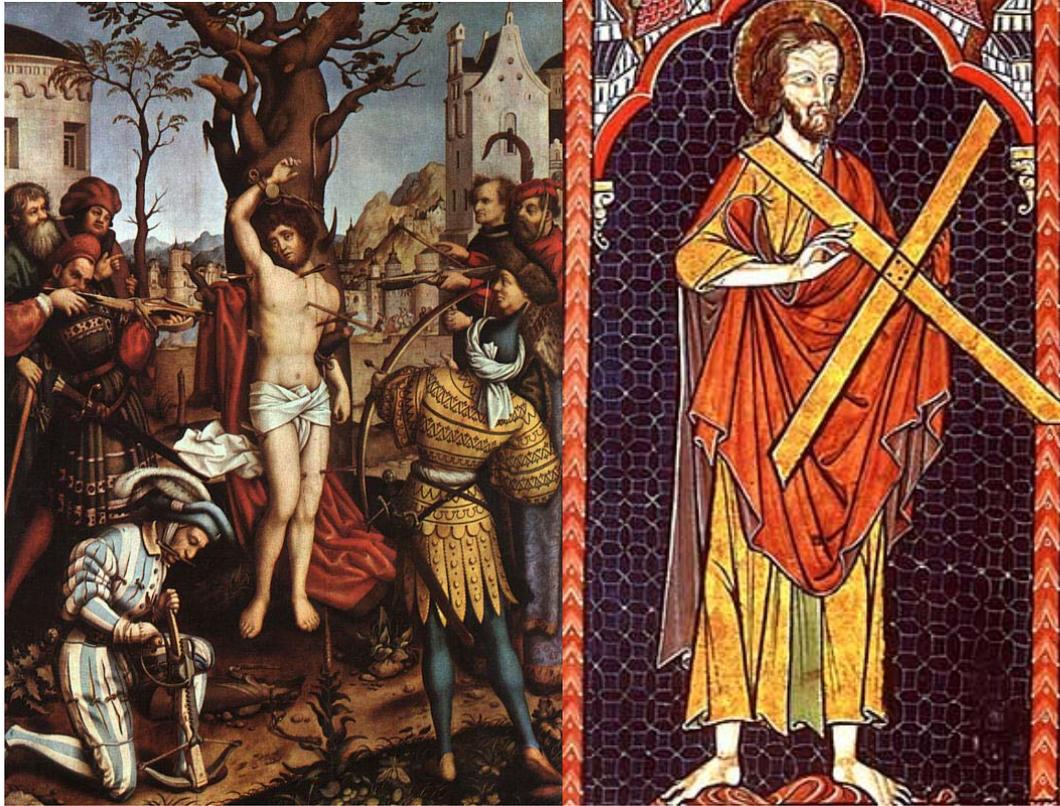


REPORT ON THE 'OLD KIRK', NORTH BERWICK.



Of Baldred's lineage little we may learn,
Whether of princess born or lowly swain,—
Suffice, that he was bred by Kentigern
What time St Colme to Iona came ;
And cleans'd the church from her Pelagian stain,
And royal Brudeus to the faith subdu'd ;
Who, haply, left the world's tumultuous scene
To meditate in sentimental mood,
And hold high converse in the Bass's solitude.

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PREPARED FOR ADDYMAN ARCHAEOLOGY BY HISTORY
TOMORROW, CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND POLICY,
UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING, FK9 4LA.

¹ Images of St Sebastien and St Andrew. Excerpt from: James Miller, *St Baldred of the Bass, a Pictish Legend; The siege of Berwick, a Tragedy; with other Poems and Ballads, founded on the Local Traditions of East Lothian and Berwickshire* (Edinburgh, 1824).

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INTRODUCTION

The earliest known medieval parish church at North Berwick was dedicated to St Andrew. It is now called the 'old kirk' and has already been the subject of a number of excellent detailed investigations by both historians and archaeologists. All of these reports have focused to different extents on hagiography relating to an even earlier and still rather obscure local saint called St Baldred who, we are informed, lived in the area in the mid-eighth century AD.² Unfortunately, there is very little surviving information relating to St Baldred and his mission apart from a couple of references in English sources and later hagiography from the Aberdeen Breviary. Yet, his figure overshadows the history of both the church of St Andrew and North Berwick to a considerable extent.

Between 1999 and 2006 a number of excavations were undertaken on the site of the 'old kirk' in advance of and during the construction of the Scottish Seabird Centre. These have resulted in a preliminary phasing of the site from an Anglian (pre-c.900) period through to present day. There seems to be sufficient evidence both from these excavations and from an earlier pre-1907 unpublished excavation to suggest that there was an earlier Anglian Christian presence upon the site that was then overlaid by the medieval parish church dedicated to St Andrew.³

In August 2008 *History Tomorrow*, University of Stirling, was commissioned by Addyman Archaeology to produce a narrative history of the old parish church from the Anglian period to c.1870. Some of this narrative is inevitably based upon secondary sources since there are essentially no surviving Scottish documentary records from the pre-1100 period. This situation does not improve much for the period 1100-c.1550 because the North Berwick burgh records for that period have not survived. This leaves the cartulary of the medieval Cistercian nunnery of North Berwick as virtually the sole source for material relating to the 'old kirk' because its revenues belonged to the convent. Post-c.1560 and the Reformation this ecclesiastic record can be increasingly supplemented by both the surviving burgh records (NAS, B56) and by assorted papers from the records of the different families, like the Dalrymples, who held the barony of North Berwick. This report will be split into three sections. First, the Anglian period. Second, the medieval period to the Reformation. Lastly, the post-1560 period.

² T. Arnold (ed), *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae* (London, 1882), i, 48.

³ Addyman Archaeology, *Kirk Ness, North Berwick* (unpublished, 2007).

ANGLIAN NORTH BERWICK

In 1981 Simpson and Stevenson suggested there was sufficient archaeological evidence to support a date of sixth-century settlement in the environs of North Berwick. This evidence consisted of a zoomorphic penannular brooch and a hand-pin recovered from a rock shelter.⁴ They also noted that a large mound which supposedly had contained Anglo-Saxon ‘relics’ had been destroyed during construction works in 1847 and that the location of those ‘relics’ was unknown.⁵ Writing sixteen years later, Hall and Bowler referred to this evidence as ‘scanty’ but noted the proximity of the burgh to both the Castle Hill motte site and to the possible Iron Age fort upon North Berwick Law which could suggest continuity of occupation.⁶ Of course, the place-name Berwick itself is commonly thought of as containing the OE prefix *bere-* (barley) and the OE suffix *-wic*, meaning specialised farm.⁷ More recently, material thought to be of firm Anglo-Saxon provenance has been excavated from a midden located on the site of the ‘old kirk’ and, if the dating is correct, this should clarify and confirm Anglo-Saxon settlement in North Berwick.⁸

In fact, some kind of Anglo-Saxon settlement or presence in this area is almost to be expected since North Berwick lies within the territories once controlled by the kings of Northumbria and the recent excavations at nearby Dunbar have demonstrated both continuity of settlement through the Anglo-Saxon period and the richness of surviving Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence.⁹ One potential problem is that North Berwick, unlike Dunbar, is never explicitly named in any surviving Anglo-Saxon source. Instead, the sole reference to an Anglo-Saxon presence in the North Berwick area comes from a medieval text written by the community of St Cuthbert, *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto*.

The most recent editor of this text has argued that it was written to record and legitimise the property claims made by the Cuthbertine community that had originated at Lindisfarne. The dating of this text depends on whether some eleventh century charters within it are interpolations. If they are, the text is tenth century in date. However, the editor on the whole favoured the idea that they were not later textual additions, which would date *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto* to the period between 1031 and 1050.¹⁰

Whatever the date, the list of territories claimed by the Cuthbertine community states,

Et hic est Lindisfarnensis terrae terminus: a fluuio Tweoda usque ad Warnedmuthe, et inde superius ad illum locum ubi haec aqua quae uocatur Warned oritur iuxta montem Hybberndune, et ab illo monte usque ad fluuium qui uocatur Bromic, et inde usque ad fluuium qui uocatur Till, et tota terra

⁴ Anne Turner Simpson and Sylvia Stevenson, *Historic North Berwick: the archaeological implications of development* (Glasgow, 1981), 14, [hereafter: Simpson and Stevenson, *Historic North Berwick*].

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ Derek Hall and David Bowler, ‘North Berwick, East Lothian: its archaeology revisited’, in *PSAS*, 127, 1997, 659-75 at 660.

⁷ www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ins/kepn/

⁸ Addyman Archaeology, *Kirk Ness, East Lothian* (unpublished draft report, 2008), 6.

⁹ David R. Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar: Two Thousand Years on a Fortified Headland* (Edinburgh, 2000), [hereafter: Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar*].

¹⁰ Ted Johnson South (ed), *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto* (Cambridge, 2002), 11 and at 35-36, [hereafter: Johnson, *Sancto Cuthberto*].

quae iacet ex utraque parte ipsius fluminis Bromie usque ad illum locum ubi oritur. Et illa terra ultra Tweoda ab illo loco ubi oritur fluuius Edre ab aquilone usque ad illum locum ubi cadet in Tweoda, et tota terra quae iacet inter istum fluuium Edre et alterum fluuium qui uocatur Leder uersus occidentem, et tota terra quae iacet ab orientali parte istius aquae quae uocatur Leder usque ad illum locum ubi cadet in fluuium Tweoda uersus austrum, et tota terra quae pertinet ad monasterium sancti Balthere, quod uocatur Tinningaham, a Lombormore usque ad Esce muthe.

(And this is the boundary of the territory of Lindisfarne: from the River Tweed as far as the mouth of Warren Beck, and from there upwards as far as the place where Warren Beck rises next to Hepburn Hill, and from that hill as far as the river that is called Beamish, and from there as far as the river that is called the Till, and all the land that lies on both sides of the same River Beamish up to the place where it rises. And that land beyond the Tweed from the place where the River Blackadder rises in the north as far as the place where it flows into the Tweed, and all the land that lies between that River Blackadder and another that is called the Leader towards the west, and all the land that lies on the east side of that water that is called the Leader as far as the place where it flows into the Tweed toward the south, and all the land that pertains to the monastery of St Balthere, which is called Tynningham, from the Lammermuir Hills as far as the mouth of the Esk.)¹¹

Leaving the geographic details to one side for the moment, the important figure amid these claims is St Balthere (now known as St Baldred). Yet another medieval text, this time written by Symeon of Durham, adds the detail that St Baldred of Tynningham was an Anglo-Saxon who had died in 756AD.¹² Symeon of Durham, who joined the monastic community there c.1090, would have witnessed first-hand the translation of St Cuthbert's coffin to Durham in 1104.¹³ Since Durham would have had an interest at that time in controlling the lands and revenues that traditionally would have belonged to the cult of Cuthbert while it was successively resident at Lindisfarne, Norham, and Chester-le-Street, Symeon's attention to Baldred is understandable. Since the Cuthbertine community had earlier claimed possession of St Baldred's monastic lands in *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto*, so the final resting place of Cuthbert's body, Durham, could also legitimately lay a later claim to those same lands and revenues.

We will, however, probably never precisely know when and how the cult of Cuthbert at Lindisfarne came to assume superiority over the lands of the Baldred community at Tynningham. Part of the problem here is that we have no chronology for the conquest of the Lothian plain by the Northumbrians. Perry, for example, has recently asserted that the *obsession Etin*, recorded in the Annals of Ulster in 638AD, completed the

¹¹ Ibid., 46-47. It should be noted that the editor has twice translated the word *Edre* as 'Blackadder' when such a translation is not justified by the text. There is also a river in the area called the Whiteadder.

¹² A.O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers* (London, 1908), 56.

¹³ A.J. Piper, 'The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert', in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliff (eds), *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), 437-46.

Northumbrian conquest of Lothian and presumably *Y Gododdin*.¹⁴ Yet, this is not what the annals state. In fact, the reduction of *Etin* in 638AD could have been undertaken by any number of different war-bands from North Britain.

Matters become a little clearer during the following sixty years. According to Eddius Stephanus, a contemporary eighth century hagiographer, Bishop Wilfred was imprisoned at Dunbar in 680.¹⁵ Then, shortly after the battle of Nechtanesmere in 685, Bede states that the Northumbrian Bishop Trumwine abandoned his episcopal seat at Abercorn on the Forth.¹⁶ Taken together, these pieces of evidence point to a complete Northumbrian takeover of Lothian before the end of the seventh century to a point at which new episcopal sees were being formed and that this conquest had subsequently been reversed to some extent by the Pictish king of Fortriu, Brude mac Bili. There is no record of either Bishop Trumwine or any subsequent Northumbrian bishop ever returning to Abercorn yet it cannot be assumed that after Nechtanesmere the Picts were able to establish effective overlordship in this area since there are later eighth century records of Pictish-Northumbrian armed clashes somewhere in the Plain of Manau around the Firth of Forth.¹⁷ Unfortunately, it is unknown whether these were either Pictish warbands attacking other areas under Northumbrian overlordship or defending territory they had previously conquered post-685 from subsequent Northumbrian re-conquest.

It is against this political backdrop that the mission of St Baldred into Lothian must be viewed. Clearly, he cannot have been a part of the initial Anglo-Saxon advance northwards into Lothian since seventy years separated the abandonment of Abercorn by Bishop Trumwine and Baldred's death. It would undoubtedly be easier to interpret this evidence if the geographic extent of the original Northumbrian diocese of Abercorn was known but it now appears impossible to exactly resurrect these boundaries. Matters are further complicated by the fact that parts of the Lothian plain, consisting of the detached parishes of Abercorn, Cramond, Preston, and Bunkle, belonged to the medieval diocese of Dunkeld, whereas the remainder of Lothian belonged to the diocese of St Andrews. Accordingly, it seems unlikely that the boundaries of these medieval Scottish dioceses were based upon earlier Northumbrian ecclesiastic patterns.¹⁸

This leaves the eleventh century perambulation of the lands of Lindisfarne between the Rivers Tweed and Esk in *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto* as the sole piece of evidence even though almost 400 years separate this description from the original creation of the see of Abercorn. Nevertheless, it is worth questioning whether these Lothian lands claimed by the see of Lindisfarne in the eleventh century either represented what had always been an entirely separate see or whether they had once formed part of a larger and earlier Northumbrian see based at Abercorn.

One clue to answering this question lies in the *Historia Regum Anglorum*, an early twelfth century text attributed to Symeon of Durham, which incorporates earlier

¹⁴ Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar*, 7; John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1997).

¹⁵ Beltram Colgrave (ed), *Vita Sancti Wilfridi Episcopi Eboracensis* (Cambridge, 1985), 72.

¹⁶ D.H. Farmer (ed), *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (rev. ed. London, 1990), 255.

¹⁷ S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (editors), *The Annals of Ulster (To AD 1131)* (Dublin, 1983), 710.3.

¹⁸ Peter G.B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (eds), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), 353.

Northumbrian material compiled by Byrhtferth of Ramsey c.1000 and a possible lost Pictish source,

Anno .DCCCLIV., natiuitatis Regis Elfredi .vi., Wlfere, regnante rege Osberto super Northimbros, suscepto pallio confirmatus est in archiepiscopatum Eboracensem, et Eardulf suscepit episcopatum Lindisfarnensem. Quo pertinebant Lugubalia, id est Luel, nunc dicitur Carliel, et Northam, quae antiquitus Vbbanford dicebatur. Omnes quoque ecclesiae ab aqua quae uocatur Tweda usque Tinam australem, et ultra desertum ad occidentem, pertinebant illo tempore ad praefatam ecclesiam, et hae mansions, Carnam et Culterham, et duae Geddewrd ad australem plagam Teinetae quas Ecgredus episcopus conditit: et Mailros, et Tigbrethingham, et Eoriercorn ad occidentalem partem, Edwinesburch, et Pefferham, et Aldham, et Tinnigaham, et Coldingham, et Tillmuthe, et Northam supradictam.

(In the year 854 in the sixth year after the birth of King Alfred, in the reign of King Osbert over the Northumbrians, Wulfhere received the *pallium*, and was confirmed in the archbishopric of York, and Eardwulf received the bishopric of Lindisfarne; to which pertained: *Lugobalia*, that is *Luel*, now called Carlisle, and Norham, that was anciently called Ubbanford. And also all of those churches between the river called Tweed and the southern Tyne, and beyond the desert to the west, pertained at this time to the aforesaid church, and these estates, Carnam and Culterham and the two Jedworths and the south side of Teviot which Bishop Ecgred donated: and Melrose, and *Tigbrethingham*, and Abercorn to the western extent, Edinburgh, and Pefferham, and Aldham, and Tynningame, and Coldingham, and Tillmouth, and Norham, as said above.)¹⁹

This text clearly indicates that at one point in time the see of Lindisfarne claimed to possess jurisdiction over the whole to Lothian to Abercorn. Its possessions are listed in a circuit going down the Tweed to Melrose, then up through the unlocated *Tigbrethingham* to Abercorn, then down the Lothian coast to Coldingham and Tillmouth. The differences between this list of Lindisfarne possessions preserved in *Historia Regum Anglorum* and the later list contained in the eleventh century *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto* can perhaps be rationalised by the conquest of much of the Lothian plain by kings of Alba during the intervening period. Unfortunately, however, there is still a period of over 150 years between the abandonment of the see of Abercorn and the list preserved in *Historia Regum Anglorum* (assuming that it is accurately dated).²⁰ This means that in theory the possessions of the see of Abercorn could have been absorbed by the see of Lindisfarne after the retreat of Bishop Trumwine southwards to Whitby in 685.

¹⁹ Johnson, *Sancto Cuthberto*, 119; Katherine Forsyth, 'Evidence of a lost Pictish source in the *Historia Regum Anglorum* of Symeon of Durham,' in Simon Taylor (ed), *Kings, clerics and chronicles in Scotland, 500-1297* (Bodmin, 2000), 19-34. It seems likely that Pefferburn could refer to the village now called Aberlady since Anglo-Saxon material has been excavated from there too.

²⁰ It has been noted that the list begins and ends at Norham, where the Cuthbertine community was based c.850, so this text may well be contemporary, Johnson, *Sancto Cuthberto*, 84-85; Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba, 789-1070* (Edinburgh, 2007), 82-84, [hereafter: Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*].

Accordingly, the activities of St Baldred must be placed within this second phase of Northumbrian ecclesiastic activity in Lothian, after the abandonment of Abercorn and the likely claiming of its properties by the bishops of Lindisfarne. Given the strength and power of the Cuthbertine community, the *Haliwerfolc* (people of the holy man, devotees of Cuthbert), and the fact that Cuthbert was being promoted as the *Reichsheiliger* of the Northumberland kingdom in imitation of the cult of St Martin in Gaul, it seems likely that South was correct to suggest that the Baldred mission in Lothian could have been a daughter house administered from Lindisfarne.²¹

Notice has also been drawn by art-historians to a contemporary Northumbrian school of sculpture within the boundaries of the see of Lindisfarne. Rosemary Cramp in particular has argued that vine scroll from Abercorn, Jedburgh and Hexam, a strange bird from Tynninghame, animal interlace from Banburgh and Coldingham, together with geometric interlance from Lindisfarne add up to a distinctive regional style.²² It will be interesting to ascertain if any finds from the vicinity of North Berwick belong to this distinctive regional school of sculpture.

The local cult of St Baldred must have received a setback in 941 when Tynninghame was sacked by Amlaíb son of Gothfrith, king of the Gaill, who also sacked Clonmacnoise in Ireland, fought at *Brunanburh*, and had a recognised claim to the kingship of Northumbria. It was, however, the sacking of Tynninghame that was the final act in Amlaíb's career. He died a few days afterwards and the northern annals claimed that he had been struck down by the power of St Baldred.²³ Whatever damage that had been done to the community of St Baldred by Amlaíb must have been shortly rectified since two of the three churches associated with his cult and the triplication of the saint's body,²⁴ Aldhame and Tynninghame, were obviously still of value to the Cuthbertine cult based at Durham at a later date.

Unfortunately, the vague but seemingly straightforward story of St Baldred is further complicated by hagiography in the Aberdeen Breviary which tells a very different story. In this text it is stated that St Baldred was a disciple of St Kentigern. This claim poses something of a problem since it has been argued that St Kentigern died c.614, some one hundred and forty years before the recorded death of St Baldred in 756, and these dates are obviously irreconcilable.²⁵ This has led to speculation that there were two St Baldreds, St Baldred of Lothian and St Baldred of Strathclyde. The Aberdeen Breviary also seems to be the first surviving source to directly associate St Baldred with the Bass Rock.

The major problem with the claims made by the Aberdeen Breviary is that it is a relatively late text printed for a particular purpose in 1509-10, long-divorced from the

²¹ Christian D. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2008), 186; Alan Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliff (eds), *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), 103-22 at 115; Johnson, *Sancto Cuthberto*, 80.

²² Rosemary Cramp, 'The Artistic Influence of Lindisfarne within Northumbria', in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliff (eds), *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), 213-28 at 226-27.

²³ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 174.

²⁴ Archibald Constable (ed), *A History of Greater Britain as Well England as Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1892), 84-85.

²⁵ Alan Macquarrie, *The Saints of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1997), 234.

times of the saints whose lives it purports to describe.²⁶ Accordingly, there must be a suspicion that the association it makes between St Baldred and the Bass Rock could be a late invention, particularly in light of the fact that a new chapel dedicated to St Baldred had recently been built upon the Bass Rock by Robert Lauder just before 1492.²⁷

²⁶ <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resources/collections/specdivision/ch200803.shtml>

²⁷ NAS, GD103/2/44. This is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

MEDIEVAL NORTH BERWICK CHURCH TO 1560

The medieval history of North Berwick has already been discussed by a large number of authors and it is well-established that these lands were under the control of the earls of Fife by the twelfth century. A now destroyed royal charter issued between 1150 and 1153 by King David I confirmed an earlier charter issued sometime between c.1136 and 1153 by Earl Duncan I of Fife which had granted the lands of *Gillecameston* to the nunnery of North Berwick.²⁸ This initial grant was confirmed (and possibly enhanced) by Earl Duncan II of Fife (1154-1204) between 1160 and 1172 when the two hospitals for pilgrims at either end of the ferry between North Berwick and Earlsferry in Fife were also listed as belonging to the Cistercian nuns of North Berwick.²⁹

A subsequent pre-1199 charter issued by Malcolm (later Earl Malcolm I of Fife between 1204 and 1230) son of Earl Duncan II of Fife also confirmed his grandfather's earlier grant and the other lands belonging to the nunnery, and this document includes the first mention of the 'old kirk',

[...] that he has granted to God, St Mary, and the nuns of North Berwick in free, pure, and perpetual alms, the church of North Berwick with the land thereof, tiends, offerings, and all other rights justly pertaining thereto, and the land on which their house is built, usually named Gillecolmestun; the hospital lands of North Berwick and Ardros [...]³⁰

This latter charter provides unequivocal proof that the nuns had built their nunnery upon the lands of Gillecolmestun and so indicates that the earlier grant of *Gillecameston* to the nuns by Earl Duncan I of Fife must surely have been the foundation charter of the nunnery. These charters are important for another reason: the place-name Gillecolmestun is clearly composed of two elements, the Gaelic personal name Gillecolm (servant of St Columba) and the Anglo-Saxon -tun suffix, meaning village/settlement. If W.J. Watson is correct, such a place-name must date to the post-1000 period when *gille-* began to replace the older word *maol-* (servant) and so this place-name might conceivably have been first coined during the period when Lothian was gradually absorbed into the Gaelic kingdom of Alba.³¹ Whatever the case, it also demonstrates that the burgh of North Berwick has absorbed at least one outlying village during its history.

The earls of Fife were not the only important patrons of this nunnery. As early as c.1210, Earl Duncan of Carrick granted the nuns three merks annually from his lands of *Berrebeth* and the lands, chapels, and tiends pertaining to his churches of Maybole and West Kilbride.³² Unfortunately, nothing is known about the names of either the nuns or prioresses of North Berwick before 1295 but Carrick links with North Berwick lasted for almost 200 years as an Elena of Carrick was prioress of the

²⁸ G.W.S. Barrow (editor), *The Charters of David I* (Woodbridge, 1999), no.260.

²⁹ Cosmo Innes (ed), *Carte Monialium De Northberwic Prioratus Cisterciensis B. Marie de Northberwic Munimenta Vetusta Que Supersunt* (Edinburgh, 1847), no.3, [hereafter: Innes, *Carte Monialium De Northberwic*].

³⁰ Scottish History Society, *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society* (vol. iv, Edinburgh, 1926), 308-09.

³¹ W.J. Watson, *The History of the Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 134.

³² Innes, *Carte Monialium De Northberwic*, nos. 1, 13, and 28.

nunnery between 1379 and 1410.³³ Given the strength of these links it is legitimate to speculate that a daughter of an early earl of Carrick could either have been a nun or prioress of North Berwick in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries. There is another possibility which might explain the links between Carrick and North Berwick: there is some circumstantial evidence to suggest that Earl Duncan of Carrick's mother could have been a sister of Earl Duncan II of Fife.³⁴

Of course, the 'old kirk' only formed a small part of the property portfolio gradually assembled by the nuns of North Berwick and this ranged from lands and rights in Fife, a church and lands in Stirlingshire, a toft in Leith, lands near Livingston in West Lothian, and their holdings received from the earls of Carrick in the south-west of Scotland.³⁵ Unfortunately, there appears to be no surviving detail relating to the lands attached to the 'old kirk' of North Berwick until the sixteenth century when it was stated that the major lands and rights belonging to the nunnery consisted of twenty-three and a half husbandlands of the *Hewch* (See Figure 1), the north meadow, three mills, North Berwick Law, various grazings, and a teind of fish landed at the harbour. These properties were obviously extensive but they cannot all have been directly attached to the 'old kirk' since both the hospital and the nunnery itself must also have had North Berwick lands attached to them for their respective upkeep.³⁶ It is also entirely possible that each of the altars within the 'old kirk' would have been provided with lands for their upkeep. Regrettably, early references to such lands are missing and it is not until the post-Reformation period that a 'Virgine Marie's croft' appears in the burgh records so it cannot be definitely proven that the profits from this croft paid for the maintenance of the altar to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the original parish church.³⁷

More importantly perhaps, because of this lack of detail it is impossible to be sure if the nuns had possessed all of these rights and properties in North Berwick since the foundation of their house. The major problem in relation to this lack of detail is the simple fact that the formal cartulary that once must have been kept by the Cistercian nuns of North Berwick in accordance with thirteenth century papal decree has been either destroyed or lost. The so-called cartulary compiled, arranged, and edited by Cosmo Innes and published by the Bannatyne Club in 1847 is an entirely false creation compiled from stray documents extracted from different collections, which perhaps helps to explain the chronological gap within it relating to the nunnery between 1293 and 1373.

What is clear is that by the sixteenth century the nuns had extensively developed their lands and rights in North Berwick since there are references to a system of aqueducts and dams that serviced their mills. This points towards cereal production and processing and their possession of property in Leith, which became the major export port in Scotland after the loss of Berwick upon Tweed, may indicate an interest in

³³ Kimberly Ann Curran, *Religious Women and Their Communities in Late Medieval Scotland* (unpublished University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2005). See listings under North Berwick.

³⁴ Richard Oram, *The Lordship of Galloway*, (Edinburgh, 2000), 89.

³⁵ G.W.S. Barrow (editor) with W.W. Scott, *Regesta Regum Scottorum ii: The Acts of William I* (Edinburgh, 1971), no.516.

³⁶ Innes, *Carte Monialium De Northberwic*, xxv, 59 and 62; Charles C.H. Harvey and John Macleod (eds), *Calendar of Writs preserved at Yester House, 1166-1625* (Edinburgh, 1930), nos. 793, 794 and 1028, [hereafter: Harvey and Macleod, *Yester Writs*].

³⁷ NAS, B56/7/1.

processed grain export. It has already been pointed out that there are thirteenth century Italian references to wool from the sheep of North Berwick's Cistercian nunnery and the certainly possessed grazing on both North Berwick Law and Bass Rock.³⁸ There also strong hints that the nuns had either constructed or been donated rabbit warrens on North Berwick Links for the production of meat and fur and this too would have been a very valuable economic asset to them.³⁹ It is likely that the nuns also had business interests in the processing young gannets caught on Bass Rock for their fat from an early date since they complained to the Pope at the end of the fifteenth century that those rights were being eroded by the Laird of Bass, Robert Lauder,

Innocentius episcopus servus servorum Dei dilectis filiis Priori et Archidiacono ecclesie Sanctiandree Salutem et apostolicam benedictionem Conqueste sunt nobis Priorissa et Conventus Monasterii de Noarchberuyk per Priorissam soliti gubernari Cistertiensis ordinis Sanctiandree diocesis quod nobilis vir Robertus Laudir dominus Insule de Bas et modernus Rector parrochialis ecclesie dicte Insule noviter erecte dicte diocesis super quibusdam Barilibus pinguedinis avium silvestrium ad Monasterium predictum spectantibus injuriantur eisdem Ideoque discretioni vestre per apostolica scripta mandamus quatinus vocatis qui fuerint evocandi et auditis hincinde propositis quod justum fuerit appellatione remota decernatis facientes quod decreveritis per censuram ecclesiasticam firmiter observari Proviso ne in Insulam predictam ac alias terras dicti Nobilis auctoritate presencium interdicti sententiam proferatis nisi super hoc a nobis mandatum receperitis speciale Testes autem qui fuerint nominati si se gratia odio vel timore subtraxerint censura simili appellatione cessante compellatis veritati testimonium perhibere Quod si non ambo hiis exequendis potueritis interesse alter vestrum ea nichilominus exequatur Datum Rome apud Sanctumpetrum anno Incarnationis Dominice millesimoquadringsimo nonagesimosecundo Quarto Idus Julii Pontificatus nostri anno octavo

(Innocent the Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to our beloved sons the Prior and Archdeacon of the church of St Andrews, Greeting and apostolic blessing. The Prioress and Convent of the Monastery of North Berwick (used to be governed by a Prioress of the Cistercian order and of St Andrews diocese) have complained to us that a noble man Robert Lauder, lord of the Isle of Bass, and the present parson of the newly erected church of the said Isle in the diocese aforesaid, are doing them injury in the matter of certain barrels of the fat of wild birds belonging to the foresaid Monastery. Therefore we commit it to your discretion by these apostolic writings that calling in the parties who should be called and hearing the arguments on both sides you decide according to the justice, forbidding appeal, and by church censure causing your decision to be firmly observed. Provided that you are not to pronounce sentence of Interdict against the foresaid Isle and the said Nobleman's other lands by authority of these presents, unless you have received from us special commission to that effect. And if those who are

³⁸ For example, Innes, *Carte Monialium De Northberwic*, 59; Derek Hall and David Bowler, 'North Berwick, East Lothian: its archaeology revisited', in *PSAS*, 127, 1997, 659-75, at 669.

³⁹ Harvey and Macleod, *Yester Writs*, no.798; Mark Bailey, 'The Rabbit and the Medieval East Anglian Economy', in *Agricultural History Review*, 36, I, 1988, 1-20.

called as witnesses shall withdraw themselves for favour disfavour or fear you shall compel them by the like censure without appeal the bear testimony to the truth. But if both of you cannot take part in the execution of this mandate, one of you is to execute it nevertheless. Given at St Peters Rome, 12 July 1492, the eighth year of my pontificate.)⁴⁰

George Ferrier, writing in 1869, noted that twelve solan geese with their feathers on were paid to the post-Reformation ministers of North Berwick.⁴¹ This may have been the continuation of a much older custom but it is impossible to prove this from the surviving documentary record.

As Simpson and Stevenson remarked in 1981, it is now impossible to tell whether North Berwick owes its origin to the nunnery, the ferry, or the sea. However, they did also note that pilgrimages to St Andrews were popular from at least the eighth century and so seemed to be suggesting that they favoured the presence of the ferry route as the most likely rationale for the existence and initial growth of North Berwick.⁴² Such a suggestion is entirely possible but cannot currently be proven since no source actually records the existence of the ferry before the twelfth century. Nor do we know the numbers of pilgrims that used the ferry on an annual basis: in 1988 Weir stated that it was common for 10,000 pilgrims to pass through North Berwick each year but such an estimate is entirely fanciful.⁴³

It is also not entirely clear where the belief that King Robert III granted North Berwick the status of a royal burgh c.1391 when he visited the burgh. Such a claim is not present in the Old Statistical Account, produced in the 1790s, but is present in the New Statistical Account that was produced between 1834 and 1845.⁴⁴ Assuming the author of the first account had undertaken his research properly, it would seem that this belief first surfaced in the period 1790x1845 and the claim has been regularly repeated as late as 1980.⁴⁵ However, Simpson and Stevenson refuted this supposition in 1981.⁴⁶ There is no record of King Robert III granting North Berwick royal burgh status when he visited the town in the early 1390s.⁴⁷

At that time the burgh barony of North Berwick still belonged to the earls of Fife, represented at that time by the second-eldest son of King Robert II, Robert Stewart, Guardian of Scotland and later duke of Albany. It is clear from a document issued on 2 August 1388 that Robert Stewart had previously granted the barony of North Berwick to James, second earl of Douglas, who had been killed at the battle of Otterburn in 1388.⁴⁸ However, in 1388 there was an on-going dispute over the

⁴⁰ NAS, GD103/2/44.

⁴¹ George Ferrier, *Descriptive Account of North Berwick, The Bass, Tantallon, and the Surrounding Vicinity* (Edinburgh, 1869), 44.

⁴² Simpson and Stevenson, *Historic North Berwick*, 1 and at 14.

⁴³ Marie Weir, *Ferries in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 50-51.

⁴⁴ www.stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Haddington/North%20Berwick/; <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Haddington/North%20Berwick/>

⁴⁵ Rev. Walter M. Ferrier, *The North Berwick Story* (North Berwick, 1980), 14, [hereafter: Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*].

⁴⁶ Simpson and Stevenson, *Historic North Berwick*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Exchequer Rolls*, iii, 255, [hereafter: ER].

⁴⁸ [1388/8/2] *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, K.M. Brown et al eds (St Andrews, 2007-2008), date accessed: 10 December 2008.

Douglas inheritance as Robert Stewart attempted (successfully) to manipulate the succession to that earldom to ensure that the illegitimate contender, Archibald the Grim, inherited the title. Possession of Tantallon Castle, one part of the barony of North Berwick, was involved in the resolution of this dispute.⁴⁹

Even though there is next to no surviving information about the ‘old kirk’ of North Berwick during the period before 1560, apart from the fact that the vicarage had been annexed to the nunnery by 1360,⁵⁰ slightly more information has been assembled about the priests by the Rev. Walter Ferrier. His listing of incumbents of the vicarage, some of whom only appeared in sources that have been recently lost, follows,

Name	Date
Richard	1177
Hugh	1219-26
J.	1242
David	1279
Waldeve	1292
Alexander	1302
William	1312
John Fabri	1365x80
William de North Berwick	1380x88
James	1418
William Sinclair	1543x47
Patrick Sinclair	1547
James Brown	1548
Archibald Barre	nd
Alexander Wood	1550, Last Catholic vicar
John Young	1567, first Protestant minister
Patrick Creich	1568

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Undoubtedly the most famous of these vicars was William de North Berwick who fought alongside the earl of Douglas at the battle of Otterburn in 1388. His exploits were such that he drew the attention of the French chronicler Froissart,

[...] They found beside him [the dying earl of Douglas] one of his knights who had kept with him throughout, and a chaplain of his who was not there as a priest but as a worthy man-at-arms, for he had followed him all night through the thick of the battle with an axe in his hand. This doughty warrior was laying about him near the earl, keeping the English back with the great blows he dealt them with his axe, for which service the Scots were truly grateful. It earned him great renown and in the same year he became archdeacon and canon of Aberdeen. The name of this priest was William of North Berwick. It is a fact

⁴⁹ Stephen Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III, 1371-1406* (East Linton, 1996), 159-64.

⁵⁰ I.B. Cowan, *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1967), 157.

⁵¹ Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*, 20-37.

he was a tall, finely built man – and brave, too, to do what he did. Nevertheless, he was severely wounded.⁵²

William's exploits during the battle were later recounted by another occasional inhabitant of the burgh in the sixteenth century, the historian John Major, who had been born in nearby Gleghornie.⁵³

It was also around the time of Otterburn that the Lauder family seem to have been first granted lands in the burgh of North Berwick by the earl of Douglas.⁵⁴ The Lauders quickly seem to have become customs of the port and the Exchequer Rolls regularly report on the export of wool, woolfells, and hides from North Berwick. Interestingly, there are also infrequent references to the export of rabbit skins, thus lending weight to the suggestion that the nuns possessed rabbit warrens. In 1425, 620 rabbit skins at 6s 2d each were exported. In 1426, 300 skins at 3s each were listed and, in 1434, another 300 skins priced at 3s 6d each were listed as exports.⁵⁵

By 14 December 1425, and after the forfeiture and execution of the duke of Albany, Sir Robert Lauder, by then a royal councillor for King James I, had been granted lordship over half of the Bass Rock, as well as further interests in and around North Berwick.⁵⁶ The Lauder family were on record as still only possessing half of the Rock (the northern side) in 1507-08.⁵⁷ In fact, despite calling themselves lords of Bass, the Lauders do not seem to have gained formal possession of the other (southern) half of the Bass Rock until just before 1609 when King James VI confirmed a charter of this from the archbishop of St Andrews to them.⁵⁸

All this evidence indicates that during the fifteenth century the Bass Rock was wholly controlled by two parties: the Lauders and the archbishops of St Andrews. Before 1492, the Lauders built a new chapel dedicated to St Baldred upon the rock and shortly afterwards hagiography that for the first time associated the historical saint with the rock was printed in the Aberdeen Breviary.⁵⁹ Given the ownership of the rock, together with the long-established ferry that operated between North Berwick and Fife, it is surely legitimate to question whether the Lauders and the archbishops of St Andrews were attempting to raise extra revenue for themselves by building the new chapel to St Baldred upon the rock, thus giving a local saint a new lease of life. The fact that the new chapel sat beside a recognised pilgrimage sea-route and within easy sailing distance of the ferries between North Berwick and Fife may have made it very attractive to pilgrims.

⁵² Geoffrey Brereton (ed), *Froissart Chronicles* (London, 1968), 344.

⁵³ Archibald Constable (ed), *A History of Greater Britain as Well England as Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1892), 321.

⁵⁴ NAS, GD1/1386/1.

⁵⁵ *ER*, iv, 386, 402, and at 559.

⁵⁶ *RMS*, ii, no.29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no.3185.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vii, no.152; see also: *RMS*, x, no.428.

⁵⁹ NAS, GD103/2/44.

NORTH BERWICK CHURCH POST-REFORMATION TO c.1850

Many of the surviving North Berwick records, both burgh and family, have already been trawled by successive local antiquarians and historians. Yet, reading the secondary literature it is clear that in fact many of these authors have been dependent upon each other as sources. The notable exception to this is the excellent small book produced by the Reverend Walter Ferrier, the local parish minister, in 1980.⁶⁰ It is obvious from his writing that he had undertaken an extensive amount of research for his book although it is unfortunate that he chose not to reference where he sourced his information. This makes the job of tracing his research strategy difficult and it is impossible to be sure about precisely where he found his data.

Even so, it is clear from this and other works that a chronology for the ‘old kirk’ structure can be established. It seems clear that the site of the ‘old kirk’ was originally an islet that was connected to the mainland by a causeway consisting of an arched bridge.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the Kirk Sessions Records within which this information was originally found during the nineteenth century have since been either destroyed or lost. The Reverend Walter Ferrier was unable to trace them for his 1980 publication and a new search of the National Archives of Scotland for this report has also failed to uncover any reference to them. This means that a huge reliance is placed upon the original readings of these books in the nineteenth century and confidence in these readings may not be entirely justified.⁶²

In any event, this information states that a large part of the site upon which the ‘old kirk’ is situated was lost through coastal erosion before 23 October 1656 when both the causeway linking the islet to the mainland and a large part of the cemetery to the east of the church were washed away during a storm. Thereafter, the local heritors decided to build a new parish church in the burgh well away from the coastline after deciding that the cost of refurbishing both the islet and the causeway would be too expensive (see Figures 1 and 2). Because the earlier town council records have been destroyed it is impossible to contextualise this autumnal 1656 storm and decide whether the ‘old kirk’ had previously been subjected to similar extreme weather events. All that really can be said is that the fabric of the ‘old kirk’ and the surrounding land were damaged by other violent storm events post-1656 so such occurrences do not seem to have been unusual at this site.

The Reverend Ferrier discovered that even after the abandonment of the medieval church and cemetery local families continued to bury bodies there, presumably because they had either purchased or reserved lairs at the site, even though it was recognised that such burials might easily be quickly uncovered again by erosion:

[...] that who should after the dait of this presents burie in the old kirke yeard should pay 20s Scots for sand and fail [turf] least the coffin should againe be discovered by winde and weather.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*.

⁶¹ George Ferrier, *North Berwick and its Vicinity, with Descriptive and Historical Notices of the Bass Rock, Tantallon Castle and other Interesting Objects and Localities* (Edinburgh, 1881).

⁶² Alasdair Ross, ‘The Bannatyne Club and the Publication of Scottish Ecclesiastical Cartularies’, in *The Scottish Historical Review*, 85, 2: no.220, 2006, 202-33.

⁶³ Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*, 51.



Figure 1. Adair's map of 1682 clearly shows the islet and the 'old kirk'.⁶⁴



Figure 2. Roy's map of 1755 again clearly shows both the islet upon which the 'old kirk' was located and the site of the new church.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ <http://www.nls.uk/maps/counties/detail.cfm?id=65>

⁶⁵ <http://geo.nls.uk/roy-lowlands/>

Further evidence of active erosion at the site has been found for this current report. A particularly violent storm in 1727 was notable because it forced the town council to go and visit the site of the 'old kirk' to view the damage. Unfortunately, the council records do not go into detail but they do record that a total of £9 was paid to labourers to 'gather all the stones between the church and the town wall together'.⁶⁶ It is difficult to decide what is meant by this reference but it could refer to grave slabs and other such markers. This interpretation has an added bonus because it might explain why a later nineteenth century report claims that there were no grave markers of any kind to be found at the 'old kirk' in 1857, the last having recently either been shifted or lost.⁶⁷ If this scenario is correct, it is to be regretted that the town council records do not state what happened to the 'stones' that were gathered together in 1727. A further storm must have occurred in 1737 when it was noted that the harbour required extensive repairs.⁶⁸

It is also interesting to note that the 1857 report also refers to an unspecified number of storms that regularly resulted in erosion of the 'old kirk' site, even if it is non-specific about the dates of those storms. This lack of dating evidence might cast doubt on the veracity of this claim and it should be noted that this report was prepared by an advocate (Mr Penny) working for the town council who were trying to establish their ownership of the site over the claims of the baron of North Berwick, Sir Hugh Dalrymple.⁶⁹ Therefore, despite the recorded references to storms in 1656, 1727, and 1737, the advocate could have been exaggerating the severity and regularity of the storms that affected the site to make a case for taking the site into council ownership more immediately compelling. In any event, the final record relating to violent storms and erosion in this pre-1870 period dates to 1852 when it was recorded that the harbour area had been damaged by a 'great storm'.⁷⁰

In general environmental history terms such extreme weather events and associated erosion are not unknown along the east Lothian coast. However, it must be questioned whether there could be a causal link between the development of North Berwick harbour and the erosion of the site of the 'old kirk'. It is known, for example, that stone from North Berwick was regularly quarried during the later medieval period. In 1531-32 a baker called Walter Scot received a payment for nineteen North Berwick stones (volcanic tufa known as *lek-stain* that splits easily into slabs) that were to be used in flooring a new oven at Holyrood, costing 32s each. Thirteen of the same kind of oven floor stones, this time at a total cost of £13, were required again for an oven at Holyrood in 1622-23, five in 1639-40 at a total cost of £9, and eighteen were required to repair an oven in Edinburgh Castle in 1649 at a total cost of £46.⁷¹

⁶⁶ NAS, B56/9/1. The average wage at this time for a labourer was 7s per day, A.J.S. Gibson and T.C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁶⁷ NAS, B56/7/7/256.

⁶⁸ NAS, B56/7/1/61.

⁶⁹ NAS, B56/7/7/256.

⁷⁰ NAS, B56/7/7.

⁷¹ Henry M. Paton (ed), *Accounts of the Masters of Works for Building and Repairing Royal Palaces and Castles, 1529-1615* (Edinburgh, 1957) lii and at 71; John Imrie and John G. Dunbar (eds), *Accounts of the Masters of Works for Building and Repairing Royal Palaces and Castles, 1616-1649* (Edinburgh, 1982), 147, 390-91, and at 447.

Perhaps more problematically, within twelve years of the damage to the harbour in 1656, the Privy Council gave permission for a voluntary contribution to be made from all parish churches south of the Forth so that North Berwick harbour might be repaired and made secure from the elements.⁷² By 1700 the interior of the harbour had been dynamited at least once and was regularly quarried to remove both stone and mud over the next 160 years.⁷³ The cumulative effects of these activities, particularly dynamiting, close to the ‘old kirk’ may well have had a long-effect upon the stability of that site.

Perhaps something of these effects can be seen on an early sketch of the ‘old kirk’, produced before 1789. In this the proximity of the harbour to the church can be seen in the background and there seems to be clear evidence that a bulwark had already been constructed on the right-hand side of the islet, probably as a defence against tidal activity.



RUIN OF THE SHORE OF NORTH BERWICK

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This drawing shows a building that is already in an advanced state of decay with only the porch and the base of a barrel-vaulted west nave tower surviving and the layout seems fairly accurate when compared against later nineteenth and twentieth century plans and reconstructions of the same building.⁷⁵

⁷² NAS, B56/16/23.

⁷³ NAS, B56/7/1/49; B56/9/1.

⁷⁴ Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Scotland* (2 vols. London, 1789), i, 77. This sketch also matches a brief description of the church made in 1760: Daniel William Kemp, *Tours in Scotland, 1747, 1750, 1760* by Richard Pococke, Bishop of Meath (Edinburgh, 1887), 319.

⁷⁵ <http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-578-376-C&scache=1ntoy6km6e&searchdb=scran>; <http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-578-377-C&scache=1ntoy6km6e&searchdb=scran>

It is perhaps unlikely that these ruins had reached such an advanced state of decay in only 120 years without human interference. The Reverend Ferrier suggested that the natives of North Berwick may have removed stone from the site for re-use elsewhere in the burgh.⁷⁶ Some support for this theory can be found in the burgh records which regularly refer to carts of ‘old stone’ being taken away from that general area for re-use in new buildings in the burgh.⁷⁷ It has also been recorded that fragments of masonry from the grave-yard are built into the swimming pool wall and in 1862 it was noted that the ground to the immediate east of the ‘old kirk’ was being filled with ‘old debris’.⁷⁸

It is also important to realise that just because this site contained a ruined medieval church does not mean that it was completely abandoned after 1658. In fact, the site seems to have been rented out for various industrial uses from the 1690s. There was an important law-suit over the ‘old-kirk’ site during the 1850s when the ownership was disputed between the burgh council and Sir Hew Dalrymple. This was the period when North Berwick was rapidly expanding as a town and many new seafront villas were constructed. It appears that it was *c.*1840 when the burgh council first inquired about whether they or the Dalrymple family possessed title to the ‘old kirk’ site. On this occasion they were informed in no uncertain terms that the site formed part of the barony of North Berwick and had belonged to the Dalrymple family and their predecessors as barons for more than 100 years. More importantly, the Dalrymple family had exercised rights of ownership over the property by granting feus of it to various people and the burgh council had never objected to these grants.⁷⁹ On this occasion the council backed down but the situation arose again in 1857.

In that year the burgh council asked an advocate to give a legal opinion about the ownership of the ‘old kirk’ site. This may have been prompted by the fact that masons employed by Dalrymple were undertaking building work on the site and the council was clearly looking for suitable locations to build more sea-front villas. On this second occasion, the advocate, Mr Penny, opined that the ‘old kirk’ site belonged to the heritors of the parish and that Sir Hew Dalrymple’s charter of barony did not actually include the site.⁸⁰

No agreement can have been reached between the two parties at this time. In 1867 the council took the provocative step of enclosing a parcel of ground at the back of the harbour near the ‘old kirk’. Dalrymple’s agents immediately contested this development but volunteered to forego compensation if the council would agree to three conditions. First, if the town agreed not to erect any buildings of more than one storey or with chimneys on the site. Second, that the sea was the northern boundary of the Melbourne Park development and the council conveyed all their rights or interests there to Sir Hew Dalrymple. Finally, that the Mill Burn would be straightened in a mutually agreeable line.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*, 59-60.

⁷⁷ NAS, B56/9/1.

⁷⁸ http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/canmore.newcandig_details_gis?inumlink=56610;

⁷⁹ NAS, B56/15/4/58.

⁸⁰ NAS, B56/7/7/256.

⁸¹ NAS, B56/7/8/263.

The burgh council quickly replied that it had no intention of building houses with chimneys on the old church green, that the straightening of the Mill Burn was desirable, but that the boundary of the Melbourne Park development not negotiable.⁸² This, however, was just a negotiating position because by 5 November 1867 the burgh council and Dalrymple had reached agreement over the straightening of the Mill Burn and Melbourne Park and the council now assumed that the piece of land they had illegally enclosed next to the 'old kirk' now belonged to them.⁸³ Due to time constraints it was impossible to follow this fight for legal title to the whole of the 'old kirk' site any further in the council records.

More importantly, these legal documents list the buildings that had been erected and the activities that had been occurring around the ruins of the 'old kirk' since the Dalrymple family had become barons of North Berwick. The first point to note is that previous holders of the barony of North Berwick, the Dicks of Lauder, had mortgaged the barony (specifically including the 'old kirk') to an Edinburgh merchant burghess called Robert Lockhart on 12 November 1646 for 46,000 merks Scots.⁸⁴ Within five years Lockhart had received infestment of the barony but was then unable to persuade his tenants in North Berwick to pay their rents and dues to him and he obtained a summons against them. This does not seem to have improved the situation to any extent because Lockhart shortly sold both the mortgage and title of baron of North Berwick to Sir Thomas Stewart of Kirkfield on 5 March 1656. This family then held the title and the accompanying mortgage until 24 November 1696 when they were purchased by Sir Hew Dalrymple, President of the Court of Session.⁸⁵ Dalrymple must then have proceeded to pay off the 46,000 merk mortgage, and presumably compensate the Stewart family, as he was granted the free barony of North Berwick on 12 April 1707.⁸⁶

These sets of papers note that for 'some time' local fishermen had been using the ruins to dry their nets, bait hooks, and repair boats, and these fishermen may have held a rental of the property to that effect. If they did, it has not survived. In fact, the first 'old kirk' feu the Dalrymples are on record as granting occurred just before 1800 and was to Mr Robert Burn who was a slater in the burgh. Either the same feu or another section of the 'old kirk' site was subsequently granted to a Mr Lorimer who erected two buildings on the site, a malt granary and a coal store. At some point after 1802 permission was given to a Mr James Somerville to erect a second coal store on the same site. In 1845 Sir Hew Dalrymple proposed to erect a fourth structure on the site: the new North Berwick gas works. He had actually reached agreement with the company to locate the gasworks on the 'old kirk' site before another site was instead chosen just before the building work commenced.⁸⁷

Sir Hew Dalrymple was obviously worried about both erosion and continued burgh council interference on what he rightful regarded as part of his barony lands. To that end, just before 1857 he employed masons to a number of related 'old kirk' projects. These consisted of constructing a new sea wall on part of the site, building a wall

⁸² NAS, B56/7/8/264.

⁸³ NAS, B56/7/8/280.

⁸⁴ NAS, GD110/59.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ NAS, B56/15/4/58.

⁸⁷ NAS, B56/7/7/256.

around ‘a considerable part’ of the ‘old kirk’ site, and erecting a locked gate upon a roadway that led through the churchyard to the beach that local businesses had used to harvest and cart seaweed.⁸⁸ How this 1857 wall round the site related to the earlier 1727 wall is unknown. In any event, the council records noted that they hoped that these 1857 developments would not render the site unsuitable for people taking walks.⁸⁹ It appears that these latter fears were unfounded because on 6 May 1868 the town treasurer approved the expenditure of 2s 6d for painting the public seats located on the ‘old kirk green’.⁹⁰

The final reason these later records are valuable is that from 1649 they record the presence of two altars within the ‘old kirk’, dedicated to the ‘Lady’ and to ‘St Seybastion’.⁹¹ It seems highly likely that these dedications were to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Sebastian. The Reverend Ferrier noted these latter two dedications during his research and mooted that the dedication to St Sebastian could have been made post-1348 to ward off the plague. This suggestion is eminently sensible. He also suggested that the high altar would have been dedicated to St Andrew and noted the presence of a fourth altar in the north transept dedicated to St Ninian and a Pietà (a representation of the Virgin Mary cradling the body of Jesus).⁹² The presence of a St Ninians aisle is also noted in the Royal Commission report on the ‘old kirk’.⁹³ Unfortunately, Ferrier did not footnote where he got this information about St Ninian and the Pietà from and no trace of any record relating to such an altar or sculpture was found during the current investigation. There are, however, a number of post-1539 references to a previously unknown altar of the ‘Rude’ (Holy Cross) within the ‘old kirk’.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ NAS, B56/7/8/4.

⁹⁰ NAS, B56/9/5.

⁹¹ NAS, GD110/59.

⁹² Ferrier, *North Berwick Story*, 19-20.

⁹³ www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/canmore.newcandig_details_gis?inumlink=56610

⁹⁴ For example: Innes, *Carte Monialium De Northberwic*, 55; [1641/8/395] *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, K.M. Brown et al eds (St Andrews, 2007-2008), date accessed: 10 December 2008.

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