

3: The Medieval Church

The church was very powerful in Moray from the 12th to the 16th centuries with Elgin Cathedral at its centre. Before the building of the cathedral, the seats of the Bishops of Moray were variously situated at Birnie, Kinneddar and Spynie. There were also important abbeys at Kinloss and Pluscarden and a priory at Urquhart. The Blackfriar and Greyfriar orders also had priories in Elgin and streets still bear these names.

Urquhart

Nothing remains on this site; even the well has been covered and lost. The stank (fishpond) still remains as an area of marshy ground where several possible medieval lead fishing weights have been recovered.

1. Medieval stone carved head

From Urquhart, showing Celtic influence in design, possibly from the Priory.

ELGNM: 1996.45

2. Pillar

From the Priory site at Urquhart, with chevron moulding typical of the 12th century. It was donated in 1861 by Rev. James Morrison, local minister and historian.

ELGNM: 1861.3

Elgin High Street – St Giles

3. Crucifix

From the old St Giles, Elgin, found in 1827. Stamped INRI, the acronym for *Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum*, translated as Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.

ELGNM: 1848.1

4. Medieval wheel-headed cross slab, grave marker

This 14th century grave marker was re-used as a paving slab in the 19th century, and was found during excavation to build a cellar in the area of Elgin's Plainstones, a known former graveyard. It was claimed as Treasure Trove (TT42/96) and purchased by The Moray Society for Elgin Museum with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 1996.46

Elgin Cathedral

Founded in 1224, its splendour was a statement of the wealth and power of the Church.

5. Cast of head with three faces

The original is described by H.B. Mackintosh (1914): "On a skewput on the east wall of the staircase [of the Precentor's Manse or so-called Bishop's House, otherwise known as Dunfermline House, near the Cathedral] is a Trinity of heads consisting of three faces looking to dexter, front and sinister; there are four eyes. A splendid cast of this is in the Museum. Above this is the date ANODNI 1557". The three faces represent the Holy Trinity in Christian belief.

It has been described as a very fine example of late 13th century sculpture, showing French influences, with comparators in Amiens Cathedral. The cast is stamped on the base "F. Piccioni, 1832", but research has failed to trace this person.

ELGNM: 1978.1010

6. Piscina

Sandstone piscina for emptying water used in washing sacred vessels with the outlet in the form of a mouth; donated by Sir George Cooper (1856-1940), The College or North College, Elgin, who gave Grant Lodge and Cooper Park to Elgin.

ELGNM: 1905.5

Greyfriars

7. Mummified Cat

A mummified cat found with a rat and a starling during restoration work at Greyfriars Abbey in 1896. It was an old custom to wall a live cat into a building for good fortune.

ELGNM: 1896.8

Pluscarden and Birnie

At Croy there was an area known as *Glazin Kilns* (or Glasen Killies) where evidence of medieval kilns was uncovered in the 19th century.

8. Medieval glass

From Croy, Pluscarden and the Shougle Burn, Birnie, Elgin.

ELGNM: 1858.8 (x3), 1867.2 (x1)

9. Crucible

Fragment of a crucible, used for smelting glass, from the Shougle Burn: donated by Rev Dr George Gordon, Minister at Birnie, 1867, and one of the Museum's founders.

ELGNM: 1867.1

Kinneddar (Drainie Parish)

Kinneddar, on the south-west outskirts of Lossiemouth, has been the find site of some 32 examples of Early Medieval or Pictish carvings. They include representatives of all three classes of Pictish stone: Class I - isolated Pictish symbol or naturalistic animal, Class II – combining symbols with a Pictish cross, Class III - Christian cross or iconography without symbols.

There is evidence for a Pictish carving site here, possibly a monastery and possibly on the site of an earlier fort but the full story is still to be discovered. In the 12th century, the Bishop of Moray moved his Cathedral from Birnie to Kinneddar, before the move of his Palace to Spynie and the building of the Cathedral, founded in 1224.

Most of the Museum's collection of Early Medieval and Pictish stone are on display in the Rear Gallery. A Catalogue is on sale in the Museum Shop.

10. Pictish or Early Medieval stone fragment

Fragment of carved stone from the site of Kinneddar (or Drainie) Manse and Kirkyard.

In the Book of Durrow (circa 650-750 AD), there is a similar foot, attached to a mythical beast where parts of the beast become parts of an interlace design.

ELGNM: 1978.123 (*Drainie 20*)

11. Pictish or Early Medieval stone fragment

Fragment of carved stone from the site of Kinneddar (or Drainie) Manse and Kirkyard.

The high relief decorative sculpture is of advanced workmanship, rivalling a piece of similar spiral ornament at Tarbat, across the Moray Firth. John Stuart, author of *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (in 2 volumes), in 1856 pointed out the similarity of the bosses with the Nigg Stone.

ELGNM: 1855.1.1 (*Drainie 6*)

12. Pictish or Early Medieval stone fragment Stone

This small fragment of carved stone from the site of Kinneddar (or Drainie) Manse and Kirkyard retains part of a double spiral decoration.

ELGNM: 1855.1.3 (*Drainie 5*)

13. Medieval pottery sherd

Glazed pottery rim sherds from an archaeological excavation at Kinneddar in 1995.

ELGNM: 2000.66.1, 2000.68.1, 2000.68.2, 2000.68.4, 2000.67.2

Maisondieu

The medieval hospital in Elgin, Maisondieu or *House of God*, survived as ruins until 1750 when it was destroyed by a gale. Today, all that remains is the street named Maisondieu Road.

14. Handle

Made of serpentine (a gem-quality hydrated magnesium silicate, usually green or yellowish-green in colour), this handle depicts in fine detail, the face of a man as can better be seen in the photo.



From Easton garden, part of the former Maisondieu Lands, it was donated by Mr William Walker in 1870.

ELGNM: 1870.3

Spynie Palace or Castle

The residence of the Bishops of Moray, the oldest part of the building probably dates from the 12th and 13th centuries. The massive tower house, known as Davy's Tower, was built by Bishop David Stewart in the 15th century. The site is now in the care of Historic Environment Scotland.

15. Tile

Medieval, glazed yellow, pottery tile.

ELGNM: 1883.9

16. Plumb-bob

Two lead plum-bobs, used in building work to define the vertical plane.

ELGNM: 1979.32

17. Window lead

Three cruciform shaped pieces of window lead. ELGNM: 1979.30

Seals and Charters

Charters were legal documents, often records of land ownership and usually signed by someone or several people of importance. The seal matrix was stamped into wax so that a seal could be attached to the document to show its authority. The design on the seal matrix is therefore a mirror image of the seal it produces in the wax.

18. Clockwise from top left:

- Seal matrix of William de Roes or William of Ross. The design is a “short cross”, so called because the arms do not extend to the circumference. Stylistically, the seal is consistent with the owner having been William of Ross, Treasurer in 1227 of the Cathedral at Rosemarkie, near Fortrose. Perhaps he lost his seal on a visit to the newly consecrated Cathedral in Elgin as the seal was found in 1976 near the Bishop’s Palace at Spynie.
Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions. This may be the earliest example in the Museum of a metal detectorist’s find allocated through Treasure Trove.
- Seal matrix showing St. Giles. Inscription: SIGILLUN COMUNE CIVITATIS ELGINI SIC ITUR AD ASTRA. It probably dates from c1500AD. Found at Greyfriars Priory. It has lost its handle.
- Charter, 1573, signed and sealed by James Thorntoun, Precentor of Elgin Cathedral. After the Reformation of 1560, church lands were dispersed and this charter relates to lands of Pluscarden Abbey.



ELGNM: 1978.1 (TT), 1936.27, 2002.5.3

Seals

Most seals were stamped in wax or moulded from lead. Because they were heavy, they often dropped off the documents they were attached to.

Papal seals:

These seals were cast in lead and attached to documents signed by the Pope and sent from Rome. Both the seal and the document were called Papal bulls. The name of the Pope is on one side of the seal. The other side of the seal shows St Paul, on the left and St Peter, on the right. Paul is always shown with straight hair and beard and Peter with curly hair and a beard.

- Papal seal of Pope John 22nd (1316-1334 AD) found at Spynie Castle.
- Papal seal of Pope Martinus 4th (1281-1285 AD) found at Spynie Castle.

Bishop's seal:

- Bishop Patrick Hepburn's seal. Hepburn (1538-1573 AD) was Bishop of Moray at the time of the Reformation, and uncle of James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, the third and last husband of Mary, Queen of Scots. The Bishop is said to have had 13 illegitimate children and lead a life more secular than religious.

ELGNM: 1979.27, 1979.26, 2001.4

Cathedral Security

Keys were needed in these wealthy ecclesiastical buildings to keep documents and treasures secure. Glazing also improved security.

19. From the top left, clockwise:

- Key to safe that contained the Holy Elements (the bread and wine used in the Eucharist, or Holy Communion).
- Key to the west doorway of Elgin Cathedral.
- Key to the College grounds, i. e. North or South College, in the Cathedral precincts.
- Medieval stained glass from Elgin Cathedral (1200-1300 AD).
- Padlock, triangular shaped from Elgin Cathedral. It was found in the Cathedral ruins by John Shanks, the cobbler, who

cleared the Cathedral ruins of rubble in the 19th century. His portrait and other memorabilia are displayed in the alcove: The Burgh. The padlock was donated by Elgin silversmith, William S. Ferguson (1804-1875).

ELGNM: 1936.7, 1936.5, 1961.4, 1936.4, 1852.6

In the Peephole

Iconographic Ring, 13-15th century

This medieval silver gilt, iconographic inscribed ring from Speyslaw, near Urquhart, would have been worn by an important official of the church. It is inscribed IHS (*Jesu Hominum Salvator*), MARIA and AMEN.

The ring was found by metal detectorist Alistair McPherson, declared as Treasure Trove and purchased for Elgin Museum with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 2000.46 (*TT103/99*)