

A Thousand Years of Haddington

Haddington was an important market town, renowned in the middle ages for its cloth mills. Its importance continued throughout the medieval period, when it became the fourth largest town in Scotland.

Destroyed several times by invading English armies, subsequent re-building retained the basic medieval street plan which we still see today – Court Street leading to the triangle formed by High Street, Market Street and Hardgate.

The town was severely flooded in 1358, 1775, 1846 and, worst of all, in 1948.

Royalty

Royal Burgh status was conferred by David I (1124-1153).

David's eldest son Henry married Ada de Warenne, Countess of Northumberland, who received the gift of Haddington as part of her marriage settlement.

Ada founded a Cistercian Priory (St Mary's) located east of the Abbey Bridge. The Priory buildings are long gone, but there is archaeological evidence of buried foundations. Only one building from the 12th century remains in Haddington: the substantial ruin of St Martin's Kirk in the Nungate. The road from Haddington to the Priory was known as the Nun's Gate, hence the modern name for the district.

Prince Henry predeceased his father so the succession went to his sons: first Malcolm IV, then his brother William 1 – 'the Lyon'. William's son, Alexander II, was born in the town in 1198.

In 1318 Robert the Bruce confirmed the Royal Charter. Bruce's document survives and is stored in the town's John Gray Centre.

Church

Begun in 1380 the construction of St Mary's Collegiate Church was completed in 1462.

Although severely damaged during the siege of Haddington (see below) the church has continued to function over the centuries. In the 1970s a major restoration project led by the Lamp of Lothian Trust returned the building to its former state.

Conflict

At various periods in the middle ages the Scots and English were at odds, in particular during the Wars of Independence. Invading English armies burned the town on several occasions, the last being the "Burnt Candlemass" of 1356.

In the 1540s the Scots resisted an English demand that Mary Stuart

marry the future Edward VI. The resulting conflict is known as the "Rough Wooing". In 1548, after victory at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh, English troops occupied and fortified Haddington. There followed the longest siege in Scottish history, over 18 months, when the Scots with their French allies attempted without success to break through the defensive earthworks. Scotland consolidated its alliance with France by signing the Treaty of Haddington at the Priory. This agreed the betrothal of Mary to the Dauphin of France. The English occupiers withdrew in September 1549. Damage to the town was considerable, and shot holes and graffiti from the time are borne by the stonework of the church,

In the 20th century Haddington served as an important army camp in both World Wars. In WW1 Amisfield (now the Golf Course) was used first by the Lothian and Borders Horse and then by 8 Battalion Royal Scots. In WW2 a Polish armoured brigade was in residence. In 1941 a German bomber jettisoned its load over the town, damaging buildings and killing 3 individuals.

Famous People

John Knox was born at Giffordgate in Haddington in 1513. Knox was a renowned leader of the Scottish Reformation

John Gray, a local minister, founded a town library in 1688. On his death in 1717, he left his personal library and a substantial sum in trust to help the poor of the town and to fund a town librarian. Today's John Gray Centre is named after him. **Adam Skirving**, born in 1719, composed

"Hey Johnny Cope", a song celebrating the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans. 19th century Haddington was the birthplace of **Jane Welsh Carlyle** and **Samuel Smiles**. Sir **William Gillies** was born in Haddington in 1898, becoming one of Scotland's renowned 20th century artists and Principal of Edinburgh College of Art.

Sean Connery, in his French polishing days, worked for Stark's Joiners and Coffin Makers in 1950/51 in the Nungate. Allegedly, he occasionally slept in a coffin (empty!) on a Friday night.

Commerce and Community

Haddington maintained a significant textile industry in modern times (West Mill and Kilspindie Knitwear, both now defunct). Other important industries until the mid 20th century were malting and distilling, a major grain market, and flour milling. Poldrate Mill, now a community arts and crafts centre, was the last flour mill. The electronic world in the form of TV manufacture came to Haddington in the 70s with the arrival of Tandberg, replaced by Mitsubishi in 1980. Of these industries only the malting operation at Bermaline Mills remains.

Post WW2 the town experienced significant additions to its population mix. Polish soldiers elected to stay and founded what is now a significant Polish community. A few Ukrainian POWs did likewise. Glasgow overspill in the early 1960 's brought a very significant influx of new people from the west coast.

Since then, additions to the population, both transient and permanent, continue to be welcomed.

21st century Haddington is a vibrant market town and centre of local government for East Lothian. It continues to have a small manufacturing industry, and services for agriculture (machinery and seeds supplies). A substantial community hospital nears completion, and Haddington's increasing role as a commuter town serving Edinburgh is reflected in extensive housing construction on the west side.

Haddington's History Society

<http://eastlothianheritage.co.uk/haddingtonhistorysociety/>