

<b>Institution:</b> University of Stirling		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28. History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Place-making and community-building through ecclesiastical heritage: Dunfermline Abbey, Fife		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> c.2008-present		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Richard Oram Dr Michael Penman Dr Thomas Turpie	Dean of Arts & Humanities Senior Lecturer in History RA in History Lecturer (0.2FTE, T&S)	2002-present 2000-present 5/3/12-4/9/13; 27/5/19-24/7/19 12/1/15-29/5/15; 16/1/17- 15/3/17; 1/5/17-31/7/17; 1/10/17-31/12/18
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> c.2015-Dec 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Stirling researchers' inter-disciplinary investigation of Dunfermline Abbey, Fife, has directly informed the redevelopment of major heritage attractions in the shared custody of local authorities and conservation agencies. This work has occurred within a context of publicly funded regional and national regeneration initiatives and raised the level of knowledge and awareness of custodians, practitioners, and the visiting public. It has ignited collaboration between these bodies and local groups, contributing to: a reprioritisation of heritage planning; the inclusion of ongoing research within the funding applications and programmes of regeneration initiatives; and an enhanced sense of place and cultural significance which has grown to inspire plans for wider community linkage.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The Benedictine Abbey of Dunfermline in Fife is a site of international importance as the royal mausoleum of the Scottish kingdom c.1070-c.1358. It lay along a confluence of medieval pilgrim routes towards St Andrews and is celebrated as a royal cult centre around St Margaret (d.1093) and as the burial site of Robert I/Bruce (d.1329). However, modern custodial arrangements – a split between the Abbey Church Kirk Session, Fife Council and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) – have resulted in fragmented heritage interpretation. This has led to an over-focus on Bruce, to the neglect of the Abbey's wider spiritual, political and cultural importance. Stirling researchers thus undertook research which radically reframed understanding of the site.</p> <p><b>Oram</b> and early-career RA <b>Turpie</b> collaborated with St Andrews University (2008-13) on the <i>Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches</i>. In exploring Dunfermline as one of St Andrews diocese's 261 parishes, this project synthesised pre- and post-Reformation (1560) church records, pre-1900 antiquarian papers, and post-1900 archaeological excavation to co-author a monograph-length study (<b>R1</b>) of this monastic house with parochial function. This identified unprecedented detail for Dunfermline's architectural phases under royal patronage, and unnoticed altars with liturgical dedications/settings which reflected the abbey's regional identity and wider networks.</p> <p><b>Penman's</b> research of modern commemoration (<b>R2</b>) revealed the political and cultural forces which contested Bruce's memory and shaped local and national engagement with Dunfermline Abbey following discovery in 1818 of what were believed to be Bruce's remains during clearing of the medieval abbey choir ruins in advance of building a new Protestant 'Abbey Church'. Penman's research into royal piety (<b>R3/4</b>) also raised liturgical questions as to identification of these remains. Reassessing the historical and antiquarian evidence, and drawing comparisons with Benedictine mausoleums elsewhere in the British Isles and Europe, Penman suggested alternative locations and liturgical meaning for Bruce's tomb relative to the Abbey's many other burials and cult settings.</p> <p>The cumulative weight of this research led to Penman's successful proposal to the Abbey Church Kirk Session (28/8/15) that historical research, ground-penetrating radar [GPR], liturgy and digital visualisation be combined to explore the overbuilt Abbey choir. Three seasons of non-invasive survey (2016-19) were undertaken by a team led by Erica Carrick Utsi of EMC Radar Consulting,</p>		

assisted by Penman. Impact was developed throughout these seasons and subsequently from the project's key findings disseminated by publication (R5), public talks and heritage media:

- GPR evidence for c.15 potential elite burials with a focus around the north-side Lady Chapel/Aisle (including possible double-tombs) and St Margaret's east-end shrine.
- GPR, archival and liturgical evidence for the high altar settings and alternative Bruce tomb locations within the central presbytery.
- GPR evidence for a hitherto unnoticed southern transept chapel/aisle dedicated to St John the Baptist, thus part of a symmetrical pilgrimage ambulatory.
- Archaeological and record evidence which raises the possibility that the 'Bruce grave' discovered in 1818 was a post-1560 intrusion.
- Cautious synthesis of the GPR with the Oram/Turpie *Corpus* work and Penman's research to recreate the choir's medieval ground-plan with functioning Trinitarian, Marian and royal liturgical space and calendar, revealing its complex development over time and its similarities to/differences from other major European royal churches.
- The impact of interaction with the site's remains c.1560-c.1930, especially during the Cromwellian, 'Psalter churchyard', and modern civic improvement periods.

Details of all projects and outputs can be accessed at <https://www.dunfgpr.stir.ac.uk>

### 3. References to the research

**R1.** R. Fawcett, J. Luxford, R.D. Oram & T. Turpie, [A Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches](#) (2008-13), entry for [Dunfermline Abbey](#). Two-stage AHRC award (AH/F010079/1 & AH/I026499/1), Stirling share GBP16,888 + GBP146,278 [PI Oram].

**R2.** M. Penman, 'Robert Bruce's Bones: Reputations, Politics and Identities in Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 34 (2009), pp. 7-73. GBP3,000 Strathmartine and Hunter Archaeological Trusts grants [PI Penman].

**R3.** M. Penman, *Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots* (Yale & New Haven, 2014), 480pp.

**R4.** M. Penman, 'Head, Body and heart: Legitimizing Kingship and the burial of Robert Bruce, Scotland's 'Leper King', ca. 1286-1329', *Micrologus, XXII – Le Corps du Prince* (2014), 229-52.

**R5.** M. Penman and E.C. Utsi, [In Search of the Scottish Royal Mausoleum at Dunfermline Abbey, Fife: Medieval History, Liturgy, Antiquarianism and a Ground-Penetrating Radar Pilot Survey, 2016-19](#) (2020) – 164pp open-access report (90% by Penman) at <https://dunfgpr.stir.ac.uk/>. Funding (all PI Penman): 2016 - GBP1,000 GWS Barrow Award, GBP3,700 Strathmartine Trust; 2017- GBP7,400 Royal Society of Edinburgh; 2019 - GBP2,000 Hunter Archaeological Trust.

### 4. Details of the impact

The beneficiaries of Stirling's research have been local government, community groups and national agencies, principally Dunfermline Abbey Church Kirk Session, Fife Council, and HES. These bodies are represented on the **Dunfermline Heritage Partnership** (DHP, f. 2017) which coordinates all strategic regeneration initiatives to enhance service linkages, access, hospitality/retail, and the visitor experience in and around Dunfermline's 'heritage quarter'.

#### Historical knowledge and interpretation

Penman's activity and research has **directly raised awareness of the Abbey's historical importance and shaped the content of history and heritage (re-) presented within the Abbey Church, enhancing its value to custodians, locals and visitors alike**. Throughout 2016-20, Penman disseminated interim results from his GPR surveys and archival research. He interacted with 150+ members of the public on scan days and delivered over a dozen lectures/conference papers throughout Scotland and elsewhere in the British Isles (e.g. Sheffield, Oxford, Dublin) and France (Sorbonne IV) to 600+ attendees. Bi-centenary celebrations for Dunfermline's 19<sup>th</sup>-century Abbey Church saw Penman's research included in a commemorative play, 'Bones, Boggles and Coronets' (Mar 2018, 300+ attendees), and he designed a series of five public lectures exploring the Abbey's heritage (Nov 2019, 500+ subscribers). Delivering two of these lectures (now podcast on [YouTube](#), c.300 views to date), Penman shared the GPR results and, crucially, their liturgical interpretation as evidence of the full layout and possible programme of Catholic worship and burial within the Abbey's lost choir. He also produced a six-minute summary slideshow of findings as part of the Abbey Church's new digital exhibits alongside HES's *Lost Tomb of Robert the Bruce*

display (Sept 2020). These activities have contributed to a c.35-40% rise in Abbey Church/Abbey & Palace site visitor numbers recorded by the Kirk Session and HES across 2017-19.

The testimony of Rvd Rennie (**S1a**) emphasises Penman's research and engagement as enabling Abbey Church guides to **'enhance their offering'** to the c.20,000 visitors to their half of the site per season for 2017-19 (with c.25% from overseas). She stresses that 'this was one of a number of elements that invited us to rethink how we as a church community tell our story to the world'.

This included using Stirling's research to **'recover the significance and shape of the previous incarnation of the building [by] re-visioning the internal space of the current church.'** In 2019, the Abbey Church north aisle was cleared of pews to admit new heritage displays which speak to the medieval abbey's Marian and Margaret cult veneration and the disposition over time of over 20 royal family burials, not just that of Bruce. Penman's activity also **empowered locals to contribute knowledge** which further informed his research and, in turn, heritage interpretation at the Church. For example, Abbey Church Guide Pirrie's contributions as to the source of fossiliferous marble used in the lost choir's fittings, helped confirm a marble fragment on site as mislabelled by HES and in fact part of the lost medieval high altar. Pirrie attests that the GPR project overall 'gives insight and an increased ability to highlight, in chronological order, various aspects of its history, importance and why it survives as a working church. It will enable me to **encourage people to bring the past to life and enhance their visit'** (**S1c**; **S8** pp. 97-9, 122-3).

Oram, Turpie and Penman were all invited speakers at a HES workshop in Dunfermline (8 May 2018, 50+ academic, practitioner and custodial attendees) which reassessed the Abbey site's records, cults, relics and interpretation. Penman subsequently shared his GPR project findings with c.35 HES practitioners in a workshop (27 Feb 2020) and **enhanced the (inter-)national heritage record** by depositing (20 Oct 2020) the final project report and its GPR data in HES's open-access CANMORE digital database at <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2103329/details/> (**R5/S8**, c.450 downloads to date: 37% USA, 33% Europe, 21% UK & Ireland, 12% other). Hailed as a 'rigorous' multidisciplinary study by HES Cultural Resources Manager Strachan (**S4c**) which 'really advances the frontiers of knowledge' [Peer Review], this final report **pioneers a research model which HES now plan to apply to further ecclesiastical sites** in their care (not least by deploying Utsi's GPR technique of scanning at 25cm intervals, not the industry standard 50cm).

Moreover, the report **changed HES practitioners' attitudes**, challenging Dunfermline's absence from that agency's list of 'priority' sites (2016-17). Interpretation Officer Gall notes it has **'strengthened the case for investing in further interpretive development' of HES's Abbey nave site**, 'helping us understand and plan how to communicate a more real sense of medieval worship' by parishioners and pilgrims, with a 'rebalanced focus' on St Margaret and her saintly husband and son within the layout of the church as a whole, and including the newly discovered south aisle chapel: 'the research will inform **the revision of our existing interpretative materials** (including illustrations, guidebook, interpretation panels and website information) as well as providing a direction for newly created materials and learning resources' (**S4a**). Penman's development of an unsuccessful AHRC-application (2019, **S5d**) to combine GPR and 3-D visualisation of the choir in collaboration with site custodians, is also credited as prompting emerging HES plans for re-presentation of the nave and Margaret's shrine to include **digital interpretation (S4a/c)**.

Overall, Stirling's inter-disciplinary approach to the patronal, architectural, liturgical and spiritual history of the site is thus (re-)**shaping the future updating of the HES Property-in-Care 'Statement of Significance'** which serves to guide conservation, research and interpretation planning for Dunfermline Abbey and Palace. Similar approaches to and outcomes for church heritage (including GPR) formed part of HES-commissioned research contracts subsequently awarded to Oram and early-career RAs for St Andrews Cathedral Priory and Arbroath Abbey (Mar 2018, GBP44,052). These themes also form the core of Oram's evolving *Perth Charterhouse* project with Perth Council, the University of the Highlands & Islands and Glasgow School of Art & Design (see <http://www.kingjames1ofscotland.co.uk/>).

Moreover, Stirling's work **facilitated further links to parallel Fife heritage projects**. Turpie's *Corpus* research under Oram of St Andrews diocese, and his ground-breaking monograph (2015) on the development of Scottish medieval saints' cults, led to his commission from Fife Cultural

Trust to deliver a scoping report of evidence for Fife saint church dedications, patronage and relics (2016, 119pp, **S7a**). This informed route and historic content decision-making for a new *Fife Pilgrim Way*, awarded GBP400,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This 64-mile walking and cycling network opened in July 2019, attracting c.25,000 users in its first year, including offshoot Dunfermline footfall (see <https://www.visitscotland.org/news/2019/pilgrim-way-unveiled>). Turpie's research had direct input into the location and content of two impressive 'gateway' heritage boards (Markinch and Lochore), a mobile exhibition, smartphone app, map downloads and guided public lectures. Via *Pilgrim Way* representation on the DHP, this work in turn **contributed to Dunfermline's positioning as a hub along this heritage network**, echoing St Margaret's medieval importance, and connecting to Penman's raising awareness about the full spiritual significance of Dunfermline's choir and its pilgrimage ambulatory with multiple Margaret and Virgin feasts. This was reflected in the development of separate *St Margaret* and *Royal Burial* strands as two of six digital and volunteer tours linking central DHP initiatives with partner heritage attractions (DHP Minutes, 21 Nov 2017; <https://dunfermline.com/dunfermline-stories-articles>).

### **Fostering collaboration, further research and planning**

The DHP embraces Fife Council, Fife Cultural Trust, Fife Pilgrim Way, the Abbey Church, the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust and Birthplace Museum, Dunfermline Carnegie Library & Gallery (DCLG), Abbot House Trust, Dunfermline & West Fife Local Tourism Association, Visit Scotland and HES. As early as May 2016, these stakeholders collectively recognised the potential value and cultural significance of Stirling's research by committing to support Penman's GPR search for the lost Abbey choir and tombs as a **'cornerstone' of regional plans for regeneration around Dunfermline's heritage quarter** (**S5a**, pp. 53, 80, 82). In 2017 Penman was invited to be (to date) the only non-Fife based or academic DHP member, attending bi-monthly meetings and participating in key network events (e.g. *Design Dunfermline*, May 2018, 400+ participants).

The DHP Chair believes inclusion of Stirling's research, where no such element had featured at concept stage, thus brought **'credibility and reputational value'** and **'significantly enhanced' successful DHP applications** for 2018-21 (**S2a**). These secured a GBP288,000 HLF *Great Places* award and a GBP190,000 Scottish Enterprise Tourism Destination Fund award (**S5b, c**), matched to GBP131,000 and GBP149,000 initial local investment respectively (**S5e**). DHP *Great Place* Project Manager Williams affirms that Penman shaped core messaging and his 'passionate story-telling' (**S2b**) informed connections between the medieval church and subsequent Dunfermline people, events and heritage assets. For example, his investigation of polymath scholar and planner Patrick Geddes' abortive plans for the Abbey quarter's inclusion in wider town regeneration drawn up for the new Carnegie Trust in 1904: these links **'pulled groups together and helped inform the strategic direction of Dunfermline's medieval story to the present day'** (**S2b**).

DHP Fife Councillor Hall-Muir (**S3a**) stresses the 'scale of Penman's invaluable contributions not only regarding the GPR works, but even more importantly to wider cross-community heritage projects. He has brought a level of expertise, collaboration and information that has enriched many other local projects'. For example, his GPR findings and use of local archives to reveal the 'Psalter' period of town burials c.1560-c.1818, plus his inclusion of community excavation plans in his 2019 AHRC-bid, **fed directly into the establishment of the Dunfermline Abbey Graveyards Project** (2019-), funded by Fife Council. This has seen the Council, Abbey Church, HES, DCLG, Dunfermline Community Heritage Projects and Youth Archaeology Club collaborate to better understand the archaeological layers of the burial grounds and their cultural importance to locals, especially post-1560. Stirling Honorary Research Associate, Dr Susan Buckham, an expert in churchyard management, was commissioned as project manager, producing a scoping report of historical resources (1/20, **S7b**) and a network of volunteers to collate community memories of the graveyards ([Friends of Dunfermline Abbey](#), 188 members to date).

HES's Interpretation Officer also testifies to Penman's having **'fostered closer joint working both through [his] process and findings'** (**S4a**). By sharing knowledge, linking documentary sources with the archaeology, problematising questions for future research, and generally **'raising the level of debate'**, Penman helped transcend past custodial demarcation issues. Abbey Church Session Clerk Williams agrees that Penman's presentation of his findings to HES through 2019-

20 'helped raise awareness [with that agency] of the significance of the Abbey and increase interest in the potential for developing the site as part of the *Heart of Dunfermline* project' (**S1b**).

The latter will be an ambitious COVID-delayed HLF-application (**S9a**) led by the Kirk Session, Fife Council and HES, tied to HES's new *Interim Interpretation Plan: Dunfermline Abbey* (Sept. 2019, **S6**), and designed to present **a single, integrated history of the shared site for the first time**; an approach urged by Penman to overcome the traditionally fragmented visitor experience. Acknowledging the importance of Stirling's research to date (**S6** pp. 5, 25) and of future collaboration (including more GPR) to answer further questions, these plans detail the desirability of co-building heritage infrastructure focussed upon St Margaret's shrine, with multi-media displays recreating the lost choir and nave while conveying to visitors the related 'layers' of worship and burial and their meaning over time, in sum a full architectural, liturgical and cultural 'biography' of the Abbey.

### Place-making and community-building

Inspired by the DHP's ethos and success in facilitating activities and access for a wide variety of local groups, including societies, charities and schools, Cllr Hall-Muir and Session Clerk Williams have begun to develop some outreach aspects of the *Heart of Dunfermline* project. They testify here (**S9 b, c**, 9/20, following their collaboration with him on both the DHP and Graveyards Project), to their approach to Penman and (to date only) Stirling's Faculties of Arts & Humanities and Social Science to provide post-COVID public talks, workshops and courses. These would start with Dunfermline's rich ecclesiastical heritage but expand to embrace related themes such as literature, policy/tics, faith, culture, social problems, environment, tourism, well-being etc. These would be delivered in Fife Council's revived Abbot House heritage hub, next to the Abbey Church and medieval nave. They would form part of **regenerative pastoral provision** to support a widening regional network of third sector agencies, businesses, education, volunteers, and vulnerable groups. This speaks to Rvd Rennie's wish, inspired by Stirling's research and other elements, 'to reimagine the purpose and use of the Abbey Precinct' (**S1a**).

In the spirit of this endeavour, a 2022 public conference and exhibition around Patrick Geddes' 1904 Dunfermline plan, in part visioning the town's future, will include current research by Penman and Buckham, organised by Dunfermline's *Great Place* Scheme and the Carnegie Trust of Dunfermline [CDT] with design input from Penman. Fife Council's former Community Manager, now CDT CEO, Gillian Taylor, affirms that Penman's GPR project was 'referenced in the wider Dunfermline Community Planning Partnership as an excellent example of place-making work' and thus continues 'to bring people together' as projects evolve and aspire to a long-term legacy (**S3b**).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1.** Testimonials, Dunfermline Abbey Church: **a.** Rvd MaryAnn Rennie; **b.** Session Clerk David Williams; **c.** Abbey Guide Elaine Pirrie.
- S2.** Testimonials, DHP: **a.** Chair; **b.** *Great Place* Project Manager Grant Williams. **c.** Dunfermline Digital Tours Project Manager Mark MacLeod (Fife Cultural Trust)
- S3.** Testimonials, Fife Council: **a.** Chair of Abbey Graveyards Project Cllr Jean Hall-Muir; **b.** Community Manager (now CEO Carnegie Dunfermline Trust) Gillian Taylor.
- S4.** Testimonials, HES: **a.** Interpretation Officer Sally Gall; **b.** Senior Cultural Resources Advisor Dr Nicki Scott; **c.** Head of Cultural Resources Richard Strachan.
- S5.** Funding Applications: **a.** *Implementation Plan for Dunfermline Heritage* (2016); **b.** DHP HLF application (2017); **c.** DHP Scottish Enterprise application (2017); **d.** Penman AHRC application (2019). **e.** 7/12/18 letter of Cllr Helen Law, City of Dunfermline Area Committee Convenor.
- S6.** **a.** HES *Interim Interpretation Plan: Dunfermline Abbey* (September 2019) and **b.** consultation.
- S7.** Commissioned Reports: **a.** T. Turpie, *Fife Pilgrim Way: Report Detailing Historical References to Pilgrimage and the Cult of the Saints in Fife* (119pp., 2016); **b.** S. Buckham, *Dunfermline Abbey Burial Grounds Desk-top Survey* (29pp., 2020).
- S8.** **a.** M. Penman/E.C. Utsi Interpretive Report (164pp. 2020) via University of Stirling, HES CANMORE, Abbey Church websites; **b.** HES CANMORE deposit/IP contract.
- S9.** *Heart of Dunfermline Project*: **a.** initial HLF application (2020); **b.** Hall-Muir email correspondence re Abbot's House (30/9/20); **c.** Visioning Workshop report (7/9/20).