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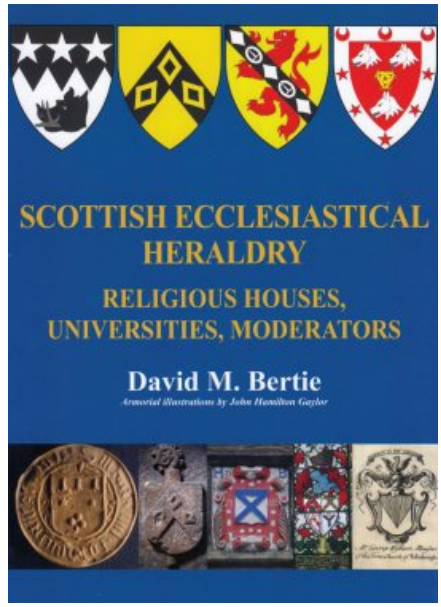

David M. Bertie, illustrated by John Hamilton Gaylor, *Scottish Ecclesiastical Heraldry, Religious Houses, Universities and Moderators*.
Edinburgh, Heraldry Society of Scotland, 2024. 395+vi pages, illustrated in colour throughout. Hardcover ISBN 978-1-9999794-4-7. £40.

This volume concludes Bertie's trilogy of books on Scottish ecclesiastical heraldry, the others being *The Heraldry of the Bishops of Scotland* (2018) and *The Heraldry of the Ecclesiastical Deans of Scotland* (2021). The first volume was reviewed by *The Coat of Arms* in no. 236 (2019). All follow the same format, being alphabetical lists of office holders, each with the arms and/or seal plus known architectural examples illustrated. There is considerable overlap between the three, with bishops and deans who also held commendatories being repeated in the third volume.

Since a large proportion of those included in this volume were commendators it is first necessary to understand what is meant by this title, and the explanation provided in the introduction is somewhat cursory. The commendator was an individual who, while not having taken a monastic vow, was made the head of a religious foundation by the crown, sometimes styling himself as prior or abbot. Such appointments began in the medieval period. A chronological list of priors, abbots and commendators of given religious houses in Appendix I goes some way to facilitating an understanding. This also provides a picture of at what point a particular monastery came to an end as a functional unit, with dates ranging from 1560 to 1624. In 1560 monastic life was outlawed in Scotland, but the existing religious were permitted to remain for the terms of their lives. The great majority of foundations were formally suppressed in the first decade of the seventeenth century; overall a considerably more drawn-out process than had been the case in England and Wales. There is some confusion in the appended lists. Kilwinning Abbey, for instance, is stated to have been converted into a temporal lordship in 1592 (indeed the church itself was destroyed in 1560), and yet here the appointment

of commendators was continued up until 1639.

Some interesting examples from the catalogue of arms: King James V appointed his natural son John Stewart as Prior of Coldingham in 1541. He was therefore a commendator, although listed as a prior, and held the priory until his death in 1563. His son Francis was commendator 1565-1567, and his grandson John Stewart 1590-1592; the priory being converted into a temporal lordship in 1606 for its then commendator Alexander, first Earl of Home. Three members of the Colville family succeded each other as commendators of Culross Abbey from 1531 to 1609, when a temporal lordship was created for them. The abbey church meanwhile was gradually taken over by the parish as the monks receded.

Bertie makes the important observation that of all the Scottish religious foundations only Paisley Abbey had a coat of arms, and therefore the heads used only their personal arms on seals. Many of these personal devices being known only from seals they are quite correctly, in most instances, drawn without colour in the book. In an apparent desire to present a complete set, some office holders were ascribed arms, or their seals were ascribed tinctures, for which there is no good historical evidence. Examples include Hugh de Conyers, Preceptor of the Knights Templar at Balantrodoch c 1233, given the arms *Azure a maunch or* because he was "possibly related to the Durham family of Conyers"; John de Eglinton, Prior of Blantyre 1380-81, of unknown parentage, is given the Eglinton family arms *Azure three rings or gemmed gules*; and finally, Robert Ker, Abbot of Kelso 1468-1506, is given *Vert on a chevron argent three mascles gules*, based on his father's seal, for which the tinctures are nowhere recorded.

Two coats of arms deserving of particular attention are those of firstly, Walter Lindsay, Preceptor of the Knights Hospitaller at Torphichen 1532-1546, to whose arms *Gules a fess checky azure and argent* were added in chief the Hospitaller flag *Gules a cross argent*, to indicate that he was a knight grand cross. As the flag superimposes the upper part of the shield, Lindsay's fess has effectively become a chief, but to have a band of red above the fess and below the cross would not have been very satisfactory. Secondly we have in the arms of Robert Pont (1524-1606) a charge very rarely seen in British heraldry, *A rainbow proper*, presumably intended to represent a rainbow bridge, in view of the surname. This is a charge which seems to belong more to the twenty-first than to the sixteenth century.

Minor quibbles aside, the completion of this set of books is a cause for celebration. It will greatly facilitate the identification of seals, will help in the understanding both of the evolution of arms within particular families, and of the religious history of Scotland; and finally, the fine artwork of John Hamilton Gaylor is a delight for the senses.

Paul A. Fox