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TWO SCOTTISH ROMANESQUE PARISH CHURCHES: ST ATHERNASE, LEUCHARS AND ST CUTHBERT, DALMENY¹

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Introduction

THE Romanesque architectural style manifested in Scotland chiefly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, at a time when on the European continent it was being superseded by the Gothic. Romanesque, often called ‘Norman’ in the context of the British Isles, is represented in Scotland by certain major buildings, both secular and ecclesiastical. These include Dunfermline Abbey, the resting place of Robert the Bruce, St Margaret’s Chapel at Edinburgh Castle, Kelso Abbey in the Borders, and Dunottar Castle, near Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire. Characteristic features of Romanesque architecture include semi-circular arches, heavy barrel or groin-vaulted roofs, thick walls, square towers, round pillars, small windows, and decorative blind arcading. These stylistic elements may appear plain and simple when compared to the soaring height, fragile clustered columns, and brilliant glass of later Gothic architecture. However, Romanesque buildings have a sturdy massiveness and austere charm, which is never more apparent than when it is manifested in small-scale structures like parish churches.² This article considers two outstanding churches, St Cuthbert, Dalmeny and St Athernase, Leuchars, which are, with St Margaret’s Chapel, among the finest examples of smaller-scale Romanesque structures in Scotland.

Accidents of history have left Leuchars and Dalmeny as crucial examples of a style that once spread across medieval Scotland, and

¹ My thanks are due to my research assistant, Dr Dominique Wilson, who assisted me with library searches and note-taking for this article, and to Don Barrett, who accompanied me on visits to St Athernase, Leuchars and St Cuthbert, Dalmeny in 2012.

² Bruce Walker and Graham Ritchie, *Fife, Perthshire, and Angus* (Edinburgh: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1996 [1987]), p. 127.

of which there are only few fragmentary survivals among parish churches in other regions. Some of these churches have close connections to Leuchars and Dalmeny. For example, the fine Norman arch from St Mary the Virgin, Edrom in the Borders was reconstructed as part of a nearby burial vault after the destruction of the church in 1732. It is all that remains of a Norman church erected c. 1130, probably by Gospatric II, Earl of Dunbar (or Lothian), the father of Gospatric III, who built St Cuthbert, Dalmeny. Gospatric II's younger son was Adam, the parish priest of Dunbar, whose death is recorded in 1179.³ Gospatric II gifted Edrom parish to the priory of Coldstream, which he had co-founded with his wife Deirdre, and two decades later it passed to the bishopric of Durham.⁴ Muthill Old Church, which also has surviving Romanesque masonry, was a post-Columban Céli Dé (Culdee, or 'companions of God') foundation that was rebuilt in the twelfth century when it came under the control of the Earls of Strathearn.⁵ St Blane's, Kingarth, on the Isle of Bute, a picturesque ruin, was originally an Irish monastic foundation but was rebuilt in the late twelfth century, probably when the powerful Stewart family, who had entered Scotland as vassals of David I, acquired Bute.⁶

Two tendencies in Scottish church building must therefore be noted before St Athernase and St Cuthbert are examined in detail. The first is that later medieval churches tended to be erected on sites that were already deemed sacred, often due to the activity of early medieval 'Celtic' saints from foundations including Iona in the Hebrides, founded by St Columba, and Whithorn in Dumfriesshire, founded by Ninian (possibly an erroneous rendition of Uinniau, and identified by some as the Irishman Finnian of Moville, with whom

³ Elsa Catherine Hamilton, 'The Earls of Dunbar and the Church in Lothian and the Merse', *The Innes Review* 58, no 1 (2007), pp. 5–6.

⁴ Hamilton, 'The Earls of Dunbar and the Church in Lothian and the Merse', pp. 11–17.

⁵ Cynthia J. Neville, 'Native Lords and the Church in Thirteenth-Century Strathearn, Scotland', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, issue 3 (2002), p. 463.

⁶ Denys Pringle, 'The Medieval Parish Churches of the Isle of Bute: St Blane's, Kingarth, and St Mary's, Rothesay', *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 22, no 2 (2000), pp. 129–130.

Columba was associated).⁷ Thus the small wood and turf churches were replaced by more elaborate stone structures. Second, the construction of churches in the Norman Romanesque style is closely associated with the royal lineage of Malcolm III and his wife, Saint Margaret, and with noble families that had connections to the monarchy, such as the Earls of Dunbar and the Stewarts, mentioned above. This has implications for church design, as Malcolm and Margaret were concerned to reform the Scottish church to be in harmony with Roman (rather than ‘Celtic’) practices, and the introduction of the Sarum Rite, devised by Osmund, nephew of William the Conqueror, during his term as Bishop of Salisbury (1078–1099), was a vital part of this reform programme. The Sarum Rite was adapted for use in Scotland and is known from the Aberdeen Breviary, which ‘was mainly the work of the learned and pious William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen from 1483 to his death in 1514’.⁸

Scottish Norman Romanesque Architecture

The term ‘Romanesque’, which is used to describe the architectural style that dominated the early Middle Ages, was coined in 1818 by the French antiquarian Charles-Alexis-Adrien Duhérissier de Gerville (1769–1853). De Gerville correctly located the origins of the style in ancient Rome, but believed that Romanesque was a crude imitation, and not comparable with the classical masterpieces that inspired it. He termed Romanesque, ‘opus romanum dénaturé ou successivement dégradé par nos rudes ancêtres’.⁹ It is curious that this designator, and the term ‘Gothic’ to describe the successor architectural form of medieval Europe, were both first applied pejoratively, yet later entered the scholarly lexicon. While all early medieval art and architecture is technically Romanesque, in Britain

⁷ Thomas Owen Clancy, ‘The Real St Ninian’, *The Innes Review* 52, no 1 (2001), pp. 1–28.

⁸ O. Hunter Blair, ‘The Aberdeen Breviary’, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02777a.htm>, accessed 4 February 2015.

⁹ Quoted in Whitney S. Stoddard, *Art and Architecture in Medieval France: Medieval Architecture, Sculpture, Stained Glass, Manuscripts, the Art of the Church Treasures* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1972 [1966]), p. 3.

the style reached new heights after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The probable influence of key models such as Bernay Abbey and St-Etienne at Caen may be observed in major buildings in England, including Durham Cathedral and St Alban's Abbey.¹⁰ Further, it seems likely that there was a systematic programme of Norman construction to obliterate or at the very least shift power away from earlier major ecclesiastical centres; E. C. Fernie, for example, has asserted that, 'no English cathedral or large monastic church is known to retain within its fabric any masonry of Anglo-Saxon date'.¹¹

British examples of Romanesque architecture tend to be conceived on a grand scale and to be more impressive and monumental than their prototypes in Normandy. Many large Romanesque churches were later overlaid with Gothic elements, in general due to repairs resulting from fire or other destruction, or to extensions and enlargements necessitated by royal burials or the institution of pilgrimages.¹² However, in England the cathedrals of Canterbury, Rochester, Ely, Gloucester, and in particular, Durham, all have substantial Romanesque masonry that demonstrates the aesthetic and practical appeal of the squat rounded pillars, heavy massed walls, rounded stone doorways with chevron decoration, and rare figure sculpture in the tympana. In Scotland the introduction and success of the Romanesque style was due to royal patronage. David I, the son of Malcolm III and Margaret, reigned from 1124 to 1153. He hired masons from Durham Cathedral to build Dunfermline Abbey, which

¹⁰ E. C. Fernie, 'Architecture and the Effects of the Norman Conquest', in David Bates and Anne Curry (eds), *England and Normandy in the Middle Ages* (London and Rio Grande, OH: The Hambledon Press, 1994), p. 112. Anglo-Saxon architectural features survive in a range of smaller buildings, virtually all of them parish churches, including: All Hallows by the Tower, London; Escomb, County Durham; St Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon; and St Peter, Bradwell-on-Sea. See Robert Stoll and Jean Roubier, *Architecture and Sculpture in Early Britain: Celtic, Saxon, Norman* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967) and H. M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

¹¹ Fernie, 'Architecture and the Effects of the Norman Conquest', p. 105.

¹² For example, Gloucester Cathedral (formerly Abbey) benefited from the burial of murdered king Edward II there, and Canterbury from the shrine of the martyred archbishop, Thomas Becket. See Alec Clifton-Taylor, *The Cathedrals of England* (New York: Association Press, 1970), pp. 69–70, 157, 196.

was dedicated in 1147, possibly as the first resting place of his sainted mother.¹³ Dunfermline's magnificent nave, huge and stately, survives almost intact, and was famously sketched by J. M. W. Turner in 1831. These masons from Durham also are likely to have been involved in the construction of St Magnus Kirkwall, the most northerly cathedral in the British Isles, 'founded in 1137 by Earl Rognvald Kolson and dedicated to his uncle, Earl Magnus Erlendson'.¹⁴ St Magnus was built over a period of three centuries.

Scholars of Romanesque architecture have long observed that the Romanesque style persisted in Scotland for far longer than anywhere else in Europe. This has been viewed as deliberate clinging to old-fashioned forms, and the Scots who favoured this type of architecture are accused of being, as Ian Campbell has noted, deemed 'backward ... [and] backward-looking'.¹⁵ Yet, Campbell has argued that Scottish masons were fully aware of architectural developments on the continent, and that the Scottish fondness for Romanesque style lies in the fact that the majority of significant monuments in that style (Melrose Abbey, Kelso Abbey, Dunfermline, and St Rule's church in St Andrew's, among others),

were founded or refounded by members of the Canmore or MacMalcolm dynasty ... [which] introduced to Scotland the new religious orders ... the Augustinians, Cistercians, and Tironensians ... [and which] reigned over an increasingly flourishing civil society ... and fostered the self-image of a distinctive *ecclesia scoticana*, which made the church a rallying point for resistance to the English during the Wars of Independence.¹⁶

There are two other reasons for the Scottish affection for the Romanesque style, both less tangible in political terms, though not unimportant. These are: first, that its classical proportions, derived from Rome and by implication Greece, connected it to the myth of

¹³ Richard Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church', in Richard Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2005), p. 31.

¹⁴ Scotland's Churches Scheme, *1000 Churches to Visit in Scotland* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2005), p. 368.

¹⁵ Ian Campbell, 'A Romanesque Revival and the Early Renaissance in Scotland, c. 1380–1513', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54, no 3 (1995), p. 302.

¹⁶ Campbell, 'A Romanesque Revival and the Early Renaissance in Scotland', p. 311.

the Greek origin of the Scots; and, second, that it was associated with the legendary introduction of Christianity to Scotland, which involved the Greek saints Andrew (the country's patron saint), Regulus (Rule), and Triduana.¹⁷ It may be speculated that Scotland's cultural connection with Greece and Rome through the veneration of these legendary saints was in part connected to the reform of the church under the Canmore dynasty, in that it offered a more ancient source for Christianity in Scotland than the previously esteemed 'Celtic' saints, and validated the change to Roman form of the religion.

*History of the Parish Church of St Athernase,
Leuchars*

Scotland boasts of a number of Norman Romanesque parish churches that survive in varying states of intactness. These include the ruined churches of St Baldred's, Tynninghame and St Martin's Kirk, Haddington, the near-complete Stobo parish church in the Borders, and others noted above. Robert William Fraser, the nineteenth century chronicler of 'romantic' ecclesiastical sites, was emphatic in his assertion that, '[o]f these very ancient species of architecture there are, however, but few specimens now remaining, with the exception of the two highly interesting parish churches of Dalmeny and Leuchars.'¹⁸ These two churches are the focus of this article. Leuchars in Fife is a site associated with the presence of the 'Celtic Church' in Scotland. This catch-all phrase covers both the evangelisation of the Picts by Saint Columba of Iona, and all subsequent 'Ionan' daughter churches, and the ecclesiastical foundation at Whithorn, Dumfriesshire, associated with Saint Ninian.¹⁹ Archaeological excavations at Leuchars in 1908 revealed no fewer than thirty-four cist burials of an early Christian date. An

¹⁷ John Foster, 'The Legend and Shrine of St Triduana', *British Journal of Ophthalmology* 37 (1953), pp. 763–765.

¹⁸ Robert William Fraser, *The Kirk and the Manse: Sixty Illustrative Views in Tinted Lithography of the Most Interesting and Romantic Parish Kirks and Manses in Scotland* (Edinburgh, London, and Dublin: A. Fullarton and Co., 1866), p. xii.

¹⁹ John MacQueen, *St Nynia* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2005 [1990]), *passim*.

eighteenth-century antiquarian, Reverend Kettle, connected the site with a no longer extant early chapel, a ‘Monument of Antiquity’, dedicated to St Bernard.²⁰ This dedication is contested, however, and the alternative saint proposed, Bonoc or Bonach, is a ‘Scottish’ saint, probably to be identified with Bonifandus, a cleric who accompanied the Anglo-Saxon saint Boniface to Pictland in 710, and whose relics, it is claimed, were venerated at Leuchars.²¹



Exterior, St Athernase Leuchars. Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

²⁰ William Reid, ‘Notice of the Discovery of a Group of Full-Length Stone Cists at the School Hill, or Temple Hill, Leuchars’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland* 43 (1909), p. 174.

²¹ John McClintock and James Strong, ‘Bonoc’, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1870), at <http://www.studydrive.org/encyclopedia/mse/view.cgi?n=34376>, accessed 2 November 2014. One of these relics, a piece of jawbone, was donated by David Rynd, Curate of Leuchars, to the altar of St Fergus, Holy Trinity Church, St Andrews in 1409, where it was venerated with relics of St Fergus and St Triduana. See F. C. Eeles, ‘The Altar of St Fergus in Holy Trinity, St Andrews: A Sixteenth Century MS Rental and Inventory’, *The Scottish Historical Review* 2, no 7 (1905), p. 263.

The antiquity of Bonoc's connection with Leuchars is further reinforced in two ways. First, the etymology of the name 'Leuchars' is Celtic, and means either 'a wet flat ... or a place abounding with rivers'. Writing in 1791, Kettle described the irregularly-shaped parish as encircled by neighbouring parishes, the 'German ocean', and the River Eden, and containing four 'long beautiful canals'.²² This connects with the tradition of Christian missionaries building churches by water sources, so as to enable the mass baptism of local people.²³ The second indication of the likelihood of Leuchars being an early church site is the Norman church's dedication to Athernase, another decidedly obscure saint widely assumed to be Ethernascus, called 'the Silent', whose primary cult site was Clane, Co. Kildare. He is presumed to have been a companion of Columba of Iona, but Michael Barrett has noted that, '[i]t is difficult to determine what his precise connection with Scotland was, but his office occurs with a proper prayer in the Breviary of Aberdeen'.²⁴ Bonoc was still the saint venerated in the chapel at Leuchars that was gifted to the Priory of St Andrews in 1187, by Ness (or Nesius), chieftain of Lochore. A generation after the gift of the chapel to St Andrews, secular patronage of Leuchars resumed after a legal dispute brought by one Simon de Quincy (or de Quinci) which was resolved by the Abbots of the ecclesiastical foundations of Arbroath, Lindores, and Cupar.²⁵ It has been suggested that the original dedication to Athernase properly belongs to Lathrisk (now Kettle) parish, Fife, and that this dedication moved to Leuchars at some time before the construction of the Norman Romanesque church commenced in the late twelfth century.

²² Rev. Mr Kettle, 'Parish of Leuchars (County of Fife)', in Sir John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn Up From the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, vol. 18 (Edinburgh: William Creech Ltd, 1791), pp. 585, 595.

²³ Richard Morris, 'Baptismal Places: 600–800', in Ian Wood and Niels Lund (eds), *Peoples and Places in Northern Europe 500–1600* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 15–24.

²⁴ Dom Michael Barrett, 'Saint Ethernascus,' *A Calendar of Scottish Saints* (Fort Augustus: Abbey Press, 1919), p. 163.

²⁵ John Hill Burton (with R. Rowland Anderson and Robert William Billings), *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, vol. III (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1901[1848–1852]), p. 1, plates 49–52.



Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

The foundation of the present church at Leuchars was laid by either the Norman lady Matilda de Quincy or her son Robert (brother of the above-mentioned Simon and a knight in the service of the Scottish king, William the Lion) in the 1170s. Robert was married to Orabile (Arabella), the daughter and heiress of Ness. Authorities differ as to which de Quincy was responsible for the completion of the building and the date of its consecration. The only twentieth century published source for the church, beyond brief entries in gazettes and

travel guides, is the parish history authored by local historian, W. B. Borthwick, in the 1950s. He states that the church was completed by Robert and Orabile's son, Saier (or Saer) de Quincy. Saier was a crusader like his father, and became Earl of Winchester after his marriage to Margaret Beaumont, and later was a signatory to Magna Carta. Borthwick further claims that St Athernase was consecrated in 1240 by David de Bernham, the Bishop of St Andrews. De Bernham was a close friend of Alexander II (reigned 1214 to 1249), and served as his chamberlain. Borthwick says that Saier de Quincy,

before setting out for the East ... made over to the Canons of St Andrews three silver marks yearly from his mill at Leuchars to endow a chantry for the repose of the souls of his grandfather, father, and mother. Since the Church of Leuchars was completed in his day, its erection may fairly be ascribed to the inspiration of this De Quinci family. Indeed its association with crusaders is commemorated in the symbolic crosses found in the decoration of the sanctuary arch.²⁶

That the de Quincys were a powerful family with royal connections in Scotland and England is incontrovertible; however, there are contradictions in the story. Borthwick claims that Saier de Quincy lived to see the church's consecration. Yet the official church website claims that it was Saier's son Roger who was present at the consecration of the church on 4 September 1244, Saier de Quincy having died at Damietta in the Holy Land in 1219.²⁷ It seems that Borthwick is incorrect about which de Quincy completed the church, and the date of the consecration.

²⁶ W. M. Borthwick, *Handbook of Leuchars Parish Church: St Athernase* (St Andrews, 1954), pp. 3–5.

²⁷ 'History: Early Days', *Leuchars St Athernase: Church of Scotland* (2012), at <http://www.leucharsstathernase.org.uk/index.php/history/early-days>, accessed 2 November 2014.



Sculpture, St Athernase Leuchars. Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

In the Middle Ages St Athernase was a Catholic church, and was a stop along the pilgrimage route to the shrine of St Andrew in St Andrews, as the hostel at Guardbridge was only a short distance

from Leuchars, and was the customary lodging place of pilgrims on the night prior to reaching the their journey's end.²⁸ After the Reformation, St Athernase became a Church of Scotland parish. The Reformation in Scotland involved a radical change in the lives of ordinary people who were attached to the practices of pilgrimage, devotion to saints, sacred images, and other Catholic traditions.²⁹

The Reformation Parliament of 1560 made Scotland a Protestant nation in terms of the law, but the Herculean tasks of training a Protestant ministry to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and enforce church discipline, and of persuading the laity to conform to this new, alien form of Christianity took many decades to achieve. John MacCallum's detailed study of the Reformation in Fife notes the relative wealth and continuity of the Kirk Sessions records in that part of the country, and to the early concentration of those records on procuring adherence to the Protestant faith and enforcing discipline in the area of sexual conduct, though later the remit extended to Sabbath observance, keeping order in church, and other aspects of discipline in every part of daily life.³⁰

In keeping with the elevation of the Bible as the sole source of doctrine and authority by Scottish Protestants, the interiors of medieval churches were altered to remove images of the saints, walls were white-washed, and structural features such as rood screens were destroyed, in addition to the removal of saints' relics, and any features that linked parish churches to pilgrimage routes.³¹ Funerary monuments were often the only decorative features to survive the programme of iconoclasm. Despite Scottish Protestant condemnation of vanity and castigation of those who asserted social superiority in this world, burial monuments continued to be erected and were often quite elaborate. There are some memorials in St Athernase that date from the sixteenth century, including one to Sir William Bruce, who fought at Flodden (1513) and died aged ninety-eight in 1584, and 'a

²⁸ Ian Campbell, 'Planning For Pilgrims: St Andrews as the Second Rome,' *The Innes Review* 64, issue 1 (2013), pp. 1–22.

²⁹ Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 1.

³⁰ John MacCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: The Reformation in Fife, 1560–1640* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 42–43.

³¹ Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, pp. 197, 219–220, 316, and 325–326.

stone in memory of Robert Carnegie of Kinnaird who died on a visit to [Leuchars] Castle in 1565'.³² Carnegie was an ambassador in the service of both Mary of Guise and her daughter, Mary Queen of Scots. Of great interest, too, is the tombstone of Agnes Lindsay, which features a 'life-sized image of the deceased'.³³ Late in the seventeenth century the church was renovated in an unsympathetic fashion, and 'new windows were slapped though the blind arcading of the chancel'.³⁴ John Hume has noted that a distinctive post-Reformation trend in Fife was the 'building or enlargement of church towers', and this may have occasioned the seventeenth century rebuild of the church, as the belfry was raised and the stone vault altered, changing the upper section of the tower to the present distinctive octagonal shape.³⁵

There is more textual evidence for the church in the seventeenth century. At some time between 1611 and 1614 the notable theologian and Presbyterian churchman, Alexander Henderson (1583–1646), was appointed minister by the archbishop of St Andrews, George Gledstones. The parishioners of Leuchars were fervently anti-prelacy, and for some years Henderson was deeply unpopular, though he later won the favour of his flock.³⁶ The Kirk Sessions records for Leuchars are complete from 1666. Borthwick says these records 'abound in human interest' and illustrates this with examples, including the parish's adoption and raising of a foundling from Cowbaikie, its succouring of an cottar injured at work, and the inscription on the tombstone of Dame Agnes Lindsay, who died in 1635, which describes her as 'charitable to the poor and profitable to that house [the church]'.³⁷ The church became rundown in the nineteenth century; John Hill Burton visited Leuchars while researching for the superb four-volume *Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of*

³² Borthwick, *Handbook of Leuchars Parish Church*, p. 7.

³³ Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, p. 339.

³⁴ Walker and Ritchie, *Fife, Perthshire, and Angus*, p. 127.

³⁵ John R. Hume, 'Introduction: Fife and the Forth Valley', in Scotland's Churches Scheme, *Sacred Fife & The Forth Valley* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2009), p. xviii.

³⁶ John Aiton, *The Life and Times of Alexander Henderson* (Edinburgh: Fraser and Co., 1836), pp. 82–109.

³⁷ Borthwick, *Handbook of Leuchars Parish Church*, pp. 9–10.

Scotland (1848–1852, illustrated by the artist Robert William Billings). He disapproved of attempts to repair the church, which he said were ‘bald and modern’, and concluded that ‘the building is at present much neglected’, but that only ‘a trifling sum would be required, to put it into a decent state of tidiness, if not repair, and remove some disagreeable obstructions to the view of its architectural effects’.³⁸ Precisely this was achieved in 1858, when the architect John Milne rebuilt the nave.³⁹ A stone from the chapel graveyard, believed to be of Pictish origin, was discovered when Leuchars Castle was demolished in 1948, and is now on display in the church.

Distinctive Architectural Features of St Athernase

St Athernase has a typical Romanesque floor-plan, with a semi-circular apse and square chancel, and a long rectangular nave that is taller than the chancel. This plan can also be observed at Tynninghame and Dalmeny. It is generally agreed that St Cuthbert, Dalmeny is in a better state of preservation than St Athernase, but that the apse and chancel are among the finest surviving Norman masonry in any structure in Scotland. Interestingly, masons’ marks that are identical to some from Durham have been identified at Leuchars, suggesting a connection with the masons invited to Scotland by David I. However, Neil Cameron has suggested that local masons worked with the masters from England. In Cameron’s view, decorative features, such as grotesque head corbels, connect St Athernase directly with ‘Dalmeny, Dunfermline Abbey nave, and the destroyed north doorway of St Giles’ Cathedral, Edinburgh’, and unite these churches in a south-eastern Scottish Romanesque building tradition that he believes exhibits a coherence of artistic intent.⁴⁰

³⁸ Burton, *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, vol. III, pp. 1–2, plates 49–52.

³⁹ Martin Coventry and Joyce Miller, *A Wee Guide to Old Churches and Abbeys of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Goblinshead, 1997), p. 61.

⁴⁰ Neil Cameron, ‘Leuchars Church (St Athernase)’, in N. J. G. Pounds (ed.), *The St Andrews Area: Proceedings of the 137th Summer Meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute* (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Sons, 1991), p. 42.

There is evidence that the church was erected in three distinct phases; building commenced with the apse, and moved then to the chancel and finally the nave. The degree of ornamental stonework diminishes as the building progressed; the original nave was strikingly plain compared to the richly decorated apse. Robert Fraser, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, described the exterior of the apse:

[e]xternally there it is of two stages or storeys; the lower one consists of a range of two semicircular arches with zigzag or chevron mouldings resting in plain double pillars. Above these arches there is a band or fillet, and resting upon this is a range of nine smaller arches, supported by short pillars, each pair of which are separated by a small intervening pier. Each of the arches connecting the tops of those pillars consists of two rows of stones, the lower one ornamented with zigzag moulding and the upper one with billet moulding. The pillars of this upper arcade are placed over the centre of each of the lower arches. There are three windows in the upper tier, places on the intervals between the pillars; they are narrow and round-topped, and widen internally. At some distance above the upper tier of arches there is a range of *corbels* carved into grotesque heads, supporting the upper part of the wall which projects a little.⁴¹

The corbels are particularly individual and charming, including animals such as a ram and a bear, as well as more fantastical beasts. The exterior of the chancel is also decorated with two levels of blind arcading, which breaks up the mass of the walls, and there is a row of corbels in the form of carved human heads under the roofline. There are three windows in the chancel, two on the south side and one on the north, but in typical Romanesque fashion they are small and admit only limited light.

Viewed from outside the alien intrusion of the octagonal bell tower is clearly apparent, and the steep pitch of the chancel roof and the fine stonework of its walls renders the rebuilt, slightly higher nave a less than successful renovation, though it is broadly in keeping with what the original church would have looked like. Inside St Athernase, the stone vault of the roof is ‘a simple cross rib of three reeds, with two half-arches meeting in the centre and groined between’.⁴² The corbels supporting the half-arches are expertly

⁴¹ Fraser, *The Kirk and the Manse*, p. 198.

⁴² Fraser, *The Kirk and the Manse*, p. 199.

carved in the shape animal heads. There are two impressive arches that separate the distinct parts of the interior; between the apse and chancel, and between the chancel and the nave, which are decorated with chevron carving. The remainder of the roof is wooden, with no vaulting, and the floor of the church is partially paved with old tombstones and memorials. St Athernase, which is erected on high ground and surrounded by a small graveyard, is usually open to visit, and the impression conveyed to the modern tourist or pilgrim is one of great beauty and serenity.

History of the Parish Church of St Cuthbert, Dalmeny

It has already been signalled that Cameron posits a direct relationship between St Athernase and St Cuthbert, Dalmeny, in terms of the masons who worked on both buildings. Dalmeny is a village situated on the south side of the Firth of Forth, approximately eight miles to the west of the city of Edinburgh, and one mile from South Queensferry, where the medieval ferry bearing pilgrims to St Andrews crossed the Forth. The church is usually esteemed the best-preserved Scottish Norman Romanesque parish church.⁴³ St Cuthbert, like St Athernase, is built on raised ground and is surrounded by a small cemetery. This has been taken to indicate that it, too, has been a site of Christian worship since the early Middle Ages. Flora Johnston, author of the parish history, says of the etymology of Dalmeny, that ‘written in earlier forms as Dunmani and Dunmany, [it] may be the Gaelic Dun Manach meaning “place of the monks”.’⁴⁴ It is important to note that Johnston’s etymology is not definitive, as Reverend Thomas Robertson, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, commented that, ‘the original name of the parish, is said to mean, in Gaelic, a *black heath*, of which, probably, a great proportion of the higher grounds in it once consisted. The Gaelic, or Celtic, was the original tongue of the whole island; and the Gaelic names ... still prevail to a very great extent in it, particularly in

⁴³ Richard Foster, *Parish Churches of Britain* (Basingstoke: The Automobile Association, 1988), p. 110.

⁴⁴ Flora Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People* (Dalmeny: Church of Scotland, 2010), p. 11.

Scotland.’⁴⁵ Yet a connection of Dalmeny with early medieval Celtic saints is reflected in the three saints that the altars of the Norman church were dedicated to, Cuthbert, Adamnán, and Brigit.



St Cuthbert, Dalmeny. Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

It has been suggested that the original saint was Adamnán, and that a chapel dedicated to him existed on the site since the seventh century. The most renowned saint of this name is the biographer of Columba and subsequent abbot of Iona, but the likelier saint is Adamnán of Coldingham, an Irish monk who was a contemporary of Cuthbert (635–687). Coldingham, which was part of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, is now in the Scottish Borders.⁴⁶ Cuthbert, to whom the high altar of the Romanesque church was dedicated, was also associated with the Scottish Borders. Cuthbert (c. 634–687

⁴⁵ Rev. Mr Thomas Robertson, ‘Parish of Dalmeny’, in Sir John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn Up From the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William Creech Ltd, 1791), pp. 227–228.

⁴⁶ Simon Taylor, ‘Seventh-Century Iona Abbots in Scottish Place Names’, *The Innes Review* 48, issue 1 (1997), pp. 45–72.

CE) became a monk at Melrose in 651 CE and during his lifetime travelled through Scotland and the north of England, founding churches in St Andrews and Edinburgh, among other sites.⁴⁷ He became Bishop of Lindisfarne and was buried there, and after his death a devotional cult developed, focused on his relics. In 875 AD his body was exhumed when the monks abandoned Lindisfarne due to Vikings raids. His body rested at Melrose, Whithorn, Ripon, and Chester-le-Street, before he was re-buried in Durham's Norman cathedral in 1104 CE.⁴⁸ His tomb was a popular place of pilgrimage until the Reformation. In 1996 a heritage trail, St Cuthbert's Way, which is a sixty-two mile walk that connects Melrose in the Scottish Borders to Lindisfarne was inaugurated in his honour.⁴⁹

The third saint, Brigit of Kildare, is supposed to be a contemporary of Patrick, and thus connected to the Christianisation of Ireland in the fifth century AD. However, where Patrick is a historical figure who left writings, the *Confessio* and the *Letter to Coroticus*, no such historical texts exist for Brigit, and it is difficult to argue that she existed, as she is more than likely to have been a pagan goddess who was transmogrified into a saint.⁵⁰ She nevertheless was extremely popular in the medieval period (and continues to be so to the present day), and was accorded romantic titles such as 'the Mary of the Gael', linking her to the Blessed Virgin.⁵¹ All three saints are identified with 'Celtic' Christianity and the Britain of the early Middle Ages.

The church was erected from approximately 1160 AD under the patronage of a local noble, Gospatric III, Earl of Lothian. He was the

⁴⁷ Carole M. Cusack, 'History, Authenticity, and Tourism: Encountering the Medieval While Walking Saint Cuthbert's Way', in Alex Norman (ed.), *Journeys and Destinations: Studies in Travel, Identity, and Meaning* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013), pp. 1–21.

⁴⁸ John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of the Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300–1200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 167–168.

⁴⁹ Roger Noyce, *The Complete Guide to St Cuthbert's Way: Melrose to Holy Island and Holy Island to Melrose* (Wilmslow: Sigma Leisure, 1999), pp. iii–iv.

⁵⁰ Carole M. Cusack, 'Brigit: Goddess, Saint, and "Holy Woman", and Bone of Contention', in Victoria Barker and Frances di Lauro (eds), *On A Panegyric Note: Studies in Honour of Garry W. Trompf* (Sydney: Sydney Studies in Religion, 2007), pp. 75–97.

⁵¹ David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Saints*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 71.

grandson of Gospatric I, Earl of Northumbria, who had fled to Scotland after the Norman Conquest, and the son of Gospatric II, the Earl of Dunbar, patron of the parish of Edrom. The church, as Johnston emphasises, is very opulent for a small village like Dalmeny, and she speculates that it, too, was a pilgrim station on the route to St Andrews, which would strengthen the link between the Dalmeny and Leuchars churches.⁵² Visitors to the church have remarked on the grand design of its structure and the simple, but elegant, impression it creates. Fraser states that, ‘Dalmeny church is an edifice built in the purest Norman style. ... It is a solid, massive, quadrangle structure, without tower, aisles or transept. The arches are Norman with toothed mouldings’.⁵³ The original tower was destroyed, by accident or deliberately is not known, in the fifteenth century. In the early twentieth century, the tower was rebuilt as part of a restoration, which reversed unsympathetic alterations from previous centuries. During this repair work, some fragments of some of the earliest stained glass in Scotland were discovered, which is further testimony to the lavish scale of the church.

As was the case with Leuchars, the parish church at Dalmeny was gifted to a monastic institution, in this case Jedburgh Abbey, in approximately 1180 by Waldeve, the son of Gospatric III. At that time it was the third wealthiest parish in the region, with only Linlithgow and Kirkliston generating greater revenues. Like Leuchars there was also a crusading connection, with Sir Roger de Mowbray (c. 1120–1188) reputedly having prayed in St Cuthbert, Dalmeny, before setting off for the Holy Land. He was captured by the Saracens at the Battle of Hattin (1187), and ransomed by the Templars, but died before he could return to Scotland. Flora Johnston records a piece of local folklore, ‘that the howling of his faithful dog at his death—[which is] still to be heard on a dark windy night—is recalled in the name Hound’s Point, on the shores of the Forth a short distance from Barnbogle.’⁵⁴

At the Reformation, Dalmeny church became a Church of Scotland parish, and while there is little documentary evidence for it in the sixteenth century, the Kirk Sessions records are available from 1669 onwards, and it seems that punishment of sins, and in particular

⁵² Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 16.

⁵³ Fraser, *The Kirk and the Manse*, p. 73.

⁵⁴ Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 36.

sexual sins, was high on the agenda of the minister, the Reverend Alexander Hamilton. In 1670, ‘the Session agreed and ordained that all who fall in the sin of fornication before marriage should sit three Sabbaths on the black stool and they appointed John Erskine to sit for four for his relapse.’⁵⁵ This type of public chastisement was understood to be a vital part of creating a Godly society, along with other measures such as banning dancing, singing, music, and games, as Presbyterianism held a negative view of leisure generally, arguing that ‘idling away the precious time allotted to us by our Saviour’⁵⁶ was sinful, and that strict Sabbath observation should be mandated by law.

Distinctive Architectural Features of St Cuthbert

An exterior view of St Cuthbert, Dalmeny confirms the basic structure already described in St Athernase, Leuchars, of a semicircular apse, a square chancel, and a rectangular nave with a roofline loftier than that of both apse and chancel. Yet there are as many differences as similarities between the two buildings. The exterior walls at Dalmeny are far plainer than those of Leuchars, and a greater number of characteristically small arched Romanesque windows have survived in the apse and chancel. Under the roofline is a row of corbels in the shape of heads, and the great tower at the west end (though a modern restoration) gives a very different impression, as the incongruous bell turret at St Athernase sits atop the apse. The main entrance to the church is the south doorway, and there is a structure opposite on the north side of the church that Burton hypothesises ‘may possibly have been added as the commencement of a transept’.⁵⁷ Rev. Robertson praised the building’s harmonious proportions, likening them to a Greek temple:

[t]he parish church, from the style of its architecture, which is Saxon, or a mixed species between the Greek and the Gothic, seems to be about 7 or 8 hundred years old. It is a very elegant small fabric, all

⁵⁵ Quoted in Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 45.

⁵⁶ Joachim K. Rühl, ‘“Time Might be Better Bestowed, and Besides Wee See Sin Acted”,’ *British Journal of Sports History* 1, no 2 (September 1984), p. 125.

⁵⁷ Burton, *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, vol. I, pp. 1–2, plates 58–60.

cut of stone, 84 feet long by 25 broad, but the breadth diminishes towards the tribune, or rounded east end. The great door and windows have semicircular pediments ornamented with many mouldings, and supported by on the sides by single round columns, without any diminution. The windows have a very elegant Grecian appearance, and were it not for the Gothic capitals of the columns, and the shafts being too thick for their height, the whole thing might be taken for Greek architecture.⁵⁸

The discovery of the cist graves at Leuchars has no exact parallel at Dalmeny, but an empty medieval stone sarcophagus was noted as an interesting antiquity by observers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The south door is a typical, elaborately ornamented, rather narrow Norman doorway, although it lacks figure sculpture, having no tympanum. Above the doorway is an intricately carved blind arcade of rounded arches. This is capped by a row of corbels directly underneath the roofline. On either side are ‘two very weathered figures carved at the springing of the arches, one of which represents a Norman knight.’⁵⁹ Flora Johnston emphasises that a medieval church door had great significance to the parishioners who entered it, because it ‘symbolised the transition point between the house of God and the ordinary world, and was the location for parts of the baptism, marriage and funeral ceremonies.’⁶⁰ As the majority of medieval Christians were illiterate, the illustrations carved into the stones of their churches were important pedagogic tools in their religious instruction.

The doorway itself was ornamented in great detail, with two sequences of images, an inner row of thirteen voussoirs and outer row of seventeen voussoirs. The inner row has been identified by some commentators as depicting the signs of the zodiac but careful examination would suggest that this is not so. Rather there are thirteen carvings, mostly of beasts, with Christian meanings deducible from medieval bestiaries. The images are, in order: a phoenix; a naked male and female sitting facing each other, surrounded by flames; a basilisk; a dragon; a sea-monster; an eagle; a hart; a pelican; fighting dragons; a lion; a griffin; a serpent; and the

⁵⁸ Robertson, ‘Parish of Dalmeny’, pp. 235–236.

⁵⁹ Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 24.

Agnus Dei, the symbol of Christ as a lamb, with a banner bearing a cross. Johnston describes the outer row as follows,

fabulous images are alternated with projecting masks. One of these masks is wearing the branks, or ‘scold’s bridal’—an iron punishment device worn mainly by women who have been accused of gossip, slander or cursing. The Dalmeny sculptor brought local references into his carving. One stone clearly depicts an enthroned king who may well be David I or his son Malcolm IV. A knight on horseback with sword and shield is probably Gospatric himself, and another stone which probably shows a knight kneeling before the king may represent the investiture of Gospatric.⁶¹



Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

⁶¹ Johnston, *Dalmeny Church: Faith, History, and the People*, p. 25.

Certain of these images are relatively easy to interpret, as the dragons and sea monsters have their origin in Leviathan and Rahab from the Old Testament, the pelican was an image of Christ as it was believed to feed its young with its own blood, King David I had a vision of a stag which may be identified with the hart, and the Agnus Dei balances the image of the couple who may be experiencing the flames of damnation, or the purifying fires of purgatory.



Memento Mori gravestone, St Cuthbert Dalmeny. Photographed by Don Barrett, June 2012.

The interior of St Cuthbert has also been much admired. It is spacious and serene, with impressive ceiling vaults, and elegant sculptured arches separating the segments of the building, nave, chancel, and apse. Robertson noted that,

the chief beauty of this church is the inside, which strikes every spectator when entering from the west. About half of the church from the east end is covered with vaulted roofs, commencing with a large semicircular arch, and divided into two equal parts, by a smaller arch further east. The arches are richly adorned with successive tiers of moulding, chiefly in a starry shape ... The church of Warthwick in England ... which was built before the times of William the Conqueror, has a striking resemblance to this at Dalmeny, but is far inferior in points of embellishment.⁶²

Finally, the small cemetery of Dalmeny church is very picturesque and has many carved headstones and memorials, which although later than the Norman church fabric often exhibit fine workmanship and allow the visitor to learn a little of the church's parishioners in more recent times. Several of the memorials feature the skull and crossed bones motif prominently, which folklorist Raymond Lamont-Brown connects with two impulses: '[t]o keep the souls of dead people within the area of the grave, thus stopping it returning to haunt its former home; and, secondly, to keep demons away from the cadaver.'⁶³ Whatever the truth of these superstitions, these sinister carved stones are a further feature contributing to the appeal of this fascinating church, and the beautiful village it is located in.

Conclusion

This article has examined the parish churches of St Athernase, Leuchars and St Cuthbert, Dalmeny. Though both are among the finest examples of Norman Romanesque in Scotland, they have to date received little scholarly attention, and information about both churches is fragmentary and scattered. The existing scholarship was critically examined, and a close relationship between the two churches has been established. They were likely built by the same

⁶² Robertson, 'Parish of Dalmeny', p. 236.

⁶³ Raymond Lamont-Brown, *Mysteries and Legends* (Edinburgh: Spurbooks, 1982), p. 22.

team of masons, possibly local craftsmen under the leadership of a master mason from Durham, with Dalmeny commenced in the 1160s, slightly earlier than Leuchars, which was begun in the 1170s. Both were also probably minor pilgrimage stops along the route from Edinburgh to St Andrews, a popular journey of devotion to the nation's patron saint in the later medieval period. Both remain in a superior state of preservation in the twenty-first century, given that they suffered the depredations of conversion to the Reformed form of worship (which often involved the defacement of representational carvings, and indeed any ornament whatsoever). Where Dalmeny lost its tower and now has a modern replacement, it is unclear whether Leuchars ever had a tower, unless it was at the opposite end of the church to the later octagonal bell-tower, erected above the apse in the seventeenth century. Finally, both churches have historic connections with the Crusades and with royal and aristocratic patronage.

The survival of two such fine Norman Romanesque parish churches in Scotland is unusual, and the majority of the other remaining comparable churches are now ruins. These include: St Mary's Chapel on Wyre, in the Orkneys; St Martin's Kirk, Haddington, St Blane's, Kingarth, and St Baldred's, Tynninghame, all of which were mentioned in this article; St Mary's Kirk, Auchindoir, Muthill Old Church, and Edrom with its reconstructed Norman doorway. Apart from Leuchars and Dalmeny, there are only three Norman Romanesque parish churches (as opposed to buildings like St Margaret's Chapel, protected by its locating within Edinburgh Castle) that survive in varying degrees of authenticity. These are: Birnie Kirk, Moray; St Mary's Church, Rothesay (on Bute); and St Mungo's, Stobo, near the Borders town of Peebles. All have been rebuilt to some extent, some quite dramatically. Fawcett, Oram, and Luxford's study of medieval fabric that survived in the parish churches of the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld argues that Scottish Protestant leaders 'abhorred ... medieval church buildings ... as the focus of idolatrous forms of worship' and that the only reason most were not demolished immediately and replaced was that

‘the funding base of the reformed Church ... [had] not adequate means for wholesale replacement’.⁶⁴

Large cathedral or monastic churches were often retained only in part, the interiors of all churches were stripped of decorative elements, and a majority of structures were substantially rebuilt between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. St Athernase, Leuchars and St Cuthbert, Dalmeny are important for architectural history as examples of the Norman Romanesque style in the south-west of Scotland (where another of the three other notable surviving Norman churches, Stobo, is also located) and are typical of all Scottish parish churches built in that style in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in floor plan and decorative elements. The detailed research of Fawcett et al reveals the extent to which the survival of these two churches was an accident of history, given that systematic programme of: rebuilding on the same sites as medieval churches; rebuilding using salvaged materials on new sites; and the general rendering of continuing church buildings as devoid of recognizably medieval features.⁶⁵ Both Leuchars and Dalmeny have been altered from their twelfth century form, but in relatively minor ways, that enables the contemporary visitor to experience them still as exemplary instances of Scottish Norman Romanesque.

⁶⁴ Richard Fawcett, Richard Oram, and Julian Luxford, ‘Scottish Medieval Parish Churches: The Evidence From the Dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 90 (2010), p. 262.

⁶⁵ Fawcett et al, ‘Scottish Medieval Parish Churches: The Evidence From the Dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld’, pp. 261–2.

