

COLDSTREAM ABBEY

The Chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Coldstream, edited by the Rev. Charles Rogers, LL.D., was published in 1879. In a note in the Preface he says: "Three members of the family of Pringle or Hoppringill, Margaret, Isabella, and Jonet, were in succession Prioresses of the convent. The family of Hoppringill of Whitsome were zealous supporters of Robert the Bruce." There was however a fourth Hoppringill prioress, and there never was any Hoppringill of Whitsome.

MARGARET HOPPRINGILL.

In June 1489 John Liddel of Lennel, at Coldstream, grants to Margaret Hoppringill, prioress, and the convent of nuns at Coldstream, a charter of sale of a ploughgate of land (104 acres) in Lennel, to be held of the King, for payment of a pair of hawking gloves, or 12 pennies, yearly, if asked (G. S.). In February 1490 a letter was sent from Westminster to the English Wardens signifying the royal protection to the prioress and convent of Coldstream and all their possessions for seven years, and that a servant or two of the Abbey with two attendants might pass into England to buy lead, wax, or other merchandise needful for its reparation (*Calendar of Documents re Scotland*). In December 1491, after meetings held at Coldstream between Scottish and English Commissioners, a five-years' truce between the two countries was ratified. Coldstream Abbey was in fact in constant use for international meetings.

Henry VII. was determined to have his daughter Margaret married to James IV. of Scotland. The negotiations, which began in 1499, ended successfully, and at the age of fifteen she was married to James at Holyrood on 8th August 1503.

Margaret Hoppringill died in 1506, after having been prioress for at least eighteen years. As offices like this tended

to be hereditary in certain families, and as the succeeding prioresses were undoubtedly daughters of the house of that ilk, it is very likely that this Margaret was a sister of Adam Hoppringill of the King's Guard.

ISABELLA

On 6th June 1506 at Edinburgh a precept is granted under the Privy Seal of the admission of Dame Isabella Hoppringill as Prioress of Coldstream (P. S.). When a prioress died the office had to be filled within a month thereafter, and this was done by the nuns meeting in chapter and appointing the new prioress from among themselves. Isabella was apparently a niece of her predecessor, and aunt of James Hoppringill of Tynnes, and his brothers George and William, who were prominent members of the household of James V.

Seven years after Isabella's appointment occurred the battle of Flodden. According to Godscroft, George Hume, younger, of Wedderburn, having been urged by his relatives before the battle to return home, as the heir, called on the way at the Abbey, when Isabella spoke so disparagingly of his action that he returned to the battle-field, where he was killed, along with his father David. In the following year Queen Margaret, now a widow, married the Earl of Angus.

In 1515 Henry VIII. issued an edict, addressed to the English Wardens, for the protection of the prioress and her convent; and when in the same year Queen Margaret and her husband fled from Regent Albany, on their way to England, they found in Isabella an intelligent and congenial hostess.

Situated on the border line of the two kingdoms Isabella had a difficult part to play. Devoted to the interests of the Abbey she had to side with the English party of the time, and especially with the Queen-Mother, her avowed and powerful protectress. In 1523 the French party maintaining the ascendancy in Scotland, and the Scots refusing the offer of the hand of King Henry's daughter Mary to their young Prince, her cousin, that King sent an army to waste the Scottish Border. In April the English Warden of the East March wrote to Henry that Queen Margaret had written to Surrey and to himself to save the Abbey from burning, and

that they had granted her request, and "because the prioress is one of the best and assured spies we have in Scotland," of whom, at this time of Scottish distraction between an English or a French alliance, an English Warden boasted he had 400. When in October Regent Albany approached the Border and laid siege to Wark Castle, Isabella wavered in her party allegiance, and the Earl of Surrey, hearing of her defection, having threatened to burn the Abbey as he had recently burned Jedburgh town and Abbey, Queen Margaret again wrote to him, on 22nd November, earnestly entreating him to spare it; and on the 26th Sir John Bulmer, Captain of Norham Castle, wrote to Surrey that by her request he had met the Prioress at Gradenford, gives him her Edinburgh news and, evidently won over by her, ends with the words, "Haste post, haste, haste." (H. L.)

Among the British Museum MSS. is a letter to the prioress from Edinburgh, undated, but perhaps written in October 1523, giving the Court news, how the Governor (the Duke of Albany) had just come to town, and had had a quarter of an hour's interview with the Queen-Mother, how the King had been reviewing the French troops at Linlithgow, and Albany had given him a gown of cloth of gold, and one of cloth of silver, and licence to ride about Stirling at his pleasure. The writer, who signs himself her Kynsman, and was probably one of the nephews referred to above, adds: "They say in this town that you are an Englishwoman, as you were before, and the rest that are in your company. The Earl of Murray is very ill content at you, but I cannot tell wherefore."

Having saved the Abbey from the flames Dame Isabella was henceforth an unflinching supporter of the English policy and that of her patroness the Queen-Mother.

In the following year, in a letter from Newcastle to Wolsey, dated 23rd October 1524, it is stated that "Jamys Pringle had, unfortunately, saved the King and Queen from being captured by the Earl of Lennox's party in Holyrood," and that the Prioress was in Edinburgh. In January 1525 Magnus, writing from Edinburgh, warns Wolsey that he is informed by the good Prioress of Coldstream that watch is to be kept for the capture of letters coming across the Borders, he suspects by Buccleuch, but purposes to send feigned letters to find out;

and in August following in another letter he says: "the bearer is Mr John Chisholm coming into England for sundry causes, and specially with his sovereign lord's letters to your King's highness for a safe-conduct to himself for a year to pass and repass with merchandise," and adds, "when I durst trust neither post nor other, he hath done my letters safely and most surely to be conveyed to your Grace, with the help of his good aunt the Prioress of Coldstream" (H. S.).

On 6th September 1528 James V. considering that the Prioress and Convent of Coldstream had shown great hospitality to, and were always ready to receive hospitably, English and foreign ambassadors, as well as Scottish and other honourable persons attending March meetings, therefore in aid of their great costs, with consent of his dearest mother the liferentrix, grants in feu-farm to Dame Isabella Hoppringill, the Prioress, and convent, and successors, the lands of Hirsell, and the third part of the lands of Graden, with its fishings near the monastery; paying annually to his mother £40 (G. S.). The sasine, given in April 1529, was witnessed by Alexander Hoppringill of that Ilk and his son John, Ninian Spottiswood, Stephen and Edward Broomfield, James Spens in Chirnside, Robert Dickson in Hassington Mains, John Galbraith, etc. (MSS. R.).

In 1535 the King confirmed the charter of sale by Alexander Ellem of Butterdean to the prioress and convent of his half husbandland in Hirsell. In 1537 the prioress received a gift of the escheat of Alexander Heriot in Darnchester, fugitive of the law for a slaughter.

Isabella Hoppringill, prioress, died on 26th January 1537.

JONET HOPPRINGILL

On 23rd February 1537 Dame Jonet Hoppringill was elected prioress of the convent; her fellow nuns, who voted for her unanimously, being Dame Isabella Rutherford, sub-prioress, Katherine Fleming, Joneta Brown, Mariota Rutherford, Joneta Kinghorn, Elizabeth Hoppringill, Christina Todrig, Katherine French, Joneta Shaw, and Helen Riddell; present as witnesses were Mr Robert Hoppringill, rector of Arniston, William Cockburn of Choicelee, Archibald and James Hoppringill, etc.

(*The Chartulary*). In 1838 the Queen-Mother grants the prioress a receipt for the mails of Spylaw; and at Christmas the prioress sends her a present of rabbits, partridges, butter, etc.

In December 1539 Sir Ralph Eure, the English Warden, writes that Dr Hillyard, chaplain to Bishop Tunstall of Durham, in escaping from England to Scotland by Coldstream, not finding the prioress at home, asked for her brother Robert, who writes that the Dr escaped because he had been advising religious houses not to submit to the King, and that when he went down to the ford and asked his servant to bring across the horses as his master was going to ride to Lauder that night, the bailie of Cornhill's servants would not allow him. Eure adds that he hopes to learn more of Hillyard's doings and sayings in Scotland through the prioress and her family, provided her communications and name are kept secret (H. S.). King James's refusal to surrender this refugee was one of the causes that led to war and the disaster of Solway Moss on 24th October 1542.

On 30th November 1542 Ralph Bulmer writes to the Earl of Hertford that Sir Ralph Eure and he have fulfilled his command to burn Coldstream, and have gotten much cattle, sheep, and prisoners. They kept the purpose secret till they came to Crookham Moor Stone, and there declared it to the captains under charge of secrecy. They desired to send Francis Bulmer with 80 men to demand the house in the King's name so that, if that were denied, they might put all to the sack, and with more slaughter requite the death of Somerset herald. But the prioress had warning and sent away all who could not safely remain, with horses, harness, 2000 sheep, and a great drove of cattle. Hugh Paitt of Cornhill had given warning, and had taken the prioress's brother and others prisoners before they came. They were met at the gate by the prioress and priests bearing the Cross, so that they could not for shame do any slaughter, and would not have burned, but that Hertford was so earnest to have it burned. As it was, the nuns sat on their knees, singing psalms, while Eure and he fired the house. The writer then set fire to the Church and the corn—which the Captain of Berwick estimated at a great sum—and went near being himself burnt; for Master Douglas (Sir George), setting fire to the town, raised such a smoke that, with the church on fire behind and the Abbey and barn on

either hand, he wist not which way to take. Afterwards he and his cousin Harry Eure, who is a very free burner, burned many stacks and kilns. He is sorry for Hertford's departure, for if he tarried till midsummer they would waste the whole Merse from Jedburgh to Coldingham. He will, if commanded, bring up Paitt with the prioress's brother and other prisoners (to York); also he will search the house of the laird of Cornhill, between whom and the prioress he suspects some "pakkyn," to find out what stuff came from Coldstream. Eure next describes the division of the spoils among the men, and the squabbling it gave rise to (H. L.). The protector of the Abbey, the Queen-Mother Margaret, had died in 1st October, the year previous.

In January 1543 a letter of an English Warden Lisl, states that "a certain nun and two of her sisters came lately to Berwick and lodged in a widow's house. Four or five days afterwards the widow came to Alnwick and sued that the said nun and her sisters might again inhabit their old cloister called Coldstream," saying the Earl of Angus had promised the nun to put her in her house again, and bringing letters to Sir Ralph Eure from Sir George Douglas and the Porter of Berwick to permit it (H. L.). In December 1543 licence was granted by the Duke of Suffolk, Lieut.-General of the north of England to Robert Pringle, Scotsman, with 12 servants, 16 oxen, 8 kine, 300 sheep, and 8 horses, till Easter next, to remain and abide upon the town fields of Coldstream; and the names of the servants, including Adam and Dave Hoppryngill, were handed to the deputy Wardens, captains, and garrisons, and others on the English Border, who are warned that any contravention of this licence will be visited with extreme punishment. Shortly afterwards this licence was extended to midsummer (H. L.)

Henry VIII. failed to get the infant Queen Mary and the Scottish strongholds handed over to his keeping, and the war continued. Sir Ralph Eure was slain by the Scots at the battle of Ancrum Moor on 27th February 1545, and Hertford, now Duke of Somerset, after his long career with fire and sword in south-east Scotland, was executed in London in 1552.

In 1550 Sir Andrew Ker, son of Mark of Littledean, who had got sasine of Hirsell and other lands, having had his goods refused admission to Sunwick by the prioress and Humes,

passed to Todrig and Graden, "where there was nothing but waste walls" (P. B.). In December 1551 the Prioress and Convent, finding it in their interest to have a bailie to administer justice among them, appoint to the office Alexander Lord Home; witnesses, John and James Hoppringill of that Ilk, William Cockburn of Choicelee, etc. In February 1552 Sir Andrew Ker of Hirsell, representing the Queen-Mother, and John Hoppringill of that Ilk and William Cockburn of Choicelee representing the Prioress and Convent, agree, with regard to the right and title to all lands debateable between them, to abide by the decision of Lord Home and Walter Ker of Cessford, who were to deliver judgment by 20th April (L. C.).

In October 1559 a feu charter of the lands of Lees, Braidhauch, and others, is granted by the Prioress and Convent to James Hoppringill of Langmuir, presently occupying them; paying yearly 18 merks; subscribed, "Jonet, prioress of Coldstream, with my hand, Isabell Rutherford sub-prioress, Marion Rutherford, Margaret Logan, Joneta Kinghorn, with our hand at the pen led by the notary: legend of seal, "S. Jonete Hoppringil prioress de Calstreme" (MSS., R.). In March 1560 another charter is granted by them to Archibald Hoppringill of Torquhan of the 20 husbandlands of Lennel, occupied by their tenants; paying to the Monastery £24 feu duty: witnesses, Robert Hoppringill, rector of Arniston, and his brother James, Alexander Hoppringill, etc. (G. S., 1565). In April 1560 a third charter is granted by them to Alexander Home of Muirdean of the lands of Little Todrig and Hatchedknowes, for great sums of money paid for the reparation of the Monastery, in great part burnt by the English (MSS., R.).

In 1560 Alexander Home of Huttonhall agrees to pay to the Treasurer the portions of the nuns of the Convent, whatever amount the Lords Auditors find due: witness, David Hoppringill, Apothecary, burgess, Edinburgh (E. R.)

Jonet Hoppringill died in 1566.

ELIZABETH

On 26th June 1566 Elizabeth Hoppringill received a grant of all and whole the benefice and Monastery of Coldstream, vacant by the decease of the late Dame Jonet Hoppringill, last

Prioress, whose niece she was (P. S.). In 1567 Isabella Broomfield sues the Prioress and Alexander Lord Home, tacksman of the Abbey, averring that her name had been omitted in the decree securing to the nuns and sisters of the Abbey the yearly pension of £20 granted to them by the Queen; the Lords ordain them to pay her the pension for three years bypast and in time to come (A. D., Scott).

In June 1575 the King's Advocate, mentioning the Act of Parliament of 1572, that any person who had a benefice, and was therefore under discipline of the true kirk, and participated not in the sacrament thereof, shall in presence of a bishop of the diocese subscribe the articles of religion and bring a testimonial thereanent, claimed that the prioress Elizabeth in failing to do so had lost her benefice. In May 1576 James Hoppringill of that ilk for not appearing to give evidence is declared rebel; and in October certain witnesses in Stow that testified they had seen the Prioress at the Communion Table, confessed they had deponed contrary to their conscience, thinking it better to preserve her benefice than declare the truth. Elizabeth however managed to get over the difficulty somehow (A. D., Scott).

About 1578 Elizabeth, Prioress of Coldstream, for moneys paid to her, granted to Alexander Home of Huttonhall the teindsheaves of Lennel for life, and after his decease, to his heirs for twice 19 years; also the lands of Wyllicleuch and Todrighill; paying in all yearly £58, 10s. (MSS., Had.).

In February 1579 at Stitchill three charters are granted by the Prioress and convent: One to Alexander Home of Huttonhall, of the dominical lands of Coldstream, and 16 husbandlands in Skatemuir, paying £55; another to Alexander Home of Manderston, of land in Sunwick and in Simprin; paying £83, 6s. 8d. (G. S., 1582); and a third to John Ker, son of Walter of Littledean, of the lands of Auld Hirsell, other lands on the Leet, Lees, Braidhauch, Deadrig and others, Fireburn and Coldstream mills devastated by the English, with power to rebuild; paying £54; teinds and fishings included: the charter subscribed, "We, Dame Elizabeth Hoppringill, prioress, Helen Riddell, Jonet Shaw, and Jonet Kinghorn, conventual sisters of the said Abbey, with our hands led on the pen, at our command, because we cannot write ourselves" (G. S., 1583). Finally, in October 1583, for favours during their trials, and

money paid for the reparation of the Monastery, they grant to John Cockburn (son of the late William of Choicelee), one of the bodyguard of the King of France, 10 husbandlands in Simprin; the feu duty of £13, 6s. 8d. payable only in time of peace between England and Scotland (G. S., 1584). All these charters were confirmed by December 1584.

Elizabeth Hoppringill the last of the prioresses of Coldstream appears to have died in 1588.

MARK KER, PRIOR

In May 1588 the King constituted Mark Ker, son of Walter of Littledean, Prior and Commendator of Coldstream for life, giving him the benefice thereof with the teind sheaves, the other teinds, privileges, etc., without prejudice of the Act of Annexation; vacant by the demission or decease of the late Dame Elizabeth Hoppringill. Mark died by February 1615 (G. S.).

THOMAS HOME, PRIOR

In June 1615, Thomas Home, second son of the late Patrick of Polwarth, who succeeded as Prior, had to summon the heritors, feuars, tenants, and occupiers of the priory lands for not paying to him the teind sheaves, mails, kaines, fruits, and duties pertaining thereto, for the crop and year 1615: defenders not compearing, the Lords order them to pay (A. D.).

JOHN HAMILTON, PRIOR

In July 1618 John Hamilton, son of the Earl of Haddington, now Prior of Coldstream, and the King's advocate summon Sir John Ker of Jedburgh (formerly called of Hirsell) to produce his tack of the teind sheaves of Hirsell, granted to him in July 1586 by Dame Elizabeth Hoppringill, prioress of Coldstream, and assigned by him to the Earl of Home; and in December following the Lords declare the tack to be of no avail or force because made without the consent of two conventual sisters living at the time, and because all tacks of teinds made at less than the former, are illegal (A. D.).

Not a fragment of the Priory of Coldstream now remains. In clearing, in 1834, a piece of ground said to have been formerly part of the burying ground of the Priory, a trench was discovered full of human bones, probably the remains of persons of note who fell in the battle of Flodden, whose corpses were brought in carts to Coldstream by order of the Lady Prioress, Isabella Hoppingill, for burial in consecrated ground.