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PERTH:

Churches: The most curious public edifice of Perth, the most ancient and the most largely connected with historical events, is the Church of St. John, originally called the Kirk of the Hold Cross of St. John the Baptist, which stands in a large open area, on the W side of St. John Street. Tradition ascribes its foundation to the Pieta; but there seems to be little doubt that it was one of the earliest stone churches built in Scotland; and historical documents, as well as portions of the edifice itself, indicate that in the 12th and 13th centuries it was both magnificent and extensive. In 1227 it was granted to the monks of Deunfermline, and in their possession it was suffered to fall into disrepair.

Robert the Bruce ordered it to be restored, but after his death in 1329 the restorations ceased. It was afterwards largely repaired in the first half of the 15th century; and at the time of the Reformation the whole structure was in complete repair, and contained a great number of altars. But in 1559 its whole interior ornaments, altarpieces, and images were completely demolished on the memorable day when John Knox first denounced the corruptions of Popery, in a sermon that led to the demolition of the monasteries in Scotland. The manner whereof was this, to quote the Reformer's own narrative., 'The preachers before had declared how odious was idolatry in God's presence; what commandment He had give for eh destruction of the monuments thereof; what idolatry and what abomination was in the mass. It chanced that the abomination was in the mass. It chanced that the next day, which was the 11th of May, after that the preachers were exiled, that after the sermon, which was vehement against idolatry, that a priest in contempt would go to the mass; and to declare his malapert presumption, he would open up ane glorious tabernacle which stood upon the high altar. There stood beside certain godly men, and amongst others a young boy, who cried with a loud voice, "This is intolerable, that when God by His Word hath plainly damned idolatry, when God by His Word hath plainly damned idolatry, we shall stand and see it used in despite." The priest, hereat offended, gave the child a great blow, who in anger took up a stone, and casting at the priest, did hit the tabernacle, and broke down ane image; and immediately the whole multitude that were about cast stones, and put hands to the said tabernacle, and to all other monuments of idolatry, which they dispatched before the tentmen in the town were advertised (for the most part were gone to dinner), which noised abroad, the whole multitude convened, not of the gentlemen, neither of them that were earnest professors, but of the rascal multitude, who, finding nothing to do in that church, did run without deliberation to the Grey and Black Friars', and notwithstanding that they had within them very strong guards kept for their defence, yet were their gates incontinent burst up. The first invasion was upon the idolatry and thereafter the common people began to seek some spoil; and in very deed the Grey Friars' was a place so well provided, that unless honest men had seen the same, we would have feared to have reported what provision they had. Their sheets, blankets, beds, and coverlets were such as no earl in Scotland hat

the better; their napery was fine. There were but eight person in convent, yet had eight puncheons of salt beef (consider the time of the year, the 11th day of May), wine, beer, and ale, besides store of victuals effeiring thereto. The like abundance was not in the Black Friars', and yet there was more than became men professing poverty. The spoil was permitted to the poor; for so had the preachers before threatened all men, that for covetousness; sake none should put their hand to such a reformation, that no honest man was enriched thereby the value of a groat. Their conscience so moved them that they suffered those hypocrites take away what they could of that which was in their places. The Prior of Charterhouse was permitted to take away with him even so much gold and silver as he was well able to carry. So was men's consciences before beaten with the Word that they had no respect to their own particular profit, but only to abolish idolatry, the places and monuments thereof, in which they were so busy and so laborious that within two days these three great places, monuments of idolatry – to wit, the Grey and Black thieves, and Charterhouse monks (a building of a wondrous cost and greatness) – was so destroyed that the wall sonly did remain of all these great edifications.' The N transept was entirely renewed in 1823. As it now stands, the church is of various dates. Its total length square tower, 155 feet high, is the chief relic of the original structure. The tower is surmounted by a tall octagonal spire of oaken beams, covered with lead; and it contains several bells, of which the oldest are one dated 1400, and St. John the Baptist's Bell, now called the ten o'clock bell, because it is rung every evening at that hour, dated 1506. A third is supposed to be the old curfew bell, which as cast in 1526. Outside of the spire are placed a set of small musical bells, which chime certain airs at the half-hour, being connected by machinery for that purpose with the public clock on the tower below. In 1886 Edward III is stated by Fordun to have stabbed his brother, John, Earl of Cornwall, before the high altar, for ravaging the western counties of Scotland; but English historians merely record that the Earl died in the October of that year at Perth. In Scott's novel the church is the scene of the trial by bier-right to discover the slayer of Proudfeute. Below it is the burial vault of the Mercers, which they are said to have obtained in exchanged for the two Inches; though another story, founding on the Mercer arms, declares that this family gave three mills in the town for their valut. **The interior of the church is divided into three parish churches – Middle, East, and West. The East Church contains the burial-place of the Gowrie family**, a blue marble tombstone with figures believed to represent James I and his Queen, both buried in the Carthusian Monastery, a monument erected by the officers of the 90th regiment or Perthshire Volunteers to their comrades who fell in the Crimes, and a beautiful eastern widow of stained glass. It has 1314 sittings; and the stipend averages 250 pounds. The Middle Church is situated to a great extent below the tower; and four massive pillars in the centre support that superstructure. It has 1208 sittings; and the stipend averages 250 pounds. The West Church was partly rebuilt in 1828 from plans by Gillespie. It has 800 sittings; and the stipend is 200 pounds.

*Read more about the Gowrie – Ruthven – Ruffin Family at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>