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In Search of Robert Bruce, Part III: Medieval Royal Burial at Dunfermline and the Tomb Investigations of 1818-19

Martin MacGregor and Caroline Wilkinson

On 5 November 1819, a burial vault uncovered the previous year within the ruins of the medieval Benedictine abbey at Dunfermline was formally opened and investigated. The contemporary assumption was that the skeleton within was that of Robert I King of Scots, or Robert Bruce, and this was the dominant theme of the official report written by the King's Remembrancer, Henry Jardine.¹ The first article in this series explains the process behind the facial reconstruction, published in December 2016, of the skull cast made from the skeleton excavated at Dunfermline on 5 November 1819. It offers a fresh analysis of the cast to make deductions about the sex, age and physique of the individual in question, and the possible presence of disease affecting the bone.² The second article broadens the scope, bringing to bear the medieval evidence to evaluate the seven available benchmarks—sex, physique, age, disease, heart burial, tomb location and manner of death—which enable conclusions to be reached about the identity of the occupant of the Dunfermline tomb.³

This, the third and final article in the series, is devoted to the most problematic of these benchmarks, that of tomb location. The problem derives from the facts that the Dunfermline church site acted as the principal Scottish royal mausoleum from 1093 to 1420, receiving the burials of several kings apart from Robert Bruce; and that the eastern arm of the medieval abbey, where some of these royal burials took place, has long been almost totally

¹ [Henry Jardine], *Report to the Right Hon. The Lord Chief Baron, and the Hon. The Barons of his Majesty's Court of Exchequer in Scotland, by the King's Remembrancer, relative to the Tomb of King Robert the Bruce, and the Cathedral Church of Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 1821).

² C. M. Wilkinson, Mark Roughley, R. D. Moffat, D. G. Monckton and Martin MacGregor, 'In Search of Robert Bruce, Part I: Craniofacial Analysis of the Skull excavated at Dunfermline in 1819', *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 24 (2019), 556-64.

³ Martin MacGregor and Caroline Wilkinson, 'In Search of Robert Bruce, Part II: Reassessing the Dunfermline Tomb Investigations of 1818-19' ([forthcoming](#)).

destroyed, and is otherwise barely recorded. The article will firstly explore the view of Thomas Bryce and Iain Fraser that the tomb investigated in 1818-19 was part of a burial group consisting of David I, Malcolm IV, Alexander III and Robert I, and probably belonged to Robert I. It will then use the available evidence to advance an alternative hypothesis: that Dunfermline abbey's eastern arm including the choir was completed not by 1150, as has generally been supposed, but by 1180; and that David I and Malcolm IV were not a part of this burial group. If so, the probability that the tomb investigated in 1818-19 was that of Robert I would be increased. Finally, it will assess the more recent argument of Michael Penman, that this tomb may rather have belonged to David I. The conclusion reached here, and in the series as a whole, is concurrence with Bryce and Fraser that there is a strong probability that the tomb discovered and investigated at Dunfermline in 1818-19 belonged to Robert Bruce.

For Henry Jardine, the burial vault's location was one of the two clinching proofs that its incumbent was Robert Bruce.⁴ In his *Scotichronicon*, compiled in the 1440s, Walter Bower records that Bruce was buried at Dunfermline in 1329 *in medio chori, cum debito honore*, 'in the middle of the choir, with due honour'.⁵ From his later vantage point he is also able to record the burial of Bruce's queen Elizabeth de Burgh in 1327 *in choro de Dunf' juxta regem Robertum sponsum suum*, 'in the choir of Dunfermline, beside King Robert her husband'.⁶ Barbour also places Bruce's burial in the choir at Dunfermline, 'in a fayr tumb'.⁷ According to Jardine the burial vault uncovered on 17 February 1818 was 'in a line with the very centre of the ancient cathedral', and the 'Plan of the Old and New Church' produced for Jardine's report by William Burn, who was responsible for the building of the new parish

⁴ [Jardine], *Report*, 28, 30.

⁵ *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen, 1987-98) [Watt, *Scotichronicon*], vii. 44-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vii. 34-5.

⁷ *John Barbour, The Bruce*, ed. and trans. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh, 1997), 756-7.

church, shows the vault on this medial line, in what according to the plan would have been the choir of the abbey in 1329.⁸ This must indeed be so, for although the choir is lost, its bounds are determined by structures that do survive, and date to 1250 or before: to the west, the splendid Romanesque building which would have acted as the nave to this choir; to the east, the remnants of the shrine and chapel to which the remains of Queen Margaret (d. 1093) were translated in 1250. The match of documentary and physical evidence, strengthened by the earlier discovery 'a few feet' from this vault of another vault which might have been Elizabeth de Burgh's, explains the conclusion drawn immediately in 1818, and upheld by the official report, that this was Bruce's tomb.

From 1093 to 1420 Dunfermline was the principal mausoleum of the Scottish royal dynasty.⁹ This was well-known to Jardine and his contemporaries, and the first section of his report rehearses at length the chronicle accounts of several of these burials without once thereafter entertaining the possibility that the vault in question could belong to anyone but Bruce.¹⁰ Investigation of that possibility depends upon four main source categories: texts relating to Queen Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093); papal documents concerning Dunfermline written in the first half of the thirteenth century; notices of medieval Scottish royal deaths and burials in Scottish and English chronicles, and assessments of the evolution and interior organisation of Dunfermline's medieval church deriving from the surviving material evidence. The last two categories raise particular issues. The loss of virtually the whole east end of the pre-Reformation abbey, including the choir in which the burial vault was originally located, has severely limited the scope to conduct professional archaeological and architectural investigation at Dunfermline. William Burn's remit was to build a new church, not to search systematically for its medieval antecedents. The last major excavation to do so

⁸ [Jardine], *Report*, 28 and facing page.

⁹ Steve Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', in Richard Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Edinburgh, 2005), 139-53, at 150.

¹⁰ [Jardine], *Report*, 7-19.

was by Peter Macgregor Chalmers in 1916.¹¹ Burial notices in the chronicles raise the question of temporal perspective. When a burial is said to have taken place in the choir or before the high altar at Dunfermline, does this mean the choir and high altar as of the time of burial, or the time of compilation of the chronicle, or an intermediate stage representing a particular horizon created by the source of information relied upon by the chronicler? More positively, whereas it is the norm in historical enquiry to attach greatest authority to sources written nearer to the time under consideration, any chronicler with access to Dunfermline, or privy to information or sources deriving from Dunfermline, was at a likely advantage in treating of burials there. Indeed, later chroniclers may have possessed the singular advantage of knowing, or actually seeing, how royal burials at Dunfermline were positioned relative to one another; a possibility unavailable either to earlier chroniclers working on a contemporary or nearly contemporary basis, or to all commentators active since the Reformation, and the loss of these tombs through destruction or decay.¹² Both advantages apply to Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* and the *Book of Pluscarden*. They were composed after 1420, when royal burial at Dunfermline ceased.¹³ As abbot of nearby Inchcolm, Bower was very likely to have had first-hand experience of Dunfermline's church; he certainly made use of Dunfermline sources.¹⁴ Both principal surviving manuscripts of the *Book of Pluscarden* originated at Dunfermline, one composed for the abbot, the other at the command of Thomas Monymail, monk and sacristan there.¹⁵ Finally, how literally should we interpret the evidence presented

¹¹ Richard Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', in Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 27-63, at 27, 61 n. 3; F. C. Eeles, 'The Development and Internal Arrangement of the Abbey Church of Dunfermline', in *The Burgh Records of Dunfermline*, ed. Erskine Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1917), xxxi-xlvi, at xxxii.

¹² Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 56; Iain Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king: the death and burial of Robert I, and the discoveries of 1818-19', in Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 155-76, at 161.

¹³ Sally Mapstone, 'The *Scotichronicon*'s First Readers', in B. E. Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland: Essays Presented to Donald Watt on the Occasion of the Completion of the Publication of Bower's Scotichronicon* (Edinburgh, 1999), 31-55, at 48 n. 23, argues that composition of the *Book of Pluscarden* 'was begun in the second half of the 1450s and completed in 1461'.

¹⁴ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iii. xvii-xviii.

¹⁵ *Liber Pluscardensis*, ed. and trans. F. J. H. Skene, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1877-80) [*Liber Pluscardensis*], i. x-xviii.

by both these source categories? To what extent can Burn's plan serve as an accurate guide to Dunfermline's medieval church interior, and what degree of proximity is meant if a medieval chronicle records the burial of one person alongside another?

Chalmers's excavation of 1916 and the ensuing studies by Eeles in 1917 and Bryce in 1926 established a scholarly consensus about the phases of development of Dunfermline's medieval church, and the location of royal burials there, which with some variations still pertains.¹⁶ The consensus holds that in the vicinity of the high altar of the church of the Holy Trinity built by Queen Margaret, a first burial group was made between 1093 and 1124 consisting of Margaret and her spouse King Malcolm III, and their sons Edward, Edgar and Alexander I. This church was then levelled and subsumed within the nave of David I's abbey which was dedicated in 1150; and it was to the east of the nave, in the choir built by David, that he and his grandson Malcolm IV were buried before the relocated high altar in 1153 and 1164 respectively. In the first half of the thirteenth century the east end of David's abbey was remodelled to incorporate the feretory chapel containing Margaret's shrine to which Margaret and Malcolm III's remains were translated in 1250, following her canonisation in 1249.¹⁷ This may have entailed an extension to the choir and a further movement eastwards of the high altar, before which Alexander III was buried in 1286, and Robert I was buried in 1329. The four points in the previous sentence are all subject to debate, but if all are accepted the result is a second burial group of four kings, the relative location and proximity of whose tombs depends upon the extent to which the high altar may have moved east at some point before 1250. Finally, the north side of the abbey choir was extended in the fourteenth century

¹⁶ Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' xxxi-xxlvii; T. H. Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', *Scottish Historical Review* 23 (1926) 81-91; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 27-63; P. A. Yeoman, 'Saint Margaret's Shrine at Dunfermline Abbey', in Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 79-88; Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 155-76.

¹⁷ For the debate concerning Margaret's canonisation, see Catherine Keene, *Saint Margaret, Queen of the Scots: A life in perspective* (Basingstoke, 2013), 119-23. A feretory chapel is a chapel containing a portable shrine containing the relics of a saint.

by the addition of an outer north aisle and Lady Chapel in which virtually all the royal-related burials between 1329 and 1420 took place to create a third burial group, no further recorded burials taking place in the choir and before the high altar.

Commencing reinvestigation of the consensus with the third group, the post-1329 interments can be divided into two categories, the first a 'Bruce grouping' consisting of Robert's daughter Matilda (d. 1353) and sister Christian (d. 1357), his nephew Thomas Randolph (d. 1332)¹⁸ and brother-in-law Andrew Murray (d. 1338). Matilda was buried at Dunfermline *cum parentibus suis*, 'with her parents', and Christian *cum parentibus suis*¹⁹ *et progenitoribus regibus Scociae, quorum locus proprius [est] sepulture*, 'with her parents and her forbears, the kings of Scotland, whose own burial-ground that is'.²⁰ Both references could be to the abbey rather than a particular location within it. Andrew Murray was buried at Rosemarkie when he died in 1338, and according to *Gesta Annalia* II was reburied at Dunfermline *coram altare Beatae Virginis*, 'before the altar of the Blessed Virgin'.²¹ He was married to Christian Bruce, and if it were upon her death in 1357 that his remains joined hers at Dunfermline,²² the further likelihood is that she was already buried before this same altar. The altars known to have been dedicated to the Virgin at Dunfermline lay elsewhere than in the middle of the choir, one of them within the Lady Chapel added to the north side of the abbey at some point in the fourteenth century.²³ Some manuscripts of Bower say that Thomas Randolph was buried at Dunfermline in 1332 *ante altare capelle Nostre Domine*, 'before the

¹⁸ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, eds. J. Stuart et al., 23 vols, H. M. General Register House (Edinburgh, 1878-1908) [ER], i. 433.

¹⁹ This is an error, as if the writer were assuming that Christian were Bruce's daughter, not his sister.

²⁰ *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. and trans. W. F. Skene, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1871-2) [*Chron. Fordun*], i. 369, 377; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, vii. 274-5, 304-5 (omitting *regibus Scociae*).

²¹ *Chron. Fordun*, i. 363; cf. Watt, *Scotichronicon*, vii. 234. On *Gesta Annalia* II see Dauvit Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun', in Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning*, 9-30, at 15-20.

²² Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', 146.

²³ Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 51-2.

altar of the Chapel of Our Lady'.²⁴ The later fifteenth century *Book of Pluscarden* claims the Lady Chapel as the resting place of Randolph, Christian Bruce and Andrew Murray.²⁵ Thus, the evidence makes no explicit connection between any of these 'Bruce burials' and Dunfermline's choir, and suggests the Lady Chapel as a possible burial location for all of them.

The second and later category consists of Queen Euphemia, wife of Robert II (d. 1387 or 1388), Queen Annabella, wife of Robert III (d. 1401) and Robert duke of Albany, who died in 1420.²⁶ Of the queens, it is only noted that they were buried at Dunfermline.²⁷ The formal possibility of their burial in the choir cannot be excluded.²⁸ Albany provides a valuable litmus test of the protocol which came to govern royal burial at Dunfermline. Although son of a king of Scots rather than a king, he was also guardian or governor of Scotland for most of the last thirty years of his life, his status 'not far removed from that of a monarch'.²⁹ That liminality was expressed in death by his burial *inter chorum et capellam nostre Domine*, 'between the choir and the chapel of Our Lady'. Some but not all manuscripts of our source, Walter Bower, add that Albany was buried *regaliter* or 'like a king', a word thus demanding very literal interpretation.³⁰

²⁴ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, vii. 64-5. Elizabeth de Burgh (d. 1327) donated a frontal *ad altare Beate Marie de Dunfermlyn*, 'to the altar of the Blessed Mary of Dunfermline' (*ER*, i. ccxv, 239).

²⁵ *Liber Pluscardensis*, i. 264, 302.

²⁶ *ER*, iv. lxxix.

²⁷ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, viii. 37; ix. 137; A. H. Dunbar, *Scottish Kings: A Revised Chronology of Scottish History 1005-1625* (Edinburgh, 1906), 164.

²⁸ Margaret Logie (née Drummond), David II's second queen, died at Marseilles c. 1373 (Michael Penman, 'Margaret Logie, Queen of Scotland', in Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes, Sian Reynolds and Rose Pipes (eds), *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women: From the earliest times to 2004* (Edinburgh, 2006), 248-9).

Boardman considers it unlikely that her intended burial at Dunfermline ever came to pass, given that her marriage to David II ended in separation and divorce (Stephen Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371-1406* (East Linton, 1996), 23), but himself poses the question as to whether Scottish queens regarded burial at Dunfermline not as a right they derived from their spouses, but rather as an expression of their own queenly status, perhaps founded upon identification with and devotion to Saint Margaret as a paragon of Scottish queenship (Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', 148-9, 152, n. 36). Nonetheless, there seems to be no evidence to indicate her burial at Dunfermline.

²⁹ Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', 148; *ER*, iv. xlvii-xlvix.

³⁰ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, viii. 134-5.

We turn to the second burial group, which is held to include Bruce. The discussion which gives fullest attention to both the material and written evidence remains that of Thomas Bryce in 1926, who in turn based his understanding of the development and internal arrangement of Dunfermline's medieval abbey church upon Francis Eeles.³¹ Eeles conjectured that this church ultimately consisted of 'a structural choir of six bays', largely built under David I before being extended in the first half of the thirteenth century, a process certainly completed by the time of Margaret's translation in 1250, and 'perhaps between 1216 and 1226'.³² By 'structural choir' he clearly meant choir in its maximal sense of the church east of the nave. Once extended, the constituent parts of Dunfermline's structural choir were first, Margaret's chapel; second, 'a vacant space' between the chapel and the high altar, to serve both 'as a processional path, and a way for pilgrims to approach the shrine' and occupying one bay; third, the high altar 'against a screen between the eastmost pillars of the choir'; fourth, the sanctuary, occupying one bay; fifth, the presbytery, occupying one bay, and finally the 'architectural choir' proper, accommodating the monks and occupying the remaining three bays. For the high altar, the probable consequence of the thirteenth-century extension was its re-erection a bay to the east of its previous location.³³

Bryce concurred that the choir as extended in the thirteenth century was completed in its unextended form by 1150, the year in which the *Chronicle of Holyrood* records that *dedicata est aecclesia de Dunfermelin*, 'the church of Dunfermline was dedicated'.³⁴ This meant that 'all the royal tombs later than 1150 must have been located in the choir of the

³¹ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 81-91. For brief biographical information, see <http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH2130&type=P>; accessed 9 Apr. 2018. Thomas Hastie Bryce was Regius Professor of Anatomy at the University of Glasgow, curator of the archaeological and anatomical specimens at the university's Hunterian Museum, an experienced and respected archaeologist and evidently competent Latinist.

³² For the reason for Eeles's choice of these dates, see below, p. **.

³³ Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' xxxi, xxxvii-xxxviii, and 'Sketch-Plan of Dunfermline Abbey ca. A.D. 1400-150', between xxx and xxxi.

³⁴ *A Scottish Chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, ed. M. O. Anderson, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1938), 121.

twelfth century church'.³⁵ The first such burial in this location was David I in 1153, *pavimento coram majus altare* or 'in the pavement before the high altar' as recorded by Fordun;³⁶ Bryce does not mention Bower's supplementary *in pavimento medii chori*, 'in the pavement of the middle of the choir'.³⁷ David was followed in 1165 by his grandson Malcolm IV, who according to *Gesta Annalia* I was buried *in medio pavimenti a dextris avi sui Regis David ante maius altare*, 'in the middle of the pavement, on the right of his grandfather King David, before the high altar'.³⁸

Moving to 1286 and Alexander III as the next recorded monarch to be buried at Dunfermline, Bryce first considered the implications for the location of the high altar of the extension to the abbey's east end completed by 1250. He noted that evidence for an apse was apparently uncovered during the investigations of 1818-19; that it 'probably represented the apse of the twelfth century unextended choir', and that the plan of the abbey by William Burn included in Jardine's report located the newly discovered burial vault 'in the axial line of the choir and in the concavity of the apse'.³⁹ Taking his cue from Eeles's comment—made a propos of Margaret's original church—that the high altar would have been positioned 'on the line of the chord of the apse', Bryce concluded that the location of the burial vault of 1818-19 'must have coincided very nearly' with the site of the high altar of the twelfth-century church, David I's abbey.⁴⁰ Hence this vault must represent a post-1250 royal burial, and confirmation

³⁵ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 83.

³⁶ *Chron. Fordun*, i. 234.

³⁷ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iv. 250-1.

³⁸ *Chron. Fordun*, i. 259; cf. Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iv. 280-1. On *Gesta Annalia* I see Dauvit Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun', in Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning*, 9-30, at 15-18; Alice Taylor, 'Historical writing in twelfth- and thirteenth- century Scotland: the Dunfermline compilation', *Historical Research* 83 (2010), 228-52, at 234 and nn. 38-9.

³⁹ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 85; [Jardine], *Report*, 28 and facing page; Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 164-5. An apse is a structure or recess, often semicircular in shape, and often forming a church's eastern end, housing the altar.

⁴⁰ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 85; Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 173.

of Eeles's proposition that the thirteenth-century extension of the eastern end of the abbey entailed a proportionate movement eastwards of the high altar.⁴¹

Bryce then sought to reconcile this scenario with our most explicit evidence for the burial place of Alexander III, which comes from the *Chronicle of Lanercost*. Here Alexander is buried *solus ex parte meridiana, prope presbyterum*, 'alone, on the south side, near the presbytery'.⁴² The statement's detail suggests that it be taken seriously, and *Lanercost* is a contemporary or nearly contemporary source, well informed on ecclesiastical matters and Scottish affairs. To Bryce this meant 'the *pars meridiana* [south side] of the choir near the presbytery, which was very probably added when the choir was extended'.⁴³ Alexander III was buried *solus*, 'alone', because he was not buried beside David I and Malcolm IV but east of them, in the extended choir. The temporal perspective here would be true to the status of *Lanercost* as a contemporary or nearly contemporary source, unable to take retrospective account of the subsequent burial of anyone else, such as Bruce, at this location. Given that no Scottish king after Bruce was buried at Dunfermline, Bryce therefore concluded that on the basis of location alone, the burial vault of 1818-19 must belong to either Alexander III or Robert I. Although strict acceptance of the accuracy of both *Lanercost's meridiana* and Burn's plan would favour Bruce over Alexander III, Bryce declined to push the evidence this far.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' xxxviii.

⁴² *Chronicon de Lanercost M.CC.I-M.CCC.XLVI*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1839) [*Chron. Lanercost*], 117. The editor notes (*ibid.*, 394) that *presbyterum* is presumably an error for *presbyterium*. *Gesta Annalia* I says no more than that Alexander III was buried at Dunfermline *honorifice*, 'with honour'; Bower that he was buried there *ut regem decuit*, 'as befitted a king' (*Chron. Fordun*, i. 309; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, v. 420-1).

⁴³ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 86. Bryce notes (*ibid.*, 88) that two nineteenth-century historians of Dunfermline translate *meridiana* here as 'middle'. Latin *meridianus* is used of time to refer to midday, but of place to refer to that which belongs to 'the south side, southern, southerly': *A Latin Dictionary*, eds. C. T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford, 1958); *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, eds. R. K. Ashdowne, D. R. Howlett and R. E. Latham, 3 vols (Oxford, 2018) [*Dictionary of Medieval Latin*], s.v. *meridianus*. The word occurs three other times in *Lanercost*, all in its temporal sense; *Chron. Lanercost*, 80, 126, 164.

⁴⁴ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 88-9.

Iain Fraser's discussion of 2005 diverges from Eeles and Bryce at points. He asks if *Lanercost* may rather mean that Alexander III was buried in 'a location in the south choir arcade'.⁴⁵ Against this, the chronicles point to the choir before the high altar as the usual burial place of medieval Scottish kings at Dunfermline, and one of the two lines of manuscript transmission of the *Book of Pluscarden* gives Alexander III's place of burial as before the high altar.⁴⁶ Secondly, Fraser considers it probable that David I's 'architectural choir' may have had four bays rather than three, although on what grounds is not made clear.⁴⁷ This contributes to his main point, that the need to provide ambulatory space to give access to Margaret's shrine would have left the high altar of David I's church capable of being moved east not by the entire bay allowed for by Eeles, but either a very short distance, or not at all. In the former scenario, pre- and post-1250 burials would be separated at most by 'a matter of yards'. The latter scenario would leave them forming 'a tighter cluster, in the vicinity of the twelfth-century altar'.⁴⁸ Either scenario is in tension with Bryce's interpretation insofar as Bryce sees the twelfth-century altar as having made sufficient movement east, once the eastern arm was extended prior to 1250, to warrant *Lanercost*'s statement that Alexander III was buried *solus*, 'alone'.

If Burn's plan does accurately locate the foundations of an apse which did indeed belong to David's church, then it too suggests that the scope to move the high altar east without compromising access to Margaret's chapel would have been minimal at best, substantiating Fraser's scepticism.⁴⁹ The problem for Eeles and Bryce is that their

⁴⁵ Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 160.

⁴⁶ *Liber Pluscardensis*, i. x-xviii, 112.

⁴⁷ See also Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 33.

⁴⁸ Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 160.

⁴⁹ Compare the locations of the apse given in Burn's plan in [Jardine], *Report*, page facing 28, and in Eeles's plan in Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' between xxx and xxxi. Fawcett argues that once extended the abbey's end wall, onto which Margaret's chapel abutted and beyond which it projected, was now squared off rather than in the form of a semicircular apse; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 49-50. If so, then if evidence of an apse were indeed discovered in 1818-19, the only plausible candidate would be the apse of the twelfth-century abbey, as Bryce concluded.

interpretations both involve significant expansion eastwards, and this irresistible force then meets Fraser's immovable object in the form of Margaret's chapel and the level of access it would have required, which after all was surely a priority in building it. In Eeles's case the imperative is the rigidity of his scheme which requires a presbytery and a sanctuary, each occupying an entire bay. For Bryce the twin imperatives were the site of the vault of 1818-19 more or less on top of what he took to be the location of the twelfth-century altar; and *Lanercost's* statement that Alexander III was buried *solus*, 'alone', which had to mean 'further east than the graves of David I and Malcolm IV and apart from them'.⁵⁰ Eeles, believing likewise that the post-1250 royal burials moved eastwards with the high altar, locates them 'in the presbytery before the High Altar of the choir as rearranged', separated from the altar by the sanctuary.⁵¹ He makes no mention of the evidence of *Lanercost*, which seems to contradict him by placing Alexander III's grave near the presbytery, not in it. Harmonising *Lanercost* with Eeles's scheme would therefore push the post-1250 burials back alongside those of David I and Malcolm IV, eliminating any separation.

Might the conundrum be explicable as a matter of terminology? The *sanctuarium* or sanctuary was strictly speaking the holiest place within the church, immediately surrounding the high altar, but it could be used more loosely to refer to the east end of the choir. The *presbyterium* or presbytery was the area east of the choir proper 'up to and including the high altar', and reserved for the clergy officiating at the altar.⁵² There would seem to be scope for confusion, overlap and interchangeability between the terms. If Eeles's sanctuary is made synonymous with *Lanercost's* presbytery, and Eeles's sanctuary and presbytery are made one, then his scheme could be aligned more closely with *Lanercost*, and reduced in scale. But a spatial problem would nonetheless remain, for by placing Alexander III near the presbytery

⁵⁰ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 86.

⁵¹ Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' xxxviii, and plan between xxx and xxxi.

⁵² *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, s.v. *sanctuarium*, *presbyterium*.

and not in it, *Lanercost* still creates a degree of distance between his tomb and the high altar which then makes it difficult to comprehend how *Lanercost* can go on to describe Alexander III as buried *solus*, ‘alone’. The same issue of encroachment upon the burials of David I and Malcolm IV becomes even more convoluted if one assumes that *Lanercost* is referring to a high altar whose location, as argued for by Fraser, was affected only minimally or not all by the extension to Dunfermline’s eastern arm completed by 1250. Under this scenario Alexander III could as readily be envisaged as lying west rather than east of David I and Malcolm IV, but his burial *solus*, ‘alone’, would remain problematic. What the wording of *Lanercost* insists upon for Alexander III is clear space: between his tomb and the high altar to the east, and between his tomb and other burials usually presumed to lie to his west. This is why its testimony sits so uneasily with both existing schools of thought regarding the location of Dunfermline’s high altar and related burials in the thirteenth century, which may explain why Eeles does not discuss it, and Fraser suggests removing Alexander III to the south choir arcade.

Lanercost’s evidence was crucial to Bryce, but it may be revealing that he does not use *Lanercost*’s statement about the presbytery as a solution to what he clearly saw as a weakness in his scheme that had to be addressed, namely mode of burial. Bryce knew that evidence existed in the *Exchequer Rolls* to the effect that Bruce was buried under or within a substantial monument which, he says, ‘must have stood on the floor of the choir’. But, he continues:

it could not very well have been placed immediately in front of the altar in the middle of the choir.... A fair marble slab on the floor level, which in no way obstructed the

approach to the altar, is a more likely form for a monument *in medio chori* [in the middle of the choir] to have taken.⁵³

This looks like wishful thinking, and subsequent research on the marble tomb fragments recovered over time from Dunfermline Abbey has suggested firstly, that they display a consistency which points to origination in a single structure comprising tomb chest with decorated side panels, surmounted by an effigy with canopy above; and secondly, that this is likely to be the tomb which Bruce is known to have commissioned from a Parisian workshop.⁵⁴ Bryce's problem is compounded in two other ways. Firstly, although in the cases of David I and Malcolm IV the phraseology of the chronicles—*pavimento/in medio pavimenti*, 'in the pavement/in the middle of the pavement'—could suggest burial beneath slabs set flush in the abbey floor,⁵⁵ nothing is known of the nature of Alexander III's tomb. Secondly, and unmentioned by Eeles, Bryce or Fraser, Alexander III's first wife Queen Margaret Plantagenet is said in *Gesta Annalia* I and Bower to have been buried *juxta regem David*, 'beside King David', on her death in 1275.⁵⁶ Remembering Elizabeth de Burgh's burial 'beside King Robert her husband' in 1327, the mooted second group would thus consist of two queens and as many as four kings.⁵⁷ The female burials could be factored into Bryce's scheme to create two rows of three graves: firstly David I with Malcolm IV to his right and Margaret Plantagenet presumably to his left;⁵⁸ secondly, and to the east, Robert I in

⁵³ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 87.

⁵⁴ Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 156-7, 159-60, 170-72. For the virtual reconstruction of the tomb which featured in an exhibition at the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, in 2015, see <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/visit/exhibitions/virtualexhibitions/robertthebruce>; accessed 9 Apr. 2018.

⁵⁵ Fraser, 'The tomb of the hero king', 160; SangDong Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey as a royal cult centre c.1070-c.1420', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Stirling, 2014), 222.

⁵⁶ *Chron. Fordun*, i. 305; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, v. 402-3; Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', 143.

⁵⁷ For the formal possibility of the burial of two later queens at this location, see above, p. **.

⁵⁸ Eeles took this to mean that Malcolm lay to David's right as seen from the nave, and thus immediately south of David; Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' plan between xxx and xxxi. However, and given that 'the north side of the choir was a particularly honorific location, at the right hand side of the Lord as viewed from the high altar', it may be likelier that this is the perspective of the chronicles, and that Malcolm lay immediately north of David; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 51.

the middle of the choir, with Alexander III to his south side and Elizabeth de Burgh presumably on his north side. However, the viability of such a scheme is now open to question on three counts: the challenge of the evidence of *Lanercost*; how far, if at all, the twelfth-century high altar was capable of being moved further east as a consequence of the extension to the eastern arm completed by 1250; and the presence before the high altar of one or more substantial above-ground tombs. All three issues coalesce into one: the existence of sufficient space before Dunfermline Abbey's high altar to accommodate tombs whose number, size and proximity both to each other and to the altar seem incompatible with the altar's main function, the celebration of the mass and the liturgy.

The matter seems intractable, existing as it does in the shadow of Fernie's sobering observation that given what has been lost at Dunfermline, 'there is no basis for the apparently assured plans which are often published of the eastern arm'.⁵⁹ Help may come from an unexpected source, the first burial group. As noted, an orthodoxy of the last century's scholarship on medieval royal burial at Dunfermline is that the burials of the first queen Margaret, her husband Malcolm III and their sons down to Alexander I (d. 1124) took place close to the high altar of the church she founded,⁶⁰ and that all subsequent royal burials, beginning with David I and Malcolm IV, took place further east, in the choir of the abbey founded by David I c. 1128 and dedicated in 1150.⁶¹ An older dissenting voice belonged to Ebenezer Henderson, who believed that papal documents of the first half of the thirteenth century showed that 'David's choir' was in fact built long after David's death, between 1216 and 1226. By Henderson's way of thinking the surviving Romanesque nave originally

⁵⁹ Eric Fernie, 'The Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', in John Higgitt (ed.), *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of St Andrews*, The British Archaeological Association (Leeds, 1994), 25-37, at 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-8. For the broaching of the possibilities that Margaret may have been buried within what Fernie termed 'Church I' at Dunfermline rather than what he termed 'Church II'; and that 'Church II' might better be associated with King Edgar rather than Margaret, see Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 30-1. The discussion below of the evidence for burial at Dunfermline before 1124 runs counter to both possibilities, for effective critiques of which see also Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 215-7, 223-4.

⁶¹ I. B. Cowan and D. E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (London, 1976), ***; G. W. S. Barrow (ed.), *The Charters of David I* (Woodbridge, 1999) [Barrow (ed.), *Charters of David I*], nos 17, 22, 171-2.

functioned as a church in its own right: built in David's time, dedicated in 1150 and only becoming the nave some eight decades later once the choir was added. The high altar of David's church as defined by Henderson occupied the same site as the high altar of Margaret's church, and went on to become the nave altar in the extended abbey after 1226. Thus, David I and Malcolm IV were part of the first burial group at Dunfermline, and logically—although here Henderson's logic seems to break down—the same would have to apply to Margaret Plantagenet, if she were buried 'beside King David'.⁶²

Henderson's scheme was rejected implicitly by Eeles and explicitly by Bryce, and has since been ignored.⁶³ This is understandable given that it predates Chalmers's excavation, and contains numerous flaws, including a highly arbitrary dating methodology.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, close scrutiny of the chronicle evidence for the pre-1250 royal burials at Dunfermline suggests that Henderson's general hypothesis deserves revisiting. The starting point is an unpublished chronicle known as the 'Dunfermline Chronicle', which Watt, Broun and Taylor have argued was a source drawn upon by the later and published Scottish medieval chronicles from *Gesta Annalia* I onwards.⁶⁵ Although only now surviving in a manuscript dating to the reign of James III, Taylor argues that it had a prior existence as part of a compilation involving two other items which precede it in the same manuscript: a version of Turgot's *Vita Sancte Margarete* or 'Life of Saint Margaret', and a grouping of texts whose compiler Watt called the 'Dunfermline Continuator'.⁶⁶ Taylor has further argued that the compilation of the three items was made between 1249 and 1285 (perhaps between

⁶² Ebenezer Henderson, *The Annals of Dunfermline* (Glasgow, 1879), 30-36, 67-9, 73-4. For Margaret's death notice Henderson cites Wyntoun rather than *Gesta Annalia* I or Bower as his source, and says that she 'was interred in the Choir of the Abbey of Dunfermline, near King David's tomb'; *ibid.*, 95-6.

⁶³ Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 83.

⁶⁴ Henderson, *Annals of Dunfermline*, 30, 67.

⁶⁵ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iii. 17-18; Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*', 20; Alice Taylor, 'Historical writing in twelfth- and thirteenth- century Scotland'.

⁶⁶ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iii. 18.

1249 and 1258), and attributes it to Watt's 'Dunfermline Continuator'; a member of Dunfermline's Benedictine community who brought the three items together, and linked and shaped their contents, in order to advance the case for Scottish kings to be granted papal approval to receive the rite of unction and coronation.⁶⁷ Its early date and Dunfermline provenance make the 'Dunfermline Chronicle' an important source for royal burial there before 1250.

Here is the sequence of royal burials given in the 'Dunfermline Chronicle':⁶⁸

[1093]: Edward, first-born son of Malcolm III and Margaret: *sepultus est in ecclesia Sancte Trinitatis de Dunfermlyn iuxta patrem suum ante altare Sancte Crucis*: 'he was buried in the church of the Holy Trinity of Dunfermline next to his father before the altar of the Holy Cross'.

[1093]: Queen Margaret: *apud Dunfermlyn perventum est, ubi quali decuit honore sepulta est contra altare Sancte Crucis*, 'they came to Dunfermline, where [Margaret] was buried with appropriate honour opposite the altar of the Holy Cross'.

1107: King Edgar: *patri suo appositus est apud Dunfermlyn, ubi requiescit corpus eius ante maius altare*, 'he was placed with his father at Dunfermline, where his body rests before the high altar'.

[1124]: King Alexander I: *apud Dunfermlyn iuxta patrem suum et matrem et fratrem ante maius altare honorifice sepultus est, ut talem virum decebat*, 'he was buried at Dunfermline next to his father and mother and brother⁶⁹ before the high altar with honour, as befitted such a man'.

⁶⁷ Taylor, 'Historical writing in twelfth- and thirteenth- century Scotland'.

⁶⁸ The original is in Madrid, Biblioteca Real, MS II 2097, fos 26r-41v. For a transcript I am indebted to Dauvit Broun.

⁶⁹ The singular may seem inconsistent with the fact that two of Alexander's brothers, Edward and Edgar, already lay before the high altar, but in the chronicle Alexander's life and death is treated in a discrete section with the

1153: King David I: *Sepultus vero est David in ecclesia Christi de Dunfermlyn honorifice in pavimento ante maius altare quam quidem ecclesiam dictus rex David copiosis donis et honoribus ditavit, et parentibus suis et fratribus appositus est,*

‘David was buried in the church of Christ of Dunfermline with honour in the pavement before the high altar, which church the said King David endowed with abundant gifts and honours, and he was placed with his parents and brothers’.

[1165]: King Malcolm IV: *sepultus est in Dunfermlyn in medio pavimenti a dextris avi sui regis David ante maius altare,* ‘he was buried in Dunfermline in the middle of the pavement on the right side of his grandfather King David before the high altar’.

Considered in isolation like this, the natural conclusion to be drawn from the sequence is that these burials were grouped together, before the same high altar.⁷⁰ To approach the entries on the basis that David I and Malcolm IV were buried at a significant remove before a different high altar would entail understanding *parentibus suis et fratribus appositus est* in

rubric *De Alexandro fratre eiusdem Edgari*, ‘Concerning Alexander brother of the same Edgar’. The brother referred to here must be Edgar.

⁷⁰ The logic of the sequence implies that *altare Sancte Crucis*, ‘the altar of the Holy Cross’ named in relation to the burials of Edward and Margaret, was the same as the *maius altare* or high altar of subsequent entries, or at least on the same site. Edward’s burial entry in the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’ is repeated in Fordun (*Chron. Fordun*, i. 219), while Wyntoun (*The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland by Androw of Wyntoun*, ed. David Laing, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1872-9) [*Chron. Wyntoun*], i. 165) records that Margaret was buried before ‘the Rood Altar’ and that Edward, Malcolm III and Ethelred (another son of Malcolm and Margaret, of whose burial the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’ says, *De Ethelredo autem nichil certum invenio scriptum ubi mortuus sic vel sepultus*, ‘Of Ethelred however I find nothing certain written about where he died or was buried’) were buried there also. Margaret dedicated her church to the Holy Trinity (Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 179), and the dedication did not change thereafter. The designation, ‘the altar of the Holy Cross’, has therefore presented a puzzle. Henderson proposed two distinct altars; Henderson, *Annals of Dunfermline*, 17. The explanation favoured by those who have accepted that there was only one altar is that, because this became the site of the nave altar, above which a cross would have been positioned, the chroniclers are writing from a retrospective viewpoint, with the nave of their own day in mind (Eeles, ‘Development of the Abbey Church,’ xxxii-iii; Bryce, ‘The Skull of King Robert the Bruce’, 83). An alternative explanation may lie in Turgot’s *Vita Sancte Margarete*, which describes a cross which Margaret placed at her church at Dunfermline: ‘a cross of incomparable worth having an image of the Saviour, which she had made to be covered with purest gold and silver and studded with gems, which shows publicly the devotion of her faith to those contemplating it even today’. It features prominently in Turgot’s narrative of Margaret’s death, which locates it within the church and also accords her the same place of burial given in the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’: ‘we surrendered [her body] to the tomb, opposite (*contra*) the altar and the venerable sign of the Holy Cross which she herself had erected’; Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 179, 221. We suggest that this cross gave rise to an alternative designation for the high altar of Margaret’s church; cf. Fernie, ‘Romanesque Churches’, 28-30.

David's entry—'he was placed with his parents and brothers'—as generic rather than specific in locational intent: all concerned were buried under the one roof, but not necessarily in the same location. That interpretation might be possible,⁷¹ but it runs counter to the logic and language of the chronicle, particularly *appositus*, literally 'placed [next] to', implying physical proximity. The same verb is used of King Edgar's burial in relation to his father, and the sequence implies that both were buried before the same high altar. It is instructive to compare the entries on David's burial in *Gesta Annalia* I and Bower:

Sepultus est autem in ecclesia Sanctae Trinitatis de Dunfermlyn honorifice, pavimento coram majus altare, quam a patre et matre primo fundatam, ab Alexandro fratre possessionibus et aedificiis auctam, etiam ipse, donis amplioribus et honoribus constructam, ditavit, et ibidem in senectute bona parentibus et fratribus est appositus ('He was buried in the church of the Holy Trinity of Dunfermline with honour, in the pavement before the great altar; the church which was first founded by his father and mother, increased in possessions and buildings by his brother Alexander, and which he built and enriched with greater gifts and honours; and in the same place in his venerable old age he was placed with his parents and brothers').⁷²

Corpus eius a Karliolo delatum est ad Dunfermelin et ante magnum altare in pavimento medii chori sepultum in nobili monasterio quod ipse construxerat multisque possessionibus ditaverat, quo monachos a Cantuaria adduxit ('His body was brought from Carlisle to Dunfermline and was buried before the great altar in the pavement of the middle of the choir in the noble monastery which he himself had

⁷¹ Cf. above, p. *, where it is has been argued that Matilda and Christian Bruce were buried in the Lady Chapel at Dunfermline, and that the references in *Gesta Annalia* II and Bower to their burial 'with' (*cum*) Robert Bruce and Elizabeth de Burgh should therefore be interpreted generically rather than specifically.

⁷² *Chron. Fordun*, i. 234.

built and enriched with many possessions, to which he brought monks from Canterbury’).⁷³

While *Gesta Annalia* I reiterates that David was buried along with his parents and brothers, it might be argued that its fuller content has the effect, intended or not, of loosening the association between David and the high altar, and that *ibidem*, ‘in the same place’, could therefore be ambiguous, referring either to the high altar or to *ecclesia*, the church as a whole. Bower is unambiguous, and by eliminating the reference to David’s parents and brothers, he may have provided the lead which modern scholarship has followed. He also adds *medii chori*, ‘of the middle of the choir’, the same phrase he later uses of Bruce’s place of burial, and perhaps with a view to suggesting a connection; in the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’ it is Malcolm IV who is buried *in medio pavimenti*, ‘in the middle of the pavement’, before the high altar.

It is understandable then that the published sources—especially Bower in conjunction with the *Chronicle of Holyrood*’s statement that ‘the church of Dunfermline was dedicated’ in 1150—have contributed to the orthodoxy that David I was buried alone in the choir of his recently dedicated abbey in 1153. The evidence of the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’ represents one challenge to that orthodoxy. The other, to which we now turn, is Henderson’s theory that David could be buried nowhere else save with his parents and brothers because the eastern arm of Dunfermline Abbey had yet to be built. From the time of Eeles and Bryce to the present, consensus on two points has governed discussion of medieval church-building at Dunfermline before 1300. The first is that there were three principal building phases: Margaret’s church in the late eleventh century;⁷⁴ David’s abbey in the twelfth century, which

⁷³ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iv. 250-1.

⁷⁴ Fernie, ‘Romanesque Churches’, 25-8; Fawcett, ‘Dunfermline Abbey Church’, 27-31; above, n. 60.

was complete enough to be dedicated in 1150,⁷⁵ and the extension to the eastern arm in the first half of the thirteenth century, culminating in the addition of Margaret's feretory chapel by 1250. Discussion of the last phase tends to be briefer, vaguer and more divergent. When Margaret's chapel was built, whether this should be seen as connected to or distinct from building works referred to in papal documents of 1226 and 1231, and the nature and dating of these works themselves are all issues which have not been explicitly addressed. The second point of consensus concerns direction of build. The standard medieval practice when one church was built over another was to superimpose the east end of the new church upon its predecessor, thereby ensuring continuity in the location of the sanctuary, high altar and important burials, and thence to expand westwards. As Fernie has observed, this was not an option at Dunfermline because the ground to the west of Margaret's church fell away too steeply to make it feasible to build upon it while maintaining connection with the original site.⁷⁶ The consensus holds that when it came to the building of David's abbey, rather than beginning with what was already there and working east, work proceeded from east to west as is accepted was the norm elsewhere, commencing with the new choir before Margaret's church was then supplanted by a Romanesque nave. The plainer or poorer building standards in evidence in the nave gallery, and on ground level at the nave's western end—the west door and north door in comparison to the south-east door—have therefore sometimes been explained as works completed after 1153, when funding grew scarcer following the death of the abbey's founder and patron, who was buried in the new choir which had been prioritised within the building process.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches', 32; Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 33, 76; Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 230-1.

⁷⁶ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 28.

⁷⁷ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches', 32, 34; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 27-31; Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 74-6.

The loss of the eastern arm of Dunfermline Abbey means that at present any investigation of whether that arm was built in David's time or later has to rely overwhelmingly upon the written sources. These suggest that in the century between the dedication of 1150 and Margaret's translation of 1250, the abbey underwent a major expansion which by 1231 left the monastic community severely burdened by debt. In 1249, the pope granted the community's petition that their church did not require a new consecration. The reason why the issue had been raised was because *ecclesia vestra post consecracionem ipsius per nobilioris structure fabricam fuerit augmentata*, 'your church after its consecration was enlarged by the building of a nobler structure'. The community had argued that nonetheless, *antiqui parietes eius pro maiori parte in pristino statu perdurent*, 'the old walls of [the church] survive for the greater part in their original state', and on those grounds the petition was granted.⁷⁸ 'Dedication' in its verbal form, *dedicata (est, fuit)*, was the term used by the *Chronicle of Holyrood* and in contemporary charters of what was a major ceremonial event at Dunfermline in 1150.⁷⁹ However, Dunfermline's dedication to the Holy Trinity was a constant before and after 1150, and in the medieval sources the terms 'consecration' and 'dedication', in their Latin nominal and verbal forms, were used interchangeably and as synonyms.⁸⁰ It could only be to the dedication of 1150 that the document of 1249 was referring, using the alternative term; the dedication or consecration in question could hardly be that of Margaret's original church c. 1070, because the walls of that church had long gone by 1249. The consensus, as represented by the views of Eeles and Bryce, takes the 'old walls' to refer to the lost choir, presumably on the grounds that if building of the abbey proceeded from east to west, the choir was built first, and its walls were older.⁸¹ However, the contrast the document of 1249 was drawing was surely between a

⁷⁸ *Registrum de Dunfermelyn*, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1842) [*Dunfermline Registrum*], no. 288.

⁷⁹ Barrow (ed.), *Charters of David I*, nos 171-2.

⁸⁰ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, s.v. *consecrare*, 1a; *dedicare*, 2a; *consecratio*; *dedicatio*.

⁸¹ Eeles, 'Development of the Abbey Church,' xxxviii; Bryce, 'The Skull of King Robert the Bruce', 83.

‘nobler structure’ built after, and old walls built before, the consecration of 1150. If, as the consensus holds, the abbey was already substantially complete by 1150, then the contrast loses its force and the ‘nobler structure’ becomes hard to identify. The formal possibilities available under the consensus—completion of works to the nave, or ‘stage three’ works carried out in the first half of the thirteenth century—do not seem readily commensurate with the ‘building of a nobler structure’.

The language of 1249 is also present in papal documents issued on behalf of Dunfermline in 1226 and 1231.⁸² Both were responses to a plea or pleas for resources to alleviate financial hardship, and presumably drew upon the language of the original supplication or supplications from the community, of date or dates unknown. In order to enhance the provision of divine worship, the monastery had been enlarged by *nobiliori*⁸³ *structura fabricae*, ‘a nobler structure of building’, increasing the number of monks who could be accommodated from thirty to fifty. Hence the ‘nobler structure’ is to be associated with the choir, and not to works to the nave. In itself the enlargement was ‘not without great expenditure and debt’, but sustaining this number of brethren alongside the need to provide hospitality to pilgrims, travellers and the poor had outstripped the resources available, creating pressures described as potential in 1226 and real in 1231, when the abbot and brethren *sepe onera subeunt debitorum*, ‘often undergo the burdens of debtors’. When this enlargement had taken place is not specified. The language of the document of 1226 suggests that it had happened by then.⁸⁴ According to the document of 1231 the enlargement had taken place *de novo*, ‘anew’, which might seem to imply works recently finished. However, if

⁸² *Dunfermline Registrum*, nos. 257, 130.

⁸³ The dative form *nobiliori* is what is printed in *Dunfermline Registrum*, although syntactically the ablative *nobiliorē* would seem to be required.

⁸⁴ In the phrase *cum ad divini cultus augmentum monasterium vestrum tam numero personarum quam et nobiliori structura fabricae duxeritis augmentandum* in the document of 1226, I take *duxeritis* to be perfect subjunctive following *cum*: ‘whereas for the increase of divine worship you considered your monastery in requirement of expansion both in numbers of personnel and by a nobler structure of building’.

weight be given to the ground shared with the document of 1249, *de novo* could be referring more broadly to what had taken place since 1150, drawing a distinction with the earlier building phase whose legacy was the ‘old walls’. Although 1226 and 1231 concerned the *monasterium* or ‘monastery’ and 1249 *ecclesia vestra*, ‘your church’, both terms should probably be understood as inclusive, embracing the entire complex.⁸⁵ Expansion of the Dunfermline community on the scale indicated would have entailed both larger dining and sleeping quarters within the monastery, and a larger monks’ choir within the church.

On the basis of the documents of 1226 and 1231 Henderson concluded that the church dedicated in 1150 was augmented by a new choir built between 1216 and 1226. The timescale seems highly unrealistic, and his choice of 1216 as a *terminus post quem* is entirely arbitrary.⁸⁶ Evidence relating to 1180 which was unknown to Henderson, Eeles and Bryce suggests that the choir of Dunfermline’s lost eastern arm certainly existed by then. The source is the text of the *Miracula* or Miracles of Saint Margaret found in the same manuscript as the ‘Dunfermline Chronicle’, and on internal evidence likewise compiled by a monk of Dunfermline in the mid-thirteenth century. Compilation may have been largely completed before 1249, but drawing upon accounts of miracles at least one of which must have been written down earlier, perhaps upon an earlier compilation.⁸⁷ Under 1180 the text describes an otherwise unrecorded translation of Margaret’s remains to a location on ‘the north side of the altar’. While the act of translation took place, the monks lay prostrate in the choir. The text then proceeds directly to narrate a miracle in which a local woman was given special access to the ‘innermost part of the sanctuary’ where Margaret’s remains now lay, and also had recourse—for its curative powers—to dust *quem tulerat a loco quo prius domina requievit in*

⁸⁵ For the use of *monasterium* in medieval and late-medieval sources where *ecclesia* is clearly to be understood, see *The Miracles of Saint Aebbe of Coldingham and Saint Margaret of Scotland*, ed. Robert Bartlett, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2003), 144-5; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, v. 420-1.

⁸⁶ Henderson, *Annals of Dunfermline*, 167-9.

⁸⁷ Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles*, xxxiv-xxxviii, 94-7; Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 123; Lee, ‘The Development of Dunfermline Abbey’, 24-6.

veteri ecclesia, ‘which she had taken from the place where the lady previously lay in the old church’.⁸⁸ Accounts of other miracles refer to ‘the translation of [Margaret’s] holy body from the former church (*de ecclesia priori*) to the high altar’; and to the ‘outer church’ (*exterioris ecclesie*) where the Rood or nave altar was situated.⁸⁹ The ‘old church’, ‘former church’ or ‘outer church’ must refer to what supplanted Margaret’s own church and which by no later than 1180 was acting as the nave of a bigger church.

The account of Margaret’s translation of 1180 in the *Miracula* is consistent with the account of her translation of 1250 given in Bower’s *Scotichronicon*.⁹⁰ Bower recounts how the grave was opened in its location in the sanctuary, and the remains raised and transferred to a casket. The casket was then ‘placed in the outer church (*exteriori ecclesie*) preparatory to re-burial in the choir beyond the high altar’. On its return journey, at ‘the chancel door just opposite the body of Margaret’s husband, King Malcolm, which lay under an arched roof on the north side of the nave’, occurred the incident which ultimately resulted in the joint translation of Margaret and Malcolm’s remains.⁹¹ It seems clear that Margaret’s remains underwent a formal progress from the sanctuary of what was by implication the ‘inner church’, where they had lain since 1180, to the nave or ‘outer church’ where her original tomb lay. She then returned in the company of her husband—until now still buried in his original location north of what had been the high altar of ‘the outer church’—to her purpose-built feretory chapel, ‘in the choir above the high altar’.

According to Wyntoun, Margaret’s remains were moved from their first place of burial at Dunfermline after one hundred years, which better matches the eighty seven years

⁸⁸ Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles*, 92-5; cf. *ibid.*, 76-7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 74-5, 82-3.

⁹⁰ The interpretation offered here agrees with Keene against Bartlett, who considers the accounts of 1180 and 1250 to be inconsistent, and Bower to be in error; Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 121-2; Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles*, xlii-xliii.

⁹¹ Watt, *Scotichronicon*, v. 296-9.

between 1093 and 1180 than the seventy years between 1180 and 1250.⁹² One narrative in the *Miracula* states that Margaret had lain in her tomb for eighty years which, given the ultimate date of compilation of the manuscript, might refer to either period.⁹³ The final narrative in the *Miracula* compilation was written after 14 October 1257, but nonetheless its reference to Margaret's tomb 'where, before her translation, the body of the saint first lay buried' suggests that the translation in question was that of 1180 rather than 1250, and that the translation of 1180 was the only one which took place between 1093 and the translation of 1250.⁹⁴ Had Margaret's remains undergone translation to another location within the church at any other date additional to 1180 and 1250, then it is likely that this would have been referenced in the *Miracula* narratives as having given rise to another focal point for her cult. Thus the strong probability is that in 1180 Margaret's remains were moved from their original location to a tomb beside the high altar in the choir of the 'inner' church, whence they were moved for a second time in 1250. The implication of our reading of the *Miracula*, Bower and Wyntoun, coupled with our reading of the documents of 1249, 1226 and 1231, is that Dunfermline's church was enlarged by the building of a 'nobler structure' after 1150, that this concerned the choir, and that the work was completed between 1150 and 1180 rather than between 1180 and 1226. Had the latter proposition been the case it would surely have carried consequences for the siting of Margaret's tomb.

Acceptance of the consensus means acceptance of the latter proposition, and the further problems it entails. If, as the consensus holds, the building of Dunfermline abbey's eastern arm was the work of David I and complete or largely so by the dedication of 1150, then the 'nobler structure' referenced in the documents of 1226 and 1231 would only seem capable of referring to the extension of the eastern arm to incorporate Margaret's feretory

⁹² *Chron. Wyntoun*, i. 165.

⁹³ Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles*, 108-9.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140-5; cf. *ibid.*, 122-3.

chapel, which would have to have been built at some point between 1150 and 1226. The evidence for the translation of 1180 would reduce these parameters to 1180 and 1226; in further reducing them to between 1216 and 1226, Eeles was presumably influenced by the speculation of Henderson.⁹⁵ However, it would seem counter-intuitive to refer to the extension to the eastern arm as a ‘nobler structure’ than the eastern arm itself. Moreover, if Margaret’s remains did not move between 1180 and 1250, this would leave her chapel *in situ* by 1226 but empty until 1250. Both problems resolve themselves if it be accepted instead that Dunfermline’s eastern arm was built not by 1150 but between 1150 and 1180, and that this was the ‘nobler structure’ of the documents of 1226, 1231 and 1249. No bar then exists to proposing what in any case would appear more likely: that Margaret’s chapel was built after 1231 and nearer to the point of her translation on 19 June 1250, perhaps indeed with that year in mind; and that it was built in its own right and in its own terms rather than as part of a more expansive scheme.

Points can be made to support both elements of this proposition. Firstly, the papally sanctioned enquiry into Margaret’s canonisation took place between 1245 and September 1249.⁹⁶ Clearly the building of the chapel was not completely dependent upon the enquiry and its outcome, since works must surely have commenced before the outcome was known, and the intention must therefore have been to proceed with the translation irrespective of the outcome. To this extent 1250 bears connection to 1180 as a local response to the continued growth of the cult of Margaret. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that there was not some relationship, including chronological correlation or overlap, between the papal process on the one hand and the building of the chapel on the other. Both initiatives may have owed much to Robert, abbot of Dunfermline from 1140 to 1152, and a beneficiary of demonstrably strong

⁹⁵ Eeles, ‘Development of the Abbey Church,’ xxxi.

⁹⁶ Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 119.

support from both the Scottish crown and the papacy.⁹⁷ Secondly, if Margaret's remains were translated to a location adjacent to the high altar in 1180, and were not moved again until their translation in June 1250, then the probability is that the high altar likewise did not move in the same period. Bower's account, we remember, places Margaret's tomb in the sanctuary immediately prior to her translation. In the light of this and of a building period belonging to the 1240s and perhaps the latter half of that decade, it becomes difficult to envisage a scenario in which the addition of Margaret's chapel also involved a significant extension of the eastern arm, and the consequent movement of the high altar eastwards by as much as a bay, as Eeles suggested. If the building of Margaret's chapel can be disaggregated from association with the 'nobler structure', assigned to the 1240s, and accounted as having little or no influence upon the position of the high altar, then it can be understood as a project whose remit did not extend beyond provision of the chapel and adequate access to it.

Why might David have decided to build from west to east, commencing with his mother's church? According to her biographer Turgot, Margaret built her church at Dunfermline 'in honour of the Holy Trinity with the intention of three salutary wishes; namely for redemption of the king's soul, and her own, and in order to obtain prosperity for her offspring in this life and the one to come'.⁹⁸ Familial sensibility is evident in David's great charters to Dunfermline, which incorporate confirmations of the grants made by his parents and brothers.⁹⁹ A desire on his part to be buried alongside them would have been understandable, perhaps irrespective of whether an alternative were available. Filial piety may also be evidenced in Fernie's analysis of the relationship between Margaret's church as excavated by Macgregor Chalmers, and the building which supplanted it. Although Margaret's church was levelled and obliterated in the process, every care was taken to

⁹⁷ Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 133-4; D. E. R. Watt and N. F. Shead (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses in Scotland from the 12th to the 16th Centuries* (Edinburgh, 2001), 68.

⁹⁸ Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 179.

⁹⁹ Barrow (ed.), *Charters of David I*, nos 33, 172.

memorialise it within the new building. The piers or columns which demarcated the new building's north and south arcades also demarcated the boundaries of Margaret's church. In Fernie's words:

The arcade walls of David's church stand on the walls of Margaret's church The placing of the arcades cannot have been conditioned by a wish to use the old walls as foundations, as they are so extensively robbed and must have been much more of a hindrance than a help in the construction. One is left to conclude that the builders wished the old church ... to be reflected in the new.¹⁰⁰

Fernie noted that this deliberate superimposition meant that the sanctuary of Margaret's church would have corresponded with what he refers to as the nave sanctuary of David's church. He demonstrates that the columns of the new building were all built in one phase, and that the contrast that exists between the two easternmost pairs of columns—one pair decorated with spirals and the other with zigzags—and the remaining plain columns to the west was thus deliberate, marking out the bay in which the high altar and sanctuary of Margaret's church would have lain, along with some of the family tombs perhaps including her own.¹⁰¹ In the same spirit, this bay could be entered directly from the cloister via the finely carved south-east doorway, which contravened norms in that it was cut one bay to the west of the standard location, and was for long the only doorway between church and cloister.¹⁰² The use of decorated pillars in this manner can be paralleled in the naves of several contemporary English churches, but pillars and doorway may again highlight filial

¹⁰⁰ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 30.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 32-3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 33-4; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 33; Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline*, 65.

piety as a motive, means of ensuring that David's mother's church and tomb would not be forgotten.¹⁰³

Fernie further draws attention to a piece of masonry between the easternmost pair of columns, the tooling on which suggests firstly that it is contemporary with the 'old church', and secondly that it 'must have formed part of the screen which separated the clergy's section of the church to the east from that of the laity to the west'.¹⁰⁴ A monastic church like Dunfermline required both a rood screen and a second screen or pulpitum to separate the nave to the west from the choir to the east. Evidence for the existence of both survives, and as noted by Fawcett:

the lack of bond with the arcade piers indicates that the rood screen was a secondary insertion, and it is possible that the same was true of the pulpitum, though the location of the doorway from the cloister in the second bay of the nave from the crossing suggests that both these screens were in the positions always intended for them.¹⁰⁵

All this gives substantive grounds for believing what might in any case appear probable, that in embarking upon the building of his abbey David's vision was of what ultimately came to pass, with Durham Cathedral as the principal model:¹⁰⁶ a fully expressed cruciform structure with nave, transept and choir beyond. In his lifetime David gave priority, not to works to the east of his mother's church, but to the redevelopment of his mother's church itself. Filial and perhaps logistical considerations dictated that the building project begin with what was already there, and move from west to east. It is a moot point whether David always intended

¹⁰³ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 32-3. Fernie also points to the use of spiral-decorated piers 'in analogous situations in the eastern arms of the cathedrals of Durham and Canterbury both after 1093'; *ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 35.

¹⁰⁶ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 34.

that there should be a phase in which his mother's church, as remade by himself, should continue to function in its own right as Dunfermline's church before expanding to reach its fullest form, or whether his hand was forced by progress that was slower than intended, and then the onset of old age and death. In either event, his burial beside his parents and brothers may still have gained in meaning if this was within the part of his abbey which he had seen brought to completion in his lifetime.

Synthesising all the evidence discussed, it can be argued that Queen Margaret founded a church at Dunfermline along with, apparently, a very small Benedictine community; the letter to her by Lanfranc archbishop of Canterbury on this issue mentions three monks. The second phase of this church provided a bigger choir, enabling the erstwhile choir to become the nave, and the erstwhile nave to become a tower-porch.¹⁰⁷ This church was supplanted by an abbey built by David, work on which commenced early in his reign when, according to Bower, he also increased the size of the Benedictine community by thirteen monks.¹⁰⁸ When dedicated or consecrated in 1150 the abbey had its nave, choir, sanctuary and high altar situated in locations corresponding to those they had occupied in phase two of Margaret's church; the choir could accommodate thirty monks. Nonetheless, consecration was required in 1150 because the previous building, Margaret's church, had ceased to exist. David and Malcolm IV were buried before this high altar in 1153 and 1164. After 1150 the abbey expanded eastwards to completion with the building of 'a nobler structure', namely the transepts and eastern arm, including the choir which is now lost which could accommodate fifty monks. The pre-1150 building now became the nave, but the descriptors applied to it—the 'outer church', 'old church' or 'former church'—commemorated its original role and status. Its 'old walls' still survived for the greater part in

¹⁰⁷ Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 25-8; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 27-32; Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 208-28.

¹⁰⁸ Barrow (ed.), *Charters of David I*, no. 17; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, iii. 147; Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland*, 58.

1249, rendering a new consecration unnecessary, and the same would have been true at the point when the new choir and high altar first became functional. This was certainly the case by 1180, when Margaret's remains were translated from the 'old church' to lie beside the high altar of what was by implication the 'new church', as the monks lay prostrate in its choir. Realistically, if work on the eastern arm only commenced in earnest after 1150, as the document of 1249 implies, then its completion would have taken place nearer to 1180, and perhaps after 1164 and Malcolm IV's burial before the high altar of the 'old church'. A plausible candidate would be 1180 itself: that the coming into service of the new choir and high altar in that year provided both opportunity and occasion for Margaret's first translation. It was also acknowledgement of what had been recently noted by Reginald of Durham; the burgeoning cult of a queen 'whose power of sanctity the whole region of Scotland venerates and adores'.¹⁰⁹ 1180 was 'the translation of a local, popularly recognised saint' capable of proceeding without papal sanction, while 1250 was more than this, part of a formal process of papal canonisation.¹¹⁰ Both translations, the papal documents of 1226 and 1231, and the progressive enlargement of Dunfermline's church and community were all in some degree measures of the growth of Margaret's cult. The culmination was the building of her feretory chapel, a building project probably to be assigned to the 1240s, and complete by 1250.

The hypothesis outlined questions the prevailing consensus for the building of Dunfermline's church and abbey, and coalesces with the evidence of the 'Dunfermline Chronicle' to question the orthodoxy for the burial place of David I. Acceptance of the hypothesis would relocate David, Malcolm IV and Margaret Plantagenet to the first royal burial group at Dunfermline, leaving only Alexander III, Robert I and Elizabeth de Burgh before the high altar of Dunfermline's lost abbey choir on Robert's internment in 1329. This

¹⁰⁹ Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles*, xlv; Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 102, 114-5.

¹¹⁰ Keene, *Saint Margaret*, 102-3, 120. For the greater rigour and papal oversight brought to the process of canonisation by Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) see Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 22.

would resolve the accumulation of burials before that altar which has rendered their proximity and location relative to one another so difficult to visualise and schematise, and obviate any felt need to posit a relocation eastwards of this altar *c.* 1250 for no other reason than to accommodate these burials. *Lanercost*'s reference to Alexander III as buried *solus*, 'alone', so difficult to interpret if in 1286 his tomb had been placed 'a matter of yards' or less from three other tombs, becomes intelligible if his were the first burial to take place before this altar, well to the east of his queen and royal predecessors.¹¹¹ In this context it may be significant that Walter Bower describes Margaret Plantagenet as buried 'beside King David'. From his later vantage point it would have been within Bower's power to have said that Margaret was buried beside or near to Alexander III had he known or believed that to be the case, just as he is able to describe Elizabeth de Burgh as buried beside her husband Robert Bruce although she predeceased him. Bower and *Lanercost* may therefore be in effective agreement. While the forms of burial accorded to Elizabeth and Alexander remain an open question, it is easier to envisage that their tombs and that of Bruce could have been accommodated in the choir without obstructing access to the high altar if theirs were the only three tombs present, rather than three of six tombs. Finally, perhaps the timescale for the major building project which was Dunfermline Abbey, begun *c.* 1128, becomes more realistic if completed by 1180 rather than 1150.

While all these points may be to the benefit of the hypothesis, it remains a radical departure from the consensus and provisional in status until subjected to the scrutiny of others, particularly specialists in medieval church architecture. Study of Dunfermline's medieval church and abbey has yet to achieve a true disciplinary integration, and it is hoped

¹¹¹ Margaret and Alexander's sons, David and Alexander, who died after their mother and before their father, were both buried at Dunfermline, the locations unspecified (*Chron. Fordun*, i. 307; Watt, *Scotichronicon*, v. 408-11). Acceptance of the alternative hypothesis would allow the possibility that they were buried in the 'outer church' with their mother. *Lanercost*'s use of *solus*, 'alone' of their father's burial counts against their being buried close to him.

that the hypothesis will draw the attention of architectural historians to the potential of the written evidence upon which it largely depends.¹¹² In testing the hypothesis, it might be asked whether any physical evidence survives to support the contention that the nave of Dunfermline Abbey functioned as both nave and choir in David I's time; and why the papal letters of 1226 and 1231 were issued when they were, decades later than the completion of the choir here identified as the 'nobler structure' to whose building they refer. A more immediate potential objection is that the hypothesis reduces congestion of burial before the high altar in the 'inner church' only to exacerbate the same scenario in the 'outer church', which on this basis would have contained at least seven royal burials by 1164 before losing Queen Margaret and Malcolm III in 1250, and gaining Margaret Plantagenet in 1275. Furthermore, Macgregor Chalmers's excavations in the 'outer church' in 1916-17 uncovered only five burials, which going by the existing consensus would correspond neatly to the graves of Queen Margaret and Malcolm III and their sons Prince Edward, King Edgar and King Alexander I. Comparison with contemporary English royal burial practice suggests the likelihood that these, the first five royal burials at Dunfermline, would all have taken place below floor slabs, and indeed restrictions of space within Dunfermline's church at this stage in its evolution would surely have precluded any other possibility.¹¹³ Since, as already noted, the same mode of burial probably applied to David I and Malcolm IV,¹¹⁴ these seven graves could all have lain in the vicinity of the one high altar without obstructing access to it. However, Macgregor Chalmers found not seven but five graves.¹¹⁵ These questions need answers, but the view taken here is that they do not give grounds for rejecting a hypothesis

¹¹² Cf. Fernie's comment on the written evidence: 'there is a great deal of other information available about who is buried at Dunfermline, but it is confused and contradictory, and does not permit one to draw any worthwhile conclusions for the history of the building'; Fernie, 'Romanesque Churches of Dunfermline Abbey', 37, n. 21.

¹¹³ Lee, 'The Development of Dunfermline Abbey', 222.

¹¹⁴ See above, p. 12.

¹¹⁵ Fawcett has suggested that 'it is unlikely from what we know of his excavations elsewhere that Chalmers would have excavated uniformly deeply enough in 1916 to find all burials'; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', 31.

which brings all the available written evidence into coherence, something which cannot be said of the orthodoxies respecting medieval royal burial and phases of building at Dunfermline.

Lack of space before the high altar was one reason which led Michael Penman, Bruce's most recent biographer, to suggest alternatively that Bruce and Elizabeth were buried side by side 'in the north aisle of the choir, within ambulatory space leading to St Margaret's feretory shrine'; and that the tomb uncovered in 1818 and investigated in 1819 probably belonged to the abbey's founder, David I.¹¹⁶ The hypothesis advanced here addresses the issue of space, leaving Bruce in 1329 in the middle of the choir with Alexander III to his south and Elizabeth de Burgh presumably to his north side. If it is right, then by relocating elsewhere the tombs of David I and Malcolm IV, it strengthens the case for identifying the tomb of 1818-19 as Bruce's tomb.¹¹⁷ Other questions may be asked of Penman's suggestion. Firstly, it would have impaired visual access to a monument designed to be seen from all directions. Secondly, it requires the setting aside of the particular evidence both of Barbour, who locates the burial place of Bruce in the choir; and of Bower, who places Bruce and his queen side by side in the choir or the middle of the choir. Thirdly—and the point applies equally to Fraser's suggestion that Alexander III may have been buried in the choir's south aisle—it goes against the grain of the evidence for medieval Scottish kingly burial at Dunfermline Abbey as naturally occurring in the main body of the choir. Mindful as he ever was of asserting to all, and by every means at his disposal, the legitimacy of his kingship and his relationship to his kingly predecessors, Bruce is unlikely to have broken with accepted practice. As early as November 1314 he made a grant to Dunfermline *propter honorem*

¹¹⁶ Michael Penman, *Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots* (New Haven and London, 2014), 305-6. Penman's argument also seems to be based upon the premise that Bruce's queen—and hence Bruce by association—would not have been buried before the high altar. He also speculates that Bruce's tomb may have been originally sited before the high altar before being moved to the [north?] aisle, 'as it blocked performance of the liturgy ... leaving behind only a slab covering the coffin'; *ibid.*, 400, n. 77.

¹¹⁷ MacGregor and Wilkinson, 'In Search Of Robert Bruce, Part II'.

sepulture regum predecessorum nostrorum qui ibidem sepeliuntur ac sepulture nostre quam apud ipsos specialiter elegimus: ‘for the sake of the honour of the burial place of the kings our predecessors who are buried there, and of our own burial place which we have expressly chosen among them’.¹¹⁸ There may have been a special identification with Alexander III, for in much of the substance of his reign, including the language of its formal diplomatic acts, Bruce looked back to ‘the time of Lord Alexander of good memory, king of Scotland, our predecessor last deceased’, as if King John Balliol and the troubled decades between 1286 and 1306 had never been.¹¹⁹

Finally, a hallmark of Bruce’s kingship from first to last was his masterful exploitation of propaganda and the public sphere to further his objectives. His tomb was the finest that contemporary Europe could offer, carved in a Parisian workshop from gilded white Italian marble probably offset by a black marble plinth, in conscious imitation of the tombs favoured by the Capetian dynasty which ruled medieval France.¹²⁰ The taking of his heart on crusade across mainland Europe towards the Holy Land was an extraordinary fusion of piety and politics, of king and kingdom, which succeeded in capturing the contemporary imagination.¹²¹ From the grave and beyond, Bruce continued to affirm that the kingship and kingdom of the Scots was on a par with any other in Latin Christendom. Precedent, continuity, the ‘royal dignity’ of Scotland and the scale of his own achievements surely insisted that the tomb of Robert Bruce lie nowhere else save in the middle of the choir of Dunfermline Abbey.

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¹¹⁸ *Regesta Regum Scottorum V: The Acts of Robert I King of Scots 1306-1329*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh, 1988), 332.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7, 48, 128, 297 and *passim*; G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (3d edn., Edinburgh, 1988), 294-6; Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, 270.

¹²⁰ Fraser, ‘The tomb of the hero king’, 169-72; Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, 307-8

¹²¹ G. G. Simpson, ‘The Heart of King Robert I: Pious Crusade or Marketing Gambit?’, in Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning*, 173-86, at 178-82.

10637 words; 13842 words plus footnotes