

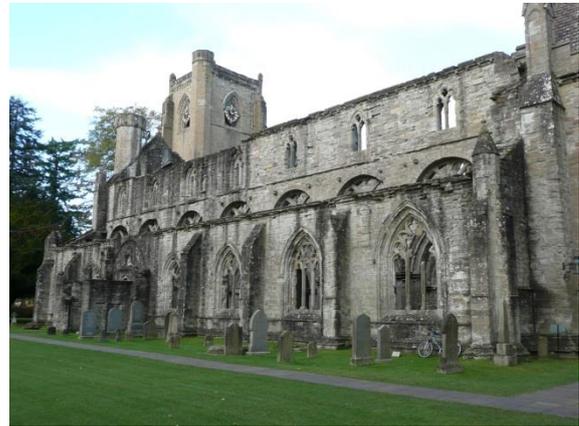
Institution: University of St Andrews



Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

Title of case study: Development of a decision-making resource: *Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches*: pilot phase**1. Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

This case study is based on the pilot phase of the *Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches* project, which provides a detailed assessment of the medieval fabric of 105 of the c.1,136 parish churches of pre-Reformation foundation in Scotland. Carried out in 2008-09 with funding from AHRC, it focused on the dioceses of Dunkeld and Dunblane. The *Corpus* has been invaluable in broadening knowledge of the buildings, and hence informing the decision-making processes of a wide range of bodies and individuals involved in preserving Scotland's medieval architecture. These include, amongst others: the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Historic Scotland; national and local societies from the Royal Archaeological Institute to the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust; and professionals called to work on the buildings.



Dunkeld Cathedral, which was also a parish church

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research carried out in 2008-09 was initiated in response to a widespread assumption that little identifiable medieval fabric has survived within Scotland's parish churches. This has resulted in a tendency to disregard those churches in the literature on Scottish architecture, and a general neglect of their conservation needs.

The researchers, based at the universities of St Andrews and Stirling, believed that much more medieval fabric has survived than is generally supposed, and that, even where a church is of post-Reformation date, if it is on a site known to be of a medieval foundation, its predecessors might have significantly conditioned the form of the existing building. It was therefore decided that all parish churches on the c.1,136 sites of medieval foundation should be investigated, and with the financial support of AHRC, a pilot project in the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld was conducted in 2008-9.

The principal investigator was Professor Richard Fawcett, who was for much of his career a Principal Inspector with Historic Scotland, and who has been a Professor in the School of Art History of the University of St Andrews since 2006. The co-investigators were Dr Julian Luxford, Senior Lecturer (now Reader) in the School of Art History of the University of St Andrews since 2004, and Professor Richard Oram, of the School of History and Politics of the University of Stirling.

During his years of research on Scottish medieval architecture Fawcett had become increasingly aware of the problems resulting from lack of understanding of parish churches. He consequently approached the need to provide a firmer basis for the understanding of the buildings from a number of directions, including a chronological survey of the component elements of the architectural vocabulary, and a study of how the attitudes of Scottish patrons and masons might be conditioned by a wish to reflect awareness of earlier models. Having been invited to provide the entries on all of the churches in the Borders, a particularly prosperous and architecturally

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productive area of the country, he was also able to see the value of considering the ways in which architectural ideas might be absorbed into and disseminated across one such area in the course of the middle ages [1].

Fawcett became convinced of the outstanding need for a rigorously conducted survey of all relevant evidence, and it was to test the viability of doing so that the pilot project was undertaken. To this end, Fawcett and Luxford carried out analysis of the upstanding architectural evidence, took measurements where it appeared these could be of significance, and carried out a photographic survey. They researched all accessible sources of information on the structural, ecclesiastical and archaeological history of the buildings, paying close attention to what could be ascertained about the consequences of successive post-Reformation restructuring and re-orderings. Oram investigated all published sources of documentation, as well as a range of manuscript sources considered likely to provide information on the structural history of the sites. In a final stage, detailed introductory pages for the website were written, in which the findings across the two dioceses were analysed and collated.

The principal output of the research has been a freely accessible website [2], which can be searched in a range of ways. There is an associated extended paper by the investigators in a prestigious peer-reviewed journal [3] and a monograph on Scottish medieval church architecture, the first such survey for over a century [4]. There have also been a number of linked papers, including a study of the continuity of medieval forms after the Reformation [5], and an account of a particularly Scottish approach to vaulting in churches of middling scale [6].

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

1. K. Cruft, J. Dunbar and R. Fawcett, *The Buildings of Scotland, Borders*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.
2. A Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches website:  
<http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/corpusofscottishchurches/>
3. R. Fawcett, R. Oram and J. Luxford, 'Scottish medieval parish churches: the evidence from the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld', *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. 90, 2010, pp. 261-98.
4. R. Fawcett, *The architecture of the Scottish medieval Church, 1100-1560*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011.  
(This monograph has been awarded the 2012 medallion of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, the most significant British award for a work on architectural history.)
5. R. Fawcett, 'Gothic or Classical? The continuity of medieval forms in Scottish church architecture', in R. Suntrup and J. R. Veenstra, eds, *Konstruktion der Gegenwart und Zukunft: Shaping the present and the future*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008, pp. 93-118.
6. R. Fawcett, 'Barrel-vaulted churches in late medieval Scotland', in J.A. Franklin, T.A. Heslop and C. Stevenson, *Architecture and Interpretation, essays for Eric Fernie*, Woodbridge: Boydell, pp. 60-77.

In endorsement of the quality of the research, AHRC has awarded a grant with FEC of £486,625 for the next phase of the project, which is currently in progress.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

This research has impacted on the knowledge-based activities of a range of organisations and individuals involved in the use, enjoyment and conservation of Scottish church buildings. Beneficiaries form an extensive user base, ranging from national and regional bodies responsible for statutory administration, through archaeologists commissioned to investigate the buildings, to bodies or individuals with an interest in this aspect of Scotland's architectural heritage. Reactions and a large body of correspondence, of which only a sample can be mentioned here, highlight the significance of this work for the cultural heritage of Scotland as reflected in its diverse range of church buildings. Cultural heritage is an increasingly valuable contributor to both the economy and

the cultural life of Scotland; it constitutes a central plank of Scotland's tourist industry, which is currently worth £4.3bn per year.

#### INFORMING THE WORK OF STATE BODIES:

The *Corpus* has met an urgent need for accurate information as a basis for reaching properly informed decisions on developments at Scottish churches of medieval origin. This was affirmed on 30 November 2011 by Historic Scotland's Director of Policy and Outreach that *'the material is an enormous help as we prioritise and distinguish candidates for designation and ensure that their entries are accurate, informative and helpful'* [S1]. The national recording body, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, also welcomed information on the churches that is based on firmly grounded research. The Secretary (chief officer) of the Commission stated on 5 December 2011 that *'the survey work and documentation produced by the project to date is providing original and valuable research that advances our understanding of the sites'* [S2].

#### SUPPORTING THE ACTIVITIES OF LEARNED BODIES AND LOCAL SOCIETIES

The increased information on the churches has met a major need for both national learned societies and local historical societies, and has made it easier for those bodies to provide informed views on the churches. Enthusiasm for the project is evidenced by the twelve illustrated lectures that the investigators have so far been asked to provide. These have varied from a formal lecture on 3 October 2012 to the British Archaeological Association in Burlington House in London, to a talk to a local church group in Cupar on 24 April 2013.

Confirmation of the positive impact is provided by a letter of 24 November 2011 from the president of the Royal Archaeological Institute, to which one lecture was given, which affirms *'the signal importance of such recording work which will form the basis for a wider understanding, better appreciation of the conservation and management needs and the springboard for future actions'* [S3].

#### PROVIDING AN AUTHORITATIVE BASIS FOR THE WORK OF PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD

The architect of the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, an arm of Perth and Kinross Council that is deeply involved in conservation of church buildings, stated on 30 September 2011 that *'the excellent work that you and your colleagues have done...has been enormously useful in not only helping us to make early assessments and prioritise the best 'targets' for our work...[but in] informing and developing the interpretation material which we are developing'* [S4].

Archaeologists commissioned to investigate and record the structures and underlying deposits of churches likewise welcome the *Corpus* as a resource to aid efficient and timely searches. AOC Archaeology, a leading body in such work in Scotland, referred to the *Corpus* on 15 October 2012 as being *'an invaluable resource...with excellent information and images provided by acknowledged experts, all of it readily accessible to the researcher. It provides a definitive statement of...each church'* [S5].

Further evidence of the increasingly diverse uses of the information assembled in the *Corpus*, are the requests to take local history and other groups on visits to churches in order to provide guidance on the interpretation of architectural and documentary evidence, and also to give those groups the confidence to provide their own guidance on questions of conservation when the need arises. Four of these have been a direct result of talks about the project to local societies.

#### THE WEBSITE

The principal means of disseminating the findings of the project is the freely available web site, which has an extended page for each of the [105 sites in the pilot phase](#) area, together with an introductory synthesis of all the information that has been gathered. Between January 2010 and July 2013 the site had over 23,000 hits, with a steady year-on-year increase.

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Links to the website have been made available through a number of online networks, including [arts-humanities.net](http://arts-humanities.net). Links have also been requested by a number of bodies, including the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and Scottish Churches Architectural Research.

**FURTHER EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE RESPONSE**

There is an evident need for ongoing engagement with a range of interest groups, and it was pleasing that the London-based Ecclesiological Society selected the website as one of their [websites of the month](http://www.ecclsoc.org/) (<http://www.ecclsoc.org/>).

One of the most significant indicators of the value placed on this work was the invitation to Fawcett to deliver the prestigious six Rhind lectures on 3-5 May 2013 to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, with the support of (and in the lecture theatre of) the Royal Society of Edinburgh (*'Magnificent for the beauty and extent of its buildings and worthy of everlasting fame' – the architecture of the Scottish late medieval Church*). These lectures drew heavily on material assembled in the course of the project.

As a particularly gratifying indication of positive reception, the pilot phase of the project was so highly rated by AHRC's peer reviewers that a grant with full economic costs of £486,625 has been made for the second phase of the project, running from 2012 to 2015, and covering the diocese of St Andrews and Brechin. The project has also been brought to wider attention in a number of newspaper reports, as well as in a range of electronic or published forms, including the following:

ScARF (Scottish Archaeological Research Framework),

[www.scottishheritagehub.com/content/medieval](http://www.scottishheritagehub.com/content/medieval)

Salon (The Society of Antiquaries of London Newsletter), issue 265, 14 November 2011,

[www.sal.org.uk/sandbox/salon/](http://www.sal.org.uk/sandbox/salon/)

The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Newsletter, issue 265, 14 November 2011.

The Society for Medieval Archaeology Newsletter, no 43, April 2011.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The impact of the pilot phase has been corroborated by a considerable number of letters from a range of national and local bodies, including those cited in section 4:

S1. Dr Debbie Mays, Director of Policy and Outreach of Historic Scotland (the national body responsible for listing of historic buildings and scheduling of ancient monuments and for dealing with the statutory processes)

S2. Diana Murray, head of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (the national recording body)

S3. Professor David Breeze, President of the Royal Archaeological Institute

S4. Andrew Driver, architect to the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (the conservation arm of Perth and Kinross Council)

S5. Dr Anne Crone of the AOC Archaeology Group