

Greyfriars' Poetry Garden

Many visitors, also some townsfolk, passing the neglected ground at the corner of St Mary's Street and Greyfriars Garden in the town centre will have noticed its neglected state. For over twenty years it has been an eyesore. From time to time local residents have tidied it up, but clearly, a more lasting solution has been required.

What the casual visitor to the town may not have known, is that this is a site of great historical importance. The whole area in the vicinity of Greyfriars Gardens once housed the medieval Franciscan Monastery of St Andrews. Situated at an ancient gateway to the town was the chapel of the religious order known as the Greyfriars. It would have been the first point of contact for many pilgrims on their arrival after a long journey.

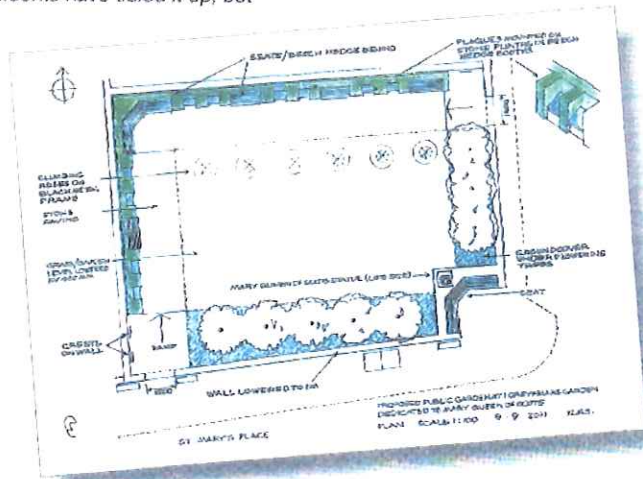
St Andrean, Margaret Lumsdaine, past president of the Marie Stuart Society, tells me that in 1560 Scotland reformed from the Roman Catholic religion to that of Protestantism, and that on 17th April 1567, a few months before her abdication, Mary Queen of Scots 'conceded and disposed' the lands which were the property of the Dominican and Franciscan Monasteries in St Andrews to the Provost, bailies, councillors, and community of St Andrews. However, this transfer of property was not done without some humanity. The monasteries were given a concession to remain until the last monk in each monastery died, but of course they were not maintained after the Charters were signed off.

A new phase in the history of this site has been initiated by a group of local residents, who with enormous support from community organisations, have successfully achieved registration of the land through the Community Right to Buy legislation. This means that it cannot be sold to anyone other than the community group. The next stage of the process will be a poll of residents in the area surrounding the garden, which, if it results in majority support for the scheme, will see the site transformed into a public garden featuring poetry by and about Mary Queen of Scots.

It is planned to make the garden fully accessible to people with disabilities. A feature will be scented roses, which were in cultivation in Mary's time. Planning consent has already been obtained for the garden, which has been designed by world-renowned architect Robert Steedman. A further plan is to erect a statue of Queen Mary in this appropriate location.

Much work lies ahead to turn this imaginative project into reality. But the responses and offers of assistance from many

town organisations and individuals confirm it to be an exciting prospect with wide support. We may therefore look forward to this historic land – gifted to the town at a time of religious turmoil – being once more returned to public ownership, providing a quiet place of retreat within the busy town centre.



Plan of the garden

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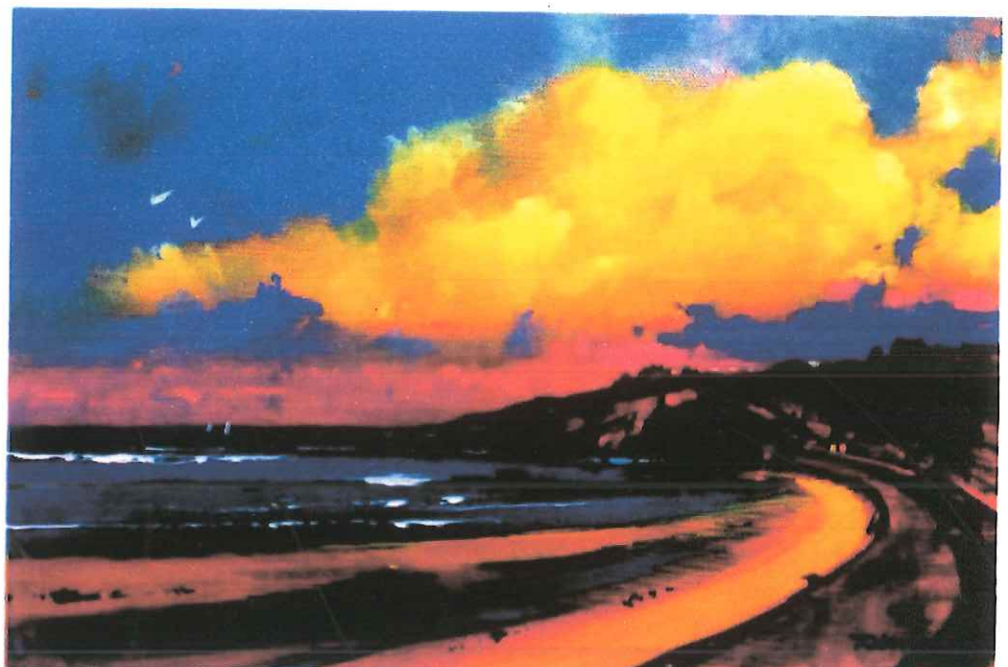
Ken Roberts

Totem

*What mysterious Presence is this
That sends a bird to flight
Clutching golden thread
Circling then perching
On the clock tower's finial.
Waiting . . .*

*Then, whether time
Is right or not, descends.
Weaving sacred thread
Through heart and soul
To involuntary hands
Where, at the end of
pen or brush appears
An image, unintended,
Bearing all the hallmarks
Of a product of the Presence.
A rare, unadulterated totem.*

Hallelujah



An original painting by Ken Roberts, 'The Walk to Kinkell Braes'