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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL & ST MARY'S CHURCH, KIRKHEUGH



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ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL & ST MARY'S CHURCH, KIRKHEUGH

SYNOPSIS

St Andrews cathedral-priory was the premier medieval church in Scotland. In existence since the 8th century as a Celtic monastery, it became a cathedral by the 11th century. In the 12th century, a house of Augustinian canons was introduced to staff the cathedral, which continued until the Protestant Reformation (1560), following which it was abandoned. The state has taken an active interest in its preservation since 1789.

The property in care comprises: (1) St Rule's Church; (2) St Andrews Cathedral; (3) the remains of the priory cloister to the cathedral's south; (4) a substantial area of the former cathedral precinct (now mostly a burial ground); (5) upstanding portions of the precinct wall, including The Pends Gate to the SW of the cathedral; (6) the remains of St Mary, Kirkheugh, beyond the precinct wall to the NE of the cathedral.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- 747 - Túathalán, abbot of Kilrymont (later St Andrews) dies. (The name Kilrymont derives from *Cillrigmonaid*, 'church of the king's mount', and survives today in the Gaelic 'Cille Rìmhinn'.) This is the first reference to the monastery's existence, generally believed to have been established by Óengus mac Fergusa (c.732-c.761). (The famous 8th-century St Andrews Sarcophagus, on display in the cathedral museum, may commemorate him.) Relics associated with the Apostle Andrew may have reached here slightly earlier, perhaps brought by the exiled Northumbrian Bishop Acca of Hexham (709-732).
- 943 - King Constantín mac Áeda abdicates the throne to lead the community at Kilrymont. Around that time, the post of abbot is apparently absorbed into that of bishop.
- 967 - first mention of a pilgrim, an Irish prince, to the shrine of Saint Andrew.
- c.1080s - Queen Margaret provides a ferry to carry pilgrims across the Queensferry Narrows en route to the shrine of St Andrew.
- 1107x24 - Alexander I makes three attempts to appoint bishops at Kilrymont to help him reform the Scottish Church. The third bishop, Robert, introduces Augustinian canons from his former priory at Scone. There are still two groups of Culdees at Kilrymont, neither of which accepts responsibility for the main services in the cathedral. St Rule's Church is probably built by Robert as the new cathedral.
- c.1140 - David I gives Bishop Robert permission to establish an ecclesiastical burgh at St Andrews. After an uncertain beginning, the Augustinians become established as the main body of clergy. St Rule's is extended.
- 1163 - work begins on a new cathedral, ordered by Bishop Arnold (1160-62).
- 1189 - first recorded mention of St Andrews, as distinct from Kilrymont.
- 1202 - Bishop Roger Beaumont is buried in St Rule's because the new cathedral is still not ready.

- 1238 - Bishop William Malvoisin is the first bishop buried in the new cathedral.
- 1248 - Bishop David de Bernham gives the remaining Culdees a new home, St Mary's, Kirkheugh (also known as St Mary on the Rock). The earliest known collegiate establishment in Scotland, it acquires the status of a chapel royal, further emphasising the national importance of St Andrews.
- 1272 - the cathedral's west front is blown down. The nave is consequently reduced by two bays (from 14 to 12) when the new west front is built.
- 1296 - Edward I of England briefly stays in St Andrews following his invasion in March.
- 1304 - Edward returns with his queen, Margaret, and holds a parliament in the cathedral-priory, at which Sir William Wallace is declared an outlaw. After he leaves for the siege of Stirling Castle, the cathedral's roof is stripped of lead to provide artillery shot.
- 1309 - King Robert I (The Bruce) holds his first parliament in the cathedral-priory (March).
- 1318 - Robert I and Bishop William Lamberton, Bruce's long-standing ally, preside over the consecration of the cathedral. Repairs carried out include a new chapter house to the east of the original, which becomes a vestibule.
- 1340x54 - Prior de Lothian re-roofs the dormitory, the four cloister alleys and St Rule's.
- 1378 - a great fire causes much damage to the cathedral. Prior Pay (1363x86) begins the rebuilding, including two arcade piers. The Pends Gate and stone precinct wall may also date from around this time.
- 1386x94 - Prior de Montrose continues rebuilding the cathedral to roof level.
- 1394x1416 - Prior Bisset completes the roof, provides new choir stalls and re-roofs the cloister. According to an inscription at Melrose Abbey, the Parisian master mason, John Morow, may have been involved on St Andrews during this time.
- 1409 - the south transept gable is blown down during a storm, damaging the dormitory, parlour and chapter house, and delaying rebuilding work.
- 1412 - the burgh church, Holy Trinity, is relocated from the cathedral precinct to a new site in the centre of the town. Bishop Henry Wardlaw formally establishes Scotland's first university in the town.
- 1417x43 - Prior Haldenstone oversees the redesign of the east gable, and the reorganisation of the cathedral interior, to enhance the liturgy and improve circulation for pilgrims. In 1418 he is granted the mitre.
- 1440 - Bishop Henry Wardlaw is buried in the presbytery.
- 1466x69 – Prior Ramsay builds a library.
- 1472 - Bishop Patrick Graham becomes Scotland's first archbishop.
- 1482x1522 - Prior John Hepburn heightens and substantially strengthens the precinct wall.
- 1538 - James V marries Mary of Guise in the cathedral (12 June), prior to which he has the priory guest house (known as the New Inns) refurbished for the wedding festivities.
- 1546 - Cardinal David Beaton, archbishop of St Andrews, is murdered in his episcopal palace (**St Andrews Castle**). In the siege that follows, guns are emplaced on the cathedral's north towers.
- 1559 - John Knox preaches a fiery sermon in Holy Trinity, after which the crowd go to the cathedral and 'cleanse' it of its Catholic fixtures.

- 1560/1 - at the Reformation, some of the remaining canons become Protestant and are allowed to remain in the cloister. The cathedral itself is abandoned, when Bishop John Hamilton moves his seat to Holy Trinity. The thirteen clergy at St Mary's, Kirkheugh, are also affected by the Reformation.
- 1582 - with the death of the sub-prior, the priory buildings are abandoned.
- 1587 - the cathedral lands are annexed by the Crown.
- 1634 - Charles I considers restoring the cathedral but nothing happens.
- 1679 - Archbishop James Sharp is murdered by zealous Fife Covenanters whilst crossing Magus Moor, near St Andrews, in his coach.
- 1689 - episcopacy is finally abolished in the Scottish Church. The cathedral lands revert to the Crown. During all this time, the ground around the cathedral and priory is used as the town cemetery.
- 1789 - St Rule's is repaired by the Barons of the Exchequer (ie, the Crown).
- 1826 - after some debate, the Crown accepts responsibility for the cathedral.
- 1833 - the first fragments of the St Andrews Sarcophagus are found.
- 1857/8 - a proposal to restore St Rule's comes to nothing.
- 1860 - construction of a coastal defence battery at St Mary's, Kirkheugh, turns up several fragments of 8th/9th-century cross-slabs.
- 1875 - 'Tommy' Morris Jnr., who won the Open aged 17 (still a record), is laid to rest in the cathedral graveyard.
- 1893 - the 3rd marquis of Bute acquires a house called The Priory, whose garden includes the cloister. He carries out major works there, including restoring undercrofts in the SE quadrant, his intention, apparently, being to found a Catholic seminary.
- 1895 - the 9th-century St Leonard's Shrine is found during building work SW of the cathedral.
- 1908 - the cathedral museum opens in the undercrofts restored by Lord Bute.
- 1946 – Lord Bute's descendant, Major Michael Crichton-Stewart, entrusts the priory buildings into state care.

Archaeological Overview:

- The cathedral precinct and St Mary's, Kirkheugh to its north, have been subjected to continued ground disturbance throughout their history, largely because of their use as burial grounds. Much below-ground archaeology must have been destroyed in the process, as recent minor excavations have shown. However, from the 19th century interest in the history of the cathedral complex has meant that important finds were increasingly recorded and preserved.
- Following the Reformation, the detritus from the cathedral-priory's walls and roofs lay upon the ground, for the towns-people to use as a handy stone quarry.
- Clearance work probably occurred in 1789 within and around St Rule's during its repair by the Barons of the Exchequer.
- From the 1820s, further clearance work was undertaken at the cathedral and priory.
- In 1833, the first fragments of the St Andrews Sarcophagus were found in the cathedral. Further fragments were subsequently found at differing, unmarked locations.

- In 1860, construction of a coastal battery at St. Mary's, Kirkcubright, turned up fragments from numerous early Christian cross-slabs. The wall footings of St Mary's were also exposed then.
- Excavations c.1887 revealed the original floor level of the cathedral, and found glazed tiles.
- Between 1893 and 1898 Lord Bute excavated the cloister buildings in advance of restoration. Numerous early Christian and medieval stones were recovered.
- In 1895 workmen at St Leonard's boarding house discovered the 9th-century 'St Leonard's Shrine'. In addition, ten long cists and 30-60 simple inhumations were found.
- Between 1903 and 1924 David Hay Fleming, researching the history of the cathedral, carried out a variety of 'howkings' across the entire site. In 1904, he claimed that the only place in the east end of the cathedral not explored by himself or his predecessors was the ground immediately under the presbytery paving slab and the stone sarcophagi. Fleming also discovered the stone coffins in the chapter house. He also found many interesting examples of tile and glass, including rare green tiles in the Lady Chapel, north of the presbytery. In 1923, he found the upper portions of a cross-slab in the east gable wall. He estimated that fragments of around 65 Celtic cross-slabs had been found at the priory.
- Since 1987, small-scale excavations and watching-briefs have taken place in various parts of the precinct, and in the vicinity of St Mary's, Kirkcubright, mostly in tandem with works associated with masonry consolidation or the repairing and renewing of below-ground services. Little of significance was discovered.
- In 1980 further investigation near St Mary's, Kirkcubright, revealed over 300 early Christian burials, of both sex and all ages.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

- The architecture of St Rule's Church, the cathedral, priory and precinct wall are of the greatest importance.

St Rule's Church

- St Rule's originally comprised a tall tower at the west end of a nave, and with a choir (possibly apsidal) at the east end.
- The church was extended not long after its construction. A new rectangular nave was built to the west of the tower, and the compartment to the east of the original nave extended. These later works have disappeared above ground but the arches that were constructed, from the tower to the new nave, and from the old nave to the eastern extension, survive.
- Although many have argued for a late 11th-century date, St Rule's is more likely to be of the early 12th century. The thin walls and double-splay windows of the earlier part, although they have been compared with Anglo-Saxon architectural details, are unlikely to be so early and the detailing of the early work shows close similarities with work at early 12th-century churches in Yorkshire (eg, Wharram-le-Street), suggesting that Bishop Robert, a former canon of Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, brought masons from that area. Within Scotland, the tower has close relationships with that at Markinch, also Fife. The church's enlargement is probably due to the arrival of the Augustinian community c.1140.

- St Rule's was re-roofed by Prior de Lothian (1340x54), and Prior John Hepburn (1482x1522) carried out major remodelling of the space below the tower.

The cathedral

- In its completed state, St Andrews Cathedral was by a considerable margin the largest church in medieval Scotland, although shorter than a number of the great English cathedrals. (St Andrews Cathedral, as finished, was 109m long, compared to York (158m) and Durham (150m).) It had an aisle-less presbytery of three bays, which seems to have served as a *revestiarium* or relic chapel from the time of Prior Haldenstone, an aisled choir of six bays (one of the first cases of such an extended choir in Britain), transepts of three bays with eastern aisles for chapels, a crossing tower and an aisled nave of twelve bays (fourteen were initially envisaged).
- The best surviving parts are the east gable, the south nave aisle wall towards the cloister, and the south part of the west front. There is some evidence that the extended period required for building resulted in numerous changes of design in the course of the work, though the poor survival of the fabric makes certainty on this difficult. If the stumps of the aisle-less presbytery can be taken as evidence for the proportions of the aisled choir (and that cannot be certain), then the eastern parts had a three-storey elevation with clustered shaft piers supporting a relatively low arcade, surmounted by a gallery of about the same size, and with a clearstory with triplets of openings to each bay, framed by the wall arches of the high vaulting.
- The influence of northern English architecture can be found at the cathedral. The clustered-shaft piers and water-leaf capitals seen in the early work point to the Yorkshire Cistercians, while the proportions of the presbytery may have been taken from the choir of Archbishop Roger of York's minster. As with St Rule's, it seems that the designing masons were still being drawn from England, with Yorkshire the preferred choice; this despite the difficulties the Scottish Church was having in dealing with the predatory interests of the archbishops of York.
- St Andrews Cathedral was part of the transfer of architectural ideas between northern England and Scotland. Forms developed at St Andrews were further developed at **Jedburgh** and **Arbroath** Abbeys, and at Hexham Priory, Northumberland. The original east gable, which had three tiers of triplets of windows (two of which were replaced in the 15th-century with a large traceried opening), shows awareness of Yorkshire Cistercian work, (eg, Kirkstall Abbey's north transept gable). The relative proportions of the storeys in the nave appear to have been modified, with a change to a much higher arcade stage, and a more compressed gallery. It is also clear that the high spaces of the nave were unvaulted.
- As with Scottish architecture in general, the late medieval work at the cathedral, following the 1378 fire, shows an awareness of Continental ideas. The nave piers are elongated to the central space, and in the south transept cylindrical piers and arcade responds make an appearance. The west façade contains mid-level openings with triplets of cusped figures; though once a popular English motif (eg, Lincoln's Angel Choir), its treatment is distinctly French, with the stiling of the main arch and tracery field above the light head. This probably occurred about the time of the involvement of John Morow, the

French master-mason who was active at Melrose and claimed to have worked at St Andrews.

- The reorganisation of the presbytery and shrine space by Prior Haldenstone can be distinguished in the surviving fabric. The presbytery originally had wall arcading, but this was removed when the floor level was increased; the stumps of the original shafts can still be seen. The heightening served further to increase the importance of the relics of Saint Andrew.

The cathedral priory

- The monastic buildings of the Augustinian priory are ranged around a very large cloister south of the cathedral. What is seen now is mostly of the 13th-/15th-century, with major reconstructions of the 1890s in the SE angle, now housing the cathedral museum.
- The east range housed the chapter house vestibule, as well as the spaces to either side, directly south of the south transept. These spaces were probably built by Prior John White (1236-58), though the chapter house itself, projecting east of the east range, was the work of Bishop William Lamberton (1297-1328). The warming house at the south end of the east range, probably the work of Prior White, was almost entirely rebuilt by Lord Bute in the 1890s, following the original forms but using red sandstone external masonry to distinguish it from the original (as was Lord Bute's 'self documenting' way). The space has two-by-six bays of restored quadripartite vaulting carried on cylindrical piers.
- The surviving undercroft in the south range, originally part of the refectory built by White, was also largely rebuilt by Lord Bute in the 1890s, again in the same red sandstone. The NW bays were built in the 1950s after the demolition of The Priory.
- The late medieval west range was left largely untouched by Bute. Only a series of barrel-vaulted basements remain.
- The priory's precinct wall is the most complete and impressive monastery wall in Scotland. It enclosed an area of about 30 acres, was almost one mile in length, had sixteen towers - thirteen survive (two rectangular, eleven circular) plus traces of a fourteenth - and four ports. In its present form the wall may date initially from the late 14th-century, but it was heightened, and towers added, apparently by Prior John Hepburn (1482-1522); his arms and the date 1520 appear on heraldic panels. The gunholes (mostly 'inverted- keyhole' type) that penetrate the wall and towers are of a type that first appeared in Scotland c.1450 (eg, **Threave Castle**); some at least appear to date from before the heightening. Surprisingly, this impressive precinct wall has received little serious modern study.
- The main entrance into the precinct was the Pends Gate, situated to the SW of the cathedral. It was probably also built in the late 14th century, for the blind arcading over the entrance is akin to that on the cathedral's post-1378 modified west front. The pend itself was covered with fine tierceron vaulting. Only one of the other three gates, that to the north of the cathedral, is in state care. Rebuilt in Prior Hepburn's day, its round-arched opening is modest by comparison with the Pends Gate. Mill Port (or Sea Yett), facing the harbour to the east, and Teinds Gate, on Abbey Walk to the south of the cathedral, are not in state care.

St Mary's, Kirkheugh

- The remains of St Mary's, excavated in 1860, reveal an aisle-less cruciform church that is clearly of a variety of dates on the evidence of changes in the masonry. The choir, which appears to represent an extension of the original plan, may have been the latest part. The long history of the site was confirmed by the finding of large numbers of Pictish cross-slabs in the area, suggesting an important burial ground here.

Cathedral Museum

- The cathedral museum, housed in Lord Bute's restored SE cloister ranges, includes an important collection of carved stones, some of outstanding significance. Most significant undoubtedly are the early Christian stones: (a) St Andrews Sarcophagus (possibly an 8th-century royal tomb); (b) the high crosses that may have marked the boundaries of the wider precinct but which were incorporated into the 12th-century cathedral; (c) the St Leonard's School Shrine; (d) the numerous Pictish cross-slabs. The museum also houses many worked stones that once formed part of the fabric or fixtures of the cathedral and other buildings within the precinct, as well as a large group of fine post-Reformation memorials.

Social Overview:

- The cathedral complex is situated within one of Scotland's most popular towns, important not just for its history, but for its university, golf and seaside location. St Rule's tower and the cathedral's upstanding lofty fragments are eye-catching.
- The graveyard (now closed to further burial) has a wide and fascinating variety of headstones to an assortment of people, including locals, academics, military men and golfers. It is much visited, valued and admired.
- The cathedral precinct is not without its popular myths, particularly the 'haunted tower' along the north precinct wall.
- Much of the precinct has been freely accessible within living memory, and is popular as a place to relax and picnic. It is also a favoured backdrop for wedding and graduation photography. The precinct's open access makes it a perfect short-cut for getting from the town centre to the harbour, eastern beaches and the much-walked pier.

Spiritual Overview:

- Kilrymont (now St Andrews) was the spiritual centre of the Scottish Church from at least the mid-700s until the Reformation (1560). Relics of St Andrew, brought here perhaps in the early 700s, ultimately helped the apostle of Christ replace St Columba in the affections of the Scottish people, and by the later Middle Ages he had become their patron saint.
- In the early Christian era, Kilrymont seems to have been closely associated with the Culdees, a Celtic monastic reform movement. From the 10th century on, St Andrews was the principal church of the leading bishops of Scotland (though it was only elevated to metropolitan status in 1472). The stone sarcophagi discovered beneath the presbytery, together with those in the chapter house, held the mortal remains of some of the most prestigious churchmen of medieval Scotland.

- The Augustinian order was amongst the most popular of monastic orders in Scotland, much favoured by the Crown, and closely associated with royal administration and ceremony (eg, Scone, **Holyrood**, **Cambuskenneth** (Stirling) and **Jedburgh**).
- St Andrews was a major focus of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages, as important as Santiago de Compostela because it held relics of one of Christ's apostles.
- Up to 1412, the burgh church was situated within the precinct, east of the cathedral.
- The cathedral was the first church in Scotland to be purged by the Protestant Reformers, and the actions taken by Knox's followers form an important part of the nation's Presbyterian heritage.
- The precinct became the main burial place for the people of St Andrews after the Reformation.
- Today, the cathedral is still viewed by many as a Christian setting, alongside its more secular social associations. The cathedral's fragmentary remains do not in themselves have strong spiritual associations, but they do when viewed against the background of the extensive graveyard, and with the lofty tower of St Rule's rising over all.
- The wider precinct is still occasionally used for services, eg, on Easter Sunday there is a non-denominational dawn service at St Mary, Kirkheugh. There are also occasional Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic services at the cathedral, and the site is visited by pilgrims en route to St Columba's Iona.

Aesthetic Overview:

- The abiding impressions of the cathedral are of its size, particularly its length, and of the dispersed nature of its remains. Though the remains are massive, they do not convey the sense of mass the building would once have had (eg, the presbytery of **Melrose Abbey** or the nave at **Jedburgh Abbey**).
- The fragmentary remains of the cathedral retain traces of its former richness, but lost almost entirely is that sense of luxury and spiritual space that would once have overwhelmed the visitor.
- The cloister, although devoid of most of its buildings, is a pleasant space, open and wide.
- The cathedral complex sits at the east end of the town centre, at the point where its three main streets converge. The lofty St Rule's tower and upstanding parts of the cathedral (its east gable and west front) are prominent in many views within the town.
- Set on its headland, and rising up behind its precinct wall, the cathedral is highly visible from the sea, and in views from along the coast to the east, helping to distinguish St Andrews from any other Fife port.
- The towers of St Rule's and the cathedral, together with those of the burgh's churches, were probably always intended to be seen as a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem for pilgrims approaching across the landward routes. Despite the ravages of the years, they still have a majestic effect, enhancing town and cathedral complex.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What was the layout of Kilrymont in the later first millennium AD, and how did it evolve into the premier religious site of late medieval Scotland?
- What exactly did the cathedral look like when completed, and how was its interior arranged and furnished, particularly regarding the circulation of pilgrims visiting the shrine of Saint Andrew?
- What form did the cathedral precinct take in the 12th century, and how did it change over time?
- Where precisely was the burgh church in the precinct before 1412?
- The documentation associated with the cathedral requires re-assessment to modern standards.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- St Andrews Cathedral was the seat of Scotland's leading medieval prelate, the head of the Scottish Church. Both St Rule's and the later cathedral were symbolic of his power, and that of the apostle of Christ it venerated.
- St Andrews University was the fruit of the cathedral, and its early history is inextricably tied to that of the cathedral.
- Both St Rule's and the cathedral are of prime importance for our understanding of early Gothic British architecture.
- Encircling the cathedral and priory is the most complete precinct wall in Scotland.
- The cathedral museum holds an outstandingly important collection of early Christian and medieval carved stones.
- The cathedral's collection of post-Reformation memorials, both in situ and on display in the cathedral museum, is of national importance.
- The cathedral is an important part of the town's landscape, and continues to be a focus of social activity and civic pride, as well as an important visitor attraction.

Associated Properties:

(other related sites locally) - **St Andrews Castle; St Andrews Blackfriars**, St Salvator's College, St Leonard's Chapel, Holy Trinity Church.

(other Scottish medieval cathedrals) - **Dunblane, Dunkeld, Elgin, Fortrose, Glasgow, Whithorn, Aberdeen**, Brechin, Kirkwall, Lismore.

(other partly surviving Augustinian foundations) - **Cambuskenneth Abbey, Holyrood Abbey, Inchcolm Abbey, Inchmahome Priory, Jedburgh Abbey, Loch Leven Priory, Restenneth Priory**, Inchaffray Abbey, May Priory, Oronsay Priory, Pittenween Priory, Strathfillan Priory.

(other monasteries with surviving precinct walls/gates) - **Arbroath Abbey, Crossraguel Abbey, Dunfermline Abbey, Sweetheart Abbey, Whithorn Cathedral-Priory**, Coupar Angus Abbey, Pittenween Priory, Pluscarden Priory.

(other major collections of early Christian carved stones) - **Jedburgh Abbey, Meikle Museum, St Vigean's Museum, Whithorn Cathedral-Priory**, Govan Church.

Keywords:

cathedral, priory, precinct, pilgrimage, early Christian, Reformation, bishop, archbishop

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