

# A royal palace in Court Street, Haddington – For or Against?



*Fig. 1: plaque on the wall of the Council Buildings in Court Street, Haddington*

## Summary

The recent discovery of royal charters suggesting a royal presence in Sidegate from the mid-1100's, inevitably led to a re-evaluation of the 'long accepted' palace site in Court Street, said to have been the birthplace in 1198 of Alexander II, son of William the Lion.

Today, if we seek information about Haddington's early history, the books we select from the library shelves will tell us that Alexander II was born in a royal palace in Haddington on the site of what is now the Council buildings in Court Street. A plaque ([Fig.1](#)) commemorating his birthplace can be found on the former Court House building. The town's history also includes an account of the murder in 1242 of Patrick, sixth Earl of Athol, in 'a palace' at the west end of the burgh. Those two 'palace' events on the west side of the town, were used to substantiate the location of Alexander's birthplace viz:

*Text taken from 'A Short History of Haddington' by W. Forbes Gray and James H. Jamieson (1995, p.139)*

*"What is now Court Street was at one-time designated King Street, thus doing obeisance to the well-founded tradition that in this quarter, when Haddington was a regal town, stood the royal palace which had associations with William the Lyon and Alexander II.*

*That a 'palace' was situated here is vouched for by Fordun, the chronicler, who, while not always to be relied on, was at any rate living sufficiently near the time covered by his narrative. From Fordun we derive the information that 'a palace' stood at the west end of the High Street and that in it, Patrick, sixth Earl of Athol was murdered in 1242."*

## The actual events

The two events took place over a 44-year period between **1198** and **1242**. Each was of national significance, meaning they would have been widely discussed.

### **Event 1 - 1198** - the birth of Alexander II at Haddington on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1198:

The birth of a royal, then as now, was an important event, but in Alexander's case his appearance as the legitimate male heir to the throne brought great joy, and relief, to William the Lion and his advisers, giving the whole country a very real cause for celebration. William had been on the throne for twenty-one years and had fathered several illegitimate children before he married Ermengarde de Beaumont in **1186**. In the nine years following their marriage the couple produced only two daughters, born **1193** and **1195**, and in the summer of **1195**, William fell seriously ill causing widespread concern, not only for his health but also because there was still no acceptable legitimate male heir to the Scottish throne. Although William recovered, his health remained uncertain and three years later, in **1198**, when the next royal birth was imminent there was great hope that Ermengarde would produce a son and heir. Accordingly, Alexander's birth was a special occasion, and it was clearly an event which would have been on the lips of most ordinary folk as well as being recorded in the Chronicles of the time.

### **Event 2 – 1242** - the murder of Patrick, sixth Earl of Athol at Haddington:

The murder of the youthful Earl of Athol was another event which caused reverberations throughout the kingdom. Athol's tragic death followed an important jousting tournament in Haddington when he is said to have overthrown Walter Bisset, the favourite. In an act of apparent revenge, Athol, along with two of his companions, was murdered in his lodgings in the town and the building set on fire to conceal the crime. The murder of a young man at any time, in any place, raises many issues, but the events surrounding the murder of Patrick of Athol were so significant that they caused a domestic political crisis said to have "shocked the peace of the realm" with the authority of Alexander II being called into question (*Richard Oram – 'Alexander II 1214-1249 King of Scots' (2012), p.158.*) The crime caused considerable controversy as both the King and Queen of Scotland became personally involved in their support of Bisset (the accused). Even seven centuries later, the trial was described "as one of the most remarkable trials recorded in Scottish history" (*Sereno -The Italian Conception of International Law (1943, Chap.32 p.136)*). Once again, this is an event which would have been on the lips of the ordinary man and woman throughout Scotland. It's safe to say that news of the murder and its repercussions would have spread like wildfire solely by word of mouth, but it's unlikely there was any formal widespread written information at the time other than in the Annals, Chronicles, and of course, the court records, all of which appeared later.

## **Historical background:**

### **Event 1 – the birthplace of Alexander II in 1198**

The sources (*Appendix I*) give few clues to the *site* of Alexander's birth. Without question, he was born in a royal residence/*palace* in the royal town of Haddington. That 'palace' is likely to have been built some 70 years earlier c.1124 by his great grandfather, king David I, who was its first known incumbent. On the death in 1152 of Earl Henry, David's only son and heir, Haddington (*with its palace*) was transferred to the temporary ownership of Henry's widow Countess Ada. On Ada's death in 1178 the town reverted to the Crown, all in terms of her widowhood 'dower'. Around 1178, a royal charter by King William describes lands next to the former early church of *SS Marie and Michael* in Sidegate as 'the king's gardens'; later royal charters in the 1490s describe an '*early King's palace*' in the same location, i.e. now St. Marys Pleasance in Sidegate.

With only around 74 years separating the building of the first royal residence in Haddington and Alexander's birth, we can assume that his birth took place in the original palace. His father, William the Lion, appears frequently in the Haddington records during his 49-year reign, with his natural daughter Isabel marrying Robert de Ros in the town in 1190/1 - (*Ross is remembered as a Magna Carta suretor*). On William's death in 1214 Alexander became king of Scots, but only 2 years later the first signs of the decline of the Dunkeld dynasty

were beginning to appear. The town was razed by the English in 1216, and again in 1244. The royal palace in Sidegate possibly survived the conflagrations as it lay outside the town boundaries, but by the 1290s Haddington's celebrated royal past was over - in **1296** during the Battle of Dunbar, Haddington was being described as "*the former home of Scottish kings*". There were multiple twists and turns in royal circles in the following centuries therefore it is little wonder that by the 1800s the site of the 12<sup>th</sup> century palace in Haddington had become something of a mystery. However, what is clear is that royal castles/palaces were normally built on the king's demesne lands with the later royal burgh growing up alongside. It would have been unthinkable for a royal castle to be sited within the burgh itself, their primary functions were entirely separate – see G.W.S. Barrow's statement in '*Kingship and Unity Scotland 1000-1306*' p.86.

*"As long as castles were in active use, they stood in clear areas either at one end or on the edge of any burgh with which they happened to be associated."*

## **Event 2 – the murder of Patrick Earl of Athol in 1242**

The details surrounding Patrick's murder are confusing. From the twelve sources consulted only eight provided info re the building in which the crime took place. Five of those described the murder site as a house, and one as a barn. The two who described the building as a palace did so six hundred years after the event, clearly ignoring earlier sources. Of those, Cosmo Innes in 1861, placed the word 'palace' in quotes showing his uncertainty re the description, whilst in 1944 Forbes Gray formally declared the murder site as a palace at the west end of the High Street, thus supporting the Court Street ruin as Alexander's birthplace. It may have seemed like a neat solution to a longstanding mystery but unfortunately the sources do not support the 20th century interpretation, and Bower and Wyntoun's all-important detailed description of the murder site as '**on the High Street at the north-west end of the Burgh**' excludes the sites as being one and the same.

Details from the attached sources formed the basis of an article which appeared in the ELA&FNS in 2019 (pp 42-67) but since then further information has come to light, adding an interesting dimension to the tale which should be included in the Haddington story even if just for interest.

### **Extract from 'The Irvines of Drum with Collateral branches.**

The extract (*see Appendix 2*) taken from 'The Irvines of Drum and collateral Branches' appears to form at least part of Sir William/Walter Bisset's alibi, which was clearly constructed in collaboration with King Alexander and Queen Marie to clear him of any involvement in the murder of Patrick, Earl of Athol. Two hundred years later 'The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun' Vol. V pp. 97-104, echoes what is contained in the extract, as do other similar reports. The importance of the story is that to some extent it explains the conflict which arose at the time between King Alexander and his closest nobles. Those nobles would have been aware of the discrepancy between fact and fiction, as virtually all of them would have been present at the Great Jousting Tournament at Haddington which, in all *likelihood*, was hosted by the king. They would have been fully aware of those who took part in the tournament and would surely have wondered how the King and Queen had allowed themselves to become so embroiled in the deception to protect Bisset.

Briefly, King Alexander and Marie de Couci his queen, following a visit to Elgin in Aberdeenshire (*undoubtedly on one of their routine trips around the realm*) accepted an invitation from Sir 'William' Bisset to stay overnight at his castle at Aboyne on their return trip south. Unfortunately, the king could only stay one night as "*he was anxious to fulfil a friendly engagement to meet the King of England on the Borders.*" Accordingly, he had to head south without delay, no doubt accompanied by his extensive entourage including the usual royal household members and supporting nobles expected on such expeditions. However, the Queen chose to accept Bisset's offer, staying on at Aboyne for a further four days. That left her vulnerable re onward travel arrangements so Bisset accompanied her to Forfar Castle (a full day trip) where they spent the night together (although you will note in separate chambers!). The following day (i.e. 6 days after Alexander's departure) the **Great Jousting Tournament in Haddington** took place, **it is said with King Alexander in attendance.** The

narrative was clearly carefully constructed as an alibi for Bisset to show how it would have been impossible for him to have attended the tournament. With the Queen central to his story, it should also have been virtually impossible to challenge the detail, but challenged it was and strongly – see *Oram, 'Alexander II 1214-1249' etc.*

The extract also advises that Athol's charred body was found amid the ruins of the **house** in which he **lodged** and that many other houses were 'entirely destroyed', **and** many other persons shared Athol's fate. Those houses are described as being made of wood and carpeted with straw and rushes. All further confirmation that Athol's murder took place in a humble house or even what we might call a barn.

## Conclusions

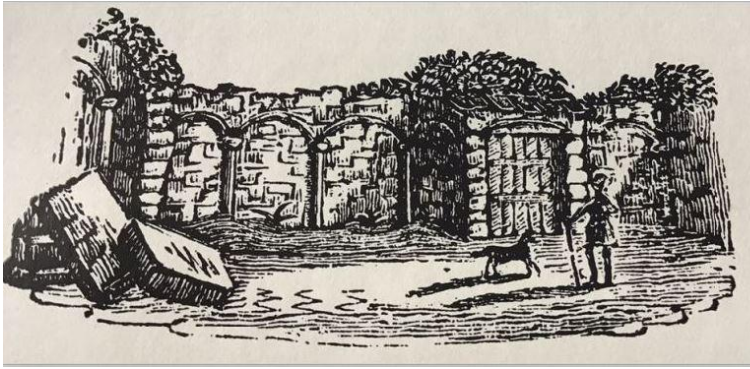
Firstly: **Alexander's birthplace** – all we know from available sources is that he was born in the royal town of Haddington, presumably in the royal bedchamber in the King's palace.

Secondly: **the site of Athol's murder** - there is no evidence in the sources (Appendix 1) to support the assertion that Athol's murder took place in a palace. The most detailed info re the location of Athol's murder is that it was **on the High Street**, at the **north-west end of the Burgh**. This is likely to have come from the St. Andrews' collaboration of Bower & Wyntoun, with Bower's local knowledge providing such precise detail. Whatever, it rules out the possibility that the two sites could have been 'one and the same', with one on the North side of what is now Court Street, the other on the South. Questions remain re the westward extent of the original High Street in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries but that is a matter for another enquiry.

Thirdly: **the site of the Jousting Tournament**, though not essential to this enquiry, is of interest re its location within the town. Before the reign of William the Lion, jousting tournaments were virtually unknown in Scotland, but jousting was one of William's great passions second only to his well-documented obsession to recover his Northumbrian earldom. He is credited with creating a dedicated park at Stirling Castle to host tournaments and hunts, and it may be significant that the area still known as 'The Sands' in Haddington was referred to in a royal charter in the late 1400s as 'The Arenas'. A jousting arena was a roughly rectangular space usually spread with sand or straw measuring in length around 100 to 200 metres which would fit the space from, and including, the existing 'Sands' and former Lady Kitty's Garden, all of which lay outside the town boundary in the 1200s. See also, *Gourlay & Turner 'Scottish Burgh Survey' – Intro: "The Sands comprehended all that ground that is now Lady Kitty's Garden and the old bowling green"*. Such location would have provided a convenient viewing area from the royal palace.

The site of the tournament is purely speculation, but it is reasonable to expect that Alexander would have been encouraged to engage in his father's favourite sport from an early age making him the person most likely to host the 'great tournament' in *his* royal burgh and the site worthy of consideration.

Finally: we are left with the outstanding question re the ancient ruin which lay on the site of the present Council Buildings. Richardson's view was that 'it had the appearance of an early religious house' and in that I agree. *Miller L of L p.229*, provides an additional clue not immediately recognisable in Neill's sketch - see *Appendix I, p.7: "The ruins removed consisted of a vault and part of an arched passage communicating with it."* *Figs. 2 & 3* below show Adam Neill's sketch alongside the ruins of Sligo Abbey, a Dominican Convent in Ireland dating back to the 1200s. The images are remarkable similar and coincidentally the Sligo image clearly shows *its* arched passageway which would have entered the vaulted cloisters normally associated with an ecclesiastical building.



**Fig.2** - Neill's sketch of the ancient ruin in Court Street



**Fig.3** - Sligo Abbey, a Dominican Convent in Ireland

The possibility, or even probability, of the ruin being the remains of an earlier Dominican/Blackfriars friary cannot be ruled-out as there is the suggestion that such a building did exist, and it was in the right location see below:

Cowan and Easson 'Medieval Religious Houses Scotland' suggest the location of a Dominican/Blackfriars friary at the West Port of the burgh. They also state *p.115* that "The Blackfriars' house at Haddington was evidently of short duration as it did not figure in a list of Blackfriars' Foundations in Scotland drawn up in 1564."

[NT57SW 14](#) c. 51 73.

The existence of a house of Dominican friars at Haddington (NT 51 73) is known by references of 1471 and 1472. Its extinction date is as obscure as its foundation but was after 1489-90. It is not mentioned in the list of Dominican houses in surviving 1557 and it is likely that it had a somewhat brief existence. Brockie states that it stood at the West Port ([NT57SW 3.2](#)) (MS collection of Fr Marianus Brockie, St Mary's College, Blaris).

*D E Easson 1957*

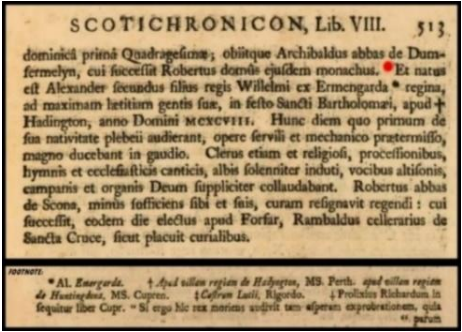
We also cannot ignore the statement by Walter Bower - *Oram 'The Dominicans in Scotland 1230-1560' p.2:*

"The introduction of the Dominican friars to Scotland was achieved by King Alexander II, who held them in great respect and helped them as their patron and special agent, assigning places to stay, furnishing and founding them." 'In common with other monastic orders, they would have been given a prominent site just outside the burgh boundary.' This would fit well with the ancient town boundary on the west being closer to the present Town House, see reference to the defence ditch/fosse a few yards west of the Town house in '*The Scottish Burgh Survey - Historic Haddington*' Gourlay & Turner 1978, *p.6*; and that "Court Street was anciently called "Tibbies Dale" - Miller, '*Lamp of Lothian*' *p226*.

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## Appendix I - The events as depicted by early chroniclers and later historians.

1198	<p><b>'Chronica de Mailros'</b> p. 103 – earliest record of <b>Alexander's birth</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p>Natus est <b>Alexander</b> filius Willelmi regis Scottorum in die sancti Bartholomaei apostoli [Aug. 24], in ejus nativitate multi gaudebant.<sup>b</sup></p> </div>	No reference to <b>where</b> he was born.
1242	<p><b>Murder of Patrick, Earl of Athol</b> - <i>Chronica</i> p.154</p> <p><i>"Pro Dolor etc: ..." Patrick was staying in lodgings at Haddington, the night after the tournament when he was murdered with his companions after which the house in which they lay was burned down.</i></p>	No mention of location. Building described as a <b>house</b>
c.1250	<p><b>'Chronica Majora'</b> by Matthew Paris, vol. 4. pp 200-201</p> <p><i>"Patrick was slain by Walter Bisset, whom he had bested in a tournament at Haddington, and who had barricaded the young man and his companions in a <b>barn</b> where they were sleeping and had burned it down with them trapped inside".</i></p>	No reference to location - the building described as a <b>barn</b>
c.1270	<p><b>Richard of Durham</b> – a Franciscan friar <b>based at Haddington</b> in 1270.</p> <p><i>"Patrick's enemies had surrounded the burning <b>house</b> and prevented him from escaping from it, and that the slain youth was buried in the Franciscan convent at Haddington."</i></p> <p>[above text taken from the papers of <b>Richard of Durham</b> (writer of the <b>Lanercost Chronicle up to 1297</b>)– see A.G. Little, 'Franciscan Papers, Lists and Documents' (Manchester 1943) pp.42-54.]</p> <p><i>Note: The Lanercost Chronicle up to 1297 was the work of <b>Richard of Durham</b> – see Dauvit Broun 'Attitudes of Gall to Gaedhel in Scotland before John of Fordun' p.80.</i></p>	<p>No reference to location - the building described as a <b>house</b>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Richard spent time with the Franciscans in Haddington c.1270 therefore would have been aware if Patrick was murdered in a palace.</p>
c.1380	<p><b>John of Fordun</b> [c.1330-1384] – <i>Fordun's 'History of Scotland from Earliest Times'</i> - said to have been the bedrock of all later attempts to write a history of Scotland. He died around 1384 before completion of his full works but this task was later undertaken by Walter Bower with additional input from Andrew de Wyntoun. His original Latin manuscripts were translated and edited much later by William F. Skene in <i>'The Historians of Scotland'</i> in 1781/82. <i>The text below is taken from Skene's work – XXIII.</i></p>	
<b>Event 1</b>	<p><i>"Alexander, to the great gladness of his people and the refreshment of the whole kingdom of the Scots ... was born at Haddington on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1198... etc."</i></p>	No ref. to the palace or its location in the town
<b>Event 2</b>	<p>There is no reference in Fordun's original 'History' or in 'Gesta Annalia' to Athol's murder.</p>	
c.1447	<p><b>Walter Bower</b> (b. 1385 Haddington, d.1449).</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">  <p><b>Fig.4</b> taken from <i>Scotichronicon</i> Lib.VIII p.513</p> </div> <div style="flex: 2; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>Bower - a canon of St. Andrew's Priory c.1400. By 1418 - Abbot of the Augustinian Abbey of Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth. c.1440 he was commissioned by Sir David Stewart of Rosyth to transcribe and complete Fordun's unfinished work. Andrew de Wyntoun, poet &amp; former canon of St. Andrew's Priory, contributed to Bower's final volumes of <b>Scotichronicon</b> which were completed by 1447. Some copies circulated during the following years but the whole work was not printed until 1759. A translation from Latin to English appeared in 1987.</p> </div> </div> <p>For the collaboration of Bower and Wynton see <b>Richard Oram</b> "Alexander II 1214-1249 King of Scots" 2012 p.159 which conveniently provides details of Patrick's murder from 'early sources.' This shows the Bower/Wyntoun narrative (according to the <i>St. Andrews account</i>) which provides a detailed description of the murder site, strongly suggesting local knowledge: <i>"in Patrick's own 'estimable lodging', a 'fine manor, princely lodging and house' located on the High Street at the north-western end of the burgh"</i></p> <p>That it was <b>'on the High Street'</b> is interesting, but that it was at <b>'the north-western end of the burgh'</b> is crucial, as this excludes it being the Court Street site later identified as Alexander's 'palace'.</p>	<p><b>Note:</b> The footnote describes Haddington as a <b>'royal town.'</b></p> <p>Location of Patrick's murder is given as on the <b>High Street</b> at the <b>N-west end</b> of the burgh. Building description a <i>fine manor, lodging and house.</i> No mention of a palace</p>

## GAP OF ALMOST 400 YEARS

<b>1833</b>	<p><b>Adam Neill – local bookseller</b></p> <p>In the 1800s, local and oral tradition had it that King Alexander II was born in one of the oldest buildings still standing in the town which was on the site of the present Council buildings. Local bookseller and publisher Adam Neill reinforced this view. Neill prepared a sketch of the ruins, and duly publicised sound confirmation that the ruin had been a Saxon/Norman palatial building and was thus the long-lost palace where Alexander II was born - <i>See Fig.2 p.5</i></p>	<p>Miller Lof L <b>p.229</b> – “The ruins removed consisted of <b>a vault and part of an arched passage communicating with it.</b> The pillars of the arches were of Saxon order.” LofL <b>p.229</b>.</p>
<p><b>1844</b></p> <p><b>James Miller – ‘Lamp of Lothian’</b></p> <p>Eleven years after demolition of the Court Street ruin, James Miller published his excellent ‘Lamp of Lothian,’ the first major work to attempt a review of the history of the royal Burgh of Haddington. He summarised (i) the birth of Alexander II, (ii) the murder of Patrick, Earl of Athol, and (iii) demolition of the Court Street ruin as follows:</p> <p><b>Event 1</b></p> <p><b>Event 2</b></p> <p><b>Event 3</b></p>	<p><b>1198</b> – “24 August was remarkable for the birth of Alexander II in the <b>palace</b> of Haddington on St. Bartholomew’s Day”. Lof L <b>p.4</b></p> <p><b>1242</b> – Following a jousting tournament in Haddington when Patrick earl of Athol overthrew the favourite, Walter Bisset, Athol was murdered in his <b>lodgings</b> in Haddington. “The <b>house</b> in which he lodged was set on fire and he, with several followers, were either burned to death or slain in their retreat. It was supposed that the house was fired that the murder might be concealed.” Lof L <b>p.5</b></p> <p><b>Demolition of Court Street ruin</b></p> <p>“The site chosen (for the new Court House) was that of the remains of one of the oldest buildings in the burgh, which appeared to have been of considerable extent and to which tradition assigned the importance of a ‘palace’. The ruins removed consisted of <b>*a vault and part of an arched passage communicating with it.</b> The pillars of the arches were of Saxon order.” Lof L <b>p.229</b> – <i>see Figs.2 &amp; 3 p.5</i></p>	<p>Palace’ mentioned, but no location given <b>despite</b> the earlier publicity by Neill in 1833.</p> <p>Murder site described as a <b>house</b> or <b>lodgings</b>. No ref. to location</p>
<p><b>1857</b></p> <p><b>Rev. Joseph Stevenson, M.A. ‘The Church Historians of England’ ‘The Chronicle of Melrose’ (1857 pp.147 &amp; 185) - Translated by Stevenson from the original Latin Text</b></p> <p><b>Event 1</b></p> <p><b>Event 2</b></p>	<p><b>1198</b> - “Alexander, the son of William, King of the Scots, was born on the day of St Bartholomew the apostle (25<sup>th</sup> Aug) and at his birth many rejoiced.”</p> <p><b>1242</b> – “Patrick, earl of Athol, the son of Thomas of Galloway, who was also the earl of Athol, a most excellent youth, and (as far as man can judge) adorned with all courtly wisdom and politeness, was wickedly murdered, - alas! That we should have to tell it – along with two of his companions, <b>in his own residence</b>, at Haddington, after he had gone to rest for the night; and this was done by some wicked wretches. To conceal the extent of the crime, the <b>house</b> in which they were lying was burnt down, that it might appear that they had perished accidentally in the conflagration, and not by murder.</p>	<p>No reference to a royal palace or location</p> <p>No reference to a location. Patrick’s residence described as a <b>house</b>.</p>
<p><b>1861</b></p> <p><b>Event 2</b></p>	<p><b>Cosmo Innes – ‘Sketches of Early Scotch History etc’ (1861 p.438).</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p><sup>1</sup> In 1242, Patrick Earl of Athol, of the highest blood and kindred of Scotland, and himself a gallant youth, after a great tournament at Haddington, was treacherously murdered, and the “palace” where he slept, in the west end of the High Street, was burned to conceal the manner of his death. The Bysets were generally believed to be the instigators of the murder, for an ancient feud between the houses, and suspicion fell especially on William de Byset, an officer of the Queen’s household, and who had prevailed with the Queen to spend four days at his castle of Aboyne on her journey south from Moray, at the very time when the Haddington tragedy happened. Byset had the support of both sovereigns, the Queen especially offering herself ready to make oath to his innocence; but the friends of the murdered earl were too powerful, and (perhaps) the proofs of guilt too strong. The southern Bysets were banished (<i>ex-legantur</i>), and obliged to take a vow to join the crusade, and never to return from the Holy Land. On this condition, apparently, they saved their lands and goods, or were allowed to dispose of them. They seem to have migrated to Ireland—<i>Quorum posteritas Hiberniam inhabitat usque nunc.</i>—Fordun, ix. 59-61.</p> </div>	<p>Location given as ‘in the <b>west end of the High Street</b>. The building is described as a ‘<b>palace</b>’ but placed in quotes suggesting the author’s uncertainty.</p>

<div>1905</div> <div>Event 1</div>	<div><div>John Richardson, Haddington “<i>Recollections of an Octogenarian 1793-1815 - (1905.)</i>”</div><div><a href="#">Birth of Alexander II</a></div><div>Between the histories of Miller (1844) and Forbes Gray (1944) the descendants of John Richardson, a former Procurator Fiscal in Haddington, published his memoirs in 1905. Richardson provides the only eye-witness account we have of the building said to have been Alexander’s birthplace before it was in the process of demolition. He remembered the ruin from his youth as having a vaulted frontage (<i>known then as “the vouts”</i>) which were used by a local carter to store his carts. Apparently, <b>it was one of three very old buildings</b> still standing in the town at that time, all three had vaulted frontages. One was known as the monastery of the Knights Templar, which stood at the junction of High Street with Hardgate, and the other was St. Ann’s chapel in Sidegate. He described the Court Street ruin as:</div><div>“The most ancient building in the town, long said to have been the birthplace of one of the Kings of Scotland”</div><div>However, despite his nod to local tradition <i>and</i> the publicity in 1833 at the time of the demolition, Richardson chose to describe the ruin as:</div><div>“Having the appearance of an <a href="#">early religious house</a>”</div></div>	<div><div>Note:</div><div>Richardson lived his entire life in Haddington where he was employed as Procurator Fiscal. He was born in the Knights’ Templar building in Hardgate and died in Church Street. His story is important, as he remembered those ancient buildings from his youth. Despite being fully aware of the local tradition that the ancient ruin in Court Street was a palace, he chose to describe it as appearing to him to be an early religious house.</div></div>
<div>1944</div>	<div><div>W. Forbes Gray FRSE, ESA. Scot and James H. Jamieson, ESA. Scot “<i>A Short History of Haddington</i>”</div><div>Exactly 100 years after Miller’s ‘<i>Lamp of Lothian</i>’, <b>W. Forbes Gray</b> (assisted by James H. Jamieson) produced ‘<i>A Short History of Haddington</i>’, published by the ELA&amp;FNS in 1944, which he described as his attempt to streamline, amend and add to, Miller’s earlier work. There have been other histories since, but most contemporary writers still reference those two earlier works, with Gray’s description of events relating to the location of a royal palace repeated many times. For his description of the Court Street ‘palace site’ in <i>Chapter XIII ‘Buildings Old and New’ (p.139): - see page 1.</i></div></div>	<div><div>Note:</div><div>Forbes Gray ignores Miller’s version of events, covering all three events in this one statement. He appears to be the first modern writer to suggest that Alexander’s birth and Athol’s murder both took place in the same ‘palace’ building. He also states this info. came from Fordun, which is highly questionable.</div></div>
	<div><div>Forbes Gray supporting evidence:</div><div><div><div>(i)</div><div>“That as Court Street was once called King Street, this provides a compelling case for a royal palace at that location” <i>G&amp;J p.139</i></div></div><div><div>(ii)</div><div>Fordun is said to have vouched for the palace location and as he lived sufficiently close to the time of Alexander’s birth his opinion was valued.</div></div><div><div>(iii)</div><div>Fordun is also said to have provided the information that ‘a palace stood at the west end of the High Street and that Patrick earl of Athol was murdered there.</div></div></div><div><div>There were other streets in Haddington from time to time known as King’s Street, e.g. King’s Street in Sidegate in 1494 - ‘<i>Calendar of Writs preserved at Yester House p.86.</i></div><div>No evidence in original sources that Fordun vouched for this. But why choose Fordun (from Aberdeenshire) when Bower had strong Haddington connections?</div><div>No evidence in original sources that such information came from Fordun.</div></div></div>	



## Appendix II

Extract from 'The Irvines of Drum with Collateral branches' by Lt. Col. Jonathan Forbes Leslie, 1901 pp. 1-3 - <https://archive.org/details/irvinesofdrumcol00les>

*"In the year 1242, King Alexander II and his youthful queen, Mary de Couci, in returning from Morayshire, were hospitably entertained at the Castle of Aboyne by Sir '**William**' Bisset, lord of that barony. The King, anxious to fulfil a friendly engagement to meet the King of England on the borders, was unable to prolong his stay at Aboyne; but the Queen, by his permission, accepted the pressing invitation of their host, and prolonged her stay for **4 days** after the departure of her husband. Then, escorted by Sir '**William**' Bisset, she passed on to Forfar, and was there on the same day that the great tournament was held, in the presence of the King, at Haddington.*

*At this tournament, Sir '**Walter**' Bisset, an experienced and accomplished knight, was worsted by the young **Earl of Athol**. On the following night, a destructive fire burst forth in the town, and in the morning the charred body of Athol was found amongst the ruins of the **house** in which he lodged. Many other houses were 'entirely destroyed', and many other persons shared the fate of Athol. Whether the fire was the result of carelessness or of malice seems, even at this time, to have been uncertain; yet the loss by fire of so many lives in these houses – which were of no great height and contained few apartments – renders it probable that it must be laid to the account of the wassail of the friends and followers of the victorious Earl, and all the more that the building was constructed of wood, and carpeted with straw and rushes.*

*The kinsmen of Athol, encouraged by the most powerful barons of the land, as well as by popular clamour, accused the Bissets – in the person of Sir '**William**' and of his uncles, **Sir Walter and Sir John** – of having contrived the assassination of the Earl, and of having kindled the fire to conceal it.*

*Sir '**Willam**' Bisset, as already mentioned, was at Forfar at the time of the tournament, more than a day's journey from Haddington. At a late hour he had been with the Queen at supper, and, having conducted her to her chamber, had retired to his own and gone to bed. On hearing that Sir '**William**' Bisset was accused, the Queen warmly espoused his cause, and even offered to appear and by her oath to prove that he was not only innocent, but "that he had never devised a crime so enormous." The measures he took to refute the accusation, although sufficiently energetic, and supported by so powerful testimony, proved ineffectual in allaying the suspicions or in arresting the active hostility of his enemies ... .." "Following a court appearance later that year the Bissets were given forty days to depart from Scotland; and before their expatriation, they were compelled to vow that they would proceed to the Holy Land, and there, for the rest of their lives, pray for the soul of the murdered Earl" – **Needless to say, much of this was ignored by the Bissets!***

<p><u>Note:</u> according to Richard Oram 'Alexander II 1214-1249' p.138 – "in later accounts the head of the Bissets was wrongly named as '<b>William</b>', therefore '<b>William</b>' should read as '<b>Walter</b>'.</p>
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