

ART. V. – *An unrecorded Carlisle church: the church of the Holy Trinity, Caldewgate.*
By D. R. PERRIAM.

IN extracting the narrative of the siege of Carlisle of 1315 from the fourteenth-century *Chronicle of Lanercost*, now in the British Library, Jefferson interprets “the church of the Holy Trinity” as the Cathedral;¹ he records the quotation that the Scots “erected an engine for casting stones near the church of the Holy Trinity [the cathedral], where their king had placed himself, and continually threw great stones towards the Caldew gate, and at the wall, but did no injury, or but little to those within, except that they killed one man”. This is the only published reference to “the church of the Holy Trinity” and recent research has produced new evidence to suggest that Jefferson’s interpretation is suspect. It is to present this evidence that these notes have been prepared.

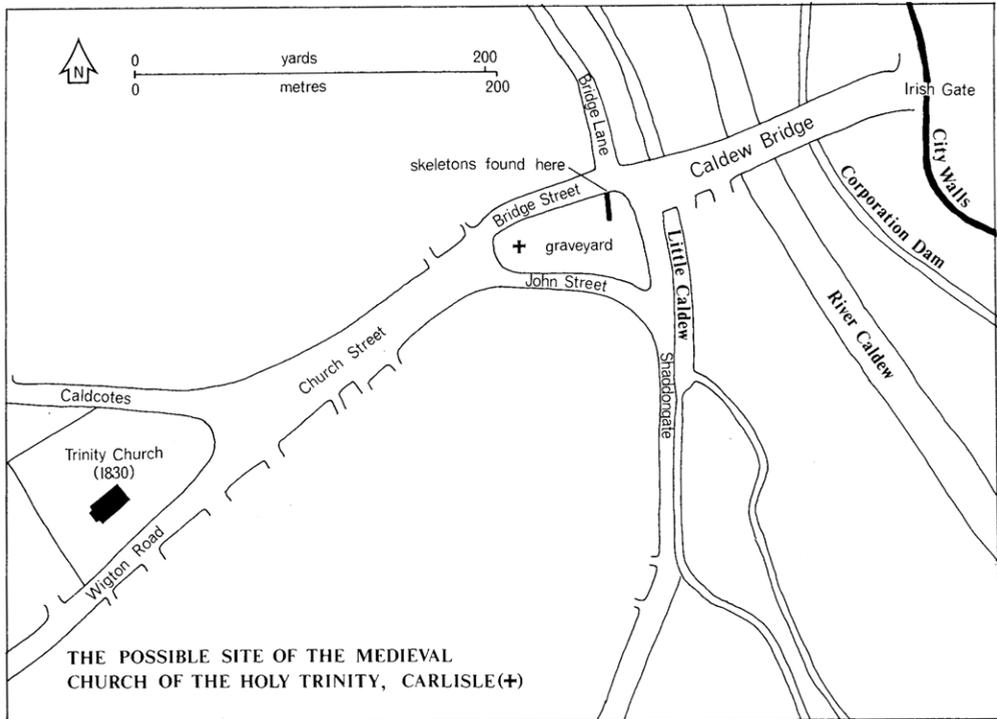
In 1315, the Cathedral was dedicated to St Mary, so there is no possibility that “the church of the Holy Trinity” could be the Cathedral; it was not until 1541 that the dedication was changed to the Holy and Undivided Trinity.² The Priory of St. Mary, which was occupied by an order of Augustinian canons, was attached to the Cathedral, therefore the reference to “the place of canons” in the description of the 1315 siege in the *Chronicle* clearly distinguishes the Priory and Cathedral from “the church of the Holy Trinity”.

There are also certain topographical problems with Jefferson’s interpretation. If the machine or catapult,³ described in the *Chronicle* was situated near to the Cathedral, it could only have been below the West Walls, in which position the Irish Gate would have been out of view hidden by a bend in the walls. In fact the catapult would have had to stand some distance from the Cathedral before the Irish Gate came into view.

The most direct line of fire would have been from Caldewgate,⁴ just to the west of the Little Caldew, situated less than two hundred metres⁵ away from the Irish Gate. It is reasonable to suppose that the object of the catapult assault was not to demolish the stone structure of the gate tower, but to break open the wooden gates, in which case a frontal assault would have been the only means of achieving this objective.

A catapult of considerable size is indicated by the fact that it threw “great stones”⁶ and it may have been of a comparable size to the belfry described in the *Chronicle*, which “when it was drawn upon wheels over moist and clayey ground, there it stuck by reason of its weight”; therefore, it may not have been possible to bring the catapult closer to the city walls than Caldewgate because of the difficulties of crossing the mill races and River Caldew.

Having demonstrated that the catapult was not near to the Cathedral, but near to “the church of the Holy Trinity”, the problem now arises of locating this church. This is made difficult because during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were repeated raids on the suburbs of Carlisle by the Scots and as a result buildings outside the city walls were



frequently destroyed.⁷ The church of the Holy Trinity apparently did not escape this destruction, otherwise it would have been mentioned in later documents.⁸ With the modern surface build-up there are today no traces above ground of a medieval church close to the city walls.

One positive reference to its location is found in the Bishop's Register recording a rental in Caldcotes in 1318;⁹ "Robert Grout for 1 plot [area] on which he has built a barn next to the church of the Holy Trinity [*juxta ecclesiam Sancte Trinitatis*] and renders each year xijd".

The entry for Caldcotes in the Bishop's Register refers not to the modern street called Caldcotes but to the medieval manor of Caldcotes, which covered a large area incorporating the whole of the township of Caldewgate with certain exceptions.¹⁰ It can be inferred, therefore, with the evidence already presented, that "the church of the Holy Trinity", said to be located in medieval Caldcotes, lay to the west of the River Caldew in modern Caldewgate.¹¹

It is difficult to visualise how Caldewgate appeared in the medieval period because so many changes have taken place since then; the road pattern has changed¹² and the earliest buildings now surviving date from 1756.¹³ Nineteenth-century photographs¹⁴ show the so-called "giant's grave" at the junction of Winton Road, Church street and Caldcotes, which remained until 1900. The origin of the name of this triangle of land is seemingly unknown, but it may have been a traditional story handed down from generation to generation, based perhaps on fact, that there were burials beneath the street.¹⁵ By a strange coincidence there is a Trinity Church in Caldewgate today. This, however, has

no historical associations with the earlier church, having been built in 1830 and the dedication to the Holy Trinity is mere coincidence.¹⁶

A number of burials were discovered in May 1959 whilst workmen were engaged in digging a sewer-trench beneath Bridge Street, close to Bridge Lane; "some forty skeletons were found lying close together and almost all aligned east-west with heads to the west . . . the possibility is that these interments represent an unrecorded town cemetery site, although the suggestion that this was an isolated mass burial cannot be ruled out on the evidence available".¹⁷ This was the only positive evidence of the existence of a church and churchyard in Caldewgate, but unfortunately the conditions did not allow further investigation at the time and none of the skeletons was retrieved for analysis. Although it was impossible to give a date the alignment of the burials suggests a Christian practice.¹⁸

With all of the evidence now available it is logical to assume that this discovery was part of the cemetery of "the church of the Holy Trinity". If this is the cemetery then the church would be in close proximity, perhaps under Bridge Street or the island formed by the junction of Bridge Street, John Street and Shaddongate.¹⁹

As the probable site of the original "church of the Holy Trinity" is threatened by a round-about for stage 3 of the Inner Ring Road ²⁰ it is important to try to locate the exact position of this church so that a rescue dig can be carried out in advance of the construction of the road. A re-appraisal of the significance of Caldewgate in the medieval period would result from conclusive evidence of the existence of this church.

APPENDIX

Notes on Caldewgate by B. C. Jones, MA

In medieval times the Bishop's manor of Caldcotes included most of the later township of Caldewgate with the exception of Denton Holme, Murrell Hill and the area on the east of the Caldew below the city walls and round about the bridge. Districts incorporated within the manor included Shaddongate, Caldcotes, Caldcote Bank, part of Willowholme, Morton and Knockupworth, but within the overall jurisdiction of the Bishop were various subordinate manors, one of which was the manor belonging to John de Chapple, which later became a manor belonging to the priory of Carlisle, and subsequently the Dean and Chapter.²¹

The area of the later township, east of the river Caldew, was generally described as the suburb of Carlisle outside the gate. In one deed of 1341 the word "Caldougates" within the gate is used to describe property, probably in Abbey Street, but it should be noted that the Crown's husgabel rents which the Bishop had the right of collecting were, in fact, drawn from areas within the Bishop's manor, for example, Shaddongate as well as from buildings and properties between Caldewgate and the bridge. It is possible too that the name Caldewgate referred to the district along the line of the main road, whether on the east side of the Caldew or the west. A deed of 1383 refers to lands belonging to the Gerbot family in Caldewgate and elsewhere outside Carlisle held in fee from the Bishop.²² The early name for Shaddongate was *vicus flandrensis* but this term appears to have gone out of use generally by about 1280. Later references to the same properties say that they were in Shaddongate or "in *vico Shadewyn*".²³ The area later known as Denton Holme and, from early medieval times, Hervi holme was held directly from the Crown as part of a

sergeanty for keeping and maintaining the gates of Carlisle and, in particular for finding iron for the gates.²⁴

The importance of the suburban settlement near Carlisle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is indicated by a reference to a revenue of 10s from husgabel rents in accounts of the revenue of the Bishop of Carlisle recorded in the Exchequer Pipe Roll for 1253-4.²⁵ It is known from information provided in a rental of the Bishop's estates for the year 1318 and updated to 1329, recorded in the Bishop of Carlisle's register, that husgabel was collected at the rate of 2d for a toft that had buildings on it and 1d from tofts that were waste or unbuilt on. By 1329 the revenue from husgabel had fallen from 10s to 2s, an indication perhaps of the extent of the decline of the suburb as a result of raids by the Scots. Further evidence of this decline is provided by the Bishop's rentals of 1318 and 1370. In the rental of 1318 ten cottages or cottage sites were named in the Bishop's manor of Caldcotes, which by the rental of 1370 had declined to five cottages and one curtilage.²⁶

Taxation records confirm this decline. In 1336 Caldcotes was assessed at £5. 10s. 10¼d. in the tenth that was collected in that year; in 1338 the manor was assessed at £2 and in 1339 £1. 4s.²⁷ It is possible that Newtown or Harrington Houses grew up in the later fourteenth century as a new plantation on the lord's waste and as a substitute for the older medieval suburb of Caldcotes which had been so vulnerable to Scottish onslaughts.²⁸

The dedication of the medieval chapel in Caldewgate to the Holy Trinity probably dates it to the twelfth century or early thirteenth. The establishment of the festival of the Holy Trinity was one of the first episcopal acts of Thomas Becket in 1162.²⁹

Notes and References

- ¹ *History and Antiquities of Carlisle*, 1838, 20-1; I am grateful to B. C. Jones for drawing this to my attention and for suggesting that there was a medieval church in Caldewgate.
- ² *Register of the Priory of Wetherhal*, ed. J. E. Prescott; "the Priory of Carlisle was dedicated to St. Mary – a dedication which the Cathedral Church retained until the refoundation in 1541, and which has led to some confusion".
- ³ *Royal Charters of Carlisle*, by R. S. Ferguson, reproduces the title letter of the Carlisle Charter of 1316 which incorporates a drawing of the 1315 siege. In the foreground of this drawing is a catapult and this is perhaps the one referred to in the *Chronicle*.
- ⁴ W. T. McIntyre in the *Cumberland News*, 4 March 1944, also thought the attack was made from Caldewgate, but he was confused by the reference to "the church of the Holy Trinity".
- ⁵ This would have been out of the range of arrows fired from the city walls and a safe refuge for the Scottish King, who, according to the *Chronicle*, was close to the catapult.
- ⁶ An indication of the size of these stones was given in 1878 when "Chancellor Ferguson found, whilst excavating near the Irish Gate, three or four stone balls about 8½" in diameter", *Castles and Towers*, Curwen, 161. Ferguson believed that these had originated from the 1315 siege catapult; "stones missing the Gate and going over it would roll harmlessly into the ditch and be silted up. The place where they have been found is only a few feet from the back of the site of the Gate", CW 1 iv, 42.
- ⁷ Jefferson *op. cit.*, 28-9, states that the Scots besieged Carlisle in October 1337 "contenting themselves with burning the suburbs, the hospital of St. Nicholas and Rose Castle"; in similar attacks in 1345, 1380, 1385 and 1387 the suburbs were again devastated.
- ⁸ Only one later documentary reference to Trinity Church is known. Thomas Tallentyre in his Will dated 18 December 1578, Record Office Carlisle, (C.R.O.), Probate Records, bequeathed to his brother along with other possessions in and around Carlisle, "the Rowme and Place of St. Tarnytie Church". The words "Rowme and Place" seem to suggest that it was the place where the church had been, rather than a room in the church. There is, however, no indication where the church was. I am grateful to B. C. Jones for this reference.

⁹ C.R.O., DRC1/1.

¹⁰ See appendix.

¹¹ Caldewgate is the name given to a modern city ward, but Church Street and Bridge Street collectively are often referred to as Caldewgate. In the medieval period these streets were called Caldewgate but were within the manor of Caldcotes.

¹² In the early medieval period there seems to have been an important north-south road crossing Willow Holme via Bridge Lane to Shaddongate and this would have taken precedence over any east-west route; "a very old road . . . once went to Carlisle by a ford over the Eden now disused, called Etterby Wath, and thence through the Willow Holme. The fact of the road having gone by this often impassable wath, where a mile round would have taken it to a bridge, points to its being older than any bridge;" CW1 vii, 70. An early church would have perhaps been close to this important road. With the building of the medieval bridges over the Eden and Caldew, an east-west road system would have become more important and a church and churchyard would have influenced the development of these roads.

¹³ A row of terraced cottages stands on the north side of Church Street, next to Carrs' Biscuit Works, bearing the date 1756 on a lintel stone and the initials G.B., perhaps those of George Blamire who owned property in Caldewgate at that date.

¹⁴ Photographs of the area are in the Jackson Collection, Carlisle Library.

¹⁵ Cross fragments or hog-backs could have been found in Caldewgate, in association with "the church of the Holy Trinity" and interpreted as a "giant's grave". However, there are no records of any such finds.

¹⁶ As early as 1819 there were press reports stating the need for a church in the rapidly expanding Caldewgate. The new church was originally a chapel of ease to St. Mary's Church and as this church was within the Cathedral, the dedication to the Holy Trinity would seem to be linked with the Cathedral.

¹⁷ CW2 lxi, notes 296.

¹⁸ CW2, *op.cit.*, Mr Hogg suggests a pre-Conquest date about the tenth century based on the assumption that the part of Bridge Street overlying the cemetery was an early road. The area in which the skeletons were found was not originally part of the street, Bridge Street having been widened to twice its original width in the twentieth century, therefore the burials lie to the south of the medieval street.

¹⁹ In this position the church would have been situated at the junction of the two townships of Caldcotes and Shaddongate.

²⁰ *Cumberland News*, 11 August 1972, for plans of the Ring Road; further references to the creation of roundabouts in Caldewgate are in *Cumberland News*, 24 December 1976.

²¹ C.R.O., Rental in Bishop's Register 1292-1347, pp. 524-5 (DRC1/1) copy of Bishop's rental 1370, from records in possession of G. H. Mounsey-Heysham, Castletown, Rockliffe.

²² From Howard of Corby Castle deeds, William of Blencow to John son of Walter 5 Feb. 1340/1 and C.R.O. Lonsdale deeds D/Lons/L. C 11 and D34, 34a.

²³ C.R.O. Lonsdale deeds D/Lons/L. C 11, and Additional Denton deeds 1298, 1307, 1310.

²⁴ VCH I, 421, 423 and C.R.O. D/Lons/L. Additional Denton deeds c. 1236.

²⁵ F. H. M. Parker (ed.), *Pipe Rolls of Cumberland and Westmorland* (CW Extra Series xii 1905), 160.

²⁶ C.R.O. DRC1/1 and copy of Bishop's Rental 1370 as above.

²⁷ P.R.O. Exch. (KR) Lay Subsidy Accounts E179/90/4, 7, 22. I am indebted to Richard Hall for these figures.

²⁸ Copy of Bishop's rental 1370 as above.

²⁹ CW1 vii, 135.

