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1334/1320

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Our ref: H/337

31st October 1996

Dear Mr Bell

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the twenty-fourth charter in the Register of Dunfermline.

This charter does indeed mention Hcctor Common but gives no further details of its site. King David granted the land to the Bishop of Caithness with all the freedoms involved in it except those of the army (presumably referring to the army's right to exercise there). The text is printed in *Registrum de Dunfermlyn*, published in Edinburgh in 1842: please find enclosed a photocopy of this with our compliments.

I hope that this is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

Dr N J Mills
Historical Search Room

Durnach and Hoctor Common.

DE Durnach .

23. Daud Rex Scotti Reinwaldo Comiti de orchadia . 7 Comiti 7 oibz probis hoibz cateneis 7 orchadie ! Salt . Mando uob 7 p̄cipio qđ ficut me diligitis . monach^{os} 7 hoies eoz . 7 Res habitantes ad Durnach i cateneis diligitis . 7 ubicūq; in^t uos uenint ! manuteneati^s . non pmittendo qđ aliquis eis iniuriam ut contumeliam faciat . n^c fieri pmittat . Test . Cancell . 7 Her^bto can^{ab} Ap̄ Abernithi .

DE hoctor comon .

24. Daud Rex Scotti omibz pb hoibz toci⁹ Pre sue salt . Sciatis me dedisse 7 con^{sc} . A . e^po de Katenes ! hoctor comon . libam et quietā ab oī suico . **excepto** comūni ex^citu . F GG . e^po dunkeld . Dunē comit . Gillandres **de** Sc^o . Alwyn mac archil . Apud Sc^o .

TRANSLATIONS OF CHARTERS

I

Mandate by King David the First to the Earls of Orkney and Caithness to protect the monks of Dornoch.

Register of Dunfermline, p. 14, No. 23. Printed: Haddan and Stubbs II. 228. Orkney and Shetland Records I., p. 17.

1. [1127-1153] ABERNETHY.

David, King of Scots, to Reinwald, Earl of Orkney, and to the Earl¹ and all goodmen of Caithness and Orkney, greeting. To you I command and ordain that as ye love me ye respect and maintain the monks and their men dwelling in Dornoch in Caithness and their goods, and wherever they come among you, that you permit no one to do them harm or to insult them; witnesses, the chancellor and Herbert, the chamberlain, at Abernethy.

II

Charter by King David I. granting Hector Common to Andrew, Bishop of Caithness.

Register de Dumfermlyn, No. 24. Lawrie's Early Scottish Charters, 199.

[*Circa* 1150]

David, King of Scots, to all good men of his whole realm, greeting. Know ye that I have given and granted to Andrew, Bishop of Caithness, Hector Common, free and quit from all service except in the common army; witnesses, Gregory, Bishop of Dunkeld; Earl Duncan, Gillanders of Scone, Alwyn, son of Archil: at Scone.

¹Rögnvald, Earl of Orkney, 1136-1158, ruled Caithness in the name of Harald Maddadh's son, his co-regent after 1139; therefore Caithness is omitted after "and to the Earl." O. and S. Records, I., p. 18n.

Murray was then, as perhaps it is still, the predominant name, Mathesons then, as perhaps now, come second.

For instance, of the 17 burgesses who feued a piece of land to Thomas Mowete in 1545, six are Murrays. Names such as Lovell, and Angusson are septes of the Murrays. Macs are hardly to be met with. Shortly before the Reformation Grays begin to appear on the scene. Kennedy, Johnson, Tailyour, Lesley, Blair, Wrycht, Pantour, Burges, Ancrane, Reid, Rattar, Ralston, Ferne, Raburne, are names which are met with again and again among the churchmen and Burgesses of Old Dornoch.

As to buildings of a public nature in the Burgh other than the Cathedral, Chapter House, Palace, Manses, and Court House, Mr Robert Sutherland Taylor, in a sketch made by him 1854, marks the corner of Church Street and Castle Street as the site of a Franciscan monastery, while tradition says that there was a nunnery on the hill a little to the south of where Mr Maccrone's house now is—the Gaelic name, *Cnoc-na-Cailleich*, meaning the hill of the old women, lending some support to the tradition.

The first reference to another of our old landmarks, viz., the bridge at the foot of High Street, is found in a Sasine of 1562. How long before this the bridge was built we cannot say. In that year Robert Duf, Burgess of Dornoch, sold to Alexander Murray, also a Burgess,

“the Kill, measuring in length 56 feet and in breadth 22 feet as appeared, lying in his tenement at the foot of the bridge, and having his garden on the south, the common road on the north, the water of Dornoch on the west, and the said garden on the east, with the house built upon the same, to be held in burgage at the usual rate.”

This property, you will see, was where Bridge Street now is.

Over this old bridge went the “King's highway” coming from the west, along where St Gilbert Street and High Street now are, over the bridge, up what is now known as the School Brae, and then along between Bishopfield and Croft Madoch where the present

track is. The road to the north branched off at right angles from it at the Cross, where Dog Street now is.

I quote the description in this Sasine because it is not only interesting for its reference to the Bridge, but also to a mill and kiln at that part of the town.

Local tradition has always affirmed that the Bishops had a mill on the Dornoch Burn near the Bridge, and, indeed, the Bishop's mill at Dornoch is expressly mentioned, if I remember correctly, among the numerous grants to the Earl at the time of the Reformation. A deep cutting can still be traced leading from the River Evelix near Astle, to the Dornoch Burn at Evelix. The tradition says this was made by the Bishops for the purpose of obtaining an additional water supply from the Evelix River for their mill at Dornoch.

Such was the old City of pre-Reformation days—beginning as an ecclesiastical settlement, gathered round the Cathedral and Palace of its overlord the Bishop, but gradually shewing signs of civic life and activities, until, long before the Reformation, we find it, in addition to its numerous church buildings, one of the seats of the Sheriff, possessing a Court House, and a Market Cross, the seat of numerous important Fairs, and possessing Magistrates, Burgesses, and lands.

I will close these notes on pre-Reformation Dornoch by quoting Mr Cosmo Innes:—

“It is difficult for a Scotchman now to call up to his imagination the cathedral towns of Old Scotland. The effect of such a society of learned Churchmen, holding a high position for influence and example, cultivating letters, preaching peace, and (for the most part) practising it, must have been great and beneficial in any rural district; but a glance at the past history of the district enables us in some degree to appreciate the benefits conferred upon Dornoch by the establishment of its Bishop, its Cathedral, and its Chapter.”