

Mary Queen of Scots in Craigmillar



Archaeological dig at Bridgend Farm House searching for Mary Queen of Scots chapel.

An archaeological dig at Bridgend farm house on the edge of Craigmillar Castle Park has been trying to find traces of an old chapel believed to have been used by Mary Queen of Scots.

The week long dig has uncovered the original floor of the building and the stonework of what looks like a well. Fragments of pottery from the 16th century have also been found and even some white gritty ware believed to be from the 12th century. The team from Rubicon Heritage, led by Colm Moloney and Louise Baker, were undertaking the dig for the Greater Liberton Heritage Project, with funding from the National Lottery.

According to paper records, a chapel was built on the site of the farm house in 1518 by Sir Simon Preston, the owner of Craigmillar Castle. The Rev Alexander Stratone was listed as chaplain and required to say prayers for the souls of King James III and James IV. It's known that Mary Queen of Scots lived briefly at the castle in the winter of 1566 while she was recovering from the birth of her son, James VI. It's likely therefore that she worshipped at the Bridgend Chapel.

The chapel obviously fell into disuse during the 17th or 18th century because by 1792, Rev Thomas White was describing it as "stables where there had previously been a chapel." The Ordnance Survey map of 1850 records the remains of a chapel but refers to the building as a labourer's cottage. The

“cottage” is presumed to be the farm house we see today and the chapel became the outhouse, used to store hay and keep pigs.

Earlier this year the farm house, now owned by Edinburgh Council, was leased to a local charity, Bridgend Inspiring Growth (BIG), which has been formed to restore the building and open it as a community-owned environmental centre. BIG has been given Lottery funding to draw up detailed plans for a community kitchen and cafe and a base for outdoor activities in the park. It’s also planning to include a heritage exhibition in the farm house to explain the history of the chapel, the castle and the park.

BIG has already secured funding from the Council to employ a part-time community development worker who is running a series of pilot projects over the summer, ranging from gardening and cooking to walking clubs, healthy living courses and children’s forest days.

For details [click here](#) to see the website.