

Antiquarianism in Pre-Reformation Scotland

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Recent scholarship has dramatically redrawn the period boundaries which traditionally characterized Scottish history. Instead of the pre-Reformation Middle Ages suddenly blossoming into Reformed early modernity in 1560 as had been the dominant paradigm for much of the twentieth century, a new generation of scholars has seen the steady growth of a Scottish Renaissance culture beginning in the late fifteenth century and a protracted period of reform, both Catholic and Protestant, which extended over much of the sixteenth.¹

This paradigm shift has brought renewed interest in the already venerable study of Scottish humanism, most notably pioneered by John Durkan, David McRoberts, Mark Dilworth, and other church historians of the mid-twentieth century. The paths by which humanist culture and practice travelled from Italy, France, and the Low Countries to Scotland, often through the mediation of leading ecclesiastics such as William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen, and William Scheves, Archbishop of St Andrews, are now increasingly well mapped.² Nonetheless, despite recognition that Scottish humanism was characterized by an interest in the history of Scotland and, especially, the history of Scottish Christianity - unsurprising given the perceived need for nationalist ripostes to ongoing English political aggression - the historical practices of fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century antiquaries have received less attention than might be expected.³

The purpose of the present chapter is to offer a preliminary outline of what Scottish antiquarianism looked like during this period: its emphases, concerns, and practices. It will do so by examining the works of three scholars active in north-eastern Scotland: William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen, Hector Boece, Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, and the Italian immigrant Giovanni Ferrerio. All three men were leading figures in the humanist circles surrounding King's College, Aberdeen, and the Abbey of Kinloss, the two *loci* for historical scholarship in Renaissance Scotland. They were known to each other and collectively they form the earliest links in what would become a long chain of Scottish antiquarian writing. As such, their work is important not only in its own right, but also for its subsequent influence, an influence which would still be felt as late as the nineteenth century.

While other texts will be considered in passing, this chapter will focus chiefly on a series of works of ecclesiastical antiquarianism by its subjects: Bishop Elphinstone's voluminous

I am grateful to Nicola Royan for her advice during the writing of this chapter and to Gloria Conti ACR and the staff of the National Records of Scotland for facilitating analysis of NRS RH12/4.

¹ See particularly Andrea Thomas, *Glory and Honour: The Renaissance in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2013) and Stephen Mark Holmes, "The Scottish Reformation was not Protestant", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 14 (2014): 115-127.

² For Elphinstone see below and for Scheves see Daryl Green, "The First Printed Books to Arrive in Scotland: 15th Century St Andrian Owners of 15th Century Books", in *Reading Copy-Specific Features: Producers, Readers and Owners of Incunabula*, ed. Takako Kato and Satoko Kotunaga (Leiden, forthcoming 2020).

³ Perhaps in part because humanist history and antiquarianism co-existed with older traditions of historical writing in Scotland throughout this period. See, for example, Archbishop Scheves's commissioning of manuscripts of the *Scotichronicon* and the *Liber Pluscardensis* (Thomas, *Glory and Honour*, 152).

collection of saints' legends in the *Aberdeen Breviary*, Boece's *Lives of the Bishops of Aberdeen*, and Ferrerio's *History of the Abbey of Kinloss*. In each instance, the scholars in question combined archival research with Latin poetics and refashioned the raw material of the medieval Scottish past into a new, humanist mold. The processes by which they did this in turn have much to tell us about the contours of antiquarianism in Renaissance Scotland: both imported and homegrown, fascinated with the textual and material relics of the middle ages, and intimately tied to the growing reform movements within the Catholic church.

William Elphinstone

William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen (1431-1514), was a leading player, if not *the* leading player, in the reception of the Renaissance in Scotland.⁴ Although he was the illegitimate son of a churchman, both his parents belonged to noble families and he enjoyed a rapid career through the grammar school and University of Glasgow, where he was a favorite of the bishop, John Cameron. After graduating MA in 1462 he proceeded to study canon law, first at home, but then in the University of Paris, 1465-1470, with a subsequent brief period studying the civil law at the University of Orléans, 1470-1471. During these formative years of his early adulthood he was exposed to the humanist scholarship and teaching then increasingly prevalent in the French universities. Crucially for his own later plans, he was a present and presumably attentive onlooker in Paris when Guillaume Fichet was rector of the Sorbonne and when the first printing press was established in that city by Fichet and Johann Heynlin in 1470.⁵ During this period he began collecting what was for the time a substantial library of printed and manuscript works of civil and canon law, devotion, and other subjects.⁶ While practical legal works dominate, hints of the new learning are also present in examples such as a manuscript of Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae Latinae Linguae*.⁷

Elphinstone returned from France as official (legal officer) of the diocese of Glasgow, held a number of increasingly senior appointments in the church and university during the 1470s, and was a member of the Scottish embassy to France in 1479. He was subsequently presented to the bishopric of Ross for his good diplomatic services in 1481 and quickly translated to Aberdeen in 1483. After the death of James III in 1488, Elphinstone focused not only on national politics but also on the intellectual and theological culture of his diocese. The foundation of the University of Aberdeen in 1495 was one of his greatest achievements, following on from a personal mission to Rome.⁸ He appointed Hector Boece, a Scottish-born friend of Erasmus and teacher at the University of Paris, as the new principal and Boece in turn oversaw the construction of the college

⁴ The standard biography remains Leslie J. Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland, 1431-1514: The Struggle for Order* (Aberdeen, 1985).

⁵ Macfarlane, *Elphinstone*, 36 and *passim*.

⁶ Leslie J. Macfarlane, "William Elphinstone's Library Revisited", in *The Renaissance in Scotland: Studies in Literature, Religion, History and Culture Offered to John Durkan*, ed. A. A. MacDonald, et al. (Leiden, 1994), 66-81.

⁷ AUL King's College MS 222.

⁸ Macfarlane, *Elphinstone*, *passim*.

buildings on lines drawn from Marsilio Ficino's *De triplici vita*.⁹ Elphinstone showed a particular interest in liturgical reform from the 1490s onward, probably influenced by his visit to Rome in 1494-1495, and it was in this context that he published his first and greatest antiquarian work - the first substantial book to be printed in Scotland - the *Aberdeen Breviary*.¹⁰ A liturgical text first and foremost, the *Breviary* also contained a series of scholarly saints' lives, the results of a remarkable antiquarian research project.

Elphinstone's role in the research and publication of the *Breviary* has been the subject of much conjecture and it is a useful exercise to separate later suppositions from contemporary evidence. This latter consists of three tantalizing references. The royal patent issued to Walter Chepman and Andrew Myllar for their printing press - the first in Scotland - is dated 15 September 1507, two years before the *Breviary's* publication, and specifies in considerable detail the implications of the new press's royal imprimatur, namely that it was to be used

for imprenting within our realme of the bukis of our lawis, actis of parliament, croniclis, mess bukis and portuus efter the use of our realme, with additiouns and legendis of Scottis sanctis now gaderit to be ekit thairto . . . [a]nd als it is divisit and thocht expedient be us and our counsall that in tyme cuming mess bukis, manualis, matyne bukis and portuus bukis efter our awin Scottis use and with legendis of Scottis sanctis as is now gaderit and ekit be the reverend fader in God and our traist counsalour Williame, bischop of Abirdene, and utheris, be usit generally within al our realme als sone as the sammyn may be imprentit and providit . . .¹¹

A "portuus" is simply a breviary - specifically a portable breviary for ordinary use - and the emphasis on specifically Scottish content clearly points to what would become the *Aberdeen Breviary* having already been envisioned and in progress by 1507.¹²

The other contemporary sources for Elphinstone's undertaking consist of two separate statements by his friend and client Hector Boece. In Boece's *Vita* of the bishop he writes of Elphinstone that

The history of the antiquities of the Scottish nation, especially in the Hebrides, where also are preserved the sepulchres of our ancient kings and the ancient monuments of our race, he examined with great care and labour. The result of his researches into our history he condensed into one volume.

⁹ Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, "Ficino in Aberdeen: The Continuing Problem of the Scottish Renaissance", *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 1 (2009) (<http://www.northernrenaissance.org/ficino-in-aberdeen-the-continuing-problem-of-the-scottish-renaissance/>)

¹⁰ For Elphinstone's liturgical reforms see Stephen Mark Holmes, *Sacred Signs in Reformation Scotland: Interpreting Worship, 1488-1590* (Oxford, 2015). The *Aberdeen Breviary*, more properly *Breviarj Aberdonensis ad per celebris ecclesie Scotorum usum*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1509-1510), ESTC S117099, has been the subject of extensive study with the fullest bibliographical account of surviving copies being Jane Stevenson, Iain Beavan, and Peter Davidson, "The Breviary of Aberdeen", *Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* 6 (2011): 11-42. A quasi-facsimile, with significant corrections to the original text, was edited by William Blew, *Breviarium Aberdonense*, 2 vols. (London, 1854) and the offices of the Scottish saints contained within the *Breviary* have been edited and translated by Alan Macquarrie as *Legends of Scottish Saints: Readings, Hymns and Prayers for the Commemoration of Scottish Saints in the Aberdeen Breviary* (Dublin, 2012).

¹¹ Matthew Livingstone, et al., eds., *Registrum secreti sigilli regum Scotorum*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1908-1966), i. no. 1546.

¹² Macfarlane, *Elphinstone*, 236-237.

Commented [WS1]: It's not clear to me whether the conclusion that this is basically the work of a single individual is yours, or is also in (e.g.) Stevenson, Beavan Davidson - if the latter, I wonder if you could trim these two pages slightly (simply because they're a large percentage of the whole)? But if you think that it is new research on Elphinstone, I can see why you want it.

Commented [KW2R1]: This argument is a new one in the literature and hasn't been made by anyone other than me (as far as I know), so I think it's worth keeping, if that's okay.

The acts of the saints, to whom our parish churches are generally dedicated, after much research in many quarters he collected into one work. These records had been longer neglected than was seemly. He caused these to be publicly read every year on the respective Saints' days.¹³

The *Vita* was published in 1522, a little over a decade after the *Breviary*, but Boece was already in Aberdeen during the period of its publication and was presumably in a position to know what had occurred. He restates this account in the prefatory material to his 1527 *Scotorum historia*, speaking of

William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen . . . [who] was the first to scour virtually all of Scotland to see if anywhere he could find any monuments of our history and bring whatever he found to light, like a spark of fire out a vein of flint. Finally, getting a taste of Vairement and the others on the island of Iona, because of his patriotism (even if distracted by his burdensome occupations) he was not afraid to undertake such a great task and began to write a history.¹⁴

Upon this slim foundation a tower of speculation has arisen since the 1980s. It seems to have begun with Macfarlane's assumption that the "utheris" who had "gaderit and ekit" the lives of Scottish saints named in the 1507 patent represented "assistants" or a "team" behind Elphinstone.¹⁵ Macfarlane attempted to identify this team, having already assured his readers that "Elphinstone was too busy to have worked on the Breviary himself" and arrived at an arbitrary list of individuals connected to the bishop and diocese of Aberdeen: "Duncan Scherar, William Elphinstone, Alexander Elphinstone, Adam and Robert Elphinstone, James Brown (possibly), and Alexander Galloway, with Archibald Lindsay as the chief organizer and controller of the whole project".¹⁶ This is repeated by Macquarrie, who categorically states that Elphinstone "must have had collaborators" and that Elphinstone's assistants "must have included Archibald Lindsay" but is hesitant to go further.¹⁷ Holmes, in turn, argues that the group he identified as the "Aberdeen Liturgists" who were active in liturgical reform at this period must have been one and the same with Elphinstone's assistants.¹⁸

A straightforward reading of the contemporary evidence, however, suggests that Elphinstone himself played a much greater role in the composition of the material which underlies the *Breviary* than has generally been assumed. Aside from the "utheris" named in the patent - which could as easily refer to authors of other, historic collections of saints' *vitae* - Elphinstone is the only

¹³ Hector Boece, *Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium episcoporum vitae* (Paris, 1522), fol. XXXIr (= Hector Boece, *Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium episcoporum vitae*, ed. and trans. James Moir [Aberdeen, 1894], 99). I have quoted from Moir's translation in this chapter.

¹⁴ Hector Boece, *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine* (Paris, 1527), sig. aiiiv. I have quoted here from Dana F. Sutton's translation of Boece, *Scotorum historia* (2010) in the Philological Museum, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/boece/fronteng.html>.

¹⁵ Macfarlane, *Elphinstone*, 237-242.

¹⁶ Macfarlane, *Elphinstone*, 240, 242-243.

¹⁷ Macquarrie, *Legends*, xxvi.

¹⁸ Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, 58-63.

individual named and Boece explicitly notes that despite his "burdensome occupations" his "patriotism" led him to undertake the task. We do not, then, need to imagine the "major collaborative research project" identified with winking anachronism by Tom Turpie, but can instead reformulate the crucial antiquarian activity underlying the *Aberdeen Breviary* as, most likely, the work of a single individual, albeit one with access to a wide-ranging scholarly network.¹⁹

What did this antiquarian activity look like? The gathering of materials is described in vague terms by Boece with the explicit exception of Elphinstone's use of material from Iona and his "form[ing] his materials into one volume".²⁰ Nicola Royan has already argued for Boece's later access to records, possibly fragmentary chronicles, preserved in the archive of the bishops of the Isles at Iona and it seems likely that this same archive provided at least some material for the *Breviary*.²¹ As Macquarrie has demonstrated, it was probably material from Iona which underlies the offices for SS. Columba and Adomnán in the printed *Breviary*.²²

But internal evidence suggests a far more heterogenous array of source-texts than simply a manuscript or manuscripts brought from Iona. While much remains to be done in identifying the sources preserved in the *Breviary*, Macquarrie's groundbreaking work has already shown enough to validate Boece's at first seemingly hyperbolic claim that Elphinstone "scour[ed] virtually all of Scotland" for his material.²³ To give further examples, the office for St Kentigern in the *Breviary* is evidently based on one of Jocelin of Furness's sources, a "codiculum alium, stilo Scottico dictatum", dating from the twelfth-century or earlier, rather than any of the more obvious sources for the life of the saint.²⁴ Jocelin implies that this *codiculum* was in Glasgow, suggesting the possibility, then, of a Glaswegian source for the *Breviary* text.²⁵ This seems the more likely when Elphinstone's long-time association with the diocese of Glasgow is considered.

Equally, the office for St. Blane (Bláán) in the *Breviary* has been suggested by Macquarrie to derive from its use in Dunblane Cathedral.²⁶ If so, this not only points to another geographical source for Elphinstone's materials but also indicates the possibility of collaboration with other antiquaries. Alexander Mylne, later abbot of Cambuskenneth and author of the *Vitae Dunkeldensis ecclesiae episcoporum* was already a canon of Dunblane Cathedral by the time of Elphinstone's project and it seems probable that he may have acted as a source for his fellow scholarly-minded ecclesiastic in providing material on Dunblane's patron saint.²⁷ The available evidence suggests a

¹⁹ Tom Turpie, "North-Eastern Saints in the Aberdeen Breviary and the *Historia Gentis Scotorum* of Hector Boece: Liturgy, History and Religious Practice in Late Medieval Scotland", in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in the Dioceses of Aberdeen and Moray*, ed. Jane Geddes (London and New York, 2016), 239-247 at 239.

²⁰ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. XXXIr.

²¹ Nicola Royan, "Hector Boece and the Question of Veremund", *Innes Review* 52 (2001): 42-62 at 48. Elphinstone's source was likely the ambitious John Campbell, Bishop of the Isles, who in 1498 had annexed the abbacy of Iona to his bishopric. See John Dowden, *The Bishops of Scotland*, ed. J. Maitland Thomson (Glasgow, 1912), 290.

²² Alan Macquarrie, "The Offices for St Columba (9 June) and St Adomnán (23 September) in the Aberdeen Breviary", *Innes Review* 51 (2000): 1-39; Macquarrie, *Legends*, 318-320 (St Adomnán), 339-344 (St Columba).

²³ Macquarrie's extensive notes, *Legends*, 318-423, give a good sense of how much remains to be done in further identifying the incredibly complex set of textual traditions underlying the *Aberdeen Breviary*.

²⁴ Macquarrie, *Legends*, 370-372.

²⁵ Macquarrie, *Legends*, 370.

²⁶ Alan Macquarrie, "The Office for St Blane (10 August) in the Aberdeen Breviary", *Innes Review* 52 (2001): 111-135; Macquarrie, *Legends*, 328-330.

²⁷ Alexander Mylne, *Vitae Dunkeldensis ecclesiae episcoporum a prima sedis fundatione ad annum M.D.XV* (Edinburgh, 1831) and ODNB, *sub nomine*.

complex, several year period of gathering and synthesizing medieval documents from across Scotland, whether by Elphinstone alone or by Elphinstone and assistants.

A further clue to Elphinstone's processes is given in Boece's statement that "[t]he acts of the saints, to whom our parish churches are generally dedicated, after much research in many quarters he collected into one work".²⁸ This certainly refers to the *Breviary*, but there is reason to think that an earlier, manuscript incarnation of the *Breviary* material - compiled by Elphinstone - may have existed. A bi-folium now in the National Records of Scotland which had been previously rescued as binding waste contains portions of the offices of St. Erasmus (2 June), St. Colmóc (6 June), SS. Gildard and Medard (8 June), St. Columba (9 June), and St. Barnabas (11 June).²⁹ While the office for St. Erasmus is absent from the *Breviary*, the text and arrangement of the remainder corresponds - with a few minor textual variants - word for word with the *Breviary* text, leading to the strong implication that the two are genealogically related. David McRoberts tentatively dated the script to "three or four decades before the Elphinstone liturgical revival" and more recently Stephen Holmes has agreed in dating it to the late fifteenth century, well within the time period when Elphinstone was compiling materials for the *Breviary*.³⁰ If so, we can trace at least three distinct stages of composition for the *Breviary* text from the now lost working papers of the bishop, through the fair volume apparently represented by RH12/4, to the printed text of the *Breviary* itself.³¹

That the first major antiquarian project of the Scottish Renaissance should also be part of the country's first substantial printed book is no accident. As already noted above, the press established by Chepman and Myllar in Edinburgh in 1507 enjoyed strong royal and ecclesiastical support and was specifically intended to publish works of nationalizing liturgical and historical use. Indeed, we can see the now far more heavily studied chapbooks of popular literature published by Chepman and Myllar prior to the *Breviary* as, essentially, journeyman works leading up to their central project.³² In this, we can see the influence on Elphinstone of the model provided by Guillaume Fichet, Johann Heynlin, and their pioneering academic press at Paris.³³ Where Fichet and Heynlin were chiefly concerned with producing texts suitable for the students of the Sorbonne, Elphinstone aspired to an altogether grander objective with his press: the dissemination of his antiquarian scholarship across Scotland and its assimilation into the liturgical reform advocated by him and his adherents in Aberdeen. It is worth restating that antiquarianism in Renaissance Scotland was fundamentally religious and that this followed directly on from the role of religion and religious reform within the Northern Renaissance as a whole.

²⁸ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. XXXIr (= Boece, *Vitae*, 99).

²⁹ NRS RH12/4.

³⁰ David McRoberts, "A Legendary Fragment in the Scottish Record Office", *Innes Review* 19 (1968): 82-85; Stephen Mark Holmes, "Catalogue of Liturgical Books and Fragments in Scotland before 1560", *Innes Review* 62 (2011): 127-212 at 151. Macquarrie, *Legends*, xxvi, has also suggested (thanking Holmes) that NRS RH12/4 could be a fragment of the "one work" mentioned by Boece and the similarity to the *Breviary* text had already been noted by McRoberts.

³¹ Unfortunately, NRS RH12/4 is part of a larger collection of ex-binding waste in the NRS whose individual provenance is not known. An analysis by Gloria Conti suggests that the volume from which it came was bound in stiff vellum on boards, possibly with green-dyed board edges, but there is insufficient internal evidence to conjecture further concerning either its reuse or the manuscript of which it was a part.

³² For the context of these publications see Sally Mapstone, ed., *The Chepman and Myllar Prints: Digitised Facsimiles with Introduction, Headnote and Transcription* (Woodbridge, 2008).

³³ Anatole Claudin, *The First Paris Press: An Account of the Books Printed for G. Fichet and J. Heynlin in the Sorbonne, 1470-1472* (n.p., 1898).

Modern assessments of the *Aberdeen Breviary* often describe it as "failed" or "unsuccessful".³⁴ Whether this was due to an ultimately limiting northeastern exclusivity in the entire project of liturgical reform or simply due to the logistical and financial challenges of printing and distributing breviaries across the forbidding terrain of a thinly-populated, pre-modern nation, remains open to debate. What is more certain, however, is that the project - successful or not - marks the sudden flowering in Scotland of a new spirit of antiquarianism, one which would reappear in the works of Elphinstone's friends and successors.

Hector Boece

Hector Boece has already been mentioned as the biographer of Bishop Elphinstone. He was also an antiquary, teacher, and administrator who has far outshone his patron in subsequent historiography.³⁵ Hailing from a burgh family in Dundee, Boece was educated in the Collège de Montaigu in Paris, arriving probably no later than 1485, and while there enjoyed the friendship of several Scots subsequently illustrious in national affairs as well as the young Desiderius Erasmus. This latter friendship led in time to Boece becoming the dedicatee - in an elegant letter dated near Paris, 8 November 1495 - of Erasmus's poem *De casa natalitia Jesu*.³⁶ While still relatively young, Boece was headhunted by Elphinstone for the latter's new foundation in Aberdeen and became its first principal, 17 September 1505. He remained in post until his death in 1536.³⁷

Boece's modern reputation, for better or for worse, is founded on his *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine libri xvii* of 1527, one of the earliest and easily the most influential of the sixteenth-century humanist histories of Scotland.³⁸ Writing broadly in the style of Livy and availing himself of the recent rediscovery of Tacitus, Boece followed in the footsteps of contemporaries such as Robert Gaguin in creating a new and appropriately humanist account of the Scottish past. His inclusion and elaboration upon Scotland's ancient monarchy myth - the belief in an unbroken line of kings from 330 BCE until the time of the Stuarts - has overshadowed the *Scotorum historiae*'s importance as a marker of Scotland's flourishing Renaissance culture. While it contains antiquarian moments, however, the rhetorical history of the *Scotorum historia* is less relevant to an account of Scottish antiquarianism than Boece's less well-known and much less studied *Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium episcoporum vitae*.

The *Vitae* appeared before the *Scotorum historia* by five years, being published by the scholar-printer Josse Badius Ascensius in Paris in 1522.³⁹ Its dedication, dated from King's College, 31

³⁴ See, for example, Stevenson, Beavan, and Davidson, 37 (indicating the presence of a stock of unsold sheets of the *Breviary* some decades after its publication) and Turpie, 247.

³⁵ The best account of Boece is Nicola Royan, *The Scotorum historia of Hector Boece: A Study* (University of Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, 1996) and, in compressed form, Royan's biography of Boece for the ODNB, *s.n.*

³⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *De casa natalitia Jesu* (Paris, not before 1496), fol. A1v. For the letter and its context see Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum*, 12 vols. ed. P.S. Allen, et al. (Oxford, 1906-1958), i. 154-158. Allen's conjecture at 155 that the dedication may have represented Erasmus indirectly seeking patronage from Elphinstone and hoping for a place at the newly founded university in Aberdeen is a tempting but probably groundless supposition.

³⁷ ODNB, *s.n.*

³⁸ Boece, *Scotorum historia*, and cf. Royan, *The Scotorum historia*.

³⁹ For Badius Ascensius see Philippe Renouard, *Bibliographie des impressions et des oeuvres de Josse Badius Ascensius, imprimeur et humaniste, 1462-1535*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1908), esp. ii. 195-196 (Boece's publications with his press), and Paul White, *Jodocus Badius Ascensius: Commentary, Commerce and Print in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2013).

August 1521, was to Gavin Dunbar, Elphinstone's successor as bishop of Aberdeen and another reformer, builder, and enthusiastic adopter of the Aberdonian liturgical reforms.⁴⁰ In it Boece repeated the longstanding canard of the destruction of Scottish records by Edward I, leading to "our bishops [being] unable to learn anything about their predecessors except their names and a very few facts about them" and hoped that the *Vitae* itself would afford pleasure to the present incumbent while also holding up "worthy models for all who anywhere hold sacred office".⁴¹

The body of the work contained biographies - usually only a paragraph or two - of each bishop of Aberdeen in chronological order from the time of Beóán, the first bishop of Mortlach who was supposedly elevated to the see by Máel Coluim II in 1010.⁴² While such an arrangement may simply have been intuitive, it is probable that Boece was influenced by the most widely available model for collective episcopal history, the humanist historian Bartolomeo Platina's 1479 *Vita Pontificum*, which enumerates the lives of the popes using the same structure.⁴³ Platina's work was widely circulated in Scotland, with several early copies known, and Boece refers to him elsewhere in the *Scotorum historia*, suggesting a reasonable degree of familiarity.⁴⁴ As such, Boece's *Vitae* fell into an already well-established category of ecclesiastical antiquarianism - antiquarian by virtue of its local emphasis, in opposition to the universality of Platina - which had been developed during the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Within the *Vitae* Boece demonstrated certain recurrent concerns which illuminate his practice and the ways in which he approached antiquarian scholarship. One was his use of contemporary documents. In the life of Bishop Beóán he was at pains to stress that the estates and revenues of the bishopric had been gifted using "diplomatus (chartas dicunt nostri)" which contained no witness list but only the name of the king.⁴⁵ Later he noted that royal charters conveying various lands to the bishopric in the time of Bishop Matthew (1163-1197) were still extant and similar documents underly other references to the land ownership of the diocese.⁴⁶ These references to specific charters in turn allow us to identify one of Boece's sources: either (more probably) the *Registrum Album*, the White Book of the bishopric of Aberdeen, which was probably begun in the fourteenth or fifteenth century and contains entries as late as 1535 or (somewhat less likely) the copy and digest of the same made by William Skene, a Carmelite monk,

⁴⁰ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIr; Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, 64.

⁴¹ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIv (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, iv-v).

⁴² Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIIr (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, 6-7). The see was moved to Aberdeen by Bishop Nechtan, who died in 1152 (*ibid.*, fol. IIIv).

⁴³ Bartolomeo Platina, *Vita Pontificum* (Venice, 1479), ISTC ip00768000. It was frequently reprinted throughout the sixteenth century.

⁴⁴ Boece lists Platina and the historian of Venice Marco Antonio Sabellico as leading figures amongst the moderns (*neotericis*) in *Scotorum historiae*, sig. aiiiv. Later in the century, a copy of the 1551 Cologne edition was owned by James Stewart, Prior of St Andrews, and a copy of the 1572 Louvain edition by Ninian Winzet, Abbot of Regensburg (John Durkan and Anthony Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* [Glasgow, 1961], 149, 161). Note also the copy in the library of Mary Queen of Scots ("The Library of Mary Queen of Scots, and of King James the Sixth", *Miscellany of the Maitland Club* 1 [Edinburgh, 1840], 12, though there is no need to agree with the editor that the heading "The livis of the paipis be Platine" necessarily indicates a translation into Scots or English).

⁴⁵ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIIr. Where a modern scholar would be apt to detect a later forgery - not least given the absence of evidence for use of charters in Máel Coluim II's reign - Boece saw a touching "confidence in men's honour" evidenced by the absence of a witness list. The thoroughly suspicious charter is printed at Cosmo Innes, ed., *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1845), i. 3.

⁴⁶ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIIr ("extant regie donationis diplomata").

at the behest of Alexander Galloway, one of the canons of the cathedral.⁴⁷ One of Boece's foundational research methods, then, was the consultation of the official documents of the diocese.

But Boece did not limit himself to textual sources and, indeed, demonstrated a noticeable fascination with the physical artefacts of the diocese. Burial places of bishops are often recorded, beginning with Bishop Beóán's burial "at the postern door of the church of Mortlach, which he himself had built", and Boece appears to have been the first to record the episcopal tombs in St. Machar's Cathedral, noting approvingly of Bishop Ingram Lindsay (d. 1458) that "his monument, with an effigy cut in stone with considerable skill, was afterwards erected by his friends to commemorate his memory".⁴⁸ Somewhat surprisingly, although he notes that Bishop Henry de Lichton (d. 1440) was buried in St. Machar's, he makes no specific mention of the bishop's lavish canopy tomb.⁴⁹

The construction of St. Machar's Cathedral is narrated by Boece in considerable detail. Bishop Lindsay's continuation of the building work begun by Bishop de Lichton is described - "he inlaid the roof with panels and paved the floor with dressed stones" - and Bishop Thomas Spens's (d. 1480) episcopal palace and Edinburgh hospital are both noted.⁵⁰ Boece was at his most eloquent and visually focused in describing the many improvements brought about by Bishop Spens:

He presented to the Church various ornamental gifts, sacred vestments, copes, chasubles, tunics, various Dalmatics embroidered with gold, and silver vessels for sacred use. He adorned the high altar with a painting and statues of wonderful artistic beauty, with hanging cloths, curtains interwoven with gold and cambric of a raised and wavy pattern and embroidered with palm branches. He removed the ancient seats (stalls as they are called) in the choir [of St. Machar's] which by long use were all but worn down . . . [h]e put in their places new ones of rare art and beauty, along with a throne of artistic beauty for the use of the bishop.⁵¹

The *Vitae* concludes with the lengthy biography of Bishop Elphinstone mentioned above where, again, the physical remains of Elphinstone's career - his erection of a bridge across the Dee and his beginning of work on the heraldic ceiling of St. Machar's - are given prominence.⁵² Collectively, Boece draws on the cartulary of the diocese, his own exploration of its ancient monuments, and either ocular evidence or received testimony concerning its movables to create a richly imagined account of the "learning and virtue" of the bishops of Aberdeen.⁵³

Boece's *Vitae* was undoubtedly influenced by the atmosphere of ecclesiastical antiquarianism surrounding Bishop Elphinstone and his circle, but we should not imagine him as

⁴⁷ The *Registrum album* is now NLS Adv.MS.16.1.10 and the Skene copy is NLS Adv.MS.34.4.4. Both are discussed at length in the *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis*, i. lxxviii-lxx.

⁴⁸ Boece, *Vitae*, fols. IIIr, XIIIr (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, 7, 37).

⁴⁹ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. XIr-v.

⁵⁰ Boece, *Vitae*, fols. XIV, XVIIr (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, 35, 53-54).

⁵¹ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. XVIv (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, 53). Some of these items were probably still in use in Boece's time and may be represented in the 1559 inventory of silver, vestments, and other goods confiscated by the reformers from St. Machar's (see *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis*, i. lxxxvi-xci).

⁵² Boece, *Vitae*, fol. XXXVIIIv.

⁵³ Boece, *Vitae*, fol. IIv (= Boece, *Vitae*, ed. Moir, v).

a lone figure pursuing his sometime patron's fascinations. Instead, there is evidence to suggest that the 1520s saw an upsurge in antiquarian interest amongst the clergy of the diocese of Aberdeen alongside continuing impetus towards reform of liturgical and clerical practice. The copy of the *Registrum album* made by William Skene for Canon Alexander Galloway in the 1520s suggests antiquarian interests on the part of the canon, whose substantial library, including works by Plutarch and Cicero, has survived in fragmentary form.⁵⁴ Likewise, the dedicatee of the *Vitae*, Bishop Dunbar, commissioned in 1527 the lavish *Epistolare de tempore et de sanctis*, a lectionary for St. Machar's which contained readings for the church year, a short history of the bishops of the diocese which is clearly indebted to Boece's account, a list of canons, and other material.⁵⁵ Dunbar commissioned it and its rich illuminations in Antwerp, presumably as part of the ongoing liturgical reform he had brought to the diocese. In both cases, there is evidence that an antiquarian fascination with the ecclesiastical history of Aberdeen went hand in hand with the increasingly active reform movement within the church.

The Abbey of Kinloss and Giovanni Ferrerio

Amongst his many accomplishments, Boece had also found the time to qualify as a physician and December 1535 found him not at Aberdeen but eighty miles to the northwest at the Abbey of Kinloss, overlooking the River Findhorn as it drains into the North Sea. There he was attending at the bedside of a fellow scholar and ecclesiastic, the aged Thomas Crystall, Abbot of Kinloss, who, despite Boece's efforts, would die later in the month.⁵⁶ Forty-eight years before, the young Crystall had received the habit of a Cistercian monk at Kinloss on 6 January 1487 and was elevated to the abbacy in 1500. A reformer and builder, he restored the abbey revenues, repaired its buildings, and bought in rich new vestments for the foundation, presiding over the first phase of its remarkable flourishing as a monastic center for humanist learning. He added significantly to its already substantial library, obtaining a selection of patristic texts as well as more recent works such as the newly-published *Sententia* of the Scottish humanist John Mair.⁵⁷ He also appears to have participated in the larger northeastern culture of liturgical reform, commissioning a manuscript set of missal and gradual from the scriptorium at the Cistercian abbey in Culross.⁵⁸

Under Crystall, Kinloss was already distinguished for its scholarly engagement. When the venerable abbot chose to retire from his chair in 1526, it was only natural that he should be succeeded by someone sympathetic to that vision. That man was Robert Reid, the nephew of John Shanwell, Abbot of the Cistercian foundation at Coupar Angus, who although he was probably only in his thirties at most, had already enjoyed a meteoric career in the Scottish church. It was probably in part due to his promotion to the abbacy that Reid was in Rome in 1527 and in

⁵⁴ Durkan and Ross, 100-103.

⁵⁵ Edited in *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis*, ii. 236-255, and more fully in *Epistolare in usum ecclesiae cathedralis Aberdonensis*, ed. Bruce McEwen (Edinburgh, 1924). The manuscript is now AUL MS 22.

⁵⁶ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fol. 66v (= Giovanni Ferrerio, *Historia abbatum de Kynlos*, ed. W. D. Wilson [Edinburgh, 1839], 82).

⁵⁷ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fol. 63r-v (= Ferrerio, *Historia abbatum*, 77).

⁵⁸ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fol. 63v (= Ferrerio, *Historia abbatum*, 77). See Marlene Villalobos Hennessy, "The Arbuthnott Book of Hours: Book Production and Religious Culture in Late Medieval Scotland", in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. Geddes, 212-238 at 230.

Paris the following year. There he made what proved to be a decisive move for the abbey's future when he met a Piedmontese student at the Sorbonne, Giovanni Ferrerio, whom he convinced to return to Kinloss as a teacher of the monks.⁵⁹

Ferrerio, a distant relative of a Piedmontese episcopal family, had been educated at Chieri and Turin before arriving in Paris in 1525. Three years later he came to Scotland and, after a brief and unsuccessful period at the court of James V, he settled into his role as tutor at Kinloss. His teaching, undertaken between 1531 and 1537 and again between 1541 and 1545 included the works of Jacques Lefèvre, Rudolph Agricola, Erasmus, and Melanchthon, bringing the latest in continental scholarship to the Cistercians of the Scottish northeast.⁶⁰ He had a particular interest in teaching humanist eloquence and lectured on Cicero, Quintilian, and Valla amongst others.

The influence of their Italian visitor on the monks of Kinloss was galvanic. While Ferrerio's teaching was the most visible manifestation of a larger humanist historical culture at the abbey additional glimpses can be seen in the libraries of the abbey itself and of individual monks.⁶¹ These included editions of Poliziano's *Epistolae* and *Opera omnia* and a sammelband of Probus and Valerius Maximus, all dating from 1526-27, as well as a later group including works by Bolzanio, Alciati, and Panvinio from the 1550s.⁶² The library of Abbot Reid himself was one of the largest collections of humanist books in pre-Reformation Scotland, notably including a copy of Werner Rolewinck's *Fasciculus temporum* with which was bound the unique manuscript of the *Historia Norvegiae*.⁶³

Kinloss was fertile ground, then, for the reception of the burgeoning Scottish antiquarian tradition and it was Ferrerio himself who gave voice to the next stage in that tradition. His first composition while at the monastery was a *Vita* of Abbot Crystall, composed in 1535, only a year before the elderly cleric's death. The influence of Boece's *Vita* of Elphinstone is evident, as is Ferrerio's outspoken approval of Crystall's scholarly reforms. His first antiquarian work, however, was the more substantial *Historia abbatum de Kynlos*, dated April 1537 and dedicated to Bishop Reid.⁶⁴ In the preface, Ferrerio set his work within humanist culture as a whole, emphasizing the importance of history in education and using echoes of the traditional classical *loci* for such justifications in Livy, Cicero, and Polybius. He did not, however, see his work as a finished history in its own right, but rather couched it - in what was already a common antiquarian move - as *sylva*, the raw materials for future histories. This tendency to treat the *Historia* as almost a sourcebook or compendium was reflected in his compositional practice: the surviving manuscripts show him preparing four blank pages for each abbot and gradually filling in material as it came to his hands.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ For Reid see *ODNB*, *s.n.*, and for Ferrerio John Durkan, "Giovanni Ferrerio, Humanist: His Influence in Sixteenth-Century Scotland", in *Religion and Humanism*, ed. Keith Robbins (Oxford, 1981), 181-194.

⁶⁰ Durkan, "Ferrerio", 183-184.

⁶¹ John Durkan, "The Beginnings of Humanism in Scotland", *Innes Review*, 4 (1953): 5-24 at 19-24.

⁶² Durkan, "Beginnings of Humanism", 19-20.

⁶³ Durkan and Ross, 44-47. The Rolewinck is now NRS GD45/31/1. For its history see Kelsey Jackson Williams, "Joachim Frederik von Bassen: A Danish Scholar in Restoration Scotland", *Northern Studies* 48 (2017): 66-81 at 70-71.

⁶⁴ The two works are bound together in both surviving autograph manuscripts. These are NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, which I have used here but which has a significant lacuna of twelve folios covering the fourteenth to the nineteenth abbots, and Vatican Library MS Ottob. lat. 2598. They are discussed in Stephen Mark Holmes, "The Meaning of History: A Dedicatory Letter from Giovanni Ferrerio to Abbot Robert Reid in his *Historia abbatum de Kynlos*", *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 10 (2008): 89-115 at 98-99.

⁶⁵ Holmes, "Meaning of History", *passim*, and cf. NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B.

The style and interests of the *Historia* show Ferrerio working in much the same tradition as Boece on the bishops of Aberdeen and Mylne on the bishops of Dunblane. Like Boece, he prioritized the locating and use of contemporary documents, notably the necrology of the abbey amongst other "vetustis scriptis".⁶⁶ Elsewhere he cites charters of donation to the monastery, one from the thirteenth century by Muriel of Pollok and her husband Walter Murdoch, and another of 1362 by William, Earl of Sutherland.⁶⁷ These were presumably taken from the cartulary of the abbey, which no longer survives, and suggest both a degree of familiarity with older texts and a significant amount of archival research underpinning the *Historia*.⁶⁸ Again like Boece, however, he took an interest in the physical artefacts of the monastery as well, whether those were its substantial library or items such as the "very long and much worn" stone which marked the tomb of Abbot Andrew (d. 1189).⁶⁹

The *Historia* may be usefully compared to Ferrerio's first foray into secular history, the 1545 *De origine et incremento Gordoniae familiae*.⁷⁰ This work, dated at Kinloss 30 March 1545 and dedicated to George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, was a genealogy of the Gordons, northeastern Scotland's leading magnate family. As such, it was one of the first, if not the first, genealogies of an individual Scottish noble family, beginning what would become a major strand of antiquarian scholarship in Scotland over the following centuries. In its dedication, Ferrerio acknowledges the assistance of a manuscript account prepared by the earl's cousin and secretary, Mr. William Gordon, as well as "historias Scotorum et aliquot veteres de his rebus annales".⁷¹

As Stephen Ree, the editor of the *De origine* has observed, much of the earliest portions of the text are heavily indebted to Boece's *Scotorum historia* for their historical context, but Ferrerio's work was more than simply stitching together relevant passages.⁷² Organized on similar principles to the *Historia*, but generation by generation rather than abbot by abbot, it, like the earlier work, contains hints of further archival research. As examples, the grant of the lands of the heiress Giles Hay jointly to her and her husband Alexander Gordon clearly echoes an extant royal charter of 8 January 1426/27, a copy of which was presumably accessible to Ferrerio in the family's muniments.⁷³ Similarly, some of the circumstantial accounts of deaths, such as the statement that

⁶⁶ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fol. 15r (= Ferrerio, *Historia*, 19). Scholars of Scottish monasticism appear to have overlooked the possibility of reconstructing a substantial proportion of this necrology from the extracts given by Ferrerio.

⁶⁷ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fols. 29r, (= Ferrerio, *Historia*, 25), and Ferrerio, *Historia*, 27-28 (not present in the Adv. MS).

⁶⁸ For the Kinloss cartulary see Matthew Hammond, "The Paradox of Medieval Scotland, 1093-1286", in *New Perspectives on Medieval Scotland, 1093-1286*, ed. Hammond (Woodbridge, 2013), 24.

⁶⁹ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5B, fols. 18r (Abbot Andrew's tomb), (= Ferrerio, *Historia*, 22), and Ferrerio, *Historia*, 43-46 (abbey library catalogue).

⁷⁰ Giovanni Ferrerio, "Historiae compendium de origine et incremento Gordoniae familiae", ed., Stephen Ree, in *The House of Gordon*, 3 vols., ed. John Malcolm Bulloch (Aberdeen, 1903-1912), ii. 11-28. Ree's edition is based on a collation of five manuscripts, the earliest of which is NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5A. The colophon of the NLS manuscript (fol. 22v) indicates that it was copied by Constant d'Aubigné for the antiquary Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun in 1613. As d'Aubigné was the son of the French historian Théodore-Agrippa d'Aubigné (for whom see d'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle*, 11 vols., ed. André Thierry [Geneva, 1981-2000]) it is tempting to suppose that the NLS manuscript is a copy of an earlier manuscript in the library of the copyist's father, perhaps an autograph left by Ferrerio in France a generation before.

⁷¹ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5A, fol. 7r (= *House of Gordon*, ii. 11).

⁷² *House of Gordon*, ii. 3-4, 29-30.

⁷³ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5A, fol. 17r (= *House of Gordon*, ii. 21); John Maitland Thomson, et al., eds., *Registrum magni sigilli regum Scotorum*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1882-1914), ii. no. 73.

Alexander Gordon, 1st Earl of Huntly, "obiit in Huntlie die XV Julii CIC.CCCC.LXX ac delatus in Elgin in divae Virginis et Matris sacello cathedralis ecclesiae humi traditur", are evidently indebted to some form of necrology, whether monastic or preserved by the family.⁷⁴

Ferrerio's later work was narrative history, rather than antiquarian collection, but he continued to demonstrate his attention to the physical relics of the Scottish past. In 1574, towards the end of his life and well outside of the scope of this essay, he edited and continued Boece's *Scotorum historia*, adding two unfinished additional books by Boece as well as a summary of the reign of James III.⁷⁵ As Ferrerio laid out in the preface to this final section, Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross, and one of the leading Scottish humanists of the mid-sixteenth century, had urged him to prepare a continuation of Boece's work and collected materials - which may or may not have included the manuscripts of Boece's two unfinished books - towards that end himself. Bishop Sinclair spent his final months in Paris, being treated for kidney stones, and it seems likely that some or all of the materials he had gathered, which Ferrerio describes as "sylvae" towards a larger work, were passed on to the Piedmontese antiquary then.⁷⁶ Here we can see the pre-Reformation antiquary at work in a post-Reformation context to preserve Scotland's archival record, much as the dedicatee of the 1574 edition, Archbishop Beaton had done.

These examples, which could easily be multiplied, offer a window onto a still largely unknown world of pre-Reformation Scottish antiquarianism. As has been argued here, the Scottish reception of humanism in the later fifteenth century, combined with the impetus brought about by liturgical reform and both spiritual and political nationalism in the face of English aggression, led to a blossoming of antiquarian scholarship in the early decades of the sixteenth century. That this moment has been largely neglected since is due in part to the fragmentary nature of what has survived, in part to the comparatively recent rehabilitation of antiquarianism as a discipline worthy of study, but more than anything to the cultural upheavals of the Reformation, which led to this moment being written over by the formidable and appropriately protestant scholarship of a subsequent generation, most notably that titan of post-Reformation Scottish intellectual culture, George Buchanan. If we wish to understand the antiquarianism of later Scots, whether Buchanan, Thomas Dempster, Robert Gordon of Straloch, or any of the other scholars active in the latter part of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, we must first understand the foundational moment of which Elphinstone, Boece, and Ferrerio were a part.

⁷⁴ NLS Adv. MS 35.5.5A, fol. 19r (= *House of Gordon*, ii. 23). It is possible that at least some of the Gordons whose deaths are given in detail may have been included in the Kinloss necrology.

⁷⁵ Hector Boece, *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine . . . libri XIX*, ed. Giovanni Ferrerio (Paris, 1575). The unfinished books are XVIII and XIX, the last of which is only a fragment (*ibid.*, fols. 355-384). They are separately dedicated by Ferrerio (*ibid.*, fol. 355) to James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow in exile, himself a historically-minded prelate known for his rescue of the cartulary and other early documents of the diocese of Glasgow from the hands of the reformers (see Mark Dilworth, "Archbishop James Beaton's Papers in the Scottish Catholic Archives", *Innes Review* 34 [1983]: 3-8). Ferrerio's continuation is at Boece, *Scotorum historiae*, ed., Ferrerio, fols. 385-402 and appropriately concludes with the revival of learning in Europe (*ibid.*, fol. 402).

⁷⁶ Boece, *Scotorum historia*, ed. Ferrerio, fol. 384r-v.