

Historic DUMFRIES

the archaeological implications
of development



Robert Gourlay
Anne Turner

Scottish Burgh Survey
1977



HISTORIC SCOTLAND
LONGMORE HOUSE
LIBRARY

CONTROL No. _____

DATE 3/12/02 PRICE _____

SHELFMARK _____

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES
LONGMORE HOUSE
SALISBURY PLACE
EDINBURGH EH9 1SH
TEL: 0131-668 8652**

Please return this item not later than the last date stamped below

--	--	--

Historic
DUMFRIES

the archaeological implications
of development



Robert Gourlay
Anne Turner

Scottish Burgh Survey
1977

Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow

PREFACE

This report on the history and archaeology of the former burgh of Dumfries is one of a series of such reports on the historic towns of Scotland. The reports have been commissioned by the Ancient Monuments division of the Department of the Environment with a view to providing the necessary background information upon which to base a policy for urban research in the future. They are also aimed at providing local authority planning departments with the historical and archaeological information necessary to enable them to assess the archaeological implications of any planning application.

Each report contains an historical report compiled by Anne Turner, with a short archaeological discussion and a series of illustrative plans compiled and drawn by Robert Gourlay. The reports attempt to identify those areas within the burghs which were developed at various periods of their history up to approximately 1800, and to locate within those areas sites which are of particular historical importance. Areas of 19th century growth and modern suburbs have not been examined.

The survey team would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council Planning Department; Mr. George Grant, Chief Executive, Nithsdale District Council; the staff of the Reference Department of Dumfries Library; Mr. Alfred Truckell, Dumfries Museum; The Scottish Development Department Historic Buildings Section; and the staff of the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey. A special mention must be made to Mr. James Williams of Dumfries, who read over the historical draft and offered valuable comments; also Professor Leslie Alcock and Mr. Eric Talbot.

Cover:- The Coat of Arms of the burgh of Dumfries as depicted in Bute, MacPhail and Lonsdale, 1897, p. 99.

History

INTRODUCTION

Site: Dumfries is situated on a ridge overlooking the east bank of the River Nith. In medieval times the burgh was protected by the river on the west, the Millburn to the south, the Lochar Moss on the east, with the only approach road of military value coming from the north. At least four burns flowed near Dumfries. Cat Strand ran to the south and emptied into the Nith at the Stank, while the Poinfield Burn formed a north-eastern boundary for the town, flowing into the river at Crindau. Millburn and Loreburn both cut through Dumfries. Millburn rose from a loch south of Dumfries, running through Milldamhead and into Millhole before meeting the Nith. Loreburn ran southwards, parallel to Loreburn Street and emptying into the Millburn. The Nith, a shallow river which has changed course several times through the years, had a number of fording points, one known as the Stake ford. That ford, located upriver from the bridge, was marked by stakes in the river bed and formed the principal route west.

Place Name: Dumfries is a Gaelic word which means 'fort of the copse (s)' - dun 'fort' and preas 'copse thicket covert'. The second element could be singular or plural and may derive therefore, from the Gaelic Dun-phreas 'fort of the copses' or Dun-phris 'fort of the copse' (Nicolaisen, et al., 1970, 85).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: Dumfries was the first royal burgh in southwest Scotland. It is first mentioned in the 1150s when Radulf, sub-king of Strathnith, granted land in 'Dronfres' to the Hospital of St. Peter at York (Truckell (1), n.d., 7). A royal charter of William the Lion, dating from 1179 x 1185, confers on Jocelin, Bishop of Glasgow, toftum illud apud Dunfres que est inter uetus castellarium et ecclesiam (Barrow, 1971, 264). The date of its erection to royal burghal status has been assigned to a date soon after the issuing of that charter, about 1186 (Pryde, 1965, 13). In 1183 x 1188 William granted to Kelso Abbey, the church of Dumfries, the chapel of St. Thomas in ipso burgo, plus five acres of land (Barrow, 1971, 290). Roughly at the same period - 1175 x 1190 - William also granted to the Hospital of St. Peter

at York two-and-a-half ploughgates of land in the territory of Dumfries and Con-
heath (Barrow, 1971, 290). In the fourteenth century, Dumfries, along with Perth,
Edinburgh, Aberdeen and a number of other burghs, received feu-ferme status
(Nicholson, 1974, 108). That formal recognition was granted to the burgh in a
charter of Robert III dated 28th April, 1395, which confirmed Dumfries 'rights to
petty customs, markets, tolls, fishings and so forth (McDowall, 1867, 14). Dumfries
was represented in Parliament at least from 1469 (Pryde, 1965, 13).

Medieval: Relationships between the crown and the lords of Galloway had been
tense throughout the twelfth century. Trouble erupted in that province following
the capture of William the Lion in 1174, and at this point A. A. M. Duncan surmises
that the 'old castle' referred to in the grant to Bishop Jocelin was 'doubtless over-
run' (Duncan, 1975, 182). At some point thereafter, and before the end of 1177, the
King once again occupied Nithsdale and it was perhaps as a result of this that a new
castle was erected at Dumfries in 1179 (Duncan, 1975, 183).

The 'timely death' of Radulf, sub-king of Strathnith in 1185, allowed the crown to
become more firmly entrenched in the area of Dumfries, strategically important
for its river crossings (Barrow, 1971, 14). After 1186 there was an increase of feu-
dal migration into Galloway. The large number of mottes in the Dumfries area
indicates the unsettled nature of the province. In Annandale and on the eastern side
of the Nith there were twenty-eight mottes and almost an equal number - twenty-six
- between the Nith and the Cree (Duncan, 1975, 185). A number of these mottes
were in the immediate area of Dumfries burgh. In addition to a motte a Townhead,
there was a motte to the south and east of the town at Kirkland and across the river
in Kirkcudbrightshire mottes at Lincluden College, Lochside and Troqueer. The
crown established a castle on the massive motte of Castledykes located nearly a
mile south of the burgh. The crown gradually extended its control into Galloway
in the thirteenth century and a more settled condition in that province brought an
increase in the peace and prosperity of the burgh. The King of Scots received
homage from the Norse King of Man in 1264 (Truckell (1), n. d., 9), and in the same
decade the royal castle at Castledykes underwent extensive refurbishment in stone
(ER, i, 17, 27). Dervorgilla Balliol is alleged to have established a colony of Grey-
friars at Dumfries sometime in the 1260s (Cowan & Easson, 1976, 125). That same
lady is given credit for the construction of a bridge - probably wooden - across the
Nith at this same period (Edgar, 1915, 53). Dumfries' commercial links at this
period were largely with western England and Ireland (Barrow, 1965, 25).

The death of Alexander III in 1285 prompted civil war in the province. In 1288 the watchman and gatekeeper of the castle were paid a gratuity on account of the extra watching by reason of the trouble raised by Robert Bruce, the Competitor, and his son, the Earl of Carrick (Truckell, (i), n.c., 10). The trouble raised by the Bruce was an effort to strengthen their position vis-a-vis the Balliols, who also had extensive landholdings in Galloway (Barrow, 1965, 25). The two Bruces were reported by John Balliol to have seized the castles of Wigton and Dumfries at some point in the conflict (Nicholson, 1974, 29).

The royal castle at Dumfries passed into English hands in 1291 and was frequently in English possession throughout the period of the Wars of Independence. Records of the English occupation at Castledykes have survived and relate not only the number of men in the garrison but also the extensive alterations carried out in 1300 on the structure under the order of the English monarch (Truckell (i), n.d., 10). Following the murder of John Comyn in the church of the Greyfriars in February, 1306, Robert Bruce is alleged to have stormed Dumfries Castle and taken it; however, the structure was retaken for the English early the following month. It remained in their possession until February 7th, 1313, when the castle once again surrendered to Bruce (Nicholson, 1974, 113). Following Bannockburn, possibly in expiation of his sacrilege in the friary church, Bruce granted an annual rent of forty merks to the Franciscans of Dumfries (Nicholson, 1974, 113).

In the second phase of the Wars of Independence, Edward Balliol surrendered much of the south of Scotland to the English and Dumfries, therefore, was largely in their possession from 1332 to at least 1354. After the English withdrawal, Dumfries suffered from two outbreaks of the Black Death in the 1350s and in 1361. Robert Edgar, writing in 1746, noted that 'Dumfries town hath been the place of several invasions of the English nation and devastations suffered from them' (Reid, 1915, 87). Truckell has catalogued seven times (with a possible eighth) that the English have burned the town: in 1345, 1384, possibly 1415/6, 1448, 1482, 1536, 1542 and 1570 (2), n.d., 1).

Trade in the fifteenth century was not extensive and concentrated mainly on the staple products. The first customers' account for the century occurs in 1463/4 when Robert McBriar reports that 'before this account there had been no great custom arose in Dumfries' (ER, vii, 282). In that year the duty on wool and cloth amounted to

£52 5s Scots, half of which was remitted by the Lords in Council to encourage traders from Brittany who had come to Dumfries (ER, vii, 282). Ayr in the same year exported goods to the value of £49, Edinburgh over £1800, Kirkcudbright £137 and Aberdeen £630 (ER, vii, 282, 283, 297, 295). Despite perhaps this 'early promise', Dumfries does not appear to have been a port of any consequence until the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Early Modern: Although Dumfries was at the centre of Anglo-Scottish conflict throughout the sixteenth century, the century opened with a massive 'domestic' riot in the streets of the town between the Crichtons and Maxwells, two leading families (RSS, i, nos. 1745, 1750, 1791). The so-called 'rough wooing' of Henry VIII brought English troops to the burgh in 1542 and led to its burning that same year. English troops returned to occupy Dumfries in the winter of 1547 and 'did spoyle and rifle the town and left nothing therein that thei could carry away, but raised no fire at that time', according to the English Warden (Truckell (1), n.d., 19). In 1570 the English once again returned to Dumfries as part of the campaign to quash Marian support in the region. On this visit the burgh was once again raided and a few houses were burnt.

Despite the bloodshed between the two nations there was a degree of peaceful participation with England in respect of trade. An account for the years 1578 and 1579 shows that Dumfriessians imported a considerable quantity of English goods, including bonnets, leather-laces, oil, brass, tar and vinegar, combs, ginger, paper and pins (ER, xx, 296, 314). At the end of the century Dumfries was stented at 36s 8d and was seventeenth on the list of burghs (RCRB, ii, 10), a decline from 1535 when she was twelfth, well ahead of Kirkcudbright, Wigton and Whithorn (Pryde, 1950-51, 84).

By the seventeenth century Dumfries, in common with many other burghs, had developed the habit of electing oligarchic town councillors who served for years and who were not always burgh residents. The Convention of Royal Burghs in the 1620s attempted to control matters to the point of sending commissioners to Dumfries who would 'sett down ane settled forme for electing and chesing the said magistrattis and counsall in tyme cuming' (RCRB, iii, 164). All was to no avail. Nominally the magistrates were elected to serve for one year, but a provost elected in 1655 stayed in office until 1660, his successor remained until 1665 and a later provost served from 1668 until 1673. The Dumfries Town Council finally passed an ordinance in 1678 restricting high burgh officials to terms of offices of no more than two years,

a piece of legislation which carried a fine of £1,000 Scots for those who broke it (McDowall, 1867, 531).

McDowall described the seventeenth-century burgh officials as 'prone . . . to the vice of over-legislation and . . . ignorant . . . of the natural laws of supply and demand' (1867, 529). Their attention to comparatively trivial matters is perhaps best illustrated by an act passed in 1690 when, pestered by a number of schoolchildren of the Grammar School to begin the holidays sooner than usual, the council actually passed a resolution rendering all children who absented themselves from classes before the 5th of September each year liable to imprisonment (McDowall, 1867, 530).

In 1692 Dumfries produced an extensive report for the Convention of Royal Burghs, in which she reports that in the previous five years she had had ships call from France, Stockholm, Norway and Bristol. There was also a notable inland trade and shops which sold 'cloath and London goodes' as well as pipes, brandy, tobacco and candles (RCRB, iv, 602). Out of a common good of £2,666 1s 4d Scots, the townspeople supported the roof and fabric of the church, a bridge of nine arches, the tolbooth, prisons, mills, schoolhouses and closes, but they had no hospital nor harbour 'that hath any key' (RCRB, iv, 603). In the tax roll of 1690 she had been stented at £1 18s and was sixth on the list, a position she maintained in 1705 (RCRB, iv, 121, 371).

Eighteenth Century: Eighteenth-century Dumfries was a town caught between two worlds. The two Jacobite rebellions will help to illustrate this point. In 1715 the crisis was answered by massive ditching, strengthening the town's ports and the provost riding out on his steed dressed in armour. A very medieval reply to the business at hand. By 1745 - just thirty years later - all this had changed. Dumfries burgesses, now accustomed to making money and pursuing the 'good life', found this second rebellion an annoyance and relied completely on the agencies of the government to deal with the emergency. Prince Charles, although he received few recruits in the area - again a marked contrast to the situation in 1715 - did occupy Dumfries; for a number of days.

The Baltic trade which had only been introduced to Dumfries in the late seventeenth century remained steady in the eighteenth, with imports of hemp, flax, iron, copper, lint and wood from that region (Smout, 1958-9, 45-6). An observer in the early eighteenth century noted the rise in trade especially that with England and 'the English plantations' (Gray, 1887-8, 134). Increased commerce with North America also created an outlet for a sizeable amount of emigration. On the stent rolls, Dumfries

remained at a steady seventh place in the accounts for 1718, 1730 and 1738 (RCRB, v, 196, 507, 630). Nevertheless, with 'absolute bankruptcy staring them in the face', burgh officials were forced to sell a portion of the burgh lands in 1726 and after that sale were still maintaining a debt of over £3,000 (McDowall, 1867, 621). A shortage of grain led to bread riots in the 1770s (McDowall, 1867, 678), sharp contrast to a burgh which in the eighteenth century was beginning to enjoy more of the 'good life' with the appearance of dance and fencing masters, jewellers, watch and clock makers, gunsmiths, printers and pastry cooks (Truckell (1), n.d., 38).

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street Layout: Determining the layout and development of the town is especially complicated in the case of Dumfries where a number of natural features - fords, lochs, burns and hills - have disappeared. The extra-ordinarily high number of mottes in the area further confuse the issue.

G.W. Shirley hypothesized that the primitive settlement initially grew up in the area around Nith Place and spread out in several directions from there (1915, 10). This is possible, but those early settlers would have been far removed from the protection afforded by the Townhead Motte. Perhaps Dumfries, like Glasgow and to a lesser extent Old and New Aberdeen, was to some degree a two-centre site with settlement developing simultaneously at the Townhead and near Nith Place hard by the parish church. Then again, a case can be made that settlement developed near the Townhead Motte and pushed south along the ridge halting near the church. It is a vexed question and not an easy one to answer.

However Dumfries developed, the market street which formed along the ridge was exceedingly wide. The 'aorta or vena cava', as one writer called it, was 1325 feet (405m) long from the head of Nith Place to the head of Friar's Vennel, and at the Midsteeple eighty-five feet (26m) in breadth, which in 1832 was by no means its widest point (McDiarmid, 1832, 69). The erection of the New Wark - a massive stone structure - in the late fourteenth century in the middle of the street greatly affected the size of the market area. As late as the sixteenth century the lower portion of the High Street was being referred to as via sutoria - the souters' (or cobblers' way (Hamilton-Grierson, 1912-13, 184), which may indicate that at one time cobblers as a craft body congregated in that area.

High Street has been defined as the main artery of Dumfries, and therefore Irish Street, Loreburn Street, Friar's Vennel, Lochmabengate and Townhead could be

described as 'principal veins'. Irish Street and Loreburn Street were both formerly back lanes of the High Street. Popular names for Irish Street in the sixteenth century were simply 'west barnraus', 'under the yairds', Galloway Gate or Irish Gate (Barbour, 1910-11, 23). Loreburn Street was similarly referred to as 'east barnraus' or 'yairdheids'. Together with the present day Shakespeare Street, they nearly encircled Dumfries.

Friar's Vennel was a street which lay at right angles to Irish Street, a long vennel which formed the Greyfriars boundary. Lochmabengate and Townhead were quarters of the town and also streets in their own right. Lochmabengate, known today as English Street, was a route to the Lochar Moss and entered the High Street below the Midsteeple. The Townhead Street led from the Townhead Motte to the top of the High Street. A number of streets were laid out in eighteenth-century Dumfries, activity which underlines the town's growing prosperity. Assembly Street, Queen and King Streets were all built in the middle of the century, while Queensberry Street was cleared in 1764 with the partial demolition of the New Wark and the removal of the flesh market to Loreburn Street. The construction of a second bridge across the Nith led to the opening of both Buccleuch Street and Bridge Street in the last decade of the century.

Market Area: Prior to the erection of the New Wark in the late fourteenth century, there would have been an uncommonly wide market area in Dumfries, stretching from a point near the Townhead to Lochmabengate. The construction of the massive fortified structure did not stop Dumfriessians, however, from maintaining a sizeable number of markets. The first mention of a burghal market in Dumfries occurs in a charter dated 1194 x 1214 (Pryde, 1950-51, 83). Many of Dumfries' markets were concentrated in the area around the New Wark. The shoe and leather market, for example, was located on the south side of the structure and the salt and lime markets were nearby (Reid, 1915, 9). The meal market was covered in 1662 and placed on the south side of the New Wark and the fleshmarket, although originally located in an area north-east of the New Wark, was moved to Loreburn Street in the eighteenth century (Reid, 1915, 10). The fish market was situated at the Fish Cross at the end of Lochmabengate near its junction with Queensberry Street. The cross was later moved to the top of St. Michael's Street, where it remained until 1788 when it was once again placed in the High Street on Cross Brae south of the Midsteeple (Reid, 1915, 10). The Market Cross of the burgh, first mentioned in

1575, was an extraordinary structure for it comprised not only a cross but also shops within it. Edgar describes the structure as being 'an house about thirty feet (9m) in length having to the front three shops, the floors a foot or two sunk under the Street' (Reid, 1915, 44). It occupied the site of the Midsteeple and when undergoing alteration in the early 1690s the cross proper disappeared, although another storey was added to the structure (Reid, 1915, 149).

Defences: At no time was Dumfries a walled town in the proper sense although it did maintain a protective ditch and dyke around the settlement. The ditch, or fosse, surrounded the burgh from the Townhead Port to the chapel of the Holy Rood and from there to Lochmabengate, round the Dyke of St. Michael's Church to the Nether Port (Reid, 1915, 10). On 15th January 1575/6, it was ordained that 'all dykes and fowceis about the Burgh be mendit and castin fra the North Port to the Nether Port and sow the part of St. Michael's Kirkdyke' (Reid, 1915, 10). The town's defences were renewed during the Rebellion of 1715, but there is no indication that the 'dyke and fosse' was surmounted by a palisade as in the case of Inverness.

Ports: Dumfries during its history had a total of five ports. The Townhead or North Port stood at the west end of Kerwyn Terrace (NX 9723 7641) and was dismantled in 1764 to widen the street. Lochmabengate Port was beyond Shakespeare Street and the Nether Port located between Burns Street and Brooms Road. That port was removed in 1641 (Ordnance Survey, Record Cards, Reference NX 97 NE 21-3). There was also a port site in Friar's Vennel located at the corner of St. David's Street and Irish Street, which was known locally as the 'port of the vennel', Shirley surmised that after the growth of Newtown the 'port of the vennel' was removed to the bridge (Shirley, 1915, 32).

Bridge: Edgar was the first writer to assign the building of a bridge across the Nith to Dervorgilla de Balliol whom he identifies incorrectly as 'Dornagilda; a spouse to John Balliol' (Reid, 1915, 53). That tradition has stuck and it is perhaps not unreasonable to suspect that she might have funded such a project. On 16th January 1425/6 the Countess of Galloway granted a charter to the Dumfries Greyfriars which enabled them to collect a toll levied at the bridge (Reid, 1915, 150). Even more significant is the wording of a 1431/2 papal relaxation which speaks of 'the bridge which has recently begun', at Dumfries over the River Nith (Shirley, 1915, 27). So a stone bridge was built at Dumfries at least by the first half of the fifteenth century, a structure which was swept away by a flood in 1621. The rebuilt

seventeenth-century bridge originally had nine arches, three of which were later removed. It is in good repair and is still in daily use for pedestrian traffic. The building of that bridge had provided not only greater access to Dumfries markets, but had led to the creation of a suburban area - Newtown - under the 'west barnraus'. A second bridge was constructed just upriver from the original in the 1790s to aid the increased flow of traffic. Its construction similarly had a revolutionary effect on the character of the northern end of Dumfries.

Castle: The Dumfries area is swamped by a number of mottes and motte-like structures, two of which, the Townhead Motte and the motte at Castledykes, affected the town's development directly. The Townhead Motte was located near the Academy and is now so mutilated that the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments stated that 'save for the suggestive name of Moat Brae by the water-side it would have been difficult to infer a motte on this site' (RCAHM, 1920, 51). Regardless, it has been inferred that the Townhead motte was the headquarters for Radulf, sub-king of Strathnith, and that it was occupied as a castle site until at least the seventeenth century. By the fifteenth century the possession of the Townhead Motte had passed to the Maxwells of Caerlaverock, whose 'castle' (perhaps, in reality, a fortified townhouse) was described in an English report of 1563-66 as 'battled within ... but not tenable nor strong against any battery of guns' (Barbour, 1903-4, 362). The words of that rang true, for Lord Scrope, writing of his raid in 1570, noted that he 'took and cast down the Castles of Caerlaverock, Hoddam, Dumfries, Tinwald ... and sundry gentlemen's houses ... and having burnt the town of Dumfries returned with great spoil to England' (McDowall, 1867, 291). The 'castle' was apparently rebuilt by the Maxwells but was again ruinous in the early eighteenth century when the existing remains of the 'castle' were employed in the construction of the New Church (McDowall, 1867, 616).

The royal castle was established on the massive motte of Castledykes, located nearly a mile to the south of the centre of Dumfries. A castellated structure at Castledykes reputedly dates to at least the late twelfth century (Truckell (1), n.d., 7), and there is mention of a chapel of St. Mary at Castledykes in the early thirteenth century (Barbour, 1905-6, 49). The castle was rebuilt in stone in the 1260s and workmen during the Edwardian occupation dug a great ditch around the castle as well as constructing a wooden paling to encircle it. In 1335 Sir Eustace Maxwell of Caerlaverock, who held Dumfries for Edward III, noted in a revenue return that 'of the mote of the castle and certain royal lands called Kingsholm at Dumfries

which are wont to be worth 60 shillings there is no reply' (Barbour, 1905-6, 49). The castle and Kingsholm were thus united as they are today. The belief is strong that Dumfries Castle was destroyed after its capture by Bruce in 1313 and was not rebuilt.

Church: The first mention of a church at Dumfries is in William the Lion's grant of 1179 x 1185 to Bishop Jocelin of Glasgow (Barrow, 1971, 264). The pre-Reformation church, dedicated to St. Michael, was cruciform in shape with no galleries and an altar facing east. It is alleged that St. Michael's underwent alterations after the slaying of John Comyn in the church of the Greyfriars (Paton, 1904, 11). The introduction of Protestant worship brought more alterations to the church, including the addition of a north wing and making the church square in shape to accommodate a larger number of parishioners (Paton, 1904, 12). Only the medieval nave and chancel were standing in the early eighteenth century when the weak condition of the church began to cause alarm. St. Michael's was pulled down in 1744 and was rebuilt by 1746. A second church, the New Church, was erected in 1727 at the head of High Street. Its successor, built in 1868, has been known as 'Greyfriars'.

Friary: A convent of Franciscan friars was established in Dumfries in the 1260s, possibly under the patronage of Dervorgilla de Balliol. Their convent was located to the north and west of the burgh, the line of Friar's Vennel being the southern boundary of their friary. In 1569 James VI granted the revenues and lands of the Greyfriars to the burgh in order that it might erect a hospital, a project never realised. Stone from the Greyfriars was alleged to have been used in the repair of Maxwell of Caerlaverock's 'castle' after 1570 (McDowall, 1867, 262). Two 'dilapidated' arch windows and part of the south wall of the friary were still standing at the turn of the nineteenth century along with a fireplace; all have since vanished (McDowall, 1867, 262).

Chapels: A number of chapels were established in Dumfries and its environs. The earliest known chapel in Dumfries was that dedicated to St. Thomas Becket, whose revenues were gifted to Kelso Abbey in 1183 x 1188 (Barrow, 1971, 290). The chapel was located between High Street and Queensberry Street. The Chapel of Our Lady, known also as 'Chapel of the Willies', stood near the corner of present-day Bank Street. After the Reformation it passed into the hands of the Rig family, who employed the structure as a place for dyeing and tanning (Reid, 1915, 102). One of

the most notable of all Dumfries' chapels was the Chapel of the Holy Rood, also known as St. Christopher's Chapel or the Chrystal Chapel, located on the road to Annandale where St. Mary's Church now stands. It was founded by Robert Bruce on the spot of the execution of his brother-in-law, who was so penalised for his part in the Comyn murders (Reid, 1915, 116). Stones from that chapel were used in strengthening the town's defences during the 1715 rebellion (Starke, 1863-4, 41). When workmen were building St. Mary's Church in 1837 a newspaper report related 'traces of rough foundation were lighted upon by the workmen' but 'from what was seen it only proves that the chapel or oratory must have been very small indeed' (Starke, 1863-4, 44).

Tolbooth: The first mention of a Tolbooth in Dumfries occurs in 1481. It was pawned by the Town Council in 1566/7, but was soon redeemed by them after the sale of Greyfriars (Reid, 1915, 147). It had cellars in the basement, shops on the ground floor and a council chamber above. Originally the tolbooth was thatched, but slates were added later and an outside clock by 1533 (Shirley, 1915, 30). The Tolbooth was pulled down and a new one, the Midsteeple was built by 1725. The new Town House occupied a prominent position in the High Street and in addition to a writing office for the Town Clerk and council rooms, it also housed the burgh's magazine (Reid, 1915, 148). At the command of the Privy Council in 1575, burgh officials had a 'sufficient prisoun-hous' constructed on the north side of the Tolbooth. Prior to its erection prisoners had been lodged in the Tolbooth, but it had proved to be insufficient (Reid, 1915, 148). That jail was apparently not a strong building and was wrecked by fire in 1742 (Reid, 1915, 44).

School: In 1330 the rector of the schools of 'Donfres' made payment in that year of the burgh's taxes (ER, i, 303). The sixteenth-century school-house was located on the north side of Chapel Street (Shirley, 1915, 44). By the eighteenth century a number of schools had sprouted under the one roof of Dumfries Academy in 1802 (McDowall, 1867, 736). Edgar reminds us that boys are boys everywhere and at all times when he relates 'a new schoolhouse, making it into double and divided rooms on an old house ... on the west of the entry to the New Kirk, whose windows and doors do suffer by the schoolboys continually frequenting the streets, throwing stones and breaking windows, etc.' (Reid, 1915, 57).

Houses: Stone houses in Dumfries were rare until the time of James III (McDowall, 1867). There are at least two early sixteenth-century references to stone houses

within Dumfries. In 1543 a daughter of a deceased burghess was involved in a business transaction which spoke of a 'large stone house' (Hamilton-Grierson, 1912-13, 198), and an earlier reference of 1508 refers to a stone house in the 'Chapelside' of Dumfries (Reid, 1915, 231). The New Wark, built in the late fourteenth century, was a massive stone structure. Its purpose may have originally been a defensive one, indeed in its day it served both as a prison and barracks (Shirley, 1915, 25). Most of the New Wark was removed in 1764, what remained was converted into dwelling houses which were in turn pulled down in 1846. A portion of the vaults of the building were laid bare when workmen were digging the foundations of a public urinal in 1908 and one of the discoveries was an iron cleek found in a fireplace (Shirley, 1915, 46). Edgar described the structure as having a forestair with vaults or cellars 'having four shops before and dwellings and shops for the fleshers on the back parts, with many rooms and apartments which are now all thrown down and demolished' (Reid, 1915, 55).

Mills: The burgh mill dates to the early thirteenth century (Shirley, 1915, 29). By Edgar's day that mill at Milldamhead had become a snuff mill (Reid, 1915, 29). Other mills in the area included a water mill at Millhole and a horse mill at the head of Brewery Street (Barbour, 1884-5, 61). The town established mills on the Galloway side of the river in 1705. A new water mill had been let in 1707 and a wheat mill was added later in 1742. In 1780 the 1705 erection was destroyed by fire and a new mill, still standing, was erected on the same site the following year (Barbour, 1884-5, 61).

Archaeology

PREVIOUS WORK

What excavation has so far been carried out in Dumfries has been small in scale and entirely due to the labours of Mr. Alfred Truckell of the Dumfries Museum. His excavations over the years, combined with constant observation of and collection from building and service trenches, have produced considerable quantities of medieval material, and contributed a great deal to the archaeology of the burgh. However, as these excavations have been mainly carried out single-handed by Mr. Truckell, they have been necessarily limited. Examples are given here:-

(1) Mill Hole

Sampling excavation, 22nd-23rd December, 1976 in waste land adjoining the rough car park in Mill Hole behind Hastie & Brodies (NX 975 760). 1.0 - 1.5 metres of nineteenth century rubble overlay late sixteenth - early eighteenth century rubble containing pottery of the period. Beneath this lay a disused sandstone slab 'cundie' or drain. Below the drain lay dirty-grey clayey occupation soil containing fragments of charcoal, bone and potsherds. Within this soil was another 'cundie' with a still vigorous flow of water. This occupation soil was sampled to a depth of 2.50 metres below present ground level, while probing indicated its continuance for at least a further metre. Three fine sherds of late twelfth - early thirteenth-century pottery were found stratified within this. The depth reached was marked and the area backfilled.

(2) Lower High Street - Shakespeare Street

Single-handed excavation over c. 3 years in a 20' x 10' trench in one of the closes which ran between the tenements fronting onto the old Soutergait. Finds were recovered from a lens of occupation material deposited when the close was levelled and cobbled. Although rich in finds, the stratification is in reverse sequence, indicating the redeposited nature of the soil. The pottery ranged from the sixteenth/early seventeenth centuries back to late twelfth to early fifteenth-century material.

A fairly large number of finds are noted from the burgh. With the exception of those recovered under the archaeological supervision of Mr. Truckell, however, they

are generally from unsatisfactory archaeological contexts. Some of the principal ones are:-

- (a) Coin and silver hoard: Comprising 213 English, Scottish, Irish and foreign coins of thirteenth - early fourteenth-century date, this was found 'in the wall of an old house in Dumfries'. Included with the hoard, believed to have been deposited about 1310, were : a small silver cross; fragments of silver chain; an annular brooch of silver; three fragments of similar brooches; and a small silver bow handle. The material is now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh. (Callander, 1924; Thompson, 1956, no.139).
- (b) Coin hoard: This was comprised of an unspecified number of late thirteenth - early fourteenth century coins, now dispersed, deposited sometime after 1320. (Numismatic Chronicle, XII, (1849-50), 14; Thompson, 1956, no.138).
- (c) Bronze figure of Christ: Originally part of a crucifix, this is said to have been found when excavating the foundations for Greyfriars Church in 1866. (Corrie, 1926).
- (d) Brass mount of cruciform shape: 'From Greyfriars Church' ('Donations' PSAS, LX (1925-26), 96).
- (e) Seal of Nicolas de Galway - A silver, handled seal of probably thirteenth - century date 'from Dumfries' (Stevenson, 1926). Now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.
- (f) Two war-scythes: Dating from the town defence during the 1715 rebellion, these were found in 'a lumber-room in the Town House'. Now in the National Museum of Antiquities. ('Donations', PSAS, XXVIII, (1893-94), 60).
- (g) Bronze hoard: Of Middle Bronze Age date, this is said to have been found, with (c) above, when excavating Greyfriars Church foundations in 1866. Some of the objects are now lost, the rest are held in Dumfries Burgh Museum. (Corrie, 1926; Coles, 1964).
- (h) Skeletal material: Much skeletal material was recovered during building operations in the area of the Greyfriars burial ground in 1951 and the 1960s. (ex. inf. A. Truckell).
- (i) Abecediary: From the Greyfriars Church Site, now occupied by Templetons Supermarket. (ex. inf. A. Truckell).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

A number of problems, of interest to both the archaeologist and the historian, are immediately apparent. The question, discussed at length above, of whether initial development took place around Townhead motte, or near the parish church (p. 9, above) is the most pressing archaeological and historical one and more intensive documentary work might assist in its solution. Next, little is known of the material aspects of the burgh's development, for example, the materials and constructional methods employed in the creation of the various domestic, public and industrial buildings throughout the historic core. The locations of these, particularly those of an industrial nature, are also difficult to establish. The street pattern appears to follow essentially that of the medieval period, and this, with the layout of the blocks of burgage plots, or 'plan units', suggests a certain degree of deliberate planning of the layout of Dumfries. However, the dates at which such units were created is unclear, while later streets may well have modified the pattern. A suggested instance of this is the realignment of burgage plots from frontages originally in the High Street as a result of the creation of Lochmaben Gate (English Street) and its corresponding 'back row' (Shakespeare Street). A hypothetical reconstruction of the initial layout is given on the historical plan.

Other more specific problems include the location of the sites of Townhead motte and the Chapel of St. Thomas. Possible locations for these are indicated on the historical plan. The precise line of the ditch and dyke which surrounded the burgh is also uncertain, although the general position is known (above.p.8).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

As discussed already above (p.6) much of the once hilly site of the burgh of Dumfries has been radically modified to provide more even ground for building. The summits of hillocks have been planed off, while the small hollows or valleys between them may well have been substantially filled in. By minimising relief, this renders the locating of early sites like St. Thomas' Chapel more difficult, but it also makes the assessment of where archaeological deposits will be likely to survive doubly difficult. It is very probable that where summit areas have been lowered, all trace of early levels will have been destroyed. Conversely, in the low-lying areas, the preservation of occupation debris might be almost total, although now covered by considerable depths of eighteenth-century and later debris.

In the High Street/Shakespeare Street area, the entire High Street frontage was

occupied by buildings with deep cellars extending down into clean sand/clay sub-soil which had completely removed any occupation debris. Outwith the area of the cellars, lenses of medieval material survive (see (2). p.13 above), and it is probable that undisturbed medieval levels survive in the patches which were formerly garden space. In the area of the Mill Hole, the depth of occupation soil indicated by Mr. Truckell's excavations suggests that more extensive work in that area might be very rewarding indeed. Untouched areas of the Greyfriars site might still yield very useful material. Elsewhere in the town the situation is less well known, although the recovery of thirteenth - fourteenth-century pottery from a gas-main trench in a close mouth in the town centre (ex. inf. A. Truckell) might indicate at least sporadic preservation of early levels, presumably in the filled-in hollows discussed above. Overall, the archaeological potential of the historic centre of Dumfries is difficult to assess at this stage.

FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT

Considerable blocks of land within the historic core of Dumfries have recently been redeveloped, and with the deep piling and substantial foundation work which normally accompanies modern building techniques, these areas can now be considered lost to archaeological investigation. In addition, substantial plots will be cleared for similar redevelopment - shops, supermarkets, multi-storey car parks, new access and circulatory roads and so on. An example of the last type is a road planned eventually to link Loreburn Street directly with Shakespeare Street (not mapped), thus creating an inner ring system bypassing the irregular and constricted High Street axis. The recent proposals for redevelopment are shown in plan form at the end of this report.

At present, Dumfries has no Conservation Areas, although the historic importance of the town and the pleasant aspect of the town centre and immediate surrounds would surely justify such a scheme. Buildings listed as being of historical or architectural interest are few, although a massive and long overdue increase in such listings is currently under way. Where such buildings or Conservation Areas exist, redevelopment is less likely to go ahead without consideration of the historic environment.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considerable areas of historic Dumfries have already been lost to archaeological investigation due to the ongoing and necessary process of central area redevelopment.

Substantial areas are expected to be redeveloped within the foreseeable future. As little is known of the town's development, and less of the survival of archaeological material within it, those areas which remain are of paramount historical importance. Preliminary archaeological investigation is necessary to establish the areas where medieval levels survive, in the first instance by further small-scale test excavations, throughout the historic centre of the burgh. Redevelopment contracts should be worded to allow time for such work to proceed between demolition and re-building on all sites becoming vacant in the town centre until the presence or absence of archaeologically productive levels are established. Where preservation of early levels is shown to be good, those organisations concerned should meet to discuss the possibility of longer periods of time being made available to the archaeologist so that large-scale excavations might be undertaken where these can be shown to be justifiable.

In addition, the lack of a conservation area causes concern. It is considered here that Dumfries more than justifies the creation of such an area, as the relatively intact historic street pattern and the presence of several historic buildings demonstrate. On historical, archaeological, (and aesthetic) grounds, such an area should be delimited by the following streets:

St. Michael's Bridge, St. Michael's Bridge Road, St. Michael Street. Barn Slaps, Glebe Street, Broom Road, St. Michael Street, Burns Street, Shakespeare Street, English Street, Loreburn Street, Academy Street to include Dumfries Academy and to the Nith beyond that point. Thence Nith to New Bridge, Galloway Street, Howgate Street and Church Street to St. Michael's Bridge including the museum and grounds. Note that this is a minimum area, and that it does not take Victorian suburbs into account. These may well merit conservation areas of their own.

Within the overall pattern of Scottish burghs, Dumfries occupied a central position in the rich agricultural area of south-west Scotland, and its importance to that area cannot be underestimated. Considerably less work has been done on the burghs of the south-west than, for example, those of the east coast. It is essential therefore, that research be carried out in Dumfries to establish the position held by the burgh in a local, national and international context.

Archaeology, with the corresponding documentary research, constitutes the primary method by which information relating to the past development of our historic towns will be extracted in the future. Every effort should be made to allow such investigation to proceed as and when the opportunities arise.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|
| BARBOUR, J. | 1884-5 | <u>Notes on the Town's Common Mills.</u>
<u>TDGAS</u> , 58-70. |
| | 1903-4 | <u>Vestiges of the Castle of Dumfries.</u>
<u>TDGAS</u> , 362-5. |
| | 1905-6 | <u>The Castle of Dumfries.</u> <u>TDGAS</u> xviii
pt 1. 48-92. |
| | 1910-11 | <u>The Greyfriars Convent of Dumfries.</u>
<u>TDGAS</u> viii, 18-35. |
| BARROW, G.W.S. | 1971 | <u>The Acts of William I, King of Scots</u>
1165-1214 (Edinburgh) |
| CALLANDER, J.G. | 1924 | 'Fourteenth-Century Brooches and Other
Ornaments in the National Museum of
Antiquities of Scotland'. PSAS, LVIII,
(1923-24). 160-3, 174, 176. |
| COLES, J.M. | 1964 | 'Scottish Middle Bronze Age Metalwork'
PSAS, XCVII, (1963-64). 151. |
| COWAN, I. and EASSON, D. | 1976 | <u>Medieval Religious Houses Scotland</u>
(London). |
| CORRIE, J.M. | 1926 | 'Notice of Certain Bronze implements
from Dumfriesshire, PSAS, LX,
(1925-26), 27-31. |
| DUNCAN, A.A.M. | 1975 | <u>Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom</u>
(Edinburgh). |
| ER | 1878-1908 | <u>The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland</u>
ed. J. Stuart and others (Edinburgh). |
| GRAY, P. | 1887-8 | <u>Dumfries in the Past.</u> <u>TDGAS</u> , 133-141 |
| HAMILTON-GRIERSON, P | 1912-13 | <u>The Protocol Book (1540-1551) of Herbert</u>
<u>Anderson, Notary in Dumfries.</u> <u>TDGAS</u>
3rd series i, 176-224 |
| MCDIARMID, J. | 1832 | <u>Picture of Dumfries and its Environs.</u>
(Edinburgh). |
| MCDOWALL, W. | 1867 | <u>History of the Burgh of Dumfries</u>
(Edinburgh) |
| NICHOLSON, R. | 1974 | <u>Scotland: The Later Middle Ages.</u>
(Edinburgh) |

- NICOLAISEN, W. F. H.
 GELLING, M.
 RICHARDS, M. 1970 The Names of the Towns and Cities in Britain (London).
- PATON, J. 1904 The Book of St. Michael's Church, Dumfries (Dumfries).
- PRYDE, G. S. 1950-1 The Burghs of Dumfriesshire and Galloway: Their Origin and Status. TDGAS, 81-132. 3rd series, XXIX.
- 1965 The Burghs of Scotland (London).
- PSAS Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
- RCAHM 1920 Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland. Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the County of Dumfries. (Edinburgh).
- RCRB 1866-90 Records of the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland ed. J.D. Marwick (after volume ii the title changes to Extracts from the Records . . .) (Edinburgh).
- RSS 1908 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum ed. M Livingstone and others (Edinburgh)
- REID, R. C. (ed) 1915 Robert Edgar. An Introduction to the History of Dumfries. (Dumfries).
- SHIRLEY, G. W. 1915 The Growth of a Scottish Burgh: A Study in the Early History of Dumfries (Dumfries)
- SMOUT, T. C. 1958-9 The Foreign Trade of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright. TDGAS 3rd series XXXVI 36-47.
- STARKE, J. 1863-4 Sir Christopher Seton and His Chapel at Dumfries. TDGAS, 40-44.
- STEVENSON, J. H. 1926 'Note on Three Metal Matrices of Seals (of Apparently the 13th century or Thereby) in the National Museum of Antiquities, which bear the emblem of the Stag-Head Cabossed'. PSAS, LX, (1925-26), 219.
- THOMPSON, J. D. A. 1956 Inventory of British Coin Hoards, AD. 600-1500.
- TDGAS Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society.

TRUCKELL, A (1)

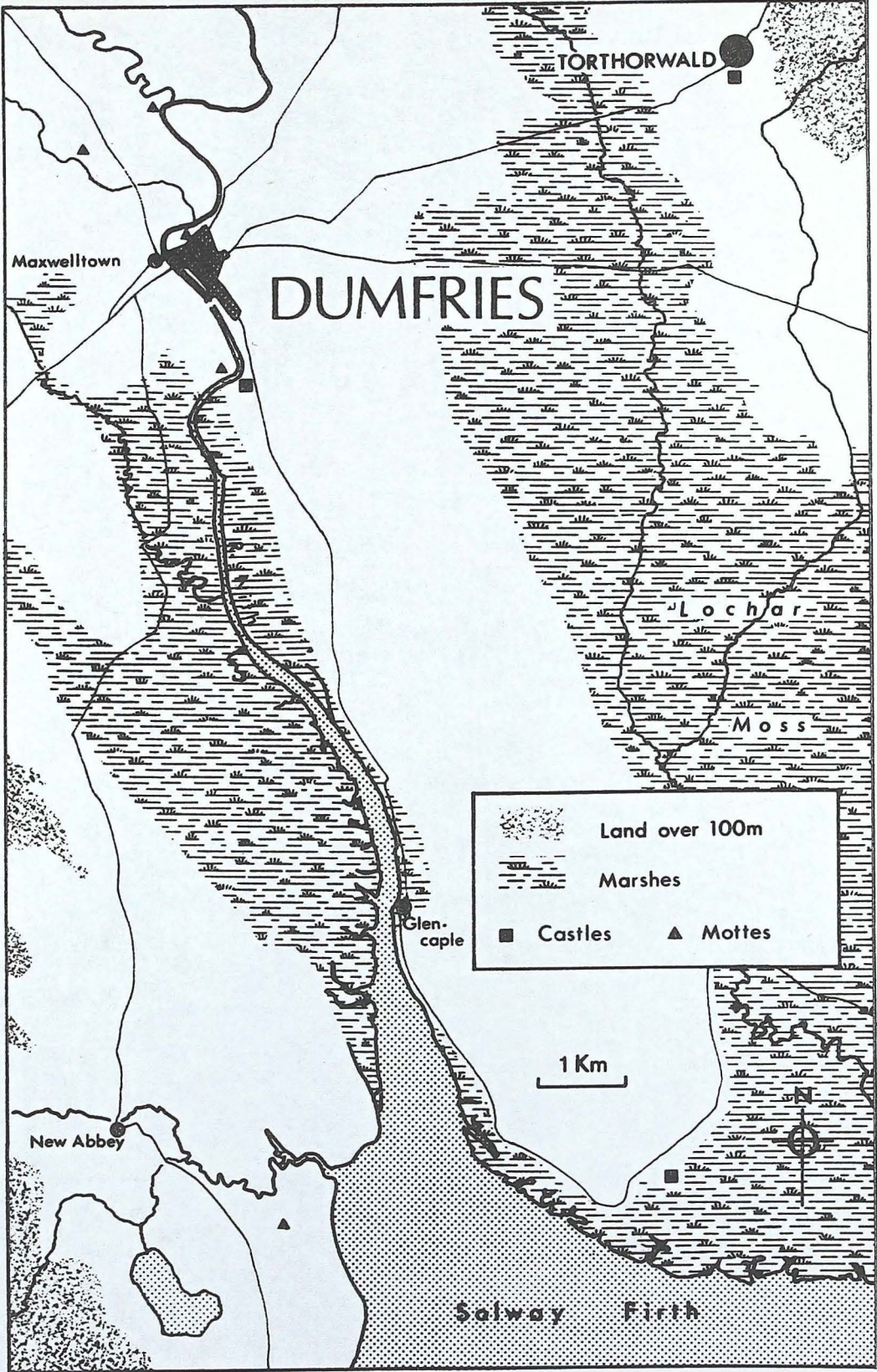
no date

Dumfries (typewritten sheet).

TRUCKELL, A. (2)

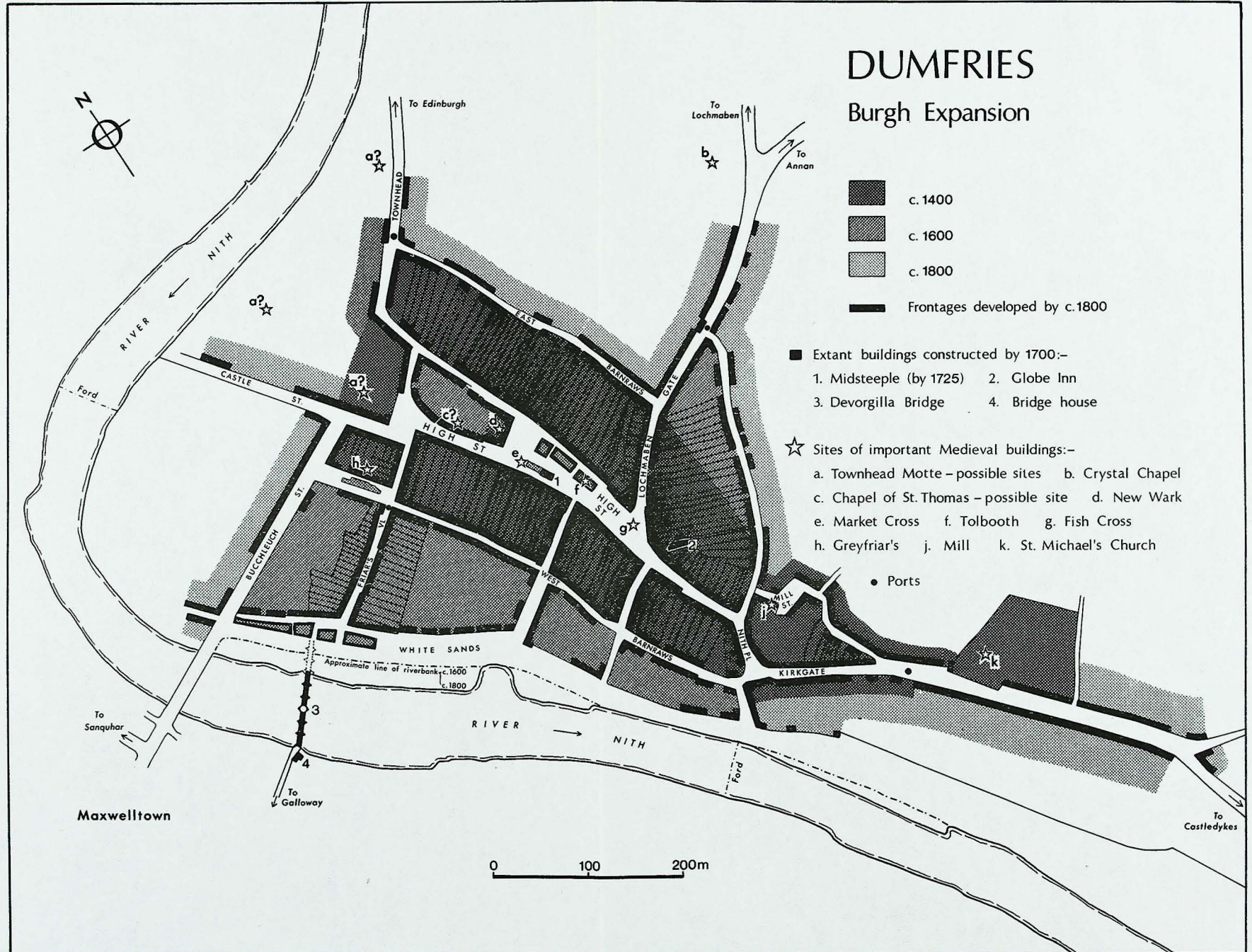
no date

Dumfries. A Summary History.
(typewritten sheet).



DUMFRIES

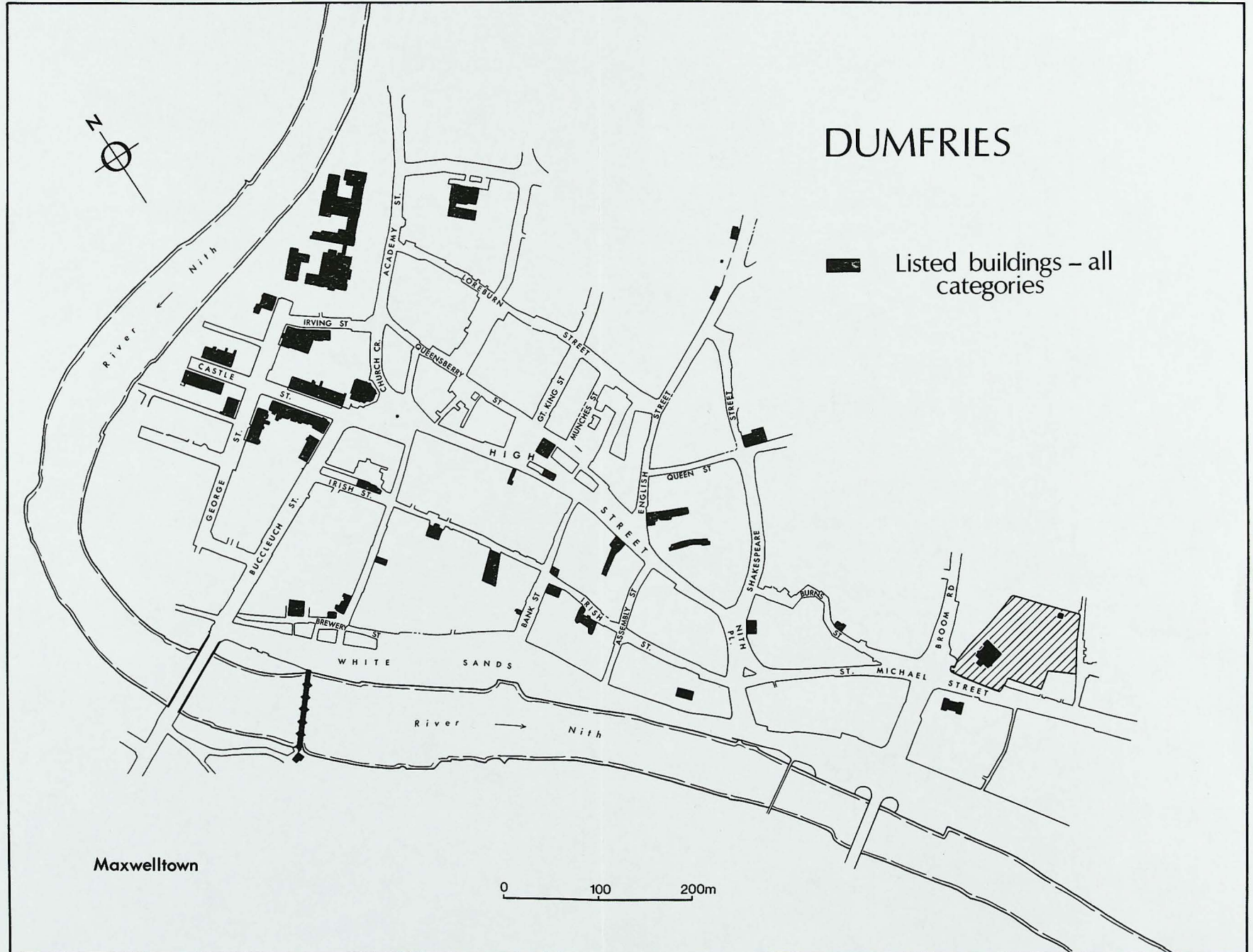
Burgh Expansion



Based on the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown copyright reserved.

DUMFRIES

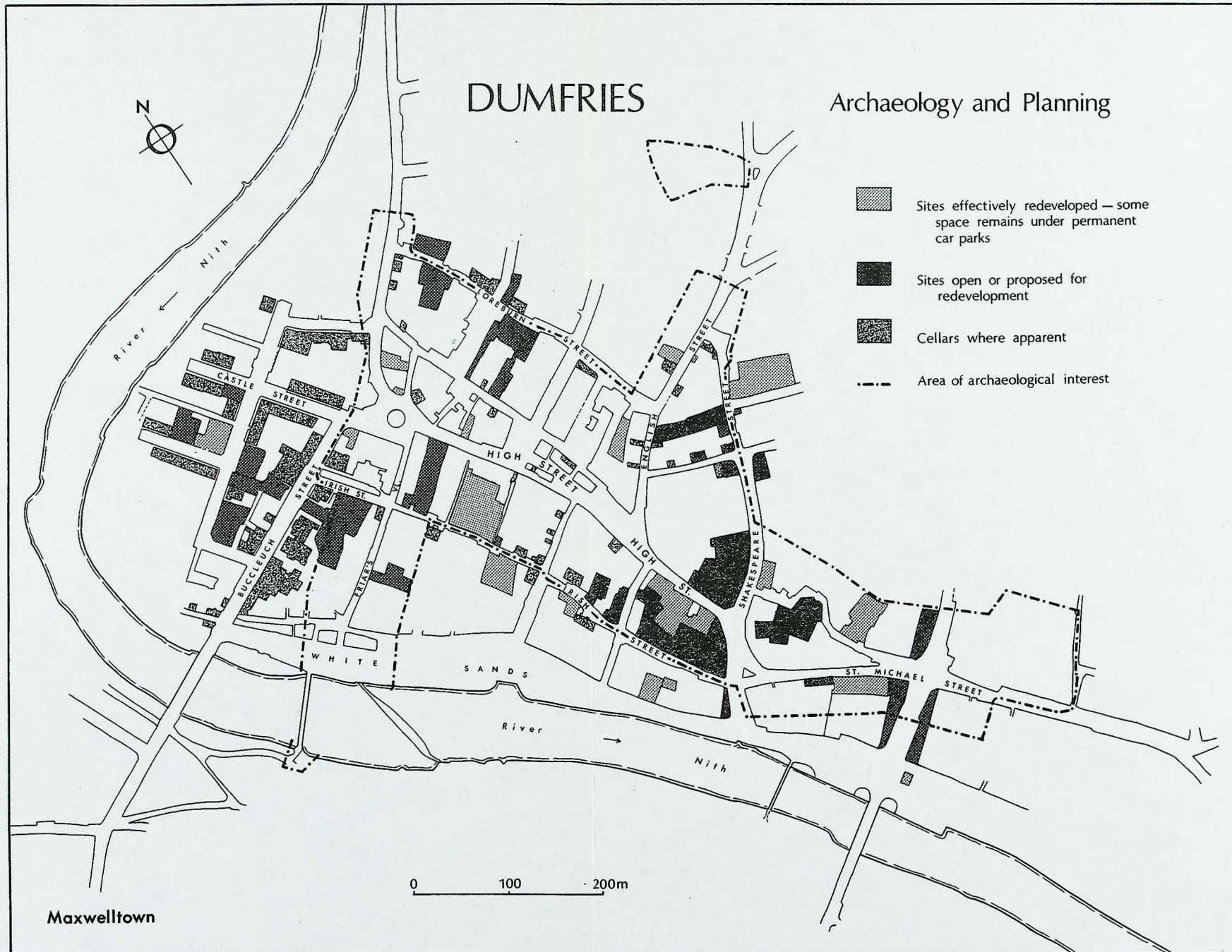
■ Listed buildings – all categories



Based on the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown copyright reserved.

Maxwelltown

0 100 200m



Based on the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown copyright reserved.

Maxwelltown

