

HOLYROOD ABBEY AND PALACE
OUTLINE CHRONOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

(Richard Fawcett notes)

THE ABBEY

1128 Founded by David I for Augustinian Canons, from Merton (Surrey).
Principal surviving feature is SE processional doorway; but basic cruciform aisle-less plan identified through excavation in 1909.

c.1190-mid 13th C. Major campaign of reconstruction started, resulting in 6-bay aisled choir (eventually with additional outer aisle on S side), 3-bay transepts with E chapel aisle and central tower, 8-bay aisled nave with twin W towers projecting out from W front. Only nave survives above foundations, and of this the building sequence was:

1. lower N aisle wall
2. upper N aisle wall
3. rest of nave, started c. 1210

Nave was 3-storeyed design with triforium and sexpartite vaulting inspired by Lincoln.

As part of same campaign conventual buildings probably rebuilt, main survivor from this period being partial foundations of octagonal chapter house.

1460x83 Abbot Crawford stabilised vaulting, added buttressing (on S side spanning cloister walk), built N doorway and added N aisle screen.

1487x1503 Abbot Bellenden leaded the roof and provided the bells.

1544 & 1547 Abbey attacked by English under earl of Hertford (later duke of Somerset), leaving the choir devastated. (The 'Rough Wooing')

1559 Abbey probably 'cleansed' by Reformers.

c.1570 Bishop Bothwell of Orkney (commendator of abbey through exchange with earl of Orkney in 1568) given permission to demolish all but the nave.

1633 Scottish Coronation of Charles I in the abbey church preceded by major remodelling, of which main evidence is reticulated E window and modifications to W front. Work probably directed by James Murray and Anthony Alexander.

1639 Tomb of Viscount Belhaven made for N tower by John Schorman (copied from Nicholas Stone's tomb for Viscount Dorchester in Westminster Abbey).

1686-7 James VII made nave into chapel royal for Catholic worship and for revived Order of Thistle. James Smith was in charge of masonry and William Morgan of woodwork; Grinling Gibbons carved images for altar. Abbey congregation was decanted into Canongate Church.

1688 Abbey ransacked by the mob.

1758 Barons of Exchequer had vaulting covered with stone flags.

1768 Roof collapsed, leaving nave in ruins.

1816 Tracery of E window renewed.

1836 James Gillespie Graham drew up proposals for restoring abbey as hall for General Assembly.

1906 Thomas Ross drew up plans for restoring abbey for Order of Thistle.

1909 & 1924 Abbey excavated

1991 Abbey consolidated

Royal burials in abbey include:

- | | |
|------|----------|
| 1371 | David II |
| 1460 | James II |

THE PALACE

Monasteries had a duty of hospitality to their founders and the successors of those founders; this meant that royal abbeys were frequently used as royal residences, with special buildings eventually being raised for royal occupation. In some cases (most notably at Holyrood and Dunfermline), the royal use outlived the monastic use and buildings originally provided for the monastery were adapted for royal use.

- 1430 The future James II born in the abbey.
- 1449 At the time of James II's marriage to Mary of Gueldres work was under way on the royal residence. (Was this a range running W from SW tower of the abbey church, on the site of the inner part of the present N range?)
- c.1503 James IV carried out major works to create an appropriate residence W of the cloister, probably in the form of a quadrangle occupying much of the area of the present palace. He also built a gatehouse to the designs of Walter Merlioun, of which one wall survives.
- 1528-32 James V added the tower at the NW angle of his father's palace. It was probably designed by John Ayton. (Tower has heraldic panels with arms of Mary of Guise and initials of James V.)
- 1535-6 James V remodelled the W range of his father's palace, probably to the designs of John Brownhill.
- 1617 Repairs carried out for homecoming of James VI. By this stage the palace had absorbed many buildings originally built for the abbey, including two large courtyards S of the main body of the palace. The N range of the palace was probably also doubled in width by this stage.
- 1622 Further repairs.
- 1658 An upper storey added to the W range in the time of Cromwell.
- 1663 A survey of the palace carried out by John Mylne, showing its full extent.
- 1671 William Bruce and Robert Mylne began to draw up schemes for rebuilding main quadrangle of palace for Charles II. First proposals included 3 apartments – for king, queen and heir to throne. King demanded much simpler scheme. But sample bay for pillastered facades to quadrangle built at NW corner, and accepted.
Foundation inscription ascribes work to Robert Mylne.
- 1672 Contract for work signed.

First scheme was only for new SW tower to balance that of James V, and for new N, E and S ranges, with 'piazzas' around ground floor and 3 storeys of pilasters to courtyard: Tuscan at base, Ionic to piano nobile and Corinthian to 2nd floor. Central pediment of E range has royal arms and crowned initials of Charles II.
- 1674 Shell of building largely complete and partly roofed.
- 1676 Decision taken to rebuild W range of quadrangle. Frontispiece, based on design by Alessandro Francini, with royal arms and initials of Charles II above doorway. Clock face is dated 1860.
- 1678 Sir William Bruce deprived of office and work left incomplete, though continued sporadically up to 1679. Estimate of 1681 costed works still to be completed at £1,510.
Charles never visited his new Scottish palace.
- 1753 James IV's forecourt gateway largely demolished.
- 1822 George IV visited Scotland and the palace – the first ruling monarch to visit Scotland since Charles II. Several buildings to S of palace were demolished in advance of visit under direction of Robert Reid, and works were also done to courthouse. This work continued after the visit. On 7 September Reid estimated cost of works needed on palace at £18,155 plus £6,600 for the stables and courthouse.
- 1836 Reid reported the main external works on palace completed, but that much required to be done internally.
- 1856 Plate glass window installed. New approach road laid out.
- 1859 Forecourt fountain built, to designs of Robert Matheson and based on one at Linlithgow.
- 1861 Stables (incorporating Reid's courthouse) built to designs of Robert Matheson.