

**Notes On
Inverkeithing Parish Church**



**And The Royal Burgh
Of
Inverkeithing**

The Burgh

“Inverkeithing is one of that group of little burghs that stud the north shore of the Forth from Crail to Culross and exhibit, for the most part, unequivocal traces having decayed from the grandeur and importance they enjoyed as the emporia of trade and commerce prior to the union of the kingdoms” (Beveridge 1867)

Certainly Inverkeithing’s position on the main route between the Palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh and the Palaces in Dunfermline, Falkland and Perth would have ensured it saw most of Scotland’s nobility pass through it at some time.

Inverkeithing is first mentioned in the foundation charter of Scone Abbey granted by Alexander I in 1114. Then it was referred to as a town along with Stirling, Perth and Aberdeen.

It is believed it was first made a Burgh in the reign of David I, although the first authentic reference to the town as a Burgh is in a Papal Bull of 1163. The original charter is now lost and the oldest extant charter is a confirmation document granted by William the Lion at Clackmannan in 1165. William also granted to the burgesses the right “to levy tolls, customs and all dues between the river Leven to the east, the river Devon to the west and Kinross to the north, by water and by land and from boats and from ships.”

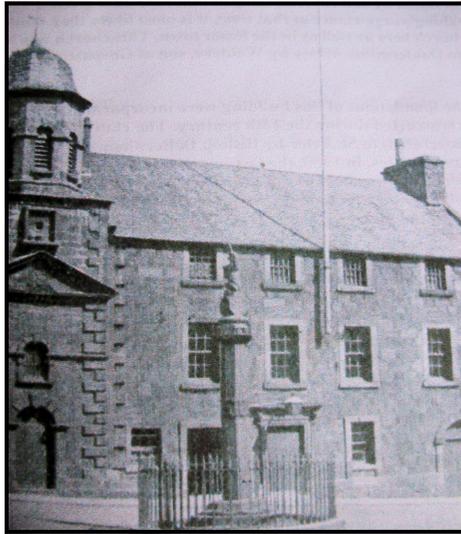
All of the 14th century monarchs had a connection with the Burgh. Robert I issued two charters from it and Robert II was a frequent visitor. There was, however, a special connection with Robert III and his Queen, Annabella Drummond, which has never been satisfactorily explained. Tradition has it that Annabella stayed regularly in a house, sometimes described as the Palace, in what is now Queen Street. Certainly a charter issued around 1398 provided a payment to the Queen in her lifetime the sum of 100 shillings a year from the Burgh rents.

Although the Burgh prospered throughout the 14th and 15th centuries a marked change took place in the 16th century. In 1535 the Burgesses complained to the King’s Council that the Burgh had decayed and fallen

into poverty compared to Kinghorn. (At this date the Royal Mint was located in Kinghorn.) The Council obviously agreed with them because their taxes were reduced. Some twenty years later the Burgesses were to make the same claim again with the same result.

Around the middle of the 17th century, during the “War of the Three Kingdoms”, (the English Civil War), the inhabitants of the Burgh suffered under the armies constantly passing between the north and south by way of Queensferry quartering themselves in the Burgh and foraging round about. The Burgh was also called upon to provide both men and money for the “ maintenance of the army.” In 1651 the Battle of Inverkeithing saw Cromwell’s Roundheads defeat a Scottish force and effectively end Scotland’s part in the war. Following the battle the English soldiers looted and plundered the Burgh and surrounding area to such an extent that the effects were still felt some fifteen years later.

In the late 18th and early 19th century a lot of coal was exported via the docks but this trade was lost with the development of docks at Burntisland and Methil. Other industries which have come and gone are potteries, tannery and dye works, salt pans, paper making, shipbuilding and breaking, distillery and brewery (although there is a new distillery operating). The main works now are scrap metal reclamation, and engineering.



The Church

Christianity was first brought to Inverkeithing around 700 AD by Erat a follower of St. Ninian. The plaque at the church door records that "On this hillside St. Erat first preached the Gospel. The site of his Holy Well is in Heriot Street." Little is known of St. Erat but there is a well, now covered over, in Heriot Street near Moffat Cottage. There is also a chapel in the grounds of Fordell castle called St. Theriots. It is assumed that this is a corruption of Erat. Clearly St. Erat was successful as a preacher as a church was established on the site where the Parish church now stands today.

The first building would most likely have been a wattle and daub structure of which no trace now exists. A stone church, believed to have been almost identical to that in Dalmeny, was built in Norman times. The family of Gospatrick, Earl of Dunbar, were barons of Dalmeny and Inverkeithing at that time and, given Inverkeithing's importance then, it is most likely they would have built a church here as well as in the lesser town. This church was bequeathed to Dunfermline Abbey in 1139 by Waldeve, son of Gospatrick.

The foundations of this building were incorporated into a Gothic building constructed during the 13th century. The church was consecrated (or re-consecrated) to St. Peter by Bishop DeBernham on 24th August, 1244. A few years after this in 1250, the last important meeting between the Culdee and Roman clergy was held in the church. The Culdees (the children of God) were the followers of Ninian and Columba, whilst the Roman clergy followed Augustine and the Papacy.

The tower was added to the building in the 14th century. Sometime between 1625-1633 the church was repaired and partially rebuilt but thereafter no major changes appear to have taken place over the next two hundred years.

Within the congregation itself there was one major upset. In 1752 a major portion of the congregation left the church in protest at the enforced appointment of the Rev. Andrew Richardson by Patronage. This group comprising some 127 Town Councillors, heads of families and others laid a petition before the Burgher Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline to become part of the Burgher churches. They were joined by several more after the deposition of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie of Car nock.