

DUNFERMLINE ABBEY

MONASTIC

AND

BARONIAL REMAINS

BY

G.J. PARKYNE V. 2.

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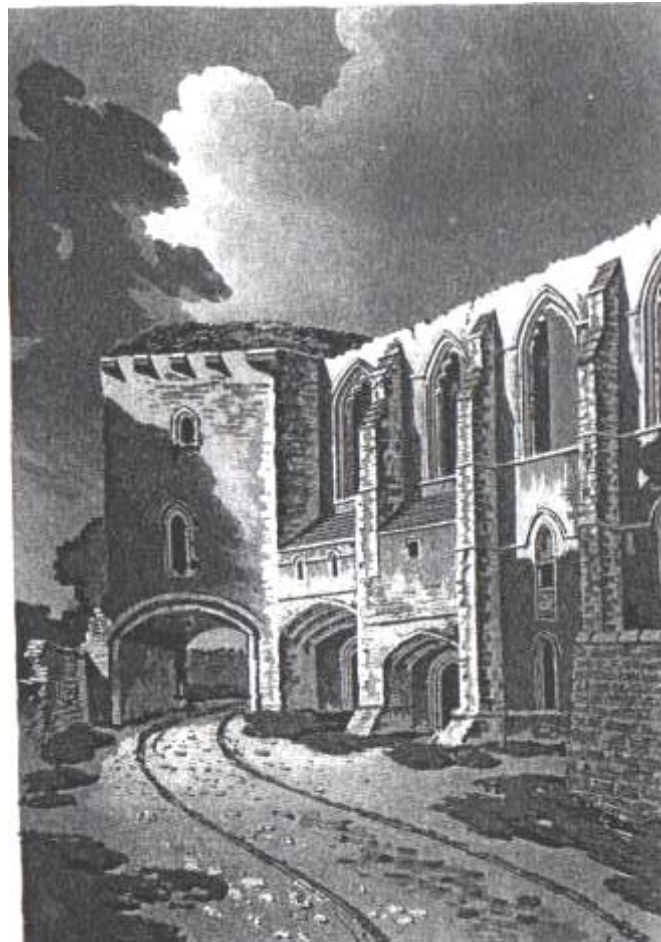
DUNFERMLINE ABBEY

The foundation of this abbey, for monks of the Benedictine order, is generally attributed to the zeal of Malcolm III; that king did not however live long enough to finish the establishment, for Alexander the First, surnamed the Fierce, is recorded as having completed what remained undone. In ancient manuscripts it is styled *Monasterium de monte infirmorum*, from whence it should seem that it was then only an infirmary, nor did it become an abbey until the reign of David I who, singular to relate, sent as far as Canterbury for religious men. Gosfridus, a character highly respected by Florence of Worcester for his remarkable piety, was the first abbot installed therein, in the year 1128, by Robert Bishop of St Andrew, which he enjoyed until his death in the year 1514. This excellent man was succeeded by one of his own family of the name of Gosfridus; at the suppression, George Davie, commendator and archdeacon of St Andrews, was the last abbot, after which the house was bestowed in the first instance upon Secretary Pitcairn. It was afterwards enjoyed by the Master of Gray, and lastly presented to Seton, who, being created an earl, took from hence his title.



The view here delineated is that part of the building known as the fraternity: the rich window to the west has all its ramifications entire; to this part is connected a tower, under which lies a branch of the public road, leading into the town; beyond the tower, in the very edge of the glen,

covered with wood, is to be seen the only remains of the royal palace, in which that unfortunate monarch Charles I was born. Grose, relates, that his mother, Anne of Denmark in the year 1600, completely restored this building, which previously had been suffered to decay. This fact he avers is sufficiently corroborated by a Latin inscription, in the possession of, and carefully preserved by, Mr Penmant; but it does not appear that any tradition at the place exists of the foregoing circumstance: it is, however, said that a house adjoining ws built for her, which only of late years has been destroyed. This might possibly have led to the mistake.



This view of the refectory is taken from the opposite side of the tower, delineated in the preceding representation. The length of the frater part of the south front, is a considerable portion of which is here given, was fifty feet, its width and height corresponding; being about thirty, by forty feet. This front had nine Gothic windows, commanding a beautiful and varied extent of a rich, luxuriant, and fertile country, with the Frith of Forth in the distance, covered with the white sails of commerce: this again is backed by the port of Leith, the castle of Edinburgh towering in the air, and the sublime mountains in its immediate neighbourhood.

A chartulary, preserved in the Advocates' library at Edinburgh, states many interesting particulars relative to the early and progressive state of this abbey; whose revenues, we are told, amounted at the dissolution to £ Scots, exclusive of the benefits, if any, arising from a most singular grant of King David I which entitles the abbey to receive the tithe of all the gold that be found in Fife or Fotheriff. The advantage accruing from so extraordinary a gift never has been ascertained.

Dunfermline, the early page of history records, shared the melancholy fate of such towns as from their situations were objects of the invader's fury; having been destroyed by fire, during the incursion of Edward I with the exception of the church and cells. That monarch, as an excuse for the cruel outrage, stated, that his only motive for reducing the town to ashes was to prevent its further harbouring of his enemies.

The church belonging to the abbey is a large pile, singularly supported by heavy buttresses, projecting considerably from the walls. Near the north aisle are a number of stones, nine of which are said to cover the graves of as many kings buried there: but they are without any inscription whatsoever. A sepulchral stone is likewise to be seen near where the high altar stood, dedicated to Margaret, the wife of King Malcolmi Canmore. This Margaret was the saint to whom the church was dedicated. That part of the building now in use is the nave; the choir, tower, and transept being all destroyed. [Monastic and baronial remains, by G J Parkyns V. 2. London 1816]



DUNFERMLINE ABBEY, the first abbey in Scotland, was founded by Margaret, Queen of Malcolm Canmore, probably soon after her marriage in 1070. This pious lady seems to have made a determined effort in bringing the Culdees into the Roman Church. It failed because they were unwilling to adopt the rule of celibacy for their clergy. Of her buildings nothing remains here or elsewhere unless it be the lower courses, and possibly one of the windows, of the little chapel-still in ST MARGARET'S CHAPEL - EDINBURGH CASTLE.



The abbey was reputed to be the richest in Scotland and the palace attached to it was a favourite residence of the Scots kings from Malcolm Canmore to James VI. Elizabeth Queen of Bohemia, was born here in 1596 and her brother, Charles I in 1600.

The nave of the church is the earliest of the surviving buildings and the only one which belongs to the period we are now considering. It is a superb example of the Norman style which would do credit even to its home in France, and is happily, almost intact. It closely resembles the nave of Durham Cathedral, at the founding of which King Malcolm was present and, though not built till after his death, may owe its existence to his conception. It was begun soon after the accession of David I in 1124 and is the earliest of his many churches.

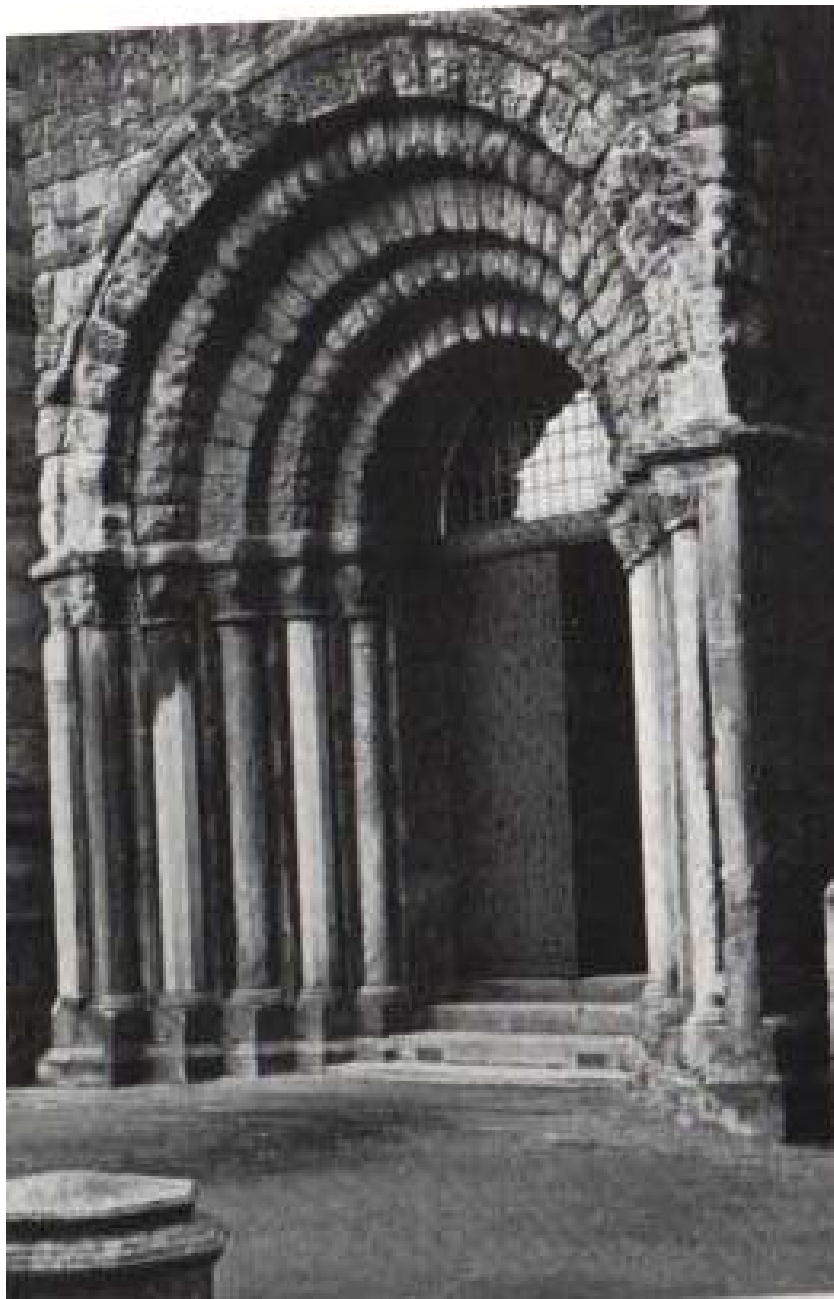


The chapel, judging by the chancel arch, could scarcely have assumed its present form less than a century after Queen Margaret's death, which occurred in the castle in 1093, a few days after King Malcolm fell at Alnwick.

The only original window is the west-most one on the south side.

The Abbey of Dunfermline as established by Queen Margaret had only the standard thirteen monks, but it grew rapidly in importance. By the end of the fifteenth century the number of monks had increased to thirty-eight and in the intervening period may have been even larger at times.

The nave is entered by a fine west door placed between two towers which have been much altered but probably formed part of the original composition. That on the left or north side was rebuilt at the end of the sixteenth century. It was designed by William Schaw, master of works to the abbey, and may be regarded as a purely local production typical of its date in Scotland. The other was destroyed by lightning in 1887 and patched up three years later in its present rather bald form. The doorway is a good example of twelfth-century work in Scotland.



West Door of Abbey.

In England it would indicate a date of some fifty years earlier. It has five orders, orders in this sense being the stages by which a doorway or window is recessed into the wall. There is another good Norman door on the north side of the nave partly concealed by a sixteenth-century porch.

The interior has the three stories usually found in large churches. The lower consists of the arcade separating the nave from the aisles. Its arches rest on massive circular pillars, some of which are decorated, like those at Durham, with bold chevron mouldings and spirals. The shallow bases on which they stand and the simple so-called cushioned capitals are typical of their period, as are the mouldings of the arches they support.

Above this arcade is the triforium or passage under the aisle roof with an opening to the nave above each of the main arches. Over this again is the clerestory, so called because it rises above the aisle roof and admits of windows. The windows are large single lights with semicircular heads.

The alterations near the western door reflect trouble occasioned by the flanking towers. The construction of the medieval builders was by no means always sound. When the great western front of Peterborough Cathedral had to be underpinned a few years ago it proved to be devoid of proper foundations. When Paisley Abbey was restored, great cost was incurred in making good the foundations of the pillars which carry the central tower. One of the Dunfermline piers has been rebuilt in a form which suggests work of the fifteenth century, being designed as a group of small shafts in place of one massive pillar.

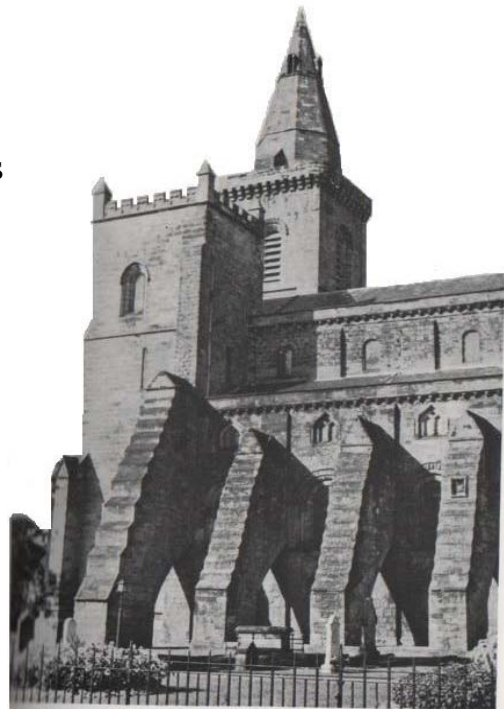


The aisles which have a narrow span are vaulted with stone and groined, which means that the vaulting is composed of ribs which carry the stone filling inserted between them. On one side these ribs spring from the great pillars of the nave, on the other from responds or pilasters attaché to the outside wall. These responds consist of three shafts grouped together, and below the windows the wall is decorated with graceful arcading.

All these features are of the best, and deserve careful study. This building has been described in detail because so few Scotsmen seem to know it. They think of Dunfermline, if they think of it at all, as an industrial town with an historic past which has completely vanished.

Many who know the churches of Normandy quite well are unaware that here and at Kirkwall, Jedburgh, and Kelso the Norman style can be studied almost as well as in France.

No visitor should leave the abbey church without glancing at the buttresses added in the sixteenth century to support the thrust of the aisle vaults. The Normans depended on the thickness of their walls to absorb this stress. Their shallow buttresses, probably a survival of the Roman pilaster, are intended more for ornament than for any practical purpose. These sixteenth-century buttresses are quite different. They supply resistance at the critical spot. But what you are asked to note now is their form, which is peculiarly Scottish. A buttress to be effective must project far out from the wall at the base, but as it ascends the projection may be diminished. In England and on the Continent this reduction is usually effected by a few bold steps at long intervals. In Scotland the same result is achieved by numerous shallow steps placed close together.



The choir of Queen Margaret, to which this new nave as no doubt originally attached, was replaced in the thirteenth century by a larger choir with transepts and a central tower. At the eastern extremity a lady chapel—a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin—was built to contain the tomb of Queen Margaret, who was canonized in 1249. The choir with all its splendour was ruined at the Reformation and has since been replaced by a large modern church, to the east of which the foundation of the lady chapel can still be traced.

At the risk of some loss of chronological order let us examine for a moment the buildings attached to the church, which are typical of those of other abbeys in Scotland. At the close of the thirteenth century they were described by Matthew of Westminster as fit to house three kings with their retainers. The Abbey was burnt by Edward I in 1303 and again by Richard II in 1385, so these buildings had a short life. Only the under buildings now remain. The monks' quarters were rebuilt after the second fire more or less on the old foundations but no doubt with increased magnificence. The Abbey suffered severely in the Reformation, as we have seen, and what was left fell into neglect and was no doubt used as a quarry. The scanty remnants which survive are extremely imposing. They consist of two walls of the monks' refectory, two chambers in the adjoining Pend Tower, so called from the arched passage below it through which the road passes, and on the other side of the road, the king's kitchen and behind it again the Royal Palace. These buildings were probably begun soon after the fire of 1385 but they are mainly of the fifteenth century. They are perched on the side of a steep ravine. The site necessitated much under building-always a telling feature in architectural composition-and the result is truly magnificent.

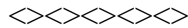
The rooms themselves must have been very fine. The monks' refectory or dining hall was over a hundred feet long by thirty broad with a vaulted roof carried on pilasters which divided it into seven bays. In the eastmost bay is the pulpit from which one of the brethren read aloud during meals. This noble hall was lit by tall windows at the side and at the west end by a larger window filled with tracery typical of late fifteenth-century work in Scotland, of which we shall see more elsewhere. This window may be an afterthought as the Pend Tower, which adjoins it, undoubtedly is, as well as the passage leading to it, which is inserted between the hall buttresses and forms such a picturesque feature of the exterior.

A dining room of these proportions for thirty-eight monks may seem excessive, but it must be remembered that the monastery sheltered a number of novices as well as a large paid staff of lay brothers who provided labour for the Abbey. Guests, to judge from the accommodation provided in other abbeys, must also have been numerous. Among the guests were no doubt the vicars of the numerous parish churches belonging to the Abbey and the missions arriving from time to time from Rome or from English and continental houses.

The king's kitchen is now roofless. Its vault was supported by pillars and it was on the same generous scale as the monks' refectory. Below it is a room with pillars and vaulting of older type which may have escaped the fires of the fourteenth century. Behind the kitchen are the remains of the palace which it served. This building was probably in the form of a

quadrangle. The only side which remains contains the hall and a large room probably used as a drawing room. The hall is about on hundred feet long and the other about fifty. Both have large mullioned windows overlooking the ravine. The under building on which the palace stood was probably the work of Robert the Bruce.

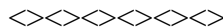
The Abbey occupies a splendid site. The church stands on the hill top. The monastic buildings sit in its shelter to the south at a slightly lower level; the palace still lower and more to the west. The whole pile when it was complete at the beginning of the sixteenth century, supported by massive under building and crowned by the three towers of the abbey church, must have been superb. [Shrines and Homes of Scotland by Sir John S. Maxwell p.25]



ABBAY DUNFERMLINE STORY

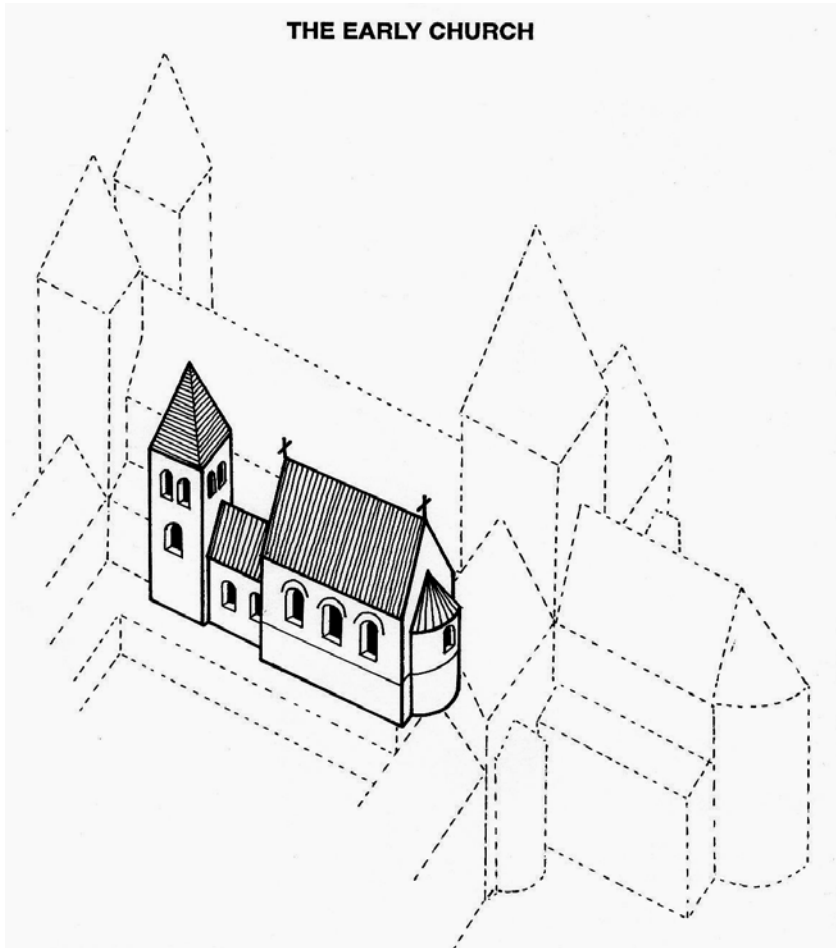
Three Churches have stood on the site covered by the present Nave. The first of these, the original Celtic church in which Malcolm King of Scots married, about A.D. 1068 as his second wife, Margaret the fugitive Saxon princess.

The second was the one Malcolm built for Margaret and was begun in 1070 and probably completed in 1072. The outlines of these two churches are clearly shown on the floor of the Norman Nave of the Abbey. There may be traced the lines of the Belfry, the Holy Well and the little Culdee church itself. Adjoining this are the outlines of the second church with the semi-circular apse. [Guide to Dunf Abbey by H.T. Macpherson]



Saint Margaret's Church

Dunfermline-Marked by brass lines on the floor of the nave.



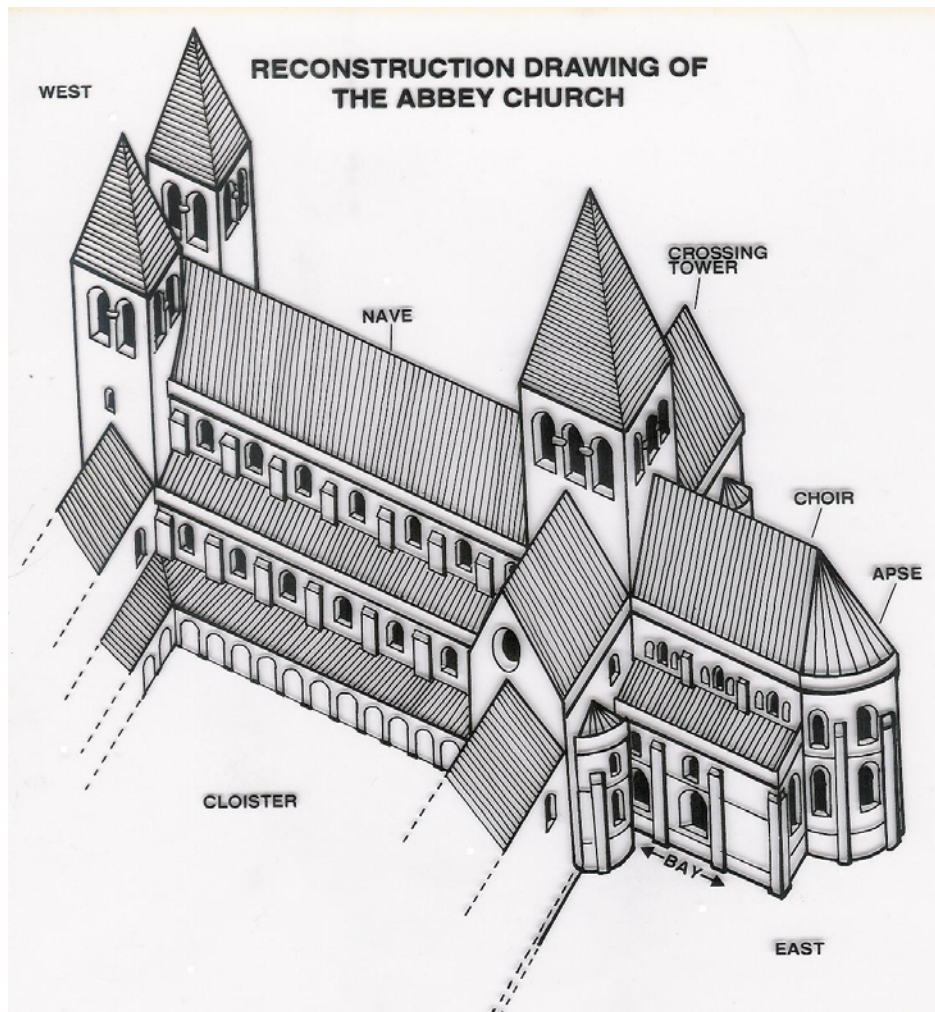
An Artist's impression of The Auld Kirk of 1072

Fordun, and other historians, state that the Royal marriage was celebrated a *place* called Dunfermline, they do not point out the *locus* in that *place*. It may be presumed that the nuptial ceremony was performed in the Chapel of Canmore's Tower, or in the supposed Culdee Chapel adjacent.

About the year 1075 the Abbey of Dunfermline was founded by King Malcolm, at the suggestion of Queen Margaret. The church was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and appointed to be the future royal burying – place in room of Iona.

Queen Margaret's remains were removed from this church to the newly completed church in 1115.

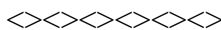
“Before the rude altar with honour,
She was laid in holy sepulchre;
There her lord was laid also,
And with them her sons two,
Edward the first and Ethelred.”



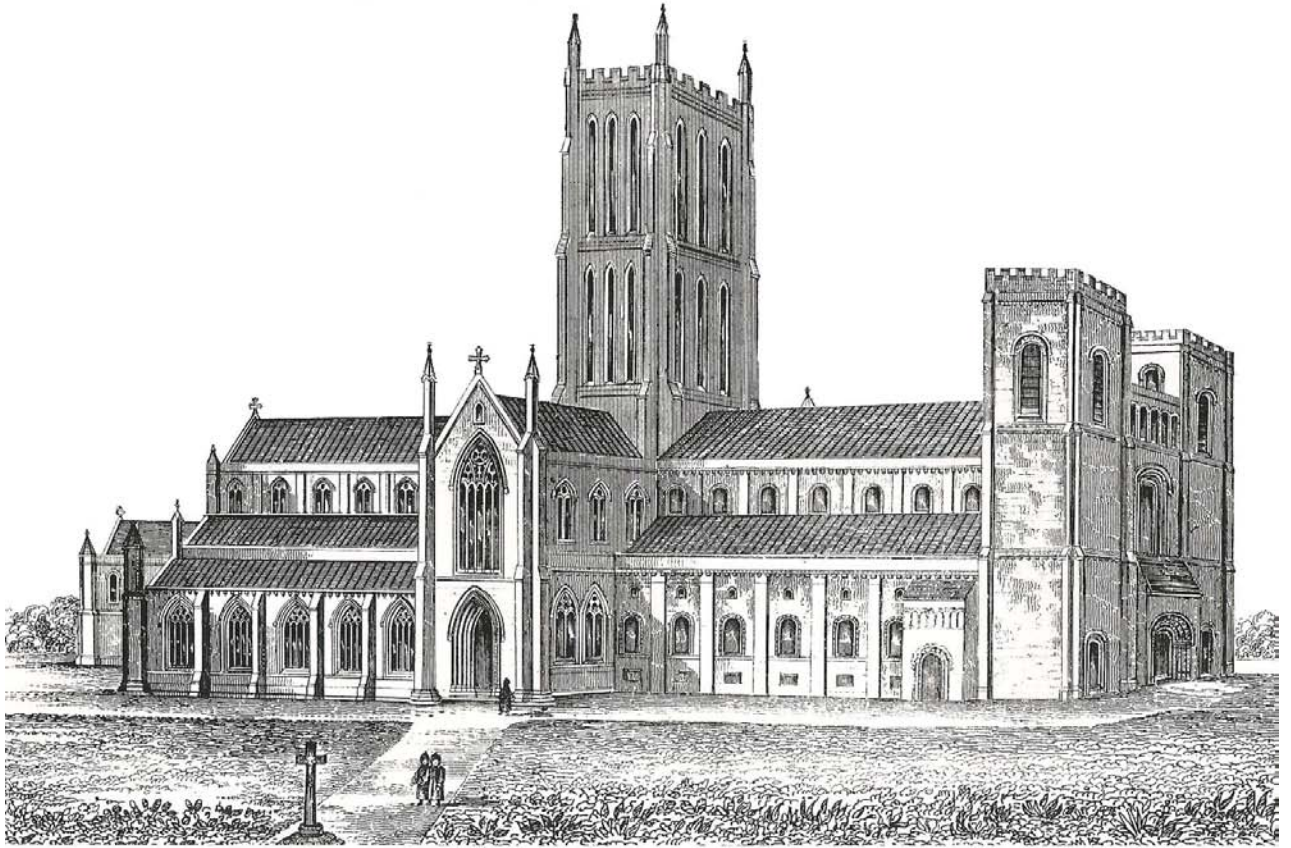
Artist's impression of Church of the Holy Trinity completed 1115.

The Abbey Nave is a complete example of a Romanesque building in Scotland. When David I became King in 1124 he raised the priory to a major abbey and brought Geoffrey in 1128 Prior of Canterbury to become Dunfermline's first Abbot.

Margaret's remains were removed from her little church built for her by Malcolm III to a new altar on the north side of the high altar in 1180.

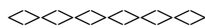


DUNFERMLINE ABBEY – TIME OF ALEXANDER III.

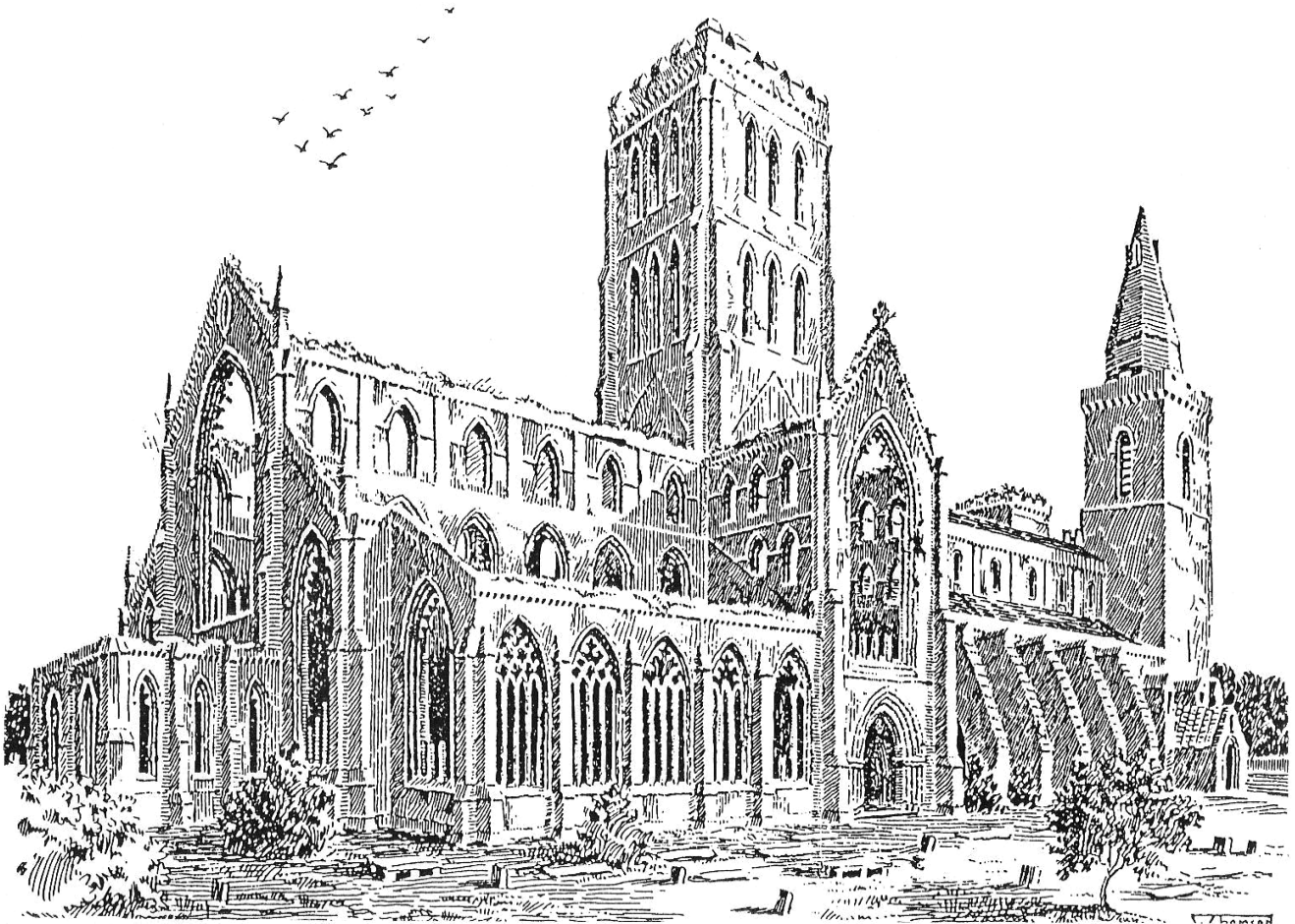


Conjectural drawing of Dunfermline Abbey in the time of
Alexander III, with Saint Margaret's Chapel
At the east ends on the left.

Alexander II died in 1249. His young son Alexander III with his mother, and numerous Bishops, Abbots, Priests, and Nobility of the kingdom were present for the translation of Saint Margaret with King Malcolm III on 13th July 1250, were translated to the Lady Aisle, east of the Choir.
“Sainte Margarete” had been canonized, 1249

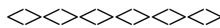


DUNFERMLINE ABBEY – C.1620

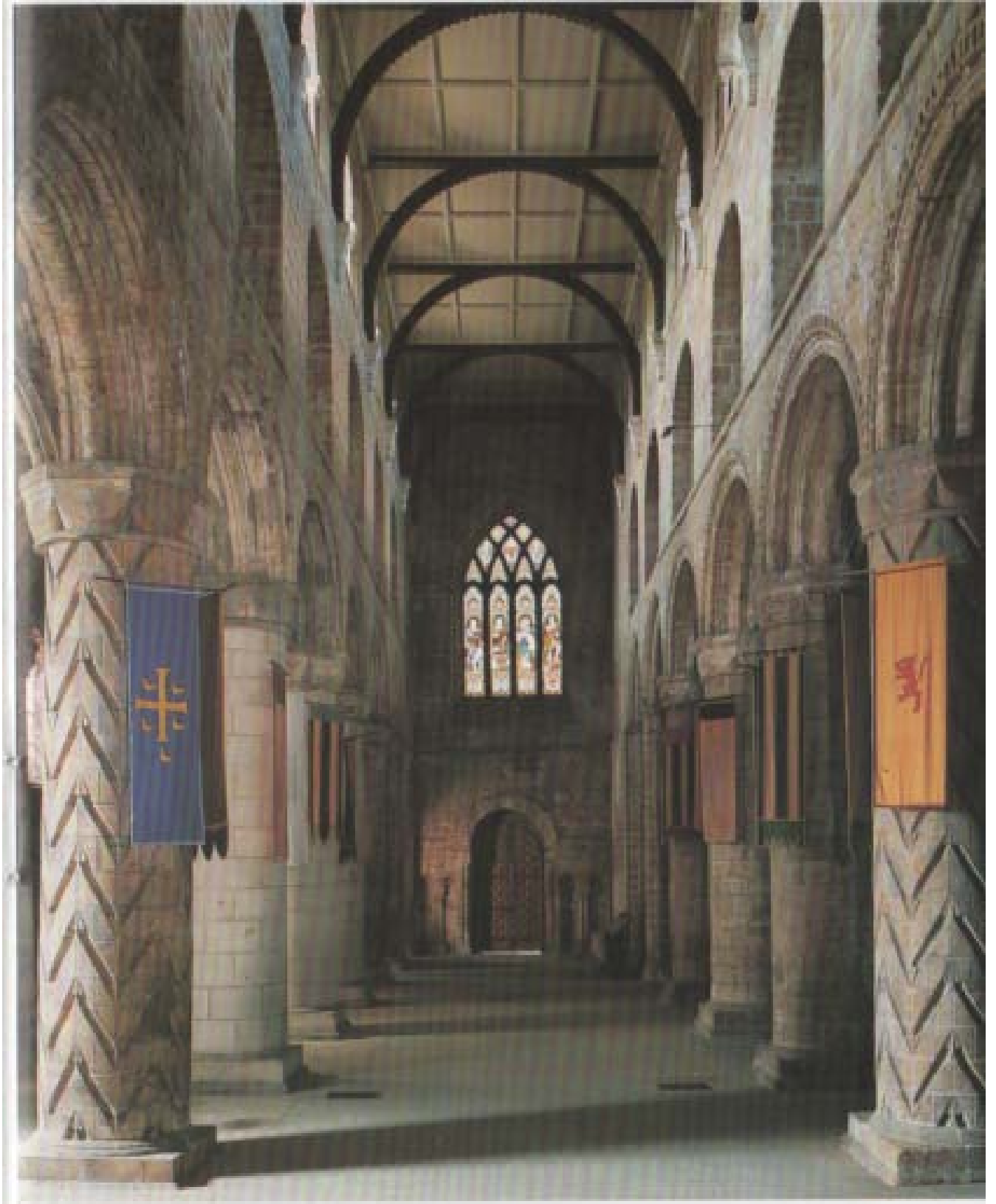


East section Choir) of Abbey and St Margaret's Shrine in ruins.

The work of destroying Dunfermline Abbey commenced on March 28 1560. The tomb of King Robert Bruce was immediately below the pulpit of the present new church, but there was nothing to mark its place but the large stone lettering on the parapet of the lantern tower immediately above the spot where he lay.



DUNFRMLINE ABBEY NAVE





A single consecration cross, the actual cross of 1150, is on the pilaster which supports the vaulting opposite the fifth pillar counting from the west end. It is a Greek cross with enlarged ends, and measured 7½ inches by 8 inches and was inlaid with gold and studded with jewels, and was despoiled at the Reformation. [Dunfermline Abbey A Brief Guide.]

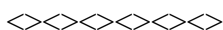
ABBEY NAVE



Picture by Sheila Pitcairn.

In 1923 when workmen were cleaning the ceiling of the north (or St Mary's) aisle, they uncovered some of the original red and blue colourings, the design incorporating chevrons and fleur-de-lis. Four of the six vaultings in the aisle are the original twelfth century ones.

At this point almost vertically above the monument erected in memory of Robert Pitcairn, a most interesting discovery was made in 1938, when sixteenth century paintings were brought to light. The paintings, of which there are four, the work of Andrew Foreman, in 1530, represent four of the Apostles. Peter and Paul are named, St Andrew is recognised by the cross, but the fourth, so far, has not been identified. [Dunfermline Abbey A Brief Guide]



THE PORCH



Painted by Adam Westwood
Dunfermline Carnegie Library.



The Nave with the -New Abbey Church dedicated 1821.

After the Reformation, efforts were made to repair and alter the abbey nave to eradicate its Catholic features and adapt it for Presbyterian worship. Part of the choir collapsed in 1672 later the gable fell in 1726 and the central tower fell in 1753.

In 1821 the new Abbey Church opened for worship it had been designed in 1817 by William Burn.

Saint Margaret's Shrine is now placed outside the Abbey Church.

Note: - See Early Illustrations Dunfermline

See A Tact chiefly relative to Monastic Antiquities search for Remains of the Scottish Kings.

Booklet: - Sang School.

Note: - See Chart of Chronological Table of the Kings, Queens, Princes, and

Princesses and Nobility interred at the Church of the Holy Trinity

Dunfermline. Sepulture of the Royal Family of Scotland including those after 1249.

Further research- Historical and Statistical Account of Dunfermline by Rev. Peter Chalmers Vol. 1 & 2.

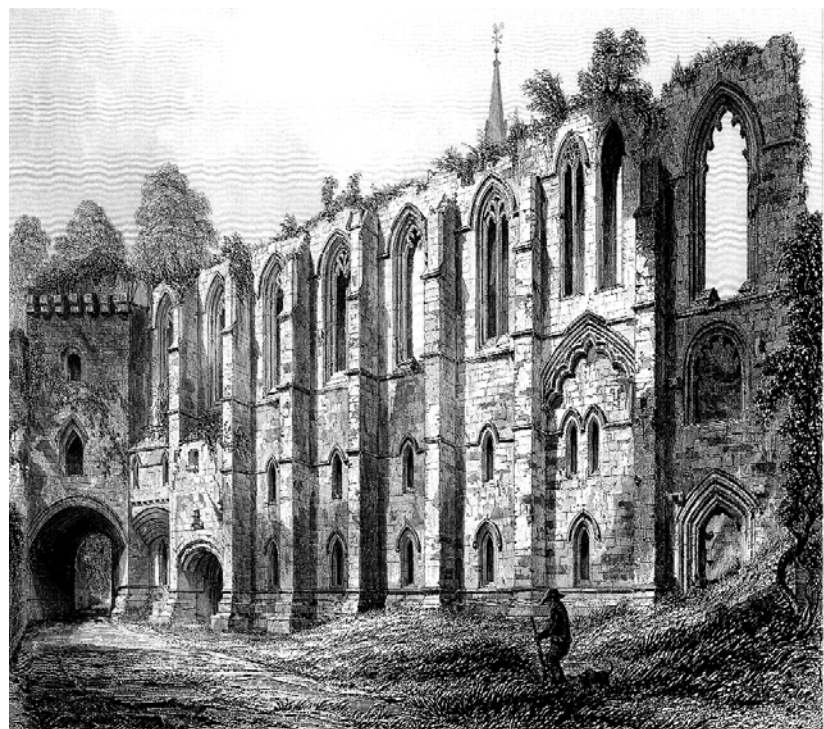
4. Introduction to Monastery/Fraternity

The “dim, religious light” of Culdeeism was in the wane before the advent of Queen Margaret, and, with a last feeble flicker, it sank for ever under the brilliance of her favoured cult. The able Turgot came from Durham to graft the new ideals, a host of monks and clerics followed in his train, Royalty gave it personal and pecuniary support, and soon the Romish incense rose from every Scottish shrine. From old records and plans we learn that the monastic buildings covered the entire area lying between the church and the southern wall of the refectory. The sites of the cloisters, chapter-house, dormitories, etc are lost under the modern burial-ground, and formation of which also conceals the fact that these structures had occupied a level considerably lower than that on which the church was raised. The south and west walls of the noble refectory, or Frater Hall, remain almost entire, and west gable showing in a seven-light traceried window a fine and example of artistic fenestration as Scotland possesses. [Royal Dunfermline by Allan Reid p.39]

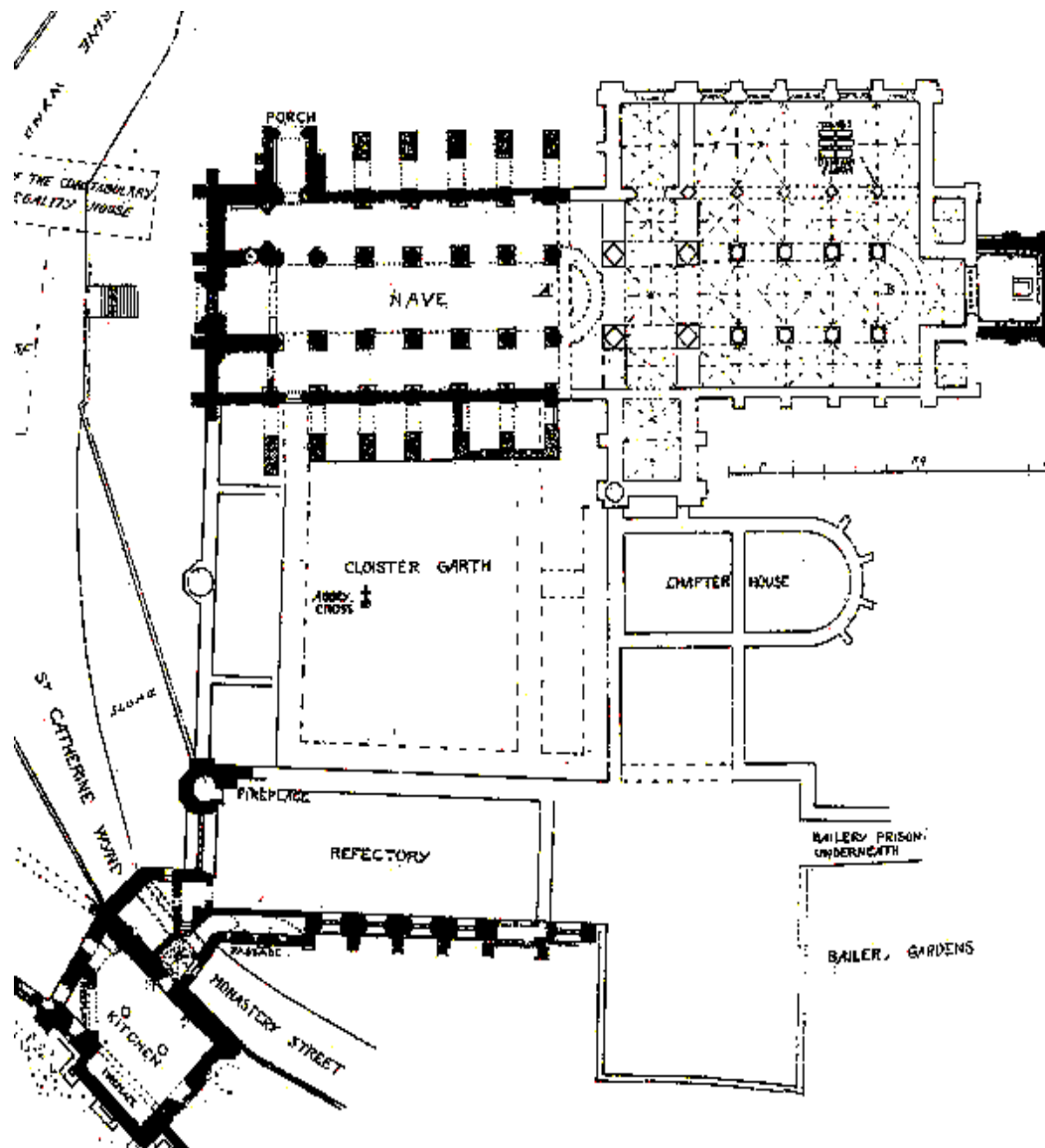


West End of Frater Hall

The Ruins of the Refectory



THE MONASTERY, between the south sides of this enlarged building and what is now called Monastery Street there stood a range of buildings, which has by this time largely disappeared. From the two ancient doorways seen in the south wall of the church there stretched two covered passages or pathways called the cloisters, and along the westmost and west from it was the dormitory of the monks, while at the south end was their refectory or dining-hall, part of which is still seen, with its beautifully-carved western window.



The cloister yard was enclosed by these two pathways and other two – one parallel to the Abbey and near it, and the other close and parallel to the dining-hall. On the east side would be the chapter house with some other apartments, and underneath the refectory, as now seen from Monastery Street, a large amount of accommodation devoted to cellarge and the various purposes of hospitality which the conditions and wealth of the Abbey necessitated. For water supplies there was the stream from the Town Loch passing through their grounds. Among the appurtenances was a room set aside for the imprisonment of defaulters. [Dunfermline Abbey by John Marshall]

END