



Forthcoming Events

Sunday 21st January - Markinch Church Hall

Open from 2.30 - Exhibition on pilgrim hostel, all in wool !!!

3.30 Talk ; "Medieval Markinch - a TripAdvisor Guide for Pilgrims", Bruce Manson

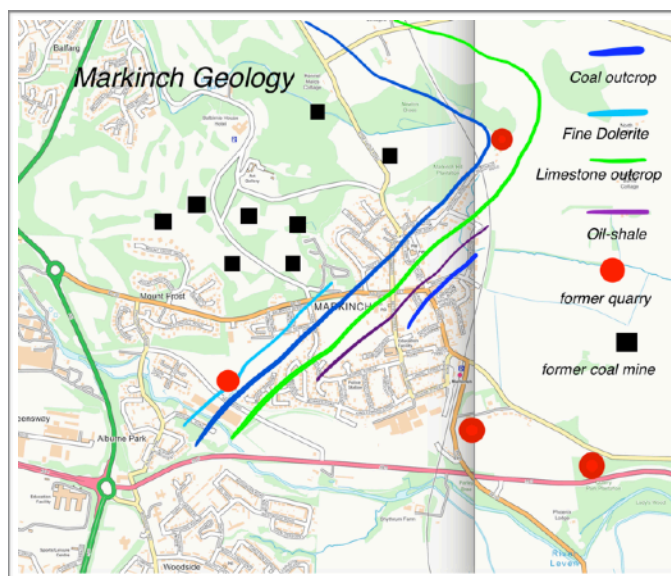
Also chance to see the medieval "cresset" from Mansefield.

Recent excavations

A trench recently dug in Commercial Street shows a layer of sand and gravel on top of the old marsh silt. This has been covered with iron slag and then large rounded cobbles have been set on top. We know that the road was laid out around 1794 using material from the Ward Knowe (near old PO). Shortly after, iron workings began at Balgonie Furnace, and the residue is likely to have come from these workings. Around 1800 Thomas Thomson owned both Radnor House (No 30 Commercial St.) and Balgonie Furnace.

The Effect of Markinch's Geology on its History (and a word about a "stink-stone")

A quick glance at a geological map of Markinch reveals a surprising picture. Cutting across the town from south west to north east are several long outcrops of rock from the Carboniferous period. These outcrops ran from the area around Balbirnie Bridge, up through Balbirnie caravan park, past the church, along the southern slope of



Markinch Hill and up to Northhall. They are upwardly tilted edges that must have been exposed when the last glaciers scraped across the landscape about 12,000 years ago. They consist of coal, limestone, whinstone (or dolerite) and sandstone. They are overlain by much more recent glacial and river deposits. Long ago lines of coal outcrop jutting out of the landscape may have been originally hacked straight from the surface. The resource would have been quickly depleted and miners in later times would have had to extract deeper coal measures in Balbirnie Park and around Balgonie Castle. In fact the word Balgonie means



New Boundary Marker

Markinch Parish is bigger than you think! See the map on the back page. Earlier this year a boundary stone was erected on the parish boundary at Coul Nature Reserve. It represents the western edge of the parish where it meets up with Leslie and Falkland parishes.

The stone is in the same style as the boundary markers laid down in the mid 19th century when the parish's marches were readjusted and Dalginch and Treaton were floated off into Kennoway.

The old parish is still used for statistical purposes and stretches as far south as Thornton and the windmills around Earl's Seat. It used to include Dubbyside, Innerleven and Saltgrein but now only extends to Cameron Bridge and Maiden



Castle south of Kennoway.

The walk to the stone at Coul nature reserve can be done in under an hour and opens the town up to many other walks on the Lomond Hills. It was financed by the Living Lomond Landscape Partnership.

“farmstead of the smiths” and is built on a spot that combines coal outcrops with nearby iron deposits at Sythrum and Balgonie Park. Balbirnie and Cadham coal were once famous and exported through several harbours in Fife. The Markinch Burn running through Balbirnie Park has recently exposed one of these old surface seams.

As well as bell-pits or “pots”, mines were often dug horizontally into the seams exposed along the Leven valley and later mines were dug vertically in Balbirnie, Sythrum and Cadham, surplus water being drained into the rivers. The Markinch Burn was even used to drive water pumps, draining a mine at Northhall. The writers of the 18th and 19th century “Statistical Accounts” for Markinch went into great detail about the parish’s coal reserves and they are well worth a read.

Church Building.

With associated lime and freestone, the church builders in the 12th century would have had all the materials required for construction within a short distance. The availability of limestone for mortar is indicated by old local place-names such as Limepotts and Sweetbank (“sweet” meaning well-limed). The sandstone would have been quarried at Sythrum Quarry near the new St Drostan’s graveyard or possibly at Northhall, and of course good quality building sand could be taken straight off Markinch Hill.

The best layers of sandstone from Sythrum Quarry had a hard quartz grain running through them and this was used by the church builders for the exterior ashlar blocks of the tower. Softer sandstone was used inside the building. The deeds of Radnor House in Commercial Street (circa 1800) lay down that Sythrum Quarry should be used for any repair work, and the quartz streaks can still be clearly seen on its walls, matching the stone from the church tower. This shows that stone for the church building was carted up the line of the High Street, crossing the marshy land around Glass Street over a paved way referred to as a *calcetum* (Scots “causie”) in a 13th century Latin charter. The sandstone takes on many colours depending upon the level of impurities, particularly iron. Some pink stone can be seen on the 17th century arch on the front of the church but it is not evident on the 12th century stonework.

Iron Extraction.

Ironstone was once quarried south east of the new cemetery by the Balgonie Iron Company which went out of business in the early 19th century due to the success of the more famous Carron Iron Company. In earlier centuries the coal from Sythrum was shared out among a number of landowners and, before the Reformation, the vicar of Markinch fought a legal case to secure his right to 10 per cent from a concession held by the monks of Soutra outside Edinburgh. Other coal seems to have been surface mined at Northhall, and the burn running through the Playfields at the back of Markinch Hill was straightened in the 18th century to make a water channel that drove a

drainage pump on the far side of the cemetery close to the railway embankment.

The quarry near the old Leslie railway track at the bottom of the Sweetbank estate seems to have been used for whinstone (dolerite) extraction in the 19th century but may also have been a source of limestone. Cut whinstone blocks can be seen, either used on their own as in the house up from the butcher's shop in Commercial Street or else interspersed with sandstone blocks.

“Stink Stones”

The more detailed geological maps show a parallel outcrop of “oil-shale” slightly to the west of the other seams. It cuts across the town roughly at the cross roads where Glass Street meets the High Street and Balbirnie Street. A strange six foot long slab that was found when the church was being renovated in the 1880s may well have been cut from this outcropping seam. It is reported as having “rude markings”, giving off a “fetid” smell when broken. Other similar slabs known as “stink stones” have been found associated with churches at Dairsie and Montrose. It may even have had some magical significance to the prehistoric inhabitants of Markinch or may even have been Pictish.

Other materials extracted from the ground locally include sand and marl. If Glass Street refers to the one time existence of a glass manufacturing factory (and I have still not found any evidence of this) then the sand of Markinch Hill would have been a cheap local source of raw material. During the 19th century a bed of shell-rich marl was mined on Balbirnie estate, providing good fertiliser for agricultural land.

Erratic Boulders.

Other aspects of Markinch geology worth noting are the rounded boulders made of various types of rock brought to the area by the glaciers during the last Ice Age. These are surface deposits coming from as far away as Perthshire. They were used as cheap walling for houses and for land division from the earliest times. A good example is the wall surrounding the garden on Mansefield (above) where dolerite and sandstone boulders jostle alongside more exotic importations. These rubble walls are some of the earliest of the town's constructions and worthy of



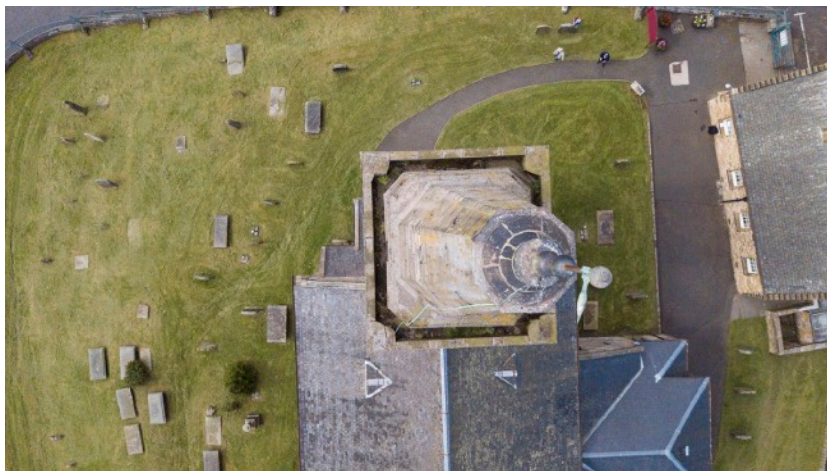
preservation. Occasionally we find odd features such as the mosaic-patterned boulder (below) next to the old mill on the Braes Loan walk. Could this “tartan stone” be petrified mud? Other erratic boulders were used as boundary markers and are referred to



as “lapides” in old charters. Look out for them on walks. The drive to Balbirnie House is lined with them, not forgetting the prehistoric standing stones themselves

Finally, we shouldn't forget that the glaciers gouged out hollows that were later filled by two long lochs, one known as Balfarg Loch to the north of Star, and other known as the Myres stretching from Markinch to Kennoway. As they gradually silted up, these provided the town's inhabitants with reeds for thatching, peat for fuel and probably also a fishing resource before they were finally drained during the age of agricultural improvement.

BFM



Much stonework is still in good condition but elsewhere on the tower there are signs of water damage, probably due to poor drainage from the roof (as can be seen from the moss growth to the right of the clock on the photograph below). Photos thanks to Scott McGlynn and Dael Wilson.



Underneath the projecting corbels the initials "R. P. " have been carved and the numbers 1 and 8 can be seen alongside. On the northern wall the inscription reads "R. Pau...." Was this put on by one of the workmen? workmen involved in repairs?

Markinch Church's Lost Chancel Arch

Readers will recall that a couple of years ago we found a section of the arch that once stood between the medieval nave of the church and the chancel. It was an incredible discovery as it was one of the last pieces in the jig-saw puzzle enabling us to describe the building when it was first built in the 12th century. The full story is set out in the book "MacDuff's Kirk?" but since the book was published the author has been searching all over England, Wales and Ireland for an arch with identical decoration. The closest match was found recently in Normandy a few weeks ago. Here, there were no fewer than three arches with the star decoration. The motif is supposed to represent the stars of heaven and would have required some very skilled stone masons. It shows how the 12th century Earl of Fife had the resources to pay for the very best that the Anglo-Norman world could provide. Perhaps now we should begin to speak about *Scoto-Norman* rather than Anglo-Norman architecture. BFM



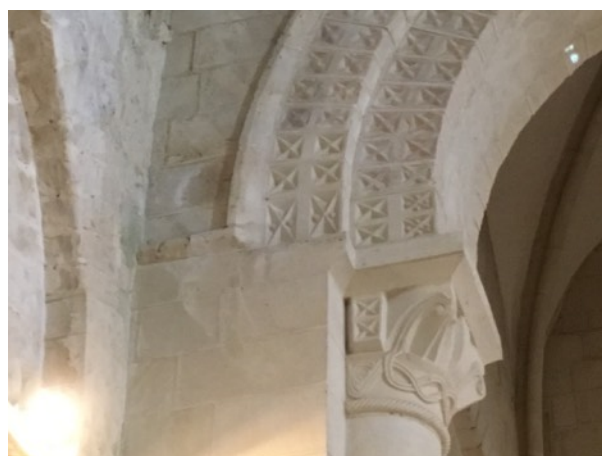
Arch segment (Markinch)



Tamerville (near Valognes, Normandy) 1070-80



Chancellor's Hall (Caen, Normandy)



Secqueville-en-Bessin (Normandy) pre-1100

Comments on any item plus newsletter contributions to bruce.manson@btinternet.com

Losses in the Civil War from Markinch Parish

This year we are marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation but it was many years before the religious wars that it triggered were finally over. Markinch Parish lost many men on the Covenanting side during the Civil Wars (or Wars of the Three Kingdoms). These losses only represent a single year in what was a long and protracted series of wars. There were probably many more local men killed in England alongside General Leslie and Crawford Lindsay. Below is a list of those fallen, announced from the Markinch pulpit in the 1640s ("ane roll off thois quho wer killed"). We don't have any losses recorded from the Royalist side. There seem to be a few names still familiar today. The Markinch men were probably accompanied by their minister, the Rev, Frederick Carmichael and attached to the Regiment of Lord Elcho and/or Lord Balfour of Burleigh.

Tibbermure (Tippermuir by Perth)	1st Sept 1644
Aberdeine (Aberdeen)	13th Sept 1644
Kilsyth (near Cumbernauld)	15th Aug. 1645

Estate	Battle	Name
Auchmowtie	<u>Kilsyth</u> -	John Ceannes James Selcraige
Balbirnie	<u>Kilsyth</u>	Patrick Gardner Watt Scot David Kid
Balquharge (Balfarg)	<u>Kilsyth</u>	John Williamsone
Bandone	<u>Aberdeine</u>	John Bonnar James Bennie James Din
	<u>Kilsyth</u>	
Kirkforthar	<u>Kilsyth</u>	William Henderson David Broun Henry Raph
Pyatstoun	<u>Kilsyth</u>	John Selcraig
Lord Durie's Ground	<u>Kilsyth</u>	Peter Hunter Walter Hunter Alexander Spowart John Dalrymple Watt Seith



Lord Weem's Ground

Aberdein

John Huid
Danel Moris
David Red
James Layng
David Boss
David Landallis
David Adamson

Kilsyth

Saltgreen (Methil/Innerleven)

Tibbermure

George Lundie
John Bickerton
John Smart
Robert Melvin
John Birrall
John Gardner

Kilsyth

Myltoune of Balgonie and Lochtieside

Tibbermure

William Beatie
Thomas Ramsay
Andro Nucall

Kilsyth

Balfour

Tibbermure

James Millar
Alexander Quhyt
David Adamson
Andro Wilsone
W B
John Mathw

Aberdein

Kilsyth

Bruntoune

Tibbermure

David Philp
Patrik Millar
William Pryd
James Thomsone
Henry Bisset
George Lawson (younger), (officer?)
David Philp
David Muffet
Willam Chalmers
James Dick

Aberdein

Kilsyth

Markinch

Alexr Greig
David Arth
James Lundie
Robert Moutray
John Binie
Peter Borthuk of
Bightie



Source : Markinch Parish Register.

Footnote The Rev. Frederick Carmichael held a thanksgiving service for the Covenanting victory at Philiphaugh on 13th September 1645.

Another look at Markinch Parish Boundaries

The map below gives an idea of the extent of the old Markinch Parish - much bigger than the later burgh. Indeed, it is still used in official records to give historical continuity to parish statistics despite the existence of Glenrothes New Town. The place-names marked with green dots represent places referred to as being part of "Strathleven Shire" in a record of the shire's major properties drawn up for Edward I in the late 13th century. The shire and the parish probably had the same boundary. Part of the parish's wealth would have derived from the many mills along the network of rivers within the parish. The map shows the land transferred to Kennoway parish in the mid 19th century, carefully marked with a line of inscribed stones.

