
Conclusions *by D R Perry*

The excavations in Kelso and Peebles reported on here have successfully established the nature of the survival of the archaeological remains in these two less well known medieval Border burghs and provided information on their development (the presence of residual flints at Roxburgh Street and Wester Kelso/Floors Castle Trench 3 suggests that the fluvio-glacial river terrace by the Tweed was the focus for prehistoric settlement).

Of crucial importance were the excavations at Wester Kelso/Floors Castle, which have established that the original medieval burgh of Wester Kelso was much further west than previously believed, being situated well inside the present policies of Floors Castle, rather than beside the East Lodge as formerly thought. The latter site was a late, post-medieval extension of (Easter) Kelso. It is also evident that the burgh was probably closer to the Tweed, if not at the northern end of the bridge of Roxburgh. The development of the settlement of Wester Kelso at the opposite end of the bridge from the royal burgh of Roxburgh can be paralleled at other royal burghs with medieval bridges: Newton of Ayr at Ayr, Bridgend at Perth, Bridgend, later Maxwelltown, at Dumfries. What is less clear is the relationship of that early settlement to the abbey and the other settlement of Easter Kelso, in particular, when the two settlements became linked, if at all, along the present Roxburgh Street. The excavations at 13–19 Roxburgh Street provided little evidence of medieval occupation, although it was not possible to investigate the frontage because of a cellar. Nevertheless, the finding of a possible building terrace in Phase 1 indicates that settlement along the southern end of Roxburgh Street could date to as early as the 13th or 14th centuries on pottery evidence. Certainly by the end of the 16th century the backland of this site contained a well and corn-drying kiln. The excavations further north, on the opposite side of Roxburgh Street, at Chalkheugh Terrace, were even less indicative of medieval occupation, the site being primarily post-medieval. Only two medieval sherds were recovered, although at least three or four phases could be identified before the construction of a building in the late 18th or early 19th century.

The archaeological evidence from the Kelso excavations is not inconsistent with the idea that settlement at intermittent occupied plots occurred along the course of Roxburgh Street between the Wester and Easter Kelso. However it is more likely, combining the archaeological, cartographic and documentary evidence, that the two settlements were in fact never united, as traditionally thought. Instead Wester Kelso, at the north end of the bridge from

Roxburgh, ceased to exist as a result of the English occupation of Roxburgh Castle, when the royal burgh of Roxburgh also ceased to exist. In its absence the new burgh of (Easter) Kelso, created in 1614, expanded in the post-medieval period northwards from the abbey and market square until by the early 18th century at the latest it had reached the boundary of the Floors estate. In the course of the 18th century the Dukes of Roxburghe bought the burgh lands and Upper Market adjacent to their estate to enclose it within their policies, thereby reversing the process of the burgh's expansion.

The house platforms found in Trench 2 at Wester Kelso/Floors Castle were of post-medieval date, and belonged to buildings lining the north side of the upper market of Kelso (presumably the lower market was the main market near the abbey). Little can be made of their superstructures, although Building A must have had an upper storey if the fragment of a newel stair found in its backfill came from this building. How the cellar with its hearth related to the upper floor is not clear, although it had its own access directly from the street. Bracken was used either as flooring or roofing material.

At 13–19 Roxburgh Street, Kelso part of a possible terrace for a building fronting the street was uncovered, although no evidence for the materials used in its construction was found. Traces of coal and slag found in its backfill cannot determine whether it was a domestic building or a workshop. Building A, constructed in the mid 17th century, was a stone structure with a possible cruck-framed roof. The walls survived the fire of 1684 to be re-used when the building was repaired. A plan of Kelso showing the area affected by the fire around the Market Square (RHP 42577) states that the 'ruinous walls' still stood, indicating that the buildings were probably all constructed of stone. Presumably thatched roofs or timber framed upper storeys helped the fire spread. The site was intensively occupied in the post-medieval period, with two rows of structures extending back from the street frontage. At this time the site seems to have had a low socio-economic status from the number of unburnished clay pipe stem fragments recovered.

Although no trace of the late 16th-century town wall erected around Peebles was found in either of the excavations in that burgh, important information on the origins of settlement there was forthcoming. The results obtained from the excavations at the two sites in Peebles indicate that settlement of the peninsular ridge between the Tweed and Eddleston Water began in the 12th century, soon after the establishment of the royal castle and burgh by David I (1124–53). At both sites, after initial dumping of

rubbish, possibly to raise the ground level to counter flooding, occupation, in the form of stone structures, can be dated to the 14th century at the latest, with probable earlier dumping of domestic refuse in the 12th and 13th centuries. This dumping was presumably carried out from settlement elsewhere on the ridge, rather than from Old Town across the Eddleston. Presumably the burgh began close to the castle, expanding eastwards along the ridge to reach both sites by the 14th century. The street of Bridgegate was apparently laid out in the 13th or 14th centuries when the excavation site was divided into three properties aligned on the street, two of which had stone buildings erected on them. One of these buildings, Building 1, was a probable merchant's house of two storeys.

Alternatively, Bridgegate may have been the initial focus of settlement on the east side of the Eddleston, providing the access route from the east into Old Town, where a pilgrimage centre had been established at the Cross Kirk in 1261, and the location of the tolbooth in it suggests that this street was originally more important than High Street. The Cuddyside excavations raise the possibility that the structures there may have been originally situated in backlands of properties aligned on Bridgegate, rather than on High Street. However the Bridgegate excavations revealed that, on the north side of the street, Plots B and C extended back only some 14 m from the street frontage with no evidence that they had been curtailed in a subsequent laying out of Northgate, while the Cuddyside structures were some 25 m from the Bridgegate frontage. It seems more likely, as the excavator suggests, that the Cuddyside structures were in backlands of a property aligned on High Street. Further archaeological investigations elsewhere in Peebles High Street may clarify this point.

It is noteworthy that all eight medieval buildings excavated at the two Peebles sites were of stone construction. While it is possible that any trace of earlier timber structures may have been removed during the construction of these stone structures, it is equally possible that stone construction was a preferred option from the beginning, due either to the availability of stone instead of timber for building or to the probability of flooding from the nearby Eddleston Water. At Murraygate/Panmure Street, Dundee water seepage from the marshy ground of the Meadows may have been the reason for the adoption of stone buildings on that site (Brown and Roy 2000). Dundee was also one of the wealthiest towns in medieval Scotland, and the use of stone may have been a display of wealth and status by the owners. Of the structures found in Bridgegate, the tolbooth (Building 4) was the most important, being the civic centre of the burgh. Peebles tolbooth is the only medieval tolbooth site in Scotland to have been excavated, and the remains uncovered provide the only surviving evidence of a medieval tolbooth. (The earliest standing tolbooths date from the second half of the 16th century, apart from Crail, where a portion

of the building may date from 1517 [Stell 1981, 450].) The ground plan comprised two rooms, covering an area at least 12 m long by 5 m wide, internally. Access to the upper rooms would have been by an external stair (no trace of which was found), the council chamber and other public offices being on the upper floor(s). It was common for the basement/cellars of tolbooths to be rented out for storage or shops, but it is curious that at Peebles the cellars/basement were being used for such a noxious industry as tanning in the mid 16th century. No evidence for a steeple attached to the tolbooth was found.

The layout of the ground floor of the tolbooth resembles that of Building 1, a stone structure of the 14th century which remained in use until the early 20th century. This structure probably began as a merchant's house of two storeys, with two rooms, possibly workshops, on the ground floor divided by a cross-passage, and living accommodation on the upper floor serviced by an external garderobe pit. To have survived for such a long time, despite the vicissitudes of English raids and structural alterations including the addition of a chimney hearth, the building must have been of good construction (or had a succession of impoverished owners). Building 3 in Plot B was also a two-room structure, although unlike the tolbooth and Building 1, its gable fronted the street.

Medieval pottery imports at both Kelso and Peebles occurred only in small quantities: 27 (out of a total of 6633 sherds) at Kelso (all at Wester Kelso/Floors Castle Trench 3); less than 1% at Bridgegate, Peebles and none at Cuddyside. Nevertheless, they provide crucial dating evidence for the origins of Wester Kelso and Bridgegate. The pottery imports recovered at Wester Kelso, (Developed Stamford, Andenne and Rhenish-Paffrath Wares) show that the burgh's origins date to the 12th century, soon after the transfer of the Tironensian abbey from Selkirk to Kelso. The presence of imported medieval pottery from England, France, the Low Countries and the Rhineland, although in small quantities, is an indication of the wide-ranging contacts of the inhabitants. Presumably these contacts were due either to the connections of the abbey with its parent house in France (the first monks came from France to Selkirk, and presumably resettled to Kelso; the first two abbots of Selkirk became second and third abbots of Tiron; the abbots of Tironensian daughter houses were supposed to make annual visits to Tiron, although, in the case of Kelso, this was changed to every three years) or to the nearby location of the royal burgh of Roxburgh. At Bridgegate, the presence of two sherds of Low Countries Greyware, although residual, hint that occupation on the south and east side of the Eddleston Water could also have begun as early as the 12th century.

The important assemblage of post-medieval pottery recovered from 13–19 Roxburgh Street, Kelso is a reminder that this all too often neglected aspect of archaeology and social history is worthy of

further study. The wide range of wares found, for both domestic and table use, including imports from the Continent, England and elsewhere in Scotland, raises the possibility that the apparent low socio-economic status for the site evident from the lack of burnished clay pipes may not be the whole story. A mixed social and economic status for the inhabitants of the site may be suggested, as in Edinburgh's Royal Mile, where, before the development of the Georgian New Town, wealthy upper and professional classes lived in close proximity to the poorer classes. The presence of wineglass fragments is a further indication of the mixed status of the site.

A notable result of these excavations is the contrast that is evident in the pastoral economy of these Borders burghs in comparison with that of other burghs in northern and eastern Scotland. Excavations in other burghs have shown that cattle were the mainstay of their local economies, whereas, in the excavations reported on here, sheep were predominant in both the medieval and post-medieval periods at Peebles Bridgegate and at Kelso Roxburgh Street and Chalkheugh Terrace (animal bone did not survive in recoverable form at Wester Kelso/Floors Castle or Peebles Cuddyside). This variation of the pastoral economy in the Borders from elsewhere in Scotland is also apparent in the excavated animal bone assemblages from Eyemouth and Jedburgh Friary. Such a contrast between the Borders and northern and eastern Scotland is hardly surprising given the documentary evidence for the sheep farming practised by the religious houses of Melrose, Kelso and Coldingham and by the Crown in the Borders.

Otherwise, the evidence from animal bones is consistent with that from excavations in other burghs. Pigs played little part as a source of food, as did deer. That bones of mature sheep and cattle were common suggests that they were reared for wool and milk respectively and that good animal husbandry was practised (winter fodder must also have been in good supply). Butchery marks on bones confirm that meat cleavers rather than saws were used to disjoint carcasses, even into the modern period. There was some evidence of the effects of improvements in sheep breeding during the agricultural changes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries from the sheep bones at Peebles Bridgegate.

Apart from the late 16th-century corn-drying kiln at 13–19 Roxburgh Street, Kelso and the tanning pits in the basement of the tolbooth of Peebles, no structural evidence of industrial activity was found in the excavations at Kelso or Peebles. Analysis of grain from the kiln revealed barley, wheat and wild oats were being dried; also found were weeds,

consistent with crop growing and wasteland. Evidence of metalworking was evident in Phase 1 at 13–19 Roxburgh Street, Kelso and in Phases 1 and 2 at Bridgegate and in Phase 2 at Cuddyside, Peebles in the form of slag and lead alloy waste. Lead alloy waste was found in the clay sealing the base of the hearth in Structure 1 at Cuddyside and may, therefore, indicate that the building was used as a workshop. Most of the slag at Bridgegate was found in the dumped deposits, which were brought onto the site from elsewhere, and is not evidence of metalworking on the site. Some slag was found in a pit in Building 1, but it is not otherwise evident that the building was used for metalworking. A local pottery industry is evident in both the medieval and post-medieval periods at Kelso, although no kiln sites are known for the medieval period. The Decorated Slipwares of the post-medieval period show strong Dutch and German influences on the local industry. Textile working would have been a domestic activity, as evident from the personal equipment recovered from the excavations, pins, needles and thimbles, some of which are of medieval date. The stone-lined pit at Wester Kelso/Floors Castle Trench 3 produced traces of grassland plants and ova, probably of sheep liver fluke, indicative of livestock grazing by the inhabitants of that part of the burgh, if it was still part of Wester Kelso and not farmland. Coal found in Phases 1–3 at Roxburgh Street may have been waste from domestic or industrial use. It was found associated with slag in the backfill of the possible building terrace in Phase 1, but it is not certain whether that building was a house or a workshop. Coal was also found in the topmost backfill of the corn-drying kiln, although there was nothing to suggest that it was being used as fuel for the kiln. Unless there were any easily worked local outcrops, the coal was apparently imported from the Northumbrian coalfield rather than from Lothian, even in the later medieval period (14th–16th centuries), presumably because it was of easier access.

The results of the excavations have shown that in both Kelso and Peebles much archaeological information can be retrieved on their medieval and post-medieval origins and growth, even in areas previously thought to have little significance in the burghs. Any future development in either burgh should provide an opportunity to further study their origins and growth in the medieval and post-medieval periods. To understand the complexities of urban growth, some of the less well known burghs such as Kelso and Peebles must be studied alongside the better-known ones such as Perth and Aberdeen.