomas Viscount Fentoun,⁷³ this became 'terras de Bonyaird'. The annual rent was quoted as 5 shillings, showing that Bonyaird was much smaller than Friars Croft, worth £6 13s 4d. In 1622 when confirming the grant the wording was 'Borneyeard (or Bonyeard)'. When William Leslie received the land it was 'Bonyaird', and when he sold it to the town it was listed as 'Bonyard'. All these documents list the parcels of land in precisely the same sequence. We believe 'Bonyard' and 'Broun Yards' to be a corruption of 'Barnyard', and that it was the same barnyard that was divided in 1744 between Patrick Stevenson ('one just and equal part of the barn and barnyard of the said lands'),⁷⁴ and Alexander Russall and Isobel Fogo ('one just and equal half of the Barn and Barnyard . . . the other half being disposed to the forenamed Patrick Stevenson').⁷⁵ The position near the mill is clearly established by the sale by Catherine Fogo in 1842 to the Stirling Gas Light Company of '17 falls of ground, being part of the lands and half of the Barn and Barnyard belonging thereto'.⁷⁶

THE BURROW MILL

The position of the Burrow Mill is not in doubt. The Mill remained in the hands of the town, and its position was clearly shown on the accurate *Plan of the Burrough Mill Lands* by William Forrester in 1820,⁷⁷ part of which was later feued to the Stirling Gas Light Company. The mill pond itself stretched from approximately opposite the old bus station (moved in 1995) to more or less opposite the entrance of the Goosecroft car park, below the Thistle Centre. Goosecroft Road from the roundabout to the bus station approximately follows the line of the mill lade, and the site of the mill itself, about 200 m south from the Railway Station, would have been excavated away when the road and underpass were constructed.

RYALL CROFT AND ST MICHAEL'S HILL

We know from a number of documents, including the Burgh Council sasine of October 1652, that 'the lands callit St Michael's hill & Ryall Croft [were] lyand contiguous to the foresaid milne'. There seems little doubt that 'the croft formarlie possess be the miller' sett to Thomas Mitchell on the last day of February 1653⁷⁸ was Ryall Croft, and that it was the land belonging to the town shown on William Forrester's plan of 1820. The land shown on that plan as belonging to William Glass was named in a sasine of 13 June 1797⁷⁹ as the Goosecroft, which never belonged to the Blackfriars and hence gives the boundary of their property in that locality.

St Michael's Hill must be on the only rising ground near the mill, where the present Thistle Centre stands. The Glass family in 1820 owned more than Goosecroft (Gibson 1933; Wood's map 1820⁶⁷). Part of their property was a 'croft of one aiker'⁸⁰ acquired in 1737, which was one of two crofts traceable via Andrew Baird in 1667 to John Blair and his wife Elizabeth Neishe in 1661. Previously both these crofts (the other croft was Berkhou's Croft) had belonged to Gilbert Brady. The 'one aiker croft'⁸¹ gives the boundary of the land of the Blackfriars.

In a sale of 1680⁸² 'a small house between the land of Andrew Baird, previously of Walter

Neish, on the east and south, the road to the mill on the north and the lands previously belonging to William Leslie, now to the Town on the west,' can be identified with the 'Small garden,' Plot no 3, on Forrester's Plan. William Leslie's land was clearly part of the Blackfriars' lands, and can be linked via a sasine of 1631⁸³ to plot no 2 on Forrester's Plan. This plot, bordering Mill Lane, and sloping down to the Mill, was clearly St Michael's Hill.

THE BRIDGE MILL

The Bridge Mill was about midway between the Old Bridge and the modern bridge constructed in 1831 to 1833. Its position at the end of the lade through the Raploch is shown in illus 1, and in more detail by a plan entitled '*Land proposed to be taken from Town Council*' in 1853 by the Forth and Clyde Junction Railway.⁸⁴

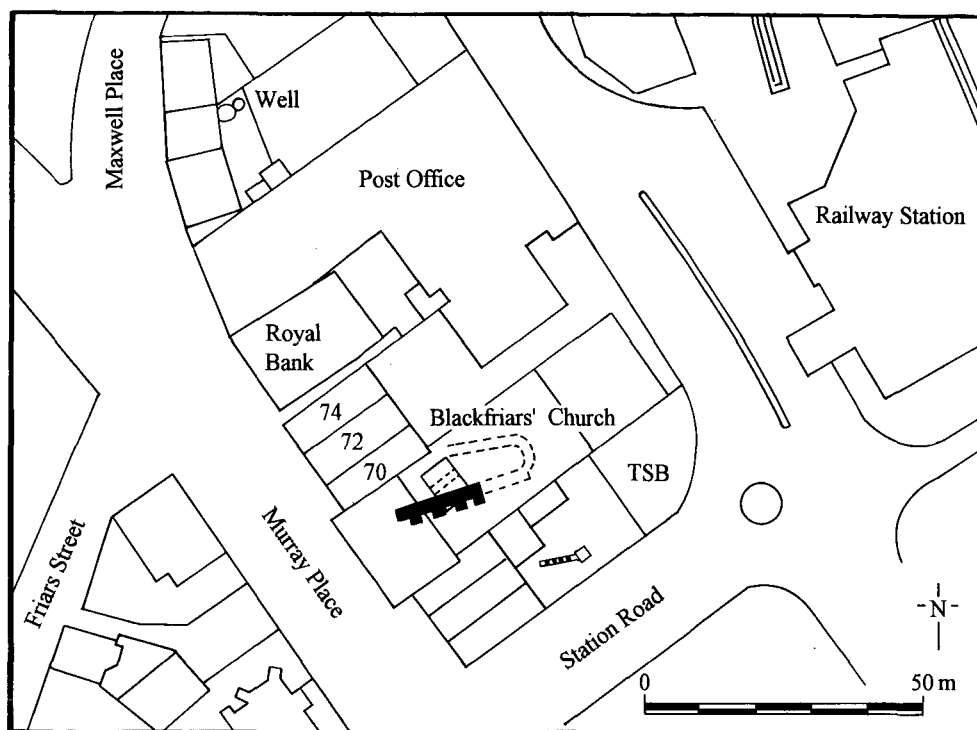
FRIARS' CARSE

McDonald's Map of 1889 shows 'Friars Carse', situated close to the junction of Friars Wynd, Shore Road and the road to the Bridge (illus 3). We have been unable to find any evidence that this area at any time belonged to the Blackfriars. The only reference we have found to Friars Carse is in a sasine of 1798 to the Trustees of the Episcopalian Congregation for 'that piece of land (called) Friars Carse whereon a chapel or house of worship is now built'.⁸⁵

THE FRIARY AND CHURCH OF THE BLACKFRIARS

The traditional site of the Dominican friary (illus 4) was pointed out in 1858 to the Ordnance Survey field surveyor.⁸⁶ The supposed site was indicated on early Ordnance Survey maps as behind the Edinburgh and Glasgow Bank, next to the post office. In 1882 a number of bones were found in the garden of 74 Murray Place.⁸⁷ In 1904 during demolition of some houses where 64 Murray Place now stands, a substantial wall with buttresses was found 'supposed to be the south wall of the Blackfriars' church' (Ronald 1904). Also 'Human remains were found in such abundance as to suggest the idea of a churchyard'. We would expect the friars' burying ground to be beside their church. We know that some burials also took place within the church itself, since it is recorded that in 1419 the so-called Marmet King, claiming to be Richard II, King of England, but apparently the impostor Thomas Warde of Trumpington,⁸⁸ was buried there, whilst in 1425 Murdoch Duke of Albany and others were interred beside the high altar.⁸⁹ An excavation by Mr Eric Ross beside Station Road in 1989 revealed a medieval drain, parallel to the wall recorded by Ronald in 1904, which could well be associated with that structure. Again some human bones were found, probably disturbed – the upper layers of the site were very confused. This drain is also depicted in illus 4. Behind 10 & 16 Maxwell Place is a massive circular stair, beside which is a capped well, no longer visible, completely concealed by the concrete.⁹⁰ This well could have been associated with the friary.

Our researches having confirmed that Bailie Ronald was correct in assuming that he had located the church of the Blackfriars, we decided to investigate further. An excavation by the authors in 1994 examined the robbed-out continuation of the wall identified in 1904. The excavation revealed traces of the north and south walls of the church, and the eastern end (illus 4). A quantity of human bones and skeletal remains and an assemblage of medieval pottery sherds were found.⁹¹ An illustrated report on the excavation will appear in the *Glasgow Archaeological Journal* (Page & Page, in press).



ILLUS 4 Location of the wall of the Blackfriars Church found in Murray Place, 1904; the medieval drain beside Station Road, Stirling, excavated in 1989; and the outline of the Church excavated in 1994. (Based on the Ordnance Survey map © Crown Copyright)

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NOTES

- 1 Bower, vol 5, bk ix, ch 47, 144.
- 2 Duncan 1975, 307.
- 3 Spottiswoode 1655, 43.
- 4 Moir Bryce 1911, 16.
- 5 Milne 1893, xviii.
- 6 Cowan & Easson 1976, 98–102.
- 7 Nicholson 1974, 12.

- 8 Writ of 7 March 1296/7, Rot. Scot. i.39.
 9 Tytler 1829, vol 1, 146, 383.
 10 *Burgh Chart*, 16.
 11 *Exch Rolls*. 1327, quoted in *Burgh Chart*, 16.
 12 Moir Bryce 1911, 34.
 13 1 chalder=16 bolls=64 ferlots=1610 litres approx. (1 ferlot measured 16 in square by 6 in deep (*Acts. Parl. Scot.*ii,12,no 22). But *Concise Scots Dict.* says 1 chalder=3386 litres.
 14 *Extracts*, 1667, 376.
 15 *Burgh Chart*, 192.
 16 *Ibid*, 197.
 17 Sucken = an obligation on tenants to use a certain mill, or payment in kind, service or money for the use of a mill.
 18 *Reg Mag Sig* 1513–46, 382, no 1722.
 19 *Ibid*, 1424–1513, 74, no 321.
 20 *Burgh Chart*, 87.
 21 *Ibid*, 91.
 22 *Reg Mag Sig*, 1546–80, 307, no 1373.
 23 *Ibid*, 419, no 1711.
 24 *Ibid*, 534, no 2044.
 25 *Ibid*, 817, no 2973.
 26 Knox 1905, 166.
 27 *Burgh Chart*, 210.
 28 *Scottish Peerage*, 1908, V, 81–2.
 29 Knox 1949, vol I, 344.
 30 *Burgh Chart*, 90–2.
 31 *Extracts 1519*, 78.
 32 *Burgh Chart*, 208.
 33 *Ibid*, 209.
 34 *Ibid*, 212.
 35 Donaldson 1965, 125.
 36 *Burgh Chart*, 92–9.
 37 *Ibid*, 101.
 38 *Reg Mag Sig* 1593–1608, 645, no 1771.
 39 *Ibid*, 1620–33, 112, no 333.
 40 Instrument dated 23 Nov 1635; SCA B66/25/211.
 41 *Burgh Chart*, 124–64.
 42 *Extracts 1519*, 204.
 43 Burgh of Stirling Accounts, 1634–1720. SCA, B66/23/1.
 44 Stirling Town Council minutes, 1619–58, SCA, B66/20/4.
 45 Protocol Book of William Barclay, 1651–8. 29–30. SCA, B66/1/19:
 ‘All and sundrie the lands etc here underwritten with all and hail that croft of land which was formerlie callit the orchart. As also all and hail that croft of land callit the frierscroft adjacent to it betuixt the watter gang running fra the milne callit the burrowmilne upon the eist,the Common gait leading fra Cambuskinneth & the said burgh of Sterling upon the west, the croft of land callit balbeane croft upon the north and [vacant space for about 7 words] the south pairts. All and hail the lands of Bonyaird and half fishing of a coble in the watter of Forth. And fishing of another half coble in the said watter of Forth. All and hail the corne milne callit the borrow milne lyand within the said burgh of Sterling with the multure segneles proffets houses & biggings thereof and pairtinentis. All & hail the lands callit St Michaells hill & Ryall croft lyand contiguous to the forsaid milne. All & hail the corne milne lying there callit the brigmilne with the multure segneles proffets & asinents houses and biggings thereof & their pairtinentis. . . Which lands milnes etc above written were formerlie unite in ane Tennendrie callit the

- Tennendrie of Ryallcroft. And in lyk maner all and hail the lands of Mobiscroft utherways callit duikdubs with pairts pendicles & pairtinentis thereof.' (This sasine translates word for word into Scots the Latin sasine conveying the land to William Leslie from Thomas Erskine, Earl of Kellie. That sasine of 10 August 1642 (Protocol Book of John Williamson, 1639–43, 189. SCA B66/1/14) supplies the missing phrase of the vacant space – '*locum fratrum predicatorum de Stirling*' [the place of the brothers preachers of Stirling].
- 46 It may be of interest that since 6 Nov 1639 John Schort, as heir of his uncle John Cowane, had been receiving 700 merks annual rent 'from lands in Cambusbarron and two grain mills in Stirling called the Burrowmilnes' (*Inquisat. Retornat. Abb.*, vol II, 1603–9, 172). Probably John Cowane had lent money to Thomas Erskine.
- 47 Burgh and Town Council Records, B66/25/218 and Protocol Book of William Barclay, 1651–8, 30, SCA B66/1/19.
- 48 Burgh and Town Council Records, SCA B66/25/219.
- 49 *Ibid*, SCA B66/25/443/1–4.
- 50 *Ibid*. SCA B66/25/223.
- 51 *Ibid*. SCA B66/25/224.
- 52 *Ibid*. SCA B66/25/245.
- 53 Cowan's (*sic*) and Spittal's Records, 1708–, SCA SB5/1/1.
- 54 *Stirling Observer*, 4 Nov 1886, 4, col 4.
- 55 Sasines 1742, 159, 12 Sept 1744.
- 56 Sasines 1846, 5, no 325, 2 Jan 1847.
- 57 *Ibid*. 5, no 801, 13 March 1848.
- 58 Sasines 1777, 190, Clare constat, 6 July 1778.
- 59 Sasines 1789, 97, 5 June 1790,
- 60 SCA MP/SB/98.
- 61 Misreading of original charter, SCA B66/25/127, which has 'Balbenis Croft'.
- 62 *Extracts 1667*, frontispiece.
- 63 Instrument of Sasine by James Gardner, portioner of Skeoch, SCA SB1/11/1/50.
- 64 *Cartulary of Cambuskenneth*, 278, and translation 388.
- 65 *Reg Mag Sig* 1609–1620, 113, no 301.
- 66 *Ibid*. 768, no 2125.
- 67 Mill Lane was not shown on the earliest extant plan of Stirling (Laye, 1725) but is clearly shown on the plan of D Campbell, 1746 (British Museum Library, K.Top. 50/95), and on Charles Ross' Plan of 1780. It is named on Wood's map of 1820 (SCA MP/SB/2), on Legate's map of 1822 (SCA MP/SB/3), and on Forrester's Plan of Burgh Mill Lands, 1820 (SCA SB1/11/2/24). The Ordnance Survey 1:500 map of 1858 shows the part of Mill Lane omitted by McDonald as Murray Place. If Mill Lane is recognized as the western boundary of Berkhouis Croft, and is 'The public street descending by the said friars and leading to the mill of the same' the difficulties which arose by Shirra (1890) supposing that it was the street that later became King Street are removed. Mill Lane descended about 40 ft (12 m) from what is now Murray Place near the post office to the site of the Burgh Mill. Certainly King Street descends more steeply, but that is not a telling argument in its favour.
- 68 Protocol Book of James Norie, 1658–69. 12 Feb 1667.
- 69 Stirling Burgh Council Minutes, 1659–80, Charter 9 Nov 1661.
- 70 Sasines 1723, 9 April 1726.
- 71 *Reg Mag Sig* 1424–1513, 74, no 321.
- 72 John Brady owned other land in the Burgh, including land between Shiphaugh and the road to Cambuskenneth. (*Reg Mag Sig* 1513–46, 293, no 1333). That land was conveyed later (in 1594) to David Forrester of Logy and his wife Jonete Alexander.
- 73 *Reg Mag Sig* 1593–1608, 645, no 1771.
- 74 Sasines 1742, 20 Aug 1744.
- 75 *Ibid*. 12 Sept 1744.

- 76 Sasines 1841, 4, no 449, 17 June 1842.
- 77 SCA SB1/11/2/24.
- 78 Burgh Council Minutes 1619–58, SCA B66/20/4.
- 79 Sasines 1793.
- 80 Sasines 1733, 80.
- 81 1 aiker Scots = 6100 sq yds = 1.26 (English) acres = 0.5099 ha.
- 82 Sasines 1679, 27 May 1680.
- 83 Reg Deeds, June 1630–Aug 1633.
- 84 SCA SB1/11/2/27.
- 85 Sasines 1797, 13 April 1798.
- 86 National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh, quoting Ordnance Survey Name Book 24, p 74, 1858.
- 87 Stirling Observer, 2 March 1882.
- 88 See Burnett, G, 1880, Preface to Vol. IV, *Exchequer Rolls, 1406–1436*, pp lxx–lxxx.
- 89 Tytler 1829, Vol.III, 225.
- 90 We are indebted to Mrs. Paton, ex-manageress of the Gateway Restaurant, which previously occupied the premises that are now the Fubar Club, for informing us of the existence of the well, and pointing out the exact location.
- 91 In the early 1960s the adjacent site, nos 70–74, was developed, and in the process part of the site of the Dominican Friary was bulldozed down to bedrock. From the site medieval pottery was collected and deposited in the Smith Museum in Stirling. The types of pottery were the same and in similar proportions to those found by us in 1994.

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- Sasines 1742 Register of Sasines 1742–8, SCA B66/2/12.
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