

Graveheart: cult and burial in a Cistercian chapter house – excavations at Melrose, 1921 and 1996

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ABSTRACT

The chapter house at Melrose was first excavated by the Ministry of Works in 1921, revealing a sequence of burials including a heart burial, possibly that of Robert I. Part of the site was re-excavated in 1996 by Kirkdale Archaeology for Historic Scotland in order to provide better information for the presentation of the monument. This revealed that the building had expanded in the 13th century, the early chamber being used as a vestibule. There was a complex sequence of burials in varied forms, including a translated bundle burial and some associated with the cult which developed around the tomb of the second abbot, Waltheof. The heart burial was re-examined (and reburied) and its significance is considered in the context of contemporary religious belief and the development of a cult. There was evidence for an elaborate tiled floor, small areas of which survive in situ.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter house at Melrose Abbey (NGR: NT 5484 3417; illus 1 and 2) was excavated first in 1921 by the Ministry of Works as part of an extensive clearance of the monastic remains but was never published. The site was partially re-excavated in 1996 by Kirkdale Archaeology for Historic Scotland in order to obtain a better understanding of the building for the improved presentation of the monument and, apart from a few exceptions, burials were excavated.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

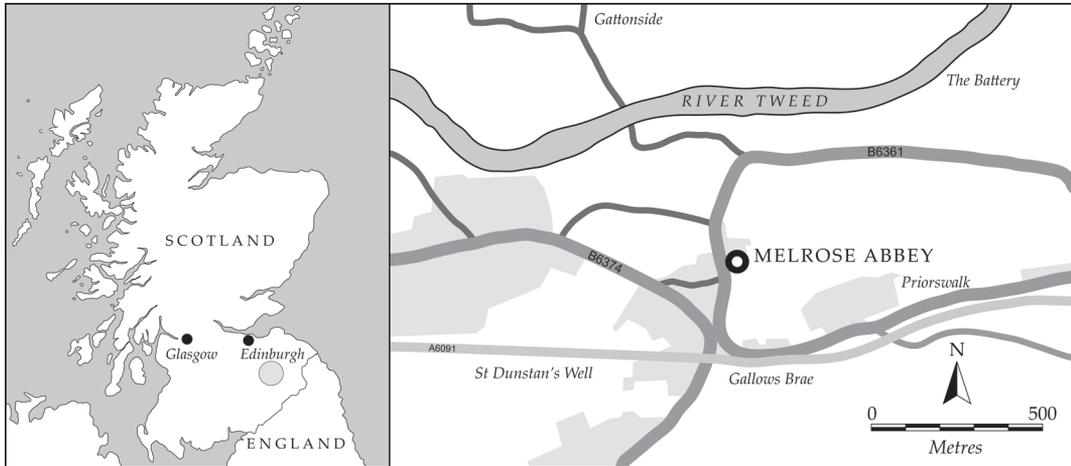
The Cistercian abbey of Melrose (illus 2) was founded in 1136–7, colonised by monks from Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire, on the

invitation of King David I. Under its first abbot, Richard (1136–48), the community rapidly expanded and royal support for their austere life led to the founding of a daughter house at Newbattle in 1140, soon to be followed by other houses (Cowan & Easson 1976, 72). Richard was succeeded by Abbot Waltheof (1148–59), the son of Earl Simon of Northampton and stepson of David I (Powicke 1950, xxx–xxxii). Despite his aristocratic background, Waltheof's generosity, humility and love of humanity endowed him with such a spiritual charisma that he was regarded locally as a saint. His presence and the perceived power of Cistercian prayer made Melrose a preferred place of burial for many aristocratic families, including King Alexander II in 1249 (Stephenson 1988, 87). A generous flow of grants had expanded the abbey estates so that by the early decades of

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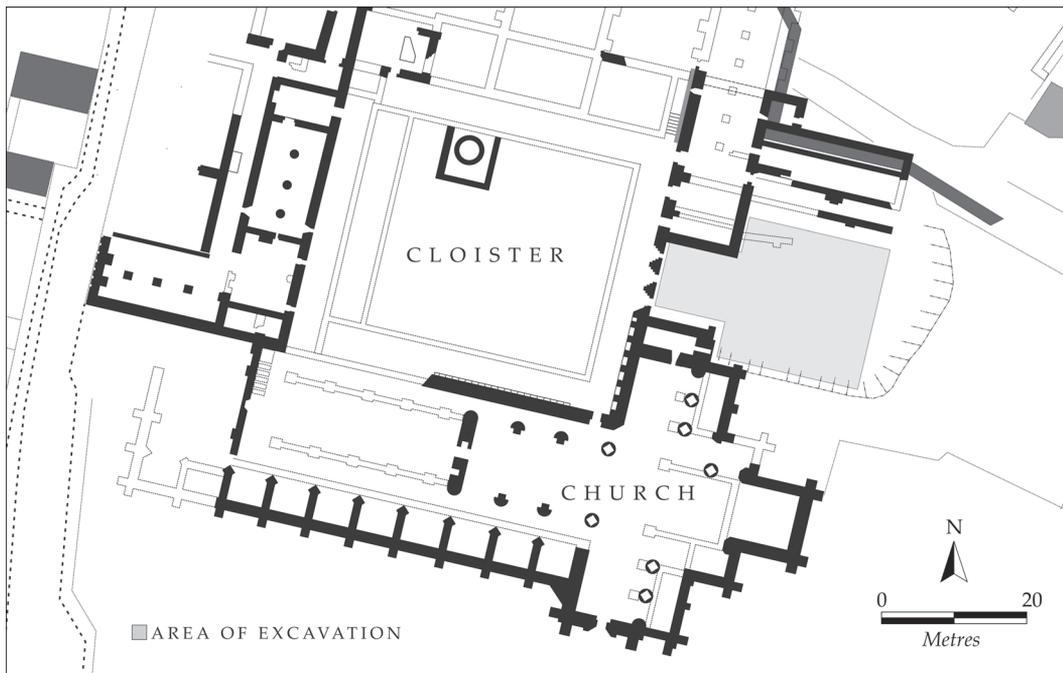


ILLUS 1 Location plan

the 13th century the abbey had become a major landowner in southern Scotland, involved in the European wool trade on a considerable scale. This wealth made possible an ambitious

rebuilding programme, including the extension of the chapter house in c 1240.

Building was to continue for the next three centuries, although with major setbacks. The



ILLUS 2 Plan of the claustral area, showing site of excavations

onset of the Wars of Independence caused a decline in the community's income, and the abbey itself was damaged. The abbot petitioned Edward I of England for materials to repair the buildings which had been burnt and destroyed while under his protection, but there was further damage in 1322 when the forces of Edward II sacked the abbey. Robert I granted the abbey both money and lands in 1326 and 1327, a daily pittance of a dish of rice in almond or pea water and eventually the favour of his heart burial – thus establishing a continuity with the past in his role as royal patron (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 39–40; RRS 5, 546, no 288). The abbey was severely damaged by Richard II of England in 1385 but rebuilding was taking place by 1398 when payments were made towards the 'new werke' – the beginning of a lavish programme of rebuilding that was to run on until after 1505 and remained uncompleted. The monastery benefited from the patronage of the Douglas family during the late 14th and early 15th centuries but royal

influence was reasserted under James I. The buildings were grand and extensive enough to accommodate the king and his retinue; in 1496, James IV twice used the abbey as his headquarters, and he received the English ambassador there in 1502. The abbey suffered damage twice during the 'Rough Wooing' of Henry VIII: first with Sir Ralph Ivers in 1544 and then in 1545 with the Earl of Hertford's troops. The documented evidence suggests that the wars left the chapter house in a ruinous condition as from that time the church superseded it as the place where business was transacted (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 61).

After the Reformation of 1560, the church was used for parochial worship. The monastery remained in the hands of the commendator. The area of the chapter house was included in the plot of land, consisting of a chamber and garden, leased in July 1587 to the minister, John Knox, by the commendator of Melrose, James Douglas.



ILLUS 3 Site of the chapter house from the NE, with the abbey church in the background

all and haill the chalmer and the gairdene with the pertinentis presentlie occupyit be the said Mr John liand within the mantill wall of Melrose maircheit and meithit as followis, viz. the kirk and kirkyaird one the south syd thair of, ane dik betuix the said gairdeine and Dene Jhone Watsones roume with ane dyke linalie dividing in tua halfiss the fermorie to the comoun foir entre one the eist, and ane dik newlie bigit be the said Mr Jhone one the northe, and the auld ruinous wallis one the east side of the closter one the vest syd, including the said wallis, reserving the stanes thiaroff to our use, lyand as said is within the mantill wall of the said abbay (Romanes 1917, 332–3).

The plot was bounded on its east side by ruinous walls of the cloister, the commendator keeping the right to stones from its fabric (illus 3). An account of the abbey in 1748 by Milne (1748, 30) gives further details of this area:

Besides the High Church, there has been a large fine Chapel, where the Manse now is, and another House adjoining to it, where the foundations of the Pillars are still to be seen. On the North-side of this House there has been a curious Oratory or private Chapel, the Foundations of which have been discovered this year, and a large cistern of Stone, with a leaden Pipe conveying the water to it.

It follows that the garden presumably encompassed the area to the south of the manse and the whole area bounded by the east wall of the cloister on the west, the abbey church on the south and the new wall on the north (ie along the line of the road leading from Abbey Street to the brewery). The area of the chapter house was part of the manse garden from at least the 1580s to the 1820s when the site was excavated under the auspices of the Duke of Buccleuch and Walter Scott.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Until the 1920s, the area of the monastic buildings to the north of the church was

subdivided by boundary walls into a number of residential properties known as Abbey House, The Priory and Cloisters House (Wood 1826; OS 1859 & 1898). Some of these incorporated medieval structures; for example, The Priory had the former commendator's house as its core. A boundary wall ran approximately west from the sacristy and excluded this area to the north from that of the church, leaving only the south-east of the cloister in the domain of the normal visitor. The public interest in the site was such that, by 1916, the Ministry of Works (MoW) were already involved in the conservation of the abbey church, parts of which were showing signs of collapse (NAS MW1/326). In 1918, the 7th Duke of Buccleuch gave church and adjacent properties to the Crown in lieu of death duties (NAS MW1/329; NA T1/12139), and about the same time Mr T J S Roberts of Drygrange gifted the properties on the north side of the church. The gifts stipulated that all such properties, boundary walls and so on should be demolished to enhance the setting of the abbey and to prevent further encroachment. Thus demolition and clearance started immediately and continued in stages into the 1930s (NAS MW1/329; MW1/331).

Melrose Abbey was excavated in phases between 1921 and 1950; the digging was carried out by workmen, not archaeologists, with sporadic supervision by J S Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland. Contemporary photographs show that trenches initially followed wall lines, after which the remaining deposits were removed (illus 4). Selected finds were kept and recorded in monthly inventories. The area of the chapter house and east claustral range was investigated by the Ministry of Works in 1921, excavations in the area of the chapter house extending to *c.* 1.1m (3' 9") below the level of the cloister walk (NAS MW1/335; HS 137/214/63). To the south, the excavations were limited by the abbey church and the tomb of the Duke of Buccleuch. The curved edge to the east of the chapter house was formed against a boundary wall, demarcating the drive to the manse (Cloisters House). Finds inventories

survive, sometimes with measured locations, often not. The excavations were the subject of memos and internal reports which, along with some plans and photographs, form both the primary and final record of the excavations (illus 4). In 1996 a programme of survey and excavation was carried out at Melrose Abbey by Kirkdale Archaeology for Historic Scotland in order to elucidate the structural sequence of the chapter house. This identified two phases of construction, the earlier chapter house having been expanded eastwards in the following century.

THE MID-12TH-CENTURY CHAPTER HOUSE

The monastery was erected on a series of man-made terraces of re-deposited clay of varying depth levelling the natural fluvio-glacial clays. Throughout the area of the chapter house, terrace deposits were found to be largely re-deposited

versions of this material, with occasional gravel inclusions. These deposits may have carried paved or tiled flooring, as well as providing a stable platform for walls and roof supports. The surviving walls of the east range demonstrates the slight nature of the foundations and indicates how stable the clay terraces were considered, as no deep foundation trenches were deemed necessary. Even the footings of the 12th-century masonry on the east side of the north transept were laid in a shallow foundation trench only some 700mm in depth. These very shallow foundations, combined with post-Reformation stone robbing and early 20th-century clearance, made the exact location of walls problematic at times.

The mid-12th-century chapter house is thought to have been contained within the body of the east range and to have been a two-by-three-bay space with an internal measurement of c 12.5m north-south, with two central piers



ILLUS 4 The 1921 excavation of the chapter house, looking west (Historic Scotland © Crown Copyright)

on that axis (illus 5 and 7). The entrance dates from the 13th-century reconstruction but the earlier south wall survives where it adjoins the upstanding sacristy and a scar, 8.5m in length, along the lower face indicates the position of the stone bench. This scar stops on the line of the east wall of the range, where there is the rectangular sub-base of a respond or buttress (F207). The exact position of the north wall at this date is uncertain; it was not located in 1921, presumably because of stone robbing, and was not excavated in 1996–7. Fawcett (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 183) suggests that it may have been further north than that of the later extended chapter house as the face of the west wall appears to extend north of its present junction with the north wall. The foundation for the south pier survives (F155), roughly rectangular in plan, and retains slight indications of a rounded pillar impression (F156). The corresponding pier footing to the north lay outside the limits of the 1996–7 excavation. There were areas of clay deposits with plaster inclusions within the chapter house, interpreted as the bedding for a floor, possibly paved.

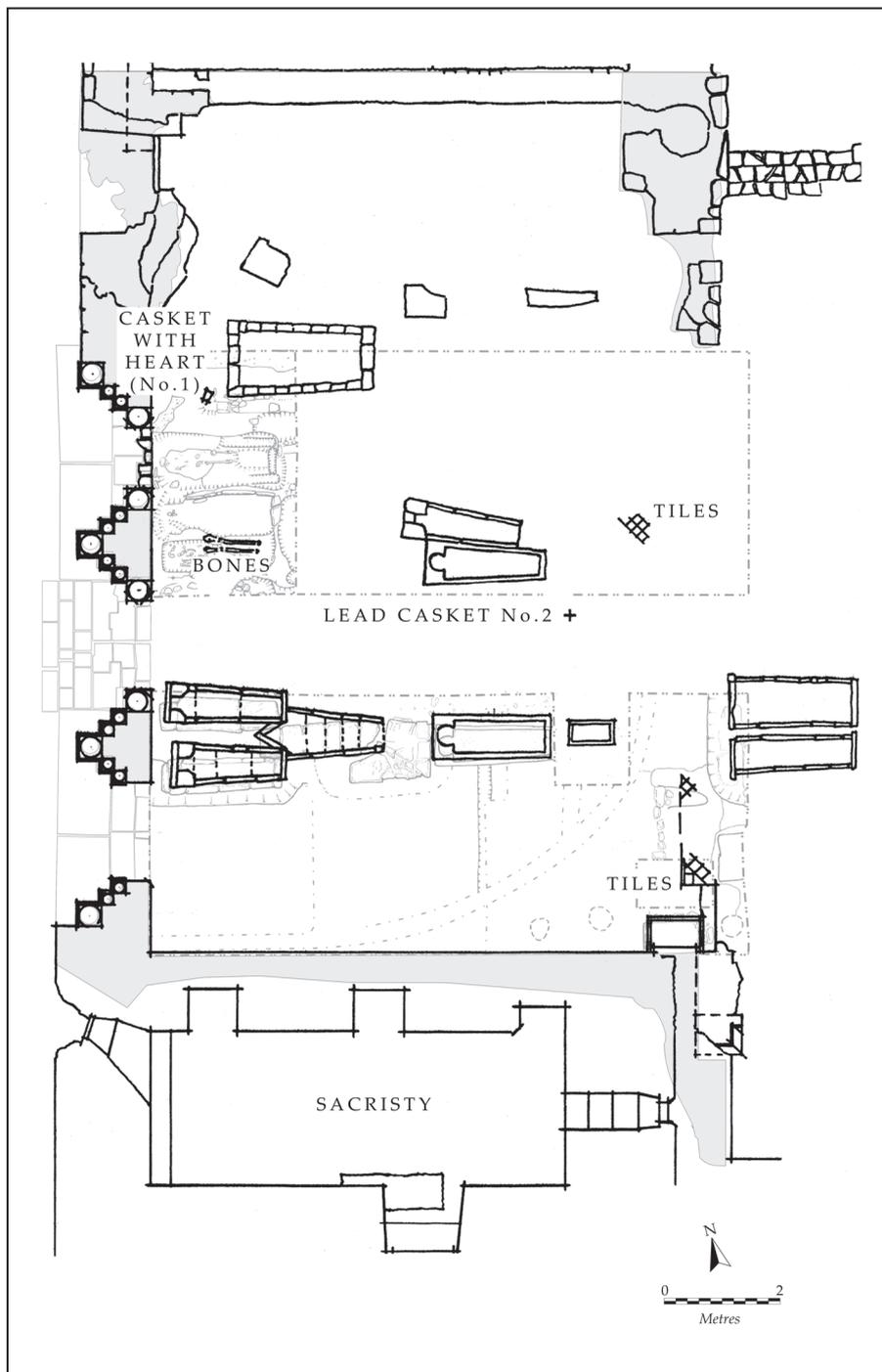
The early chapter house was within the width of the range, three bays wide and with the dormitory above. This form is unusual in Britain, but is found in Cistercian chapter houses in Burgundy in the 1130s, at Fountains in the 1140s and at the Irish houses of Mellifont and Dunbrody in the following decade (Fergusson & Harrison 1994, 221).

THE EXTENDED 13TH-CENTURY CHAPTER HOUSE

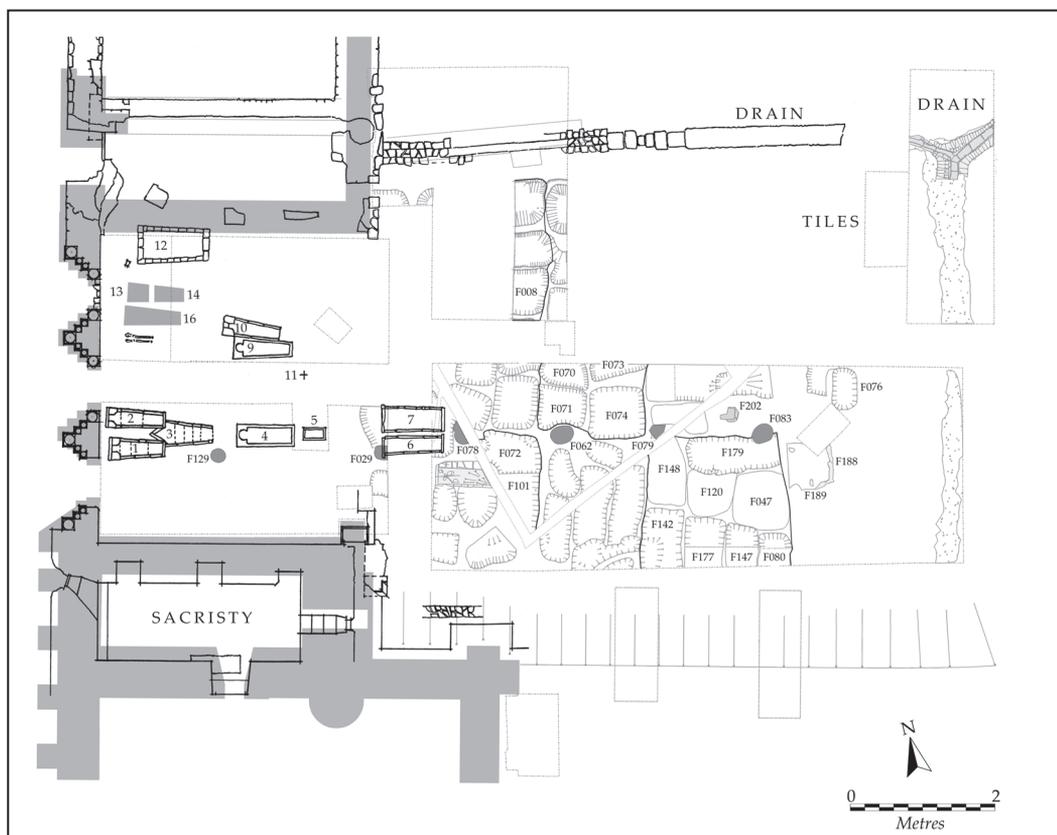
An extension of the chapter house is implied in an entry for 1240 in the Melrose Chronicle which refers to the removal of the remains of early abbots from their former position near the door to the more prestigious east end, implying that the building had been extended. It was not unusual for chapter houses to be extended to the east, allowing freedom of architectural expression beyond the confines of the east range.

The space of the former chapter was adapted as a vestibule for the new structure, a solution also adopted at Furness and at Kirkstall (Robinson 1998, 117 & 133). The mid-13th-century date of this extension is implied by the documented evidence, the date of the façade and the date of the surviving tiled pavement. The tomb of Abbot Waltheof remained in the newly created vestibule, possibly the large cist, no 12, on its north side (illus 5 and 6). This is set against the north wall of the chapter house, which would not have been possible in the 12th century when this area functioned as the chapter house, as wall benches would have occupied this space. The new arrangement would allow pilgrims to visit the tomb without entering the body of the chapter house. The growing cult of Waltheof would have attracted funds to the monastery and this separation of the tomb and chapter house may have been a major factor in the decision to extend the building.

The only surviving sections of masonry of the chapter house revealed in 1921 were the lower part of the west front and the western part of the south wall where it adjoins the sacristy. Part of the walling of the chapter house survived on its south side where it adjoins the sacristy as well as the footing for the triple opening of the west doorway. The latter consists of three entrance arches of four orders with water-holding bases of a mid-13th-century form. There are free-standing shafts placed against the leading faces and within the re-entrant angles of masonry set out to a stepped profile and the wider central arch also having sunk rolls on the salient angles (Fawcett & Oram, 184). Newspaper accounts of the excavation noted that the wall faces were decorated in imitation of ashlar, in red on a white ground, presumably on plaster. Two incised ('scratched') crosses noted on columns at the entrance were interpreted as consecration crosses (*Evening News*, 9 May 1921; *The Scotsman*, 10 May 1921). The archaeological evidence for the remainder of the structure is very fragmentary due to the thoroughness of the lost post-medieval robbing of the shallow wall foundation



ILLUS 5 W end of the chapter house: 1921 excavation plan in bold line over 1996 excavation plan



ILLUS 6 Plan of the extended Chapter House: the 1921 plan in heavy line together with the shallow pits excavated in 1996. 1996 grave numbers in light script

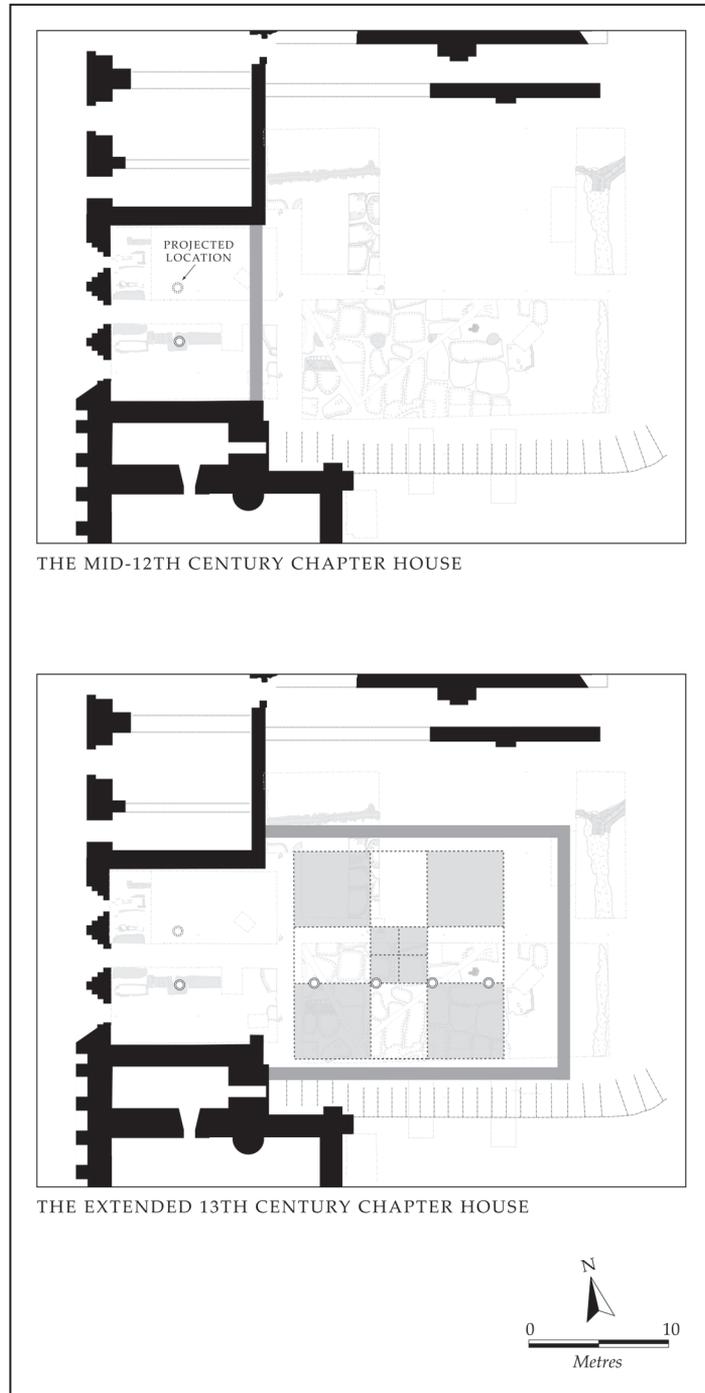
combined with subsequent activity on the site (illus 6). Little evidence of the north wall was found in the 1921 excavations but the scar of its western end survives, its position conforming to a symmetrical arrangement of the entrance arches, giving the chapter house an internal width of 10.36m (34 feet). Evidence for the actual walls of the extended chapter house has been removed by a combination of robbing and the effects of Ministry of Works clearance, however, the size of the building can be estimated from evidence of the floor and from surviving drains around its exterior. Patches of floor tiles survive, probably because they were covered by the boundary wall of the manse garden which stood on the line of

the east wall of the east range. These tiles were restored in situ after the 1921 excavations, one of which is situated 25.75m from the inner face of the west wall of the chapter house (illus 8). The tile is a two-colour type ascribed to the mid-13th century (Norton 1986, 250) suggesting that they were laid shortly after the extension of the building. It has a border on its eastern side and is likely to represent the eastern extremity of the tiled floor. Allowing about 1m for a stone bench and footpace, this would give an external length of the whole building of 26.75m or *c* 17m for the extension beyond the line of the east range. Drains surround the chapter house where it projects beyond the line of the east range.

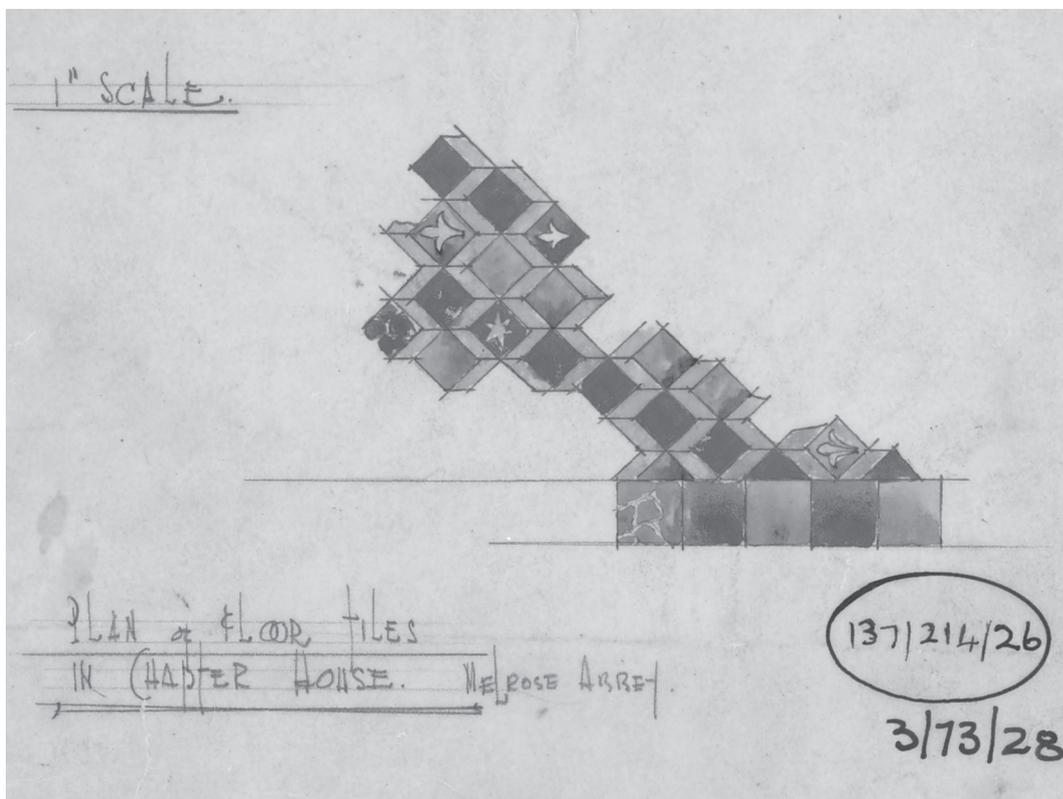
Excavated in 1921, these were stone-lined surface channels with capstones, designed to remove rainwater.

The position of the internal pillars of this phase of the chapter house can be identified from the survival of stone pads for their bases (F078, F062, F079, F083; illus 6 and 7). These were of mortared stonework of relatively light construction, approximately 3.4m apart (centre to centre). The pads were roughly rounded in plan, with a maximum width of 700–800mm. The first chapter house now formed the antechamber of a large, rectangular space roughly twice its size. The main area of this chamber comprised an extension north- and southwards to create a wide aisle around the perimeter of the room. The outer circuit was approximately 1.5 times wider north–south than the central area, as defined by the two rows of mortar pier bases.

The sub-floor of the chapter house extension consisted of re-deposited clay with gravel inclusions (F212). The foundations for the piers of the south arcade of this phase survived as crude pads of mortared stonework (F078, F062, F079, F083, F211) set within a very narrow cut, or within the floor itself, the tiles having been removed. These pads were of relatively



ILLUS 7 The two phases of the chapter house



ILLUS 8 Tiles at the east end of the extended chapter house, as planned in 1921 (Historic Scotland © Crown Copyright)

light construction, roughly rounded in plan, a maximum of 700–800mm in diameter and lay *c* 3.4m apart. The bases varied in depth from only 200mm to a maximum of 320mm, and were of markedly lighter construction than the foundations for the earlier piers. A rectangular pit (F076), measuring 1.5m by 0.8m and 0.4m deep, was centrally placed at the extreme east end of chapter house. This had considerable amounts of charcoal in its lower fill and, although human remains were found, it may be interpreted as a burial on a bed of charcoal or with charcoal in the coffin (cf Gilchrist & Sloan 2005, 120–3). It is sited on the approximate location of the abbot's seat of the extended chapter house and in such a prominent position could have held the translated remains of the earlier abbots.

The interior of the extended chapter house is further indicated by a complex series of shallow pits cut into the clay sub-floor of the extended part of the building. In plan, these pits respected each other, and their fills were similar, comprised of light rubble, floor tiles and mortar. The fill is interpreted as a compacted aggregate, suitable for tiled floors. The amount of tile within these features was considerable; some 2086 floor tiles and fragments were retrieved during the 1996 excavations, representing a mere fraction of the total assemblage. This quantity suggests that it may be the result of a remaking of the floor incorporating fragments of an earlier one. The pattern of pits appears to represent a coherent plan, albeit with the absence of in situ tiles. The area delimited by these features was square in

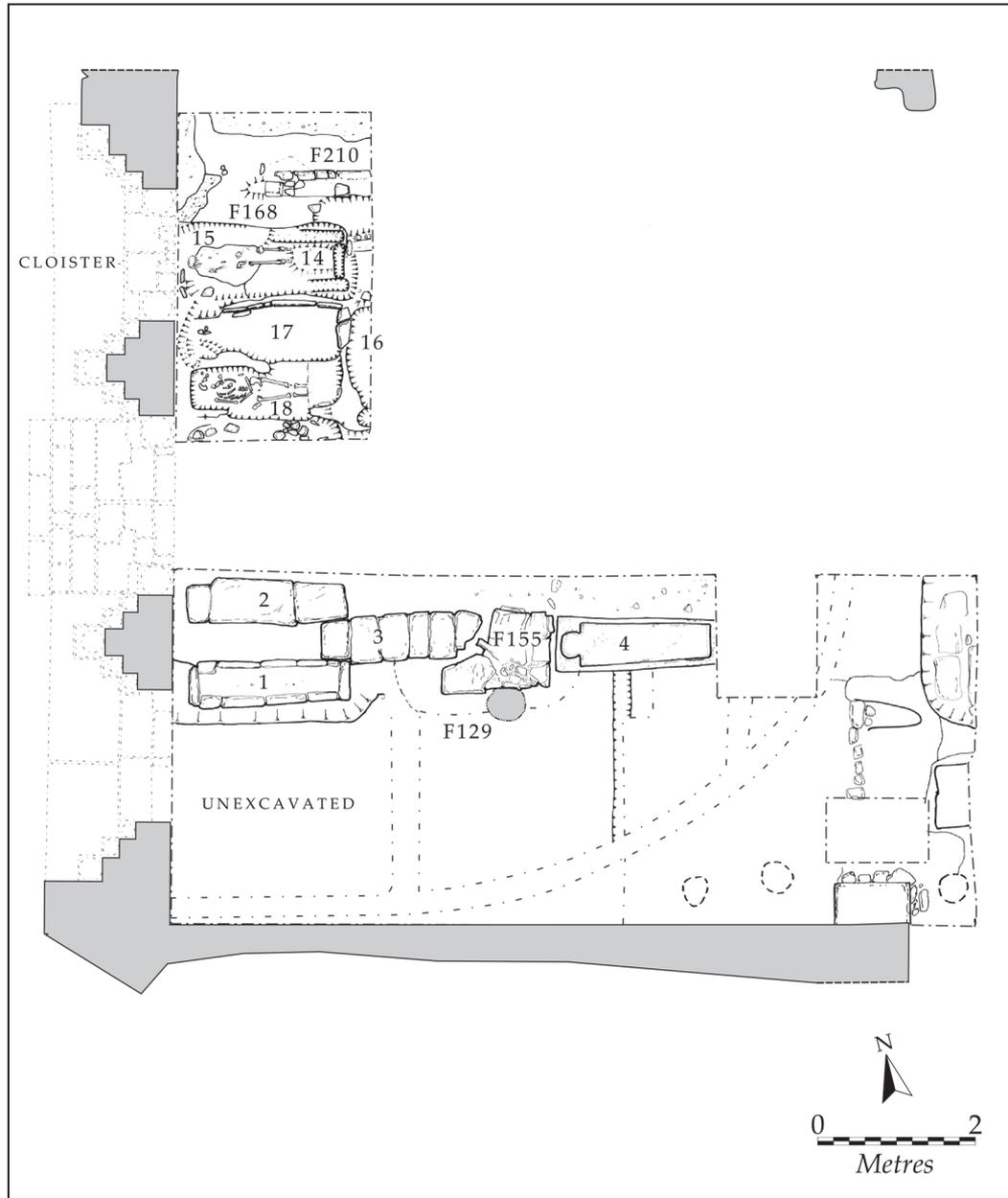
plan, measuring 14.6×14.6m (48×48 feet). The centre of the 48-foot square corresponds with the junction of four straight-sided pits (F070, F071, F073 & F074). These features apparently cover an area 3.65×3.65m (12×12 feet), the same distance as that between pier bases F078, F062, F079 and F083. The floor, as defined by the shallow pits and the pier bases, appears to conform to a 12-foot grid, centred on a square, itself divided into four quarters. There is further evidence for the pattern within the tiled floor – a block of features, lying to the south-east of the central square, defined on the west by F148 and F142 and to the north by F179. This group of pits covered an area 5.48×5.48m (18×18 feet). Two further similar blocks may be defined by pits F072 and F101 to the south-west of the central square and F008 to the north-west. When all these elements are combined, a cruciform ground plan is revealed, centred on a 12-foot square precisely over the centre of the 48-foot grid. All the pits appear to have been backfilled and levelled up, but the 48-foot square is seen at this stage as being integral to the extended chapter house.

The combined effects of war, and the impetus to redraft the abbey complex with a considerably reduced community and a still more elaborate church, affected the chapter house area dramatically. Excavations on the south side of the extended chapter house site revealed clear evidence of how a low terrace was laid against the footings of the early church, as seen in masonry at the base of the north transept. This terrace was raised by a re-deposited dump of mixed debris (including floor tile fragments, significantly), which was associated with the upper rebuilt sections of the post-1385 north transept (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 90). However, this entire area was complicated by the presence of the south edge of the MoW excavation trench, which sought to excavate along almost the same line as these monastic terraces. Unfortunately this disturbed much of the crucial interface between the drain to the south of the extended chapter house and the rebuilding works as

defined by the upper terrace. During the 1997 season of excavation, evidence was found to show that the rebuilding of the north transept overlay the line of this drain. The upper terrace was found to comprise several interleaved layers of re-deposited orange-brown sandy silt (F8003, F8022). The former was almost 500mm thick, and was revetted by a pitched stone alignment (F8014). F8003 sealed F8022, which was up to 300mm thick and of similar composition. The stone revetment was supported by a mixed clay dump (F8015) and sat in an obvious construction cut (F8026). The south drain, as revealed in trenches 8 and 9, comprised pitched side slabs (F8028, F8033) with a slabbed base (F8032) within a construction cut (F8034), and capped by large flat stones (F8029). The internal area for this drain was 650mm wide and 600mm deep. The upper terrace was found to comprise several interleaved layers of re-deposited orange-brown sandy silt up to 0.5m thick. This was revetted by a crude alignment of pitched stones set within a construction cut. The south drain also lay in a construction cut and comprised pitched side slabs with a slabbed base, capped by large flat stones. The internal area for this drain was 0.65m wide and was 0.6m deep.

THE BURIALS

The burials in the chapter house display a remarkably wide diversity of burial practices for such a small sample, including stone coffins, cists, lead canisters, translated bodies and a possible burial on a bed of charcoal. Much of the interest during the 1921 excavation concentrated on the burials rather than the structure of the chapter house. Notes by Richardson on the burials survive in the Ministry of Works files (NAS MW1/335). Details are quoted in the catalogue below where his numbering of the burials is given a 1921 prefix. The full extent of the early excavation is unknown; a plan of 20 January 1921 shows the limit of excavation at approximately 16.5m east of the inner face of



ILLUS 9 Location of burials in the east end of the chapter house

the west door of the chapter house. Surviving photographs show only the western end of the chapter house cleared to a consistent level; only selected areas may have been chosen for

excavation further to the east, possibly where stonework was revealed after probing. Partial excavation of the west end of the chapter house in 1996–7 revealed further burials (illus 9).

There is, therefore, no consistent plan of the burials across the whole chapter house area, so only limited comments can be made about their comparative distribution. The separation of grave types and their chronology within the successive chapter house ground plans has proved difficult, due in part to the disturbance of the 1921 excavations, but also to the fact the 13th-century chapter house merely extended the primary area to the east. Consequently, only in a few instances could a stratigraphic hierarchy be discerned. The best-preserved burials uncovered in the 1921 excavations were along the lines of the east–west arcades and included both cists and stone coffins. One group of burials was noted extending from the west wall on the line of the south arcade (NAS MW1/335):

- 1 Cist of roughly dressed freestone, with capstones. A head niche was formed with chamfered stones ('the shoulders and sides of the head formed of cube stones chamfered at the neck'). 1921 no 2.
- 2 Cist of roughly dressed freestone, with capstones. A head niche with chamfered stones. 1921 no 3.
- 3 Another cist burial (no 3; illus 10) lay immediately to the east of the first two; its head was triangular in plan being formed of two slabs. The joints between stones, both the sides of the cist and between the capstones, were sealed with mortar. The skeleton was noted as being well preserved but it was not excavated. This cist lay west of the pier footing (F155) which it cut.
- 4 A much damaged stone coffin of white sandstone with a central drain hole (1921 no 1). The burial, which was identified as that of a female, showed signs of disturbance. A single iron nail was found with the burial. This coffin was immediately east of the pier footing (F155).
- 5 A small stone coffin (1921 no 8) lay 0.3m to the east of Grave 4. This was described by the excavators in 1921 as 'a small dugout stone coffin 2' 6" (0.76m) long by 1' 2" (0.35m) wide'. It was not excavated in 1996–7 as it now lies under an area of medieval tile.
- 6 Two further cist burials lying alongside each other. These were outside the body of the east range and so presumably related to the second phase of the chapter house. Grave 6, the northernmost cist of this pair (1921 no 9; illus 6 and 11) had seven capstones sealed with mortar. It had an internal length of 1.92m and tapered slightly from a width of 0.67m at its head to 0.57m at the foot. The sides were of slabs and 'the lip was brought to an equal level by means of red roof tiles'. Photographs show that the slab at the head of the cist was about 0.05m higher than the other slabs, possibly forming a grave marker. The extended burial, 'evidently that of a young person', was in a good state of preservation. Wooden coffins were noted in 1921 both in this and the adjacent burial (no 10): 'fragments of a wood and nails were still existing in their relative positions'.
- 7 The adjacent cist (1921 no 10; illus 6 and 12) was of red sandstone with five capstones sealed with mortar at their joints. The cist had an internal length of 2m in length. Remains of a coffin were noted. The burial was that of a well-grown adult but it was heaped in the centre of the cist and the body appeared to have been dismembered not long after death. There was a hack mark on the lower end of the left femur as 'the head also appeared to have been off at the top of the cervical vertebrae as the axis and atlas were lying under it. The vertebral column had again been severed at the base of the dorsal vertebrae'.
- 8 Cist of sandstone with a disturbed, disarticulated skeleton, to the south-east of Grave 7.
- 9 The 1921 excavations uncovered two further burials lying next to each other on the presumed line of the northern arcade of the chapter house. The southernmost



ILLUS 10 Grave 3 (Historic Scotland © Crown Copyright)

of the pair (1921 no 5) was a stone coffin, approximately 2m in length and with an internal space including the head recess 1.83m long. There was no form of grave cover present. The coffin was filled with red clay which was removed, but no evidence of human remains was found.

- 10 A cist (1921 no 6) was placed against the north side of stone coffin no 9 and a little further west. Its head was formed by cubical stones rounded on the interior. As with the adjacent coffin, it lacked a cover and was filled with red clay. Also no evidence of human remains was found when excavated in 1921.
- 11 A cylindrical lead canister (1921 lead casket no 2; illus 13; Historic Scotland accession no MEL 360) was recovered in 1921 in the central aisle of the chapter house,

approximately 0.8m south/west of the east end of the stone coffin no 9. This was partially covered by a roughly circular stone disc, which was described as forming the seating for the tiled floor.

The canister is made of 350mm thick lead sheeting. It is 380mm in height and has a diameter of 330mm. The body has a soldered vertical joint and the top c 80mm is made with a separate sheet, indicating reuse of previous vessels. The body would have been formed using a cylindrical wooden former (Crummy 2004, 134). The wall of the vessel is distorted; the upper part, when described in 1921, was said to be 'depressed inwards' and its present shape may be the result of restoration. The rim is created by folding over the top of the vessel. The base is



ILLUS 11 Grave 6 (Historic Scotland © Crown Copyright)



ILLUS 12 Grave 7, looking east (Historic Scotland © Crown Copyright)

slightly concave and, though now loose and held only by its own weight, was soldered to the interior of the wall. Records from 1921 indicate that it had an 'independent' lid that 'overlapped' the rim (NAS MW1/335), but this no longer survives.

The casket, on examination in 1921, contained 'about 6" (150mm) of "debris" that included a few fragments of human bone and two teeth' (NAS MW1/335). These do not survive.

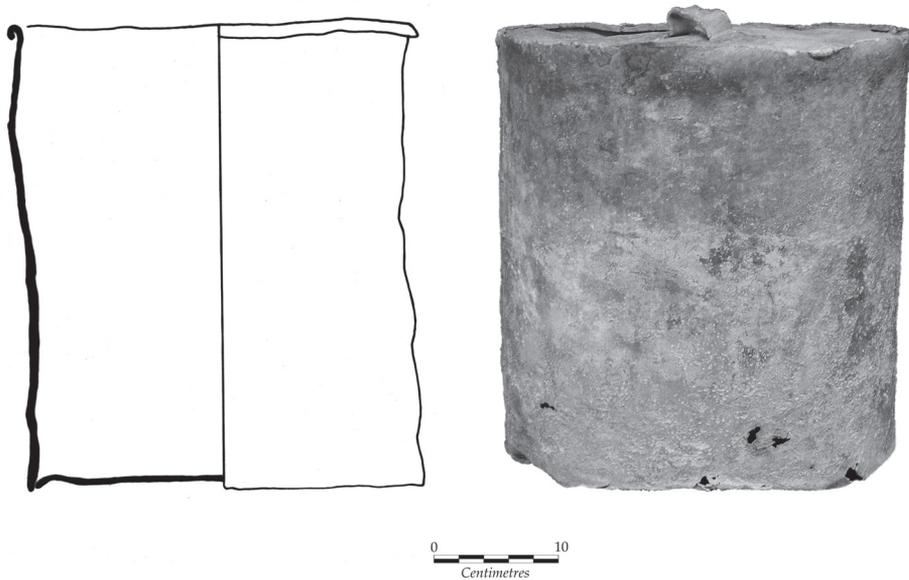
Similar lead canisters have been associated with coin hoards (Crummy 2004, 134–40). A parallel in a burial context is the unpublished canister from Sweetheart Abbey (Historic Scotland accession no MEL361). It has a height of 290mm and a diameter of 250mm. The rim is folded inwards to form a seal for

a flat lid with a simple strap handle. No base survives. Sweetheart Abbey takes its popular name from the heart burial there of John Balliol in 1289.

- 12 On the north side of the chapter house, 1.3m from the doorway and probably set against the north wall, was a cist constructed of clay-bonded sandstone, uncovered in 1921 and partially excavated in 1996–7. This had an internal length of 2m (6' 8") and a width of 0.85m (2' 10") at its head tapering slightly to 0.65m (2' 2"). There was no record of any burial.
- 13 Casket with a heart burial (illus 14), found in 1921 close to the north-west corner of the chapter house, to the south-west corner of the large cist (no 12). It was reported that the casket 'looked as if it had just been dropped in' (NAS MW1/1086/186). It lay about 0.53m below the level of the tiled floor and about 0.07m below the level of the top of the adjacent cist.

The casket was of conical form, made with sheet lead with a soldered join at the base, height 200mm, diameter of base 112mm, diameter of top 40mm. There was a strip attached to the top, 22mm in length and surviving to a height of 6mm, possibly the remains of a handle. A desiccated heart was found inside the container. Richardson noted fragments of iron 'in close proximity' as an iron-bound container for the lead casket. These consisted of two strips, 19mm (¾") wide, two circular discs 44mm (1¾") wide and two oval discs. Each disc had a small pin in its centre, on one of which were found traces of wood fibre. These fragments, which do not appear to have survived, were interpreted by Richardson as the bindings of a wooden box for the lead casket (NAS MW1/335).

In 1996 a more detailed investigation was made of a small area, measuring 2.5m east–west and 4m north–south, located just inside the northern



ILLUS 13 Lead canister, grave 11

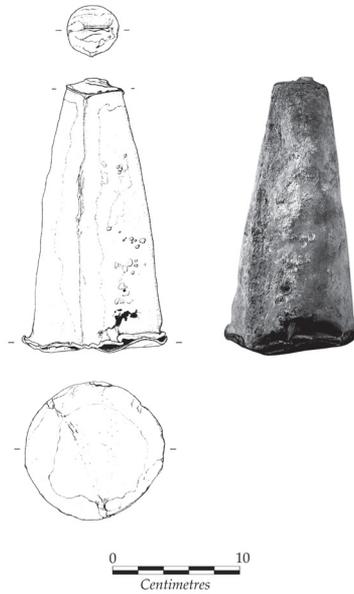
entrance of the chapter house. This revealed a complex series of burials where the skeletal remains of cist graves had been removed and the cists robbed of stone before other burials were inserted at a shallower depth in the same positions. The 1921 site plan marks two long bones in this area emphasising both the limited methods of excavation and recording burials in 1921 and the potential complexity of the rest of the chapter house site.

- 14 A former cist burial, now robbed of its orthostats and cut by Grave 15.
- 15 Extended inhumation, of poor preservation, inserted within position of robbed cist of Grave 14.
- 16 A cist of which only part of the north side and the eastern orthostat remain. A fragment of capstone remains mortared to the latter.
- 17 Inhumation, not fully excavated, inside position of former cist (Grave 16). Visible in 1921 when the long bones were drawn on the site plan.

- 18 Extended inhumation with hands crossed over pelvis, inserted into cut of former cist. A radius lying below the torso survives from another individual, indicating the disturbance of the earlier inhumation.

BURIALS AT THE EAST END

There has been very limited investigation of burials at the east end of the extended chapter house. The area seems to have been excavated only to near floor level in 1921 and no burials were recorded. In 1996, only the southern part of this area was investigated and potential grave cuts were planned but not excavated. It would be expected, both from the evidence of the Melrose Chronicle and from parallels elsewhere, that this area held the graves of the early abbots. Finds of fragments of tiles with inlaid lettering suggest that these abbatial burials may have been marked by inscriptions on tile tombs – a form rare in Britain (Norton 1994, 144–5). The 1996 excavation noted a possible grave (F202) at the



ILLUS 14 Heart canister

east end, immediately south of the central east–west axis, with another possible grave (F179) to the south of it. A grave (F077) near the western end of the chapter house extension was lined with narrow sandstone slabs resting on which were three courses of tiles.

One rectangular pit (F076) was centrally placed at the extreme east end of chapter house. This feature, which had a length of 1.5m, a width of 0.8m and a depth of 0.4m, had considerable amounts of charcoal in its lower fill. It may have been a burial on a bed of charcoal or with charcoal in the coffin, although no traces of human remains were noted.

There were at least four burials at the west end of the chapter house which appeared to have been dug through earlier burials. The secondary inhumations were sunk deeper, and were slightly narrower than their predecessors. The later graves are characterised by their different clay fill and simpler grave construction. The contrast in burial styles within different areas of the chapter house was apparent in Grave 3, which

was clearly dug against the now redundant pier base F155.

FORMS AND DISPOSITION OF BURIALS

The burials within the chapter house reflect both contemporary spirituality and status. They include both stone coffins and cists. An article in *The Times* of 10 May 1921 on ‘the supposed heart of Robert the Bruce’ noted this variation in burials, reporting that

So far, ten coffins belonging to four different types of construction have been discovered. Complete human skeletons were found in eight of the coffins. There was evidence in two cases of wooden coffins having been enclosed within the stone burial grave.

While stone coffins were a much more expensive option and imply a high status, the reverse does not necessarily apply to the use of cists, as the choice of a simpler form of burial may have been an expression of humility on the part of a particular abbot. The dating of the graves is problematic as many were not permanent. As stated above, the bodies of the other early abbots were moved from the west end of the chapter house to the east, thereafter disregarding the humility espoused by Waltheof and conforming to normal practice.

The stone coffins have head recesses that are shaped with a chamfer or simply rounded. Little work has been done on the typology of such coffins but these conform to 13th-/14th-century type in the development sequence noted in the chapter house of Lincoln cathedral (Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 148). These would be items of great expense and thus are likely to be for high-status burials. One stone coffin (no 5) is of a small size, only 0.76m long. It is unshaped inside and while it may have been intended for an infant, it is also possible that it was for a heart burial. A small coffin with two heart-shaped cavities, for the heart and viscera, was found at the Cistercian abbey of Beaulieu (Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 159).

Cist burials have a wide chronology in northern Britain from prehistoric into medieval times. Some have a form with shaped head niches that echo that of the stone coffins. Cists with internal stones forming head niches were used for the burials in the chapter house at Jedburgh Abbey (Lewis & Ewart 1995, 118–21). One cist (no 6) appeared to have a headstone that may have projected above the level of the capstones. The capstones of the cists may have formed part of the floor rather than being buried as in one cist they were carefully levelled with tiles.

The large cist (no 12) on the north side of the chapter house is unusual both in its size and the enormity of its construction. It appears to lie partly behind the line of the north wall of the extended chapter house and thus may have been a burial chamber in front of a tomb recess. It is likely that it was covered by some form of tomb chest, possibly that of Abbot Waltheof. As the tomb protrudes in front of the wall line it would not be possible to have stone benching at this point, so the arrangement would appear to date from the extended chapter house when this area is thought to have been used as a vestibule.

Melrose is unusual in the number of lead containers used for the burial of body parts. Three lead caskets were found in the area of the east range: two of these from the chapter house and one from the reredorter drain. One conical casket (no 12; illus 6 and 14), which proved to contain an embalmed heart, was discovered in 1921 near the north entrance of the chapter house, adjacent to the south-west corner of a large cist. A large cylindrical canister (no 11; illus 6 and 13) was found in a central position in the Chapter House, 7m east of the entrance. It has been identified as a container for a head burial on the basis of two teeth having been found inside it. These, however, may be intrusive, as the container was found not completely sealed; it is probable that it also served as the outer container for a body part or visceral burial but probably not a head. Similar examples of lead containers have been found at Sweetheart Abbey (Historic Scotland accession no MEL 361) and St Pancras's Priory,

Lewes and Leybourne, Kent (Gilchrist & Sloane 2005, 159; Lower 1846, 351).

Another lead container found in the reredorter drain, some 12m north of the chapter house, was of similar form to that containing the heart, although in this case empty (located on a survey plan of 20 January 1921, HS plan 137/214/63). It is uncertain if it was used for burial purposes.

One grave (no 7; illus 12) had a burial which appeared to the excavators to have been dismembered and placed in a bundle. It may be an example of burial after excarnation, the removal of the flesh from the body, a process usually associated with the transport of the corpse over some distance. The skeletal remains of Babenberg Duke Frederick I, who died in 1198 while on crusade, were transported in a tightly packed bundle and buried in the centre of a stone coffin in the chapter house of the Cistercian Heiligenkreuz monastery (Weiss-Krejci 2001, 772–4). There are a number of British examples of similar burials bundled into containers which would seem to be associated with translation or reburial (Gilchrist & Sloan 2005, 116). For example, a burial in the choir at Rushen Abbey, Isle of Man, consisted of a bundle with the remains of three individuals who had been placed in the centre of a long cist (Butler 1988, 74 & pl XIB). At St Oswald's Priory, Gloucester, the remains of an adult were found neatly packed into a small wooden box (Heighway & Bryant 1999, 205–6, fig 78).

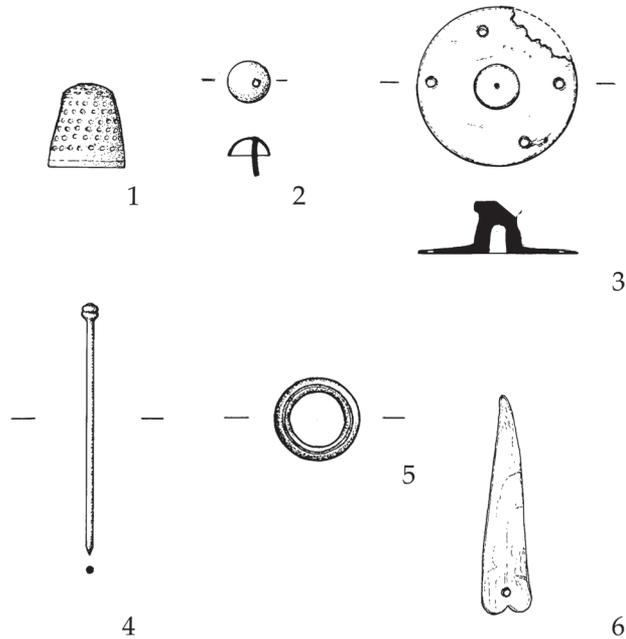
THE FINDS

The report only deals with the medieval material, up to the 16th century, from the working life of the abbey. A small amount of clay pipes, bottle glass and modern metal fittings were also found, spanning the 17th to 20th centuries.

The excavation area has been disturbed by gardening, drainage and the Ministry of Works excavations in the 1920s. It is unclear to what extent the finds gathered are merely

those missed or thrown back from those excavations. The majority of finds came from the upper levels (F001 & F002). Many of the finds from the old excavations are on display at Melrose Abbey in the site museum, with others in storage. These form a useful base of reference.

The finds have been divided into two sections: first, Small Finds, including any portable metal objects, pottery, glass ware, stone and bone objects; second, Structural Remains, including window glass, metalwork, stone and ceramic building materials, including floor tiles.



SMALL FINDS

Copper Alloy (illus 15)

The thimble (no 1), made of thin sheet with small holes is meant for light work, fine clothes or embroidery. The spiral pattern of holes is typical of the 16th century (Holmes 1991, 2). Mounts 2

and 3 may be from books or pieces of furniture; no 3 is in good condition and is possibly modern, but four very similar items recovered in the 1920s excavations, along with hasps and various other fittings, were identified as book mounts. Nos 4–10 may be lost dress accessories but, given the context, may have originally related to burials. Shrouds could be fastened either using pins or laces threaded through holes reinforced with metal eyelets. Lace ends of 13th- and 14th-century date are unusual; the majority of Scottish examples are 15th and 16th century. A few are known from 14th-century grave fills at St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh (Franklin & Collard 2006, 35), and a large group from Whithorn were

ILLUS 15 Copper alloy and lead finds

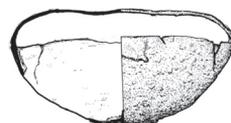
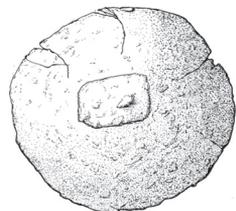


associated with graves of the second half of the 14th century (Nicholson 1997, 375). Whithorn also produced an eyelet identical to nos 9 and 10, though from a recent context (Nicholson 1997, 380:28.19). Wire pins with stamped heads such as no 5 are generally a later type. They are only found from the late 15th century at Sandal Castle, and this may therefore be a casual loss after the destruction of the building. However, pins with stuck or soldered heads such as no 4 can be found as early as the late 13th century (Caple 1983, 274).

The mounts (nos 2 and 3) could have decorated any high-status object such as a book or a shrine. Similar examples were found in the

excavations of the 1920s, although their exact provenances are unknown.

- 1 Thimble. Domed, light duty, made from ?stamped sheet, slightly dented. Hand-punched indentations over whole surface including crown, except last 5mm above rim, punched in a spiral pattern beginning at rim, forming roughly straight vertical lines. SF631, F002.
- 2 Circular domed stud with rivet. SF505, F001.
- 3 Cast disc with four rivet holes and a central projecting knob. SF761, F005.
- 4 Pin. Complete, with wound wire head, stuck or soldered to shaft. Length 34mm. SF681, F002.
- 5 Eyelet. Small ring made from sheet copper alloy, rolled and flattened. Diameter 11mm. SF508, F001.



7



ILLUS 16 Iron bowl

Lead

- 6 Weight. Long, flat triangular object with bilobed wide end with a small hole. Length 58mm. SF814, F013.

Several similar items were recovered from the Ministry of Works excavations. Being relatively light and flat they would not have made ideal loom weights or plumb bobs. They may have been used as fishing weights.

Iron

- 7 Small round bowl (illus 16) made of thin sheet with a rounded base and a short, blunt spike rising from the interior centre of the base. The spike is attached to a small patch; riveted to the exterior of the base possibly three small iron rivets about 6mm in diameter, visible on the exterior only. A basket handle made of thin strip appears to have been soldered to inside of the rim. This has been reconstructed from pieces found in the fill of the bowl. It has been a little flattened along the axis of the handle and it appears that downwards pressure has been put on the

handle, flattening it, pushing out the edges and ultimately breaking off the centre of the handle. Originally it would have been circular with a diameter of 110mm and a depth of about 37mm. The handle was probably curved and would have stood approximately the same distance above the rim as the depth of the bowl, forming a symmetrical profile. There is no sign that it ever had a lid. The fill of the bowl was the same as the surrounding soil deposit but for two lumps of charcoal approximately 35×15mm. There is also a charcoal deposit adhering to the interior of the base surrounding the spike. SF011, F060.

The bowl no 7 is one of the more enigmatic finds. No parallels could be found for such an object. The patch at the bottom may be an alteration to add the spike, though a spike could have been soldered onto the inside with less effort. It is probably therefore a repair, implying that this was the area most subject to stress, rather than, for example, the rim. Splits in the rim have not been

repaired and are probably post-depositional. The rounded base and two rivets mean that the bowl cannot stand upright on a solid flat surface.

The charcoal found on the interior suggests use as a small brazier, possibly for wood soaked in incense. However, medieval censers were decorative objects, universally of copper alloy or even more precious metal, with decorative open-work lids and were hung from holed lugs around the rim. The fixed, rather than pivoted, handle of the iron bowl makes it impractical as a hanging bowl for candles or for any kind of burning when chains attached to lugs at the rim would have served the purpose much better. A possible use is as an internal lining bowl for a censer. This would account for the thinness of the metal, as it would not have had to support its own weight. The iron would protect the precious metal of the censer from direct contact with burning material and the handle would have served to lift the bowl out for cleaning.

Blades from a whittle tang knife, a scale tang knife and a mason's chisel are all from

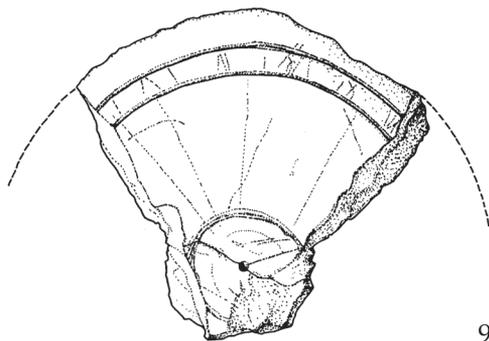
the topsoil and are thus of uncertain age. However, scale tang knives become common during the early 15th century. The whittle tang knife is probably earlier (Cowgill et al 1987, 25). The condition of the chisel implies it is at least pre-19th century.

Bone objects (not illustrated)

- 8 Small linear object of antler/ivory with a crudely rounded shaft, broken at one end and a lump left at the other. Length 35mm, width 6mm. Possibly a rough out for a pin or writing stylus, broken during manufacture. SF760, F005.

Stone objects

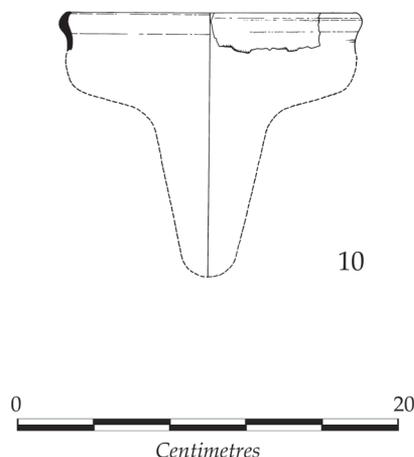
- 9 Incised slate, possibly part of a scratch dial (illus 17). A segment of a roughly-cut circular piece of slate with four incised concentric circles. At the centre is an enlarged compass point, 2mm in diameter. The smallest circle is very faintly drawn, diameter 18mm. The second has been repeatedly scored at least four times, diameter 28mm. The third and fourth are scored with more certainty and neatness, though some variation in the outer circle suggests it has been accentuated freehand, diameters 100mm and 114mm. There is also the suggestion of three radial lines, and some roughly scratched figures between the two outer circles, possibly Roman numerals. When complete, the whole disc would have had a diameter of 134mm. The back is rough and it may originally have been thicker than its 7mm. SF675, F002.



ILLUS 17 Incised slate dial

Vessel Glass

The vessel glass was largely from 18th-century and later bottles. There were a few earlier sherds but only one recognisable form, a rim from a hanging lamp (no 22). These saucer-shaped vessels, with a hollow spike for a base, were hung from the ceiling by chains secured to a ring through which the spike fitted (Egan 1998, 130). They have been found as early as the 13th



ILLUS 18 Glass lamp

century (Oakley 1979, 298). It was associated with pottery of 14th- to 15th-century date.

10 Lamp rim (illus 18). Clear, possibly pale green. SF003, F021.

Pottery

Of the 892 sherds of pottery, only 39 were medieval in date. There are no conjoining sherds and all are small and some abraded, suggesting re-deposition and only 14 sherds came from contexts containing no modern material whatsoever. All could fit into the years between the late 14th and the early 16th century. Similarly, late medieval pottery was found during excavations in the 1920s (Cruden 1952–3). There is no evidence for an early White Gritty industry, as found at Kelso Abbey and Jedburgh Abbey (Tabraham 1984; Haggarty & Will 1995). The local wares are mainly represented by reduced and oxidised sandy jugs and jars, probably dating to between the 14th and 16th centuries. Nine sherds of White Gritty Ware are possibly a little earlier and include part of a pipkin handle and a cooking pot rim.

Three imported vessels are represented, all from disturbed levels (F002). A Scarborough-type jug sherd, decorated with vertical applied

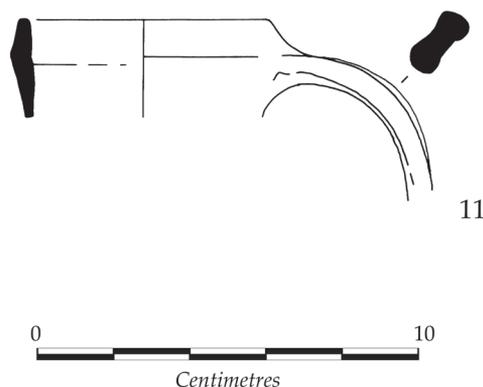
lines, dates to the 13th or 14th century. A small sherd from a Raeren/Aachen type stoneware vessel is probably 16th century. Lastly, there are three sherds of a small Beauvais mug or jug (no 23). Often decorated with medallions, these were popular in Britain in the late 15th and 16th centuries, particularly the early 16th century (Hurst et al 1986, 106).

11 Beauvais jug rim and handle (illus 19). Fine, sandy, off-white earthenware; bright apple-green glaze with darker mottles all over handle and exterior. SF1197, F002.

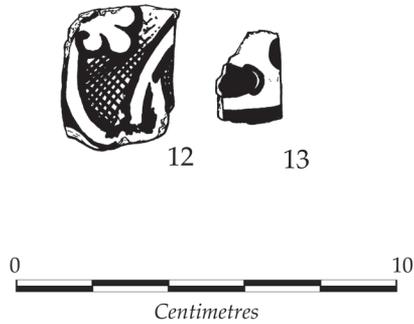
STRUCTURAL REMAINS

Window Glass

In 1996, 24 shards of medieval window glass were recovered. The sherds are now opaque and any original colour obscured, though there are traces of grisaille painting on four sherds. The reddish-brown paint now appears lighter than the glass under it but originally, when viewed against the light, the lines would have appeared black. One sherd has trefoil, curvilinear designs and cross-hatching; this is characteristic of early grisaille, similar to sherds found at Perth Carmelite Friary (Stones 1989, 151) and Jedburgh Abbey, the latter dated to the



ILLUS 19 Pottery



ILLUS 20 Painted glass

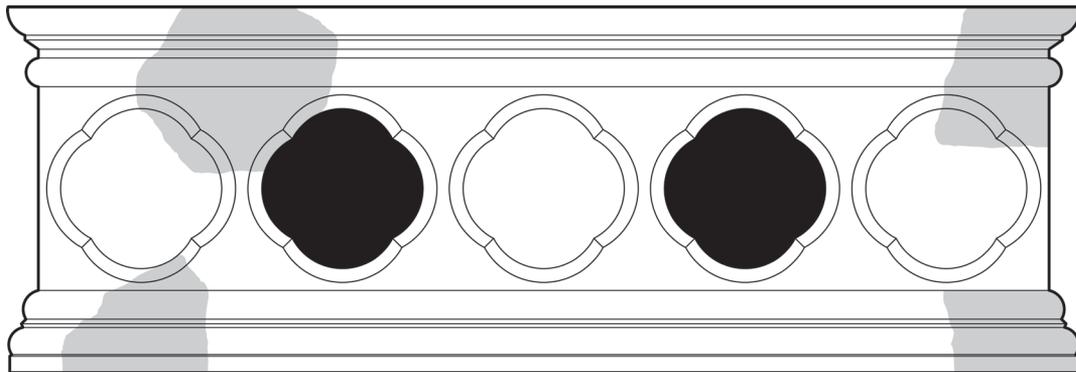
early to mid-13th century (Graves 1995, 112). There is no evidence for glass production in medieval Scotland, and white glass may have been imported from England (Graves 1995, 110). It is possible, however, that the glass may have been painted in Scotland. Graves draws stylistic parallels between the grisaille glass at Melrose, Jedburgh and Cambuskenneth Abbeys, Coldingham Priory and several sites in the North of England, including some stylistic similarity to Rievaulx Abbey.

12 Painted window sherd, trefoil, curvilinear and cross-hatching (illus 20). 42×33mm. SF007, F021.

13 Painted window sherd (illus 20). 27×20mm. SF017, F054.

Lead

Compared to ceramic and stone building material, lead must be particularly under-represented in proportion to the quantities used in the building, due to its value as scrap. Most of the lead consisted of strips and molten dribbles, some of which may be distorted window comes or repair patches from windows. Two large thick strips were possibly used as filler for fixing iron fittings into stone. Four pieces of lead sheeting were probably from roofing. There were nine short strips recognisable as lead window comes. Four of these were heavy weight with markedly lozenge-shaped flanges, characteristic of the medieval period (Egan 1998, 52), and are probably off-cuts or demolition scraps from the chapter house. The rest are thinner with flat flanges and probably relate to 15th- or 16th-century repairs to the church or other buildings.



ILLUS 21 Reconstruction of the shrine showing surviving fragments in darker tint

Iron

The iron structural finds included pintle hinge pivot and staple (not illustrated). Most of the 38 nails had flat round heads, 7mm to 20mm in diameter and varying from 42mm to 70mm in length. A handful had small square or rectangular heads. These were probably for general woodworking. Those with larger heads could have also had a decorative purpose, for example, for a door. One large nail with a shaft length of 100mm was possibly for structural timbers but the rest were for lighter work such as fittings and furniture, as would be expected from a building made largely of stone.

Plaster

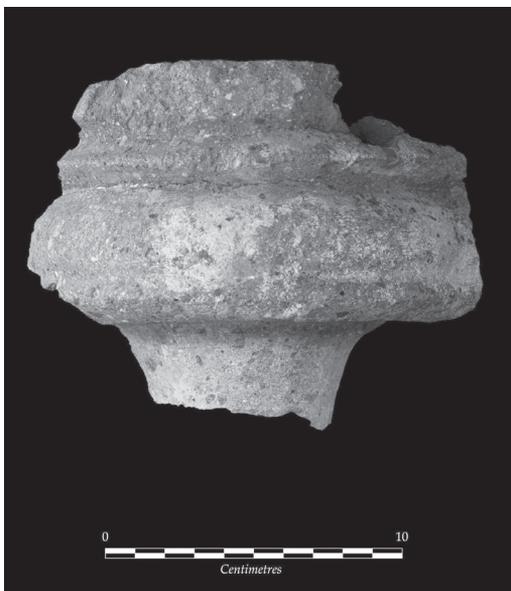
In 1996, 72 fragments of plaster were recovered, most painted white, although three pieces were painted all over respectively creamy brown, brown and black, and three other pieces had fragments of red designs or borders on white (not illustrated).

ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENTS

TOMB SHRINE

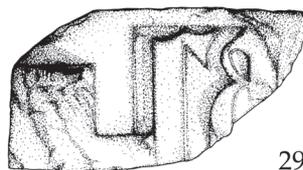
Seven fragments recovered from the Chapter House during the 1921 excavation were identified by Richardson as part of a tomb shrine of Waltheof (Wood & Richardson 1995; Fawcett 2004, 186–8) and mounted in a partial reconstruction in the site museum (illus 21). Five of the fragments are of a tomb chest, with quatrefoils, some of which are open. There is also a fragment of a capital and triplet shaft (illus 22). The stone is an agglomerate, polished on its visible faces; a type of stone that was used for the early buildings of the abbey (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 273–4).

The moulding consists of a double roll and fillet, and is of an early to mid-13th century date. One surviving fragment of the shrine has part of two quatrefoils, one open, suggesting an alternating pattern of open and closed quatrefoils



ILLUS 22 Fragment of capital, possibly part of the shrine of Waltheof

on the long face of the tomb. The open quatrefoils are chamfered on both their outer and inner faces. One upper wall section ends with a vertical face (now hidden in the reconstruction) indicating that the chest was constructed against a wall. There are grooves for metal clamps on the top faces of the wall, that on the side wall indicating



ILLUS 23 Sculptured stone with relief lettering

a joint at the top of the open quatrefoil. One basal fragment also includes part of the interior base of the shrine, extending 160mm in from the inner face of the tomb wall. While providing great stability, this is an extravagant use of stone. The present reconstruction includes three quatrefoils on its long face. This conveniently fitted into the available display case, but it is probable the tomb chest was longer and incorporated five quatrefoils, thus covering the length of the extended burial below (illus 22). There are traces of underpaint or gesso but there is no indication of a decorative scheme. The chest would be covered by a slab, of which no surviving fragments have been identified. There are also a fragment of a chalice capital and a fragment of a triplet shaft. It has been suggested that these formed part of the superstructure of the shrine, possibly supporting a gabled roof (Fawcett & Oram 2002, 187–8).

The form of tomb at Melrose is similar to others erected in connection with the veneration of saints in the late 12th and early 13th century. The open quatrefoils (foraminæ) would allow pilgrims access to the space immediately above the burial for a more intense spiritual experience. Nilson (1998, 45) has suggested that this type of tomb was used over the burials of those locally considered as saints but before official canonisation had been granted, when the body could be raised to an elevated shrine. Mid-13th-century illustrations of the tomb of St Edward the Confessor show pilgrims enjoying access through similar apertures in the shrine (Alexander & Binski 1987, 217).

The 128 pieces of dressed stone were recovered in 1996. These include a fragment of foliate decoration similar to that of the transept capitals (Fawcett & Oram 2004, 124) and a stone with relief lettering (no 29). There are also a few fragments of possible flagstones, including a corner of a grey marble floor tile.

29 Sculptured stone with relief lettering (illus 23). Length 160mm. SF1011, Unstratified.

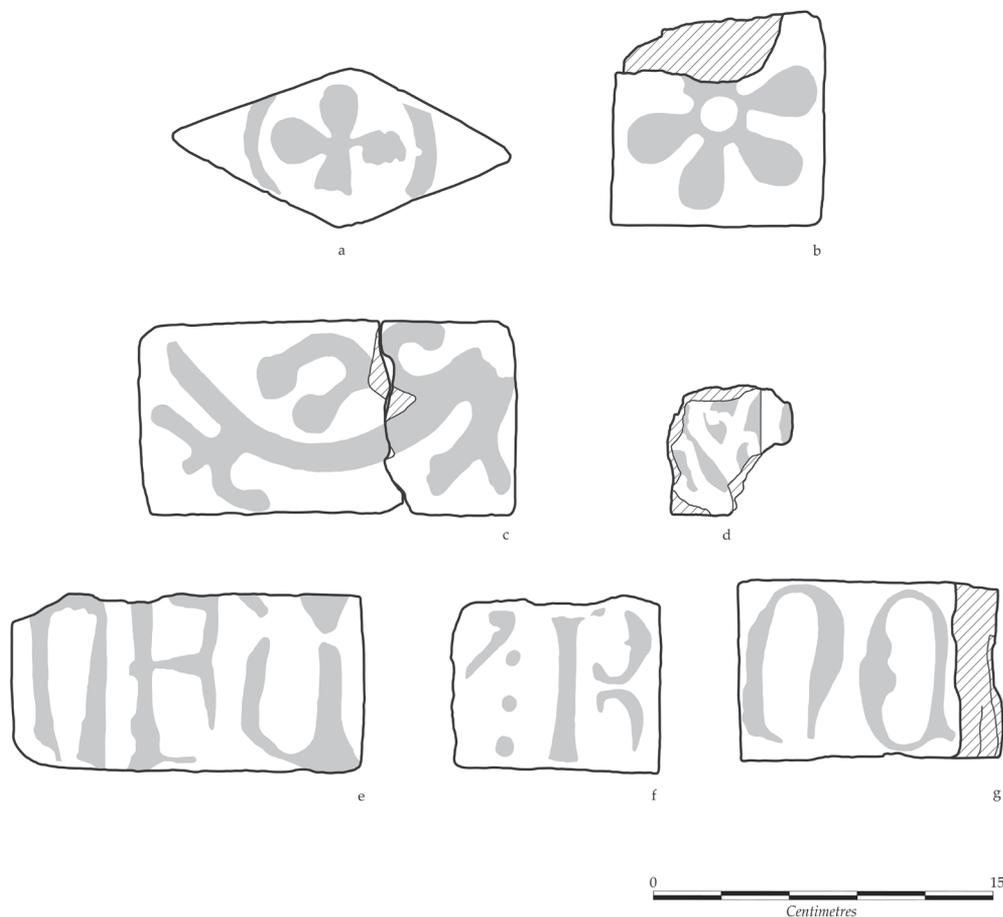
FLOOR TILES (ILLUS 24)

Julie Franklin

Excavations in 1996 and 1997 within the chapter house of Melrose Abbey produced 2086 pieces of floor tile, mainly of the mosaic type, greatly expanding the amount of floor tile previously recorded from the site and bringing the total to 3006. Selected tiles from the 1926 excavation of the chapter house were published by Richardson (1929, 293–7) and, more recently, Norton (1986 & 1994) has discussed their position both in Scotland and within Cistercian abbeys in general. The Melrose tiles are related to the northern series of mosaic floors that include the Cistercian abbeys of Byland, Fountains, Rievaulx, Meaux and Newbattle, the daughter house of Melrose, and also the Augustinian Guisborough and Thornton (Norton 1994, 141; Eames 1980, 80), the same tile shapes and designs appearing at many of these sites. Stylistically and technically speaking, Melrose sits at the edge of this group of northern abbeys. It is strongly linked to Newbattle with almost all the same shapes used, and also to Rievaulx and Byland, but there are a number of important differences which mark Melrose as unique.

The exact place of manufacture of the tiles is unknown. Richardson (1929, 293) refers to an 18th-century account of the parish of Melrose where the Rev Adam Mylne (Milne) records the place name of Tilehouse, ‘a little to the south of Darnick’, south-west of Melrose, ‘where they made the tile for the service of the monastery, and a great deal of it is sometimes found there finely glazed’. A few possible wasters are also found among the Melrose assemblage, with extremely convex tops or stacking scars in the glaze, implying the kiln site was nearby.

It is generally agreed that the tiles are somewhat amateurishly made (Richardson 1929, 293; Norton 1994, 145). They are extremely thick, typically around 50mm, sometimes as much as 60mm, which makes some of the smaller tiles thicker than they are wide. The ‘white’ clay used



ILLUS 24 Decorated tiles: a–b mosaic tiles, c–d vine scroll, e–g lettering

for inlaying is not white, but varies from cream to pale orange, making for a poor contrast. Designs are simple and sometimes badly executed, with stamp impressions sometimes too shallow or smudged. Nine different motifs appear on the square tiles, all simple, sometimes from badly cut stamps. There is a high proportion of decorated square tiles. About one-fifth of the identifiable shapes were squares, some decorated, mostly plain. These could be used on their own or as part of mosaic patterns. It is also the only floor to have patterned mosaic tiles as integral parts of the design. Three of the mosaic shapes,

diamonds, hexagons and small squares, are all routinely decorated, generally each with its own specific motif. Some rare inscribed tiles in the pits could originally have commemorated this burial (Norton 1994, 144).

The floor must date to the second half of the 13th century and it is unlikely to predate 1235, as this is the date of the earliest known two-colour tiles (Norton 1986). The tiles' origin has a lot of bearing on their date. If the Melrose tiles were indeed made by inexpert roof tilers, they probably had an existing floor to use as a guide. This model was almost certainly Newbattle as

the similarities are so pronounced, and there was probably also a floor of decorated square tiles at some nearby site, which has since been lost (Norton 1994, 146). If this is true, Melrose must post-date Newbattle, but there is unfortunately no exact date for the Newbattle floor either. If, as seems likely, the Newbattle tiles were imported from Yorkshire, they must post-date the floor of whichever abbey tilery supplied them. If this was Meaux, as Norton believes, the floor there was laid between 1249 and 1269, most likely by 1253 (Norton 1994, 144). However, Byland and Rievaulx are reckoned to be earlier in the sequence (Eames 1980, 80). The presence of so many decorated tiles and the prominence of square tiles at Melrose seem to point to a date late in the series. Norton places the tiles stylistically in the third quarter of the 13th century and states that if they are copied from Newbattle then this must put them in the later 13th century (Norton 1994, 145).

Tile classification and description

All the tiles (including those still in situ within the chapter house but to date excluding those on display in the site museum) were recorded. As well as the tiles being individually numbered and catalogued, each tile was classified by shape. A total of 52 different shapes were identified (see Table 1). Where possible the equivalent British Museum mosaic shape number was also given (Eames 1980, S1-S328). However, the frequency of tile shapes identified will not necessarily match the frequency present, as some shapes are easier to recognise than others. Small shapes are more likely to survive intact and some more distinctive shapes are identifiable from smaller fragments. Each of the 12 decorative motifs has also been classified (see Table 2). The five pieces of in situ flooring have been numbered and described (see Table 3).

Decoration

The motifs are all simple (see Table 2). Analogies from other sites are generally more

complex variations. The motifs for the squares and those for the mosaic tiles are separate, but for one, the star (B), which appears on both squares (see Table 1, M03) and on one hexagon (M21). None of the square motifs appears on more than nine tiles but much decoration has been lost through wear. Motifs are larger on larger tiles and therefore would have been made with different stamps, but only in pattern F does the design differ slightly between the two. As a general rule of thumb, designs on large squares (M01) are light on a dark ground and those on smaller squares (M03) are dark on light. Patterns on mosaic tiles are all specific to the shape and tend to be dark on a light ground, though not always. The different colours of these tiles might indicate different uses.

Another group of decorated tiles, of seven different shapes, is represented only by examples in the site museum. They are different to the bulk of the tiles in that the body of the clay is light cream-coloured inlaid in red, and the quality of the decoration is outstanding. The curling fronds are finer and more intricately drawn than the motifs on the red-bodied tiles (Richardson fig 9.4 and Pl.IV.18 for illustrated examples). Since none were found during the 1996–7 excavations, it cannot be certain they were from the chapter house. Norton dates them to the late 13th century (Norton 1994, 146).

As well as these, there are a number of long rectangular tiles with a continuous vine scroll pattern (illus 24, c–d). These came in two sizes, of approximate widths 107mm and 70mm; none has complete lengths. They were presumably used as borders.

The last type of inlaid tile is a group of seven tiles bearing the letters ‘IA-’, ‘-NO-’ and ‘:B’ (illus 24, e–g). All are rectangular, of approximate width 67mm. The recently excavated examples were found, along with large concentrations of other tile, in two adjacent pits at the east end of the extended chapter house. Given their location, it is likely that they formed part of one or more commemorative tile tombs for abbots (Norton 1994, 144–5).

TABLE 1
Classification of tile shapes

Type no.	BM* no. (if applicable)	Description	Suggested use (and evidence for use, if available)	Tiles retrieved in 96/97	Tiles in situ	Total known to exist**	Size (mm)
M01		Square	Possible panel, diagonally (in situ 1) Possible panel, diagonally (in situ 3) Corner, straight (in situ 3) Border, straight (in situ 4)	9	13	42	126 × 127
M02		Square		3	0	9	107 × 107
M03		Square	Panel, diagonally (in situ 2a) Border, diagonally (in situ 2b) Panel, diagonally with M09 (in situ 4)	139	70	304	93 × 93
M04	S5	Square	Possible panel (Richardson 1929, Pl III.1, after Newbattle) Possible roundel (Commandator's House)	19	0	35	56 × 57
M05	S7	Square		0	0	1	45 × 45
M06	S11	Rectangle	Panel (in situ 2b)	21	28	57	56 × 90
M07		Rectangle		0	0	3	50 × 80
M08***		Narrow Rectangle (no obvious curve)	Possible roundel	2	0	14	41 × 102
M09	S22	Parallelogram	Panel (in situ 4)	104	38	173	83 × 40
M10	S35	Diamond	Possible panel (Richardson 1929, Pl III.1, after Newbattle) Possible border with M35 (Commandator's House) Possible roundel (Commandator's House)	35	0	56	68 × 142
M11		Right Angled Triangle (45°)	Corner edge for M01 (in situ 3)	7	2	18	121 (side)
M12	S46	Right Angled Triangle (45°)	Border edge for M03 (in situ 2b)	45	13	158	90 (side)

Type no.	BM* no. (if applicable)	Description	Suggested use (and evidence for use, if available)	Tiles retrieved in 96/97	Tiles in situ	Total known to exist**	Size (mm)
M13	S48	Right Angled Triangle (45°)	Possible panel edge for M04 (after Newbattle, Richardson 1929, Fig. 6.3)	9	0	16	58 (side)
M14	S49	Right Angled Triangle (45°)		0	0	1	45 side
M15		Right Angled Triangle (30°)	Possible corner for M10 panel (after Newbattle)	1	0	2	44×72
M16		Right Angled Triangle (30°)	Panel edge (in situ 2b)	6	5	13	62×89
M17		Acute Isosceles Triangle	Edge for M10 panel (after Newbattle)	13	0	14	67×85
M18		Acute Isosceles Triangle	Possible panel (Richardson 1929, Pl.III.1, after Newbattle) Possible roundel (Commandator's House)	132	0	163	56×74
M19		Obtuse Isosceles Triangle	Edge for M10 panel (after Newbattle)	3	0	7	135×40
M20	S56	Equilateral Triangle	Panel (in situ 2b) Possible roundel (Commandator's House)	50	22	177	87×78
M21		Hexagon	Panel (in situ 2b)	13	9	24	57 (side)
M22		Part Hexagon	Panel edge (in situ 2b)	2	2	4	57 (side)
M23		Circle	Possible roundel	0	0	1	55 diam
M24		Semi-Circle		0	0	2	55 diam
M25		Leaf	Possible panel (Richardson 1929, Pl.III.2) Roundel (Commandator's House) Possible roundel (after Newbattle)	4	0	9	135×43
M26	S132	Petal	Edge/gap fill (in situ 3) Possible roundel (Richardson 1929, Pl.III.4 and Commandator's House)	15	2	22	42×104
M27		Squared Petal		0	0	11	

Type no.	BM* no. (if applicable)	Description	Suggested use (and evidence for use, if available)	Tiles retrieved in 96/97	Tiles in situ	Total known to exist**	Size (mm)
M28		Broad Petal	Possible roundel (after Newbattle)	0	0	1	
M29	S139	Tear Drop	Possible roundel (after Newbattle 2)	1	0	2	55×60
M30		Concave Triangle	Possible roundel (Commandator's House)	9	0	17	73×59
M31	S172	Concave Square	Possible panel	0	0	2	
M32	S215	Quadrilateral with two pointed sides, two concave	Possible panel	0	0	1	
M33	Possibly S211	Finial for curvilinear X-shaped tile, similar to motif F	Possible panel	0	0	4	
M34	S237	Bow tie shape with one concave, one convex edge	Roundel (after Newbattle and Commandator's House)	0	0	4	
M35		Bow Tie	Possible border with M10 (Richardson 1929, Fig 9.3)	1	0	4	28–95×146
M36***		Curved Rectangle	Possible roundel	3	0	5	27–57
M37		Broad trapezium with narrow end curving to a point	Roundel	1	0	1	
M38	Possibly S167	Narrow trapezium with narrow end curving to a point	Roundel (after Newbattle)	1	0	2	
M39		Hook	Use unknown	0	0	2	
M40		Square with two round cut outs	Use unknown	0	0	1	
M41	Possibly S280	Square corner with concave cut out, 190mm diameter	Possible roundel	0	0	5	

Type no.	BM* no. (if applicable)	Description	Suggested use (and evidence for use, if available)	Tiles retrieved in 96/97	Tiles in situ	Total known to exist**	Size (mm)
M42***		Straight sides with cut out, 90mm diameter	Possible roundel	0	0	4	
M43		Acute corner with concave cut out, 50mm diameter	Possible roundel	0	0	1	
M44		Square with concave cut out, 30mm diameter	Possible roundel	0	0	1	
M45		Wide Scroll	Possible border	2	0	6	107 wide
M46		Narrow Scroll	Possible border	12	0	19	70 wide
M47		Lettered	Possible tomb (Norton)	6	0	7	67 × 135
M48		Trapezium	Possible roundel	1	0	1	
M49		Trapezium	Possible roundel	0	0	1	
M50		Trapezium	Possible roundel	1	0	1	
M51		Parallelogram	Use unknown	1	0	1	
M52		Square	Possible border (after Newbattle, at Commendator's House)	1	0	1	65 × 66
–		Unidentifiable Fragments	–	1414	0	1576	
		Total		2086	204	3006	

* British Museum mosaic shape number.

** Includes tiles from sources other than the 1996/97 excavations and in situ tiles.

*** May compose of tiles cut from different templates, though of the same use.

Italics Group of pale bodied tiles with fine decoration, probably of different origin.

TABLE 2
Classification of decorative motifs

<i>Motif</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Tile Shapes</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Illustrated</i>
A	4-looped flower	M03		Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.11
B	6-pointed star	M03, M21	Only motif to appear on square and mosaic tiles	Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.9
C	6-petalled flower with central hole	M03		Illus 24b; Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.10
D	Fleur-de-lis	M03, M01		Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.6
E	Fleur-de-lis with ring	M03, M01	Part of 4-tile panel	Illus 24a; Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.1 & 2
F	Double backed C	M03, M01	Has extra cross bar on larger M01 tiles	Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.7 & 8
G	4 semi-circular rings	M03, M01, M12	Part of continuous pattern, with triangular edging tiles	Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.4
H	Diagonal lines and part rings at corners	M01	Part of continuous pattern	Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.3
I	Detached 6-petalled flower	M21		Richardson 1929, Fig.12
J	4-petalled flower with central hole	M04		Richardson 1929, Pl.III.1
K	Simple 4-petalled flower inside ring	M10		Richardson 1929, Pl.III.1
L	4-looped flower with central hole	M03		Richardson 1929, Pl.IV.12 (only known from illus)

With the exception of those with letters, the tiles can be divided into three groups according to their assumed or apparent use: panel, border and roundel. The square tiles have been included in this, the surviving area of squared tiling being counted as a panel. There is some cross-over – some shapes almost certainly had more than one use. The only definite guide are the pieces of in situ flooring, but ignoring the two smallest fragments, these give only three examples of panels and two of borders. Other evidence comes from analogies to Newbattle and the Yorkshire abbeys. Arrangements illustrated by Richardson

and those in the site museum at least show what is geometrically possible. The arrangements for each type for which there is reasonable evidence are detailed below.

Panels

Tiles from panels are generally the most numerous, being made up of two or three shapes continuously repeated. Lesser numbers of edging pieces are found, generally half shapes cut to give a straight edge to the panel. Of the two mosaic panels definitely known to have existed, in situ no 2b (M21 hexagons, M06 rectangles

TABLE 3
Details of in situ tiling

<i>In situ no.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Max dimensions (m)</i>	<i>Illustrated</i>
1	5 Large squares (M01) set diagonally	NS-0.37 EW-0.39	
2a	Squares (M03) set diagonally	NS-1.90 EW-0.57	Richardson 1929, Fig. 11
2b	Panel - Hexagons (M21), rectangles (M06) and triangles (M20), with edging (M16 & M22) Border – diagonal squares (M03) and triangles (M12)	Panel NS-0.40, EW-0.94 Border-NS-0.56, EW-0.13	Richardson 1929, Fig. 12
3	2 large squares (M01) set diagonally with triangles (M11) and a straight set large square used for cornering, ‘petals’ (M26) used probably as gap fill	NS-0.34 EW-0.32	
4	Panel – Squares (M03) set diagonally with parallelograms (M09) and edged with triangles (M12), Border – Large straight set squares (M01)	Panel-NS-1.12, EW-0.63 Border-NS-0.63, EW 0.12	Illus 8; Richardson 1929, Fig. 10

and M20 triangles) and in situ no 4 (M03 squares and M09 parallelograms), there are enough tiles, including these in situ pieces to reconstruct panels of 1.1m² and 1.3m² respectively. These are probably not representative of a whole panel. Eames found that such panels tend to be of the order of 2 × 2m (therefore 4m²) (Eames 1980, 78). There were also simple panels of squares (M03) set diagonally (in situ no 2a) and also possibly of large squares (M01), though these are not as common, and were certainly used as borders.

Richardson suggests two other panels (Richardson 1929, Pl.III.1 – M10 diamonds, M18 triangles and M04 small squares; Pl.III.2 – M25 leaves and M30 concave triangles). There are enough tiles to accept the first, though diamond (M10) tiles could also be used in a roundel as at Newbattle and were almost certainly used in borders. There are very few, however, from the second, only 26 in total. In both these examples, the tiles involved could almost all be used in

roundels as demonstrated at the site museum. There are also a total of seven tiles of the types illustrated by Richardson from a reconstructed panel at Newbattle (Richardson 1929, fig 6.4 – M31, M32, M33).

Borders

Of the two borders in situ the first is made of simple large squares (M01 – in situ no 4) and the second from squares set diagonally and edged with triangles (M03 & M12 – in situ no 2b). There is also an assumed border made of diamonds and large bowtie shapes (M10 & M35 – Richardson 1929, fig 9.3). It is hard to think of another use for the four bowtie-shaped tiles. Borders could also have been made from decorated vine scroll (M45 & M46).

Roundel

There is no in situ evidence for a roundel at Melrose but here are some tile shapes which could

only have come from one (M34, M37 & M38) though there are not many of each. Comparison with the roundel 'Wheel Pattern 1' (Richardson pl I) reconstructed from the Newbattle tiles shows that nine out of the 17 shapes needed are present in the Melrose assemblage (M36, M34, M38, M25, M41, M08, M17/M18, M10, M20 & possibly M04). Some others could be variations (eg M26 & M37), perhaps copied from another lost roundel.

ROOF TILES

Two hundred and fifty-six pieces could be positively identified as roof tiles. These were flat, if a little unevenly finished, of a coarsely-wedged orange fabric with frequent large grits and often with sand covering one side, from being formed in a sand bed. A few tiles had small nail holes visible in the corners implying they were shaped on a board. The edges were knife-trimmed with drag marks visible on some of the surfaces. None was glazed, although several on display in the museum are. One of the 1996 examples shows spots of glaze implying it was fired in the same kiln as glazed roof tiles, or possibly floor tiles or pottery. In terms of thickness they vary from 13mm to 21mm, with an average of about 18mm. The only tile which could be reconstructed to give complete dimensions was 183 × 114mm, though the few near-complete examples from the 1920s excavations are larger than this, approximately 300 × 180mm, indicating a variation in size. Complaints about the lack of uniformity in roof tile size were recorded in 15th-century England (Salzman 1952, 230).

They would be hung either by means of a nib protruding at right angles from one end of the tile or by a wooden peg driven through a ready-made hole. Seven examples of nibs were found. The nib appears to have been cut out as one with the shape of the tile and then bent over by hand. Eight sherds were found with the evidence for peg holes, though this would have been a point of weakness for the tile and often they are broken. The peg holes were approximately 14mm in

diameter, pushed through from one side, possibly using a finger. There is no evidence either from this collection or those from the 1920s of nibs and peg holes appearing on the same tile, as was found, for example, at Battle Abbey (Streeten 1985, 97). Tiles either had a nib, generally a little off centre, or one or two peg holes.

Medieval roof tiles were known from at least the start of the 13th century and their use gradually increased, especially in the 14th century (Salzman 1952, 229). Nib tiles are generally recognised as a 13th-century type (Streeten 1985, 97). In St Andrews, peg tiles replaced nib tiles in the early 14th century (Maxwell 1997, 91) while in Perth, peg tiles appeared in the late 13th or early 14th century (MacAskill 1987, 156). Nib and peg tiles were represented in approximately equal numbers. Three tiles were curved, possibly ridge tiles or guttering, and one had a broken stump on its exterior raised by pulling the clay with fingers, possibly part of a decorative ridge crest.

ROOF SLATES

In contrast to the tiles, only 18 pieces of possible roof slate were found. Six of these had very small neat nail holes and are probably recent. None of the slates with large peg holes is made of true slate. Either sandstone or mudstone were used instead, which also implies they were old. The nearest source of slate would be the West Highlands and there is little evidence of slates travelling such distances in Scotland before the post-medieval period.

DISCUSSION

The church and chapter house were the two centres on which the spiritual life of the monastery pivoted. Both played important roles in the daily liturgical life that lay at the core of the monastic existence, but it was the work of the chapter house which ensured the continuity of the community by encouraging its spiritual

vigour and by regulating its pattern of life. Indeed, it was argued by the late 12th-century Cistercian writer, Helinandus of Froidmont, that

no place is holier than the chapter house, no place more worthy of reverence; in no place is the devil father away, in no place God closer; for there the devil loses whatever he might gain elsewhere and there God regains in obedience whatever he might lose elsewhere through negligence or contempt (Fergusson & Harrison 1994, 238).

The chapter house was a place of discipline and possible punishment, where the abbot ensured that monks were kept on the hard path to salvation. There was the daily reading of a chapter of the Rule of St Benedict followed by prayers commemorating the dead, for ‘our brothers, fathers, benefactors and all the faithful departed’ (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 112). This period saw a development in the concept of purgatory and an increased belief in the need for commemoration and intercession. The prayers of the living could contribute towards the eternal salvation of the dead and, likewise, dead saints could intercede on behalf of the living. The Cistercian monk was in an environment where the dead were still very much part of the landscape of the living, particularly in the liturgies of the chapter house where, surrounded by the tombs of past abbots, the monks contemplated the ‘community of eternity’ (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 127–8). Normally the preferred place of burial for abbots would be at the east end of the chapter house in front of the president’s chair, as at Fountains Abbey (Gilyard-Beer 1987). The situation at Melrose differed from the norm with the burial of the second abbot, Waltheof, at the west end and the subsequent special requirements of his cult.

THE CULT OF SAINT WALTHEOF

Melrose exercised a particular appeal for patrons as the major Scottish Cistercian monastery in an age where the austerity and non-worldliness of that Order appeared to promise the fastest route

to eternal salvation. Its attraction was increased by the growing cult of Waltheof (1100–59). Famed for his kindness, mercy and humility, before his death in 1159, he expressed a wish to be buried at the west end of the chapter house rather than, as was normal, the more sacred and prestigious east end. A number of miracles were reported – for example, Gillesperda, a lay brother from Cupar Angus, was said to be cured of dropsy after spending a night in prayer while lying on Waltheof’s grave slab. This is an echo of the account of Waltheof himself, who is said to have spent the night in prayer at the tomb of Abbot William at Rievaulx (Fergusson & Harrison 1994, 243). The developing cult associated with the proto-saint at Melrose led to growing number of visitors in the 1160s, causing Abbot William of Melrose (1159–70) to prohibit public access to the chapter house in an attempt to protect the quietude embodied in the Cistercian ideal. This was not popular with the convent, and in 1170 William resigned, to be replaced by Abbot Jocelin (1170–74). The new abbot actively encouraged the growth of the cult and, on 22 May 1171, 12 years after Waltheof’s death, his tomb was opened in the presence of an impressive ecclesiastical gathering which included Ingram, Bishop of Glasgow, four other Cistercian abbots and the whole convent. The body was found to be miraculously incorrupt, a state recognised as a hallmark of sanctity since as early as the 6th century and evident in such major British saints as St Cuthbert and St Edmund (Crook 2000, 69). Such an official inspection of the body would normally be the first stage in the exhumation and eventual translation of the body to a shrine: the normal treatment of someone regarded as a saint (Nilson 1998, 26–33). Indeed, a marginal note in the Melrose Chronicle notes this event as the translation of the venerable Waltheof (Anderson 1990, 274). A discussion followed as to whether he should be moved to a shrine in the choir of the church, which would require permission from the general Chapter of the Order or from Rome, and it was decided that his relics would be left in the chapter house. The former stone effigy

was replaced by a marble slab (Bulloch 1952, 129), the rich material reflecting his status as a saint, rather than following the Cistercian norm of simple slabs for abbots (Butler 1993, 81–2). A similar splendour was accorded to Robert of Newminster when his body was translated from the chapter house to a shrine ‘of grand and precious marble’ in the church (Butler 1993, 82). The assembled clerics would also be aware of the cult associated with Waltheof’s grandfather, Earl Waltheof (who was regarded as a saint after his execution by William I of England in 1075) and subsequent burial in the chapter house of the abbey of Crowland. His body, claimed to be incorrupt, was translated in 1092 from the chapter house to a shrine in the church (Farmer 1982, 395–6).

Abbot Jocelin would seem to have profited from his enthusiasm for Waltheof; Duncan (1998, 10) considers that this devotion to the cult of the royal kin was a major factor in his promotion to Bishop of Glasgow in 1174. The timing of this inspection of Waltheof is likely to have been prompted by the rapid growth of the cult of Thomas Becket at Canterbury following his martyrdom in the previous year. The reports of miracles continued – Duramus, a lay brother who had been troubled with stomach pain, was standing outside the east end of the chapter house, next to the infirmary, when he looked through a window, saw the tomb of Waltheof and was cured (Bulloch 1952, 129).

Waltheof’s tomb was opened next in 1206 when, following the death of Abbot William, it was decided that he would be buried next to the saint. While working on this tomb, Brother Robert, the mason, was persuaded to open Waltheof’s tomb in the presence of six monks and six lay brothers. The body was seen to be still intact and fragrant, and the garments free from decay (Bulloch 1955, 130; *Scotichronicon* iv, 237–9 and 608). It was about this time that Jocelin of Furness wrote a life of St Waltheof, addressing it to King William, his son Alexander and his brother, Earl David. The king was to rejoice in this ancestor who, still incorrupt like

St Cuthbert, was to be honoured among the greatest saints of the land: ‘he is indeed the glory and adornment of your lineage, a guardian of the kingdom, a protector of the country, a symbol of chastity, a jewel of canonical life, a mirror of monastic discipline’. Waltheof continued to be seen in this light into the 15th century, when Bower included large sections of the Life into his *Scotichronicon* (iii, xxi). The compilation of a written Life can be seen not only as a pious act for the inspiration of others but also as necessary evidence prior to the inauguration of an official canonisation process.

In 1240, when the bodies of the abbots were being moved to the east end of the chapter house, Waltheof’s tomb was opened again. This occurred in the presence of a distinguished audience, including William, son of Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, and his mother, Ada, daughter of William I. The body was found to be no longer incorrupt; only dust, some bone fragments and some teeth remained. This must have been a great disappointment to all present; no longer could their saint be ranked with those such as St Cuthbert, whose sanctity bestowed an incorrupt state. The prospect of official canonisation receded and the cult, although it continued, was destined to remain local. William was allowed to remove one tooth as a relic, a normal ‘payment’ for a high-ranking witness (Nilson 1998, 31). The remains of the other abbots were translated to the east end of the chapter house but those of Waltheof were left where they were originally buried (Bulloch 1952, 131; Anderson 1990, ii, 519). It is likely that some form of shrine was erected over the saint’s remains after 1240. Architectural fragments with traces of paint and gilding were recovered from the area of the chapter house during the 1921 excavations and identified by Richardson & Wood (1949, 19) as parts of a possible shrine. They appear to be from a tomb chest of 13th-century date. Quatrefoils, some pierced, have been reconstructed as the sides of the tomb, the open apertures giving pilgrims closer access to the saint’s relics. Small triplet shafts may have carried a gabled canopy

(Fawcett & Oram 2004, 186–8). Fragments of another possible shrine of similar date have been identified at Abbey Dore, another Cistercian monastery (Harrison 2000, 71–2).

Several reasons may be suggested for the timing of the examination of the tomb in 1240. The previous year had seen the translation of the body of Adam, Bishop of Caithness from the former cathedral at Halkirk, where he had been buried after his murder in 1222, to the new cathedral of Dornoch where, according to the Melrose Chronicle ‘no few miracles were performed’ (Anderson 1990, ii, 561). As Adam formerly had been Abbot of Melrose (1207–13), the events of his translation would have been followed with much interest by that monastery and may have stimulated an interest in the promotion of Waltheof. This is paralleled at Rievaulx Abbey by the veneration of William, their first abbot; a shrine, with altar, was erected in the 1250s within the west wall of the chapter house (Fergusson & Harrison 1994, 243). The wish to remove Waltheof’s body from its original burial place in the chapter to a more prestigious position in the church is paralleled by that of Robert, first abbot of the Cistercian house of Newminster, Northumberland, who died in the same year as Waltheof, 1159, and whose body was subsequently translated to the abbey church (Williams 1939, 146). On a more earthly level, if the cult of Waltheof had flourished, the increased offerings from pilgrims would have helped finance new building work, such as the newly completed chapter house.

SECULAR BURIALS IN THE CHAPTER HOUSE

While the Cistercian ideal stressed the spiritual benefits of isolation from the world, any monastery had to take into consideration the expectations of its patrons and benefactors. The latter sought the aid of the prayers and commemorative practices offered by the monks as a route to eternal salvation, but the chances of this were thought to be greatly increased by burial within the sacred space of the monastery.

Lay burial within the confines of the monastery was carefully limited and the early injunctions of the General Chapter allowed only sovereigns, prelates, founders, guests and hired workers dying on the premises to be buried within a monastery. Statutes of 1157 and 1180 permitted founders, royalty and bishops to be buried in the church or chapter house (Butler 1993, 81), and again in 1202, the General Chapter pronounced that ‘in our oratories none are to be buried except kings and queens and bishops; in our chapter houses, abbots, or the aforesaid also, if they prefer’ – a decree that was to be repeated several times during the 13th century. Despite this ruling, there was a gradual relaxation in the official attitude of the Cistercian order towards lay burial from after *c* 1220 (Hall 2005, 368–9; Hall, Sneddon & Sohr 2005, 384), a trend that was recognised in 1217 when lay burials were allowed with the permission of their parish priest (Williams 1991, 105–6; Hall, Sneddon & Sohr 2005, 392).

The acceptance of lay burial was not merely a negation of Cistercian ideals in the face of increasing demands from the world beyond the cloister and the prospect of extra income; it was a privilege which a monastic community could use as a means of building bonds with the valued members of the laity (Jamroziak 2005, 325). It has been argued that the growing demand for lay burial was not simply a matter of increased secular influence in the affairs of the monastery but a changing response to commemoration. There was a heightening sense of a hierarchy of sacred space within the monastery, a desire for a precise location for burial that reflected the social status of the deceased (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 218). In the early years of the order there was a reluctance to use the church for burials so it was natural that the chapter house, the traditional burial place of abbots, would attract the attention of those wishing high-status lay burial. It has been argued that the Cistercian houses in northern England, at some distance from the mother house of Cîteaux, were more relaxed in their adherence to the rules of the

General Chapter on lay burial. Sawley Abbey, for example, allowed Lord William Percy to be buried in 1244 in the choir of the church (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 235–6). The founder of Newminster Abbey, Ranulph de Merlay, his wife and son, were all buried on the north side of its chapter house (Butler 1993, 81). The Welsh Cistercian houses would seem to have been in a similar position; at least ten of the descendants of the Lord Rhys were interred in the chapter house at the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida (Williams 1984, 184). Melrose seems to have been equally responsive to bending the rule in relation to its lay benefactors.

The Melrose Chronicle notes a number of high-status secular burials in the chapter house, no doubt encouraged by the growing cult of Waltheof. Some were persons connected with the royal administration: chamberlains and justices like Philip de Valognes, lord of Benvie and Panmure, and chamberlain to William I, who was buried there in 1215. In 1219 William de Valognes died at Kelso and, contrary to the wishes of the monks of that house, was carried to Melrose, where he was ‘honourably buried’ beside his father (Anderson 1990, ii, 437). William de Valognes had succeeded his father as chamberlain to Alexander II (RRS 2, 33). In the same year Gervase Avenel was also buried in the chapter house (Anderson 1990, ii, 438). His father, Robert, Lord of Eskdale, had granted the lands of Eskdalemuir to the abbey in *c* 1166 and Gervase extended their rights in *c* 1215 (Gilbert 1979, 255–6). Robert Avenel had entered Melrose as lay brother and novice and was buried in the abbey in 1185 (Anderson 1990, ii, 308; Reid 1960, 71; RRS 2, 296), although the exact place within the monastery was not known. Those who died in the Cistercian habit would be comforted by the belief that their entry to heaven would be immediate, an idea that was common in many stories prevalent in the order in the 12th century (Ward 1987, 197).

The Melrose Chronicle records a number of burials of prominent lay persons within the chapter house shortly after the extension

of the building and the re-examination of Waltheof’s tomb in 1240, perhaps attracted by the growing cult associated with the tomb of Waltheof. Christina Corbet, wife of William Cospatric, son of Patrick earl of Dunbar, was buried in 1241 (Anderson 1990, ii, 528). She was daughter of Walter Corbet and Alice de Vologne, perhaps a daughter of the Philip de Valognes, who was buried in the chapter house in 1215. Her father-in-law, Earl Patrick, had been a close friend of the Abbot of Melrose and had received the Cistercian habit from him on his deathbed in 1232 (Anderson 1990, 486). The burial of women in Cistercian monasteries was a contentious subject. Gerald of Wales wrote scathingly of two women, buried at Abbey Dore, who had adopted Cistercian habits on the deathbeds ‘with all the solemnity of psalms and prayers with which men were wont to be made monks’, superficially becoming members of the community before death (Williams 1991, 105). This practice continued despite its censure by the General Chapter of the order in 1201 (Williams 1998, 133). Matilda de Broase, who died in 1209–10, also received the Cistercian habit before her burial at the abbey of Strata Florida, Wales (Williams 1984, 183). Given the Cistercian attitude to women within monasteries, it is likely that Christina Corbet also adopted the Cistercian habit before death and was buried as one of the Melrose community. The burial of Isabella Mauley was allowed at Meaux in 1238 (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 238).

Walter de Olifard, justice of Lothian and lord of Bothwell and Smailholm, was interred in the chapter house in 1242 (Anderson 1990, ii, 531). In 1246, the body of Henry de Balliol, lord of Cavers, was carried from a place named as St James, perhaps Santiago de Compostela (*Scotichronicon* v, 285), and buried in the chapter house at Melrose (Anderson 1990, ii, 543). The following year saw another female burial in the chapter house when Ada de Bailliol was buried beside her father, probably Henry de Bailliol (Anderson 1990, ii, 545 and xii). In the same year, Master William of Greenlaw was also buried in

the chapter house. William of Greenlaw, a secular cleric who held the church at Lilliesleaf, had a career in royal and ecclesiastical administration, including a period as a clerk to Henry III. Shortly before his death he granted land in Halsington to Melrose (Watt 1977, 243). In 1249, Alexander II died on the island of Kerrera, Argyll, and was buried at Melrose. Given the distance he died from Melrose, it is probable that his heart was removed on death; it is not known if this was buried with his body in the church or separately in the chapter house.

THE HEART BURIAL OF ROBERT I: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The separate burial of viscera and heart was not an unusual practice for high-status individuals in the medieval period. It was normal practice from as early as the 11th century in Germany, where the Salian kings were buried in Speyer Cathedral while their entrails were interred at whichever important church was nearest at the time of death. Hallam (1982, 364), in his review of the practice, considers its adoption in England and France in the 12th century as being initially 'a means of hygiene and aesthetics rather than ceremony'. The death of a king at some distance from the desired place of burial meant that measures had to be taken to prevent the rapid decomposition of the body before the funeral. This problem arose with the death of Henry I in Normandy, in 1135, when bad weather made it impossible to cross the Channel for several weeks. The enforced disembowelment made necessary by increasing decomposition of the corpse some time after death proved an unpleasant experience, with one person dying after taking part in the operation.

During the 12th century, the decision to donate one's heart to a particular church was increasingly seen as a special favour. The heart was thought to have held the soul; as such it was the seat of personal piety (Binski 1996, 65). This idea was expressed by Robert I with regard to Melrose, 'to which through special devotion we

have granted our heart for burial' (RRS 5, no 380). This was a method of spreading patronage, hence Robert I could be buried in Dunfermline Abbey with other Scottish kings but also express his 'special devotion' to Melrose. It also had the spiritual benefit in that prayers were being said for one's salvation in two different places, often by different monastic orders.

It has been claimed that the first heart burial, as opposed to entrails, was that of Robert d'Abrissel, the founder of Fontevrault, in 1117 (Bradford 1933, 41). By the time of Richard I's death in 1199, the custom of heart burial was a well-established ceremony; to be chosen as the burial place for a royal heart was a great privilege. Richard's heart was granted to Rouen Cathedral where a silver shrine accompanied by an effigy of the king was erected. The heart of William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, who died in Normandy in 1189, was buried in the chapter house of Walden Priory (Golding 1985, 67).

Death on crusade may have increased the general vogue for heart burial. For example, William de Warenne's heart was buried at Lewes Priory following his death on crusade. Saher de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, who died on the fifth crusade, at the siege of Damietta in 1219, requested that his heart be buried at Garendon Priory. His body was taken to Acre for burial (Macquarrie 1997, 36). According to one source, his sons carried his heart home; one of these sons, Roger de Quincy, married Elena, sister of Devorguilla of Galloway. One notable example was that of Louis IX of France who died at Tunis in 1270. Dying on pagan soil, his heart and entrails were removed and his body boiled to separate the bones for transport to their burial place. His bones were buried at St Denis, Paris, and his heart was taken by his brother, Charles of Anjou, and buried at Monreale.

As mentioned, other heart burials enabled the dying person to spread their patronage between two places: the body being buried in a place often dictated by family or dynastic

tradition, while the place of burial of the heart expressed a personal preference for a particular monastery or order (Westerhof 2005, 37). For example, Richard, Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans, founded the Cistercian abbey of Hayles in 1270. After his death, his body was buried there, but his heart rested with the Friars Minor at Oxford. His son, Henry of Almaine, a nephew of Henry III, was also buried at Hayles Abbey following his murder in 1271, while his heart was placed on the tomb of Edward the Confessor at Westminster. Henry III placed his own tomb close to that of Edward the Confessor. He was buried there in 1272 but his heart was interred with his mother, Isabella of Angoulême, at Fontevrault.

The method of marking the position of burial varied greatly from the simple to the spectacular. When Count Thibaut V of Champagne died in 1270 at Trapani while returning from crusade, his entrails and heart were removed and his body was embalmed. His body was buried in the Franciscan convent at Provins and his heart entombed in a special urn in the same church. His wife Isabelle, daughter of St Louis, died in the following year; her body was placed next to that of her husband at Provins, but her heart was buried at Clairvaux. The heart of John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury (died 1292), was placed in a monument behind the high altar of the church of Greyfriars in London (Gardner 1995, 107). Some heart tombs included an effigy, the earliest possibly being that of Charles of Anjou in St Denis, which was erected in 1326 (Gardner 1995, 110). When Isabella, Queen of Edward II, was buried in 1358, the heart of her husband, who had died in 1327, was placed under the breast of her effigy.

Heart burials are recorded in Scotland from the later 13th century, notably Dervorguilla of Galloway who, on the death of her husband, John de Balliol, in 1268, had his heart preserved in an ivory casket. In 1273 she founded a Cistercian monastery, afterwards known as Sweetheart, where she was eventually buried, in 1290, together with her husband's heart. Richard of

Inverkeithing, Bishop of Dunkeld, had financed the building of a new choir at Inchcolm Abbey and, on his death in 1272, chose to have his heart buried there, while his body was interred in his cathedral (*Scotichronicon* V, 387). William Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews, died in Paris in 1297 and was buried in the Dominican church there. His successor, Bishop Lamberton, brought Fraser's heart back from Paris, at some unknown date, to St Andrews where it was interred in the cathedral (Dowden 1912, 21; Watt 1977, 319). It is possible that James Douglas may have accompanied the bishop when the heart was returned, for he was in Paris about this time and on his return to Scotland he held office in the episcopal household at St Andrews.

The custom of heart burial was not without its critics. The Benedictine chronicler, Rishanger, berated those, especially friars, who 'are wont to claim something for themselves of the mighty dead, like dogs who wait greedily to receive each its own particular morsel of the carcass' (Bradford 1933, 49), probably a reference to the Dominicans who were known as 'dogs of the Lord' (*Domini-canis*). The custom of heart burial was denounced in 1299 by Pope Boniface VIII in his bull *Detestande feritatis abusus* (An abuse of horrible savagery) where he condemns those who agree to such treatment of a dead person, those who 'trucefully disembowel him, divide him up limb by limb or gobbet by gobbet, and seethe him down in a cauldron' (Brown 1981; Binski 1996, 67). Papal permission, however, could be obtained after this date by special indult allowing the division of a body.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF ROBERT I

A little over a month before his death in 1329, Robert I compiled a letter, addressed to his son and successors, urging them to make donations to Melrose Abbey 'to which through special devotion we have granted our heart for burial' (RRS 5, no 380). The unusual form of this

document caused Duncan (1953, 18–22) to consider it as a later forgery by the monks of Melrose but he later revised this opinion (RRS 5, no 380) and it now must be considered at face value.

The main source for the events surrounding the death of Robert I and the after life of his heart is ‘The Bruce’, an epic poem composed by John Barbour in c 1370 which relates the life of the Robert. The king, on his deathbed at Cardross, repeats his wish to go on crusade. He says that it was always his intention to be saved from his sins by the struggle against God’s enemies (‘Goddis fayis’) and requests that his heart be carried on this quest

And sen he now me till him tayis
Sua that the body may na wys
Fulfill thast the hart gan devis
I wald the hart war thidder sent
Quharin consavyt wes that entent.

Since he takes me to him now,
so that [my] body can in no way fulfil what the
heart called for,
I wish that the heart, wherein that resolve was
conceived,
be sent thither

(Duncan 1997, 753)

Barbour has the king make his request before the assembled lords and prelates. In the chronicle by Jean le Bel, written between 1352 and 1361, the king singles out Sir William Douglas for the task, asking that he ‘take my heart to the Holy Sepulchre’ (Duncan 1997, 750–1). Neither Barbour nor Le Bel mention Melrose in this context or specify where Robert wished his heart to be buried. Bower, writing in the 1440s, tells that the king wished his heart to be buried at the Holy Sepulchre (*Scotichronicon* VII, 65), and this version is accepted by Macquarrie (1981, 87; 1997, 76). The Bower version is dismissed by Duncan (1997, 752) on the grounds that the ‘peaceful mission’ just to bury the heart in Jerusalem would not have required Douglas and his ‘posse’.

When the king died, in Barbour’s words (Duncan 1997, 757):

he debowaillyt wes clenly
And bawmyt syne richly’

He was cleanly disembowelled and richly
embalmed.

Douglas then arranged for a container to be made for the heart, ‘a cas of silver fyne’ (a case of fine silver), which was ‘ennamylyt throu sutelte’ (cunningly enamelled) and which he wore round his neck (Duncan 1997, 757).

Thus equipped, Douglas set out to fulfil his assignment and reached Spain, where Alphonso XI of Castile was organising a campaign against the Moorish kingdom of Grenada. Douglas was persuaded to help in this ‘holy war’ but unfortunately died in his first major battle (Macquarrie 1981, 88–90; 1997, 76–9). In Barbour’s account, the treatment of his corpse was less subtle than that of Robert I; he was disembowelled and his body boiled to remove the flesh. So the surviving Scots returned to Scotland with both the king’s heart and the heart and bones of Douglas. Robert I’s heart was buried at Melrose and that of Sir James Douglas was interred in St Bride’s church at Douglas. Boece elaborated the tale and related how Douglas carried the king’s heart to the Holy Sepulchre (Boece 1942, 209–41). The exact place where the heart was interred at Melrose is not specified.

Those involved in the removal of the heart of Robert I were excommunicated for their pains by the Bishop of Moray. This sentence was revoked by an indult of John XXII in August 1331 (Bliss 1895, 345). Similar permission had been granted for the heart burial of Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray on 15 November 1329 (Theiner 1864, 249).

The heart burial of Robert I has three elements: first, the wish to fulfil a vow to go on crusade, which gave rise to the second, the wish to separate the heart from the body, and, finally, to have his heart buried at Melrose.

These, although interconnected, may be usefully considered separately.

Despite the loss of Acre in 1291 and the fading hopes for the eventual recapture of Jerusalem, the idea of a crusade continued to captivate the warriors of western Christendom. When Philip IV of France proposed a crusade in 1308 it received a favourable response from Robert I 'when the tempers of war have been suppressed', a sentiment that was repeated in the 'Declaration of Arbroath' in 1320 (Macquarrie 1997, 72–3). When Robert I declared his intention to go on crusade he was following in the steps of several generations of his own family. A strong Scottish contingent had taken part in the crusade of 1270, among them his grandfather and his father. It was also the expected duty of a Christian ruler; Robert I was following in the steps of Louis of France and, among English kings, Richard and Edward I. Going on crusade would be viewed as an important short-term measure towards the king's spiritual salvation. In the longer term, the prayers of the monks of Dunfermline and Melrose were seen as essential to salvation.

The idea of a post-mortem crusade was not without precedent. Alfonso of Castile stipulated in his will of 1284 that his heart was to be buried on Calvary in order to fulfil his wish to go there on pilgrimage (Brown 1981, 234). When Henry Plantagenet, the Young King, was dying, in 1183, having sworn to go on crusade, he asked his most intimate friend, William Marshall, to take his cloak stitched with the crusader's cross to Jerusalem in fulfilment of his vow (Croach 1990, 49). In a tale found in contemporary songs and later repeated by Froissart, Edward I's bones were carried with the English army in a final, post-mortem victory over the Scots while his heart was borne to Jerusalem by a large escort of knights. The tale demonstrates ideas current in the popular imagination both of the supernatural power of royal body parts and the validity of post-mortem crusades.

By choosing to have his heart buried at Melrose, Robert I spread his patronage and

acknowledged the status of Dunfermline, burial place of most Scottish monarchs since Edgar, while favouring Melrose with an expression of his particular love for that house. In this latter choice, he was following a family tradition for the Cistercian order that had been particularly favoured by the patronage of the Bruce family. Robert Bruce the elder had visited Clairvaux while returning from the crusade in 1272 or 1273. Robert I's father was buried at Holm Cultram in 1303, a daughter house of Melrose. Robert I was generous in his grants to the abbey and Barbour relates in the 'The Bruce' how 'For hele of his saule gaf he silver in gret quantitie' to religious bodies of various orders (Duncan 1997, 751). For Robert I the appeal of Melrose would have been heightened by the cult of Abbot Waltheof. Monarchs gained prestige through burial next to their saintly predecessors; the English kings next to St Edward at Westminster, the French kings by St Denis. The kings of Scotland were traditionally buried at Dunfermline by the tomb of St Margaret, but Melrose could also claim a similar honour as a dynastic burial place. Here, at the tomb of Waltheof, stepson of David I, was another potential royal mausoleum. Alexander I was buried here, from whom Robert I claimed lawful descent through his grandfather. Robert would also have been well aware of the event that took place on 9 January 1216 when the barons of the north of England, in rebellion against John, met Alexander II and, according to the Melrose Chronicle, 'did their homage, and all alike, touching the relics of the saints, swore fealty and security. In the chapter of the monks, at Melrose' (Anderson 1990, 406). Robert was dividing his patronage between the place of burial of Alexander II and its associated cult of Waltheof, and Dunfermline, the place of burial of Alexander III and centre of the cult of St Margaret, who was canonised in c 1250. By placing himself, in death, beside these monarchs, he was making a final statement about the rightful place of the Bruces in the dynasty of Scottish kings.

THE HEART OF ROBERT I IN MODERN TIMES

Robert I's life and death have become part of Scottish national identity along with other elements of the Wars of Independence such as the Stone of Destiny, the resistance of William Wallace and the Declaration of Arbroath. During excavations in the area of the chapter house at Melrose Abbey in February 1921, a conical lead casket was discovered and, when opened at the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, found to contain a mummified heart. Links were made to the story of the heart of Robert I by J W Paterson, the Ministry of Works's architect at the abbey (NAS MW1/335, JWP memo 24 February 1921). However, the Director of the Royal Scottish Museum, Dr A O Curle, the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, J S Richardson and the Chief Inspector, Charles Peers, strongly doubted that this was the king's heart, due to its location in the chapter house rather than at the high altar and because the container was plain with no identifying decoration suitable for a king (NAS MW1/335 memos and letters, March 1921). It was not deemed appropriate at the time to arouse popular interest when the identity of the heart was uncertain. Curle wrote prophetically that 'to keep [it] for the curious to gaze at in a Museum would to my view be little short of sacrilege, more especially as the public, without any justification really, are sure to consider it the heart of Bruce. If it were so, no patriotic Scot would desire to have it in any place other than where it was deposited originally' (ibid.). However, the story was leaked, apparently by someone at the museum, and it resulted in an article in *The Scotsman* on 5 March 1921. The article reports the excavations at the abbey, concentrating on the heart in the lead casket. 'The question at once naturally occurs – is this the heart of King Robert the Bruce?' It describes the story of the heart and suggests that, although it should have been buried at the high altar, it might have been moved in a time of crisis. 'The fact that this is a leaden casket does not disprove the theory of its Royal character', because it

would have been in an outer container. The public interest resulted in several anxious memos in the Ministry of Works, and articles in *The Scotsman* on 23 March 1921 and in *The Evening Dispatch* on 2 May 1921 contained accusations of secrecy and barring public access to the abbey. The Ministry of Works was outraged: 'The articles referred to are ... brim full of inaccuracies which will tend to misguide the public. The article in *The Dispatch* is a direct attack upon the department, written to make mischief' (MW1/335, letter 4 May 1921). An official release was promptly sent to the newspapers, detailing the excavations and individual finds (even a piece of exotic pottery). The resultant penitent articles, published on 9 and 10 March 1921, were dryly academic and made no link to the heart being that of the king. Rumours of secrecy were denied and the limited public access was explained as a measure to prevent contamination of the areas of excavation. The official articles appear to have quelled any further press interest.

After the heart had been studied and photographed, it was replaced in the casket and sealed in a new container with a copper plaque bearing the inscription 'The enclosed leaden casket, containing a heart, was found beneath the chapter house floor, March 1921, and reburied by HM Office of Works'. Obviously, the possibility that this was the heart of Robert I was considered plausible enough for this to be done. It was reburied some distance to the east of the place where it was discovered, possibly for security reasons. A picture of the casket was printed with a small article about the heart of Robert I in *The Scotsman*, 20 January 1928. The discovery was noted in the official guide to the abbey (first published in 1932) in two carefully separated entries (Richardson & Wood 1949, 19). The first entry recorded the find of a mummified heart in a lead casket, which still lay buried below the floor of the chapter house. The second stated that the heart of Robert I was 'probably' buried near the high altar, but may have been deposited in the chapter house due to

the presence of the nearby shrine of Waltheof. The matter appeared closed.

REDISCOVERY AND REACTION

When excavations commenced in 1996, media attention concentrated on the potential for the rediscovery of a casket that might contain the heart of Robert I. This came at a time when many of the aspirations and icons of Scotland were in the headlines. Mel Gibson's film *Braveheart* was released in 1995 and, despite glaring historical inaccuracies and omissions, its effect on popular sentiment was profound. The Stone of Destiny was returned to Scotland and unveiled to the public in November 1996. The 1997 National Referendum securing devolution for Scotland was followed by the election of a Scottish parliament in 1999. The rediscovery of what may have been the heart of another Scottish icon, Robert I, in 1996 and its reburial in 1998 was part of these events, reported in the media worldwide. Most newspapers took the opportunity to give a potted history of Robert I's life and legends, including the story of his heart. The information provided by Historic Scotland on the 1921 discovery was also quoted, but the fact that it was still not certain that the heart was that of the king was often omitted. The *Scottish Daily Express* wrote on 13 August 1996 that 'the very name Robert the Bruce is enough to set the blood pulsing with pride in every Scot'. The *Daily Star* briefly noted that 'boffins' were digging for the heart of Bruce at Montrose.

When Historic Scotland sent out a press release on 26 August 1996, containing the story of the heart and that the 1920s canister had been recovered, but that the medieval casket would not be opened, the reaction was enormous. The huge number of camera crews and news reporters present at Melrose Abbey for official interviews reflected interest in the discovery (but not in the chapter house excavation itself) from all over the world. Articles reiterated the story of the heart, the significance of Robert I and the 1921 discovery. Drama was added with articles

stating that the container was held in a secret location in Edinburgh.

The canister was eventually confirmed as that reburied by Ministry of Works and was buried once again, without further analysis, within the chapter house in 1998. In general, the newspapers reported the event in a favourable manner, quoting the words of the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, that 'we cannot know for certain whether the casket buried here contains the heart of Robert the Bruce, but in a sense it does not matter; the casket and the heart are symbols of the man'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all those field staff who assisted on the various excavation programmes from 1996 to 1998). Particular mention should go to Andrew Dunn, Stewart Farrell, David Murray, Alan Radley, Paul Sharman, David Stewart, Jennifer Thoms and Jon Triscott. Illustrations are by David Connolly, Andrew Hollinrake and Angus Mackintosh. Also thanks to Dr Bill McQueen and Paul Sharman for their work on the documentation associated with the site. Thanks to Mandy Clydesdale (AOC Scotland), Marion Fry (Historic Scotland) and all the local volunteers, notably Walter Elliot. Historic Scotland Inspectorate and other staff all provided great support, notably Doreen Grove, Richard Welander, Neil Hynd, Richard Fawcett, Peter Yeoman and Nick Bridgland. Tom Whalley provided invaluable assistance in preparing the paper for publication. We also would like to thank Emilia Jamroziak for her comments on a draft of this paper.

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