

Case 3

Elgin Cathedral 800: the story of the Cathedral

Celebrating the 800th anniversary of the founding of Elgin Cathedral

Elgin Cathedral was founded in 1224, on land granted by King Alexander II, and was dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It acted as the principal church of the Bishops of Moray, although prior to this date the seat of the Bishops of Moray had been at Kinneddar, Birnie, and then Spynie.

The Cathedral suffered fire damage in 1270, was attacked and burnt in 1390, and was again subject to fire damage in 1402. With each rebuild, the structure was enlarged and made more elaborate. The Cathedral continued in use during the early part of the Protestant Reformation of 1560. Soon after this, the lead roof covering was removed – this marked the beginning of the Cathedral's structural deterioration, which culminated with the collapse of the central steeple and nave walls in 1711. In its heyday, the Cathedral would have been adorned with ornately carved stone and wood, decorative plasterwork and stained glass.

1. Lead

Two lead fragments from the roof of the Cathedral – a long strip of lead and a melted fragment of lead, a remnant of its destruction. The roofs of the Cathedral, now long gone, would have been covered with lead.

Lead strip: ELGNM: 1937.3 / Lead fragment: ELGNM: 1936.24

2. Wood

This fragment of wood is said to have been salvaged from the roof of Elgin Cathedral.

ELGNM: 1936.6

3. Latch

A metal door latch found in the ruins of Elgin Cathedral. Incised "I F 1783", but this may be a later addition to the item.

ELGNM: 1936.8

4. Print

Destruction of Elgin Cathedral, print by R. Sands. An imagined view of the burning of the Cathedral in 1390 by Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan and so-called *Wolf of Badenoch*. Stewart was the third son of King Robert II. Following his father's death in April 1390, and having fallen out with the Bishops of Moray, Stewart set off on a trail of destruction from Forres to Elgin, culminating in the burning of the Cathedral. Unsurprisingly, the Church excommunicated him as a result. He was absolved following a public apology to the Church, in the presence of his brother Robert, by that time King Robert III of Scotland, and the Earl of Fife.

ELGNM: tbc

5. Cast of seal

Cast of the seal of Andrew de Moravia, Bishop 1223 – 1242. Andrew de Moravia is described as the son of Hugh de Moravia, Lord of Duffus, in a charter of the chaplainry of Duffus, between 1203 and 1214. He was then parson of Duffus, and in 1222 he was elected Bishop of Moray. In his time the cathedral of Moray was removed to Elgin, and he may have built, or at least commenced the erection of, the cathedral church.

ELGNM: 1915.15.37

6. Cast of seal

Cast of the seal of Andrew Stewart, Bishop 1482 – 1501. Prior to being elected Bishop of Moray in 1482, Andrew Stewart had held the positions of Sub-Dean of the diocese of Glasgow, Dean of the diocese of Aberdeen and Dean of Moray. He studied at the Universities of Glasgow, St Andrews and Paris. He was instrumental in the remodelling of the Chapter House, including the installation of traceried windows in 7 of the 8 faces of the octagonal building. He also added new decoration to the top of the central pillar, adding 8 shields – see item 10, below.

ELGNM: 1915.15.47

7. Cast of seal

Cast of the seal of Patrick Hepburn, Bishop 1538 – 1573. Patrick Hepburn, a very colourful character who enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle (somewhat at odds with his religious position), was the last Bishop of Elgin Cathedral.

ELGNM: 1915.15.3

8. Print

Print depicting the reconstructed Cathedral after the burning in 1390 by Alexander Stewart. Drawn by J. Grant, Engraved by J. Shury & Sons.

ELGNM: 1938.5

9. Stained glass

Stained glass fragments thought to have come from Elgin Cathedral. Coloured glass (blue, green, flashed red) and plain glass with grisaille (grey) painted decoration.

Un-accessioned

10. Casts from the Chapter House

Plaster casts of 6 of the 8 faces of the central pillar top of the Chapter House of Elgin Cathedral, added by Bishop Andrew Stewart.

Front row L-R: shield, crowned with a mitre, bearing the Arms of Bishop Andrew Stewart of the Family of Lorn; figure of St Andrew on the Cross; shield depicting the Royal Arms of Scotland, topped with a crown.

Back row L-R: shield bearing the Cross and Crown of Thorns, with pierced heart, hands and feet; shield depicting the instruments of the Passion (in the centre: the Cross and Crown of Thorns over which are the reed and spear in saltire; on the right: the seamless garment, the three dice and the ladder; on the left: the pillar of flagellation and a scourge; below right: the three nails, the hammer, the lantern and the pincers; below left: a scourge and a cockerel); shield bearing a flaming heart and pierced hands and feet.

ELGNM: 1838.7.1-6