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## 2 THE CARMELITE FRIARS      IB COWAN

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The origin of the Carmelite friars, who were a contemplative and eremital order founded in the 12th century, is still imperfectly known, but it seems certain that groups of hermits from Mount Carmel, of European nationality, were brought back by Crusaders in the mid-13th century and confirmed as mendicants by Pope Honorius III (Cowan and Easson 1976, 134-9). They settled in England c 1242 and three years later their rule, which had previously specified rural settlement, was mitigated to allow foundations in urban centres.

It is uncertain when the Carmelites came to Scotland but the assertion that William of Sandwich brought them in 1244 is certainly without foundation. Their first appearance in Scotland may have been at Tullilum near Perth in 1262 (Ill 1), it being reputed that Richard, bishop of Dunkeld, provided the friars, who had arrived in Scotland two years previously, with their first chapel at that spot. No documentary proof is, however, forthcoming until the early 14th century and it may be that the house at Berwick-upon-Tweed reputedly founded by Sir John Gray in 1270, was the first foundation in Scotland. Aberdeen, too, vies for this honour as in 1273 Reginald le Chen made a grant to the Carmelites there 'till their buildings be ready' (Cowan and Easson 1976, 135). Others followed at Irvine (-1293), founded by one of the Fullertons of Fullerton with whose ancestors the patronage remained in 1412 and at Luffness (-1293). At Banff (1321-4), the lady chapel near the burgh was bestowed on the Carmelites on 21 April 1321 by Robert I, who confirmed the grant to them on 1 August 1323, along with land for the erection of a church and monastery. Other houses were erected at Linlithgow by Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith (1401), and at Queensferry in 1440/1 when a charter of James Dundas of Dundas granted a piece of ground there 'for the church of St Mary the Virgin and for the construction of certain buildings there in the form of a monastery' (Cowan and Easson 1976, 137). Inverbervie was founded before 1443, followed by Kingussie erected by George, earl of Huntly before 1501. Their final foundation at Edinburgh stemmed from the generosity of the town council who granted a site at the Greenside to the friars of Queensferry on 5 December 1520, although possession of the site was not obtained for another five years.

The Carmelites were also known as the 'White Friars' and their priories were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditionally believed that their establishments were small, while from documentary evidence of the 16th century it would appear that their communities numbered only a few friars (McRoberts 1962, 234, 238). Archaeological evidence from the three sites excavated at Aberdeen, Linlithgow and Perth indicates, however, that these three principal friaries, at least, were on a larger scale than has hitherto been believed. While these friaries may be exceptional within the Scottish province, the evidence does strongly suggest that originally the number of friars was greater and the order better endowed than previously suspected. This may also reflect wide-ranging use of these particular establishments prior to the 16th century, when it is possible that a number of lay people were attached to the friaries either as servants or organised in confraternities.

Until 1291 × 1294 the Scottish houses appear to have been accounted with those pertaining to the English province of the order, but a division of the province appears to have taken place between these dates (Cowan and Easson 1976, 134). With the exception of the years between 1460 and 1482, Berwick was effectively lost to the Scottish province after 1296 and was eventually dissolved in 1539. The remaining houses apparently held regular provincial chapters, such a meeting taking place at Luffness in 1480.

The early history of the order and its activities in Scotland are obscure, but it can be assumed that the principal responsibility of the Carmelites was to preach and they seem also to have been

actively involved in teaching. William Elphinstone bishop of Aberdeen endowed the Carmelites of Aberdeen and one of their number, William Shewan, in turn acted as scribe to William Hay, sub-principal of King's College (Macfarlane 1985, 255, 359). He copied out his lectures on Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony for the use of students of theology in 1535 and also transcribed some of the Aberdeen cathedral registers (Macfarlane 1985, 255). Friars were also employed as special preachers by other bishops. In 1512 Friars Musch and Pareis of Tullilum were subsidised at Aberdeen University by George Browne, bishop of Dunkeld, who also helped the friars build the nave of their church and improved the conventual accommodation (McRoberts 1962, 209). Men of learning were not uncommon among members of the order, amongst the most prominent being David Balbirny who acted in turn as prior at Greenside (Edinburgh), Tullilum and Queensferry and who had earlier taught at Dunkeld (McRoberts 1962, 210). A community library which contained a volume of Duns Scotus was in existence at Aberdeen in the early 16th century and although the Carmelite claim to learning is modest, reform of the order which was requested of the prior general by James V in 1530 was accorded high priority by many of its members and led in 1541 to controversy over the office of provincial between John Malcolmson and William Stob who appears to have wished to institute a stricter regimen. Such changes appear to have been initially resisted at the Scottish court, but the acceptance of Stob as provincial by a papal commission presided over by Cardinal Beaton in February 1540/1 appears to have opened the way to reform (McRoberts 1962, 210-11). As with other orders of friars, fear of their influence as orthodox teachers and preachers may have led to the onslaught upon their houses at the Reformation of 1559/60. Little documentary information is available about their actual destruction. The reforming barons of the Mearns apparently destroyed the friary at Aberdeen, in other burghs such as Linlithgow and Perth the 'rascal multitude' were invited to take direct action but at Banff the buildings were set on fire 'under sylens of nicht' and on 15 August 1559 the prior with the consent of one of the friars leased 'all and haill our place besyde Banff . . . in quhait stait yat ewer yai be for ye tyme be resounn of this present contrawersie' (Cowan and Easson 1976, 136). The hope no doubt remained that the change of faith would only be temporary, but it was not to be.