**Whitefriar’s Friory, Kingussie**

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Although Kingussie was a planned settlement dating from the 18th century, an early Christian church dedicated to St Columba was reputedly founded there much earlier. Documentary sources also record the founding of a Carmelite Friary in late medieval times. The exact location of both sites was unknown, but recent work has found walls and burials which probably relate to the friary, and possibly also to the earlier church, together with remains of metalworking dating to the 8th-early 11th century AD (MHG4413; Birch 2018b; 2020).

The metalworking evidence add to our growing knowledge of ironworking sites in the Early Medieval Period, and is particularly important providing evidence in an area where we have little settlement evidence from this period. The metalworking debris appears to have been redeposited. It is not clear whether this relates to the early church or secular use.

The Carmelites were an austere, mendicant order. There were 10 foundations in Scotland (11 if Berwick is included), although little is known about most of them, and virtually nothing about the Kingussie order. Kingussie appears to be one of the latest, probably in the late 1400s (Copesey 1998), and was said to have been founded by George, Earl of Huntley.

The walls of the lost friary were discovered during a watching brief in 2018, when the cutting of a water pipe trench along Mill Road adjacent to the cemetery disturbed human remains. Subsequent excavation work along the length of the trench uncovered two large sections of wall, complete with their lime-mortar bonding, which comprise the west gable and south walls of a building aligned north-south and east-west. This was highly likely to be the remains of the Carmelite Friary, which was projected to extend under the turning circle at the end of Mill Road and into the present enclosure marking St Columba’s cemetery (See figure 11of the 2018 Data Structure Report). Significant quantities of disarticulated human bones were uncovered within a structure built inside the church (built against the central area of the inner west gable) which was interpreted as an ossuary.

Despite the small nature of the excavation (confined only to the pipeline trench), important evidence was discovered. The human bone primarily comprised crania and long bones with few lower mandibles, teeth, vertebrae, ribs or other bone from extremities identified; bone preservation however was poor. Further deposits and human remains, extended below, appearing to underlie the church foundations. These may predate the Carmelite Friary and possibly relate to earlier funerary use of the site associated with the Columban church. The human remains from the ossuary type feature probably contained re-interments of disturbed human remains, perhaps from the construction of the church or digging of new graves. Radiocarbon dating of the bones suggest two clusters, between 1446-1522 cal AD and 1521-1630 cal AD. The first cluster could be during the use of the Friary, while the later late may relate to abandonment and use of the church for burial. However, the stratigraphy is confusing, and reburial of bones may have occurred (Birch 2020, 88-89).

Opportunities for further work here are limited, with the friary and possible earlier church under a tarmac road, turning circle and current graveyard. However, there may be further scope for documentary research. Even the limited excavation shows the importance of the site for the Highlands where unlike other areas in Scotland, few religious houses were established.