

Perth and Kinross Archaeological Research Framework

Chapter 7. Medieval





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7.1 Introduction

The medieval period saw significant social and economic changes in Perth and Kinross, resulting in shifts in land use and a variety of new building and monument types. The centuries between the accession of Malcolm III in 1058 and the union of the crowns of Scotland and England in 1603 witnessed considerable alterations in the governance and economy of the region. This period was characterised by more complex administrative structures, a development and growth in urban settlements, reorganisation of the Church, expansion in international trade, the arrival of new diseases and significant climatic change.

Yet there were also elements of continuity. At the beginning and end of the Middle Ages most people in Perth and Kinross were living in rural communities, primarily sustained by subsistence farming. Many of the same places continued to be occupied, travel remained challenging and early death was ever present. It is likely that many features of daily life in the 11th century would have seemed familiar to a 16th-century inhabitant of the same locality. As with many periods in the past, whether researchers regard the Middle Ages as a time of change or continuity depends largely on the aspect of society under consideration, and the broader narrative being conveyed.



Map of Medieval Perth and Kinross centred on Loch Leven © Perth and Kinross Museum and Art Gallery

Recent scholars have revised many traditional assumptions about Scotland in the Middle Ages. Previously, medieval Scotland was often portrayed as a 'remote' and 'primitive' 'Celtic realm' which was brought into a 'more orderly' Anglo-Norman style of kingdom by the efforts of David I (reigned 1124 to 1153) and his successors (Duncan [1975](#), 132–73). In contrast, current discussions tend to highlight Scotland's international connections, to emphasise the blending of cultures, and to be more sceptical of the Crown's role in imposing change. The archaeology of the area which is now Perth and Kinross is potentially highly relevant to these debates.

In the Middle Ages, as today, the region encompassed a range of landscapes and cultures. The relatively low-lying and fertile lands around the River Tay were part of the heartlands of the medieval Scottish state. Scone was for many centuries the site of royal inaugurations and 'one of Scotland's principal medieval ceremonial and legislative gathering places' (O'Grady [2018](#), 137). Meanwhile Perth was one of the kingdom's richest trading centres and during the early 15th century was 'the favoured location' for parliaments (MacDonald [2011](#), 30).

Perth and Kinross also includes more inaccessible upland areas, parts of which may have had a less direct relationship with the Scottish Crown. By the end of the Middle Ages these uplands were regarded by some Scots as culturally different – a distinction that was reinforced by the predominance of Gaelic in upland areas, whereas in contrast Scots was more prevalent around Perth and further south. Perth and Kinross straddles the interface between what later generations would regard as 'the Highlands' and 'the Lowlands'. How and when this cultural divide was created, and the modes of interaction across it, should be a key research priority for the region. This is topic which has considerable significance for our understanding of the nature of medieval Scotland.

7.2 Landscape and Settlement

7.2.1 Highland and Lowland Landscapes

Perth and Kinross has a great variety of both upland and lowland terrain. It includes inhospitable high mountains, waterlogged river valleys and most environments in between. Fertile arable land, rough grazing, marginal uplands, low-lying carse lands

and flooded mosses were all present in medieval Perth and Kinross. Any attempt to develop regional research priorities must recognise the diversity of environments in this part of Scotland.



The Perth and Kinross landscape, showing highlands and lowlands © HES

The RCAHMS surveys of eastern Perth and Kinross provide valuable insights into the evolution of the landscape over much of the region, and may hint at relevant trends in areas not covered (RCAHMS [1990](#); [1994](#)). In many parts of Perth and Kinross there have been significant changes in land usage between the Middle Ages and today. Post-medieval drainage projects, modern agricultural practices and urban expansion have all affected the landscape. Both written records and modern scientific methods can help us understand the rather different landscapes of the past. For example, recent landscape archaeology projects at the University of Stirling have used documentary evidence and environmental science to shed light on medieval land use (Tipping et al [2016](#), 111–28).

A large body of property records, such as charters and rentals, survive for much of Perth and Kinross from the 14th century onwards, and there is fragmentary written evidence for earlier periods. These economic and legal documents contain a significant amount of information on land use and notable geographic features. Later maps and estate records also have considerable potential for highlighting changes which have occurred between the Middle Ages and the present. It is hoped that future research will increasingly link the remarkable textual and physical

evidence present in Perth and Kinross.

Many of the questions we ask regarding landscape will relate to local and site-specific topics of interest. However, some broad themes are worthwhile highlighting. At present our understanding of the degree of variation in land use between upland and lowland areas, and the many gradations between, remains limited. Our knowledge of biodiversity in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages, and how that compares to other regions and periods, could similarly be improved.

Climate change and its impact on upland and marginal communities could also be an area for further research. While climatic alterations in earlier periods, such as the Bronze Age, have been the subject of considerable archaeological interest, experiences of climate change in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages have been relatively neglected. This is surprising, as there is evidence for farming and settlement at relatively high altitudes prior to the 14th-century cold spell. For example, the study of the deer park at [Buzzart Dykes](#), Middleton Muir revealed rig and furrow at 270m above sea level, apparently associated with a building dated to the 13th or 14th centuries (MPK3821; D Hall and Malloy [2016](#), 27; see [Buzzart Dykes Case Study](#)). Building and cultivation remains have been found at similar heights across much of the north-east uplands of Perth and Kinross (RCAHMS [1990](#); Strachan et al [2019](#)).



Rig and furrow landscape visible at Buzzart Dykes © HES

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.1: Enhancing understanding of the landscape of medieval Perth and Kinross, particularly in the less studied western parts of the region.

PKARF Agenda 7.2: Comparative research regarding the use of upland and lowland landscapes in the Middle Ages.

PKARF Agenda 7.3: Understanding the impact of climate change on Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages, including how it affected habitable zones.

PKARF Agenda 7.4: Studying changing biodiversity in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.1: What was the landscape like in different parts of Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.2: Were there notable differences regarding the use of land in upland and lowland areas in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.3: How does biodiversity in medieval Perth and Kinross compare with other places and periods?

PKARF Qu 7.4: Is there evidence of changes in biodiversity in this region during the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.5: How did changing climatic conditions affect the landscape in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages? How did climate change impact on marginal areas?

PKARF Qu 7.6: How helpful is the concept of a Highland / Lowland divide? Is it for example detectable in material culture?

PKARF Qu 7.7: How does the material culture we find reflect the zonality or taskscape use of the landscape?

7.2.2 Woodlands

Today, Perth and Kinross is one of the more wooded regions of Scotland, and has particular potential for the study of historic trees and woodlands. Research in other parts of Scotland has revealed examples of living oaks and pines dating back to the 15th century (Baillie [1982](#); Mills [2008](#) and [2015](#)). Similar survivals may be present in Perth and Kinross. Likely locations

for finding medieval trees include early parkland, plantations and wood pastures.

The extent of tree cover in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages is unclear. By the early 15th century foreign commentators were already commenting on the scarcity of woodland in Scotland. Legislation forbidding peeling bark from trees was passed by the Scottish Parliament at Perth in 1425 (*Records of the Parliaments of Scotland 1425/3/11*). Meanwhile, dendrochronological study of timbers in Scottish medieval buildings suggests that during the 15th century imported oak was increasingly used for construction (Mills and Crone [2012](#), 32). All of this implies significant deforestation in Scotland towards the end of the Middle Ages. Yet, the amount of deforestation earlier on in the medieval period, and how significant an issue it was in Perth and Kinross, remains unknown.



Black woods of Rannoch © Jennifer Jones (CC BY-SA)

There is written and physical evidence for a late medieval timber industry in the Black Wood of Rannoch. This has received a degree of study (Lindsay [1974](#); Gilbert [1979](#); Mills [2010](#); Mills et al [2017](#)). Similar research into other areas of historic woodland in Perth and Kinross would be desirable. Interdisciplinary studies, including surveys, archaeological excavation, textual evidence, place-name evidence and historic map data and investigation of the woods and trees themselves could reveal much about the history of old wooded landscapes in Perth and Kinross. While such landscape studies are likely to be multi-period in approach, they may well uncover valuable information about medieval wooded landscapes. The burgh of Perth has also produced an exceptional range of wooden

artefacts and buildings which can help inform our understanding of how woodlands were exploited in the region.

Long-established woodlands have the potential to preserve archaeological remains much better than open farmland. LiDAR has revolutionised the discovery and recording of surface features in woodland. Archaeological remains may relate to woodland management but can often pre-date it. Given the extensive tree planting in Perth and Kinross during the post-medieval period of improvement, it is quite possible that various medieval remains are currently preserved under 18th- and 19th-century woodland.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.5: Developing an overview of the extent and nature of woodland in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages, and how that changed over time.

PKARF Agenda 7.6: Identifying examples of surviving medieval trees.

PKARF Agenda 7.7: Using LiDAR data to identify medieval archaeological remains hidden by later woodland.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.8: How wooded was Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.9: What types of trees were prevalent?

PKARF Qu 7.10: How was woodland managed and exploited?

PKARF Qu 7.11: Do areas of woodland survive from this period

PKARF Qu 7.12: To what extent can timber from historic buildings help us understand the medieval woodlands of Perth and Kinross?

7.2.3 Wetlands

In the Middle Ages Perth and Kinross had far more extensive wetlands than today. For example, there were substantial marshy and waterlogged areas at places such as Methven Moss and the Carse of Gowrie. Some of these former marshes and bodies of water are remembered in place-names. Further study of locations with names such as ‘moss’ and

‘mòine’ might be of interest. Medieval charters and post-medieval maps similarly provide clues about vanished lochs and marshes. There was also an extensive and valuable inter-tidal zone in the Firth of Tay consisting of saltmarsh and mudflats.

The post-medieval period saw widespread drainage of wetlands and stripping of peat, causing significant disruption to the archaeological record. Nevertheless, research into the location, uses and habitability of medieval wetlands is of considerable importance for understanding broader settlement patterns. For example, the complex settlement patterns of the Carse of Gowrie probably relate to habitable areas in otherwise waterlogged terrain. Understanding of the setting and significance of elite residences can likewise be altered by awareness of lost bodies of water. For instance, [Caisteal Dubh](#), Moulin was originally set on an island in a loch, which later became marsh, prior to being thoroughly drained in the 18th century (MPK1613; Clapperton [2005](#), 117–8).



The wetlands at Caisteal Dubh © Michael Walsh (CC BY)

Drainage of wetlands was already underway in the Middle Ages. There is written evidence for Coupar Angus Abbey draining parts of the Carse of Gowrie in the late 12th and early 13th centuries (Duncan [1975](#), 320–1). Unfortunately, these early drainage ditches or ‘pows’ are difficult to identify and date archaeologically. Documentary evidence is therefore likely to be significant in understanding medieval drainage projects.

Newly drained lands were often agriculturally productive. In the early 15th century John Hardyng described the Carse of Gowrie as ‘a plentiful countree... of corne and catell, and all commoditees’ (Hume Brown [1891](#), 19). Yet we should be wary of dismissing undrained wetlands as intrinsically unprofitable. Depending on their nature, they had considerable potential for grazing, reed cutting, providing fuel, wildfowling and fishing. Wetland research in other North Sea nations has shown considerable medieval exploitation (O’Sullivan [2012](#)). Our present understanding of the location and extent of medieval wetlands in Perth and Kinross, their management and exploitation and the date and process of drainage could be significantly developed. A combination of field survey and analysis of medieval and post-medieval written evidence may provide significant insights into this topic.

Surviving wetlands can preserve important archaeological material. The waterlogged soil of even relatively developed areas of Perth and Kinross, such as the burgh of Perth, has provided exceptional organic finds for the medieval period. As a result, the potential of existing wetlands is widely recognised, and is of considerable relevance to researchers working in many parts of Perth and Kinross.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.8: Using interdisciplinary approaches to identify former areas of marsh and other wetlands in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.9: Improving understanding of how the medieval residents of Perth and Kinross exploited wetlands.

PKARF Agenda 7.10: Integrating written records and physical evidence to better understand medieval drainage projects in Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.13: Which areas of Perth and Kinross were wetlands in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.14: How were wetlands used and managed?

PKARF Qu 7.15: The phenomenon of draining wetlands tends to be seen primarily as a feature of post-medieval agricultural improvement, but can we

detect such activity in the medieval period?

7.2.4 Rural Settlement

During the Middle Ages most of the inhabitants of Perth and Kinross lived in the countryside, yet the region’s medieval rural settlements are poorly understood. Some upland areas have seen important archaeological surveys. However, the majority of rural settlements remain largely unstudied. Enhancing our knowledge of rural settlements should be a high priority for research in the region (M Brown pers comm).

Survey by the RCAHMS in the 1990s identified a significant number of probable medieval settlements in eastern Perth and Kinross (RCAHMS [1990](#); [1994](#)). In the uplands of the north-east many elongated stone and turf buildings have been recorded. These are thought to range in date from early medieval to post-medieval. Many of the earlier buildings are of the Pitcarmick-type – that is large turf-built byre houses with rounded ends typically constructed between the 7th and 11th centuries (Carver et al [2013](#); Strachan et al [2019](#)). Unfortunately, most of the other buildings ‘do not lend themselves easily to classification’ (RCAHMS [1990](#), 12). The remains of numerous stone-built rectangular farmsteads and fermtouns can be seen in upland areas. These are often assumed to be medieval or post-medieval, but more research into their dating would be desirable (RCAHMS [1990](#), 95–171).

Initial assumptions about the date of rural buildings in upland Perth and Kinross have often been overturned by evidence from excavation. For example, the possible hunting lodge at [Buzzart Dykes](#) was originally thought to be post-medieval, but has been radiocarbon dated to the 13th or 14th century (MPK3821; RCAHMS [1994](#); Hall and Malloy [2017](#); see [Buzzart Dykes Case Study](#)). Meanwhile at [Lair](#) (MPK4456), Glen Shee two turf buildings (1 and 2) which did not conform to the Pitcarmick-type were presumed to be relatively late structures. However, excavation has shown that they were also early medieval (Strachan et al [2019](#), 110–1).

The Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project significantly enhanced our knowledge of medieval communities in the area around Loch

Tay (Atkinson [2016](#)). In particular, the project's excavation of a cluster of stone and turf buildings at Kiltyrie ([MPK16865](#) and [MPK16961](#)) has helped our understanding of medieval upland dwellings. They are thought to be the remains of a long-term settlement, mainly occupied between the 12th and 15th centuries, though with some episodes of abandonment within this period (Atkinson [2016](#), 86–7). The best-preserved of the Kiltyrie buildings was a dwelling 'constructed mainly of turf, with traces of what may be a stone inner face along the base of the banks' (Atkinson [2016](#), 91). This building was about 9.5m long by 6m wide and had a hearth towards one end. Although not fully of the Pitcarmick-type, there were several similarities between the Kiltyrie examples and the early medieval dwellings of the region. This again suggests that researchers should be wary of dating structures purely on the basis of their plan and construction style.



Excavation of 11th-12th century structure at Kiltyrie © NTS

The sparse occupation of upland areas, at least since the 19th century, has left many archaeological remains relatively undisturbed. This provides opportunities for investigating medieval settlement and cultivation in marginal zones – a topic of considerable significance for understanding how climatic variation, and other economic and cultural factors, affected the habitable areas of Scotland. There has been a recent exploration of this theme in relation to the early medieval period (Strachan et al [2019](#)). However, more study for the rest of the Middle Ages would be helpful. Ongoing forestry activity and the construction of wind-farms might provide opportunities for survey and excavation in

medieval marginal zones.

In comparison to the research on upland settlements, the archaeological work on lowland rural settlements in Perth and Kinross has been even more limited. This is partly the result of denser post-medieval occupation of lowland areas, causing medieval settlements to be built over by later farms and villages or removed by modern cultivation. The current trend for redeveloping farm buildings may provide opportunities for investigating the origins of these sites. However, as medieval rural buildings were insubstantial compared with their successors, the survival of evidence may be rare and difficult to identify. The use of charter evidence may prove to be a valuable tool in the identification of centres of settlement and the patterns of estates into which they fitted.

The abandoned village of [Pitmiddle](#) (MPK4669) on the slopes above the Carse of Gowrie would be an interesting site for further investigation. Although much of the evidence for this farming community dates from the 17th and 18th centuries, there was already an established settlement here in the 1170s (Perry [1988](#), 8). Careful study of cropmarks could perhaps provide evidence for other abandoned settlements, although thus far cropmarks have mainly revealed the presence of larger moated sites, which are morphologically more diagnostic (RCAHMS [1994](#), 108–9).

The relationship between medieval settlements and earlier patterns of occupation deserves further research. The Perthshire Crannog Survey highlighted the frequency with which prehistoric crannogs 'continued to be significant into the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods' (Dixon and Shelley [2006](#), 80). A number of these crannogs became the basis of relatively high-status residences, such the tower house built by the bishop of Dunkeld on a possible crannog at [Loch Clunie](#) (MPK5255). Investigation of the way in which medieval communities made use of other types of prehistoric site, and the extent to which there is evidence of continuous occupation, would be beneficial.



Loch Clunie with potential crannog visible © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Attention should be drawn to another unusual form of rural settlement – namely moated sites. At least 14 moated sites are recorded in Perth and Kinross. This is a sizeable number as only about 60 are known across the whole of Scotland (Coleman and Perry [1997](#), 176–7). Moated sites are usually enclosed by broad rectilinear ditches and often survive either as earthworks or cropmarks. They vary significantly in scale. For example, while the enclosure at [Hallyards](#) near Alyth (MPK5366) measures 75 x 60m, another moated site at [Ballangrew](#) in the Stirling Council area has an enclosure of only 20 x 15m.



Hallyards homestead moat visible in cropmark © HES

The status of these settlements is currently unclear. They were previously thought to reflect seigneurial status (RCAHMS [1994](#), 108–9). However, it seems likely that they ‘filled a variety of needs’ (Coleman

and Perry [1997](#), 180). Some were perhaps estate centres, but others may have protected the homes of farmers or even served to define features such as orchards. The problems of interpreting and dating most moated sites are considerable, and much more research is needed before we can confidently assert their purpose or social status. Written records may well play a role in our efforts to understand these places. While the study of medieval charters has disproportionately focused on either the aristocracy or urban residents, property documents do contain a significant body of material on rural landholders below the level of the nobility and gentry. It is perhaps this sector of society that we should be primarily considering in relation to moated sites

The challenges of the surviving physical evidence means that documentary and cartographic research may offer the best route to improving our understanding of rural settlement in lowland areas. We are fortunate that large numbers of medieval charters, both published and unpublished, survive from Perth and Kinross. They are held in archives such as the National Records of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council Archive, and the University of St Andrews Library. Financial records recorded in the Exchequer Rolls are another important source. For example, there is an account for Strathearn from the 1380s and for Atholl, Strathearn and other royal properties from the 1440s onwards. At present, there have been surprisingly few efforts to use these records to understand rural settlement and landholding beyond the elites.

Proxy forms of evidence, such as parish churches, can also provide indications of lost settlements (RCAHMS [1994](#), 112). Churches usually leave evidence of their existence, both in documents and on the ground, sometimes as ruins, sometimes integrated into newer buildings on the same site. They often mark the focus of a medieval rural settlement which otherwise has left little or no trace. Parish churches may be key to understanding rural settlement for the area as a whole, confirming settlement locations, providing assemblages of human remains, and indicating the changing economic fortunes of rural communities. Overall, we need to combine different strands of evidence from various disciplines, locations and centuries to better understand medieval rural settlement in Perth and Kinross.

HER / Canmore ID	Place (Site and Locality)	National Grid Reference	State of Remains
MPK429/ 24963	Moated site at Fortingall	NN 7340 4664	Well-preserved homestead moat on a flat river terrace. Enclosure around 70 x 63m with ditch about 15m wide.
MPK761/ 25346	John the Bangster's House (also known as Fintalich and Muir of Lintibert), Muthill	NN 8727 1743	Described around 1860 as the 'site of an ancient house... on a knoll surrounded by a mote or ditch. The remains of the building were removed, and the ditch filled up about twenty years ago'. Slight remains recorded by the OS in 1967 were not traced by RCAHMS in 1996.
MPK1422/ 26071	Kirklands of Damside, Auchterarder	NN 9634 1465	Cropmark of a rectilinear enclosure, tentatively interpreted as a moated homestead.
MPK1693/ 26358	Clochfoldich, Strathtay	NN 8999 5277	Well-preserved medieval earthwork about 36 x 34m with ditch around 8m wide and rampart about 4m wide on the north side.
MPK1839/ 26511	Wood of Coldrain (also known as Hall Yard), Kinross	NO 08390 00797	Cropmark of a moated rectilinear enclosure measuring around 60 x 45m with a ditch about 10m wide.
MPK1990/ 26671	Ardargie, Forgandenny	NO 0827 1437	A rectilinear moated homestead measuring around 85 x 105m. A bank on both sides was replaced by a steep gully on the east.
MPK2214/ 26909	Peel, Tibbermore	NO 0551 2354	Cropmark of a probable moated site. Has been partly built over by Peel Farm.
MPK3124/ 27973	Balgonie, Abernethy	NO 1931 1744	Cropmarks from a complex of ditched enclosures and rig and furrow cultivation (which respects the enclosure), suggesting a medieval moated site within a contemporary cultivated landscape.
MPK3131/ 27980	Moated site at Wallacetown, River Earn	NO 1628 1850	Cropmark of a moated sub-rectangular settlement, sited on the edge of a natural terrace above the River Earn flood plain. It measures around 40 x 20m.
MPK3191/ 28043	Balmanno Castle, Dron	NO 1436 1557	A moat surrounding a L-shaped tower house. In the 19th century the moat was still partly filled with water.
MPK3650/ 28607	Newhall, Kinrossie	NO 1865 3192	A document of 1546 refers to a 'moat called Newhall of Kinrossie'. A RCAHMS visit in 1989 identified no remains of the 'castle' that formerly stood on a knoll near Newhall steading.
MPK5366/ 30750	Hallyards, Alyth	NO 2790 4642	Cropmarks from a rectangular moated settlement measuring around 85 x 80m with a ditch about 8m wide.
MPK5459/ 28523	Links, River Isla	NO 1825 3864	Cropmarks from a probable rectangular moated site on the edge of a terrace overlooking the River Isla.
MPK5818/ 71784	Monzie Moated Site, Gilmerton	NN 8824 2412	Cropmarks from a trapezoidal moated site, situated on a terrace, with two ditches about 3m wide and set about 6m apart.

Table 7.1. Moated Sites in Perth and Kinross (data from Historic Environment Record and HES designation records).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.21: Undertaking further study of the many upland settlements of uncertain date in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.22: Using interdisciplinary methods, including the study of documents and analysis of cropmarks, to identify medieval rural settlements in lowland Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.23: Researching the relationship between medieval settlements and earlier patterns of occupation.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.36: Where were rural settlements located in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.37: How and where can we use modified soils (anthrosols) as evidence of land use and settlement?

PKARF Qu 7.38: To what extent can we use property records to locate smaller settlements?

PKARF Qu 7.39: What forms did medieval settlements take? Is there a coherent hierarchy of settlements in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.40: How does topography affect settlement patterns?

PKARF Qu 7.41: To what extent did political and cultural changes affect settlement patterns?

7.2.5 Urban Settlement

The burgh of Perth has dominated much of our understanding of urban archaeology in Perth and Kinross. It was one of the most important burghs in medieval Scotland, an economic powerhouse and a major royal centre, a role which was reinforced by its proximity to the inauguration place of the kings of Scots at Scone, from the 12th century onwards. During the early 15th century Perth was the preferred location for parliaments, church councils and meetings of the exchequer. Meanwhile, the royal lodgings at Blackfriars were frequently used by James I and his predecessors.

Perth was fundamentally shaped by its location at a crossing point of the River Tay. The medieval settlement probably stood on a square patch of raised

ground in the middle of a swamp (Strachan [2011](#), 10). These waterlogged surroundings have contributed to the survival of extensive organic material from the burgh. Over the past 50 years Perth has produced exceptional archaeological finds, including unusually well-preserved domestic utensils, rare fragments of luxury textiles and invaluable environmental evidence. The depth and quality of Perth's archaeology have made it one of the most intensively and productively studied Scottish medieval towns. In particular, the Perth High Street excavations undertaken in the 1970s were transformative for our understanding of daily life in medieval Scotland (Perry et al [2010](#)).

It is widely accepted that medieval Perth had a well-defined street plan and burghage plot system, unusually extensive urban defences, a concentration of important religious foundations and numerous urban industries, in particular trades associated with the preparation of animal skins. All of these aspects have received a degree of archaeological research and investigation (D Hall [1989](#); Bowler et al [1996](#); Coleman [1997](#); Bowler [2004](#); Coleman and Smith [2005](#)). A combination of extant property boundaries, exceptional archaeological remains and a considerable body of early written records mean that at Perth we can examine the evolution of a medieval Scottish town in detail.



Perth city centre, the medieval royal burgh © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust



Suggested remains of the burgh wall in Perth © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Yet, despite significant study of Perth’s medieval past, there are still many possibilities for future research. It is increasingly apparent that there was a settlement at Perth before the official grant of burghal status in the early 12th century. For example, 11th century radiocarbon dates have been recovered from a wattle-lined ditch at 80–86 High Street (Moloney and Coleman [1997](#), 710). Any further evidence about this phase of the burgh’s origins would be of great interest. Research into the Watergate area could prove especially instructive regarding Perth’s early development. Watergate, and the land to the east of what is now St John’s Church, was probably the original heart of the burgh. A watching brief in this area in the 1990s found medieval deposits and a natural ridge surprisingly near the surface, confirming the theory that this was a slightly drier area of raised land which attracted early settlement (D Hall pers comm). At present Watergate is largely unexcavated, and investigation of future urban development here might be of considerable significance.

The (probably) 12th-century thoroughfare of South Street would likewise benefit from further investigation. South Street currently has several gap sites and vulnerable buildings which might make excavations a possibility. The slightly later insertion of Skinnergate, once a focal point for Perth’s leatherworkers, similarly deserves more research. There have been some recent interventions in this area, which as of the end of 2021 were being written up, but much more work remains to be done.

Perth lade is also worthy of note. It flows from the River Almond, around four miles to the west of the medieval burgh, and powered several watermills. The lade then split to run around the burgh wall as part of the defences. The lade is thought to date to the 14th century, but has received limited study (Barton and Perry [2011](#)). Further documentary research and physical investigation of this major historic feature should be a priority.

Additional interdisciplinary study of Perth towards the end of the Middle Ages may well prove helpful. Archaeological remains from this period are often truncated by subsequent development. Although excavation on the Perth Theatre site in the 2010s produced evidence for a substantial late medieval stone building and boundary ditches (Cachart [2018](#)). Perth has a vast quantity of written records for the 15th and 16th centuries. Combining the textual and physical evidence could be revealing. Currently, documentary research on the Carthusian holdings in Perth is proving a fruitful line of inquiry about the monastery and the wider burgh (L Dean pers comm).



Architectural fragment of medieval structure at Perth High Street © HES

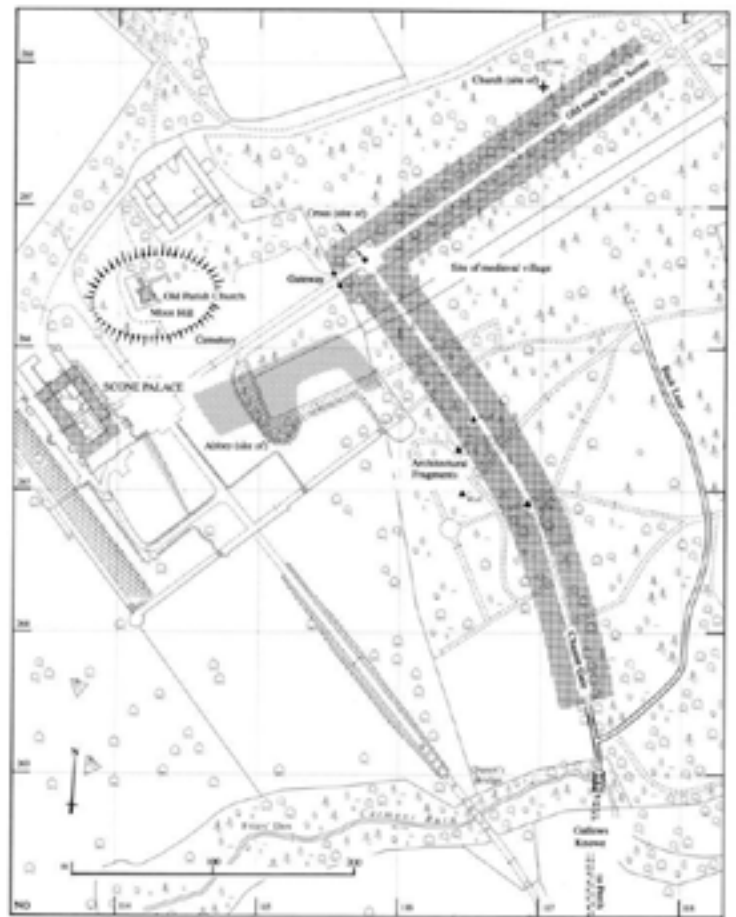
Beyond Perth, there were several smaller medieval towns in the region. Most of these are under-researched, yet they are vital to understanding the range of settlements in medieval Scotland and the economic networks which connected them. Notably, the 13th-century royal burgh of Auchterarder has received surprisingly little archaeological investigation. As a seemingly thriving middle-ranking settlement which went into decline around the 16th century, Auchterarder could be of considerable interest. Further study would also be desirable at Abernethy and Dunkeld; both were significant religious centres which acquired burghal status towards the end of the Middle Ages.

The late 15th and early 16th centuries saw the establishment of several burghs of barony in Perth and Kinross, including Keithick (founded in the 1490s), Balnakilly, Balnald, Dalnagairn, Dunning and Kirkmichael (all founded in the 1510s), and Kinross (founded in the 1540s). Some of these settlements thrived, although most sank back into obscurity. Yet even the 'unsuccessful' towns could provide valuable information about the relationship between burgh foundations and earlier settlement patterns. They might also inform us about the extent to which new burghal sites were provided with the physical identifiers of urban settlement, such as market places and burgage plots.

Coupar Angus is also significant as there appears to have been a secular settlement alongside the [abbey](#) some time before the official establishment of a burgh in the 17th century (MPK5328; O'Sullivan et al [1996](#); Dennison and Coleman [1998](#)). Limited excavations and recent geophysical survey have provided tantalising clues about the extent and plan of the medieval settlement (O'Sullivan et al [1996](#); Morris [2012](#)). Coupar Angus offers both an opportunity to explore the relationship between a Cistercian community and its surroundings, and an interesting example of medieval settlement and trading outside of the official burgh system. Recent doctoral research on Coupar Angus has highlighted the potential benefits of linking documentary evidence with the archaeological record (Hodgson [2016](#)).

Further investigation of the deserted medieval settlement at [Old Scone](#) (MPK3307), and its relationship with the nearby [abbey](#) (MPK3308) and [royal inauguration site](#) (MPK5474), is also

required. While Scone never achieved official burghal status, it was an important regional and national centre; it hosted early Scottish parliaments and was the base for a series of 12th-century sheriffs. In 1796, only a few years before Old Scone was demolished, it was noted that the street then serving as the market place was 'remarkably wide' (Thomas [1796](#), 78). This is perhaps a hint as to the function and plan of the medieval settlement. Although some recent archaeological work has been undertaken, considerable potential remains, not least because of the lack of later development (Timoney [2007](#); O'Grady [2018](#)).



Plan of Scone and Moot Hill © HES

The medieval settlements of Perth and Kinross appear to have differed greatly in age, origin, legal status and physical form. Many of the smaller urban settlements might be better understood by considering how topography, function and historical considerations may have guided their early development. For example, Abernethy's plan was probably shaped by the location of the [early monastic centre](#) (MPK3088), the sloping hillside and the proximity of the River Tay.

Here, as at many other sites in Perth and Kinross, the relationship between medieval settlement and earlier occupation is a topic of considerable interest. It would also be desirable to see more investigation of how larger burghs, like Perth, interacted with smaller centres, such as Abernethy. Analysis of non-burghal centres, such as Crieff, should likewise be considered. Comparison across these different types of settlement has the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of the development of medieval economic and administrative frameworks.

Investigation of the smaller urban settlements, and the sites with urban aspirations, should be a priority for researchers. While some have been covered by the Scottish Burgh Surveys, most have not. Many of these overlooked settlements may see increased development over the next decade, providing opportunities for investigation. Community-led archaeology may also prove beneficial. It must be stressed that without the study of the smaller burghs, and the places which never quite made burghal status, our understanding of the hierarchy of medieval settlement in Perth and Kinross will inevitably be partial and distorted.

Decade	Burgh Foundations
1120s	Perth (Royal Burgh)
1240s	Auchterarder (Royal Burgh)
1450s	Abernethy (Burgh of Barony)
1490s	Keithick (Burgh of Barony)
1510s	Balnakilly (Burgh of Barony), Balnald (Burgh of Barony), Dalnagairn (Burgh of Barony), Dunkeld (Extension of privileges to existing Burgh of Barony), Dunning (Burgh of Barony), and Kirkmichael (Burgh of Barony)
1540s	Kinross (Burgh of Barony)

Table 7.2. Official Foundations of Medieval Burghs in Perth and Kinross (Pryde 1965).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.24: Developing a greater understanding of the origins of urban settlement in

the region, particularly in relation to the burgh of Perth.

PKARF Agenda 7.25: Using interdisciplinary approaches to develop our knowledge of the burgh of Perth at the end of the Middle Ages, when the physical evidence has often been truncated by later development.

PKARF Agenda 7.26: Researching the smaller medieval urban centres of Perth and Kinross, in particular the historic burghs of Auchterarder and Dunkeld.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.42: What evidence is there for urban settlement in Perth and Kinross before the 12th century?

PKARF Qu 7.43: How do street plans and property boundaries evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.44: How well do medieval property boundaries survive? How are they marked?

PKARF Qu 7.45: How were the edges of urban spaces delineated (eg ports, walls, ditches)?

PKARF Qu 7.46: What are the origins of the burgh lade in Perth, and was it monastic or secular?

PKARF Qu 7.47: What physical and written evidence is there for suburbs? What status did these areas hold?

PKARF Qu 7.48: How does the experience of medieval Perth compare with smaller burghs in the region?

PKARF Qu 7.49: What can we learn from abandoned burgh sites?

7.2.6 Castles and High-Status Settlements

Castles are the best-known type of medieval elite residence, both in terms of popular awareness and academic study. Around 110 possible and actual castles are recorded in Perth and Kinross. This figure includes tower houses, but excludes post-1700 mock-castles. When discussing this type of site, it should be borne in mind that many residences we now call castles are not referred to as such in contemporary records, often just being named as the place. Castle is a loaded term and there is considerable debate

about its use. In this research framework it is used to encompass most forms of fortified residence used by medieval elites.

While long recognised as of historic interest by the Ordnance Survey, RCAHMS and Historic Environment Scotland (and its various predecessors), most castles in Perth and Kinross have never been excavated. As a result, many important questions about the form, function and evolution of castles in the region remain unanswered. Among the gaps in our knowledge is a lack of understanding about when and how castles were introduced to the region. In the past, the adoption of castles in Scotland was often attributed to growing royal authority in the 12th and 13th centuries, and an associated Normanisation of the Scottish elites. Yet this model does not necessarily work for Perth and Kinross, or indeed most of Scotland outside the Borders. Much of what is now Perth and Kinross was part of the earldom of Strathearn, which in the 12th and 13th centuries was held by a native family with established roots in the area. It has been suggested that the earls of Strathearn, and their officials and vassals, showed little interest in castle building prior to the 1290s (Watson 2005). This theory is largely based on information from charters, partly because of the small proportion of excavated medieval elite residences. The relationship between castles, other forms of medieval noble residences, and earlier high-status sites is a topic which needs more research.

It is often assumed that early Scottish castles were mainly built of earth and timber, and typically consisted of a mound, or motte, and an associated enclosure or bailey. Yet other, perhaps less easily recognisable, styles of timber castle probably existed. A low-level cropmark enclosure at [Green of Invermay](#) (MPK1910) has been interpreted as a medieval ring-work – a type of early castle with circular earthworks but lacking a motte. Recent excavation revealed that the site was a ‘significant residence’ in the 13th century, and may have been occupied as early as the 11th century (Campbell and Driscoll 2020, 187). Green of Invermay potentially provides vital evidence for shifting expressions of lordship and the early evolution of castles in this region.

At least 13 possible mottes have been identified in Perth and Kinross (see Table 3). Several of these sites

have been significantly altered or damaged over the last two hundred years. In the 19th century the motte at [Mote Hill](#) (MPK3747), Blairgowrie was removed during building work, while the possible motte at [Law Knowe](#) (MPK5379), Errol had a burial vault placed within it. Meanwhile in the 1970s the motte at [Castle of Rattray](#) (MPK5364) was destroyed by quarrying, and the motte at [Barton Hill](#) (MPK4671), Kinnaird was significantly altered by the construction of a new house. Fortunately, several other probable mottes remain relatively undamaged by later development, and could be priorities for archaeological investigation (R Oram pers comm). Only two surviving mottes have been excavated; there was a limited rescue excavation of Barton Hill in the early 1970s and the possible motte in [Glen Devon Reservoir](#) (MPK1305) was investigated in the early 2000s. The dig at Barton Hill revealed a number of features which were not visible above ground; these included the remains of a ditch around the perimeter of the castle. This indicates the need for excavation (Tabraham 1997). The mottes at [Carnbane Castle](#) (MPK187), Invervar, and [Gleneagles Castle](#) (MPK1272), Blackford have the remains of later stone castles built on top of them. Similarly, the possible motte at [Cleish Castle](#) (MPK5584) and the motte at [Meikleour House](#) (MPK5398) have later tower houses nearby. It is likely that a number of post-1400 castles and great houses are on the sites of earlier castles and residences, and this possibility should be considered when such properties are studied.

Early castles can also lie under urban development, as at Perth, where there is written evidence for a castle in about 1160. Perth Castle is often thought to have been abandoned after severe flood damage in 1209, although new historical research suggests that it may have been occupied after this (R Oram pers comm). In the early 2000s excavations in the Horse Cross area, where Perth Concert Hall now stands, revealed a medieval ditch (about 15m wide and 1.4m deep) and postholes from a possible palisade (Cox et al 2007). These discoveries have been tentatively linked to Perth Castle. Unlike some of the rural sites previously discussed, much of the Horse Cross area has been densely occupied for centuries, potentially destroying the remains of an earth and timber castle.

HER/ Canmore ID	Place (Site and Locality)	National Grid Reference	State of Remains
MPK4671/ 30437	Barton Hill, Kinnaird	NO 2437 2864	Surviving motte with modern house built on it.
MPK3747/ 28727	Mote Hill, Blairgowrie	NO 1785 4544	Motte removed in 19th century.
MPK187/ 24516	Carnbane Castle, Invervar	NN 6771 4788	Rise in ground which has been tentatively interpreted as a motte. Remains of 16th-century castle on same site.
MPK5364/ 30764	Castle Of Rattray, Rattray	NO 2099 4539	Motte largely destroyed by quarrying in 1970s.
MPK5584/ 49626	Cleish Castle, Cleish	NT 0820 9790	Traces of possible motte near 16th-century castle.
MPK301/ 24825	Coney Hill, Comrie	NN 7755 2238	Surviving ditch and motte (significantly altered by later landscaping).
MPK1094/ 25713	Edradynate Castle, Edradynate	NN 8808 5215	Earthwork which has been tentatively interpreted as a motte. Stone foundations of uncertain date on summit.
MPK1305/ 25949	Glen Devon, Upper Glendevon Reservoir	NN 90407 04675	Covered by Upper Glendevon Reservoir. Possible motte visible when water levels are low.
MPK1272/ 25906	Gleneagles Castle, Blackford	NN 9288 0924	Possible motte still exists. Remains of 15th-century tower on same site.
MPK65/ 24233	Kerrowmore, Innerwick	NN 5889 4669	Remains of terraced earthwork which has been tentatively interpreted as a motte. Also footings from seven former buildings of uncertain date.
MPK5379/ 30496	Law Knowe, Errol	NO 2315 2238	Possible motte still exists. 19th-century burial vault inserted into mound.
MPK5398/ 28558	Meikleour House Policies, Meikleour	NO 1536 3869	Motte still exists. Dip on summit where a dovecot formerly stood.
MPK1177/ 25807	Tom An Tigh Mhoir, Struan	NN 8073 6536	Motte still exists, also a ditch (tentatively associated with a bailey). Some damage to earthworks from ploughing.

Table 7.3. Sites of mottes in Perth and Kinross (data from Historic Environment Record).

HER/ Canmore ID	Place (Site and Locality)	National Grid Reference	State of Remains
MPK5483/ MPK3899/ 28875/288886	Ardblair Castle, Blairgowrie	NO 1635 4453	Earthwork platform, possibly from a medieval fortification, near to a largely 16th and 17th-century tower house.
MPK5453/ 28488	Castle Hill, Cargill	NO 1579 3743	Remains of probable 12th-century earthworks and a small section of ditch.
MPK1910/ 26588	Green of Invermay, Forteviot	NO 0526 1621	Cropmark enclosure excavated by SERF project to reveal a ring-work castle with timber buildings, perhaps including a tower.
MPK3485/ EPK266/ 28392/269281	Perth Castle, Perth	NO 118 238	Ditch and timber postholes discovered during excavation.

Table 7.4. Sites without mottes but with other evidence of medieval timber and earth defences in Perth and Kinross (data from Historic Environment Record, Cox et al 2007 and Campbell and Driscoll 2020).

The date at which stone became the preferred building material for elite residences in Perth and Kinross is unclear. It is possible that the construction of mottes and timber palisades continued relatively late, while some elements of stone construction may have been included from quite early on. We should not necessarily assume that timber gave way to stone – the use of both materials may have co-existed.

There are considerable difficulties associated with dating castles in Perth and Kinross. Many of these structures were occupied for long periods of time. Indeed, over 30 castles in the area are still occupied today for residential and commercial use, while one, [Castle Huntly](#) (MPK5112), Longforan, is a prison. Their ongoing use can reflect continuities between medieval and modern landscapes of power. However, the combination of centuries of habitation and relatively limited archaeological investigation creates significant challenges when attempting to establish construction dates. Written sources provide some clues, although before the 17th century detailed building accounts are rare, even for elite residences. At present the presumed chronology of many castles in Perth and Kinross still relies on the work of a limited number of early and mid-20th-century architectural historians, and their assumptions about the date at which certain stylistic features were introduced to the region.

Relatively few castles in Perth and Kinross seem to have significant standing remains from before 1400.



Loch Leven Castle © Jonathan Oldenbuck (CC BY-SA)

[Lochleven Castle](#) (MPK8538) is one of the best-preserved, having a substantial late 14th-century stone tower house and a curtain wall with foundations from the early 1300s, although much of the rest of the wall probably dates from the late 14th or early 15th centuries. Lochleven has seen limited archaeological investigation, with small-scale excavation in the 1980s and 1990s. However, there is considerable potential for further research (Historic Environment Scotland [2005a](#)). Substantial stone keeps, tentatively dated to the 14th century, also survive at [Balthayock Castle](#) (MPK3334), Kinfauns, and [Garth Castle](#) (MPK573), Keltneyburn. Both of these have seen major restoration, yet they may still repay detailed study.



Loch Leven Castle and courtyard © Gunther Tschuch (CC BY-SA)

The remains of [Kinclaven Castle](#) (MPK3575), Murthly, are more fragmentary. Written records suggest Kinclaven was built in the early 13th century and largely demolished in the late 1330s. Today the site is relatively overgrown by trees, but several sections of wall survive from what was a square enclosure castle. A survey in the 2010s showed that the masonry work is likely to date from one phase of construction (Historic Environment Scotland [2015](#)). As Kinclaven was probably not used after the mid-14th century it provides an exceptional site for exploring the design of Scottish stone castles before and during the Wars of Independence. The relationship between the castle and other local features of importance at Kinclaven, such as the parish church and ferry, is another worthwhile topic for research.

Limited 14th-century remains might also be present at [Caisteal Dubh](#) (MPK1613), Moulin and [Castle Cluggy](#) (MPK900), Crieff. In both cases only small sections of walls still survive above ground. Caisteal Dubh was once surrounded by a loch, seemingly drained in the 1700s. Evaluation in 2005 to the south-west of the castle revealed 18th-century field drains, though little else was discovered (Clapperton [2005](#)). Castle Cluggy is now limited to a small square tower, but appears to have once had a wider enclosure. The tower was evaluated in 2001 prior to consolidation of the remains. Inside the tower researchers uncovered what may have been the original floor, but unfortunately found no evidence to date its construction (Roy [2001](#)).



Remains of Black Castle, Moulin © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

It is likely that a number of 13th and 14th-century castles were built on or beside earlier elite residences. This appears to have been the case at [Castle Hill](#) (MPK3954), Clunie. There is written evidence that Clunie was already a place of importance by the 9th century (Alcock [1981](#), 161). In the 12th century Clunie is recorded as a royal residence, while there is a reference to a castle here in 1215 (O'Driscoll and Noble [2019](#)). Much of the stonework from Castle Hill was reportedly removed in the early 1500s when the tower house on the island in [Loch Clunie](#) was built (MPK5255; Lock and Ralston [2017](#)). However, some fragments of stonework from a large building and a possible curtain wall remain. There are also extensive earthworks, including a remarkable series of terraces on the hill on which the castle stood. Nearby is the site of an early church and an open area which may relate to further medieval settlement. Clunie appears to be a site of considerable significance both in relation to the structures surrounding a castle, and the evolution of an elite residence across the medieval period. Geophysical survey and some small-scale excavations took place in 2018 and 2019, but there is potential for much more extensive investigation (O'Driscoll and Noble [2019](#)).



Remains of Castle Clunie from Loch Clunie © Glen Breaden (CC BY-SA)

Perth and Kinross has a large number of 15th and 16th-century castles, often relatively well-preserved. Outstanding examples include [Balvaird Castle](#) (MPK3221), Glenfarg, [Elcho Castle](#) (MPK3313), Rhynd, and the two linked tower houses at [Huntingtower Castle](#) (MPK5534), Ruthvenfield. However, many other castles of this period survive, often still in use as family homes. Several 15th and 16th-century castles from Perth and Kinross have elaborate carved stone detailing, providing insights into the visual language employed by the Scottish elites. Historic Environment Scotland has undertaken some research into the carved stones at properties in their care. However, more study in this area could be undertaken. A number of elaborate carved stone panels and lintels have also been removed from 16th-century castles and laird's houses and reused in other buildings in Perth and Kinross. Decorated architectural fragments, most probably from nearby castles or other elite residences, can be found built into later structures at [Castlehill](#) (MPK4820), Longforan; [Kilspindie Farmhouse and Manse](#) (MPK5361), Kilspindie; [Pitkindie Castle](#) (MPK4828), Abernyte; and [Pitroddie Farm](#) (MPK6700), Kilspindie. Many of these carved stone fragments have received limited study or recording.



Huntingtower Castle © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Some examples of interior decoration also survive from this period. At Huntingtower Castle there is an impressive painted timber ceiling, probably from around 1540. Elements of 16th-century interior decoration may survive at other properties, possibly concealed by later decorative schemes. Invaluable information on age and construction methods can also be obtained from historic timbers preserved within these buildings. It is important that recording and conservation efforts at elite residences include both exterior and interior features.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages the always rather mutable distinction between a castle and a grand house seems to have become even more blurred. It is debatable to what extent many of the castles built in Perth and Kinross in the 15th and 16th centuries were intended as serious fortifications. Scholars such as Charles McKean have argued that the majority of Scottish castles at this time were essentially country houses with symbolic martial decorations (McKean [2001](#)). Certainly, most 16th-century castles in Perth and Kinross were not designed to resist heavy artillery. Instead, the fashionable form appears to have been variants of the tower house, often with an associated walled enclosure or barmkin. Given the current state of academic debate, it seems sensible to consider both aesthetic and defensive explanations when examining the architecture of castles built at this time.

Castles and tower houses have traditionally dominated our understanding of medieval elite residences. Yet

other forms of aristocratic dwellings clearly existed in Perth and Kinross. At the start of the 15th century the bishop's palace at [Dunkeld](#) (MPK2453) consisted of 'great houses built upon the ground' (Oram [2005](#)). Perhaps significantly, Bishop Robert de Cardeny replaced this low-level collection of buildings with a now demolished, tower house – arguably a sign of changing fashions in aristocratic housing. The extraordinary complex of medieval buildings at [Stobhall](#) (MPK3714), Guildtown also appears to be an example of a largely unfortified noble residence which subsequently acquired a tower house. If likely locations of medieval halls, or other forms of unfortified elite dwellings, are identified they should be a priority for archaeological investigation.

Castles and other high-status residences must not be viewed in isolation. They typically had a number of ancillary buildings and were often placed within carefully planned landscapes. The ancillary buildings associated with medieval elite residences have frequently been demolished, even where core structures such as stone tower houses have been preserved. Yet they are fundamental to understanding the appearance and function of a site. Excavation in the 1980s led to a more detailed understanding of the ancillary buildings in the inner courtyard at [Balvaird Castle](#) (MPK3221), although further research could be undertaken on the outer courtyard and former walled gardens (Historic Environment Scotland [2013](#); Lewis [1992](#)).

The designed landscapes surrounding medieval castles served practical purposes and formed a key part of how elite residences were publicly presented (Creighton [2009](#)). Recent research by Brown has significantly advanced our understanding of medieval Scottish gardens (Brown [2012](#)). However, there is potential for far more survey work and excavation of the remains of medieval designed landscapes in Perth and Kinross. It should perhaps be noted that medieval gardens were sometimes located a little distance from elite residences – cropmarks from a possible walled garden near [Rossie Priory](#) (MPK4640) may be an example of this phenomenon (Brown [2012](#), 61–2).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.27: Enhancing understanding of the early development of castles in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.28: Undertaking research into different types of elite residences, including halls and other unfortified structures, and royal apartments in monasteries.

PKARF Agenda 7.29: Encouraging interdisciplinary study of the designed landscapes and ancillary buildings associated with elite residences.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.50: What types of high-status residences existed in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.51: Were there notable differences between high-status residences in upland and lowland areas?

PKARF Qu 7.52: How do castles evolve in Perth and Kinross over the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.53: When were castles introduced to the region? What evidence is there for timber and earth castles?

PKARF Qu 7.54: Can we see the impact of the Wars of Independence on castle construction?

PKARF Qu 7.55: To what extent were castles actually usable as defensive structures?

PKARF Qu 7.56: How does the design of castles in Perth and Kinross compare to other parts of Scotland?

PKARF Qu 7.57: What international influences can be detected in castle design in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.58: What techniques can we use to understand those castles and high-status residences which are still occupied?

PKARF Qu 7.59: How did high-status sites interact with wider landscapes (eg gardens, parks, farming, use of water)?

PKARF Qu 7.60: How do sites of political significance in the Middle Ages in Perth and Kinross relate to earlier places of importance?

7.2.7 Royal Residences

Perth and Kinross was regularly visited by Scotland's medieval monarchs and their courts. Yet the region's royal residences are imperfectly understood. Charter

evidence provides some clues as to the movements of the court in the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. From the 1470s onwards the *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* provide invaluable detail regarding the activities of the monarch and their household (Dickson et al [1877–1978](#)). The *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, which survive intermittently from the 14th century onwards, and unpublished household books, mostly from the 15th and 16th centuries, also hold considerable research potential (L Dean pers comm).

Written evidence suggests that from the 12th to the 14th centuries Scottish rulers stayed at numerous different sites in the area, while the 15th century saw a change in behaviour and a much greater focus on the burgh of Perth, to the exclusion of other places in the region. This reflects a wider retreat by the Stewart monarchs to a limited number of grand residences, largely located in the central belt. This was probably triggered by the growing size of the royal court and the increasing complexity of the kingdom’s bureaucracy.

Dates (and monarch)	Places (with number of charters)
Before 1153	Scone (13), Perth (5), Kinross (5), Clunie (1)
1153–1165 (Malcolm IV)	Perth (13), Kinross (3), Forteviot (1)
1165–1214 (William I)	Perth (46), Alyth (8), Clunie (5), Forteviot (1), Kinross (1), Longforgan (1), Scone (1)
1214–1249 (Alexander II)	Scone (18), Clunie (8), Perth (8), Kinross (6), Kinclaven (3), Alyth (1), Kenmore (1), Kinfauns (1)
1249–1286 (Alexander III)	Scone (24), Kinross (3), Perth (3), Coupar Angus (1), Dunkeld (1), Grandtully (1), Kinclaven (1)
1286–1292 (Guardians)	Perth (2), Scone (1)
1292–1296 (John)	None in Perth and Kinross

1308–1329 (Robert I)	Scone (39), Perth (9), Scotlandwell (9), Kinross (5), Strathord (2), Alyth (1), Clunie (1), Coupar Angus (1), Dunkeld (1), Inchture (1), Leitfie (1), Strathardle (1)
1329–1371 (David II)	Perth (108), Scone (53), Loch Leven Castle (1), Strathord (1)
1371–1390 (Robert II)	Perth (109), Methven (39), Scone (39), Coupar Angus (4), Clunie (3), Dunkeld (2), Loch Freuchie (1), Logierait (1)
1390–1406 (Robert III)	Perth (53), Scone (21), Cardney (1), Dunkeld (1), Logierait (1), Methven (1)
1406–1424 (Dukes of Albany as governors)	Perth (75)
1424–1437 (James I personal rule)	Perth (87)
1437–1460 (James II)	Perth (107), Methven (10)
1460–1488 (James III)	Perth (14)
1488–1513 (James IV)	Perth (34), Glen Artney (1), Methven (1), Scone (1)
1513–1542 (James V)	Perth (73), Grange (1), Scone (1)

Table 7.5. Locations in Perth and Kinross mentioned in place-dates of royal charters (McNeill and MacQueen [1996](#)).

Perth and Scone are the sites in the region most frequently recorded in the place-dates of royal charters. In both locations the royal household seems to have usually stayed in accommodation associated with local religious houses, namely the Dominican friary at [Perth](#) (MPK3517) and the abbey at [Scone](#) (MPK3308). Most of the buildings associated with these institutions were probably demolished at the Reformation.



Scone Palace © Herbert Frank (CC BY)

The Dominican friary at Perth has attracted considerable interest as the scene of James I's murder in 1437. Yet despite extensive historical research, and some archaeological investigation, many questions remain about the nature of the royal accommodation at the friary (Oram [2021](#)). Further understanding of the royal lodgings' layout, construction date, duration of occupation and relationship with the wider religious buildings would be desirable.

Scone Abbey has also received a degree of study, not least because of its role as the intermittent inauguration place of Scottish kings from at least the 12th century until the 15th century (RCAHMS [1994](#), 124–7). Excavations over 2008–9 revealed much about the likely relationship between the ceremonial space at the [Moothill](#) (MPK5474) and the abbey buildings (O'Grady [2018](#); see also PKARF early medieval chapter). However, the location of the abbot's house, which perhaps served as accommodation for the monarch, has not yet been established. It is possible that the former abbot's house may lie under the 19th-century great house known as Scone Palace.

Other sites which regularly feature as place-dates in royal charters include Clunie and Kinross. Some notable early medieval royal centres such as Forteviot also occasionally appear as place-dates for 12th-century charters. The nature of the residences at many of these sites is unclear (see early medieval PKARF report). Some are later recorded as castles. Others have been described by modern scholars as 'hunting lodges'. However, in reality much more

research is needed to understand the significance of these sites.

7.2.8 Assembly Places

Perth and Kinross has some of Scotland's most important medieval assembly sites. Scone was the traditional place where Scottish kings were inaugurated, and there is evidence for royal assemblies here as early as the 10th century (Anderson [1973](#), 251; see also early medieval chapter of PKARF). The low oval mound known as the [Moothill](#) (MPK3308) has long been recognised as a focal point for medieval ceremonial gatherings. Geophysical survey and limited excavation work in the 2000s significantly enhanced our understanding of this feature. Radiocarbon dates from the ditch around the Moothill suggests that the mound was constructed, or at least raised in height, in the 10th or 11th century (O'Grady [2018](#), 142–3). Meanwhile, a series of hexagonal stake-holes indicated that a fence was constructed around the Moothill in the 14th or 15th century – arguably a sign of increasing efforts to control access to the mound (O'Grady [2018](#), 143). The interventions at Scone also identified the foundations of the abbey church which stood to the south of the mound and may have helped to define the outdoor gathering place. Further archaeological investigation at Scone should be a priority, if a suitable opportunity arises.

During the 13th and 14th centuries Scone was a frequent meeting place for the Scottish Parliament (MacDonald [2011](#), 30). However, from the late 14th century onwards it was increasingly replaced by Perth as a parliamentary venue. Indeed, during the early 15th century Perth was the commonest location for the Scottish Parliament. The parliaments in Perth often met at the burgh's Dominican friary (MacDonald [2011](#), 30). Although research has already been undertaken regarding the Dominican site, further exploration of its governmental and ceremonial uses, and of the way in which parliamentary gatherings affected the wider burgh of Perth, would be of considerable interest.

HER / Canmore ID	Place (Site and Locality)	National Grid Reference	State of Remains / Description
MPK490/ 25030	Tom a' Mhoid, Fearnan	NN 7222 4449	Wooded knoll with a tradition of courts and gallows.
MPK838/ 25434	Stayt of Crieff (also known as Court Hill), Crieff	NN 8669 2066	A Bronze Age burial mound, removed in 19th century, said to have been where the Earls of Strathearn and their stewards held court until 1665. Site documented in 1358.
MPK2435/ 27140	Mute Hill (also known as Caputh Church), Caputh	NO 0822 4008	Hill said to have been where 'justice was administered in former times'. The old parish church at Caputh was located on this hill.
MPK3074/ 27922	Preaching How (also known as Castle Law), Abernethy	NO 1839 1548	Flat natural shelf. May possibly be the Preaching How described in the 1860 <i>OS Namebook</i> .
MPK5119/ 32008	Market Knowe, Longforgan	NO 3122 3058	Probably the site of the barony court of Longforgan in the 14th century. It is also claimed that Longforgan market took place here until 1633.
MPK5474/ 28191	Moothill (also known as Boothill and Scone Palace Policies), Scone	NO 1140 2663	A flat-topped artificial mound which was a royal assembly and inauguration site.
MPK328/ 24854	Court Knoll, Dalginross	NN 77712105	Former mound, opened in early 19th century when a cist and cremation discovered. Named 'Court Knoll' on a plan of 1802. Levelled around 1940. It may be the same site as MPK331 Dunmoid.
MPK331/ 24857	Dunmoid (also known as Roundel and Muirend), Dalginross	NN 7802 2126	Prehistoric stone circle. Name Dunmoid translates to 'hill of judgement' or 'hill or mound of assembly'.
MPK177/ 24498	Baron Court, Kiltyrie	NN 6300 3662	Remains of a possible barrow. Traditionally said to be the site of a baron court.
MPK2327/ 27025	Loak Court Hill, Bankfoot	NO 0773 3300	Turf covered barrow named 'Court Hill'. Traditionally the site of judicial courts prior to 1745.
MPK3954/ 28970	Castlehill, Clunie	NO 3111 7440	A natural knoll upon which a motte, and later a castle, was built. The mound was a place of royal assembly and the administration of justice by the 12th century (M Hall 2015a).

Table 7.6. Moot and Assembly Sites in Perth and Kinross (data from the Historic Environment Record and O'Grady 2018).



17th century. For example, the mound at [Stayt of Crieff](#) (MPK838) was supposedly the site of the court of the Earls of Strathearn and their stewards as late as 1665. While some research has been undertaken regarding the sites of outdoor courts, further interdisciplinary research involving field work, place-name evidence, and written sources would be desirable (O’Grady [2008](#) [SET1]). By the 15th and 16th centuries courts and public gatherings were increasingly moving to indoor venues. Further research into the buildings used would be helpful. It is likely that written sources will play a key role in identifying the locations of late medieval courts.

Purpose built civic spaces became more common in Scotland towards the end of the Middle Ages, leading to the construction of tolbooths or town halls. Research into the history of Perth’s tolbooth should be a priority. There is written evidence for a tolbooth at Perth in the 15th century, but little is known about its medieval appearance (*Records of the Parliaments of Scotland* [1445/1](#)). The medieval tolbooth at Perth may have been demolished in the late 17th century when the burgh council ordered the construction of a new ‘Council House, Clerks’ Chamber, and Pack House’ (Fittis [1885](#), 272–3).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.30: Further enhancing our understanding of the nationally important ceremonial site at Scone and its relationship with the wider abbey complex

da 7.31: Using interdisciplinary approaches to study the locations of courts and lower-level places of assembly, (such as the meeting places of incorporated trades,) in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.61: What evidence is there of political and ceremonial gathering places in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.62: What can we learn about the evolution of the ceremonial site at Scone over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.63: To what extent is there a shift from outdoor to indoor courts during the 15th and 16th centuries?

PKARF Qu 7.64: What can we learn about the medieval history of the tolbooth in Perth?

7.2.9 Building Traditions

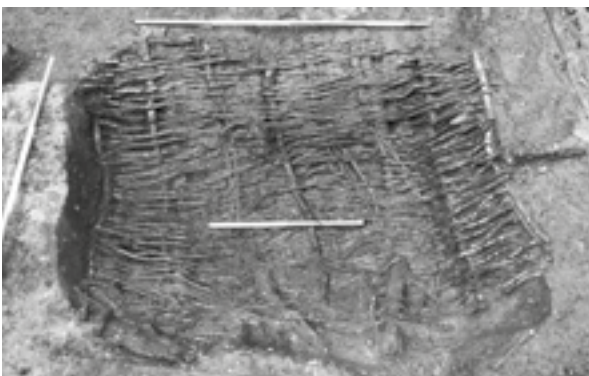
Far more research is needed into the materials and construction techniques used in Scottish medieval buildings. Study of standing buildings has largely focused on exceptional, and relatively high-status, structures such as castles and churches. This is understandable as they are more likely to survive. Yet, in Perth and Kinross we may have the opportunity to investigate more ‘ordinary’ vernacular buildings, both in urban and rural contexts.

In Perth itself the recording of standing buildings has revealed intriguing traces of medieval structures. Evidence of medieval construction has been found in buildings on Perth High Street and in properties outside the traditional core of the burgh (Bowler and Barton [2008](#), 4–5). For example, medieval remains are present in the cellars of the King James Pub (MPK19095; formerly [Christie’s Bar](#)) on Kinnoull Street. Surveys of historic buildings in Perth, and further afield, may well reveal valuable evidence embedded in cellars, party walls and roof spaces. More widespread use of dendrochronology on standing buildings could also be helpful, especially given the tendency for older timbers to be reused in later structures.



Medieval building remains in the cellar at Christie's Bar © HES

The history of timber construction in Perth and Kinross deserves more study. Although Scottish architecture was later dominated by stone buildings, the Middle Ages seem to have seen significant numbers of wooden buildings. Perth has produced extensive evidence for medieval timber construction, including the reuse of ship's timbers to build houses, as evidenced by the High Street excavations (Martin and Bogdan [2012](#), 317–22). In particular, the Perth High Street excavations provided valuable waterlogged timbers (Murray [1980](#); Perry et al [2010](#)). Some initial dendrochronological analysis of these timbers was undertaken in the 1970s, when such an approach was relatively pioneering in Scotland (Crone and Baillie [2010](#)). This initial research revealed that several of the native oak timbers excavated at Perth High Street dated from the 12th and 13th centuries. Yet, despite this early promise, little further dendrochronological work has been undertaken on excavated timbers from Perth.



Remains of wattle preserved at Perth High Street © HES



Structural remains preserved at Perth High Street © HES

Stone, turf and clay are all building materials thought to have been used in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages. Unsurprisingly, stone is the likeliest of these to leave significant remains. Systematic study of medieval stone construction in Perth and Kinross, including the recording of masons' marks, where relevant, would be beneficial. Yet upland earthwork sites also offer considerable potential for study. Comparison of construction techniques between various parts of Perth and Kinross might prove of interest. Late medieval writers commented on the difference between buildings in the Highlands and in the Lowlands. It could be helpful to see if the physical evidence also shows signs of distinctive styles of construction in upland and lowland areas.

Roofing materials and construction is another topic which requires far more research. Interdisciplinary approaches may prove revealing, at least regarding urban and high-status sites. For obvious reasons, physical evidence for medieval roofs is harder to come by than for the foundations of buildings. However, the burgh of Perth has produced two decorative ceramic roof finials, a significant number of ceramic peg tiles, fragments of glazed ridge tiles and a limited selection of stone slates and a single roof shingle (Di Folco and Hall [2012](#), 75–7; Curteis et al [2012](#), 288, illus 194; Walker [2001](#), 168–9). A number of medieval roof tiles and slates were also found at Elcho Priory (Reid and Lye [1988](#), 57, 80). These finds suggest similarities between medieval

Scottish roofing trends, at least on religious sites and in urban areas such as Perth, and contemporary practices in Continental Europe.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.32: Identify the remains of medieval standing buildings in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.33: Supporting the use of dendrochronology and other scientific techniques to date and analyse medieval buildings in the region.

PKARF Agenda 7.34: Undertaking comparative research into building design in upland and lowland Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.65: What medieval buildings survive in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.66: What building materials and techniques were used in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.67: How common was the reuse of timbers from ships in medieval buildings in the region?

PKARF Qu 7.68: Is there notable variation in the design and construction of medieval buildings across the different areas of Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.69: How do urban and rural buildings differ?

PKARF Qu 7.70: What evidence is there for interior decoration?

7.3 Daily Life

7.3.1 Agriculture and Diet

Farming was fundamental to the economy of Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages, providing the vast majority of the region's food, many of the raw materials for clothing and trade, and as the main occupation for most of the population. Arable cultivation, fruit growing and animal husbandry were all practised. However, there remain many gaps in our understanding of the agriculture of the period.

The role of transhumance in medieval upland farming is a topic of particular interest. Research into

the area around Glen Shee and Strathardle identified three zones of medieval and post-medieval farming. The primary settlements were located in the main valleys, whilst the tributary valleys and moorland had a mixture of permanent settlements and shielings. Finally, the higher land was primarily characterised by pasture and shielings, which were temporary dwellings associated with the care of grazing animals (RCAHMS [1990](#), 5). Shielings are one of the commonest types of monument in upland Perth and Kinross. However, our understanding of their likely date and use is often very limited. More research into shielings, and their relationship to wider patterns of upland farming, would be desirable. It is possible that some post-medieval shielings may conceal evidence of medieval activity (M. Hall pers comm). Many upland areas, like Glen Shee and Strathardle, saw successive phases of occupation, abandonment and reoccupation from the Bronze Age through to the post-medieval period (Strachan et al [2019](#)). Further study of these periods of expansion and retreat, and their correlation with wider economic and environmental trends, should be undertaken.

There was historically extensive cereal production in Perth and Kinross. Cultivation remains in the form of rig and furrow have been identified at many locations in the region. Most of these markings have not been securely dated, although the majority are probably post-medieval, with later activity perhaps obscuring evidence of medieval ploughing. In the Middle Ages cereal cultivation often took place at altitudes no longer regarded as suitable for growing grain in Scotland. Glimpses of possible medieval field systems, including rig and furrow, can often be seen in upland settings in Perth and Kinross, where improvement was less intensive and well-preserved cultivation remains survive as earthworks (RCAHMS [1990](#), 136–8, 169). Greater efforts to investigate and date these earthworks might be beneficial. More use could also be made of soil analysis to detect evidence of cultivation and other modification of the earth. This form of investigation is likely to be particularly relevant in upland and marginal areas which have been less disturbed (Oram pers comm).

In lowland areas later farming activity has often severely damaged medieval cultivation remains. Only a few examples of medieval rig and furrow have been excavated in lowland Perth and Kinross,

and include: [Abernethy](#) (MPK12705), [Errol Airfield](#) (MPK15430), [Kinross High School](#) (MPK17086) and [Loanleven](#) (MPK6147). Meanwhile at [Balgonie](#) (MPK3124) cropmarks from probable medieval rig and furrow surround a large ditched enclosure, suggesting a moated site set within a wider cultivated landscape. The identification of medieval lowland field systems should be a priority for researchers.



Medieval rig and furrow cropmarks at Balgonie © HES

Botanical evidence suggests that oats, in particular *Avena sativa*, and bere barley were among the most common medieval cereals in Perth and Kinross (Fraser and Smith [2011](#), 75–6). However, wheat was also grown and consumed, and there is some evidence for the eating of rye in Perth (Fraser and Smith [2011](#), 76; D Hall [forthcoming](#)). Further understanding of the locations and types of community which cultivated these different cereals, and whether their preferences changed over time, is desirable. Clearly, the physical evidence would play a key role in any such study. However, teind records could also inform our understanding of where different types of grain were grown. In particular, the 16th-century *Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices* might provide an overview of grain production at the end of the Middle Ages (Kirk [1995](#)). How and where grain was stored is another topic of interest which interdisciplinary approaches could perhaps elucidate.

While beans and peas appear to have been eaten in many parts of medieval Scotland, large-seeded

legumes often do not leave as obvious a trace in the archaeological record as cereals (Fraser and Smith [2011](#), 75). We therefore could be underestimating their contribution to the medieval diet. Preservation bias may also affect our awareness of vegetable consumption. Recent research on medieval Ireland has highlighted how different archaeobotanical approaches can broaden our understanding of historic diets (Lyons [2015](#), 111–66). Similar considerations may well be relevant in Perth and Kinross.

The contribution of fruit to the diet of medieval residents of Perth and Kinross deserves further research. The area around the River Tay has a long tradition of fruit growing, especially of apples and pears, with considerable written evidence for medieval orchards in the Carse of Gowrie and in the immediate vicinity of Perth. Some initial recording of historic orchards has been undertaken in the Carse of Gowrie (Hayes [2008](#); D Hall [2010](#)). However, there is a need for more extensive interdisciplinary investigation here, and in other parts of Perth and Kinross. It should be noted that some existing small orchards in the Carse of Gowrie have exceptionally early origins. For example, there are records of an orchard at Carsegrange, Errol in the 15th century, and written evidence for a monastic grange at this site in the 13th century (D Hall [2006a](#); [2010](#)). Although the orchard at Carsegrange has since been divided by a railway line and new houses have been built, several ancient fruit trees still survive, and botanical study might be of interest in this area. The orchard at [Elcho Priory](#) on the south side of the Tay also survived until ‘comparatively recently’ and is marked on Ordnance Survey maps published in the 1950s (MPK3482; Reid and Lye [1988](#), 49). Unfortunately, the last 50 years has seen the destruction of the majority of historic orchards in Perth and Kinross. Many of those which remain are in poor condition and subject to pressure from development. Investigation of surviving early orchards should therefore be an urgent priority before potentially significant botanical information is lost.



Elcho Castle from the orchard © James TM Towill (CC BY-SA)

There is some evidence for the consumption of imported fruits in medieval Perth – a reminder of the burgh’s international connections. Fig seeds were found in several contexts on Perth High Street (Fraser and Smith [2011](#), 77). Meanwhile, recent environmental analysis at Perth Whitefriars has identified the presence of grape seeds, probably indicating the eating of raisins, although it is possible that they were associated with wine-making (D. Hall [forthcoming](#)).

Perth and Kinross has produced large medieval assemblages of butchered animal bones. Most are from urban settings, in particular the burgh of Perth. It is slightly paradoxical that while medieval livestock were mainly raised in the countryside, our evidence for their existence mostly comes from the towns. While this primarily reflects archaeological survival and excavation bias, the rural producing sites tended not to consume meat, or indeed other foodstuffs, in the concentrated quantities seen in the burghs. Rural waste disposal may also have differed from the pits and middens common in urban settings. It is possible that rural elite residences might provide some large assemblages of animal bones, as is the

case in other parts of Scotland. However, the limited number of excavations of rural elite residences in the region currently limits our understanding of this question. Some animal bone assemblages have been recovered from rural religious sites, including the female Cistercian house of Elcho Priory. Interestingly, study of the Elcho animal remains suggest they came from ‘the poorer offcuts of meat’ (Reid and Lye [1988](#), 78).



Preserved egg from Perth High Street © HES

The butchered animal bone from medieval Perth has been extensively recorded and studied (Hodgson et al [2011](#); Smith and Clarke [2011](#)). Investigation has provided detailed information about how animals were managed and exploited, which species were commonest, and evidence of the sex, size, age and health of the animals at the time of slaughter. The Perth High Street excavations revealed evidence of the butchering of large numbers of cattle, sheep and goats, arguably in excess of what the local population was likely to consume. These large assemblages may reflect the region’s export trade in hides and woolfells (Hodgson et al [2011](#), 43–44). Perth has also provided extensive evidence for the keeping of domestic fowl, and large numbers of bones from greylag geese, although it is not clear whether the geese were wild or domesticated (Smith and Clarke [2011](#)).

Despite the progress made with the Perth animal bones, further research could still be undertaken. Most of the animal bone has not yet been subject to modern radiocarbon dating, genetic study or stable isotope analysis. However, some work in these areas is currently underway at the University

of Aberdeen. The natural history of zoonotic diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, which can transfer from animal to human populations, is an important area of interest (C Smith pers comm). As scientific techniques improve and become more accessible, we can increasingly identify when and where animals were raised before they arrived in towns – providing vital clues about economic networks and rural production sites. Large bone assemblages continue to present a serious storage problem, but their research potential is by no means exhausted. The question of storing large numbers of animal bones is of particular relevance to the study of the Middle Ages – in Scotland earlier periods tend not to produce the same quantity of bones, while later periods are more fully documented and can be studied in other ways.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.17: Identifying examples of medieval field systems in lowland Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.18: Making greater use of soil analysis to understand historic cultivation patterns and techniques in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.19: Developing a regional strategy for the storage and study of medieval animal bone assemblages.

PKARF Agenda 7.20: Undertaking further study and recording of historic orchards in Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.23: What were the main crops cultivated in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.24: Are there shifts in the areas used for arable cultivation over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.25: How do field systems in upland and lowland areas compare?

PKARF Qu 7.26: What evidence is there for fruit growing in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.27: To what extent does the design of agricultural tools evolve during the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.28: What was animal husbandry like in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.29: For what purposes were animals primarily being kept (eg meat, wool and hide production, draught animals, pets)?

PKARF Qu 7.30: What can high-resolution radiocarbon dating, stable isotope and genetic analysis tell us about domestic and wild animals and fish?

PKARF Qu 7.31: How should we curate large animal bone and shell assemblages for further study?

PKARF Qu 7.32: What evidence is there for famine in Perth and Kinross during the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.33: Was there a notable variation in diet between different types of community in Perth and Kinross (eg urban, rural, upland, lowland, monastic, burgess, peasant)?

PKARF Qu 7.34: What can we learn about food production and consumption from high-status sites?

PKARF Qu 7.35: How significant a role did imported foodstuffs play in the diet of the residents of Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

7.3.2 Hunting and Fishing

Fishing

Written evidence indicates fishing was a significant part of the medieval economy of Perth and Kinross. Customs records show that the burgh of Perth was a major exporter of salmon. Meanwhile charters and parliamentary legislation confirm the presence of fisheries on the River Tay and River Earn. The importance of fishing rights on the Tay is also evident in a series of disputes between the burgh of Perth and local landowners. These legal records identify specific stretches of the river and might help landscape and archaeological study (M Brown pers comm). However, little trace of medieval fishing has been successfully identified, despite textual evidence suggesting the presence of fish ponds and fish traps, as well as the use of nets. Fish ponds were especially associated with religious houses, and supposedly ‘some marks’ of the Carthusians’ fish ponds were still visible at Perth in the 18th century (Kemp [1887](#), 251).

The considerable numbers of shells and fish bone uncovered by the Perth High Street excavations confirm fish as a component in the diet of at least some residents. Analysis revealed a preponderance

of marine species, such as herring, plaice, haddock and cod (Jones [2011](#), 56–7). Migratory fish such as salmon and smelt were also present, although exclusively freshwater fish such as pike were absent. A large proportion of the shells discovered at Perth High Street were from oysters and mussels (Heppel et al [2011](#), 62).

Careful analysis of fish bones and shells can reveal information about species, age, date and provenance. What is more, fish remains often provide insights into past diets, trading patterns and environments. For example, the large numbers of oyster shells discovered at Perth hint at changes in the biodiversity of the Tay estuary, as this species is now locally extinct (C Smith pers comm).

Several medieval iron fish hooks, ranging in length from 25mm to 121mm, were discovered on Perth High Street (Franklin and Goodall [2012](#), 149). Other types of artefact, such as ceramics, can also provide clues about the medieval fish trade. It has recently been suggested that Shelly-Sandy Ware pottery excavated on Perth High Street, and carbon-dated to the 11th century, may have been associated with the trade in stockfish around the North Sea (D Hall [2013](#)).

It is likely that more detailed analysis of assemblages from old excavations could enhance our understanding of the medieval environment and fishing networks across Perth and Kinross. Care should also be taken in the excavation of new material. It is perhaps worthwhile noting here the differences in assemblages recovered by hand which tend to bias large fish bones and sieved samples which typically include more smaller fish bones and the impact this can have on the identification of types of fish present at a site.

Hunting

Scottish hunting customs altered over the course of the Middle Ages. Before the 1100s free people appear to have been allowed to hunt over most land. However, from the 12th century onwards there was ‘a privatisation of hunting’ as the monarch and nobility sought to exclude the general population from hunting on their estates and made certain forms of game an elite privilege (D Hall et al [2011](#), 59). Deer hunting was particularly restricted, and venison is thought to have become a largely royal and aristocratic meat. Notably, very few deer remains

were found in the large assemblage of animal bones from Perth High Street (Hodgson et al [2011](#), 34–35).

Deer management has left its mark upon the landscape of Perth and Kinross. Possible medieval deer parks have been identified at [Invermay House](#) (MPK7490), [Laighwood](#) (MPK2370), [St Martins House](#) (MPK3252) and [Buzzart Dykes](#) (MPK3821). Of these, Buzzart Dykes has received the most detailed investigation, and excavation has revealed a building and ceramics radiocarbon dated to the 13th–14th centuries, which may be evidence of a medieval hunting lodge (RCAHMS [1990](#), 93–4; D. Hall and Malloy [2016](#); see [Buzzart Dykes Case Study](#)).

Because of their elite associations, hunting rights and parks are often documented. While the Buzzart Dykes enclosure has not yet been securely linked to written records, it has been suggested that it could be associated with [Glasclune Castle](#) (MPK3754), [Drumlochy Castle](#) (MPK3733), or the [Forest of Clunie](#) (MPK3954) (D Hall and Malloy [2016](#), 25). Medieval written records suggest that Perth and Kinross was a popular area for royal hunts and parts of the region were designated as royal forests. Notable royal forests include Alyth, Atholl and Clunie (RCAHMS [1990](#), 6–9). A combination of documentary research, field survey and analysis of finds from elite residences could significantly enhance our understanding of royal and aristocratic hunting.



Royal Fonab Forest, Clunie and Strathhtay © Jim Barton (CC BY-SA)

Smaller mammals such as hares and foxes were also hunted in medieval Scotland, and wild fowl were caught. Access to these lesser game was not as tightly controlled, although the 15th and 16th centuries did see increasing restrictions on when and how hares and wildfowl could be killed. Analysis of bone assemblages from Perth suggest that lesser game and wildfowl did not make up a large element of the local diet. Bones from some birds now extinct in the region, such as cranes, were found in the Perth High Street excavations, but not in large quantities (Smith and Clarke [2011](#), 52). It seems likely that a combination of habitat destruction and hunting had already led to the decline of a number of species in medieval Perth and Kinross – something that is perhaps the background to the growing regulation of hunting. Comparison of bone assemblages across periods and locations might develop our understanding of this issue.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.11: Using interdisciplinary approaches to identify the sites of fish ponds and traps in the region.

PKARF Agenda 7.12: Undertaking analysis of old and new assemblages of fish bones to better understand the diet of medieval residents of Perth and Kinross and how fish stocks have altered over time.

PKARF Agenda 7.13: Integrating evidence from written records, fish bones and other artefacts to identify how the medieval fish trade functioned.

PKARF Agenda 7.14: Identifying evidence of medieval hunting by non-nobles.

PKARF Agenda 7.15: Undertaking further research into the management of parks and royal forests.

PKARF Agenda 7.16: Using bone assemblages to map changes in the prevalence of different types of wild animal.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.16: What evidence is there for the management of rivers and other water courses for fishing in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.18: How did the types of fish present in the waters in and near to Perth and Kinross in the

Middle Ages differ from today?

PKARF Qu 7.19: How connected was Perth and Kinross to the international fish trade?

PKARF Qu 7.20: To what extent was hunting an exclusively elite activity in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.21: How did hunting shape the management of parks and royal forests?

PKARF Qu 7.22: Can we see the impact of medieval legislation on hunting in the archaeological record?

7.3.3 Health and Mortality

Significant assemblages of medieval human remains have been recovered from Perth, particularly from around St John's Kirk (MPK15175) and from the sites of the former [Dominican](#) (MPK5533) and [Carmelite](#) (MPK3515) friaries (Fyles et al [2005](#); D Hall [forthcoming](#)). However, fewer burials have been excavated in rural areas of Perth and Kinross. It seems likely that rural churchyards may contain significant numbers of relatively undisturbed medieval graves. These could be a valuable source of evidence – although any investigation would require considerable sensitivity.

Scientific investigation of human remains can enhance our understanding of many aspects of life and death in medieval Scotland. Careful study of the burial assemblages from Perth and Kinross could further our understanding of the age structure of the region's medieval communities, the geographic origins of local residents, their experiences of health and disease and the types of labour they undertook. For example, evidence of heavy manual labour is present on a significant proportion of the adolescent and adult male remains from St John's Kirk, but less so on female skeletons. This is perhaps indicative of the differences in the types of labour that men and women engaged in.

Many burials of children, especially of those aged under about five, have been discovered. In part this reflects the relatively high levels of infant mortality common to many medieval societies. However, the St John's Kirk burials included a large number of juvenile burials even by the standards of medieval Scotland (Fyles et al [2005](#), 30). Numerous infant and child burials were also found at Elcho Priory. Interestingly, a large proportion of the child burials from Elcho

showed evidence of dental disease (Lunt [1972](#)).

Dietary deficiencies are apparent on some medieval skeletons from Perth and Kinross, including rare cases of scurvy. There is arguably a need to consider how evidence for metabolic disorders and dietary-related events can be linked to specific periods of crisis. For instance, can we identify the people who lived through the famine of the early 14th century? In general, we could do far more work using human remains to study nutrient availability and wider environmental shifts. There has been limited research on this topic anywhere in Scotland. However, the large burial assemblages from Perth and Kinross, combined with the fact that famine is documented in the written sources for this region well into the 16th century, make this a topic of particular local significance (R Oram pers comm).

Further research into epidemic disease in the region would also be beneficial. At present, the impact of the Black Death on medieval Perth and Kinross is poorly understood. Burial assemblages could supplement documentary and economic evidence for the disruption posed by this crisis. The impact of subsequent outbreaks of plague should also not be overlooked. For instance, historical research indicates that Perth experienced large numbers of deaths from plague in the 16th century, with apparently 1400 people dying in the burgh during the epidemic of 1584–5 (Oram [2007](#), 21).

We have only begun to tap the potential of the medieval human remains already excavated in Perth and Kinross. Urban development makes it likely that further large burial assemblages will be uncovered. This offers significant opportunities, but also raises potential challenges regarding reburial, curation and storage. Furthermore, it is probable that scientific methods will continue to develop, creating still more research possibilities for human bones. There are therefore significant practical and ethical questions about how this valuable source of evidence can be managed and preserved for future study (MGS [2011](#); Historic Environment Scotland [2006](#); M Hall [2013a](#); Sharp and Hall [2013](#)).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.35: Developing a strategy for the longer longer-term storage and study of human bone

assemblages in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.36: Enhancing our understanding of the typical age structure of medieval communities and the impact of crises such as famine and epidemic disease

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.71: What was the age structure of medieval communities in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.72: What was the impact of the Black Death in Perth and Kinross? What evidence is there for disease more generally?

PKARF Qu 7.73: How do we best curate large burial assemblages for future study?

PKARF Qu 7.74: Are there research possibilities in the large number of undisturbed rural burial grounds in Perth and Kinross?

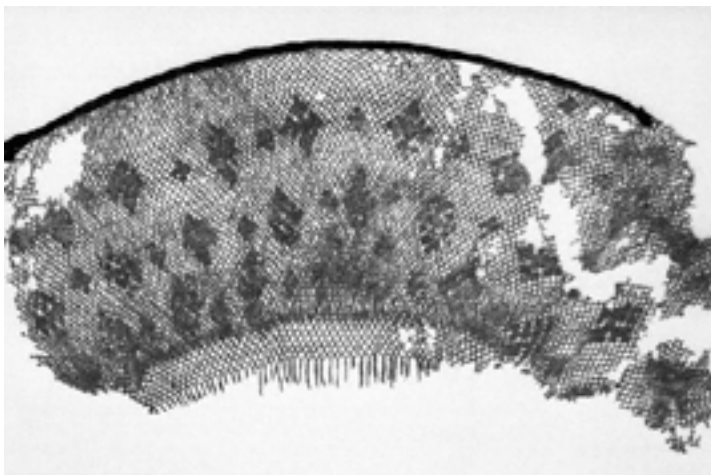
7.3.4 Clothing and Dress

For many years Scottish medieval costume was surprisingly under-researched. A recent cluster of publications and research projects indicates that this situation may be changing (Hayward [2019](#); Schussler Bond [2019](#); French and Westerhof Nyman [2021](#)). Yet there remain many basic unanswered questions about clothing and dress in medieval Scotland. The archaeological evidence from Perth and Kinross is potentially highly significant in advancing our understanding of what Scots wore in the Middle Ages.

The Perth High Street excavations produced ‘the first large body of medieval textiles from Scotland’ (Dransart et al [2012](#)). Because of the exceptional nature of this discovery, extensive analysis was undertaken. The level of study, and the number of items excavated in Perth, mean that we now have a valuable reference point for other medieval textile finds in the region.

Most of the Perth High Street textiles date from before the 14th century, while the remainder were from around the period of the Wars of Independence (Dransart et al [2012](#)). A significant number of silk items were uncovered; no fewer than 11 examples of loom-woven silk were identified from Perth High Street. These were almost certainly imported items;

Spain, Italy, France and Byzantium are all possible countries of origin. Silk hairnets, silk tablet-woven ribbons and decorative silk stitching on shoes were also discovered. Clearly there was a market for luxury goods in Perth. Of course, the silks excavated on Perth High Street date from before the main Scottish sumptuary laws of the 15th and 16th centuries limited the wearing of silk to the aristocracy (Hayward [2019](#)). Whether the impact of sumptuary legislation can be traced in the archaeological record is a question for future research.



Imported Medieval hairnet from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of the medieval textiles discovered at Perth were made from wool. The woollen textiles were of varying quality, and probably include items produced in Scotland and overseas. However, there was a notable lack of linen textiles uncovered in Perth. This appears to reflect problems with survival. The presence of flax seeds in the botanical remains from Perth High Street, and the discovery of tools associated with the preparation of linen, strongly suggest that linen was used in the burgh (Dransart et al [2012](#), 61–2). Evidence from Greenland shows that linen often perishes with little trace in conditions where wool is still relatively well-preserved.

Large numbers of medieval leather shoes have been recovered in Perth, notably during the Perth High Street excavations and at St John’s Square (Thomas and Bogdan [2012](#); Thomas [2016](#)). Most are of turnshoe construction. The quantity of shoe leather which has been excavated suggests that wearing shoes was the norm for the residents of medieval Perth. Whether this was the case in upland

and rural areas is still unclear, though medieval and post-medieval written accounts suggest that bare feet may have been more common in the Highlands. The shoes from the burgh of Perth show similarities with finds from other countries around the North Sea. A combination of the discoveries at Perth with evidence from other Scottish urban and elite sites has enabled the development of outline typologies for Scottish medieval shoes (Thomas and Bogdan [2012](#), 158–257).



Medieval shoes from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

A significant body of medieval metal items associated with clothing and personal adornment have been found across Perth and Kinross (M Hall [2021](#)). Many were found during large-scale excavations. However, others were discovered as a result of metal-detecting. Given the popularity of recreational metal-detecting, it seems likely that this will continue to be a useful source of small metal finds. While metal-detecting often produces finds with less contextual information, it does enable us to recover interesting objects from a much wider range of locations than would otherwise be possible. The relatively strict laws on portable antiquities in Scotland mean that a wide range of stray finds are properly recorded. However, there perhaps ought to be discussions about the best way for researchers to access these records, so this data can be compared and analysed.

The Perth High Street excavations produced 27 medieval brooches, almost all of which were annular in design (Goodall [2012](#), 90–4). Metal buckles and pins were also discovered, as well as a number

of small metal tubes which have been tentatively identified as ends for laces. Several long-decorated pins were found in Perth in contexts ranging from the 12th to the 14th centuries. These were probably used to fasten clothing and are relatively archaic in their design. They raise questions about what more old-fashioned elements persisted in Scottish medieval dress, and the extent to which their use related to conscious expressions of identity.



Metal buckle from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery



Metal buckle from Dunkeld © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Many of the more exceptional finds associated with clothing and personal accessories, such as zoomorphic brooches or heraldic pendants, have received relatively detailed study. As well as being discussed in excavation reports, some of these objects have been considered in more theoretical overviews, such as recent discussion of the role of status, magic and religious devotion in choices about dress accessories (M Hall [2011](#) and [2021](#); Hall and Spencer [2012](#)). Accurate and easily accessible museum catalogues, preferably with images, form an important resource to enable such comparative research to take place.

Despite recent advances, more research is still needed into dress in medieval Perth and Kinross. At present much of our evidence is from lowland urban sites. Further evidence of dress in rural and upland areas would be of great interest. Written records suggest that there may have been notable distinctions between costume in upland and lowland areas. However, the patchy nature of the physical evidence makes it hard to assess to what extent these comments reflect lowland Scottish prejudices rather than actual differences in practice.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.37: Improving the cataloguing and recording of artefacts associated with dress history and making this information more readily available to researchers.

PKARF Agenda 7.38: Undertaking comparative research regarding the evidence for clothing and dress in upland and lowland parts of Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.39: Assessing the evidence for the use of linen in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.75: How does dress and clothing in Perth and Kinross evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.76: Can differences be discerned between dress in upland and lowland areas?

PKARF Qu 7.77: What evidence is there for luxury and imported items?

PKARF Qu 7.78: Does the physical evidence show any impact from sumptuary laws?

PKARF Qu 7.79: What can we learn about the production and use of linen in the region?

PKARF Qu 7.80: How did clothing and its accessorisation contribute to the defining of identity in changing social contexts?

7.3.5 Leisure and Sport

Tantalising hints about medieval recreational activities have been discovered in Perth and Kinross. For example, eight bone dice and a bone playing piece were found during the Perth High Street excavations (MacGregor et al [2011](#), 101–2). Similarly, a walrus ivory gaming piece was retrieved during the Horse Cross excavations in Perth and a jet chess piece was recovered from Meal Vennel (Cox et al [1996](#), 782–3; M Hall [2003](#); Cox et al [2007](#), 177–8). Interestingly, a bone die with ring and dot designs was found at Elcho Priory, although this was perhaps lost by a high-status visitor rather a member of the religious community (M Hall [2015b](#), 290–1).

Games of chance were often condemned by medieval religious writers. However, dice and board games seem to have remained popular at all levels of society. Financial records reveal that on the evening of James I's murder at Perth, the king and court entertained themselves by gambling on chess, tables and cards (M Hall [2015b](#), 292). There has, in recent decades, been considerable study of the evidence for dice and board games from Perth and Kinross and how this relates to the wider European context, providing a valuable foundation for further research in this area (M Hall [2002](#); [2013b](#); [2018](#)).

Written records give us important information about more physically active games in the region. The first legislation banning football in Scotland was issued by the parliament sitting at Perth in 1424 (*Records of the Parliaments of Scotland* [1424/19](#)). Significantly, the same parliament ordered all men to practice archery from the age of 12 upwards. Perth also has early golfing associations. In 1502 James IV paid a Perth bow-maker 14 shillings for 'clubbes', thought to be the world's first recorded purchase of golf clubs (Golfiana Caledonia [2022](#)). There is documentary evidence for golf being played on Perth's North Inch in the 1590s, and on the South Inch from the 1610s

(Golfiana Caledonia [2022](#)). However, it seems likely that golf was being played in the open spaces around Perth before this.

Famously, James I and his courtiers played an early form of real tennis or *jeu de paume* while staying in Perth, using a court which was part of the Dominican friary, presumably deliberately commissioned for the royal apartments there. Indeed, the king's decision to block up an access point to a cess pit to avoid losing tennis balls ultimately meant that he was unable to escape his murderers via that route (Aberdare [1989](#); Matheson [1999](#)). Many medieval sporting activities are unlikely to have left much physical evidence. However, the courts used for playing *jeu de paume* and other forms of handball were more substantial structures; these were walled enclosures which were often partly built from stone. These early tennis and handball courts were frequently associated with religious houses and, from the 16th century onwards, parish churches. The only surviving example of such a court in Scotland is at [Falkland Palace](#) in Fife, but careful study of other sites might reveal relevant remains (Puttfarken and Stuart [1989](#)). Outside of Perth and Kinross, research into property records and early map evidence has proved helpful for identifying the location of handball and tennis courts. For instance, the approximate sites of the ball courts at [Holyrood Abbey](#) in Edinburgh and [St Andrews Cathedral](#) in Fife have been ascertained from textual and visual sources (Wordie and Butler [1989](#), 18–25; Puttfarken and Stuart [1989](#), 26–35; B Rhodes pers comm). Similar documentation may exist for Perth.

There is also evidence for crueller sports and pastimes in medieval Perth and Kinross, including cock-fighting, dog-fighting and cat tossing (Penny [1836](#), 134–5; Smith [1998](#), 880–2; M Hall [2002](#), 298). For example, the metatarsus from a probable fighting cock was discovered on Perth High Street. The natural bone spur of this bird had been sawn off, most likely to enable a sharper metal spur to be attached to its leg (Smith and Clarke [2011](#)). An appetite for blood extended to other activities, including dramatic performances such as Perth's Corpus Christi play, which used fake blood in some of its martyr scenes (M Hall [2005a](#), 220–4).

Finally, during the early 15th century the burgh of Perth was the scene of at least two major jousting

tournaments. There is evidence for tournaments near the burgh in 1401 and 1433 (Edington [1998](#), 54; Stevenson [2006](#), 71). The contest in 1433 is of particular interest as it is thought to be the only tournament organised by James I, and probably accompanied a General Council held at Perth to discuss diplomatic overtures from Henry VI of England (Stevenson [2006](#), 71). As special events, tournaments are unlikely to have made as much impact on the landscape as more long-term forms of activity. However, interdisciplinary study of possible jousting locations might be beneficial.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.40: Enhancing our understanding of board games in Perth and Kinross and what they may reveal about cultural connections in the region.

PKARF Agenda 7.41: Undertaking interdisciplinary study of medieval sporting activity in Perth and Kinross, including the various forms of football, golf, handball and tennis.

PKARF Agenda 7.42: Identifying possible locations for medieval tournaments held at Perth.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.81: What evidence is there of sporting activity in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.82: What evidence is there for tabletop games? What cultural influences may they reflect?

PKARF Qu 7.83: Can we identify the sites of the medieval tournaments at Perth?

7.3.6 Other Material Culture

Many facets of medieval life are reflected in the objects excavated in Perth and Kinross. It would be desirable for a comprehensive strategy for material culture found in the region, including through activities such as metal-detecting, to be developed. Unfortunately, creating research priorities for all possible types of find is a vast undertaking and beyond the scope of a brief regional overview such as this. However, there are some areas of particular interest which are perhaps worthwhile highlighting.



Ivory knife handle from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

We have a surprisingly limited understanding of experiences of childhood in medieval Scotland. Although physical evidence for children is apparent in burials and in some clothing items, particularly shoes, many of the traces of their lives are indistinguishable from the adult population. Toys are one of the areas where they might become visible – though even here we should not automatically assume that toys and games were the preserve of childhood. Objects associated with childhood often come to light in unpredictable ways, and we should be conscious of the need to identify, curate and interpret them. The archaeology of childhood is an important area of study, and one in which artefacts from Perth and Kinross may play a significant part (M Hall [2014](#); [2018](#)).



Jet gaming piece from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Further research into how medieval gender roles affected material culture, and vice versa, might be beneficial. Interdisciplinary approaches may help inform our understanding of this topic. It should perhaps be noted that we must be wary of applying later assumptions about gender to medieval societies. For example, the presence of needles and sewing items should not automatically be associated with femininity. Written records from medieval Scotland show that embroidery and tailoring were often male activities, especially in commercial settings (Dickson et al [1877–1978](#)). The spinning of thread, on the other hand, is more likely to have been performed by women, not least because it could be done while undertaking other tasks, such as caring for offspring (C Smith, pers comm). Numerous spindle whorls have been excavated in Perth, made from a variety of materials including stone, bone and wood (Dransart et al [2012](#); Smith et al [2011](#), 129–34). The Perth High Street excavations also produced relatively rare wooden spindles (Curteis et al [2012](#), 272–4).



Spindle whorl from Dunkeld © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Further physical evidence for medieval music would be of great interest. Significant musical finds from the burgh of Perth include a medieval bone flute from excavations in Skinnergate and a Jew's harp of copper alloy from the High Street (Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust [2004](#), 4; Goodall [2012](#), 111). Meanwhile, fieldwalking in Bridge of Earn in the late 1990s turned up a ceramic whistle 'in the form of a robed figure playing a wind instrument' (Hallyburton and Brown [2000](#), 72). Metal-detecting will probably continue to produce finds with musical, or at least auditory, associations. Indeed, it is thought that whistles, small bells and jingling dress accessories, worn by people and animals, were often used by medieval Scots to protect against malign supernatural influences (Hall [2021](#), 483–5).

Current historical research suggests that medieval Perth and Kinross had a rich musical culture. The burgh of Perth had frequent processions, dramatic performances, including the annual Corpus Christi play and ritual festivities such as Maying. Music formed an integral part of these celebrations (M Hall [2001](#), 182–4). There is written evidence for secular music making in Perth as far back as the early 1300s when Edward I of England made payments to 'diverse vielle-players, timpanists, and other minstrels' in the burgh (M Hall [2001](#), 183). The English king was also met by a group of women singers on the road between Ogilvy Castle and Gask who 'sang to him in the way they were wont to do in the time of the Lord Alexander, lately king of the Scots' (M Hall [2001](#), 183).

The relationship between literary culture and medieval physical objects is another area to consider. Some notable research on this theme has already been undertaken in Perth and Kinross, for example through study of the Tristram and Iseult mirror case excavated in Perth in the 1920s (M Hall and Owen [1998](#)). As this example makes clear, the significance of such objects is sometimes realised many years after excavation, which emphasises the importance of good recording and curation of finds.



Mirror case from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Several objects directly relating to books and writing have been discovered in the region. For instance, a lead stylus was found during a watching brief on Perth High Street (Smith et al [2016](#), 37). Excavation at Elcho Priory produced three book clasps, probably dating from the 15th or early 16th centuries, and a similar book clasp was found at [Inchaffray Abbey](#) (MPK1510; Reid and Lye [1988](#), 70–2). Of course, a significant number of medieval manuscripts and books from Perth and Kinross are preserved in Scottish archives, including the Perth and Kinross Archive, the National Records of Scotland, and the National Library of Scotland. Greater study of these manuscripts as physical objects, and comparison of items from excavation with archival material, would be advisable. Traditionally, analysis of books and documents has been the preserve of disciplines other than archaeology. However, manuscripts are part of the extant material culture of medieval Scotland and greater interdisciplinary dialogue might reveal new insights.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.43: Improving recording and study of artefacts possibly associated with medieval children.

PKARF Agenda 7.44: Using interdisciplinary approaches to better understand gender roles in medieval Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.45: Developing understanding of the artefacts associated with music making in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.84: What can excavated and collected assemblages tell us about the visual culture of Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.85: What can the physical evidence tell us about musical culture?

PKARF Qu 7.86: To what extent can we understand gender roles in medieval Perth and Kinross through the material culture?

PKARF Qu 7.87: What can we discover about childhood from material culture?

PKARF Qu 7.88: What physical evidence is there for scholarship and learning?

PKARF Qu 7.89: How does material culture contribute to our understanding of medieval sensory perceptions?

PKARF Qu 7.90: How does material culture contribute to our understanding of medieval magical, ritual and religious practices?

7.4 Economy and Industry

7.4.1 Economic Networks

Extensive, if fragmentary, evidence survives for the economic networks within medieval Perth and Kinross, as well as the connections between the region and the wider world. Yet much more work could be done to analyse and piece together the various forms of written and physical information which relate to this topic. Late medieval customs records provide a detailed insight into the goods which entered and left the region, usually through the burgh of Perth. Charters can provide insights into

the locations of markets and fairs. Market places are also evidenced in the landscape, both in street plans and through markers such as mercat crosses (M Hall [2004](#)). Meanwhile, many types of finds, including animal bones, timber and ceramics, are potentially traceable to their areas of origin, although no isotopic analysis on animal bone has, as yet, been carried out in the area.

Medieval Perth was connected to trading networks which stretched across the North Sea and beyond. Ceramics from England, the Low Countries, France and parts of Germany were found during the Perth High Street excavations (D Hall et al [2012](#)). Finds of fig seeds and walnut shells in Perth provide reminders of links with the Mediterranean (Fraser and Smith [2011](#), 77). Recent decades have seen increasingly scholarly interest in the connections between Scotland and the wider world, but more detailed mapping and analysis of these links could be undertaken (Fleming and Mason [2019](#)).

There is a great need for more research into the trading and transport networks within Perth and Kinross. The bulk of trade was probably conducted in legally recognised market places, to which goods had to be brought from mostly rural production sites. Similarly major religious houses must have had networks connecting their granges, and indeed any appropriated parishes where teinds were paid in kind, with the main monastic centre. The networks through which royal and aristocratic centres were supplied also deserve further study. The large assemblages of medieval animal bones which survive from Perth and Kinross provide one possible way of beginning to identify these often overlooked connections within the region.

Coinage provides another window onto economic activity. While Scottish sites tend not to produce large coin assemblages, there have been a significant number of individual finds – both excavated and metal detected. Even badly stratified or poorly provenanced coins can tell us a great deal about trading links, the effects of inflation and debasement of coinage, and wider economic disruption in society. Coins were also sometimes used in ritual and symbolic ways, a topic which has received a degree of local study (M Hall [2012](#); [2016](#)).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.46: Undertaking further study of the relationship between urban settlements and rural production sites in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.47: Linking physical and written evidence to enhance understanding of rural trading activity.

PKARF Agenda 7.48: Considering the impact of international trade on the burgh of Perth and the wider region.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.91: How significant was international trade in the economy of Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.92: What do coin assemblages suggest about trading networks and economic change?

PKARF Qu 7.93: How did the network of rural fairs and markets operate?

PKARF Qu 7.94: What were the networks connecting urban settlements with rural production sites?

PKARF Qu 7.95: How did religious institutions affect the wider economy?

PKARF Qu 7.96: How were different economic activities organised spatially in Perth and other urban settlements?

7.4.2 Food Processing and Storage

Much medieval food and drink underwent significant processing. This was partly to ensure preservation, as well as for reasons of taste and nutrition. Food production and processing made up a large proportion of the medieval economy in Perth and Kinross, and is well evidenced in both the written and archaeological record.

Cereals were a key part of the medieval diet in Perth and Kinross, and often went through a number of different processes in their journey to the table. There is evidence for a considerable number of watermills in medieval Perth and Kinross. The main mill lade, and related features, in the burgh of Perth have been surveyed, although more research into this aspect of the burgh would be desirable (Barton and Perry [2011](#)). Across the wider region medieval mills have not received the attention they deserve.

As mills often leave both documentary evidence and significant traces in the landscape, this is a topic which should be further investigated. It seems likely that many mills first recorded in the post-medieval period had earlier origins, but further research is required to confirm this assumption.

Several medieval corn-drying kilns have been discovered in Perth and Kinross, including those recently excavated at [Peterhead Enclosure](#) near Auchterarder (MPK1287; Dingwall 2019). These appear to have been in use until the improvement period, another reminder of continuity between medieval and post-medieval landscapes and industries. Urban evidence for a medieval grain-drying or malting kiln was excavated at [Canal Street](#) in the 1980s (MPK3376; Coleman 1997). This was located near to a clay-lined pit, which appears to have served as a coble for preparing barley for malting. Medieval written evidence also supports the theory of malting in the Canal Street area. Grain-drying or malting kilns were likewise found at [Mill Street](#) in Perth, where they may have been deliberately sited near the water (MPK3359; Bowler et al 1996). Malt kilns and cobles are features commonly mentioned in property records, and interdisciplinary approaches may well prove helpful in identifying possible locations for this industry.



Oven found west of Curfew Row, Perth High Street © David P. Bowler

Another relatively well-documented urban industry is baking. Although the Perth baxters' guild minutes only survive from the 17th century onwards, there is considerable evidence about bakers in charters

and other medieval legal documents. A probable medieval bakery was identified on Kirk Close in Perth (Coleman and Smith 2005, 307). The number of excavated medieval ovens in Perth is lower than one might expect from the written evidence. In theory all burgesses were entitled to have an oven on their premises, quite apart from those used by professional bakers. It seems likely that a number of ovens may have been misidentified as ordinary hearths by previous excavators (Coleman and Smith 2005).

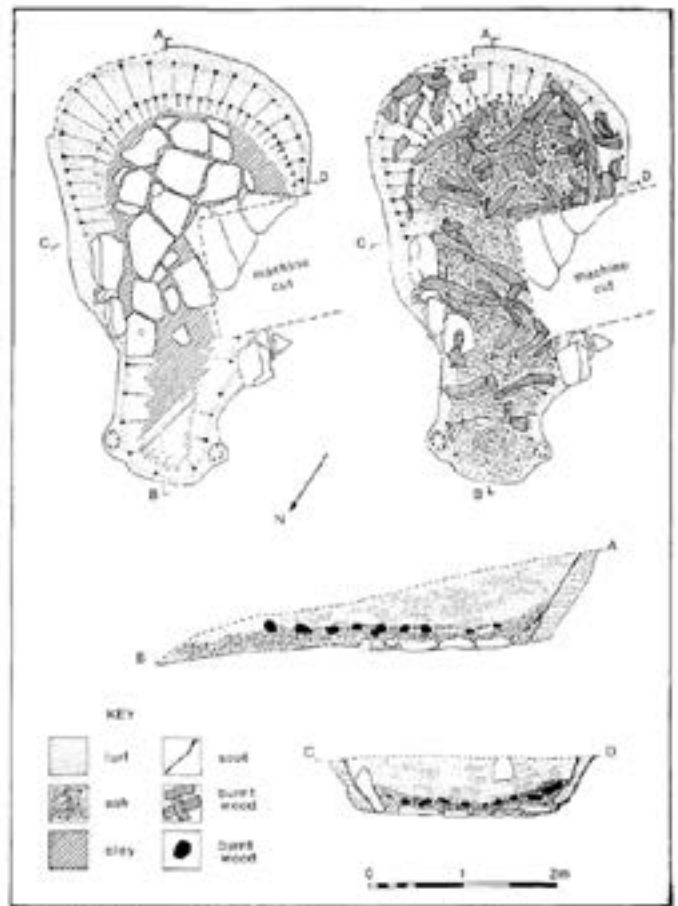


Figure 4 Capo, kiln A

Corn drying kiln from Capo © Annemarie Gibson

The burgh of Perth has provided extensive evidence for the activities of medieval fleshers or butchers (Hodgson et al 2011). Live animals were brought to Perth in large numbers for slaughter. However, we should not automatically assume that meat production was the most important factor in this trend. Many of the cattle, sheep and goats in Perth appear to have been killed primarily for their skins, with meat as a 'by-product' (Hodgson et al 2011, 44). Analysis of the age of animals at death and the types of bone found can provide clues as to the reasons for slaughter. Further research regarding this topic,

including comparative work on any collections of animal bones excavated outside of Perth, would be beneficial.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.49: Integrating physical and written evidence to understand the processing of foodstuffs in medieval Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.50: Undertaking detailed study of the locations and design of medieval mills and associated structures such as lades.

PKARF Agenda 7.51: Developing techniques to better identify medieval ovens.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.35: How significant a role did imported foodstuffs play in the diet of the residents of Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.97: How were foodstuffs processed in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.98: What evidence is there for the storage of large quantities of food (eg teind barns)?

PKARF Qu 7.99: What evidence is there for medieval mills in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.100: Why have so few ovens been excavated?

PKARF Qu 7.101: What evidence is there for medieval brewing?

PKARF Qu 7.102: Did food production and consumption contribute to local identities?

7.4.3 Textile Production

Both local and imported textiles were present in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages. There is written evidence for cloth being made in Perth as far back as the 12th century (Duncan [1975](#), 489–90). By the early 15th century, cloth was a significant export from the region, although it was not until the 16th century that it overtook the trade in raw wool. Most of the cloth produced in Perth and Kinross was probably made from wool, but there is also some evidence for the making of linen.

A number of different activities and trades were

involved in cloth production. Excavations at Perth High Street revealed hints about the initial processes by which fibres were prepared (Dransart et al [2012](#), 71). An item thought to have been used as a flax-breaking mallet and some iron spikes probably for preparing wool or vegetable fibres were found in Perth. It should be noted that hand carding is not thought to have been used in Scotland before the late 14th century. Further evidence about the initial preparation of textile fibres would be of great interest.

The creation of yarn through spinning seems to have taken place in and around medieval homes. This was probably mostly women's work, and has left little trace in the documentary record. Medieval spindle whorls have been uncovered from rural and urban sites, although the burgh of Perth has produced a particular concentration (Dransart et al [2012](#); Smith et al [2011](#), 129–34). Stone, bone and wood spindle whorls were all found in medieval contexts in Perth, as were a small number of wooden spindles. Drop spindles seem to have been the normal method for creating yarn in medieval Perth and Kinross. Any evidence for the presence of spinning wheels would be highly significant. It has been suggested that drop spindles both gave greater control regarding the twist in the yarn and, being portable, did not restrict the spinner to one place (Leadbeater [1976](#); Jones and Stallybrass [2000](#)).

In late medieval Scottish towns loom weaving was a largely male occupation. By the 16th century Perth's weavers were an incorporated trade, and for a time had representation on the burgh council (Paton [2010](#)). It is likely that different gender patterns regarding weaving existed earlier in the Middle Ages, and may have continued in upland Perth and Kinross into the post-medieval period. Surprisingly little physical evidence for medieval looms has survived from Perth, perhaps because components were reused (Dransart et al [2012](#), 73). It is thought that both more old-fashioned warp-weighted looms and newer horizontal looms were used in Scottish towns in the Middle Ages. Some relatively small finds from Perth provide evidence for warp-weighted looms, including several pin-beaters and a sword-beater, with both tools being used to beat the weft while weaving on a warp-weighted loom (Dransart et al [2012](#)). Textiles from Perth High Street have also

provided evidence for tablet weaving, which was generally used to make narrow bands of decoration (Dransart et al [2012](#), 43–6). Further interdisciplinary research into weaving in medieval Perth and Kinross, using evidence from extant textiles, other small finds and written records should be a priority.

The use of dye in medieval Perth and Kinross is another topic for research. In 1979 dye analysis was undertaken on a selection of textiles excavated on Perth High Street (Dransart et al [2012](#), 12–4). A significant proportion of the textiles were found to be undyed and to have had very little finishing, which is indicative of plainer and cheaper cloth. However, others had been dyed, often with madder. It is likely that dyeing took place on the outskirts of settlements. Interdisciplinary research, including the study of property records, may help to locate sites where dyeing took place. An interdisciplinary approach may also help us understand where cloth was finished, and in particular where fulling took place, an activity that might be expected to leave a degree of archaeological evidence.

Significant evidence for sewing and tailoring has been found in Perth. Shears, scissors and needles, both metal and bone, were discovered during the Perth High Street excavations (Dransart et al [2012](#), 74–6). Written records indicate that both men and women sewed professionally in medieval Scotland. By the 16th century tailors had become one of Perth’s incorporated trades, and a proportion of the trade’s records have survived from this date (Perth and Kinross Archives, MS70). As with many activities in medieval Scotland, more understanding of sewing outside of urban contexts would be of considerable interest.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.52: Improving understanding of the initial preparation of textile fibres, and in particular how and where flax was processed.

PKARF Agenda 7.53: Researching the transition from warp-weighted to horizontal looms and the wider social consequences of this change in technology.

PKARF Agenda 7.54: Combining written and physical evidence in an effort to identify likely locations for dyeing and fulling.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.103: How were textile fibres initially prepared?

PKARF Qu 7.104: What evidence is there for the production of loom-woven textiles?

PKARF Qu 7.105: How common were horizontal looms in medieval Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.106: What evidence is there for non loom-woven textiles?

PKARF Qu 7.107: What can we discover about sewing in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.108: What can we discover about dyeing techniques and locations?

PKARF Qu 7.109: How were textiles used to furnish domestic interiors at various social levels?

7.4.4 Leather Working

The burgh of Perth was a significant centre for leatherworking. By the 1360s it already had a street known as ‘vico sellatorum’ or ‘Saddlers’ Street (Thomas and Bogdan [2012](#), 353). The modern road name Skinnergate also recalls the medieval leatherworking industry. Hides made from cattle skins were a major export from Perth from the beginning of the Scottish *Exchequer Rolls* in the 1320s through to the late 16th century. By the end of the Middle Ages both the shoemakers and the glovers were incorporated trades, and extensive records from these crafts survive from the 16th century onwards. Several skinners also appear in earlier property records from the burgh, and further work on these documents might prove beneficial.

The Perth High Street excavations confirmed extensive leatherworking in Perth, producing over 6,000 leather fragments (Thomas and Bogdan [2012](#), 145). A significant number of leather offcuts and scraps were recovered, which demonstrate that leatherworking was undertaken in the heart of the burgh. While shoemakers and glovers could work in the town centre, the more noxious activity of tanning seems to have taken place on the outskirts. There is written evidence for tanning on Curfew Row in the 1470s and post-medieval tanning pits have been excavated in this area (Cox et al [2007](#), 118).

Perth has provided exceptional evidence for leatherworking, yet leather goods were clearly made in other places in Perth and Kinross. There is written evidence for a shoemaker and tanner at Scone Abbey during the reign of David I (Thomas and Bogdan [2012](#), 353). The role of Scottish monastic estates in leather production is a question which deserves further research. Greater understanding of leatherworking in upland areas of Perth and Kinross should also be a research priority.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.55: Improving our understanding of leather working in the region outside of the burgh of Perth (eg in upland areas and on monastic estates).

PKARF Agenda 7.56: Using written and physical evidence to identify the sites of medieval tanneries.

PKARF Agenda 7.57: Undertaking further study on the extensive assemblage of leather items and scraps from the burgh of Perth.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.110: What evidence is there for leather production and the treatment of animal skins in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.111: What sites were used for tanning hides?

PKARF Qu 7.112: What can we learn from previously excavated leather items?

PKARF Qu 7.113: What does the range of leather products tell us about social stratification?

PKARF Qu 7.114: How did leather work alongside textile fabrics?

7.4.5 Metalworking

There are abundant assemblages of medieval metal objects for Perth and Kinross. Unsurprisingly, the burgh of Perth has produced particularly large numbers of metal artefacts, mostly of iron, copper alloy and lead. Some items were probably imported, but many were made locally. By the 16th century the hammermen, metal workers who used hammers, were one of Perth's incorporated trades. Relatively detailed records of the trade survive from the 1510s onwards, part of which have been published

(Hunt [1889](#)).

Archaeological investigation has produced physical evidence for metalworking within the burgh of Perth. Signs of medieval iron-working were found at Meal Vennel in Perth (Cox et al [1997](#), 742). The Perth High Street excavations revealed evidence for medieval casting of ornamental metal items, probably lead and copper alloys, and repairs to larger metal objects (Goodall [2012](#), 89). Meanwhile, a stone mould for casting penannular brooches was discovered during a watching brief on Perth's Skinnergate (Smith et al [2011](#), 135–7). There is also possible evidence for smelting or refining metals in the backlands at Perth Theatre (MPK20120; C Fyles pers comm).

Relatively few items made from precious metals have been excavated in Perth, presumably a sign of their rarity and value to contemporaries. A group of fused copper-alloy brooches, and ring-casting moulds, were recovered at [80–86 High Street](#) (MPK5767; Moloney and Coleman [1997](#)). Cupellation tiles from the House of Fraser site on [King Edward Street](#) in Perth are also probably related to precious metalworking (MPK3360; Bowler et al [1996](#)). Any further evidence for the working of gold or silver would be of considerable interest.

Interestingly, the Perth hammermen's guild also included metalworkers based in Dunkeld. Thus far, very little archaeological evidence of metalworking has been found at Dunkeld, although half of a sandstone mould for making lead spindle whorls was discovered in the area (MPK2461; Perth Museum accession 119; Hall [2004](#), 48). Metal-detecting near [Dunkeld Cathedral](#) also turned up an interesting lead spindle whorl converted from a 13th-century Papal bulla (MPK12698; Perth Museum accession 1999.65). This item both hints at domestic reuse and refashioning of metal objects, and at a potentially amuletic significance (Hall [2004](#), 48).

Raw materials for metalworking were often imported to Scotland, and there is evidence for this in the medieval customs records for Perth. However, at least some iron was produced in the Middle Ages from bog deposits in Perth and Kinross. Medieval bloomeries, a basic type of smelter, have been excavated on Rannoch Moor (Aitken [1970](#); Reid [1984](#); Photos-Jones and Atkinson [1999](#)). Written evidence suggests that the 16th century saw efforts to expand the mining of

metal ores in the region, including the prospecting of new sites between ‘the wattir of Tay and the Sherefdome of Orkney’ (Cochran-Patrick [1878](#), 5). Research in the 1980s provided an initial overview of some of the sources of raw materials used by Scottish metal workers (Spearman [1988b](#)). However, further interdisciplinary investigation, using landscape surveys, scientific analysis and written records, may help us discover more about the origins of the raw materials for metalwork in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.58: Identifying evidence for metalworking in places other than the burgh of Perth.

PKARF Agenda 7.59: Undertaking further research into the sources of raw materials for metalworking.

PKARF Agenda 7.60: Studying the evidence for the working of precious metals in the region.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.115: What evidence is there for medieval metalworking in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.116: Were metal items made in Perth and Kinross used in international trade networks?

PKARF Qu 7.117: Where were the raw materials for metalworking sourced?

PKARF Qu 7.118: What were the main types of metal objects being produced?

PKARF Qu 7.119: What evidence is there for working with high-value metals (eg gold and silver)?

PKARF Qu 7.120: What was the status of metalworkers?

7.4.6 Pottery

Pottery is an important source of evidence for medieval Perth and Kinross. It is found in abundance in urban areas and is also well-represented on many rural sites. Fieldwalking has been relatively productive of medieval pottery, probably having been spread on the fields with other waste such as manure.

At the beginning of the medieval period Perth and

Kinross was heavily dependent on imported pottery from England and Continental Europe. A local redware industry appears to have developed in the 12th century. However, imports remained significant for some time. Many of the large assemblages of medieval ceramics from Perth and Kinross have been intensively studied, and provide invaluable insights into local and international trade, as well as often giving evidence of local industries (D Hall [1996](#); [1998](#); M Hall et al [2012](#)). Scientific techniques form an important part of research into medieval ceramics and have been used on many of the finds from Perth and Kinross. For example, ICPMS analysis of clay fabrics has helped identify probable clay sources, while radiocarbon dating has been used on organic residues on sherds (M Hall et al [2005](#)).



Medieval pottery jugs from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

There are currently no known ceramic kiln sites in Perth and Kinross, although scientific analysis of ceramics indicate that they must have existed in the area (Haggarty et al [2011](#)). It has been argued that the religious orders may have helped establish the local ceramic industry, partly through their system of granges (D Hall [2006a](#)). Ceramic production would leave significant remains with wasters and kiln furniture tending not to travel far. Targeted fieldwalking guided by clay sourcing and supplemented by geophysical survey could be very productive, and the Carse of Gowrie, with its known clay sources, would be a promising area for this type of investigation (D Hall pers comm). A fieldwalkers’ guide to pottery, kiln waste and kiln furniture could be of great assistance in the ongoing search for ceramic production sites.



Medieval potter horn from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

The quantity of medieval pottery excavated in Perth and Kinross poses significant challenges regarding storage and preservation. Excavations can produce literally tonnes of ceramics. Preservation of all these items would overwhelm existing museum storage. A process of selection is therefore inevitable. However, historic assemblages of pottery have been found to produce important data and it is likely that as scientific techniques develop even more information will be discoverable from ceramics. There is therefore a need for informed conversations about priorities for preservation and storage, and the relationship with existing legal mechanisms for allocating assemblages.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.61: Developing a regional strategy for curating large pottery assemblages.

PKARF Agenda 7.62: Encouraging more widespread scientific analysis of ceramics.

PKARF Agenda 7.63: Having a programme of fieldwalking to try to identify possible medieval kiln sites.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.121: Where were the kiln sites in Perth and Kinross? How can scientific clay sourcing, fieldwalking and field survey be used to identify them?

PKARF Qu 7.122: What were the networks of ceramic trade (both regional and international)?

PKARF Qu 7.123: What roles did religious institutions play in the production and distribution of pottery?

PKARF Qu 7.124: How can we best link traditional ceramic chronology to physical chronology (eg by radiocarbon dating food and fuel residues on sherds)?

PKARF Qu 7.125: How should we curate large pottery assemblages for future study?

PKARF Qu 7.126: What was the status of pottery makers?

7.4.7 Timber and Woodworking

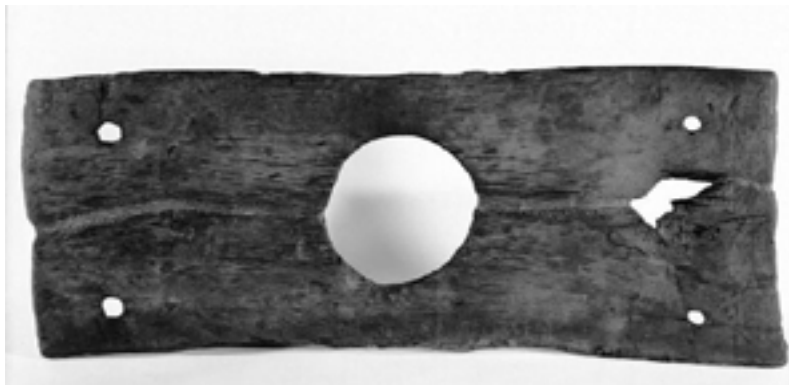
Finds from Perth and Kinross have contributed significantly to our understanding of woodworking in medieval Scotland. In particular, the waterlogged soils of Perth have preserved an extraordinary range of wooden artefacts, including barrels, mugs, mallets, furniture fragments, building components and even a privy seat. Numerous lathe-turned objects, such as bowls, plates and a candlestick, were found during the Perth High Street excavations (Curteis et al [2012](#)). Staved items were also common. There is evidence of barrels, buckets, tubs, tankards and porringers having been made from oak staves and bound with hoops. It is thought that for much of the Middle Ages the hoops in Scotland were mostly made from organic materials. Examples of the use of iron hoops in medieval Perth and Kinross would be of considerable interest. Also discovered on Perth High Street were many hewn items, including a trough, platters, shovels and two strainers or skimmers (Curteis et al [2012](#)).



Medieval wooden pot and lid from Perth © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Some of these wooden items were imported. For example, analysis of staves from a 12th-century cask, which had been reused as a well lining on Perth High Street, showed that they were probably from a French wine barrel (Crone [2005](#)). Several imported wine barrels have been discovered in Scotland and their distribution was studied in the 1980s (Morris [1984](#)). Meanwhile, analysis of the extraordinary carved wood panels from a church screen preserved in Perth Museum revealed that the wood had been imported from the Baltic, and perhaps carved in that region as well (Crone et al [2000](#)).

However, a significant proportion of the wood items excavated in Perth seem to have been made locally (Curteis et al [2012](#)). Offcuts and waste from lathe turning were found during the Perth High Street excavations. Unfortunately, the creation of smaller wooden objects has only left a limited trace in the written record. As preservation of buried wooden items also relies on specific conditions, the objects discovered in Perth are of considerable importance in understanding the evolution of woodworking in medieval Scotland.



Preserved wood 'toilet seat' from Perth High Street
© Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Historic documentation for the timber used in large-scale building projects occasionally survives. For example, there is written evidence that timber from the Black Wood of Rannoch was used to construct a new roof for the Carmelite friary at Perth and for work on the bridge at Dunkeld (D Hall pers comm). Indeed, the *Rentale Dunkeldense* contains details of the transport of timber across Loch Rannoch and then by cart to Dunkeld and Perth (Hannay [1915](#)).

Dendrochronological analysis of the pine 'lang garret' roof at [Castle Menzies](#) dated it to 1572 and

indicated it was probably built from Rannoch pine (MPK1054; Mills et al [2017](#)). The trees from which it was built started life in the late 15th century, suggesting that there had been previous phases of exploitation of the woodland. While the Black Wood of Rannoch is not the only ancient woodland of interest in the area, it has thus far received the most attention (Lindsay [1974](#); Gilbert [1979](#); Mills [2010](#); Mills et al [2017](#)). It is evident from the archaeological wood recovered from Perth that a diverse range of woodland resources were being exploited in the region during the Middle Ages.

Boat Building

There is a need for more research into boat building in medieval Scotland, including Perth and Kinross. Relatively few physical remains have been found from medieval shipping anywhere in the country. However, excavations in Perth have produced some boat fragments (Martin and Bogdan [2012](#)). These include frames, lengths of clinker planking, an oarport cover and tholes, pins on which oars pivot while rowing. The Perth oar cover is thought to be from a more substantial seagoing ship, which was largely reliant on sails (Martin and Bogdan [2012](#), 322). The tholes probably relate to smaller craft, and it has been suggested that a 13th-century upright thole may relate to a local ferry. In general, the boat fragments from Perth show similarities with finds from Scandinavia.

The extent to which boats were constructed locally is unclear. It has been suggested that some of the metal finds from Perth imply local boat building (Martin and Bogdan [2012](#), 317). By the late Middle Ages, the Scottish government was actively seeking to encourage boat building in Scotland. In 1471 the Scottish Parliament ordered that lords and burghs should 'make or get ships' and smaller boats for trade and fishing. Further documentary research may further our understanding of boats and their construction in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Evidence of medieval boats can be found in unexpected places. For example, the oar cover from Perth was in a midden. Timbers from boats can also be reused in buildings. A number of the boat remains from Perth required careful study to properly identify them. Excavators' ability 'to recognise boat finds' and 'the availability of adequate techniques to record

and preserve them' may well be key to progressing research in this area (Martin and Bogdan [2012](#), 318).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.64: Studying the physical evidence for small-scale woodworking both in the burgh of Perth and across the wider region.

PKARF Agenda 7.65: Enhancing our understanding of the medieval timber industry in Perth and Kinross through written records and dendrochronology.

PKARF Agenda 7.66: Ensuring that excavators have the requisite knowledge to recognise finds associated with medieval boats.

PKARF Agenda 7.67: Undertaking further interdisciplinary research into the types of boat used in medieval Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.127: What are the physical and documentary traces of the timber and woodworking industry?

PKARF Qu 7.128: What evidence can be gained from timbers in standing and excavated buildings?

PKARF Qu 7.129: To what extent was imported timber used?

PKARF Qu 7.130: Is there evidence of environmental change impacting the use of timber?

PKARF Qu 7.131: How can physical and written evidence develop our understanding of boat building in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.132: How were seagoing vessels constructed in the region?

PKARF Qu 7.133: What evidence is there for the construction of small craft in Perth and Kinross?

7.5 Religion and Ritual

7.5.1 Churches and Chapels

The centuries after the Scottish Reformation of 1560 saw widespread demolition and remodelling of medieval religious buildings. Yet recent research suggests that more remains from pre-Reformation churches may survive than previously thought, although careful study is often required to identify

the 'underlying presence of medieval fabric' (Fawcett et al [2010](#)). The physical remains of medieval churches in Perth and Kinross vary considerably in terms of size, design and preservation. They span everything from the imposing buildings of [Dunkeld Cathedral](#) (MPK2445) to fragments of masonry from small 'lost' chapels (RCAHMS [1994](#), 124–5). Most of the more impressive examples were recorded by MacGibbon and Ross at the end of the 19th century; their volumes provide a helpful guide as to their appearance and preservation at that time (MacGibbon and Ross [1896–7](#)). The history and architecture of over 60 of the region's parish churches were researched for the *Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches* (Fawcett et al [2009](#)). However, only a small number of churches and chapels have seen excavation or detailed scientific study.



Dunkeld Cathedral © James Denham (CC BY-SA)

A significant proportion of the medieval churches in Perth and Kinross still serve a religious purpose, though often greatly altered. Others are ruined but stand adjacent to later places of worship. Financial pressures and declining congregations mean that the future of many current places of worship is uncertain. Thoroughly researching and recording these sites before any major alterations are undertaken must be a priority. Particular attention should be paid to church interiors, which are often largely removed when significant alterations in use take place. Previous repairs and conservation of churches in Perth and Kinross have shown that sometimes relatively unprepossessing buildings can reveal unexpected finds. For example, in the 1880s a medieval sacrament house was discovered

under the floor of the mainly post-medieval parish church at [Bendochy](#) (MPK5236; Fawcett et al [2009](#)). Meanwhile, in the 2000s early medieval cross-slabs were excavated inside the largely post-Reformation church at [Dull](#) (MPK1015; Will and Reid [2003](#)). Many churches which appear to be of mostly 18th and 19th-century construction incorporate much older fragments, and care should therefore be taken during any alterations or conservation. The rising number of derelict churches in the region is concerning, and the challenges and opportunities this situation creates could perhaps be further discussed by the heritage sector and wider Scottish society.

During the Middle Ages what is now Perth and Kinross was split between several dioceses, meaning that written references to religious activity occur in a diverse range of archives and publications. However, much of the region fell within the diocese of Dunkeld. The administrative and religious headquarters of the diocese at Dunkeld Cathedral deserves more detailed archaeological investigation. Watching briefs in 1994 and 2000 uncovered several medieval remains, including sections of wall and a cobbled road (Historic Environment Scotland [2004a](#)). Geophysical survey in the 2010s revealed to the south-west of the cathedral signs of what may have been the medieval bishop's palace and chanonry, as well as possible early medieval monastic remains (O'Grady [2014](#)). Further study could greatly enhance our understanding of the evolution of a major cathedral influenced by both Gaelic and Lowland culture. Mention should also be made of the medieval murals which survive in the former consistory court room at Dunkeld Cathedral. Surprisingly limited research has been undertaken regarding this extraordinary example of pre-Reformation religious art.

One of the most studied churches in Perth and Kinross is the burgh [church of St John the Baptist](#) (MPK3498) in Perth. Both the building itself and its environs have been repeatedly investigated in response to repairs and development (Perry [1989](#); Fyles et al [2005](#)). This process of occasional intervention is likely to continue. While much has been discovered about St John's Kirk through both physical and desk-based research, many gaps in our knowledge remain. Further understanding of the evolution of St John's before the 15th century is needed, as is work on the extent and development of the surrounding

burial ground. In general, more research linking the physical investigation of the site with wider historical analyses of the social and religious uses of the church and its setting would be desirable (M Hall [2002](#); [2005a](#); [2010](#)). There has also been surprisingly little dendrochronological investigation of the church's historic timberwork.



St John the Baptist Church © David Dixon (CC BY-SA)

Medieval churches are likely to be a key resource for the development of dendrochronology in Perth and Kinross. Recently, the South East Scotland Oak Dendrochronology project highlighted the potential of Scotland's pre-Reformation churches as a source of medieval tree-ring samples (C Mills pers comm). It is possible that native timber was used more extensively in Perth and Kinross, especially in areas distant from ports, than in Scotland south of the Forth. If so, the area's medieval churches could be significant in the development of long regional native tree-ring reference chronologies.

More detailed study of stonework, including the recording of mason's marks, would be desirable. Some unusually early stone church towers survive in the region, including the free-standing circular bell tower at [Abernethy](#) (MPK3066) and the rectangular Romanesque tower at [Muthill](#) (MPK726). The old parish church at Muthill has received surprisingly little study, despite having a nationally important tower and extensive remains from a 15th-century nave (Historic Environment Scotland [2005b](#)).

Detailed research at Muthill should be a priority. Further investigation at [St Serf's Church](#) (MPK1999) in Dunning would also be of interest, and could follow up the recent advances made by Glasgow University's SERF Project. The tower at St Serf's has some similarities with that at Muthill, although the main church building is largely 19th century (Historic Environment Scotland [2004b](#)).



Circular bell tower at Abernethy © James Denham (CC BY-SA)



Dunning church tower © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

In many instances, the wider surroundings of churches deserve more investigation. With a few notable exceptions, such as the recent archaeological work at Forteviot, research has tended to focus on the buildings themselves, rather than the graveyards and other structures around them (Campbell and Driscoll [2020](#)). At many of the medieval churches in Perth and Kinross, we have a poor understanding of the delineation of sacred space, the relationship between the boundaries of the current churchyards and former enclosures, and the presence of additional focal points for religious devotion, such as crosses, wells and chapels. We also know little about the nature of accommodation for the clergy, which may or may not have been in the vicinity of the church, and the interaction between holy ground and the wider settlement. Such broader investigation could prove pivotal to comprehending the development of the region's ecclesiastical sites, and reveal overlooked remains of early religious buildings. In particular, the use of written records, in conjunction with archaeological survey and landscape analysis, might provide new insights into the character of medieval churches and their landscape settings.

Finally, the importance of investigating smaller religious sites, below the level of parish churches, should be stressed. Numerous medieval chapels maintained by great families and local communities formerly existed in Perth and Kinross. Thus far these sites have not received systematic study. One of the best-preserved chapels in the region is that of the Murray family at [Tullibardine](#), which has exceptional potential for the study of medieval construction techniques and religious interiors (MPK1430; Historic Environment Scotland [2020a](#)). Innerpefferay Chapel might also be worthy of investigation, potentially providing insights into the relationship between secular elites and the construction of ecclesiastical buildings. An interdisciplinary survey of the region's chapels, including physical evidence and consultation of written sources, is desirable. Discovering how religious life was served at a sub-parochial level has the potential to cast new light on medieval piety and the identities and activities of local communities. It is important to recognise that even relatively small religious institutions served as local centres, with an impact beyond Christian worship, and have sometimes left invaluable records of land management. Religious institutions, both

large and small, hold a significance beyond the history of faith, and potentially provide a key entry point into understanding medieval Perth and Kinross (M. Brown pers comm).



Murray family chapel at Tullybardine © Rosser 1954 (CC BY-SA)

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.68: Detailed recording of the interiors and exteriors of churches at risk of dereliction or change of use.

PKARF Agenda 7.69: Systematic research into the locations and remains of the region's chapels and small religious institutions.

PKARF Agenda 7.70: More detailed physical study of notable sites such as Dunkeld, Muthill and Dunning.

PKARF Agenda 7.71: Further investigation of the surroundings of churches.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.134: How does the design of churches and chapels in Perth and Kinross evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.136: To what extent can we identify the locations of smaller churches and chapels?

PKARF Qu 7.137: Can rural churches help us identify otherwise lost medieval settlements?

PKARF Qu 7.138: To what extent are there remains of medieval churches embedded within, beneath or beside later structures?

PKARF Qu 7.139: What can we discover about the surroundings of medieval churches?

PKARF Qu 7.140: What can we learn about the workers who constructed medieval churches?

PKARF Qu 7.141: How do physical remains of churches compare with the documentary evidence of the parish system?

PKARF Qu 7.142: What physical and written evidence is there for medieval church furnishings in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.143: How can we best record and understand architectural and decorative fragments which have been removed from their original location?

PKARF Qu 7.144: What evidence is there for devotion to particular saints' cults?

PKARF Qu 7.145: Is there evidence for an increased interest in Marian devotion and Christocentric piety towards the end of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.146: To what extent is there evidence for an expansion in religious provision during the 15th and early 16th centuries?

PKARF Qu 7.147: How does material culture help us understand the diverse uses of religious spaces?

PKARF Qu 7.148: To what extent can material culture help us map the expression of heterodox practices of belief?

PKARF Qu 7.149: What physical evidence is there for the impact of the Reformation?

PKARF Qu 7.150: What does material culture tell us about continuity in religious practices and belief before and after the Reformation?

7.5.2 Monastic Sites

Monasteries and friaries are among the more intensively studied medieval institutions in Perth and Kinross – a pattern that is common across Scotland (Gilchrist 2020). Twelve religious houses are believed to have existed in the region. These encompassed five houses of Augustinian canons, a community of Augustinian canonesses, a Carthusian monastery, a Cistercian monastery, a female Cistercian community and three friaries. A large proportion of these sites

have been at least partly excavated. Indeed, recent excavations at Perth [Whitefriars](#) have located virtually the entire friary layout and the southern limit of the complex (MPK3515; D. Hall [2020b](#) and [forthcoming](#)). Meanwhile, archaeological investigation at [Elcho Priory](#) in the late 20th century significantly furthered our understanding of Scottish female religious houses (MPK3482; Reid and Lye [1988](#)). However, more research could still be undertaken.

Significant sites which have had little archaeological intervention include the former Augustinian priory on [Loch Tay](#) (MPK400), located on a heavily wooded island. In Perth, the [Franciscan friary](#) (MPK3427) is largely covered by a later cemetery, while [St Leonard's Priory](#) (MPK3521) may lie under the tracks approaching Perth railway station. Finally the [Charterhouse](#) (MPK3394) probably occupied the site of the present King James VI Hospital and a sizeable area to the south. The Charterhouse's role as a royal burial site has attracted considerable attention as James I, Joan Beaufort and Margaret Tudor were all interred there. Yet the site is also of great interest as the only Carthusian monastery established in medieval Scotland.

Further investigation would be desirable at some of the partially excavated sites, such as the major Cistercian centre at [Coupar Angus Abbey](#) (MPK5328) or the [Dominican friary](#) (MPK3517) in Perth. Greater study of the setting of Elcho Priory might also be worthwhile, as the area holds considerable potential for enhancing our understanding of how a women's Cistercian house altered the surrounding landscape. Given the extensive written records associated with many of the monastic sites in Perth and Kinross, interdisciplinary approaches are likely to prove informative. The religious houses offer a valuable documented interface between local populations and international religious networks. For example, donations recorded in the Perth Charterhouse papers reveal much about the devotional preferences of benefactors, and the variety of churches, chapels and revenues linked to the Carthusians (L Dean pers comm). Recent doctoral research on Coupar Angus Abbey has similarly highlighted the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches (Hodgson [2016](#)).



Scone Abbey with the Stone of Destiny © Shadowgate (CC BY)

Monastic sites in Perth were clearly influenced by wider European traditions regarding the layout of religious houses. However, a greater understanding of local variations of the standard plan would be desirable. More consideration of how earlier religious occupation of a site may have shaped later medieval usage would also be of interest. The relationship between 12th- and 13th-century monasteries and earlier religious activity has been touched on through the recent Culdee Archaeology Project, considerably improving our understanding of the evolution of [St Serf's Priory](#) at Lochleven (MPK3030; O'Grady [2017](#)). Yet related considerations may be applicable to other sites. While some of the new monastic foundations of the 12th and 13th century were on 'greenfield' sites, many were established in places with existing religious associations – a past which has often been obscured by the more substantial buildings and extensive records of later institutions.

Further study of the numerous finds from the region's monastic sites and their environs would be helpful. In particular, the possibilities of items discovered by metal-detecting should not be overlooked. For example, a significant broken silver crucifix, probably dating from the 12th or 13th century and perhaps belonging to a member of St Serf's Priory, was recovered near Lochleven (Perth Museum 2015.103; Gilchrist [2020](#), 115–7; Hall [2021](#), 485–6). Even small finds with limited context can often help flesh out the nature of medieval practices and beliefs.

HER/ Canmore ID	NGR	Religious House	Order	Century of Official Foundation	Archaeological Investigation
MPK3088/ 27936	NO 1903 1644	Abernethy Priory	Augustinian (canons)	13th Century	Rescue excavation on edge of monastic enclosure (Fyles 2008).
MPK5328/ 30556	NO 2243 3985	Coupar Angus Abbey	Cistercian (monks)	12th Century	Geophysical survey (Morris 2012) and limited rescue excavation (O'Sullivan et al 1995).
MPK3482/ 28389	NO 1414 2176	Elcho Priory	Cistercian (nuns)	13th Century	Excavations in 1960s and 1970s (Reid and Lye 1988).
MPK1510/ 26164	NN 9535 2260	Inchaffray Abbey	Augustinian (canons)	13th Century	Geophysical survey and rescue excavation (Ewart et al 1996).
MPK400/ 24932	NN 7664 4537	Priory Island, Loch Tay	Augustinian (canons)	12th Century	Limited underwater survey (Dixon et al 2007).
MPK3517/ 28428	NO 1171 2387	Blackfriars, Perth	Dominican (friars)	13th Century	Part of east range and cemetery excavated in 1980s (Bowler et al 1995).
MPK3394/ 28297	NO 1152 2340	Charterhouse, Perth	Carthusian (monks)	15th Century	Geophysical survey on part of site (Fawcett and Hall 2005).
MPK3427/ 28331	NO 1196 2332	Greyfriars, Perth	Observant Franciscan (friars)	15th Century	Some investigation along boundary of site (Cachart 1997).
MPK3515/ 28425	NO 1084 2379	Whitefriars, Perth	Carmelite (friars)	13th Century	Rescue excavation (Hall 2020).
MPK3521/ 28432	NO 1124 2293	St Leonard's Priory, Perth	Augustinian (canonesses)	13th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK3030/ 27872	NO 1615 0026	St Serf's Priory	Augustinian (canons)	12th Century	Limited excavation (O'Grady 2017).
MPK3308/ 28192	NO 1148 2655	Scone Abbey	Augustinian (canons)	12th Century	Geophysical survey and small-scale excavation of abbey church and moothill (O'Grady 2018).

Table 7.7 Friaries and Monastic Sites in Perth and Kinross (D Hall [2006a](#); McNeill and MacQueen [1996](#)).

Many questions also remain about the ending of medieval monastic life in Perth and Kinross. Traditionally, the 15th and early 16th centuries have been presented as a period of monastic decline, a time when religious houses became increasingly 'corrupt' and communal life was eroded. Yet this version of events has increasingly been challenged (Dilworth [1995](#); Rhodes [2019](#)). The archaeological record could bring important new perspectives to this debate. Similarly, scholarly discussions about the impact of the Reformation, and the extent of iconoclasm and demolition which accompanied religious change, would also benefit from more careful consideration of the material evidence (Spicer [2003](#)). Perth's pivotal role in sparking the religious crisis of 1559, and the widespread Protestant activism in the area, makes this topic of particular regional importance. The extent of occupation of monastic sites after the Reformation, and especially the degree to which domestic and industrial buildings continued in use also deserves more research. Both documentary and archaeological evidence could shed light on this question; the records of the Perth Charterhouse and James VI Hospital are of particular value (L Dean pers comm).

Medieval monasteries were of course important economic centres, playing significant roles in agriculture, trade and industry. These activities shaped both the sites of the actual religious houses and their wider estates. Field surveys and documentary research has identified many likely monastic granges, mills, quarries and other industrial sites (D Hall [2006a](#)). Most have never been excavated, although there are a few with standing remains, such as the overgrown ruins at the former Cistercian grange at [Campsie Linn](#) (MPK3671; D Hall [2006a](#), 101). As granges often continued as farms into modern times, several have been significantly affected by ploughing and later development. However, there are many former granges, mills and other industrial properties where archaeological investigation would be desirable. Cropmark evidence suggests that the Augustinian grange at [Cambusmichael](#) (MPK5404) or the Cistercian grange at [Coupar Grange](#) (MPK6123) might prove interesting sites for excavation. Local residents also occasionally uncover probable medieval artefacts near these sites, like the stone bowl or font found in a garden at Coupar Grange (D Hall [2006a](#), 103). Such isolated items can be

overlooked, despite having the potential to tell us about medieval activities associated with these places (Hall [2010](#)).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.72: Improving understanding of the relationship between early medieval religious sites and the monastic foundations of the 12th century and later.

PKARF Agenda 7.73: Further research into the impact of religious orders on land use and management.

PKARF Agenda 7.74: Excavating granges and industrial sites associated with religious houses.

PKARF Agenda 7.75: Analysing physical evidence for the destruction and abandonment of monastic buildings during and after the Reformation.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.151: How does the design of monastic sites in Perth and Kinross evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.152: To what extent do monastic sites in Perth and Kinross follow wider national and European trends?

PKARF Qu 7.153: How can we best use the extensive written records from religious houses to understand their physical remains?

PKARF Qu 7.154: What approaches can we use to better understand the female religious houses in the region?

PKARF Qu 7.155: What can we discover about the residential and industrial buildings associated with religious houses?

PKARF Qu 7.156: What was the impact of religious orders on land use and management?

PKARF Qu 7.157: Is there physical evidence for a retreat from communal living towards the end of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.158: What evidence is there for the demolition and adaptation of religious houses in the 16th century?

7.5.3 Hospital and Poorhouses

A wide variety of religious institutions and individuals cared for the poor and sick in medieval Scotland, with hospitals established from the 12th century onwards. While medieval hospitals were sometimes intended to provide shelter to travellers, most in Perth and Kinross seem to have primarily supported poor, diseased or otherwise vulnerable people. Perth had an especially high concentration of hospitals, although these institutions were also established at [Dunkeld](#) (MPK5441), [Portmoak](#) (MPK9859), [Scone](#) (MPK11829) and [Scotlandwell](#) (MPK8536) (D Hall [2006b](#)).

A gazetteer of sites has been created as a result of the research on Scottish medieval hospitals (Hall and Cachart 1997). However, more work remains to be done. None of the sites in Perth and Kinross have been extensively excavated. Indeed, the precise location of several hospitals in the region remains a matter of debate. For example, while Perth's leper hospital is known to have been at [Potterhill](#) in the Bridgend area, the actual site has not yet been identified (MPK9856; Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 24). As hospitals were often on the fringes of medieval settlements, some of these sites may well become targeted for development – potentially providing valuable opportunities for archaeological investigation. Further interdisciplinary study of the relationship between hospitals and their surrounding communities, including connections with urban authorities and other ecclesiastical institutions, could also be of interest. Because of the role hospitals played in caring for the poor and infirm they have the potential to provide an important window into the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals in medieval Scotland, who are typically under-represented in written sources from the period.

HER/ Canmore ID	NGR	Hospital	Type	Century of Official Foundation	Archaeological Investigation
MPK9856/ 144863	NO 1240 2390	Leper Hospital, Perth	Leper	16th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK3449/ 28353	NO 1196 2350	St Anne, Perth	Poorhouse	15th Century	Limited excavations in St Ann's Lane – hospital not found (Bowler and Perry 2004 , 23–4).
MPK3406/ 28309	NO 1129 2375	St Catherine's, Perth	Poorhouse	16th Century	Remains possibly associated with hospital visible in 19th century (Fittis 1885 , 292–3).
MPK5441/ 27173	NO 0256 4262	St George's, Dunkeld	Poorhouse	16th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK11829/ 169285	NO 1193 2684	St John the Apostle, Scone	Unknown	13th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK3521/ 28432	NO 1124 2293	St Leonard, Perth	Unknown	12th Century	Unexcavated. Site assumed largely destroyed by Perth railway station (Bowler 2004 , 56).
MPK3486/ 28393	NO 1112 2169	St Mary Magdalene, Perth	Poorhouse	14th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK8536/ 27874	NO 1866 0154	St Mary, Scotlandwell	Poorhouse	13th Century	Unexcavated.
MPK3438/ 28342	NO 1143 2365	St Paul's, Perth	Poorhouse	15th Century	Well and human remains possibly associated with hospital uncovered in 19th century (Bowler and Perry 2004 , 23).
MPK9859/ 145493	NO 1825 0015	St Thomas, Portmoak	Poorhouse	12th Century	Unexcavated.

Table 8. Medieval Hospitals in Perth and Kinross (D Hall [2006b](#))

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.76: Further physical investigation of known hospital sites.

PKARF Agenda 7.77: Interdisciplinary research to try to clarify the exact location of 'lost' hospitals.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.159: How does the design of hospitals and poorhouses in Perth and Kinross evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.160: What was the relationship between hospitals and poorhouses and surrounding communities?

7.5.4 Wider Religious Landscapes

Religious activity in medieval Perth and Kinross was of course not restricted to ecclesiastical buildings. The wider landscape was marked by people's beliefs and rituals. Freestanding crosses were placed in significant locations, while a number of wells had religious associations, and even some trees, such as the [Fortingall yew](#) (MPK442), probably had religious significance. Interdisciplinary study is likely to prove key to understanding this wider religious landscape.

Crosses and wells are frequently mentioned in charters and written records, providing valuable insights about their location and meaning. Around 20 holy wells are currently listed in the Historic Environment Record for the region, but this is probably an underestimate of the number that existed in the Middle Ages. A combination of documentary research and place-name evidence could prove helpful in mapping the sites of lost crosses and wells.

Some wells are still readily identifiable in the landscape. For example, the main spring at [Scotlandwell](#) is perhaps where King Robert I sought to be cured from leprosy in 1329 (MPK11832; Perth and Kinross Council [2009](#)). Archaeological investigation of the area around medieval wells can prove productive. In the 1970s St [Magdalene's Well](#), which was associated with the site of the hospital at Hilton Hill near Perth was excavated; a cobbled area, a water stoup and a stone with an inscription were discovered (MPK3486; Bowler and Perry [2004](#)). Excavation at the holy well at [Inchadney](#), Kenmore produced an interesting body of votive offerings now

held in the National Museums Scotland, including many items from the post-medieval period (MPK362; Gillies [1938](#), 56–7; Stevenson [1988](#), 92; Hall [2016](#), 151). These later artefacts demonstrate a continuity of ritual practice even after the Reformation. To date, Inchadney and St Magdalene's Well are the only two holy wells in Perth and Kinross that have been excavated. There is considerable popular interest in sacred wells, but at present we lack a systematic study of these sites in Perth and Kinross.

The role of pilgrimage in medieval Perth and Kinross also deserves more detailed investigation. [Dunkeld Cathedral](#) had relics associated with St Columba, and Columba's shrine and crozier were focal points for veneration in the Middle Ages (MPK2445; Yeoman [1999](#), 85–7; Hall [2005a](#), 64–72). Meanwhile [Scone Abbey](#) had the head of St Fergus, which was visited by James IV in 1503 (MPK3308; Hall [2005a](#), 85–7). Pilgrims also travelled through the region to shrines further afield, such as [St Andrews](#), and even religious centres overseas. Reconstructing Scottish pilgrim routes is a challenging task, but a combination of written records and landscape study might further our understanding of faith and travel in the Middle Ages (Hall [2005a](#); Hall [2007](#); Hall and Spencer [2012](#)).

Similarly, much more research is required into church property, and how ecclesiastical ownership impacted on land and buildings. There has been some study of monastic estates in Perth and Kinross (Hodgson [2016](#)). However, research into the holdings of other types of ecclesiastical institutions and benefice holders, such as prebendaries, chaplains and parish priests, has been very limited. There is extensive and underused written evidence for the property owned and managed by a wide spectrum of clerics. Efforts to link this documentation to the physical evidence could prove highly revealing.

There were many different facets to medieval religion in Perth and Kinross. Despite the considerable attention that historians and archaeologists have paid to religious topics, there is still much more to research. Ritual and belief were woven into the lives of individuals and communities, sometimes in unorthodox ways (M Hall [2005b](#); [2007](#); [2011](#); [2021](#)). More investigation of the relationship between the policies of central ecclesiastical authorities and the material and written evidence for the practices and

attitudes of local communities should be a priority. One notable expression of popular religious identity was of course through drama. There is considerable written evidence for the Corpus Christi plays in Perth, which were financially supported by craft and trade incorporations (Hunt [1889](#)). The Corpus Christi play was a burgh-wide performance, and linked together the burgh's key religious sites with more secular spaces. Previous research into this major burgh festivity has noted that the Corpus Christi procession culminated at the 'playfield' at the end of the High Street (M Hall [2005a](#), 220–4). Further study of the playfield's location, and of how religious festivities reflected and influenced the wider social and religious topography of the burgh, could be of considerable value.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.78: Interdisciplinary study of the sites of sacred wells, crosses and other focal points for popular religious devotion.

PKARF Agenda 7.79: Further analysis of the evidence for pilgrimage in Perth and Kinross, including efforts to identify pilgrim routes.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.161: What evidence is there for pilgrimage in Perth and Kinross, inward and outward?

PKARF Qu 7.162: What evidence is there for crosses, sacred wells and other points of religious devotion outside of church buildings?

PKARF Qu 7.163: To what extent did religious institutions develop and maintain local infrastructure?

PKARF Qu 7.164: What can we learn about ecclesiastical property in the region, especially lands and rights held by non-monastic religious institutions and churchmen?

7.5.5 Religious Artefacts

Perth and Kinross has produced some exceptional medieval religious artefacts. Some are still displayed in modern churches, such as the extraordinary 15th-century brass candelabrum with an image of the Virgin and Child which hangs in [St John's Kirk](#), Perth (MPK3498; Hall [2010b](#)). This impressive example of late medieval metalworking is now owned by Perth

Museum who have loaned it to the church. Yet other items are still owned by religious institutions. Although it is likely that the most notable medieval artefacts held by the region's churches have been recorded, it is possible that some less obviously important objects have been overlooked. Further contact with churches about items in their care would be advisable. This is a task of some urgency because of the significant number of planned church closures.

Of course, many religious artefacts are in museums and archives, especially the collections of Perth Museum. Important religious items from the region are also in the care of the National Museums Scotland, which has the seal matrix for Perth's Dominican friary (accession NM47) and the amber seal of one of the canons at Inchaffray Abbey (accession A.1905.1178). It also has a rare candlestick linked to the church of St Constantine, Kinnoull (accession KJ22). Additionally, the Perth Psalter is in the National Library of Scotland (Caldwell [1982](#), 84; E55). Some items are also preserved in the British Museum, including the main seal matrix of Inchaffray Abbey (accession 1917.1110.1).



Perth Whitefriars seal matrix © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Numerous excavations in the region from the 19th century onwards have revealed objects with likely religious associations. For example, as far back as the 1860s a headless statue of a woman probably 'of ecclesiastical origin' was found at the former site of [St Catherine's Chapel](#) in Perth (MPK3406; Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 24). The recording of many of these early finds was often limited and their fate is frequently unclear. Further research into religious objects described by antiquarians and uncovered by early excavations could be of interest.

More recent excavations have of course provided considerable evidence regarding faith and material culture in Perth and Kinross. Unsurprisingly former ecclesiastical sites have produced a number of items with religious associations, such as the remarkable bronze hanging lamp from Elcho Priory (Reid and Lye 1988). Fragments of stained glass and the ceramic figurine have also been uncovered at [Blackfriars](#) in Perth (MPK3517; Bowler et al [1996](#)). However, a number of religious objects have been discovered at more secular sites. This is a reminder of the way in which religion and ritual was integrated into the daily life of many medieval communities. For instance, the Perth High Street excavations produced a pilgrim badge from St Andrews and a scallop shell adapted into a badge which was probably from Compostella. There were also three ampullae, two of which were associated with the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury and one was probably from the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Walsingham. Further finds included a jet cross and bead, perhaps from a rosary, and a seal matrix with symbols thought to represent the vault of Heaven (Hall and Spencer [2012](#)).



Dunkeld Cathedral seal © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Small religious items, such as badges, crucifixes and seal matrixes, can also be recovered by metal-detecting and fieldwalking. Meanwhile, various forms of stonework, including fonts or stoups, have sometimes been reused for other purposes, including as garden ornaments. Because of the extensive destruction of medieval religious items during and after the Reformation, even these poorly provenanced objects are important. At present much of the material evidence of medieval religious activity in Perth and Kinross is scattered across a range of locations and collections, with highly variable degrees of recording and care. A systematic survey of medieval religious items from Perth and Kinross, including photography and photogrammetry where possible, is arguably needed. Such a survey could provide a much more informed starting point for future research and conservation activities.



St Andrews pilgrim badge © Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.80: Compilation of an overview of the extant medieval religious artefacts from Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.81: Research into medieval religious artefacts which formerly existed in the region, both those recorded in medieval documents and described by antiquarians.

PKARF Agenda 7.82: Interdisciplinary study of the evidence for iconoclasm in Perth and Kinross.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.165: What religious objects survive in Perth and Kinross from the Middle Ages? Where did these items originate?

PKARF Qu 7.166: Were religious objects imported from outside the region?

PKARF Qu 7.167: What physical evidence is there of iconoclasm?

PKARF Qu 7.168: What physical evidence is there for the continuity of belief on either side of the Reformation watershed?

7.5.6 Burials

Most of the excavated medieval cemeteries in Perth and Kinross have come from urban communities. Such burial sites were typically heavily used, meaning that graves have often been disturbed or intercut. This poses challenges for excavators, and limits some of the sampling techniques which can be employed. The constraints of developer-led archaeology has also, at times, restricted approaches to excavation (D Hall pers comm). Some rural graveyards in Perth and Kinross are probably less overcrowded, and are likely to be similar to the cemetery excavated at [Ballumbie Parish Church](#), Angus (Hall and Cachart [2005](#); D Hall [2007](#)). However, many cemeteries of rural parish churches also show indications of being quite intensively used, and are probably have comparable problems to those of urban graveyards. It is possible that some non-parochial chapels might have less densely occupied burial grounds.

Burial practices in medieval Perth and Kinross appear to have conformed to customs found across Western Christendom. Burials were typically in sacred ground with the bodies laid out full length, though not necessarily aligned east to west. Yet unusual features have been found at some sites. For example, the [Carmelite friary](#) in Perth has produced intriguing timber-lined graves and burials with curious grave

goods; these perhaps relate to pilgrimage or signs of office (MPK3515; D Hall [1989](#); D Hall [2020](#); M Hall [2012](#)). More systematic study of grave goods associated with the burials of churchmen could perhaps be revealing.

Perth and Kinross has a number of impressive medieval funerary monuments. [Dunkeld Cathedral](#) (MPK2445) has a particularly notable collection of memorials. These include the tomb of Alexander Stewart, Wolf of Badenoch, which is of considerable significance given the rarity of extant medieval Scottish royal tombs, and the monument to Bishop Robert Cardeny (RCAHMS [1994](#), 124). Recent conservation work on Bishop Cardeny's tomb revealed previously hidden carving – a reminder of how detailed study of even relatively well-known memorials can provide new insights (Muir 2018). [Coupar Angus Church](#) (MPK4876) also houses fragments of medieval tombs from the nearby former [Cistercian abbey](#) (MPK5328). These include monuments to former abbots and two armoured effigies (RCAHMS [1994](#), 128). Greater conservation and study of the Coupar Angus monuments should be a priority.



Tomb of Alexander Stewart, Wolf of Badenoch, at Dunkeld Cathedral © HES

Perth Museum holds a figure from the 15th-century tomb of one of the Hays of Errol (accession 1990.169), which was formerly in Coupar Angus Abbey, before it was relocated to [Errol churchyard](#) (MPK6513). It seems likely that in the medieval and post-medieval period funerary monuments were more moveable than we have sometimes assumed. Another example of a relocated memorial in the region is the incised

tomb slab of a Perth Carthusian prior which was moved to [Tower of Lethendy](#) (MPK5508; Fisher and Greenhill [1972](#), 240–1). Medieval grave slabs can also be found in several parish churches in Perth and Kinross, such as [Aberdalgie](#) (MPK2176) and [Longforgan](#) (MPK5117) (Gifford [2007](#)). Although often removed from their original context, the remains of such memorials provide invaluable evidence for the piety, art, identity and clothing of medieval elites.

Recent decades have seen the development of new methodologies for recording Scottish graveyards through schemes such as the *Carved Stone Adviser Project* and ScARF's *Future Thinking on Carved Stones* (Foster et al 2016). However, despite such guidelines, many graveyards in Perth and Kinross have received limited study. Valuable progress recording graveyards was made by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) through the *Historic Churchyards Project* (2011–2013), the *Tay Landscape Partnership Project* (2014–2019), and conservation projects such as [Westown](#) (MPK4666), but there is much more left to do. While the majority of surviving memorials are post-medieval, there may well be a small proportion of overlooked medieval grave slabs and fragments from other monuments.

Inscriptions on gravestones are of considerable interest, providing an important record of literacy and cultural identity. In Perth and Kinross such inscriptions might give a window on the interaction between Highland and Lowland culture. The reuse of fragments of medieval tombs in non-religious settings should also be noted. For example, part of a medieval tomb with a Latin inscription can be seen in a rockery at Scone Palace (D Hall [2006a](#), 13; RCAHMS [1994](#), 124–7). Indeed, an audit of all the surviving sculptured stonework at Scone Palace would be advisable.

Previously, several graveyard surveys were carried out by local groups. Community archaeology might offer a productive way to record and identify sites. Between 2009 and 2011 PKHT carried out rapid condition surveys of historic churchyards in the ownership of the local authority, assessing and scoring 124 graveyards. The need for local authorities to manage risks associated with monument stability has introduced additional threats to memorials, beyond those already existing from ongoing issues

such as weathering and grass cutting (D Strachan pers comm). Greater discussion between heritage professionals and other interested parties about how best to study and preserve the funerary monuments of Perth and Kinross should be a priority. For a discussion of the analysis of human remains see [PKARF 7.3.3. Health and Mobility](#).

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.83: More extensive recording of historic graveyards and funerary monuments.

PKARF Agenda 7.84: Excavation of rural burial grounds when suitable opportunities arise.

PKARF Agenda 7.85: Specific study of the graves of churchmen and identification of any unusual burial practices.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.169: Are there unrecorded medieval burial grounds (eg associated with later churches)?

PKARF Qu 7.170: What types of medieval funerary monuments survive in Perth and Kinross? Are there any unrecorded grave markers?

PKARF Qu 7.171: How do burial and memorial customs for churchmen compare with wider society?

PKARF Qu 7.172: Is there evidence for different burial customs in Gaelic-speaking and Scots-speaking areas?

PKARF Qu 7.173: What can we learn from inscriptions on funerary monuments? Is there any evidence of the cultural interface between Gaelic and Scots (eg through personal names)?

PKARF Qu 7.174: What range of objects were placed with human burials?

7.6 Transport and Movement

Land Routes

Far more research is required into land routes in medieval Perth and Kinross. The region clearly had a network of roads and tracks, and medieval property documents frequently refer to roads within towns and connecting settlements. Unsurprisingly, there are extensive written records regarding the main routes in and out of the burgh of Perth (Perth and

Kinross Archives, B59 series). However, we also have documentation for the links between many smaller settlements. For example, there are 16th-century references to the roads linking quite small communities around Abernyte and Rossie (Perth and Kinross Archives, MS100/1/63). It is to be hoped that more research will be undertaken linking this wealth of written records to early maps, especially the work of Timothy Pont, place-names which can provide invaluable clues about features such as passes and bridges, and the physical evidence of the landscape.

It is likely that the nature of the roads varied considerably, with some capable of taking carts while others were probably little more than paths. Remains relating to medieval roads have been excavated in and around the burgh of Perth. For instance, part of a stone causeway or small bridge was discovered at [North Port](#) (MPK14989) and a section of paved roadway was identified near [Mill Street](#) (MPK3359; Cox et al [2007](#); Bowler et al [1996](#)). Sections of at least some roads seem to have been cobbled, while others were gravel, sand and mud.

When considering the nature of medieval roads, it should be remembered that a proportion were probably mainly intended for moving animals rather than people. Further research into drove roads in Perth and Kinross would be desirable. The relationship between the road network of the Middle Ages and earlier and later routes is also of interest. It is likely that Roman roads influenced medieval land routes in the region. Yet, it is also possible that some roads that have popularly been identified as Roman were actually medieval. For instance, the 'Roman' road discovered in the 1840s during the construction of Perth railway station may have been the medieval road to Edinburgh (Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 23). Small-scale archaeological excavation could prove beneficial in investigating proposed Roman roads that may actually be medieval, such as at [Strelitz Wood](#) near Coupar Angus (MPK3568; D Strachan pers comm).

Bridges, Fords and Ferries

Crossing points for rivers and lochs played a significant role in shaping the landscape of medieval Perth and Kinross. They influenced settlement patterns and helped determine possible land routes. Fords and ferries were probably the commonest form of

crossing. There has been surprisingly limited research into ferries in Perth and Kinross, despite the fact that they are mentioned in written records, particularly charters and financial documents. Thus far there has been no systematic effort to identify and record the sites of medieval ferries in the region. It is of course debatable how much physical trace ferries will have left, but some initial investigation at possible ferry landing points could be worthwhile. The discovery of a probable late medieval or post-medieval ferry boat from beside the Tay at [Dalmarnock](#), Dunkeld provides an important reminder that boats as well as infrastructure can occasionally survive (MPK1563; Mowatt [1996](#), no. 25, fig 5). Fords are also sometimes recorded in medieval property records, and are more likely to leave a trace in the landscape. Some fords were near the sites of later bridges, although many were probably at now abandoned crossing points.

Perth and Kinross is known to have had a number of important bridges in the Middle Ages. Probable surviving medieval bridges include [Ardoch Old Bridge](#) (MPK699), Braco, thought to have been constructed in the early 15th century and the packhorse bridge at [Alyth](#) (MPK4918; Gifford [2007](#), 92). These extant bridges are smaller than some of the other late medieval crossings known to have existed in the region. In the 1510s Bishop George Brown funded the construction of a bridge with multiple arches across the Tay at [Dunkeld](#) (MPK2478). The building accounts survive, providing an invaluable insight into methods of construction and the vast sums involved in such a project (Mylne [1893](#), 18–29). It is likely that Bishop Brown's bridge was destroyed in the 17th century. Research into the site of this and earlier medieval bridges at Dunkeld would be of considerable interest.

A four arch (later extended to five arch) medieval bridge used to stand at [Bridge of Earn](#) (MPK3166). Unfortunately, following the construction of a new crossing for the River Earn in the 1820s, the medieval bridge became increasingly ruinous. In 1976 the final surviving arch from the medieval bridge was demolished (Hay and Stell [1984](#)). Written records indicate that there had been a stone bridge across the Earn since at least the 14th century. Although the Old Bridge of Earn was recorded prior to its demolition, more research into this site could be beneficial.

Arguably, the most significant medieval bridges

in the region were those at Perth itself. There was already a bridge at Perth in 1209, when it was swept away by floods. A series of later bridges were constructed, but all met unfortunate ends. The last of the burgh's medieval bridges across the Tay was destroyed in 1621, and was not replaced until 1771 when the current [Smeaton's Bridge](#) (MPK3405) was constructed. The medieval bridges are thought to have crossed the River Tay at the islands known as the [Stanners](#) (MPK3535). The earlier bridges were probably timber, while the late medieval bridges seem to have been made of stone. It has been suggested that 'white water at very low tide' near the Stanners is caused by the remains of former bridge piers (Bowler et al [2004](#), 136). Some stones and timbers 'firmly embedded in sand' may also relate to an old bridge. The recent success of the [Ancrum Old Bridge Project](#) in the Borders shows that it is possible for medieval bridge timbers to survive in the right waterlogged conditions (Historic Environment Scotland [2020b](#)). Further survey work around the Stanners, including underwater investigation, should be a priority.

Perth also had a number of smaller crossings across the town ditch and other waterlogged areas. The Horsecross excavations revealed a section of a small medieval bridge or causeway faced in ashlar stone with a rubble core. The stones from this structure have been dismantled and stored (Cox et al [2007](#), 131). The role that such lesser bridges and causeways played in shaping the topography of Perth, and other burghs in the region, deserves more research.

Harbours and Waterways

A number of major rivers run through Perth and Kinross, the most notable of which is of course the River Tay. In terms of sheer volume of water it is the largest river in Britain. Yet rivers such as the Almond, Earn, Isla and Tummel also significantly shape the landscape, as do the many lochs in the region. It is known that seagoing ships could travel up the Tay as far as Perth in the Middle Ages. However more research is needed into the extent to which other waterways were navigable to smaller vessels, and how these connected to wider transport networks. For example, there is written evidence of goods being transported by water along Loch Rannoch and then onwards by road (Hannay [1915](#)).

There has been a degree of research into Perth's medieval harbours. The first harbour was located near the east end of [Perth High Street](#) (MPK15258). Old timbers probably associated with the harbour were seen during building work to underpin the former City Chambers (MPK3378; Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 21). Further archaeological work in the old harbour area would be of considerable interest; such work would potentially advance our understanding of the evolution of the burgh and its maritime networks. By the early 16th century, a second harbour, known as the New Haven, had been established in Perth near what is now the junction between [Canal Street and Tay Street](#) (MPK3401). This site was excavated in the 1980s (Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 21).



Perth Harbour © HES

There are several smaller harbours on the Tay downriver from Perth. These were surveyed by Graham in the 1960s (Graham [1969](#)). Most of the structures such as quays and piers recorded in this survey date from the 18th or 19th century. However, Graham noted that both [Elcho](#) (MPK3341) and [Port Allen](#) (MPK4693), also known as Lindores Pow, probably had an earlier history as landing places. Further physical and documentary investigation at other small harbours, such as [Cairnie](#) (MPK3139), [Carpow](#) (MPK3140), [Inchyra](#) (MPK3337), [Kingoodie](#) (MPK5106 & MPK5107),

and [Powgavie](#) (MPK4647), might reveal earlier origins than currently assumed.

Another shipping related question to consider is ballast. There has been relatively little research on this topic, yet ballast may provide significant insights into economic networks. The burgh of Perth has produced lumps of chalk and flint in several medieval contexts. These stones are thought to have arrived in the area as ballast and then been reused for other purposes (Perry et al [2010](#), 118). More research to recognise stones which were perhaps used as ballast and identify their origins is needed. For a discussion of boat design see [PKARF 7.4.7 Timber and Woodworking](#).

Migration

The population of medieval Perth has been depicted as ‘cosmopolitan’ (Perry et al [2010](#), 107). There is written and linguistic evidence for settlement in the burgh of people with English, French, Irish and Flemish cultural connections. Analysis of pottery from Perth indicates extensive ties with the east coast of England, Northern France, the Low Countries and the area around the Rhine, though these finds may be a reflection of trading links rather than permanent settlement. Several medieval items probably imported from Scandinavia, including some textile fragments, have also been discovered in Perth. The burgh of Perth clearly had overseas contacts and seems to have experienced a degree of inward migration during the Middle Ages. However, assessing the extent of movement of people over time is challenging, although more detailed analysis of excavated human remains might provide an indication as to the prevalence of people of non-local upbringing in medieval Perth. For example, ongoing isotopic analysis of ‘staff burials’ from Perth [Whitefriars](#) suggests they were not local (MPK3515; D Hall pers comm).

It is likely that as a major port the burgh of Perth was more multicultural than the wider region. However, even smaller towns and rural areas in Perth and Kinross probably had a degree of external contact. Historical research has shown that during the 12th and 13th centuries several families ‘of foreign extraction’ achieved positions of influence within the earldom of Strathearn (Watson [2005](#), 39). The extent to which these new aristocratic families affected

the wider ethnic and cultural makeup of the region is unclear. The role of leading churchmen and large monastic foundations in fostering international ties and new patterns of settlement also deserves greater consideration in Perth and Kinross.

Migration within a nation or region can at times be less obvious than international connections. Analysis of personal and place-names may provide some clues as to movement within Perth and Kinross, particularly with regard to relocation and interaction between Gaelic- and Scots-speaking areas. Of course, many of the techniques applicable to the study of the movement of goods also provides evidence regarding the places people travelled between. However, greater archaeological discussion of how best to trace migration within medieval Scotland would be desirable.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.86: Integrating written and physical evidence to gain an overview of the medieval road network in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.87: Physical investigation of known historic routes, with particular attention to roads identified as ‘Roman’ by antiquarians but perhaps in reality dating from the medieval period.

PKARF Agenda 7.88: Physical study, (including underwater investigation,) of the probable medieval bridge sites at Dunkeld and Perth.

PKARF Agenda 7.89: An interdisciplinary survey of the locations of medieval fords and ferries in Perth and Kinross.

PKARF Agenda 7.90: Interdisciplinary study of the smaller harbours on the River Tay.

PKARF Agenda 7.91: Further investigation at Perth’s medieval harbour sites.

PKARF Agenda 7.92: Study of stones and other items possibly used as ballast.

PKARF Agenda 7.93: Further analysis and mapping of the existing evidence for medieval migration both within the region and overseas.

PKARF Agenda 7.94: More isotopic analysis of human remains to investigate people’s places of origin.

PKARF Agenda 7.95: Greater study of the cultural impact of foreign elite families on surrounding communities.

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.175: What physical evidence survives of medieval land routes in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.176: To what extent can we use place-names and written evidence to understand the location of tracks and roads?

PKARF Qu 7.177: What evidence is there for the use of carts and other vehicles with wheels?

PKARF Qu 7.178: How were animals moved around the region?

PKARF Qu 7.179: Are any supposedly 'Roman' roads actually medieval?

PKARF Qu 7.180: What were the main crossing points over rivers and lochs in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.181: What physical remains are there of medieval bridges in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.182: How does the design of bridges evolve over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.183: What is the relationship between bridges and earlier crossing points?

PKARF Qu 7.184: How can we use written records to enhance our understanding of the location, construction and maintenance of bridges and other forms of crossing?

PKARF Qu 7.185: Where were major harbours (eg the old harbour at Perth) located and how did they develop over time?

PKARF Qu 7.186: What evidence is there for smaller ports, jetties, slipways and other access points?

PKARF Qu 7.187: How can we best use physical and written evidence to understand the use of waterways and maritime connections in medieval Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.188: What can we learn about medieval maritime networks from the remains of ballast?

PKARF Qu 7.189: What were the geographic / eth-

nic origins of the medieval population of Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.190: What evidence is there for the movement of people within the Perth and Kinross region in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.191: What evidence is there for migration over longer distances (eg more distant parts of Scotland or overseas)?

PKARF Qu 7.192: Are there any notable periods of higher migration?

PKARF Qu 7.193: How did migration influence local culture and practices in Perth and Kinross?

PKARF Qu 7.194: Is it possible to discern gendered patterns to migration?

PKARF Qu 7.195: To what extent can the names of people recorded in contemporary documents help to unravel the story of the movement of medieval people and ethnogenesis? How can we link this evidence to the increasing genetic study of medieval populations?

7.7 Conflict

Fortifications

The burgh of Perth was famed for its extensive urban defences (MPK3507). In the 15th century John Hardyng described Perth as 'fayre and stronge, dytched about syxtene foote depe' (Hume Brown [1891](#), 19). Unlike in many other parts of Europe, major urban fortifications were far from the norm in Scotland, and their presence at Perth reflects the strategic importance of the burgh. Indeed, it has been suggested that Perth's town walls were 'probably the finest ever to be constructed in Scotland' (Perry et al [2010](#), 10).

There appears to have been some form of earth and timber defences at Perth in the mid-12th century (Perry et al [2010](#), 7). These were probably replaced by stone fortifications on the orders of Edward I of England in the 1300s, though there is some debate about this chronology. The English stone defences were then slighted by Robert I, but new town walls were built by Edward Balliol and Edward III of England in the 1330s. The defences of Edward III seem to have lasted into the 18th century, albeit with some alterations. Today Perth's medieval town walls have

been almost entirely demolished, although a small fragment may survive at Albert Close (MPK6441; Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 25).

The location of Perth's defences seems to have moved over the course of the Middle Ages. Excavations in the 1970s, prior to the building of Marks and Spencer on the High Street, uncovered the foundations of a stone defensive wall much closer to the centre of the burgh than the presumed line of the town walls at the end of the Middle Ages. Those are thought to have followed the town lade running along Mill Street, South Methven Street and Canal Street. It is possible that the Marks and Spencer remains relate to the defences built by Edward I, although this dating has been questioned on the basis of surrounding ceramic fragments from the 11th or 12th century (Bowler and Perry [2004](#), 25). Other excavations have discovered sections of the medieval ditches encircling the burgh, including a bank which may have been part of the 12th century earth defences. At present we can confidently state that medieval Perth did have extensive urban fortifications. However, many aspects of their origin, development and precise location remain unclear. Some of these questions may be clarified by future excavations. Physical evidence of the successive sieges which Perth faced during the Wars of Independence would be of great interest if discovered. In particular the burning of Perth in 1298 and around 1332 may have left some trace in the archaeological record.

Aside from Perth's town walls, castles and tower houses were the main forms of medieval fortification in Perth and Kinross. It has been suggested that some Iron Age defences were still used in the region in the Middle Ages. Notably claims have been made for the 'multi-vallate fortification' at [Dunknock](#) (MPK2004), which served as the administrative heart of the medieval thanage of Dunning (Driscoll [1998](#); Watson [2005](#)).



Dunknock multi-vallate fortification cropmarks © HES

Field walking at Dunknock in the 1990s revealed medieval pottery in the area, although evaluation trenches in the 2000s only produced evidence of occupation during the Iron Age and earlier (Dalglish et al [2009](#)). Evidence for medieval occupation of hillforts and other earthworks in Perth and Kinross is at present extremely sparse. Yet there are some tantalising clues of medieval people interacting with these sites in various ways. For instance, a medieval vessel hoard was found at the foot of Dunsinane hillfort (NMS [1994](#)). Further study and mapping of medieval finds from prehistoric sites in Perth and Kinross would be desirable. For a discussion of castles see [PKARF 7.2.6 Castles and High-Status Settlements](#).

Battlefields

Perth and Kinross experienced several phases of conflict in the Middle Ages. Like many other parts of Scotland, the region was significantly affected by the Wars of Independence, with military activity here in the 1290s, 1300s, 1310s and 1330s. In the 1540s lands beside the River Tay were again attacked by English forces during the Rough Wooing. The area around Perth also became a focal point for conflict during the religious crisis of 1559. The region saw major pitched battles near [Methven](#) (MPK2161) in 1306 and at Dupplin Moor (MPK17754) in 1332.

The Battle of Dupplin Moor has been listed on Historic Environment Scotland's Inventory of Historic Battlefields (Historic Environment Scotland [2012](#)).

Drawing on written sources, HES has tentatively identified the battle as taking place near Burnside Lodge on the Dupplin Castle Estate. However, as the compilers of the battlefield inventory concede, ‘this location is only tentative in the absence of any supporting evidence from fieldwork’.

The Battle of Methven was considered for HES’s Inventory of Historic Battlefields, but doubts about the precise location of the battlefield meant that it was not included (Historic Environment Scotland [2016](#)). The battle took place at the Wood of Methven, which was near the River Almond, probably a few miles north of the modern village of Methven. HES has previously noted that if ‘new evidence is found that would allow the events to be located with confidence, the battle is of sufficient significance to be included in the Inventory’.

The discovery of physical remains relating to either the Battle of Dupplin Moor or the Battle of Methven would be of great interest. A small but highly significant recent find is the gilt and enamel horse harness pendant bearing the arms of Sir William Keith (Perth Museum 2007.175). Sir William was killed at Dupplin Moor and the harness pendant was found by metal-detecting near Forteviot, opposite the probable battlefield site on the far side of the River Earn (MPK17580; M Hall [2021](#), 478–9). The find spot may indicate the location of the Scottish camp or baggage train.

However, study of medieval battlefields in other parts of Scotland, such as around Stirling, suggests that fieldwork and metal-detecting are typically not as productive as might be expected. Unless mass graves are found, it seems likely that the precise locations of major battles in Perth and Kinross may well remain conjectural. Arguably, rather than focusing vast efforts on identifying specific battlefields, a more productive approach might be careful analysis of any evidence of medieval conflict across the region, including burning of buildings and crops – known from written sources to have been a strategy used in the Wars of Independence and during the conflicts of the 1540s.

Weapons and Military Equipment

Perth and Kinross has produced a number of interesting finds of medieval military equipment. Several medieval weapons, including arrowheads,

spearheads, a sword hilt and a battle axe were uncovered during the Perth High Street excavations (Caldwell et al [2012](#)). The spearheads were similar to ones found in London and Dublin (and associated by some researchers with viking activity), while the axe head was of the type sometimes known as a Danish axe. The sword hilt also showed Scandinavian influences and is comparable to examples traditionally dated to around the 10th century, including an example found during construction work on the Watergate in Perth in 1849. Yet the Perth High Street hilt was uncovered in a late 12th century context, strongly suggesting an heirloom function (Gilchrist [2013](#), 174, fig.12).

Other weapons from the region include a high-status silver inlaid axe from Lochleven (Perth Museum K1972.291; Caldwell [1981](#), 268–9) and a spearhead (MPK5865; Perth Museum 1991.55) from the Tay near [Kinclaven Castle](#). A piece of the wooden shaft preserved in the socket of the Kinclaven spearhead has been radiocarbon dated to the 11th or 12th century. Both shaft and spearhead may have been made at the same time. However, as the spearhead is of an older type it is also possible that again this was an heirloom weapon. A better understanding of the chronology of Scottish weapons across the early and late medieval periods, including consideration of the complicating factor of heirloom usage, is highly desirable.

A number of medieval items associated with riding have also been uncovered in Perth and Kinross. While horses were obviously not exclusively used for war, much of the elite culture around riding had martial connotations. The parts of five spurs, including an elaborate gilded spur probably dating from the 12th century, were found during the Perth High Street excavations (Caldwell et al [2012](#)). In recent years metal-detecting has produced a number of medieval horse accessories, including a heraldic mount found at Burrelton (now in the National Museums Scotland) and a harness pendant discovered at Scotlandwell (now in Perth Museum). It is likely that metal-detecting will continue to produce stray finds relating to riding and military activity. More discussion between museums, archaeologists and historians on how these artefacts might best be studied would be desirable.

Research Priorities

PKARF Agenda 7.96: Further physical investigation of the medieval defences at Perth to ascertain their location and development.

PKARF Agenda 7.97: Research into medieval finds from prehistoric fortifications to determine whether, and how, these sites were used in the Middle Ages.

PKARF Agenda 7.98: Careful recording of evidence of medieval conflict (eg burning of property) in the region.

PKARF Agenda 7.99: Further investigation of the possible sites of the Battle of Dupplin Moor and the Battle of Methven.

PKARF Agenda 7.100: Comparative study of the extant military artefacts from the region, including stray finds.

PKARF Agenda 7.101: Interdisciplinary research into the use of horses in the region

Research Questions

PKARF Qu 7.196: What can we learn about the design and evolution of the defences at Perth?

PKARF Qu 7.197: Were prehistoric defences reused in the medieval period?

PKARF Qu 7.198: Do we have evidence of sieges or deliberate destruction of fortifications?

PKARF Qu 7.199: How can we best use written records and physical evidence to identify medieval battlefields?

PKARF Qu 7.200: What physical remains are medieval Scottish battlefields likely to leave behind?

PKARF Qu 7.201: How do weapons and other military equipment evolve in Perth and Kinross over the course of the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.202: How can we best use written records, existing museum assemblages and new finds to understand military equipment in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages?

PKARF Qu 7.203: How do the weapons and military equipment in use in Perth and Kinross in the Middle Ages compare with contemporary Scottish and Euro-

pean trends?

PKARF Qu 7.204: What can we discover about the use of horses in conflict?

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