Playing with the past

This is the place to find out about the lighter side of historical investigations. Here are places to visit, crafts from the past, pages for 'Young Players' and other activities and information to help bring the past into the present

Places to Visit

Young Players

Design for the Past

Crafts

Superstitions

Traditions and Reminiscences

Maps of the Town

Places to visit

Pittencrieff Park

This beautiful park (known locally as The Glen) was bought for the town by Andrew Carnegie and officially opened by his wife, Louise. Carnegie had been born in a cottage on the eastern edge of the park, which was then in private hands, and had memories of being chased out by its owner, James Hunt, so he had great satisfaction in making it available to all the people of Dunfermline.

The estate of Pittencrieff is almost as old as the burgh of Dunfermline itself, having been given by David I to the de Oberville family in the early twelfth century. The estate once stretched from Cluny in the north right down to the shore of the Forth at Brucehaven near Limekilns, but the park comprises the 'policies' or grounds of Pittencrieff House, which was built in 1610 as a two-storey house, the third storey being added later. The house was once a musuem but owing to lack of disabled access only the ground floor is now open, housing a display about the ecology of the park. The dining room on the first floor has a magnificent seventeenth century plaster ceiling and there are interesting nineteenth century plasterwork murals on the top floor, but owing to compliance with current access legislation these are now no longer available for public view.

The policies have been remodelled by successive owners and the remains of what may be an early garden layout have been identified by geophysical survey on the slope to the south of the house and it is know that there was once a ha-ha at the top of the slope. The grounds as we see them today are essentially as laid out in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although the doocot which stands near the northern wall of the park dates from the eighteenth century. To the east of Pittencrieff House is a formal garden with a large and well-stocked glasshouse/conservatory on its northern side. The fishpond on the western side of the house was built in the 1930s after the stables

which used to stand there burnt down.Further to the west is the Glen Pavilion, built in the 1930s as a Pavilion and Bandstand, adjoining the existing 1920s tearoom which replaced an earlier wooden structure. The Pavilion contains a large hall with a stage, an outdoor stage and small amphitheatre and a tearoom. It is used for large exhibitions and musical events . The gorge of the Tower Burn is planted with a variety of trees and shrubs and has a rustic summerhouse. The children's play-park was opened by the Queen in 2003.

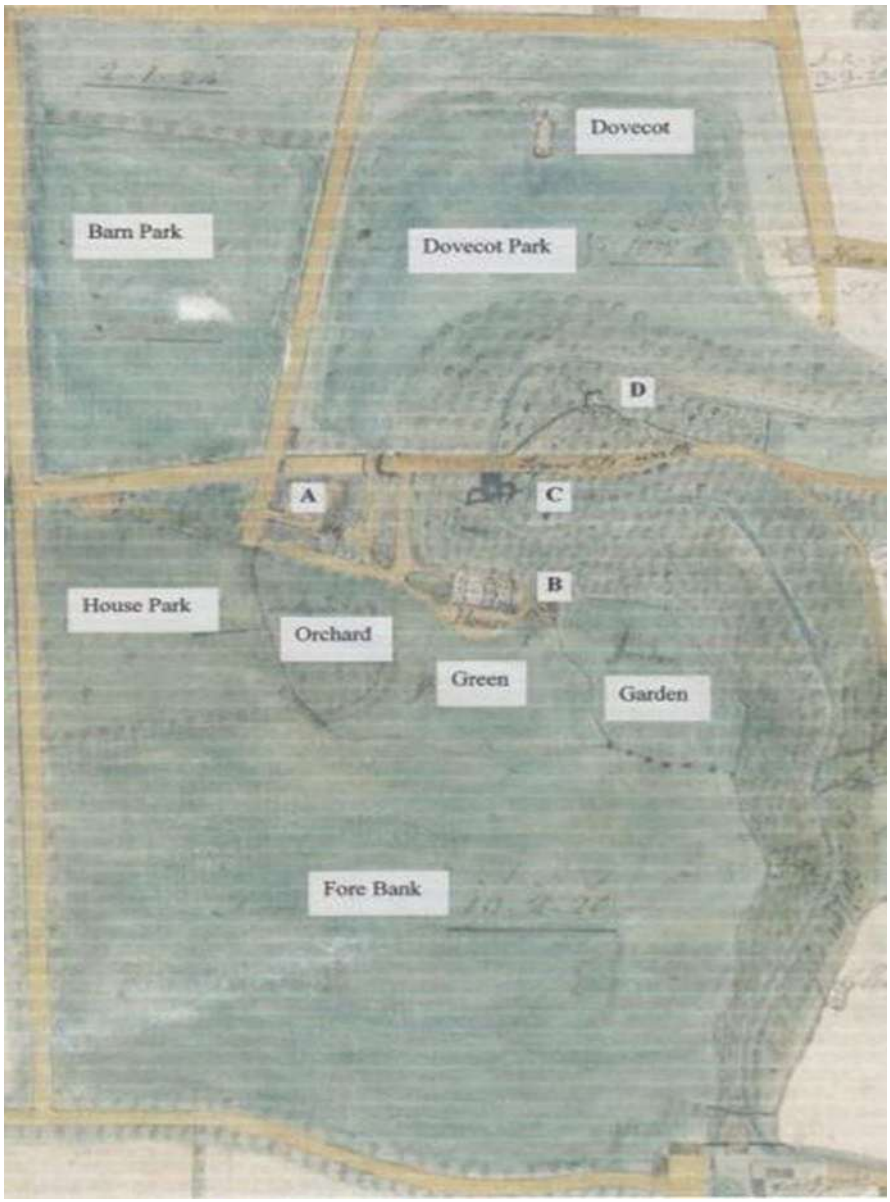

Figure 01. The Glen in 1771

A Stables and outhouses
B Pittencrieff House
C The Double Bridge
D The Canmore Tower
For more pictures of The Glen go to the Images section

The Public Park

This pleasant small park lies at the eastern end of the town and was bought in 1863 with money left to the Town by Mr Kerr of Middlebank. For centuries much of this area was open fields known as the Halbank and Briary Hill, and the remains of medieval rig and furrow ploughing (rig) are still very evident. Amid much controversy a relief road was built over part of the park in 1986 to divert through traffic away from the New Row and the eastern end of the town. It is worth a visit just to see the charming bandstand, which was the gift of Louise Carnegie in 1888, and there is also a play-park for children.

Figure 02.The Bandstand and the rigs in the Public Park

Figure 03 Children's play park in the Public Park

For more pictures of The Public Park go to the Images section

The Palace and Fratery Complex

The remains of the Abbey refectory and the royal Palace lie largely open to public view, but it is worth paying the entrance fee to see the hidden parts -the rooms over the pend, with their original fireplaces and windows, the vaulted undercroft of the kitchen, with its carved roof bosses and the entrance to the 'secret' room, the huge fireplaces in the kitchen itself and the collections of carved stones from the ruins of the thirteenth century Abbey church.

Figuere 04. The undercroft of the kitchen

Figure 05. Drawing of the carved stone from the collection, depicting the Annunciation

Figure 06. Ornate coat of arms and statue in the carved stone collection

The masons' marks from the building of the refectory complex are still visible on the individual stones of the cellar and there is another undercroft at the far end of the refectory cellar, which houses more carved stones. The pulpitum from which devotional books were read to the monks as they ate is distinguished by its ornate window carvings. From the road outside are visible the remains of the magnificent drain which flushed the reredorter (lavatories) of the monastery

Figure 07. Mason's marks and graffiti in the Fratery

The floors of the Palace have now disappeared, but it was a favourite residence of Ann of Denmark, James VI's queen and some of her children were born there. The window of the room where Charles I was born is still to be seen. There is a private lavatory (garderobe) at the northern end of the palace.

All the areas of the complex are explained by excellent display boards.

The Abbey Church

This is a building of two halves. The western half is the nave of the church that was built by David 1 for the Abbey in the twelfth century and the eastern half is a nineteenth century reconstruction of

the thirteenth century monk's church (choir) which used to stand on the site. Outside its eastern end lie the remains of the thirteenth century shrine of St Margaret. David I's church was used by both

the monks and the townspeople, the monks sitting in the choir below the high altar at the eastern end and the people being confined to the western end, with a screen between the two sections.

Figure 08 The interior of the twelfth century nave

The shrine of St Margaret attracted pilgrims from all over the British Isles and beyond. Seven Scottish monarchs were buried in the monks' church, including Robert the Bruce, whose tomb can still be seen. After the Reformation of 1560 the townspeople continued to use their parish church and the monks' choir fell into ruin, helped along by the re-using of much of its stone in the houses of the people of Dunfermline. By the end of the eighteenth century only a couple of tottery walls remained and in 1818 the decision was taken to demolish the ruins and build a new church on the site.

Once the new church was completed it became the parish church and the old church was left unused. Although the exterior of the nineteenth century church is medieval in appearance, internally it is laid out as a conventional Presbyterian church, centred on the pulpit and with galleries round three sides. The twelfth century church is now empty and invites the use of imagination to visualise what the interior once looked like. The decorated pillars reflect David I's close relationship with Durham at the time it was built. It is believed that David employed a mason who had been involved in building Durham cathedral.

The patterns carved into stone last for centuries, but the paintings which brightened much of the rest of the building has long disappeared. In medieval times it was normal to paint stone carvings in bright colours and to gild parts of it with gold. There is no reason to believe that the church at Dunfermline was any different and in fact some medieval roof painting still survives at the eastern end of the north aisle. Robert Henryson, the late fifteenth century schoolmaster and poet, wrote about walking in 'an Abbey' (presumably Dunfermline) and reading texts and mottoes painted on the

walls. The high altar stood at the eastern end of the church and there were numerous small altars in chapels formed by erecting screens between the pillars and the side walls. Each altar would have had a coloured frontal, adding to the colourful general effect.

Figure 09 The vaulted roof of the north porch

The monuments in the old kirk include include a very ornate eighteenth century specimen in the porch, to bailie Robert Adie. In the church itself are a seventeenth century monument to Sir William Schaw, royal Master of Works and and a late sixteenth century memorial to Robert Pitcairn, last commendator of the Abbey.

There are graveyards to the north, south and east of the Abbey. The southern and eastern areas were not started until the beginning of the nineteenth century but the northern graveyard has been in use for nearly a thousand years. It contains several seventeenth and eighteenth century gravestones, including one which re-used a fragment of a fourteenth century grave slab with an ornate circular cross-head carved on it. There is an ornate eighteenth century monument to Ralph Erskine.

Figure 10. Ralph Erskine's Memorial

Figure 11 Eighteenth century gravestones in the northern kirkyard

For more pictures of the Abbey see the Images section

Abbot House

This house in the Maygate was once thought to have been the residence of the Abbots of Dunfermline since the early days of the Abbey. Archeological excavation, however, has established that there was no building on the site before the second half of the fifteenth century and that the first use of the ground floor of the house was as a smith's workshop, or similar industrial premises. The first phase of the building was a simple two-roomed structure, probably with corresponding rooms on the first floor, which was periodically extended over the years, as the Maygate became a 'desirable area', to produce the imposing residence we see now.

Much of the first floor is given over to an excellent series of room settings which depict the history of the Abbey and of the house itself over the centuries. Tickets for this tour of the house are available from the shop at the eastern end of the building. The ground floor is largely occupied by a very popular cafe which serves beverages, home baking and and an extensive lunch menu of freshly-prepared hot and cold dishes.

School parties regularly visit the Abbot House to learn about life in the Abbey and in medieval Dunfermline and various events are centred on the building throughout the year. For more details visit the Abbot House website.

St Margaret's Cave

In the car park behind the city hotel is the entrance to a cave which was said to have been used by St Margaret as a retreat for prayer and quiet contemplation. It is open from 10.00am to 4.00pm from April to October.

Carnegie Birthplace Museum

The weaver's cottage where Andrew Carnegie was born has been greatly extended and houses a museum of his life and work. The original cottage is furnished as it would have been when he lived in it, with a weaving room on the ground floor and living rooms above. The museum displays include a video of Carnegie's life and much fascinating information about him and his achievements. Visit the Carnegie Birthplace Museum website

Return to Playing with the Past.

Young Players

Find it in the Glen

Here are some pictures of objects in The Glen (Pittencrieff Park). On the next page is a map of The Glen with the locations of the objects marked. See if you can find them. There are also some questions for you to answer if you want to.

Figure 12.

Figure 13.

Figure14.

Figure 15.

Figure 16.

Figure 17

Figure 18.

Figure 18

Figure 19

Map of the Glen

Match the numbers on the map to the pictures on the previous page and see if you can answer the questions. (Ask an adult to help you if you get stuck)

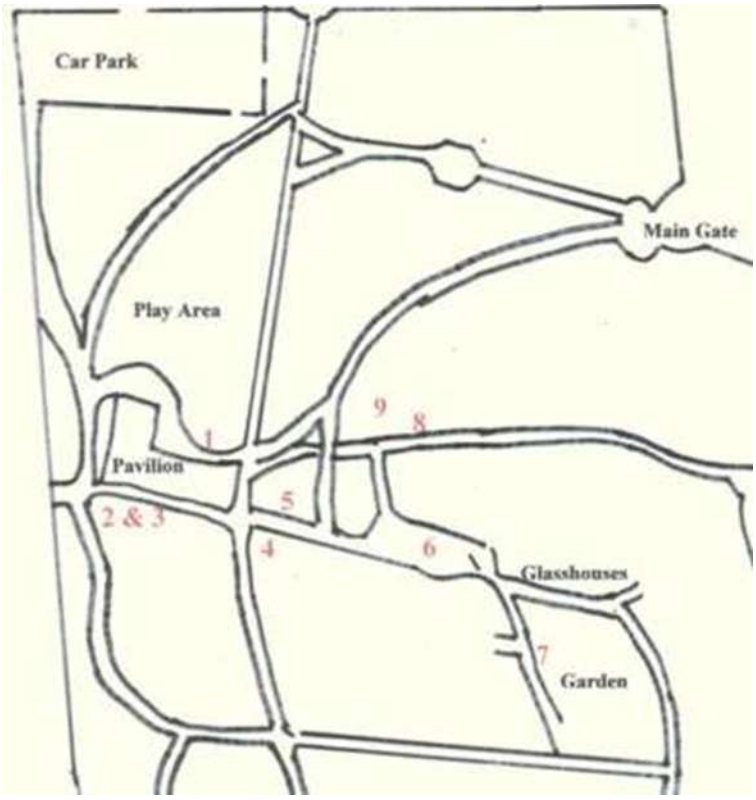

Figure 20. Map of the Glen

1 Of what object is this a part?

2 What instrument is the lady playing? Do you know its Scottish name ?

3 How many of these objects can you see here? What are they?

4 What country does this roof remind you of ? Do you know what kind of building this is?

5 Look at the boy's foot. What kind of creature is he? (Hint, Mr Tumnus in 'The Lion, the Witch andthe Wardrobe was one of these

6 Have you seen patterns like the ones on this stone anywhere else? Can you guess what kind of stone it is

7 What animal heads can you see on this object. How many large ones are there

8 Why would it be very dangerous to ignore this notice?

9 At what time of year would this building be most used?

Answers on page 17

Now and Then

Can you match up the pictures of old things with their modern equivalents. ANSWERS on page 19

Figure 21 (A)

Figure 21 (A)

Figure 22(B)

Figure 23 (C)

Figure 24 (D)

Figure 25 (E)

Figure 26 (F)

Figure 27 (3)

Figure 28 (1)

(Figure 29 (6)

Figure 30 ()2)

Figure 31 (4)

Figure 32 (5)

Colouring Pages

The next three pages have pictures for you to print out and colour in. The picture on this page is from Kirsty and Craig go back to Medieval Dunfermline, an exciting story book with a lot of pictures to colour. If you would like to buy this book, find out more in the News section on the Home page.

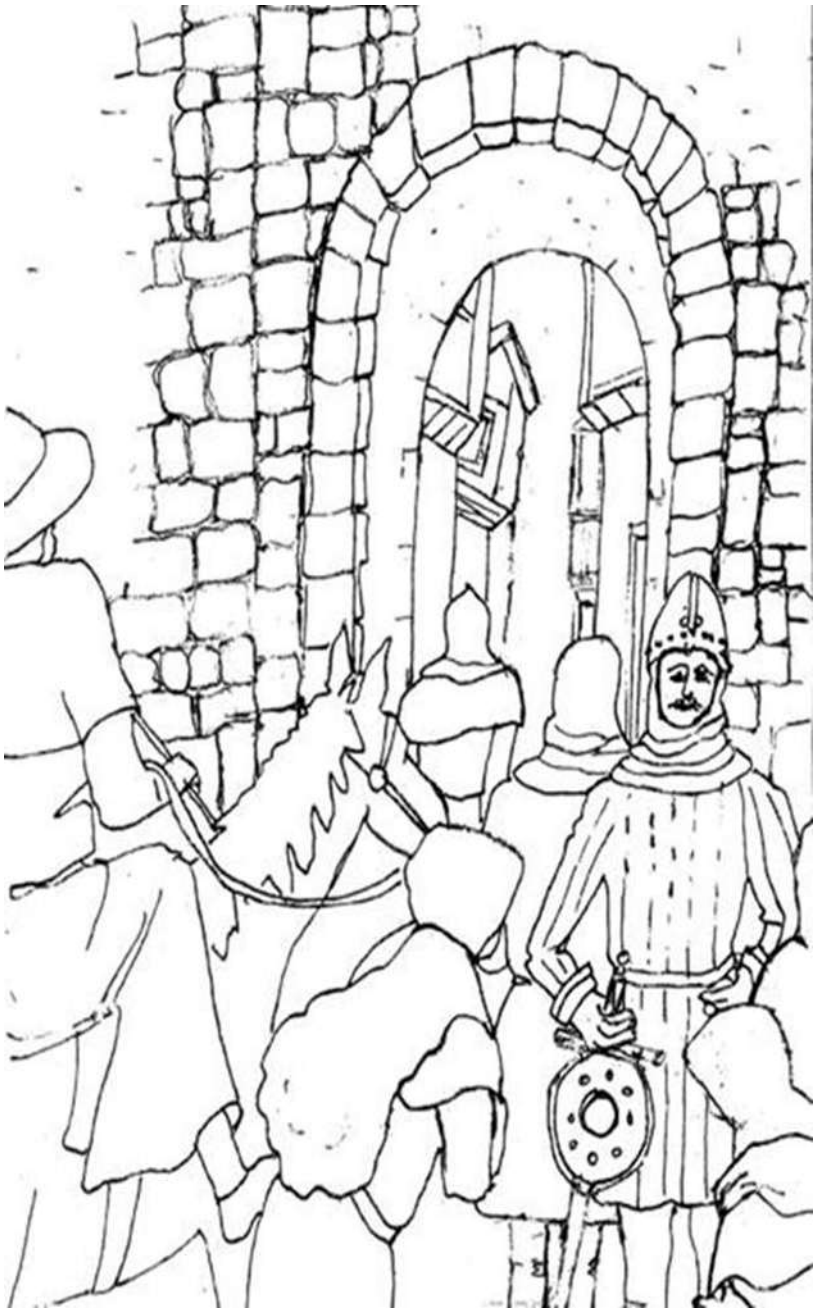

Figure 33 More Colouring This interlace pattern is from a damask cloth woven in Dunfermline.

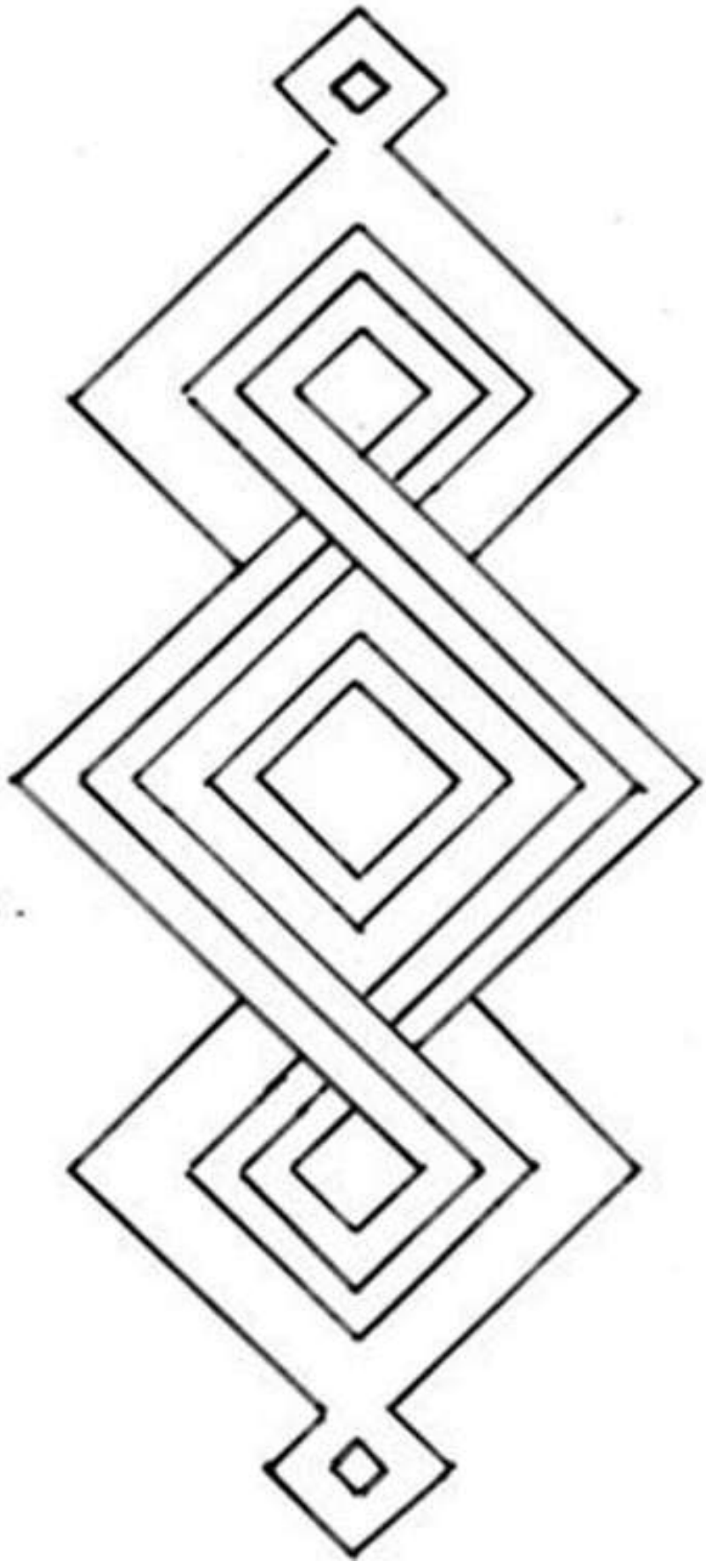

Figure 34. And Another One to Colour

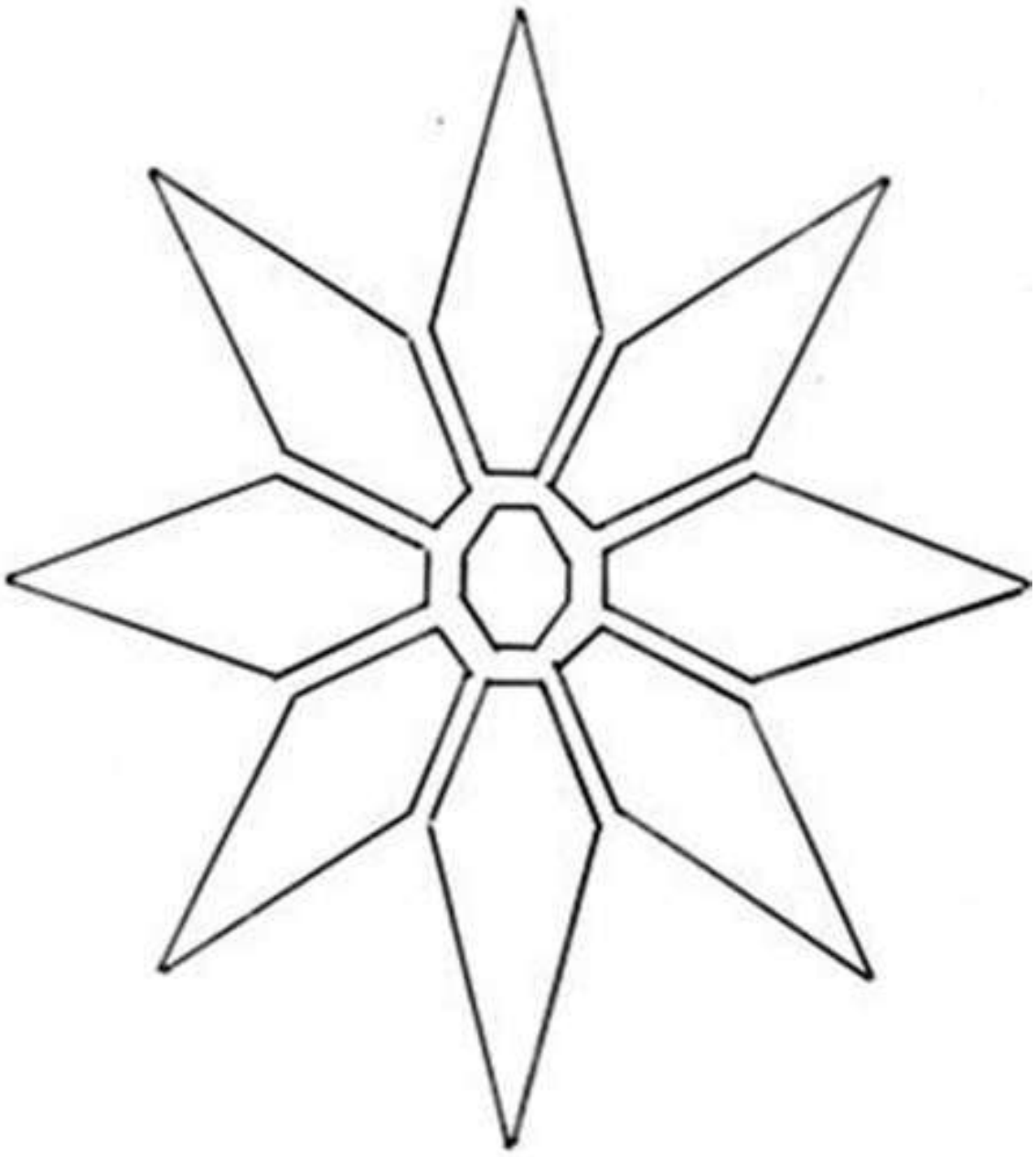

Figure 35 Another damask pattern, this time a star

Answers to pages10 through 13.

1 Is the wheel of a small steam locomotive

2 The lady is playing a harp. The Scottish harp is called a clarsach

3 There are two of these objects. They are column finials

4 Roofs like this are common in China. The building is a small kiosk

5 The boy is a faun, a creature from Greek myth.

6 You would see patterns like this on the beach at low tide. The stone is sandstone

7 The larger animal heads are lions. There are 5 of them, 10 if you count the ones on the backs.

8 The parapet is of a bridge over a deep gorge.

9 This is a summer house.

Answers to pages 14 through 18.

Goes with D, a ginger beer bottle

Goes with E, an old street light

Goes with A, a carpet sweeper

Goes with C, a stone hot water bottle

Goes with F, a Victorian knitting machine

Goes with B, an old tin bath

Return to Playing with the Past.

Design from the Past :

Old buildings offer a rich source of designs. Here are some from around Dunfermline.

Stonework

Figure 36 Norman carving from the Abbey

Figure 37 From the plinth of Ralph Erskine's statue

Figure 38 Another Norman Carving

Figure39 Another Norman carving From the Abbey west steps

Figure 40 Detail from window surround

Ironwork

Figure 41 Roundel from the Abbey wet gate

Figure 42 Roundel from the Glen north gate

Figure 43 Downpipe bracket, City Chambers

Figure 44 Downpipe bracket, Women's Institute

Figure 45 Window, Erskine church

Other Designs:

Figure 46 Damask Pattern

Figure 46 Damask Pattern

Figure 47 Stained glass, Viewfield Museum

Figure 48 Stained glass, Viewfield Museum

Return to Playing with the Past.

Crafts:

Embroidery

Needlework and embroidery were an inevitable part of a woman's life until the early twentieth century. To prepare a girl for this work she worked samplers while she was young in order to practice the stitches she would need later. Here are some motifs from eighteenth and nineteenth

century samplers in the Dunfermline Museum's collection

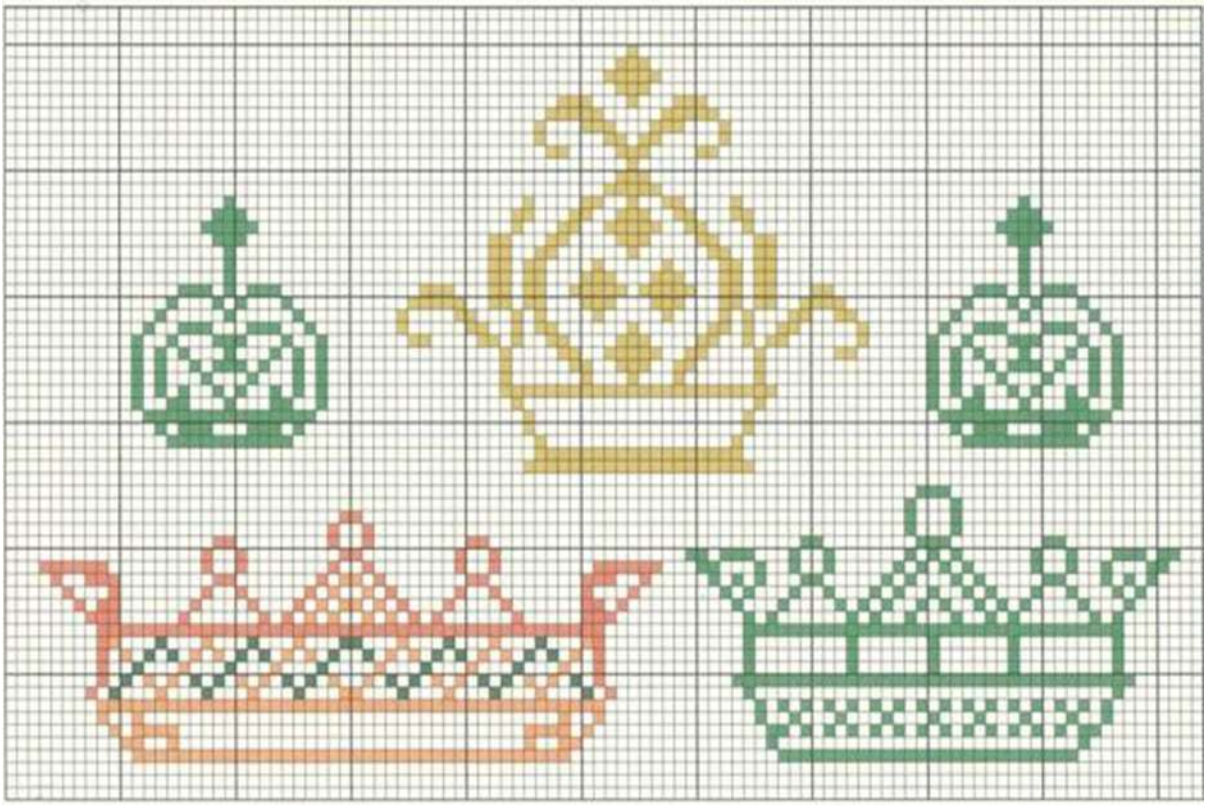

Figure 49 Crown motifs were used to mark the linen in aristocratic households.

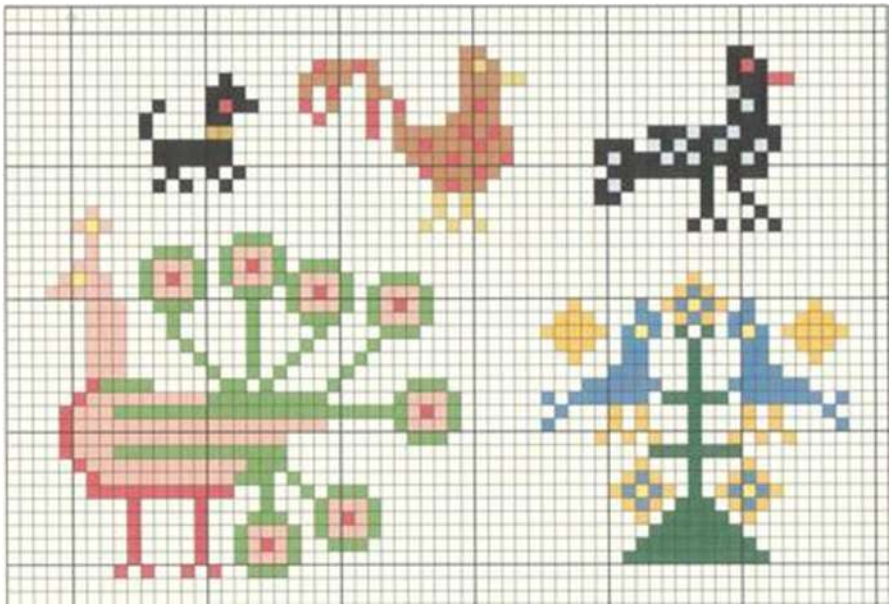

Figure50 Animals

Figure 51 Flowers

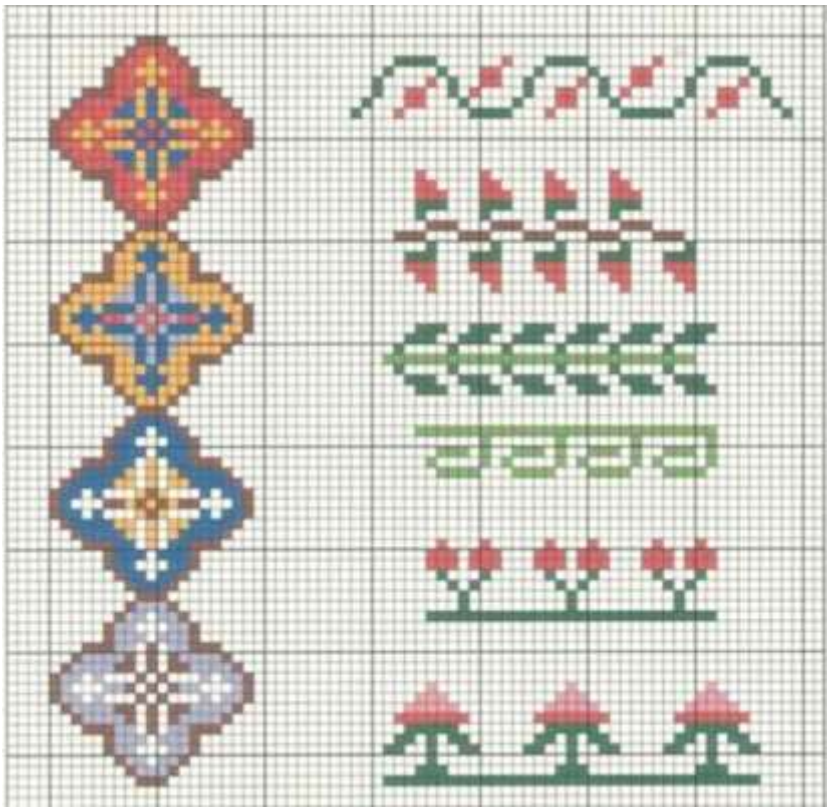

Figure 52 Borders. The motifs on the left can be adapted as an allover pattern

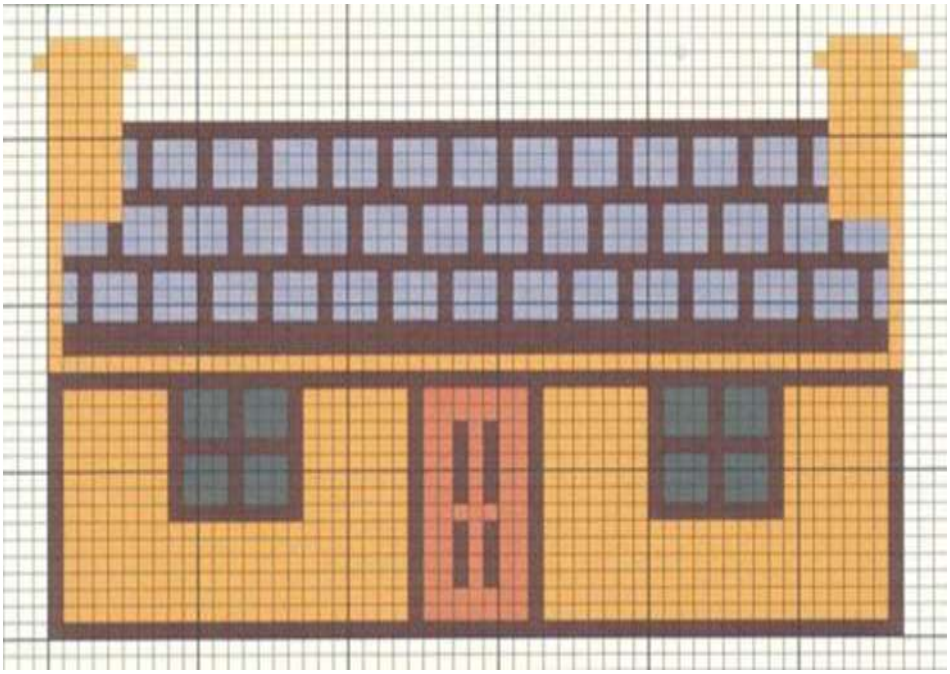

Figure 53 Cottage

Figure 54 Some of the motifs combined Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

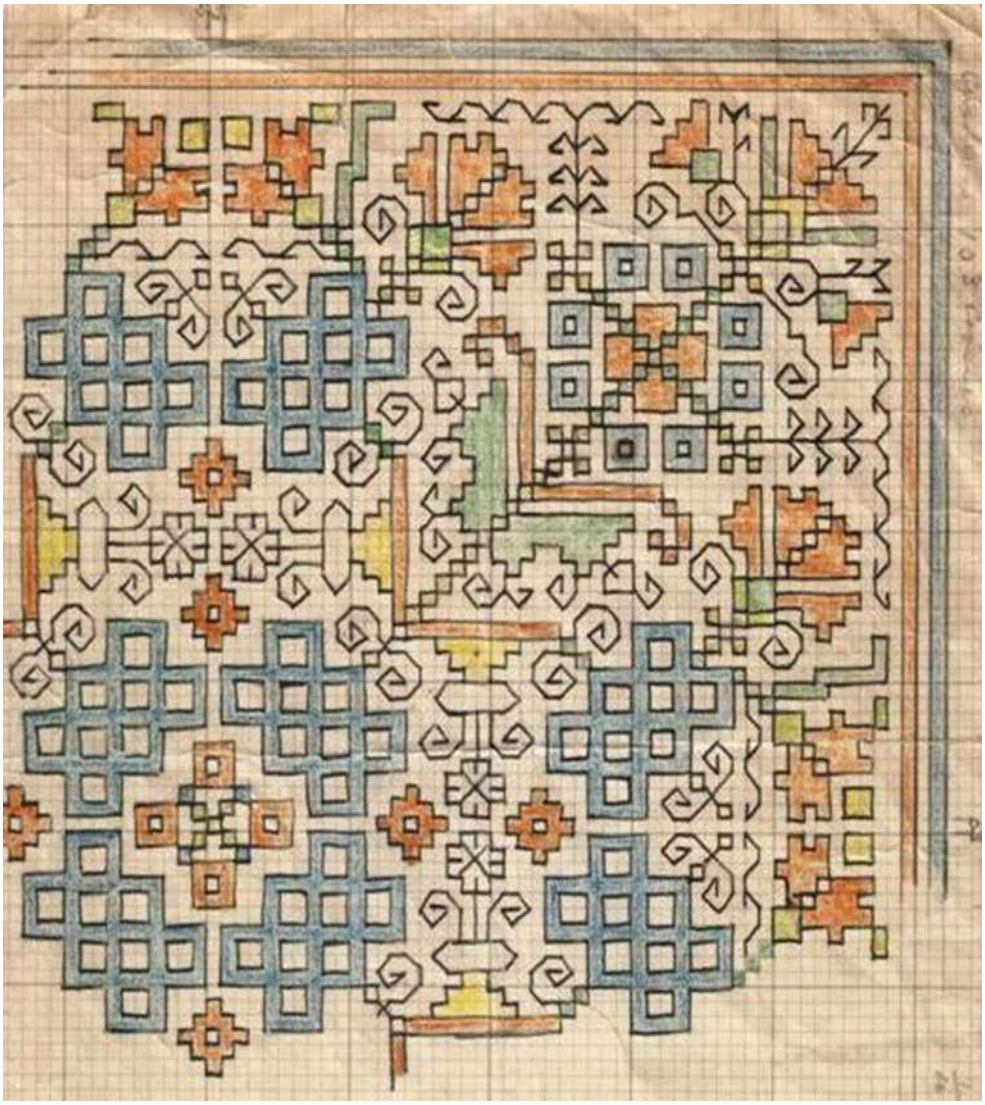

Figure 55 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

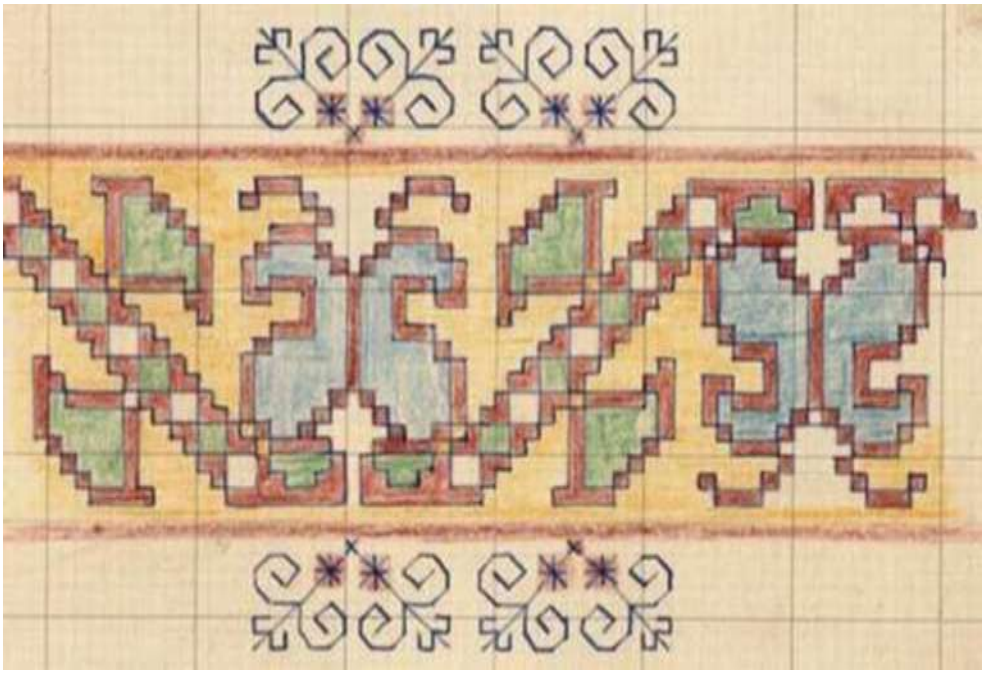

Figure 56 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

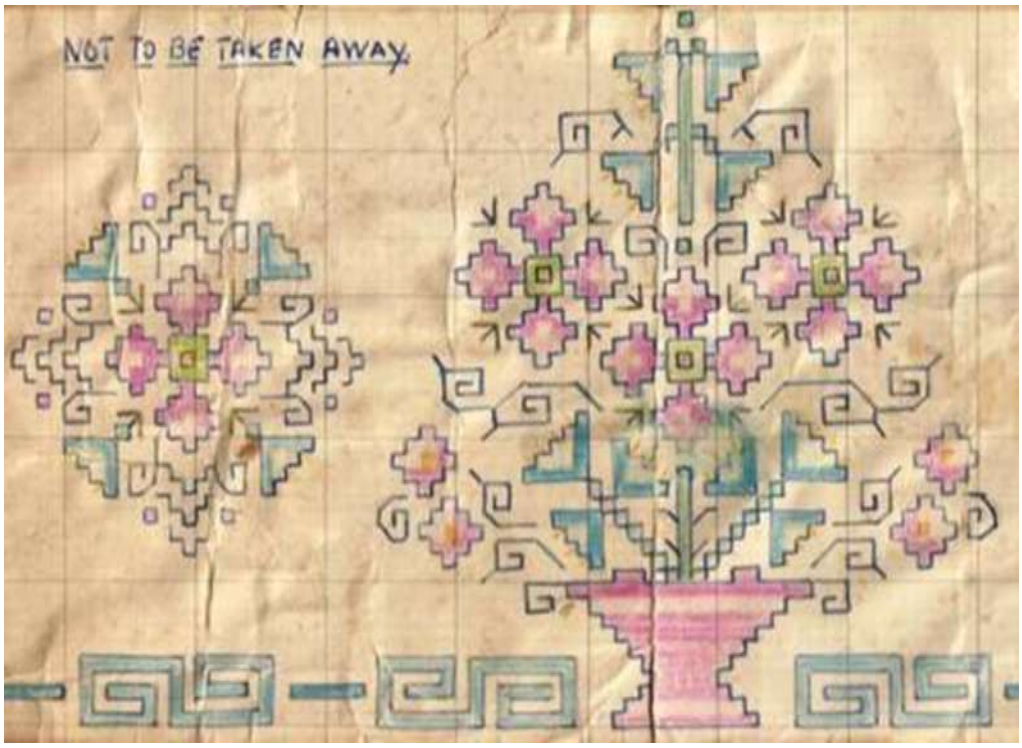

Figure 57 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

Figure 58 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

Figure 59 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

Figure 60 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

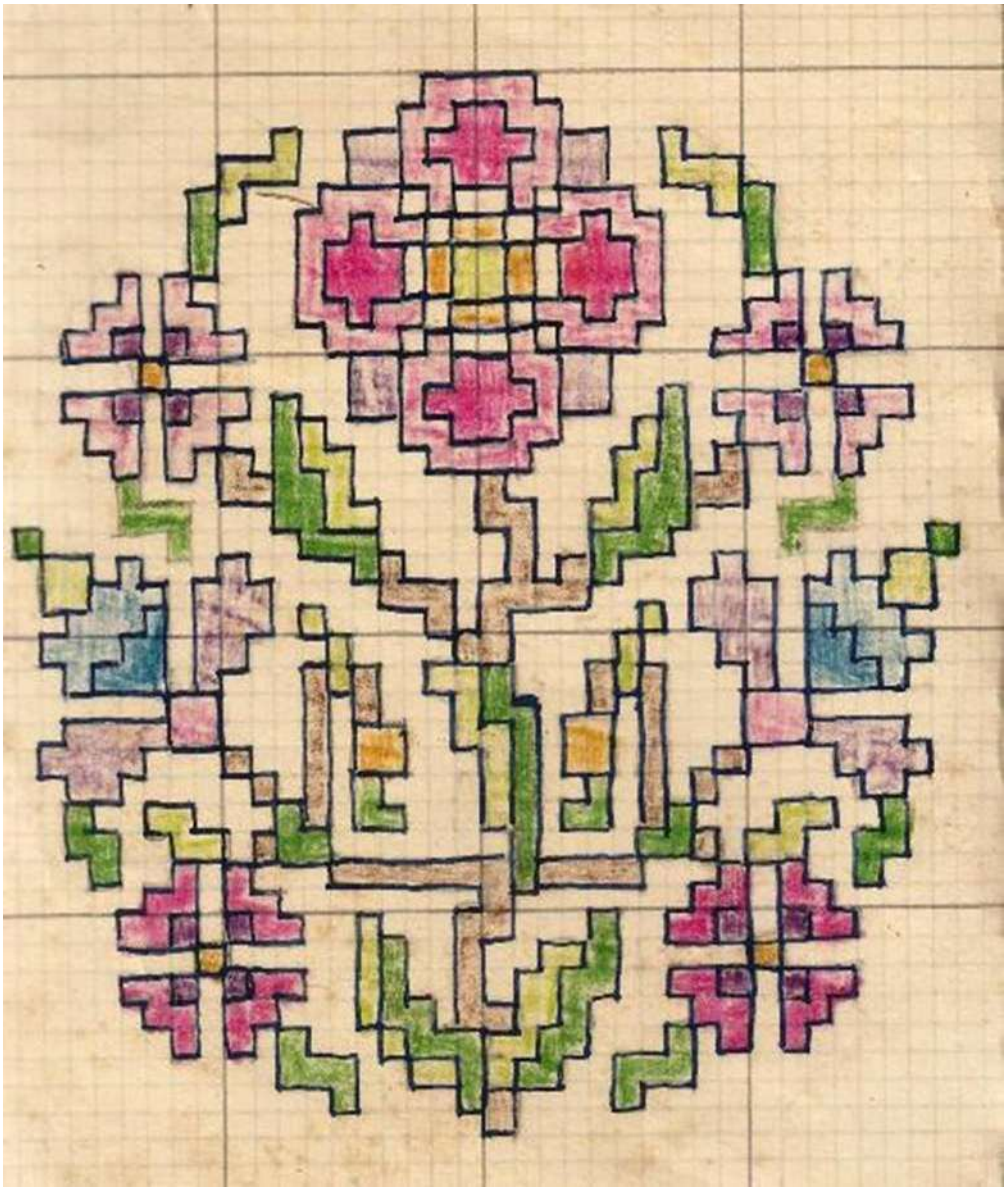

Figure 61 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

Figure 62 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

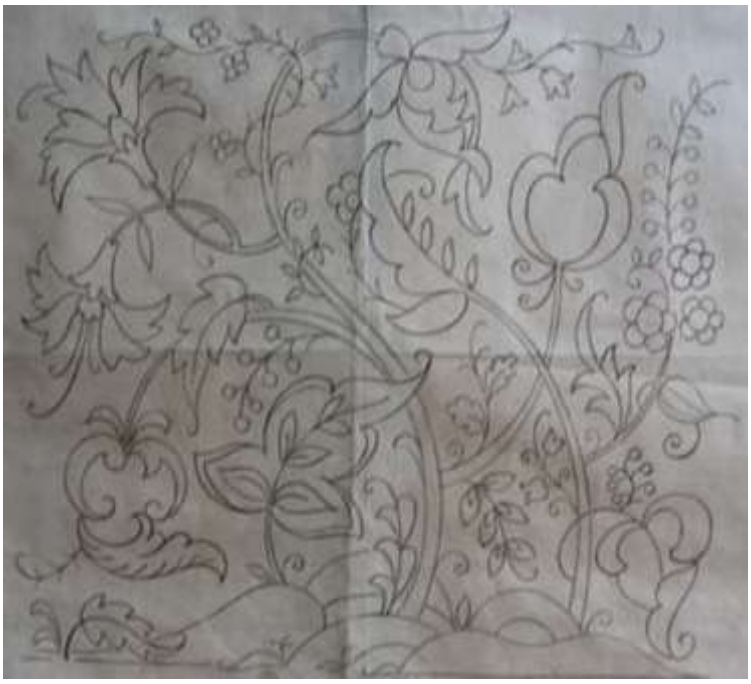

Figure 63 Cross Stitch Designs used at the Carnegie Trust Craft School

Return to Playing with the Past.

Superstitions:

Cases from the Kirk Session Records

3 January 1643

Margaret Gotterstones wife of David Cochran weaver, has been accused of using a superstitious form with her maidens that night that she was married, in casting her left hose over her shoulder on them, signifying thereby that upon whom of them it fell should be first married. The said Margaret being posed and examined thereupon confessed she had mind of no ill in so doing and that she did it not of herself but through the instigation of her maidens who were with her, viz Janet Henrison, Christine Mudie, Janet Horn, Agnes Kinsman, Janet Mudie, Janet Taylor. Who confessed that they never saw such a thing done before but at Janet Fyg's marriage, and the said Janet being likewise examined thereupon deponed that her maidens bade her do it. In order to prevent further scurrility, profane superstitions and idle fashions and freets, lest the devil should wind himself in piece and piece and take advantage to beguile silly ignorant bodies thereby, in making them to believe in such idle toys' ordered them all to kneel down and ask forgiveness of God and the session, which they did and promised never to do the like again. If they do it again they will have to make public repentance in sackcloth and pay a fine. This to be intimated to the people.

23 April 1643

Christian Smith deponed that she came to Elspeth Inche wife of Robert Shorthouse and did wash and rub her head with wash and oil olive to put the anger out of it, and also did wash and rub therewith her shoulders and legs'. The Session referred this case to the Presbytery for advice as to how to proceed.

2 July 1643

It is ordered that if any shall cast up the sek goun (sack gown) to Robert Shorthouse, mocking and scorning him therewith, shall be liable to censure and modification (fining) of the session'. On 23 July it was minuted that Robert Shorthouse, had sat in sackcloth two for Sundays in the public place of repentance for consulting and seeking charms for his wife, he should have sat before the pulpit, but he was pitied'.

1 October 1643

Christian Speare has sat three Sundays in sackcloth on the public place of repentance, as ordered by the presbytery, for seeking charms from the wife of Kilbuk called Drummond, a witch and consulting with her for health to her husband called Robert Harper, who lately became dumb and wanted the power of his side (ie he had suffered a stroke). A Treatment for Insanity!

13 August 1648

Elspeth Ritchie wife of !ndrew _urn in Easter Gellet is 'distracted'. She went with Robert Ritchie in Aberdour her brother, John Burn her son and John McKenlaw her servant, to Strenchill Well* on the Water of Machany on the west side of Strathearn and to the chapel of Auchterderran to get remedy unlawfully and superstitiously for her madness (which she has often taken before and now is extremely distracted since she went that unlawful way). Her husband allowed her to go even though

he was forbidden by Mr Robert Kay, minister. He also allows her ‘to go loose this long time bygone and yet does, cursing, blaspheming and abusing her neighbours, and that he uses no means to hold her fast and quiet in a house.

Two days later Andrew Burn was questioned as to why he allowed her to go to the well and chapel. He said he knew of her going but it was not with his consent. Asked why he allows her to go loose for so long troubling her neighbours, he answered that he now intended to have fetters and shackles made for her soon. He is ordered to do so and to keep her in his house.

On 20 August her brother admitted that he went with her and she drank from the well after sunset and before sunrise the next morning and then went to the chapel and was bound there. John McKenlaw her servant said that he took her on his horse at his master’s order. She drank from the well and washed her head with the water. Then they went into the chapel and her brother bound her feet together and her hands behind her back. They stayed there two days. John Burn her son corroborated their evidence.

The case was referred to the Presbytery and on 27 August the minister reported that the presbytery thinks that steps should be taken to curb the visiting of Strenchill Well and Auchterderran. On 3 September it was reported that Andrew Burn had still not 'detained and fastened' his wife as ordered by the presbytery. Over a month later he had still not appeared before the Session to explain himself and the land bailie was ordered to have Burn's wife fettered 'being so extremely distracted'. Burn himself was to be arrested by the magistrates. He finally came before the session on 29 October and was sharply rebuked for continuing to allow his wife out of the house and not fettering her. The land bailie Mr William Wardlaw of _almule promised to ‘take order’ with him.

Burn was ordered to go to Walter Dalgleish, the land clerk within the next two days and act himself to bind her and hold her fast in his house that she come not forth to the wronging of her neighbours and the derision of himself. To be done within two days. However, the session did not allow the matter to rest there and on 27 March the following year, when the parishioners were being prepared for a Communion Sunday, Andrew Moodie at the east end of the Netherton gave evidence that he also went to Strenchill Well and Auchterderran chapel with Elspeth Ritchie his goodsister, because her husband asked him to. They were there two days and two nights. She drank from the well in the evening and the morning and washed her head. Her brother bound her feet together and her hands behind her back in the chapel and ‘they left her there two nights betootching her to God’. (It is hardly surprising that the treatment made her condition worse!) Moodie was forbidden to take communion until ‘course be taken herewith’.

* Possibly the Old Scots 'strenkell' to sprinkle ie Sprinkling Well, where sick people were sprinkled with water for a cur

Return to Playing with the Past.

Traditions and Reminiscences:

The Thorn Tree in the Abbey Churchyard

The Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session Burial Register recorded burials by marking them from the

"Thorn Tree" which stands on its little mount in the northern part of the _hurchyard. The Thorn Tree to this day still stands on that same little mount giving glory to Sir William Wallace's mother. There is a tradition that the Lady Margaret de Lambinus Craufuird, daughter of Sir Hugh Craufuird, mother of Sir William Wallace, was buried in the old churchyard on the spot where the present thorn-tree is growing, but on how she came to lie here, history seems to be silent. It is added that her son wished, after her death, to erect a monument to her memory but being in pursuit of, or in flight from, his enemies he had not time to do so and as a substitute he planted the Thorn Tree.

In the autumn of 1303 Sir William Wallace had been in hiding in or near Dundee. On finding that he

was being surrounded by scouts from the King of England's army and by sworn enemies of his

countrymen, he left his hiding place. In disguise and armed with a concealed sword, he and his

Mother travelled on foot, south to Dunfermline. !ccording to Langtoft's _hronicle, they crossed a

ferry over to Lindores, then through the Ochils to the south. If asked where they were going, they made answer that they were travelling to St Margaret's Shrine at Dunfermline (it being a distance of about 43 miles). Whether this was really their place of destination or not, the answer would secure them ecclesiastical protection and allow them to proceed without molestation

."His modyr grathit hir in pilgrame weid; Hym (self) disgysyt syne glaidlye with hir yeild;A schort swerd wndyr his weid priuale, in all that land full mony fays had he."

From this metrical account Langtoft tells us Wallace and his mother stayed only one night in Dunfermline, setting out on the following day to Linlithgow. Shortly afterwards, however, he was in Dunfermline again probably to escape from the English spies, whom he would find in abundance in the Lothians. This time he made the forest of Dunfermline his hiding place. At this period the glen of Pittencrieff was an almost impenetrable forest extending from the low grounds on the south to Baldrige Burn on the north. There were also other forests of a lesser degree, but it would most likely be in the locality of St Margaret's _ave and the Wallace Well (Wallace's Spa Well, which is still to be seen on the north side of the Glen burn at the foot of Tower Hill) that would have been his place of shelter.

In the forest of Dunfermline the renowned Wallace appears to have had meetings with friends as to the propriety of delivering himself up to Edward of England on honourable terms. When these terms were made known to Edward, he became infuriated and cursed Wallace, denouncing him as a traitor and setting a price of 300 merks on his head. On hearing this, the great patriot fled from the forest of Dunfermline to the mountain wilds.

Tradition has it that the mother of Wallace died at Dunfermline on one of her son's flights and that s

may have been that of a Weeping Cross (the Churchyard Weeping Cross), which at the time of the Reformation was destroyed and a Gospel Tree (The Thorn) planted in its place. Some said if the mother of Wallace was interred at Dunfermline she would have been interred within the consecrated walls of the Abbey Church where daily services were conducted. If this tradition is correct the interment must have taken place a few weeks before King Edward I of England, (The Hammer of the Scots) and his Court took up their winter quarters in the Monastery.

It is possible that once the haughty monarch heard of this event and the part played by the abbot and monks in the interment it may have been one of the reasons which induced Edward to have the Monastery fired when he left Dunfermline in May 1304.The Thorn Tree ~ At the period of the

Reformation, “Popish crosses” were cast down and destroyed as well as cathedrals, abbeys, and churches. Shortly afterwards a religious mania set in for planting “Gospel Oaks” and “Gospel Thorns”

on the sites of a great many of these crosses. A Gospel Thorn was planted on this site. This Tree had reached an immense size, and was seemingly of great age, when it was blown down during a great thunderstorm in 1784, and a stem from the old Tree, which by 1844 had advanced, to a considerable height and magnitude replaced it.

This was the only living and remaining memorial of the filial affection of the Scottish patriot William Wallace to his mother. Many years ago, when a deep grave was being dug near the Thorn Tree, a circular stone wall was discovered, possibly the base wall of the original cross. Tradition tells us after Sir William Wallace was hanged, drawn and quartered, his head was held at the Tower in London.

John _lair, Wallace’s confessor, who became a monk in Dunfermline, wrote the biography of

Wallace, which is now lost. He and other followers collected his other body parts, which were displayed at Newcastle, Berwick, Stirling and Perth. They are said to have brought them back to Dunfermline, and laid them to rest beside his mother under the “Thorn Tree” in the _hurchyard of the Holy Sepulture.

(From Henderson’s !nnals of Dunfermline) he was hastily buried at the spot in the northern Church¬yard marked by The Thorn Tree. This site

Return to Playing with the Past.

Maps of the Town

Figure 64 Map of the Town Centre

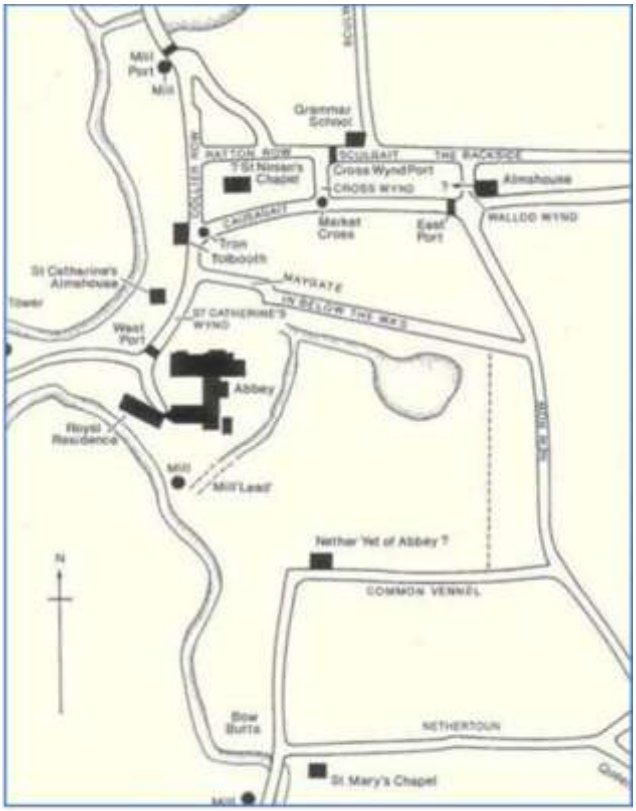

Figure 65 Map of Medieval Dunfermline

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