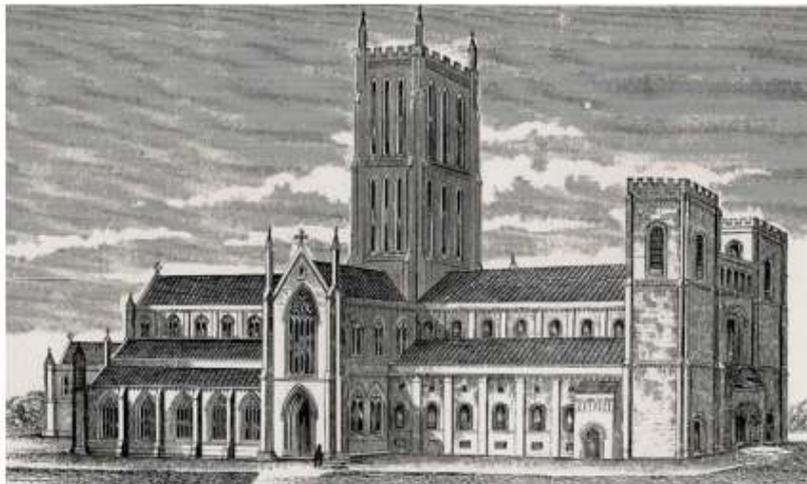


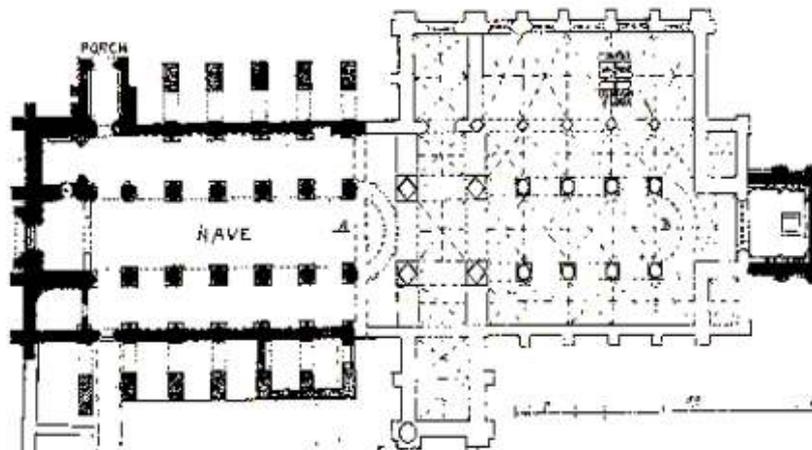
## The Satur Churchyard

Although it has now disappeared (apart from one small corner, as we shall see) there was a third churchyard in the grounds of the Abbey church. The site of the ruined Conventual church at the east end of the Parish church was used for burials until it was almost completely covered by the new Abbey church in 1821. The earliest surviving mention of this third burial ground is found in the mid-sixteenth century Kirk Session minutes, where it was called variously the Settir, Satyr or Satur churchyard. The origin of this name is something of a mystery, although the nineteenth century local antiquarians decided that it was a corruption of the word Psalter, the monks having chanted psalms from a psalter as part of their daily worship in the choir. For a while in the eighteenth century it was sometimes referred to as the St Salvatore churchyard, but this name was just plucked out of the air.

In order to understand how this area came to be used for burials we must go back to the original Abbey church, which was built in two phases. The first phase was the twelfth century nave that still stands to the west of the nineteenth century Abbey church. This was used by both monks and laity, the monks celebrating the Mass in their choir around the high altar at the eastern end and the laity standing in the western portion. Early in the thirteenth century Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, who was buried in the church, was declared to be a saint. In her honour the church was extended by building a new choir to the east with a shrine for St Margaret's body at the east end of the new choir. Thereafter the old church became the Parish church and the monks choir was called the Conventual church.

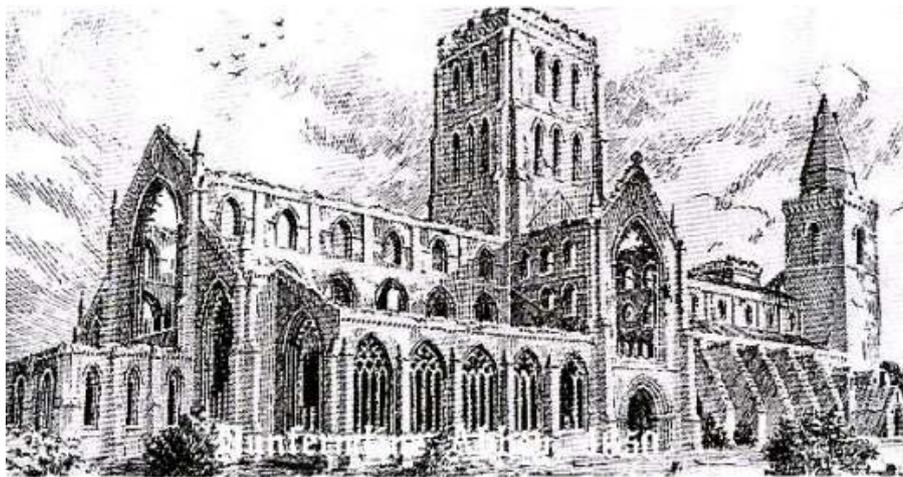


**An artist's impression of how the completed church may have looked from the north. The plan below is based on drawings made in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries before the ruins were removed for the building of the new Abbey church**



An unusual feature of the layout of the Conventual church is the extra aisle on the north side. This was probably built as a place for pilgrims to St Margaret's shrine to gather and prepare themselves for their visit to the sacred spot itself. The Galilee Chapel at Durham cathedral served the same function. Neither the shrine of Margaret at Dunfermline nor of Cuthbert at Durham would accommodate many pilgrims at a time so if there were large numbers they needed somewhere to wait until their turn came to approach the saint's resting place. The aisle at Dunfermline would also have provided a route to the shrine that would not impinge on the daily worship of the monks in the main body of the choir.

At the time of the Reformation of 1560, when the Roman Catholic church was banned in Scotland, the Abbey was dissolved and the Conventual church ceased to be used. The Presbyterian church was now the official church in Scotland and many of the former church buildings were totally abandoned. In Dunfermline the twelfth century nave continued to be used as the Presbyterian Parish church and the Conventual church was allowed to fall into ruin. It is said to have been destroyed at the Reformation but this probably only means that the altars were removed, images smashed and any paintings and stained glass obliterated. It may also have been unroofed. It certainly did not suffer wholesale destruction and its gradual ruination can be traced over the following centuries.



**An artist's impression of how the church may have looked after the Reformation, with the Conventual church and St Margaret's shrine unroofed but otherwise intact.**



**All that now remains of the thirteenth century building is the foundation stone of St Margaret's shrine and the bases of its surrounding walls.**

In the two and a half centuries between the Reformation and the building of the new Abbey church the old church fell into ruin piece by piece. According to Henderson's *Annals of Dunfermline* part of the east end fell shortly after 1672. Mr George Walker, who was Chamberlain of the Regality of Dunfermline from 1666 to 1683, removed 130 loads of stone

from the Abbey ruins, which may have been at least partly from the fallen east end of the church; he may also have done a bit of quiet demolition of other crumbling walls. As Chamberlain he was custodian of the Abbey ruins but he had no right to remove stone for his own purposes and this was one of several high-handed actions that were reported to his master the Marquis of Tweeddale.

The great central lantern tower fell in 1716 and in 1753 a turnpike tower adjoining the northeast end of the parish church collapsed. The latter fall is well documented in the minutes of the Dunfermline parish Heritors and it is probably safe to assume that they would have dealt in a similar way with the fall of the lantern tower (their minutes for 1716 no longer exist).

Towards the end of January 1753 the Heritors and the town Magistrates met in the churchyard to inspect the ruins, about which there was some concern, and:

...having considered the old steeple or staircase of the old kirk at the east end of the kirk of Dunfermline is in hazard of falling. Therefore they appoint the same to be sold by roup on Monday next the 29 instant and this to be intimated through the town by tuck of drum and from the lectern Sabbath next.

They were too late, however:

The steeple having fallen 29 Janr 1753 about 6 in the morning. The Town Council and some of the heritors met about 10 forenoon and desired Clerk Black to write to the prinll heritors to meet Wednesday next in the forenoon to concert proper measures for disposing on the stones, taking down a tusk of a pend hanging out from the northeast end of the Kirk, supporting the pillar below the tusk and re-enclosing the St Salvator churchyard

The Heritors decided to roup (auction) the stones and two days later their minutes record the articles of roup, which stated the conditions on which the successful bidder could remove the debris. The remains were to be demolished by 1 May and the stones completely removed by the following Lammas (1 August). The purchaser was to remove the tusk of the pend 'and make the same plain and not easily accessible by boys or ill designing people' and support the pillar below the tusk. He was also to repair the north wall of the Satur churchyard, the pend and a gate which had been damaged by the fall. The Heritors and Magistrates would 'furnish a cart road to & from the said gate, where most commodious & where it will occasion least lifting of gravestones'.

On 5 February the Heritors again met in the churchyard and amended the articles of roup so that the stones would be removed by 1 March because 'the foresaid stones ought to be removed before the weather turns warm, because of the many new and fresh graves disturbed and thrown up by the fall thereof.' It seems that much of the tower had fallen into the main graveyard and that the affected graves were much less than six feet deep. The articles also contained the interesting clause that the purchaser was to use any rubbish to fill up the hollows at the east end of the churchyard, where there were as yet no burials and could also use that area as a temporary store for heaps of stones before they were removed. Other evidence suggests that the east end of the churchyard was the wettest area of the boggy churchyard and was not used until there was absolutely no other space to be had.

The roup was held on 12 February with four bidders. The work was finally knocked down to a baker, Thomas Anderson, for 3 guineas (£3.15p) and the contract between the Heritors, Town Council and Anderson was recorded in the minute book.:

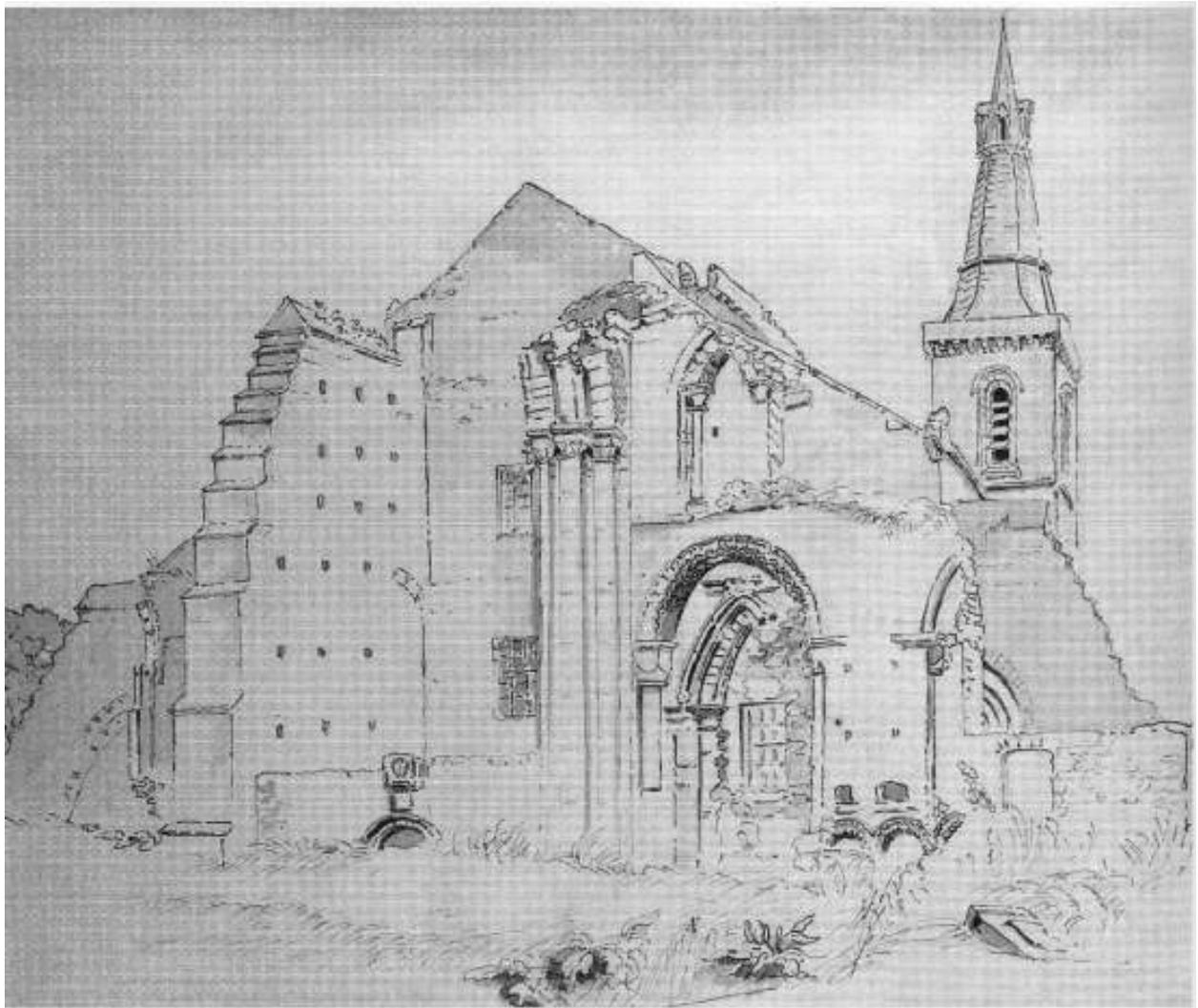
The said heritors and Town councillors foresaid hath sold to the said Thomas Anderson the stones of old steeple or staircase at the east end of the kirk of Dunfermline, lately fallen down, with liberty of a cart road to and from the gate of the St Salvatore churchyard to (ms torn) most commodious and where it will occasion least lifting of grave stones and to put up the stones in heaps or cairns upon the east end of the churchyard where there are no burial places.

For the which causes, and on the other part, the said Thos Anderson binds and obliges him and his heirs execs and successors qtsoever to redd out and carry off the said stones from

where they fell as soon as possible, at furthers betwixt and the first day of March next....to take down the tusk remaining of the said fall and make the same plain and not easily accessible by boys or ill designing people and shall cause support the pillar at the east end of the kirk adjoining to the sd fallen steeple or staircase below the sd tusk and to enclose the St Salvator kirkyard with a dyke as sufficient as the dyke at the east side of the gate thereof is and repair the foresaid gate and pend thereof and make them as sufficient as they were before the foresaid fall of the steeple, all betwixt & the first day of May next.

And further to carry off the rubbish of the foresaid steeple and spread it equally upon the road betwixt the porch door and the pend and to carry off the said stones from the said cairns or heaps at furthest betwixt and the first day of March 1754.

It would seem from the details given in these records that the tower that had fallen was a turnpike in the north transept that had provided access to its upper storey. The 'pend' mentioned would have been the vaulted ceiling of the lower storey and the 'gate' the doorway into the transept, which was also the entrance to the Satur churchyard. This door was known as the 'black yett' and was kept locked, the key being held by the beadle.



**The interior of the Satur Churchyard and the North Transept before it was demolished to make way for the new church in 1818.**

#### *Burials in the Satur Churchyard*

Burial in a church was a sign of high status but it was also forbidden in Scotland after the Reformation. There was a well-documented incident in 1660, when the widow of the Laird of Rosyth clandestinely buried her husband's corpse at night in the family's traditional place in Dunfermline's parish church, but other local dignitaries seem to have been content with burial places in the Satur churchyard. On 19 December 1654 the Kirk Session fixed the cost of a burial there for the landed gentry at 5 merks (£3.34p) and the cost of a family plot at £20, the

Session having the right to charge more if they thought the buyer's status warranted it. If a person subsequently sold his lands the new owner would have to pay the same price if he wanted the plot. 'And this without prejudice to them who have burials there before and have been in use to have burial there'. (For comparison of prices – a plot in the churchyard cost half a merk, ie 6/8d, and an actual burial a few shillings to the bellman and grave-diggers.)

Although it is clear that the Satur churchyard had already been used for burials by 1654 there is no record of the names of the plot owners. A Dr Barclay is mentioned in 1754 but there is no other record until January 1800 when William Hunt of Logie and John Stenhouse of North Fod were granted plots there by the Heritors to the north and south of 'Phyn's burial ground' (probably the Phin family of Limekilns). John Stenhouse paid 4 guineas for a plot six feet by nine feet and William Hunt 6 guineas for a piece nine feet square.

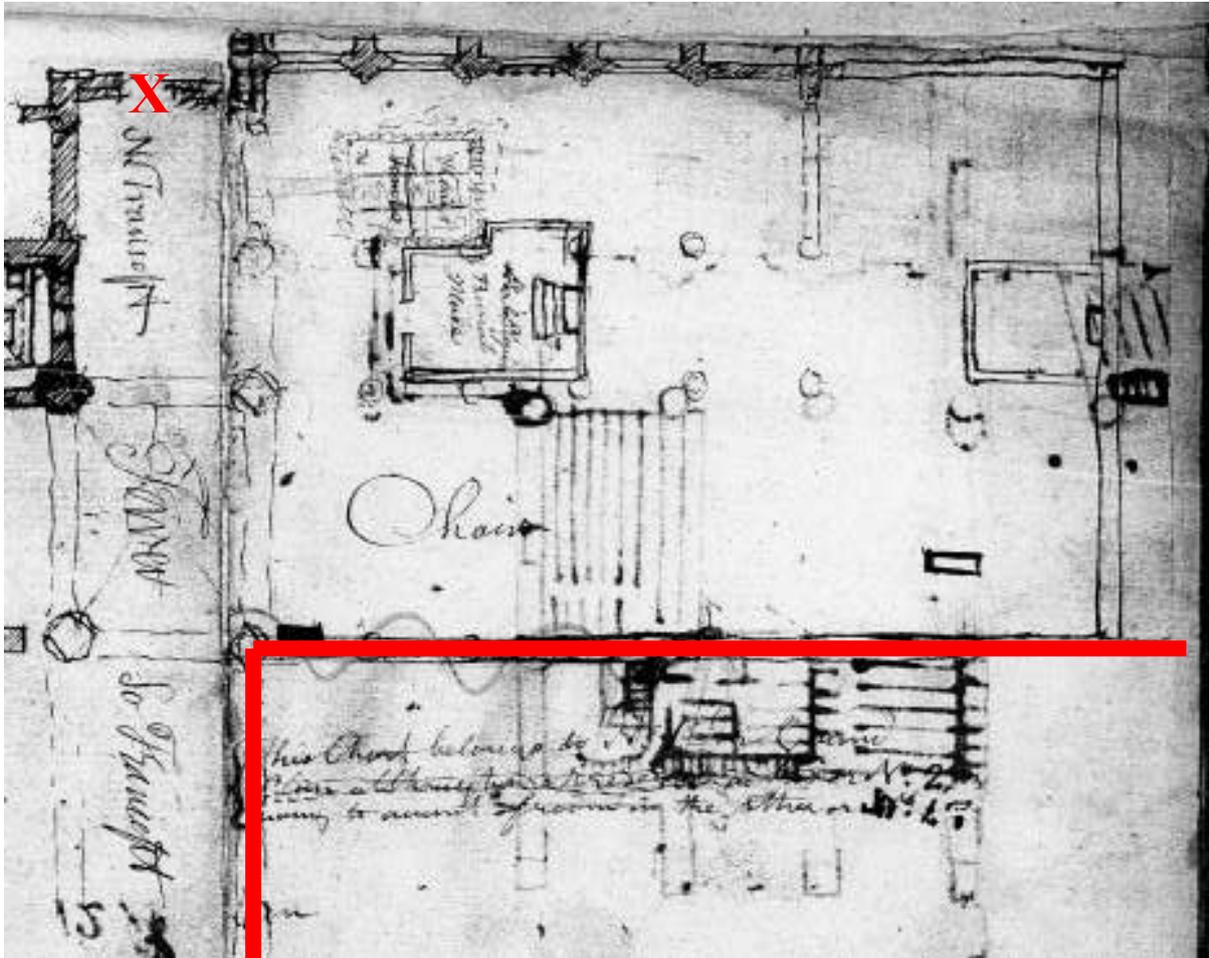
In 1802 Sir Charles Halket was given permission to enclose the Pitfirrane family ground and three years later Lord Elgin was allowed to add to the existing ground of his family to form a plot measuring 50 feet east to west and 19 feet north to south. The rights of the Halkets of Pitfirrane may well have extended back to the Reformation and of the Bruces of Broomhall possibly to the mid-seventeenth century. Lord Elgin was allowed his extension in 1802 on condition that he gave up an area at the east end of the church called Randiford's aisle, which had presumably formerly belonged to the family of Mentieth of Randiford, owners of Hill House.

#### *The Layout of the Satur Churchyard*

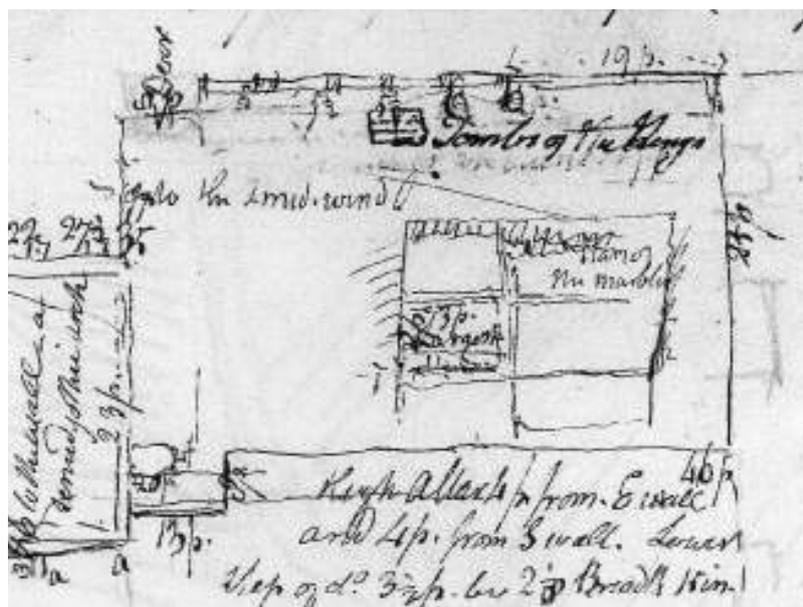
Drawings made in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries show the layout of the churchyard. The earliest was made in 1771 as part of a sketch plan of the town that was included in a huge plan of the Pittencrieff estate. Two significant features to note are the dogleg in the wall on the southern side and the placing of St Margaret's shrine within the curtilage.



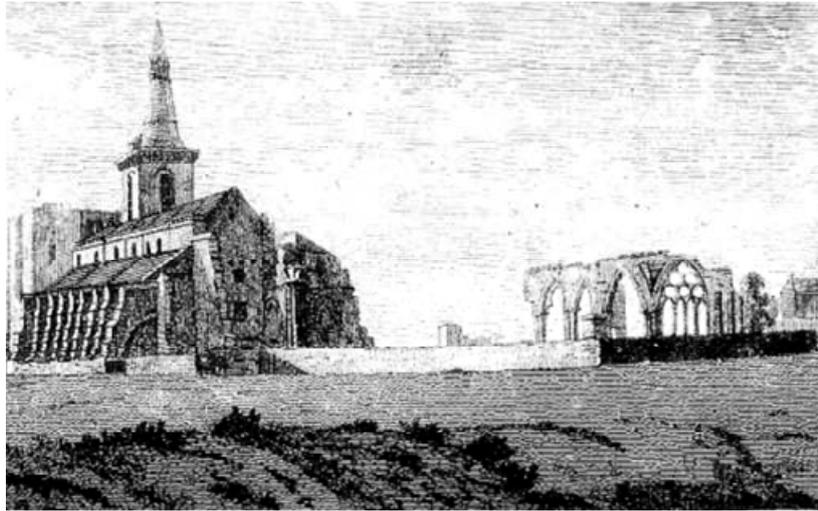
The sketch also shows the group of grave slabs that at the time were thought to cover the remains of eight Scottish kings and four windows of the northern aisle that were still standing in 1818 and were demolished to make way for the new church.



This drawing is one of a series of sketches of the Parish church and Satur churchyard made in 1805 and it shows the reason for the dogleg in the churchyard wall. It skirted the south transept of the Conventual church and continued east along the line of the outer wall of the southern aisle. The drawing also shows the position of the Black Yett entrance in the north transept of the Conventual church (X). (The confusing extra lines on the south side are bleed-through from an ink sketch of the layout of the Parish church on the other side of the paper.)



A sketch made by John Bain in 1790 clearly shows a dogleg in the Satur churchyard's southern wall but does not include the shrine of St Margaret. Bain was more interested in measurements than in accurate details.

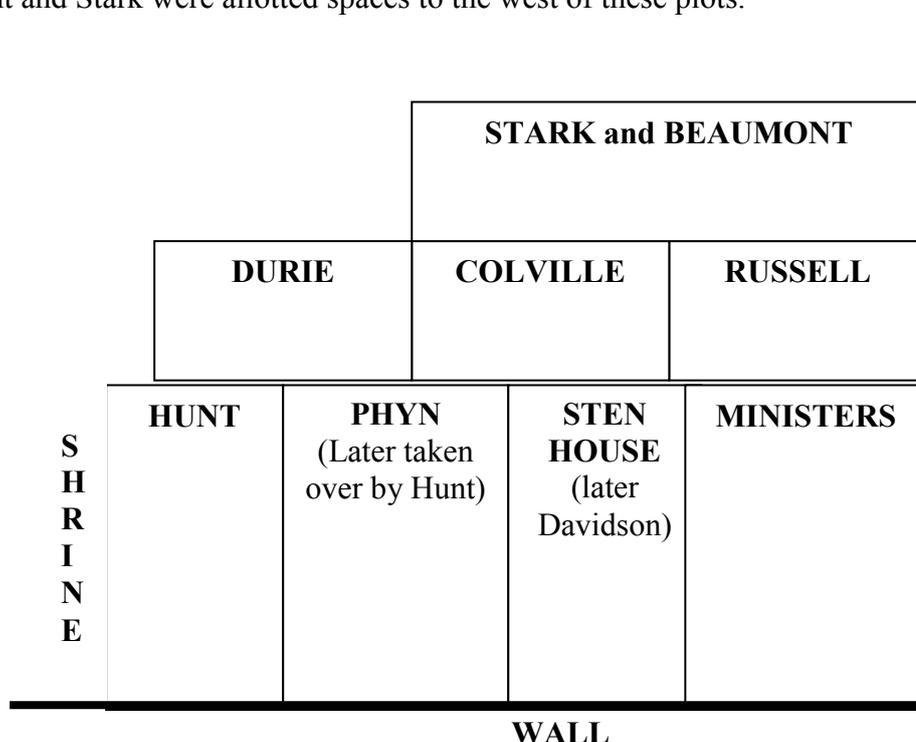


**This drawing, also dated 1790, shows the dogleg in the wall of the Satur churchyard and the inclusion of St Margaret's shrine within the wall**

*Burials Moved from Site of New Church 1818*

In 1816 Robert Russell was granted 6 grave rooms in the Satur churchyard but in 1818 they were removed, along with several others, to make room for the new church that was being built. Although their ownership and layouts have changed over the years, they are recognisable as a group of plots, some enclosed by railings, that can be seen immediately to the north of St Margaret's shrine.

The new grave plots lay within an area roughly 40 feet square in the northeast corner of the Satur churchyard, with a plot for the ministers and their families having its walls to north and east. To the south of the ministers' plot was the one that had been granted to Stenhouse of Fod in 1800. To the south of Stenhouse was the Phyn burial area and to the south of that the Hunt plot, also granted in 1800. The families of Russell, Colville of Lambhill, Durie of Craighuscar, Beaumont and Stark were allotted spaces to the west of these plots.



The ministers' plot now contains memorials to four ministers of the first charge of Dunfermline, James Thomson (1790), Allan McLean (1850) Peter Chalmers (1870) and James French (1880). There are also memorials to six young members of the Chalmers family. The Hunts later took in the Phyn plot in order to accommodate the burials of ten family members.

The Stenhouse plot came to the Davidsons. There were changes in the other areas as well, but the basic layout remains as it was planned in 1818, with large plots to the east and two smaller rows to the west..

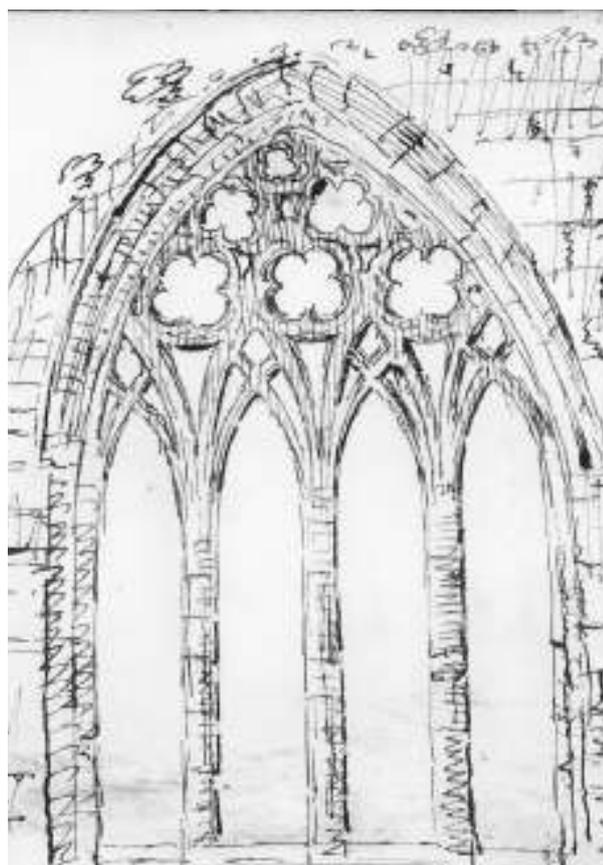


**The enclosed areas today. The Ministers area is on the extreme left. The portion containing the obelisk belonged to the Davidson family (formerly Stenhouse of Fod) and on the right is the ground of the Hunts of Logie/Pittencrieff (formerly partly Phyn).**

Heritors who had not been assigned to the new plots but who had rights of burial in the Satur churchyard were allowed to bury in the aisles of the old Parish church with the permission of the Kirk Session and three Heritors, one of which was to be the Provost. The graves were to be covered with flagstones on a level with the floor without railings of any kind of raised enclosure. Any commemorative tablets or monuments were to be placed on the walls of the church. The Earl of Elgin was allowed to build a family vault under the south transept of the new church.

*The Last Remnants of the Conventual Church and Satur Churchyard*

By the time the new Abbey church was being planned in 1818 all that remained of the Conventual church was the portion of the north transept pictured on page 4 and four windows of the north aisle, shown on the plan and drawing of page 5. Only one of the windows retained its tracery and it was sketched by John Bain in 1790.



### *The Royal Burials*

Much has been written about the group of gravestones that were thought to cover royal burials, which excited much interest in the past. The idea that they were all the resting places of kings has been shown to be erroneous, but they were probably the tombs of minor royalty.

The discovery of the tomb of Robert The Bruce and his reburial in the new church have also been covered exhaustively and Henderson in his *Annals of Dunfermline* gives a full account:

During the progress of clearing away the rubbish and levelling the area of the Psalter Churchyard (the site of the ancient Choir), preparatory to the erection of a new church on the site, the workmen, on the 17th of February, 1818, came accidentally on a vault, near the east end, where formerly the Great, or High Altar had stood. The vault was roughly put together, and of soft free-stone. In length it was found to be 7 feet 6 inches, and in breadth 2 feet 4½ inches. The cover consisted of two slab-stones of unequal size, and attached to them by lead fastenings were several large iron rings, which had served as handles for the purpose of lowering it. Some of these rings were in a state of utter decay, and some were quite detached from the cover. On removing the cover, another vault or built space was found, composed of the same kind of stone, but a little less in its dimensions, being only 7 feet in length, and 22½ inches in breadth. The outer vault was oblong and curved at the east end, the bottom of which was well paved with large slab-stones; but near the middle of it there was an open space or fracture nearly 2 inches in breadth.

In the inner vault or space lay the skeleton of a large body, about six feet long, encased or wrapt up in thin sheet-lead. The lead consisted of two thin coats, each about the tenth of an inch in thickness; the upper coat of lead was much more wasted than the under coating or wrapping; the under lead-wrapping was nearly entire, excepting at the breast, knees, and feet, where it was much decayed, exhibiting part of the skeleton in a state of high preservation; the lead-covering had sunk a little into the abdomen, and was there much depressed. In this inner vault were found several fragments of fine linen interwoven with gold (the *toile d'or*, or cloth of gold, used as a shroud for the body). Fragments of wood, in a very decayed state, were found all round the skeleton, and appeared to have been the remains of the costly wooden coffin which had encased his body; they were of oak, and attached to one or two of the pieces were large iron nails with broad heads, while one or two were found lying free, and below the skeleton. After this, the first inspection, the grave-vault was closed, and a careful watch kept over the vault by nightly detachments of the constables of the burgh.

The Barons of the Exchequer were immediately informed of the interest-

ing discovery. In their reply, they ordered the authorities in Dunfermline to place three rows of large flat stones over the vault to protect it from depredations or intrusive curiosity, and to get these fastened together by iron bars, till the intentions of the Barons "as to further procedure for a more thorough investigation were determined on." (See *Annals of Dunf.* date Nov. 5, 1819, for second investigation, ceremonies, and re-interment.)

Dr. Gregory, of Edinburgh, had been consulted regarding the best method of securing the remains from future decay. He recommended the Barons of the Exchequer to pour *melted pitch* on the remains, which was done—five barrels of pitch (about 1500 lbs.) being employed for that purpose. The new lead coffin was very large—almost 7 ft. long by 2 ft. 8 in. broad at the shoulders, and 2 ft. 4 in. deep. At the ceremony of the re-entombment were the Barons of the Exchequer, the King's Remembrancer, Dr. Gregory, Dr. Munro, Mr. Scoular, sculptor, Edinburgh, the Provost, Magistrates, Heritors, and other gentlemen of Dunfermline and neighbourhood. Mr. Scoular made a plaster cast of the Bruce's head previous to the *pitching* process. The King's Remembrancer, Sir Henry Jardine, in the works which he afterwards published regarding the re-entombment, says:—

In the coffin was first poured melted pitch, to the depth of 4 inches, and then the following articles were deposited:—

*Barbour's Life of Bruce*, 4th ed., 1714. (Given by Dr. Jamieson.)

*Lord Hailes' Annals of Scotland*. 2 vols. 8vo.

*Kerr's History of the Reign of King Robert the Bruce*. 2 vols. 8vo. 1811.

*The History of Dunfermline*, by the Rev. John Fernie. 8vo. 1815.

*The Edinburgh Almanack and Directory for 1819*.

Contemporary newspapers and coins were also put into the coffin.

The Skeleton was then placed upon the top of the leaden coffin, resting upon the wooden board by which it had been raised; and, in order to gratify the curiosity of an immense crowd of people who had assembled outside the church, the south and north doors of the church were thrown open, and the people were allowed to enter by the south door, passing along the side of the vault, and retiring by the north, which they did in the most decent and orderly manner.

As soon as the public curiosity was gratified, the vault was levelled to the floor, which was also taken up and laid level, and upon the top of it was placed a bed of bricks laid in mortar, on which, and in the exact situation in which the skeleton was found, the new leaden coffin was placed, and the body carefully deposited in it. It was then filled up within two inches of the top with melted pitch, and the top soldered on.

The sides of the vault were then built up with bricks, the whole arched over, and a strong wall 18 inches thick was built all round the brick-work. (See *Report of the King's Remembrancer Relative to the Tomb and Skeleton of King Robert the Bruce*, published at Edinburgh in 1821, pp. 39-43; see also the *Histories of Dunfermline*.) The site of this vault, containing the remains of King Robert the Bruce, is under the pulpit-stair of the present Abbey Church.

At the time of the re-entombment of "The Bruce," the new church walls were about seven feet high all round. It was resolved, shortly after the discovery of the remains, to have the new walls raised to this height in order to keep back the pressure of the crowd at the re-entombment; hence the cause of the 626 days elapsing between the discovery and the re-interment.