

(0847) 3237

Thurso Library, Davidson's Lane, Thurso.

17.7.81

Mr Horsey,
RCAHMS,
52-54 Melville Street,
Edinburgh.

Dear Mr Horsey,

Latheron Church, Caithness, and 22-24 Manson's Lane, Thurso.

Enclosed find film, colour and monochrome, of the above two buildings both exterior and interior. I trust these will be adequate for your purposes. If not, and it must be admitted that light conditions were very far from the ideal, could you contact the following gentleman with instructions, and he will take further shots for you:

Mr David Mather,
30, Castlegreen Road,
Thurso, Caithness. (Not on telephone).

A visit on 16.7.81 to Latheron Church revealed that most of the joinery work has been completed in the church interior. This has entailed the removal of the pews in the aisles either side of the pulpit and the covering of the sloping floor by two flat platforms, designed to hold display cases. The (north?) wall of the church has been breached at external ground level to provide a fire exit. The pews in the main body of the church will be retained, according to the joiners, as will the pulpit itself and the wall painting behind it. Incidentally, the central part of the painting is on wood, and appears to be inset. Could there be something behind this? The sides of the painting are on paper adhering (apparently) to a plaster wall.

I hope that this information will be adequate. Otherwise, please get in touch for further information. Also, I would be obliged if you could furnish me with any information you have regarding the church itself, and the small mausoleum/chapel building attached to the church on the seaward side (dates of construction, etc.) as many local people are interested in sorting out the rather jumbled impressions they have at present.

I enclose a sketch of those alterations already carried out.

Yours sincerely,

Rosene Crawley

3237

Thurso Library, Davidson's Lane, Thurso, KW14 7AF.

10.8.81.

Mr John Gifford,
91, West Bow,
Edinburgh.

Dear Sir,

Latheron Church, Caithness

I have recently been involved in making a photographic record of the interior of this church in advance of its conversion to a museum for the Clan Gunn Society. In the course of this, I received many requests for information about the building from local people, and accordingly asked for this from the Royal Commission (RCAHMS) for whom the photographs were taken. In their reply they supplied me with a photocopy of their catalogue slips, one of which states (without source) that the architect was Alexander Ross. Because of your work on Ross their Mr Ian Gow suggested that I write to you. Can you therefore, provide me with any information regarding the date of the present building, and if possible its relationship to the mausoleum which abuts the main church on the east? I would be grateful for any help you can give.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Gourlay.

→ SMR Accessioning/Updating
DPA
JLL/s ✓

HISTORIC



SCOTLAND

Telephone 0131 668 8720

Fax 8722

Chief Executive
Highland Regional Council
Regional Buildings
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

Our Ref: HGH/A/HB

10 October 1995

Dear Sir

BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST
ITEM 41 LATHERON PARISH CAITHNESS DISTRICT
LATHERONWHEEL (JANETSTOWN) BARN/STORE IMMEDIATELY WEST OF
CRAIGLEA

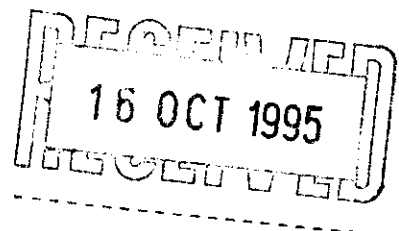
Please note that the description applicable to the above property has been altered as follows: first line to read 'Not shown on 1905 OS Map but built shortly thereafter. Rectangular-plan rubble...'

A revised description is enclosed which replaces your existing copy.

Yours faithfully

MRS A SPEARS

Enc



STATUTORY LIST

INFORMATION SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE STATUTORY LIST

This information (cols 2-8) has no legal significance, nor do errors or omissions nullify or otherwise affect statutory listing

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

NAME OF BUILDING AND/OR ADDRESS	ITEM NO	DATE OF LISTING	DESCRIPTION	CAT	MAP REF	REFERENCE	NOTES
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LATHERONWHEEL (JANETSTOWN) BARN/STORE IMMEDIATELY WEST OF CRAIGLEA	41	28.11.84	Not shown on 1905 OS Map, but built shortly thereafter. Rectangular-plan rubble barn/store with long elevations east and west. Enlarged entrance in east elevation with window above and door left; single ground (later) and 1st floor windows in west elevation; forestair at north gable serving centre 1st floor entrance; apex ball finials; Caithness slate roof.	B	ND 081 196	(7)	Modern lean to garage against south gable not included in listing.
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Thurso 3237

Thurso Library, Davidson's Lane, Thurso, KW14 7AF.

21st Aug. 1981.

Mr John Gifford,
91, West Bow,
Edinburgh 1.

Dear Mr Gifford,

Many, many thanks for your account of Latheron parish church which answered all my questions and much more. This must have taken a good deal of time and trouble, for which I am most grateful. If you have no objections, I will type up a copy of your summary and pass it on to the vergen/gravedigger. He himself is very interested, and can consequently pass on the information to visitors, who frequently enquire about the church. Again, many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Grounley



The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

(including the National Monuments Record of Scotland)

54 Melville Street Edinburgh EH3 7HF
Telephone 031-225 5994/5

R Gourlay Esq
Department of Leisure & Recreation
Thurso Library
Davidson's Lane
Thurso
Caithness

Your reference

Our reference

Date

4 August 1981

Dear Mr Gourlay

LATHERON PARISH CHURCH

Mr Horsey has passed your letter to me, to reply to your request for information about this church.

I enclose copies of our catalogue slips. We have nothing in our collection but we do have references to papers in the Scottish Record Office. Unfortunately I do not have an index to their general deposit numbers to enable me to tell you which family collections they are in, but the Record Office will supply details.

I do not know where our reference to Alexander Ross came from but John Gifford has done a lot of work on Ross for the Highland volume of the 'Buildings of Scotland' and may be able to give you further details. It does not feature in his list of Ross's work however. He may be contacted at 91 West Bow, Edinburgh.

I hope this may be of some help.

Yours sincerely

Ian R Gow

LATHERON PARISH church

By 1724 the pre-Reformation parish church of Latheron was ruinous and may even have largely fallen down. In that year the Rev. Andrew Sutherland, Minister of Latheron, reported to the Presbytery of Caithness and Sutherland 'that he was using his best Endeavours with his Heritors' to get them to carry out "reparation" of the church. As was the case throughout Scotland, the building and repair of the parish church, manse and school of Latheron was the responsibility of the heritors or landowners of the parish. Although the presbytery could raise an action in the Court of Session to force them to do their duty, few presbyteries tried to exert more than moral pressure. This weakness of the system left the people of Latheron without a parish for more than ten years.

[church

At first, matters seem to have moved quite fast. By 6 January, 1725, Mr. Sutherland seems to have persuaded his heritors that a new church needed to be built. On that day the presbytery received a petition from the minister and heritors of Latheron asking that the presbytery should enact that two-thirds of the stent (or levy on the heritors) should be raised for repair of the church and manse should be paid to Donald Calder, tenant in Over Latheron, who had been appointed "manager" for the work. The presbytery agreed to this and work began.

After this beginning, the project ran into difficulty. By October, 1725, work had stopped, with only three-quarters of the walls built. Some of the heritors had not paid their share of the stent, what money had been raised had been spent and the masons refused to carry on without wages. The presbytery ordered the Minister to announce from the pulpit that the heritors must pay up.

Mr. Sutherland may have been too respectful of the local landowners to press them. On 16 April, 1728, the Presbytery made a visitation of the parish and found the situation exactly as it had been in October, 1725, except that now some of the heritors were suggesting that the walls already built had been too damaged by the weather, with no roof to protect them, to be of much use. After an inspection by masons, the Presbytery declared that what had already been built was sound enough. The problem of certain heritors not having paid their share towards the cost was as great as ever and quarrels among the heritors as to their rights made matters no easier. As the Minister reported:

"Sir James Sinclair of Dumbeath did upon a certain day (as he is informed) come to the Church ~~Manse~~ and cause throw down a part of a door in the East Gavel [gable], which the Lady Forse designed as an Entry to her left, alleging that the whole of that Gavel belonged to him, and the Lady Forse insists upon it as

belonging to her."

The Presbytery ordered these two heritors to reach an agreement, threatening that otherwise it would be decided by the members of the Presbytery. Work, as it was decreed, should be begun again and the defaulting heritors pay their due contributions.

The orders of the Presbytery achieved nothing. On their next visitation of the parish on 1 September, 1730, the Minister represented to the Presbytery the great hardships he laboured under for want of a Church, notwithstanding all the Methods [which] had been [tried], and yet all was stopped for want of the necessary diligence to recover the funds [.] Nothing was done for the reparation of the Church. By which Both his people and he were every day reduced to great Inconveniencies."

Donald Calder, the "manager" of the work, seems to have been in despair, saying that he was unable to force the heritors who had not paid to do so. His resignation from his post was accepted.

The Rev. Andrew Sutherland died in 1732. His successor, James Brodie did not accept the call to the charge until 1734. On 2 April, 1735, the Presbytery again considered the question of the building of Lathera Church. Despite Brodie's nearly hysterical complaints that there was now no church at Lathera and that ~~the new church~~ what had been built of the new church would have to be pulled down and everything begun again, the Presbytery was able to take a calmer view. Two masons, William Shearer and John Sutherland, reported that the walls which had already been built were strong enough to ~~stand~~ be kept and all that was needed was to finish the building. This at last happened, although slowly, the roof structure being in place by February, 1738, although even then the roof had not been covered with sarking to take the weight of the slabs which completed it.

Thirteen years is a long time to take in building any church. For a church like Lathera which was an absolutely plain rectangle of no great size it must be exceptional. But the reluctance of the heritors to meet their legal obligations and the squabble between Sir James Sinclair of Dunbeath and Lady Sutherland of Forse about ownership of the east gable could be paralleled in most parishes in Scotland at some time between the Reformation and 1925 when the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland replaced the heritors.

The church which was put up was typical of country churches of the period — a galleried rectangle with the pulpit placed against the long south wall. An unusual feature was that it did not have a bellcote on one of the gables. Instead, the bell was housed in a free-standing belltower, probably built in the seventeenth century. Of the pre-Reformation church only a fragment was left. Probably most of its stones were used to build the 18th-century

church. The surviving fragment was left because it had been taken over by the mid-17th century as the burial place of the Sinclairs of Dunbeath. Perhaps it had been the chancel, no longer needed for worship after the Reformation and sold to the Sinclairs. This might explain why Sir James Sinclair claimed ownership of the east gable of the new church since if he had owned the east gable of the old he might think this entitled him to ownership of the gable of the new church. Lady Sutherland's counter-claim could be explained by her being allotted the east end of the church for her gallery and thinking that if any heir was to be able to claim exclusive ownership of any part of the walls, her gallery being placed there gave her a good reason to argue that that was her part of the walls.

By the beginning of the 19th century the church was in need of fairly major roof repairs and was also much too small to hold the population of the parish (the church at Berriedale was not built until 1826 nor the church at Lybster for yet another ten years). The heirs, though, were now rather more co-operative than their 18th-century predecessors. Not that they were quick to act. Estimates of the cost of enlarging the church had been obtained in 1815 but it was only in 1821 that they took action. Then they agreed that the roof required "immediate repair". At the same meeting (on 7 March, 1821) they decided:

"... that on account of the great population of the Parish and the scanty accommodation which the Church at present affords, it is indispensably necessary that an Aisle should, with as little delay as possible, be built on the north side of the Church opposite [the Pulpit [,] the length of which not to exceed thirty feet nor the breadth twenty five feet and to have a Belfry erected at the North end of it. The said Aisle to be fitted up with pews above and below of the same description as those in the Gallery in the East end of the Church. And in order still further to enlarge the accommodation of the Church they think it absolutely necessary that the body of the Church below should be new seated with close single pews, with the exception of a square seat [box-pew] to each Heritor and the Minister of the Parish."

At their next meeting, on 6 April, 1821, plans the heirs considered plans and specifications for re-roofing the existing church and adding a north aisle produced by a local architect-builder, William Davidson. General approval was given to Davidson's scheme but the thrifty heirs asked for the specifications to be given in greater detail (a sensible precaution since Davidson was to be the contractor as well as the architect and could well be tempted to skimp on the quality of the work) and also for the estimate for new seating to be broken down so as to distinguish between the seating of the new aisle and that of the existing church where they thought it possible that costs could be cut by re-use of old pews. Four days later Davidson's more detailed specifications were approved and he was

AGS. DOCS.

ND235W

Roinn na Gaidhealtachd



Highland

Department of Planning
Director
Richard W. G. Cameron
R.I.B.A., A.R.I.A.S., M.R.T.P.I.

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Regional Buildings
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Inverness IV 3 5NX

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Ian Robertson Esq
Director of Leisure and
Recreation Department
Caithness District Council
District Sub-Office
Rotterdam Street
THURSO

Please ask for: Mr Duncan

Ext. no: 563

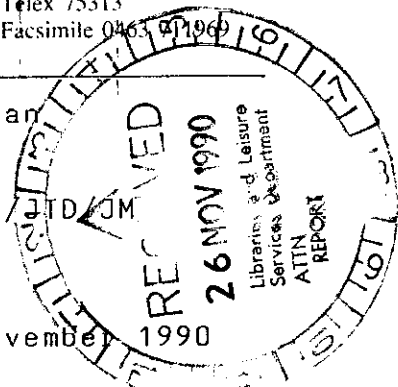
CA/17/C/JTD/JM

Our ref:

Your ref:

22nd November 1990

Date:



Dear Sir

BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST OLD PARISH CHURCH AND BURIAL GROUND, LATHERON

I refer to the site meeting of 20th November, 1990 between yourself and John Duncan, the Region's Conservation Officer concerning an intention to lift some stone slabs within the above burial ground to create a footpath between the entrance gate and entrance door to the Clan Gunn Museum which is housed within the Old Parish Church.

I confirm that the Old Parish Church and the Burial Ground have been listed since 1971 as being of special architectural or historic interest and that the Church and Aisle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Secretary of State's list, in fact, specifically refers to the Burial Ground being "filled with closely packed tombstones of high quality of 17th, 18th and 19th century date".

Whilst I acknowledge the concern which has been expressed by your Council's Environmental Health Officer regarding the unsafe nature of using these slabs as a surface to gain pedestrian access to the Museum, and that it may be difficult to distinguish between original tombstones and later stone slabs, they add considerable character to the Burial Ground and to the setting of the Old Church. Furthermore, the slabs have presumably functioned as part of the pedestrian access to the building since the day they were laid until the present day.

To effect their removal, would require an application for listed building consent which would require to be determined by the Planning Authority and the Secretary of State. Their removal would also entail notifying the Regional Archaeologist.

Consideration could alternatively be given to covering the route over the slabs with a hessian mat which need only be laid when it is anticipated that the slabs will become wet and slippery.

Yours faithfully

Director

c.c. Director of Libraries and Leisure Services (FAO: Archaeologist)

(0847) 3237.

Thurso Library, Davidson's Lane, Thurso, KW14 7AF.

18.6.81

Mr J.G. Dunbar,
RCAHMS,
54, Melville Street,
Edinburgh, EH3 7HF.

Dear Mr Dunbar,

LATHERON CHURCH, CAITHNESS.

After a request from your office, I have taken a series of photographs, in monochrome and colour, of the interior and pulpit painting of the above church before contractors come in to convert the building for the proposed Clan Gunn Museum. I enclose the films, and a receipt.

I am afraid, however, that the quality of the films will be rather poor, as they were shot in available light, and the interior was somewhat gloomy. The electricity supply has not yet been connected, and without flash available, I have had to make do. In addition, the pulpit painting is a very drab, deep red-brown with the design painted in faded gold, lying between two windows. I will therefore be surprised if useful prints can be made of the shots I took. To cap all this, the Divisional Planner is on holiday, as I will be from June 19th-29th, and I have been unable to find out just when the alteration work will begin. If nothing is done when I get back at the end of the month, I will get flash from someone and try again. If you feel that something ought to be done in the meantime, I suggest that you contact the Caithness Field Club through their Secretary, Mr G. Leet, 8 Burnside, Thurso.

I trust something useful will come from these films,

Yours sincerely,


Robert Gourlay.