CROMARTY EAST CHURCH

History of East Church

As the former Parish Church, and the historic place of worship for the town, the East Church reflects much of the fortunes of the society it served through the centuries, and is rich in the history of Cromarty and its people.

The East Church has been described as "*the epitome of a post-Reformation Church*", "*a true Presbyterian edifice*", and "*of exceptional interest in a Scottish as well as a local context*." It ranks among the eight finest examples of its type in Scotland and is nationally significant in terms of both built and ecclesiastical heritage. The East Church is Category A listed and stands within a B listed walled graveyard in an Outstanding Conservation Area.

Harled, slated and T-plan in form, the church is likely to have developed from an initial slender medieval rectangle. Following the reformation in 1560 the pulpit was moved to the south wall and windows to either side enlarged. The north aisle was added to cater for an expanding congregation during 1739-41.

The interior contains box pews of the 18th and 19th centuries, one of which incorporates reused painted panels. The furnishings and movables are remarkably complete and include a number of rare survivals, adding to the authenticity and interest of the building.

The surrounding graveyard, in the care of The Highland Council, contains a number of memorials carved by the geologist, writer and church reformer Hugh Miller (1802-1856) during his time as a stone mason in Cromarty. The church is also significant for its associations with Sir Thomas Urquhart (c.1611-1660) and George Ross (c.1700-1786).

Some interesting things to view in the church include:

- A fifteenth century carved gravestone with a cross, long swords and an open book
- Galleries, also known as lofts, from the eighteenth century. The north loft bears the initials of the pew holders painted on the gallery front
- Fragments of an early eighteenth-century pew panel bearing the arms of the laird, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie and his wife
- The nineteenth century session house build over the tomb of the Anderson family, with a finely carved memorial tablet
- A memorial plaque to the great eccentric Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, placed by the then recently formed Saltire Society in 1938

- A painted funeral hatchment to 18th century laird George Ross
- Wooden pegs for hanging hats and bonnets

You can download David Alston's historical report on the church for more detailed information

The old parish church of Cromarty
Section 1: Cromarty parish church in context

The medieval parish of Cromarty

During the reign of David I (1124–53) the structure of, and support for, the church in Scotland was consolidated as a system of parishes grouped into diocese, each under the authority of a bishop appointed by the crown, with an obligation on landowners to contribute a tenth part of the annual crop from their land for the upkeep of the local church (a *teind* in Scotland, equivalent to the English *tithe*). Over time teinds, also known as *teind sheaves*, were appropriated (diverted) to support clergy in larger religious establishments – cathedrals and monasteries – and those who received the teinds appointed poorly paid deputes (vicars) to carry out their duties in the parishes. Vicars might in turn retain the income and appoint a further, poorly paid, substitute – a curate. Further income from the parish was derived from the glebe – an area of land which could be farmed by the priest or rented out to provide an income – and small teinds (also known as *vicarage*), which were an additional payment on a variety of farm produce (hay, livestock, garden and dairy produce) and, in some communities, including Cromarty, on catches of fish.[1]

The right of patronage – that is, the right to appoint individuals to positions in the church, with the incomes attached to these positions – was a valuable asset. Richard Oram makes the point that the power structure within the early diocese of Ross was markedly different from other earldoms and provincial lordships in Scotland. Whereas the common pattern was for secular lords to hold significant 'portfolios' of patronage within the diocese, it is clear that by the mid-thirteenth century the bishops of Ross had acquired control of the majority of the parochial churches. Oram argues that it is likely that 'this was a situation of some antiquity, dating possibly from the tenth and eleventh centuries when the old monastic centre at Rosemarkie was still functioning'.[2] In the course of the thirteenth century, the income from these parishes was used as income for the main diocesan officials and the other canons of the chapter established in the cathedral at Fortrose.

By 1256 the teinds of the parish of Cromarty were appropriated and divided equally between the dean, chancellor, treasurer and precentor of the diocese. This allocation was exactly the same as that of the parish of Rosemarkie.[3] At the Reformation [1560] the vicarage, or small teinds, were held by John Anderson (or Henderson), chamberlain of Moray.[4]

Other churches and chapels in the parish

There were other places of worship within the parishes – some of them pre-dating the parish system, others endowed by private individuals or corporate bodies, such as the burgh. At Navity there is evidence of three early chapels,

[1] Craigston Archive, Bundle 160, Rental of the estate of Cromarty, 1750. The payment of vicarage by fishers is itself an indication of a long established fishing community.
[2] Richard D Oram, 'The Parish and Kirk of Kirkmichael, Ross', unpublished report (2003) for Kirkmichael Trust.
[3] DER Watt, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae Medii Aevi, ad annum 1638* (Scottish Record Society, 1969)
[4] *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* (Edinburgh, 1850–55), Parish of Cromarty

dedicated to saints Duthac, Michael and either Bennet, Kennat or Bainan. The name Navity derives from *neimhidh*, meaning consecrated or holy ground, and often indicates an early Christian site, possibly superseding a pre-Christian sacred place. A well, and possibly remains of the chapel, dedicated to St Duthac survived until *c.*1800; and a burial ground,[5] and what appears to have been a stone coffin survived at St Bainan's Chapel until the early 1740s.[6] St Bainan's well,[7] now commonly known as St Bennet's well, still flows near the shore below the chapel site. St Michael's chapel, along with that of St Duthac, is mentioned in the burgh of Cromarty' s charter of 1593, when the income from both was allocated to the repair and upkeep of the harbour.[8]

The chapel of St Regulus, on a steep sided knoll close to Cromarty House, was sketched and measured in 1815 and later described in detail by Hugh Miller,[9] before a new entrance to its burial vault was created and the ruins above ground removed, as part of landscaping in the mid-nineteenth century. An Act of Parliament of 1672 stated that the chapel had been 'founded and dotit [endowed]' by the people of the burgh.[10]

There is no substance to the claim that there was a foundation of Red Friars in or near Cromarty.[11] The tradition of an 'Old Kirk', reputedly lost to coastal erosion, is more substantial but ultimately ambiguous. The Sites and Monuments Record locates the site on sandbanks in front of the town (NH 791675), but the entry is wrong on a number of counts and the putative site lies to the east of the town.[12]

The evidence for there being a church, lost to the sea, consists of three 'productions'. First, when Bishop Pockocke visited Cromarty in 1760, he noted that there were on the shore, to the east of St Regulus, the 'very

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[5] Hugh Miller, *Tales and Sketches* (Edinburgh, 1863), 265

[6] Hugh Miller gives 'Bennet' in *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1994), 101. This is an unlikely dedication for what appears to be an early site. Elsewhere he gives the otherwise unknown 'Kennat' – *Sketchbook of Popular Geology* (Edinburgh, 1870) – and possibly this is simply a misprint. An older source – David Aitken's map of the Cromarty estate (Cromarty House archive) – gives the more likely 'Bainan'. Miller records that the stone coffin, a trough known as the Fairy Cradle, was destroyed by the parish minister and elders (*Scenes and Legends*, 101) and this certainly coincided with a clamp down on superstitious practices in the parish, evidenced in the minutes of the Kirk Session. Aitken also marks the chapel of St Duthac (NH 779645) and, intriguingly, a cross by the road to the east of Navity.

[7] Map reference NH 792651

[8] *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* (Scottish Record Society, 1984) vi, no 2350

[9] National Library of Scotland, *Hutton's Shires*; Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 200ff

[10] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905), 106

[11] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905), 106

12 The SMR notes that 'The site of a former church and churchyard of Cromarty, now covered by the sea, is marked by 'the Kirkstanes' below the Fishertown . . . Mr James Hogg (High Street, Cromarty) indicated the former area of the Kirkstanes, now covered by the sea, at NH 791 675' James Hogg was not a reliable informant. This is not the location of the Kirkstanes, which are indeed east of St Regulus. The SMR also states: 'About 1815, the beach below the town was covered with human bones and hewn stones from this graveyard. They were buried in the present church-yard.' This is a misreading of Miller, who dates this to the mid-eighteenth-century: 'about ninety years ago' when Miller published in 1835. This ties it to much the same date as Pockocke's visit.

imperfect remains of a church . . . called the Old Kirk'.[13] Second, Hugh Miller records the tradition that following a storm from the north east in the mid-eighteenth century, human bones were washed onto the beach 'below the town', together with 'several blocks of hewn stone', presumed to be from an old church and burial ground.[14] One piece of cornice stone could still be seen in Miller's time but the supposed site of the church was then 'covered every larger tide by about ten feet of water'.[15] And, finally, an area below high water mark is still known as the 'Kirkstanes'.

It is possible that this is a tradition arising from a single event *c.*1745 – the appearance on the shore of human bones and hewn stones after a storm. Pococke's 'very imperfect remains' may simply be the stones washed up some years before his visit, for no site 'on the shore' in 1760 was under two fathoms of water by 1835, when Miller wrote.[16] It is worth bearing in mind there was a similar tradition in Nigg of a church below the sea, whose bells, it was said, could be heard tolling below the waves in stormy weather.

There is no other evidence for the existence of the church. David Aitken's 1764 map of the Cromarty estate marks no remains on the shore and no property records examined refer to such a building. While absence of evidence in not conclusive evidence of absence, the tradition of the 'Old Kirk' below the sea, as an immediate forerunner to the present church, must be balanced against other evidence that the present church was the medieval parish church of Cromarty.

The Reformation

In 1560 the leaders of Scottish protestants, backed by minor lairds and barons, passed legislation in the Scottish parliament which established a radically new protestant church, based on the presbyterian model of Calvin's reformed church in Geneva. However, making the new church a reality at parish level was a long and painful process with many compromises. Chief among these was the decision in 1562 to allow the existing holders of church revenues to retain two-thirds of the income, with the other third allocated to the crown for the support of the new church. This was, nevertheless, an improvement on the financial position of the pre-Reformation parish clergy.

There was another major compromise over patronage, which the reformers had intended to abolish. Instead patronage generally passed to the crown, who took over the rights of the major religious institutions, and from 1587 patronage began to be granted to landowners by the crown as a property right.

The vicar of Cromarty at the time of the Reformation, John Anderson [or Henderson], did not conform to the new religion but, as described above, retained two-thirds of the income. Only after his death in 1582 was Cromarty's first presbyterian minister, Robert Williamson, appointed by the crown.

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[13] Richard Pockocke, *Tours in Scotland 1747, 1750, 1760*, (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1887)
[14] Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 29
[15] Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 101
[16] This can be confirmed by comparing David Aitken's map of the Cromarty estate made in 1764 and the fist edition Ordnance Survey (1871)

The seventeenth century

Divisions between episcopalian and presbyterian parties in the church, and civil war in the country, marked much of the century as a time of troubles. The laird of Cromarty in the late sixteenth century was Walter Urquhart (*d.* 1607), who was succeeded by his grandson Sir Thomas Urquhart the Elder [1582–1642], followed by Sir Thomas Urquhart [1611–*c.*1661].[17] The first presbyterian minister, Robert Williamson, was succeeded in the parish, before November 1638, by William Lunan. The younger Sir Thomas had been sent to King's College, Aberdeen, in 1622 at the age of 11, where he had as his regent a Mr Alexander Lunan. By 1638, Sir Thomas Urquhart had allied himself firmly to the episcopalian party in the church and it may be that William Lunan, who was appointed by Sir Thomas snr, was of the same mind. Lunan was gone from Cromarty by 1641 and was later excommunicated by the Presbytery of Turriff.

Later that year the 44-year old Gilbert Anderson, who had served as minister at Cawdor, was appointed. Elizabeth, a daughter of the Sir Thomas the Elder, was married to the laird of Cawdor.[18] The younger Sir Thomas was to quarrel bitterly with Anderson. In 1652 he described his dispute with the parish minister over the erection of a desk (a table seat] in the church. The desk had been 'put in without his [Urquhart's] consent by a professed enemy to his House, who had plotted the ruine thereof, and one that had no land in the parish'. The point at issue here was that only heritors [landowners in the parish] had the right to erect seats in the church. Urquhart went on to describe how the minister, Gilbert Anderson, as a consequence of this dispute 'did so rail against him and his family in the pulpit at several times . . . more like a scolding tripe-seller's wife than good minister . . . squirting the poison of detraction and abominable falsehood, unfit for the chaire of verity, in the eares of his tenandry, who were the only auditors'.[19]

Anderson died in 1655 and was followed as minister by his son Hugh. This appointment was made by the congregation, lay patronage having been abolished in 1649. Hugh married Grizel Rowe, daughter of the principal of King's College, Aberdeen, and carved window pediments with the couple's initials can still be seen at Poyntzfield House. Following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, and the re-establishment of episcopacy in the established church in Scotland, Anderson, a firm presbyterian, was deprived of his charge by the Privy Council. This occurred in 1662 but Anderson seems to have remained until at least 1673.

In 1661 the Cromarty estate passed to his Sir Thomas's cousin, John Urquhart of Craigston who committed suicide in 1678 in a bizarre fashion, stabbing himself with a series of knives and forks in the dining room of the castle. He was succeeded by his son Jonathon, but the family had already been enmeshed in debt by a consortium headed by George Mackenzie of Tarbat. Mackenzie acquired sole control of the estate by the early 1780s.

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[17] Henrietta Tayler, *The Family of Urquhart* (Aberdeen, 1946)

[18] In December 1643 three male guests in the castle were poisoned, having taken a drink intended for Elizabeth's husband – the mad, impotent John Campbell, Laird of Cawdor. The three were found dead in their beds in the morning. John Spalding, *The history of the troubles and memorable transactions in Scotland and England, from MDCXXIV to MDCXLV* (Edinburgh, 1828-9), ii, 70.

[19] Sir Thomas Urquhart, *The Jewel* in *Collected Works* (Maitland Club, 1834), 280–1

Two episcopalian ministers followed Hugh Anderson. A Thomas Urquhart was minister from 1673 until 1678, when he was removed. He had been suspected of involvement in the suicide of Sir John Urquhart in that year and was sent in custody to the Magistrates of Edinburgh, from where he was released in December. It appears that he may have boasted of having had some active part in Sir John's death. He was replaced in August 1678 by Bernard Mackenzie – whose appointment was itself an indication of growing Mackenzie influence in the parish. Mackenzie later acquired, or built, the house of Sandilands which still has very worn Mackenzie arms above its door.

Hugh Anderson had remained in the parish and in 1675 participated in a covenanting communion service at Obsdale House, near Alness. Mr John McKillican, who had held the communion service, was arrested in Anderson's house in Cromarty, in Church Street, on the site of the present Wellington House, and sent to the Bass Rock. Anderson had acquired the small estate of Udale and he retired there.

Mackenzie was in turn removed after the Revolution of 1690 and, with the reintroduction of presbyterian government in the Scottish church, Hugh Anderson was restored to the charge.

Anderson and his wife, Grizel Rowe, were said to have been welcomed back with the rhyme:

Good Mester Hugh
And Grizzie Row
The happy crew –
You're welcome back again.[20]

Anderson remained as minister until his death in 1704. Both he and his father were buried in a tomb adjoining the east gable of the church – now incorporated in the nineteenth-century session house.

The eighteenth century – protests and revivals

Cromarty had a remarkably stable ministry in the eighteenth century and, with the exception of a quickly deposed appointee in 1755, three ministers served the parish from 1707 until 1824. The first, George Gordon became minister of the parish in 1707 and remained in the charge until his death in 1749. His wife was known as 'Luggie' – it being the local belief that her lugs [ears] had been cut off during the religious disputes of the late seventeenth century.[21]

The economic relationship between church and people in eighteenth-century Scotland was determined by those landowners who formed the board of heritors in each parish and who were responsible for the church building, the manse and glebe, the minister's stipend, the school and the schoolmaster's salary. They offset these expenses by charging school fees and pew rents, by making tenants responsible for payment of teinds and by

[20] M Macdonald, *The Covenanters in Moray and Ross* (Inverness, 1892), 190
[21] Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 118

requiring labour services from tenants for such tasks as roofing the church. Dissent within the church in the eighteenth century was commonly the result of conflict between the largest landowners and independent small landowners, tradesmen and merchants, with disputes often focussed on patronage, that is, the hereditary right to appoint the parish minister – a right often vested in the principal landowner. Patronage, having been abolished in 1690, was restored by the British parliament in 1712, although the effects of this were modified by the right of presbyteries to overrule a presentation. Until 1729 presbyteries, in general, opposed the appointment of ministers against the wishes of congregations but from 1730 began to support patrons in their choice.[22]

From the 1730s religious life in Easter Ross and the Black Isle was marked by a series of evangelical revivals, such that by 1800 the area was dubbed 'The Holy Land'.[23] The revivals not only left a mark on the life of individuals but also led to greater popular opposition to ministers intruded by patrons on unwilling congregations and, in two parishes, to secessions from the established church. There were patronage disputes before the mid-1790s in Alness[24] (1725), Cromarty (1750), Nigg (1752), Kiltearn[25] (1770), Rosskeen[26] (1783), Avoch (1787) and Knockbain (1791.[27] The most notable of the revivals was in Nigg, beginning in 1739, which was followed, in the 1750s, by the secession of almost the entire congregation in a patronage dispute.[28]

In Cromarty, conflict between the major landowner and the majority of the other heritors was already evident in 1738. The parish schoolmaster had resigned since he was 'going off the country', that is, emigrating, and a young man named David MacCulloch had 'set himself up to teach privately, without being tryed by the presbytery, according to law'. The parish minister proposed the appointment of James Robertson, tutor in Gordon of Ardoch's family, for which he claimed to have the consent of the laird and principal heritor, George Mackenzie of Grandvel. At this point the other heritors claimed to have already appointed MacCulloch. They met in the church, refused to sit in the same pew as the minister, issued a second call and left, refusing to let the minister see the document. MacCulloch's position as schoolmaster appears to have been confirmed and he remained in this position until the 1760s.[29]

Polarisation increased after the Cromarty estate was acquired, in 1741, by Captain John Urquhart. Urquhart was a Roman Catholic and, although initially welcomed, faced growing opposition after 1748 when Gordon of

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[22] Calum G Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), 18–23, 69
[23] JN Hall, *Travels in Scotland*, 2 vols (London, 1807)
[24] In this case there was an attempt by a number of local lairds to prevent the induction of John Fraser. John Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Inverness, 1895), 36.
[25] This was not, strictly speaking, a patronage dispute but a case in which a minister was, after his induction, judged by the congregation to be too closely associated with the principal landowner and, in the face of opposition, left the parish.
[26] Parishioners in the parish were granted permission by the presbytery to attend services in other parishes because of their opposition to the minister.
[27] IRM Mowat, *Easter Ross 1750–1850: The Divided Frontier* (Edinburgh, 1976), 121.
[28] JB Munro, 'The First Dissenting Congregation in the Highlands' in *United Presbyterian Magazine* (Glasgow, 1865), New Series Vol IX, 307–315, 354–360, 401–408
[29] NAS CH2/672.

Ardoch, a landowner in the neighbouring parish of Resolis, attempted to persuade his fellow justices of the peace to implement anti-catholic legislation against Urquhart's household servants – on the basis that one of them was a teacher. Urquhart's factor interpreted this as, in part, linked with Gordon's attempts to encroach on Urquhart's lands. Gordon could not persuade the other justices to act and was also unsuccessful in an attempt to involve the commander of the troops stationed in Cromarty. However, he persuaded the presbytery, and subsequently the synod, to take up the matter and the commissioners to the General Assembly were instructed 'to represent how popery increased . . . and . . . how priests abounded'. It is interesting to note that Urquhart was supported by some neighbouring presbyterian landowners, including Sir John Gordon of Invergordon, uncle to Gordon of Ardoch – a fact suggesting a commonality of interest among the larger landowners that transcended religious divisions.[30]

Ardoch had gained the support of the elders who pursued Urquhart on other matters, principally over Urquhart's claim to the right of patronage in the parish, an issue that came to a head on the death of the minister in 1749. Urquhart sought to exercise his alleged right with, as he saw it, some tact, but without in anyway abandoning his claim. His chosen candidate was Thomas Simson and he suggested that the presbytery authorise him to preach for several Sundays so that the congregation could form an opinion of him and he further agreed to find another candidate if any objection could be sustained against Simson's qualifications or character. While Simson was initially accepted by a majority of the heads of families in the parish, the elders, again supported by Gordon of Ardoch, opposed Simson on principle, refused to accept any candidate presented by the patron and issued a call to James Robertson[31]. Robertson withdrew on being offered a university post and the kirk session then called Patrick Henderson. The matter was appealed through the courts of the Church of Scotland and to the Court of Session, with victory going to Gordon and the elders. The decision rested on the patronage of the church being judged to lie with the crown, not with Urquhart, and Henderson was inducted – although only to be deposed for immorality within a few years. Finally James Munro was appointed in 1755 and remained as minister until his death in 1789. During much of this time the estate was in the hands of George Ross, who had made his fortune as a London-based army agent and used his wealth to improve and embellish the estate. His improvements included the building of a chapel for Gaelic speakers in the town.

Munro's successor was Robert Smith, tutor to the Sheriff, Donald Macleod of Geanies, and appointed through his influence. Donald Sage, the minister of Resolis, described him as 'a sound Scriptural preacher and a laborious conscientious minister', but added that 'his mind was very secular'. He continued as minister until his death in 1824.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Cromarty had been brought under the influence of the evangelical revivals at the time of the patronage dispute. In 1738, the year before the Nigg revival, a small number of people

[30] Craigston Archive, Bundle 97.

[31] It is possible that this was a relation of the Robertson who has been tutor in Gordon of Ardoch's family and had been proposed by Ardoch as parish schoolmaster in 1738.

in the Black Isle and Wester Ross, including one Kenneth Clark[32] from Cromarty, formed themselves into 'The Society in Ross in connection with the Secession Church'[33] and in 1742 there are references to people going to hear 'the minister from the south' preach at Eathie, possibly a secessionist preaching in the open.[34]

There were also other disputes in the church. It was a common complaint throughout Scotland that major heritors diverted the parish poor funds to defray their expenditure on the church.[35] The Cromarty kirk session perceived such a threat from Urquhart and in 1751 allocated funds to 'defend the rights of the poor of the parish to the lands pertaining to them'.[36] This may have followed Urquhart's moves to clarify the boundaries of holdings – whatever the cause it led to a clear recording by 1760 of the lands which had been mortified in 1649 for the benefit of the poor and to support the school. In 1756 Urquhart initiated a division of the church – that is, an allocation of the floor space among the heritors in proportion to their landholdings – which naturally resulted in the allocation to his family of the bulk of the pew space, including the 'eastern gallery' which subsequently became the 'laird's loft'.[37] A number of Urquhart's policies in the management of his estate had aroused resentment, which had led to damage to his property. It is interesting that this extended to the church building, perhaps in consequence of the division, since in 1759 the estate obtained a sheriff's interdict prohibiting people from 'strolling round the castle, kirk and storehouse and breaking windows'.[38]

Urquhart adopted a more commercial approach to estate management and implemented some changes in tenant structure. However, it appears that opposition to Urquhart in church affairs was the result of the breakdown in a cohesive social structure that, in the past, might have united laird, tenants and townspeople. Thus Urquhart's principal opponents were not tenants threatened with eviction but an articulate group of minor heritors, tradesmen and merchants. Anti-catholic sentiments and suspicion of strangers brought into the town by Urquhart fuelled this opposition.

Many of those protesting against patronage from the mid-eighteenth century saw themselves as taking on the mantle of the seventeenth-century covenanters of southern Scotland. This was coupled with staunch anti-Catholicism, targeted in Cromarty at the catholic laird. The petition presented to the crown in the 1750s, opposing the appointment of Urquhart's presentee, was based on the need to prevent 'Popery fixing a new nest in Cromarty' and the sum of £500 was raised, mostly locally, to pursue the case through the courts.[39] Anti-catholic sentiment remained a unifying factor in local opinion. In 1779 a collection was organised by the kirk session

[32] The session records refer to a Kenneth Clerk who was a ferrier. If this was the same person he would have had regular contact with the revivalists in Nigg.
[33] J Munro, 'The First Dissenting Congregation in the Highlands'.
[34] NAS CH2/672
[35] Calum G Brown, *Religion and Society*, 77
[36] NAS CH2/672, 1 July 1751.
[37] Craigston Archive, Bundle 36; Highland Council Archive, HCA/C154/25
[38] Craigston Archive, Bundle 138
[39] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church' in *Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (1905), 103

for 'the Protestant Interest at Edinburgh' in order to support their opposition to 'the late Popish Bill'. Over £12 was raised, more than twice the amount that the 'Protestant Interest' thought sufficient.[40] Almost fifty years later, Hugh Miller was the only individual unwilling to sign a petition opposing Roman Catholic emancipation.[41]

Between 1790 and the mid-nineteenth century there were further evangelical revivals in this area and a spread of evangelical religion throughout the Highlands and Western Islands. In this later period religious revival and agrarian changes, including clearances, were generally contemporaneous. From this point, and certainly after 1800, religious revivals took a different form. They now characteristically centred on the conversion of young men and women and the experience of 'awakening' was often accompanied by 'violent bodily excitement' – although some disapproved of this.[42] The increasingly mobile work force of the east Highlands was also more mobile in participation in religion. Annual communion services, especially in revived congregations, attracted large crowds, with gatherings of up to 10,000 people reported on some occasions.[43] The most notable revival was under the Revd John Macdonald, minister in the parish of Urquhart from 1813 until 1849.[44]

The Gaelic congregation

Cromarty's Gaelic Chapel was erected in 1783 as a place of worship for Gaelic speakers in and around the town, many of whom had moved into the area to work in the hemp manufactory established in the early 1770s.[45] It was the fourth establishment of its kind in lowland Scotland, following the erection of chapels in Edinburgh (1769), Glasgow (1770) and Aberdeen (1781).[46] The congregation was dissolved 135 years later, in 1918.

Unlike the other Gaelic chapels, the Cromarty chapel was very much the creation of a single individual, George Ross, proprietor of the Cromarty estate, who provided both the site and the building. In 1781, Ross also secured an annual endowment of £50 to meet the cost of the stipend for a minister, granted by the Exchequer from the Bishops' or Crown Rents. This was increased over time to £150 per year but was reduced, *c.*1870, to the original amount of £50.[47] The right to appoint the minister of the chapel lay with the Crown and, because of the Cromarty Gaelic Chapel's unusual status, this remained uniquely so even after rights of patronage were abolished in the established Church of Scotland.

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[40] NAS CH2/672/2. Of this sum raised, £2 10s was contributed from the factory. Unfortunately it is not clear if this was collected from the workers or donated by the company.
[41] Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, 453
[42] John Kennedy, *Days of the Fathers*, 234
[43] John Kennedy, *Days of the Fathers*, 220
[44] Marinell Ash, *This Noble Harbour* (Edinburgh and Invergordon, 1991), 52
[45] Andrew Wight, who visited Cromarty in 1781, noted that 'The church is already too small for the congregation; a place is fixed for building a new church.' *Present State of Husbandry in Scotland*, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1778–84)
[46] CWJ Withers, *Urban Highlanders* (East Linton, 1998), 161
[47] Report of General Assembly Commissioners, 1889

The first minister was Alexander MacAdam, who had been appointed as parish schoolmaster in 1771.[48] He was licensed as a preacher by the Presbytery in 1779, in both English and 'Erse', and appointed minister of the Gaelic Chapel in 1782.[49]

The first references to evangelical 'awakenings' in Cromarty were after the appointment of MacAdam. This revival in Cromarty seems, unlike that in Nigg in the 1740s, to be related to economic change and social dislocation in the Highlands. The marginalised nature of the community is seen in the two Men from Cromarty identified by Kennedy – Roderick Mackenzie (Rory Phadrig), who was 'awakened' in the 1780s, and John Clark, who appears to have been a contemporary. Neither remained settled in Cromarty – Mackenzie later moved to Contin and Clark emigrated to America. Clark was noted for having declared at a prayer meeting that 'not a builder or tailor in Cromarty could be saved'. This was interpreted as having a 'spiritual' meaning – referring to the 'builders' who rejected the corner-stone and those who 'patched with rags a righteousness for themselves' – but it equally betrays a tension, within the congregation, between established artisans and tradesmen on one hand and the recently settled, and poorer, Gaelic speakers on the other.[50]

In May 1831, the minister of the Gaelic Chapel, John Finlayson, petitioned the Presbytery seeking either to have a parish created for him within the bounds of the parish of Cromarty or to have a collegiate charge created, with the two ministers having equal status. Counter petitions were presented and the case was referred to the General Assembly. Wider church politics lay behind the dispute. Finlayson was a member of the Moderate party in the church, while Alexander Stewart, the parish minister, was an Evangelical. Had Finlayson become a parish minister, or shared a collegiate charge with Stewart, the balance of power within the Presbytery would have been tipped in favour of the Moderates. Moreover, although both the parish church and the Gaelic Chapel were Crown appointments, the people of Cromarty had freely chosen Stewart as their minister, while Finlayson had been appointed without local views being taken into account. The case was, however, never called at the General Assembly because Finlayson and his supporters could not hope to overcome the Moderate party's opposition, in principle, to the erection of chapels of ease into regular parishes.[51]

Finlayson was described by Hugh Miller as 'frank and genial', though not 'of high talent' – a man who 'visited often, and conversed much'. He officiated on such occasions as the Masonic ceremony when the foundation stone of the Cromarty Lodge of Free Gardeners was laid.[52] His wider involvement in the parish, on occasions such as these, together with his successful move in 1828 to be allowed to hold services in English, demonstrates that the Gaelic Chapel was no longer solely concerned with a ministry to Gaelic speakers.

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[48] NAS CH2/672/2, Cromarty Kirk Session minute book 1738–1813
[49] NAS CH2/66/4
[50] John Kennedy, *Days of the Fathers*, 105–107
[51] Hugh Miller, *Schools and Schoolmasters*, 454–8; *Inverness Courier*, 4 May 1831
[52] *Inverness Courier*, 21 April 1830

The Disruption

Tensions mounted in the Church of Scotland in the early nineteenth century between the evangelical party, who opposed patronage, and the moderates, who accepted it. Alexander Stewart, who was minister of Cromarty from 1824 until the Disruption of 1843, and thereafter minister of the Free Church until 1837, was a leading evangelical and one of the most eminent preachers in Scotland.

The evangelicals gained a majority in the General Assembly in 1834 but the refusal of government to introduce reforming legislation led to their secession in 1843 to form the Free Church. Easter Ross and the Black Isle were notably strong in their support for the evangelical party and, subsequently, for the Free Church. This appears to have been, in part, the legacy of evangelical revivals and patronage disputes in the eighteenth century and, in part, the result of revivals in the early nineteenth century.

Hugh Miller (1802–56) was a leading lay figure in the Disruption largely through his role as editor of the evangelicals' newspaper the *Witness*. Miller's family had rented part of the west table seat at the front of the north loft and following the Disruption he wrote:

> *I do begrudge the Moderates our snug, comfortable churches. I begrudge them my father's pew. It bears date 1741, and was held by my family, through times of poverty and depression a sort of memorial of better days, when we could afford getting a pew in the front gallery.*[53]

Support for the Free Church throughout the Highlands was particularly strong among small tenant farmers, farm workers and unskilled labourers.[54] Miller wrote of Sutherland that 'all who are not creatures of the proprietor . . . are devotedly attached to the disestablished ministers' and the schism in the church has subsequently been represented as, in effect, a class conflict between 'small tenantry on the one hand, sheep farmers, factors and proprietors on the other'.[55] This differed from the pattern of adherence to the Free and Established Churches in other parts of Scotland. In the rural lowlands of the south and north-east the influence of the evangelical party varied more from parish to parish and in urban areas, including small towns like Cromarty, the poorest classes often remained in the established church, while skilled artisans and merchants joined the secession.[56]

The great majority of the congregation of the Gaelic Chapel remained in the established church at the Disruption.[57] However, it appears either that a number subsequently joined the Free Church or that new Gaelic speakers moved into the town, who were Free Church members. During a vacancy in the Gaelic Chapel there was a short-lived secession within the newly formed Free Church in Cromarty, following the appointment of the Rev David Wilkie

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[53] Peter Bayne, *Life and Letters of Hugh Miller* (Edinburgh, 186?), ii, 383

[54] PLM Hillis, 'The Sociology of the Disruption' in SJ Brown and M Fry (eds), *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1993) 46

[55] James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976) 104

[56] PLM Hillis, 'The Sociology of the Disruption', 46

[57] Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (Edinburgh, 1993), 455. Miller claims that ninety per cent of the congregation remained in the establishment.

as minister and between 1848 and 1851, there were two congregations. The precise reasons for the split cannot now be determined but a wooden building, with seating for 400 people, erected in 1850 by the breakaway group, was described in a newspaper report as a 'station house for Gaelic speakers' and its erection as an 'act of justice'.[58]

Following the Disruption in 1843 – and the departure of Alexander Stewart to the Free Church – Adam Hall was appointed minister, but died in 1846. He was followed by George Russell (1846–76] and Walter Scott [1876–1925], who was responsible for significant alterations to the interior of the church. Gordon Moore was appointed as assistant and successor to Mr Scott on 1917 and served as parish minister from Scott's death until 1934

The Union of 1929

The Free Church of Scotland, having joined with earlier 'seceders' to become the United Free Church, was re-united with the established church in 1929. In almost every parish in Scotland there were minorities – the 'Wee' Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Church – who did not follow this path to re-union. However, in Cromarty all presbyterians were re-united in 1929, forming a single congregation from 1934, worshipping in both the old parish church building (subsequently known as the East Church] and in the Free Church building [the Stewart Memorial Church, subsequently known as the West Church].

It is an open question what name now best suits the church building. Perhaps Cromarty Old Parish Church . . .

[58] *Inverness Courier*, 28 Mar 1850 reported the opening of the wooden church, with a Mr Macgrigor as missionary. The *Northern Ensign* 20 June 1850 refers to the two congregations and the impending move of the Rev David Wilkie to Forfar, implying that this was likely to remove the cause of the division.

The old parish church of Cromarty
Section 2: The church building

The pre-Reformation parish church of Cromarty

There is considerable evidence that the present church is on the site of, and continuous with, the pre-Reformation church of the parish – that is, dating from before 1560AD. First, it is built on the E–W orientation characteristic of churches in which mass was celebrated, such that the priest, facing the altar, looked towards the rising sun – a symbol of the Resurrection. No church built shortly after the Reformation would have been so constructed. Second, there is an aumbry (a cupboard for holding the vessels for Mass) in the north wall at the east end – and this too is a feature of a pre-Reformation church. The low height of the aumbry indicates that the floor level was once significantly lower. Third, a fourteenth-century, or possibly fifteenth-century, grave-slab, now in the west porch, was discovered within the church *c.*1980.[59] And, fourth, the church is close to the site of the 'vicar of Cromarty's manse', roughly equivalent to present day Nicol Terrace. (see below). This is a pre-Reformation term and its proximity to the church suggests that the church site is also pre-Reformation.

The argument for a post-Reformation date rests almost entirely on a tradition recorded by Hugh Miller that the church was built after 1560. According to this tradition there was a supernatural intervention to determine the site.

> *Having made choice of a piece of land on the edge of the ridge which rises behind the houses as a proper site for their church, they began to collect the materials. It so chanced, however, that the first few stones gathered for the purpose, being thrown down too near the edge of the declivity, rolled to the bottom; the circumstance was deemed supernaturally admonitory; and the church, after due deliberation, was built at the base instead of at the top of the ridge, on exactly the spot where the stones had rested.*[60]

William Mackay Mackenzie accepted this date and argued that St Regulus was used as the parish church after the 'old Kirk' on the shore fell into ruins and was washed away. His argument was based on the facts that St Regulus had a burial ground – which a chapel would not have had – and that the first protestant official in the church in Cromarty was the chaplain of St Regulus. However, against his first point is the evidence from the Craigston papers that the townspeople only started to use this as a burial ground when the Urquharts' affairs fell into disorder in the 1670s.[61] Other burials were in a vault attached to the chapel. His second point has little force. There were considerable difficulties in establishing a reformed ministry after 1560. The chaplain became a 'reader' in the parish church, a position filled by those who did not have sufficient qualifications to become a minister, but this does not suggest that the chapel of St Regulus was serving as the parish church.

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[59] Ian Fisher of RCAHMS suggested a fourteenth-century origin on visiting the church; Lawrie (1981) has ±1500.
[60] Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 104
[61] Craigston Archive, Bundle 159, Memorials and queries to Lord Pitfour.

The argument based on tradition, recorded by Miller 250 years after the supposed event, is weak and there is a notable lack of any other evidence for a new church being built after the Reformation. Sir Thomas Urquhart claimed that his father was the first protestant in the family and that he had enlarged the chapel at Kirkmichael. He then writes that his earlier Roman Catholic ancestors 'were at the cost of building the churches of Cromartie and Cullicudden . . . betokening their zeal to the Romish faith they then professed'. If the east Church had been built after the Reformation it would have been at the expense of Walter Urquhart, Sir Thomas's grandfather – and Sir Thomas, no friend of the presbyterian church authorities, would have used this in his argument.[62] The only counter to this would be a claim that the church was built, not by the patron, but by the inhabitants of the burgh – but this seems unlikely given that that burgh charter of 1593[63] makes no mention of the church.

It is reasonable to conclude that the present church is on the site of, and continuous with, the pre-Reformation church of the parish; and that it has been on this site since at least the fifteenth century, and possibly from the formation of the parish in the twelfth or thirteenth century.

In a pattern common throughout Scotland after the Reformation, the focus of the church changed from an altar at the east end to a pulpit, placed centrally on the south wall, where the light was best. The subsequent enlargement of the church, as was common elsewhere, was by building a new aisle opposite the pulpit to create the T–plan church typical of many Scottish parishes.

Manses and glebes

To the south east of the chapel of St Regulus, on the other side of the narrow ravine below the knoll, was the 'manse field' or 'chapel park'. This may have been land associated with the chapel of St Regulus. Elsewhere there were the 'lands of the Blessed Virgin Mary',[64] in earlier records described as the 'lands of Sanct Marie Virgin called the minister's glebe'.[65]

An area of three roods of lands, roughly where Nicol Terrace now stands, is variously described as 'the vicar of Cromarty his manse',[66] the 'manse of Cromarty being three roods with houses',[67] and 'the vicarage'.[68] It seems likely that this refers to the pre-Reformation manse of Cromarty – and may the priest's house where James IV 'lugyit' (lodged) on route to Tain in March 1496, paying 18 shillings for his accommodation.[69]

[62] Sir Thomas Urquhart, *Logopandecteision* in *Collected Works* (Maitland Club, 1834), 353–3
[63] *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* (Scottish Record Society, 1984) vi, no 2350
[64] NAS GD159/40, Lands disponed in 1711 by Thomas Clunes to George Urquhart. These fields were above the town at or near the later glebe.
[65] NAS SC34/28/90 where this appears as the western boundary of two rigs of land called 'the crose'.
[66] NAS RS38/XII/389
[67] NAS RS38/XII/17
[68] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905)
[69] T Dickenson, (ed.), *Lord High Treasurer's Accounts – Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1877)

The church building in the seventeenth century

While there are differing views as to the origins of the church building, whatever view is taken it is accepted that the church has been on the present site since at least the late sixteenth century.

When the church roof was renewed in 1756 the roof it replaced was of oak 'said to have been cut down from the Hill of Cromarty, upwards of 140 years before', that is, in the early years of the seventeenth century.[70] There are no contemporary records of this. Local timber was not plentiful and when a new wing was added to Cromarty Castle in 1631 timber had to be imported from Norway.[71]

The younger Sir Thomas's dispute with the minister, Gilbert Anderson, over the erection of a 'desk' in the church (see above) is a vivid reminder of the fact that 'pewing' – that is, provision of and charging for seating – was a recurring source of tension in many churches in Scotland. The only other information furnished from Urquhart's writings is his statement, already referred to above, that his ancestors 'were at the cost of building the churches of Cromartie and Cullicudden, and many other monuments, betokening their zeal to the Romish faith they professed'.[72]

As the affairs of the Urquhart family fell into disorder from the 1660s, the more prominent families in the town began to bury their dead in what had been the private burial ground at the chapel of St Regulus.[73] There are only two visible stones in the burial ground of the East Church with seventeenth century dates (although there may be other stones from this period, either undated or hidden below the ground]. One is incised with a carving of a long sword, dated 1604 and marked with the initials HT, DT, WT and BT. It is likely that the date and initials are later than the sword. The other is dated 1660 and commemorates John Williamson, burgess in Cromarty.[74]

Inside the church seating consisted of desks (table seats], pews and, for those who could not afford either of these, stools in the open space remaining. There is, for example, a reference in the Kirk Session minutes of 1683 to a desk belonging to the laird, Jonathon Urquhart of Cromarty, on the north side of the church, with a desk of Urquhart of Craighouse to the east and a desk of Fraser of Bannans to the west.[75] At the east end was the scholars' loft, for children attending the parish school, who were on one occasion described as 'ill-conditioned royit [unruly] loons' who 'rasied disturbances and faught in the . . . loft'.[76]

On 25th July 1680 'Alexander Wood petitioned the Session that he might have a place where to build a desk in the church, and seeing that there was no fit place below in the church he sought that he might build beside the

[70] OSA, Parish of Cromarty, 1793
[71] Privy Council records
[72] Sir Thomas Urquhart, *Logopandecteision* in *Collected Works* (Maitland Club, 1834), 353–3
[73] Craigston Archive, Bundle 159, Memorials and queries to Lord Pitfour.
[74] East Church Cromarty: Survey of Inscriptions on Gravestones (Cromarty Courthouse, 1993)
[75] NAS CH2/672/1, 69
[76] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905), 112

Scholars' Loft, which was granted him by the Session, he to build two foot below the Scholars' Loft.' [77] There was also, from a date which cannot be determined, a common loft.

The affairs of the church may have been mismanaged in the late seventeenth century – although we must be cautious here because accusations and counter-accusations were being made by different factions in the burgh. In 1673 Thomas Lindsay, a Cromarty merchant, was called on to provide accounts for his dealings 'with the common good of the Session' when he was treasurer. He had received £15 sterling from a 'stent' (local tax) imposed in order to buy a new church bell – the bell had been bought but at a cost of only £5. He had neither paid nor accounted for the income for the use of the mortcloth [a decorated cloth used to cover the coffin at funerals] for a fourteen-year period, which suggests that this had been his term of office – and he had also been responsible for collecting £40 for 'distressed people abroad' and an undisclosed sum 'for the loft'.[78]

The kirkyard and surroundings

The earliest reference found to the kirkyard is a disposition, probably of the late 1660s, in which 'ane Chalmer neir the kirkyard comonlie appelat the Plaister Chalmer' [a room near the churchyard commonly called the Plaster Room] is described as bounded by the 'kirkstyll' at the west, the yard of John Baillie at the east, the kirkyard at the south and the 'hie streit' at the north.[79] The 'kirkstyll' may have been either a gateway or a set of steps over the churchyard wall. This appears to be the same property delineated in 1728 as having the churchyard entry at the west, the churchyard at the south, the street at the north and the yard of William Husband at the east.[80] This may be the building of which a wall remains at the north-east corner of the burial ground.

The same document of 1728 refers to a road leading from the church over the bridge towards the castle – suggesting that what is now Church Street ran on to the east, rather than turning into Burnside Place, which is elsewhere described as a *vennel* (lane) leading from the churchyard to the shore.[81] These delineations in property records are likely to repeat earlier descriptions. By 1744, and probably much earlier, the present street lay-out seems to have been established.[82]

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[77] CH2/672/1

[78] William MacGill, *Old Ross-shire and Scotland as seen in the Tain and Balnagowan documents*, 2 vols (Inverness, 1909) i. no 784

[79] William MacGill, *Old Ross-shire and Scotland as seen in the Tain and Balnagowan documents*, 2 vols (Inverness, 1909) i, no 779. The original papers, on which some of this detail is based, are NAS SC34/28/90.

[80] NAS GD159/25. The Husband property was disponed to George Ross of Cromarty in 1775 (NAS RS 38/XIII/238).

[81] A disposition of 1725 (NAS GD159/40) describes the boundaries of a malt kiln and house (which for other reasons appears to have stood on or near the site of the Old Brewery) as bounded on the west by the vennel leading from the churchyard to the shore, on the south and east by the 'street or common way' and on the north by the burn.

[82] Craigston Archive, Bundle 171, List of inhabitants, 1744

The old manses of Cromarty

A parish manse was a house provided by the heritors [principal landowners] for the accommodation of the parish minister. A number of ministers of Cromarty held land and houses in the town and did not require a manse, and some preferred to receive a payment in lieu of a manse, making their own arrangements for housing.

It was only in 1582, twenty-two years after the Reformation in Scotland, that Robert Williamson became the first presbyterian minister of the parish. Hugh Miller wrote in 1835 that Williamson's initials, with those of this wife, were 'still to be seen on a flat triangular stone in the eastern part of the town, which bears the date 1593'.[83] This stone may be the window pediment, now very worn, built into the north gable of The Kennels on the Causeway. Williamson was succeeded in 1638 by William Lunan, followed by Gilbert Anderson in 1642.

Gilbert Anderson (minister 1642-55) and his son Hugh [minister 1656-75 and 1690-1704] owned property on Church Street (on the site of Albion House and Waterloo House], and Bernard Mackenzie [minister 1678-1690] also owned land in the town. They may not have required accommodation but in 1699 a house was purchased, to serve as a manse, from Alexander Davidson, the sheriff clerk. In 1707 it was in a poor state of repair and 'not sufficient'.[84] According to William Mackay Mackenzie the manse had the date 1702 above its door and, writing in 1905, he stated that, while it no longer stood, its predecessor 'still usefully survives'.[85] It is not clear to what building he was referring. A house of similar date on the Causeway is now called 'The Old Manse'. However, this appears to be a case of mistaken identity – it was briefly the home of the minister of the Gaelic Chapel in the mid-nineteenth century

A new manse was built in the early 1770s.[86] It must have been a substantial house since it was taxed on 20 windows – the same number as Forsyth House.[87] However, its timbers were rotten by 1805[88] and in 1844, since it had 'become ruinous', it was taken off the hands of the minister, Mr Hall, who received an allowance of £47 in lieu of a manse.[89] It is not clear if Mr Hall had been occupying the manse or not. This building was located between Church Street and Gordon's Lane (then known as Manse Lane] and some of the walls may be incorporated in nos 30 and 36, Church Street.

In the 1850s Hugh Miller noted that the house of his boyhood friend, William Swan, had become a 'moderate manse' – the Moderates being the party which remained in the established church when the Evangelicals formed the Free Church in 1843. However, this is likely to have simply been the house rented by the minister, Mr Russell.

Forsyth House was acquired as the manse of the established church in the later nineteenth century and remained in use until after the union with the United Free church in 1928. When the parish minister, Mr Moore, moved to Wick in 1934, Mr Fyfe became the first minister of the united congregation and the UF manse became the parish manse.

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[83] Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 104

84 NAS CH2/66/1, 9. (Minutes of the Presbytery of Chanonry).

[85] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', Journal of the *Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905), 115

[86] NAS CH2/66/4, 51 [1772] refers to the 'manse and offices lately built at a cost of "£294 13s'.

[87] NAS E326/2/45

[88] NAS CH2/66/6, 39

[89] NAS CH2/672/3, 248

The church building in the eighteenth century

Information on the church building in the first four decades of the eighteenth century remains scant. The volume of Kirk Session minutes for the years 1690 to 1737 was accidentally destroyed in a house fire in 1867.[90] From later records it is known that there was a 'division of the church' by the heritors in1702.[91] The heritors were responsible for the maintenance of the church, manse and parish school – and the floor space of the church was divided among them in proportion to the valuation of their estate and so also in proportion to their contribution to the upkeep of the building. A 'division of the church' was a re-allocation of the space within the building among the heritors, whose landholdings might have changed over the years. There had been a formal Valuation of the shire of Cromarty in 1698, which would have formed the basis of the division.

1702 is also the date of a painted panel, which displayed the armorial bearings of the principal heritor, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, and his wife Anne or Anna Campbell.[92] Sections of this survive, having been recovered from re-use as the back of seating in the east loft. [The internal stair to the east loft was, according to William Mackay Mackenzie, built in 1848 and the backs of the pews were probably altered at that time.[93]]

Set in the wall of the church, now within the Session house or vestry, is a memorial to Gilbert Anderson and his son, Hugh, who were both ministers of the parish. Hugh died in 1704 and the memorial probably dates from shortly afterwards.

In 1717, following a period of growth in the town, the Kirk Session agreed to the erection of a new loft at the west end of the church. This ran across the breadth of the church from the west side of the most westerly window. A roof light was to be created on the south side above the loft, two couples in breadth, leaving the middle couple in place as a support.[94] This west loft was repaired and apparently extended by William Forsyth in 1758.[95] The earlier front of the loft, with painted initials, survives behind the present first pew. The joist supporting the front of the loft is in line with the wester side of the window – as described in 1717 – although the loft projected beyond this.

Prior to the erection of the west loft there was both a scholars' loft and a common loft. When permission was granted to erect a new loft in 1717, the timber of 'the old common loft' was to be used but 'reserving' the timber of the school loft and the timber of Alexander McIver and John Reid.[96]

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[90] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Session papers, 15, 2. NAS CH2/622/4, 218 gives the explanation: the volume had been retained by Rev Robert Smith. When he died in 1824 his widow took it with his papers. It passed to her daughter in 1844, who took it to Canada, where it was later destroyed in a house fire in New Brunswick.

[91] CH2/66/1 Minutes of the Presbytery of Chanonry, 1747

[92] GD Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968

[93] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905)

[94] Craigston Archive, Bundle 181, Extract from Cromarty Kirk Session Minutes, 1717

[95] Highland Council Archive, Decreet of Division of the Church of Cromarty, 1758

[96] Craigston Archive, Bundle 181

The North or Poors' Aisle

In August 1738 there was a proposal to build a new loft on the north side of the church, opposite the pulpit. This was to run from the breast of 'the other loft in the west end of the church to George Urquhart's pew'. Urquhart's pew is probably the table seat to the east of the aisle (see 1758 Division below). It was agreed that the 'culms'[columns]of the seats that are to be under the loft be lowered in a line with the . . . wester loft' – suggesting something of the design of the pews.

At a meeting of the Session on 5th March 1739 it was 'found that the loft proposed to be built . . . will not be sufficient for accommodating all the inhabitants who want seats in the church . . . (and) that instead of the said loft an Isle or Jamb be built on that side of the church opposite the pulpit'.

Later minutes detail an agreement with Alexander Mitchell and Donald Robson, masons, to build the aisle 'twentie two foot broad and twentie eight foot in Length from the Inface of the wall of the church to the inface of the gavill of the said jamb and that with (lime?) above the fund [foundation], six hewen windows, two hewen doors skew and rigging stone the wall to be two feet and an half higher than the side wall of the church and to be two and an half feet thick.'

The aisle was largely financed from money (1000 merks Scots = £666 Scots = approx. £33 sterling] which had accumulated in the Poor Fund – and was consequently known as the Poors' Aisle. The Fund, through pew rents, received a return of £4 to £5 sterling a year on this investment of capital. Further money was raised from local donations. The contribution of the principal heritor, the laird Sir George Mackenzie, was to be the stones of 'the Old Kiln', which stood nearby on the site of the later brewery. All in all, the aisle cost just over £79 sterling.

As the work was managed directly by the Kirk Session, details are well recorded in the minutes:

> *16th July 1739.*
> *Bargain anent putting the roof on the jamb. Bargain with David Sandieson & John Keith wrights . . .*

For bridling the roof of the church above the jamb, being 9 couples, and putting pillars under the main bridle if need be	*25s*
For making and putting on roof on jamb for each of big couples	*14s*
For each of the four small couples	*6d*
For sarking, the session furnishing the nails to sarking, and iron bolts for the bridling	*15s*

The roof timbers are also detailed.

> *For trees for roof and joists.14 joists and one big tree for bridle of the roof of church, and for couples to the jamb, 26 trees at 22 ft in length, 14 trees at 18 ft, 4 trees at 20 ft by boat.*
>
> *23rd July 1739*
> *Session agreed with William McKintastle wright for flooring the loft of the jamb at 2s per dale and 14s for making the two doors of it.*
>
> *13th August 1739*
> *Bargain . . . with Alexr Gray in Kilbokie and David Podison in Brelangwol for winning sclates in the quarry for one jamb: each of the said 2 men, 2000 sclates to be delivered at shore of Kilbokie & Kinbeachy respectively @ 16 marks and 14 pennies Scots per thousand and altogether, bargain with Donald Munro, sclater for sclating the whole work.*
>
> *22nd October 1739*
> *John Keith, Wright & Glazier for making six windows to the jamb and weirs for the three upper windows.*
>
> *21st April 1740*
> *. . . ordered the alteration of the stairs of the jamb without and agreed to pay for the material.*
>
> *15th September 1740*
> *Complaint that the door of the Loft of the Jamb standing open as people come in make it cold . . . ordered that an iron sneck be made to it that may be lifted without and the door drawen close as people come in.*
>
> *20th October 1740*
> *Pews in the Loft of the Jamb must be raised proportionately as they go back . . . (and) that the frame of a stair in the passage in the middle of the Loft be erected.*

A later entry makes it clear that both entrances and the forestair were on the side, rather than the gable, of the aisle. The rybats of the northmost window on the east side show that it was originally the lower door. The details above show that of the original 'six hewen windows', three were 'upper windows'. In 1771 the Session paid for a further sash window for the aisle.[97]

In 1779 Thomas Keith, wright, submitted an account for 'joist and pillars' in the aisle.[98] There were six supporting pillars, three on the west side of the aisle passage way and three against the east wall. These can be seen in Hay's photographs (1968).[99] Only the lower sections of the pillars on the east wall remain. Hay also mentions blocked fireplaces at each end of the front pew in the North loft.

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[97] NAS CH2/672/2, 219
[98] NAS CH2/672/2, 2nd March 1779, account from Thomas Keith, wright
[99] Reproduced in James Lawrie, *Cromarty East Church* (Cromarty, 1981)

Seating in the North Aisle

By 1744, on the ground floor of the aisle, spaces had been allocated for twelve pairs of pews. A pew could be bought upright but it was more common to opt to pay an annual feu or rent. The most expensive annual rent, at the front, was £1-13s-8d, reducing to 12s in row 10.[100] After the Aisle was completed in late 1739 there had been complaints that some of those allocated space for pews had not completed them – thus delaying work for those behind them.[101]

In the loft there were three table seats 'in the breast' with a half pew behind, on the west side. By 1758, on the west side, there were a further eight pews behind the half pew. On the east side there was a table seat on the north side of the upper door, then a single pew, then a double pew space which had been converted to a table seat, followed by two single pews.

In 1774 there were, in addition, four pews 'next the gable' which belonged to the session – presumably two on each side of the passage way – which were occupied by people who paid nothing. These were subsequently rented to a William Millar who then sub-let them.[102] When internal wooden stairs were erected in 1797, the eighth pew on the west side – and presumably the pews behind which Millar had rented – were removed.[103] The seventh pew was either removed at the same time or at a later date.[104] The erection of the stairs also required the removal of three pews below – numbers ten, eleven and twelve on the west side.[105]

There are now consecutive numbers on the backs of pews in the loft, with the exception of the 'painted pew' where the numbering is on the front. This numbering runs in sequence front-to-back on the east side, from the 'painted pew' [No 22] to the rear pew [No 28]; and then back-to-front on the west side from the rear pew [No 29] to the 'half pew' [No 35]. This numbering system allows for, and so must post-date, the removal of pews on the west side to create the internal stair to the loft (1799).

There were significant problems with arrears on seat rents and a number reverted to the kirk session who rented individual places. The descriptions of these pews are in a standard form, as, for example, 'this seat holds six @ 1s 6d the Bottom' – revealing that 'bums on seats' had its eighteenth-century equivalent.

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[100] NAS CH2/672/5
[101] NAS CH2/672/2, 19
[102] NAS CH2/672/2, 225
[103] NAS CH2/672/5, 137. The eight pew, rented to William Mouat, butcher, is described as 'condemned by the stairs'.
[104] This pew had been bought outright in 1798 by Murdoch Ross and therefore does not appear in the seat rent book after that date. NAS CH2/672/5, 129.
[105] NAS CH2/672/5, 107 & 121.

Schematic representation of pews and table seats in North loft (not to scale)

Later pews?		*Later pew – date?* – 'No 28'
		Later pew – date? – 'No 27
[Eighth pew from westmost table seat – first rented 1758 – removed 1797]		
[Seventh pew from westmost table seat– first rented 1755 – now removed]		Fifth pew – first rented 1758 – 'No 26'
Sixth pew from westmost table seat – first rented 1755 – 'No 29'		Fourth pew– first rented 1756 – 'No 25
Fifth pew from westmost table seat– first rented 1741 – 'No 30'		Table seat formed from second and third pews from table seat on north side of door – first rented 1755 – 'No 24'
Fourth pew from westmost table seat– first rented 1741		Pew next to table seat on north side of door – first rented 1741– 'No 23'
Third pew from westmost table seat – first rented 1741– 'No 32'		Table seat on north side of the door: Hugh M^{c}Culloch & Kenneth M^{c}Farquhar – – first rented 1741 – marked 'No 22' on front
Second pew from westmost table seat– first rented 1741 – 'No 33'		
First pew from westmost table seat – first rented 1741 – 'No 34'		
Half pew– first rented 1755 – 'No 35'		*Door*
Table seat: Thomas Harper, Alex^{r} Ross & William Galdie – first rented 1741	Table seat: Gordon of Ardoch & Robert Gordon – first rented 1741	Table seat: Alex^{r} Allan, Alex^{r} Mitchell & Donald Robson – first rented 1741
Body of the Kirk		

Initials and dates on the breast of the North loft

The three table seats 'in the breast of the loft' were rented by the following individuals:

The westmost table seat:
Thomas Harper – elder - shoemaker
Alexr Ross - merchant
William Galdie – vintner and innkeeper

The middle table seat:
Gordon of Ardoch
Robert Gordon (of Haughs) – elder from 1745 – son of the former parish minister George Gordon

The eastmost table seat:
Alexr Allan – elder from 1761 – merchant
Alexr Mithchell – elder - mason
Donald Robson – elder – mason

The loft now bears the initials 'TH' and 'AMCC' above the date '1741'; 'WE' and 'IMCG' above the date '1788'; and 'RR' and 'IMAY'. At the time of Hay's report in 1968, underlying letters could be traced – 'WE' had a 'G' behind the 'E'; 'AG' was behind 'IMCG'; 'EW' was in the space beneath; and '41' underlay '88' in the date. Subsequent works appear to have hidden or removed the underlying letters.

The following identifications are probable:

TH = Thomas Harper
AMCC = Ann MCCulloch, Thomas Harper's wife[106]
1741

WG = William Galdie
AG = Ann Gordon, first wife of William Galdie[107]
EW = Elizabeth Watson, second wife of William Galdie[108]
1741

WE = William Elder (bought the seat from Galdie's son in 1787[109]]
IMCG = Jean MCGlashan, William Elder's wife[110]
1788

RR = Robert Ross, who held Alexr Ross's seat from 1752[111]
IMAY = not known

[106] Index to Particular Register of Sasines, Volume III, 1721–1780
[107] Index to Particular Register of Sasines, Volume III, 1721–1780
[108] Index to Particular Register of Sasines, Volume III, 1721–1780
[109] NAS CH2/672/5
[110] Register of Sasines 3.015, 23 May 1789
[111] NAS CH2/672/5

The old front of the west loft, now hidden behind the front pew, also has the remnant of two pairs of initials, although only the lower initials of each pair are entire – 'AU' and 'MR'.

The custom of placing initials on the lofts is thus seen to be similar to the initials of husband and wife found carved above fireplaces and doorways in houses in the town.

The painted and decorated table seat

The painted and decorated table seat in the loft of the North Aisle is described in detail by Hay, who identifies the Mackenzie arms among the decoration.[112] He suggests that this was probably the laird's seat from the time when the Mackenzies were in possession of the Cromarty estate [from *c*1784], going out of their family's use when Sir George Mackenzie sold out to Captain John Urquhart in 1741. Mackenzie, although he remained in Cromarty, sold off many of his possessions.[113]

From the completion of the North Aisle, the seat was rented by Hugh McCulloch in Udale and Kenneth McFarquhar. The entrance to the pew was originally by a door on the south side of the pew, now blocked by a half pew. The front of the pew has the initials 'H MC' and 'K MK' and the date '1740'. The initial 'MMC' is surely Hugh McCulloch – but 'K MK' remains unidentified. Hugh McCulloch – 'tacksman and doer for Mr Hugh Anderson' of Udale[114] - was married to Janet Young, whose name does not match the initials. The other pew holder, Kenneth McFarquhar, vintner in Cromarty, was married to Margaret McCulloch of Kirkmichael parish.[115]

Improvements of 1756/57

There was a visitation of the church by the presbytery in 1747, with estimates made of work required.[116] However, substantial repairs were not carried out until 1756, because the principal heritor, Captain John Urquhart, was in protracted dispute with the congregation over the right of patronage and affairs in the church were unsettled between the death of Rev George Gordon in 1749 and the induction of Rev James Munro in 1755.

In March 1756, Urquhart authorised his factor, John Gorry, to use materials stored at Cromarty castle – 'any Gottenburg plank of spey trees, or chest of glass in the vault called the charter room'. In June, Gorry reported that 'slates, lime and hewn stone' were laid down in the churchyard and that he had sent to Garmouth (on the River Spey) for 'trees'. As work began, Gorry commented that 'the roof was very insufficient' and he also urged Urquhart to take account of the fact that 'a loft is highly necessary for accommodating your people'.

The roof was renewed and its level was raised by some four feet. Almost forty years later, Rev Robert Smith reported that the new roof of 1756 replaced a

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[112] GD Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968

[113] NAS GD23/6/148, Letters from Sir George Mackenzie to Gilbert Gordon, Inverness. 5th Feb 1742 refers to his intention to roup the furniture from Cromarty castle.

[114] Craigston Archive, Bundle 185

[115] OPR Parish of Cromarty

[116] NAS CH2/66/4

roof of oak 'said to have been cut down from the Hill of Cromarty, upwards of 140 years before'.[117] It is possible that the present gable windows, in both lofts, were created at this time, and the older, lower windows closed off. These were a narrow splayed window in the west gable and a round headed opening in the east gable. The new window in the west gable re-uses an older lintel with a chamfer.

Hay, on the basis of the slightly rounded edges to the rybats (some detail of which has since been lost), dates to the work of 1756/57 the high gable windows, the blocked doors at either end of the south wall, the adjacent windows on the south wall and the two high level windows on the south wall.[118]

A new loft was created at the east end, as Gorry had urged.[119] The timbers of the east loft suggest a later extension forwards into the body of the church. The aisle roof was also re-slated in 1756 with Easdale slate, the Black Isle slate used in 1739 having proved porous, leading to a rotting of the couples and sarking.[120] There were other minor works at this time, including a locked box for the bell rope.[121]

Bishop Pococke, after his visit in 1760, noted that 'where the present church is they found lately on pulling down a wall an old font and some stones of the old church'.[122] This could be a discovery made when the north wall of the church was breached in building the north aisle, twenty years before, or perhaps the result of the 1756 improvements.

The 'Division of the church', 1758[123]

The division of 1758, following significant repairs to the building, allocated the existing pews and table seats. It did not include seating in the recently built north aisle. At the same time, the west or common loft was repaired and extended by Cromarty's leading merchant, William Forsyth. It was agreed that Forsyth, in return for carrying out the repairs, would have the front pew free of charge and the rest would be sold to 'small feuars and others'. This work is described as taking down the old loft and erecting a new one, suggesting that little would have remained of the former common and scholars lofts. Those who rented pews in the loft were to retain their rights for as long as the loft lasted or until the church required a new roof, whichever was the shorter period.[124]

There were forty-two pews and five table seats allocated in the low area of the church, and the description makes it clear that there was also a minister's table seat or 'desk'. Table seats were thirty-eight square feet in area.

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[117] OSA, Account of the Parish of Cromarty, 1793
[118] GD Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968
[119] Craigston Archive, Bundles 86, 156, 163, 181
[120] NAS CH2/ 672/2, 6th September 1756.
[121] NAS CH2/672/2, 103
[122] Richard Pockocke, *Tours in Scotland 1747, 1750, 1760*, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1887)
[123] Highland Council Archive, Decreet of Division of the Church of Cromarty, 1758
[124] Highland Council Archive, Decreet of Division of the Church of Cromarty, 1758

The table seats were situated as follows (schematic and not to scale):

'East low door'	Table seat no 2: Clunes of Neilston	Table seat no 3: John Davidson of Drumhall	Pulpit and minister's desk	Table seat no 4: Anderson of Udall		[Wester door]
	Table seat: Urquhart of Greenhill				Table seat no 5: William Davidson, Sheriff Clerk	
		North Aisle				

The 'east low door' and the corresponding 'west low door' are now windows. The doors whose dressed rybats are visible on the outside of the buildings were the doors [presumably 'high doors'] giving access to the lofts and Hay dates these to the work of 1756/57 (see above).

Appendix 2 shows a layout of the pews and table seats in the body of the kirk which is consonant with the descriptions in the Decreet of Division of 1758. This can be regarded as accurate with the exception of the position of pews 23 and 24.

In 1759 the laird's agent paid James Innes for executing a sheriff's interdict prohibiting people from strolling round the castle, kirk and storehouse and breaking windows.[125] This suggests continuing antagonism to the laird's power, embodied in his control of the church building and, perhaps especially, in his new loft.

George Ross of Cromarty

George Ross owned the Cromarty estate from 1767 until his death in 1786, and was the principal heritor of the church. He commissioned plans for a new parish church from John Adam.[126] However, these were not used and instead the Gaelic Chapel was built in 1783. Thereafter the parish church was commonly known as the 'English Church', to distinguish it from the Gaelic, Erse or Irish church.[127]

In 1773 Ross and his business partner in London, Henry Davidson (a son of the Cromarty sheriff clerk), offered to take over responsibility for and management of the North aisle, guaranteeing a 5% return on the poor fund

[125] Craigston Archive, Bundle 138

[126] Soane Museum, Adam papers

[127] The Communicants Roll Book for the period formally identifies the church as the English Church and for a short time after the Disruption of 1843 the Free Church congregation referred to themselves as the Free English Church. Communicants Roll 1837-1865, deposited in Highland Council Archive.

invested in the aisle.[128] Although the Kirk Session were in favour, negotiations seem to have fallen through.

In 1778 Hugh Rose, as factor for Ross, submitted a paper to the Session[129] making the following points:

- The table seat [no 5 above], formerly belonging to Henry Davidson of Tulloch [son of William Davidson, Sheriff Clerk], on the north side opposite the wester door, was now possessed by George Ross but was used by the minister, without Ross's consent
- The minister's seat around the pulpit was now used by the elders in gathering collections
- George Ross would retain the table seat but granted the minister, Mr Munro, personal use of it
- The Ross family, during Mr Munro's incumbency would have use of the pew around the pulpit
- George Ross would fill the seats belonging to him which were not occupied by his own tenants and the rents would be used for '[undeciphered[130]] the Kirk
- Ross requested a copy of the allocation of seats in the Poors' Aisle

At some point, from the evidence of the timber work, the east loft was extended forwards towards the pulpit. The date of this is unknown but it is likely to date either from the time of George Ross or from the ownership of Hugh Rose Ross and his wife, Catherine Munro, that is the 1840s. In 1844 the heritors noted that they had 'fitted up the body of the church and galleries on the right and left of the pulpit at their own expense'.[131] This may suggest that either the westward extension of the 'laird's loft', or some significant improvement to it, dates from this period, rather than from George Ross's time. Examination of the fabric may determine this.

The painted panel in the loft is a funeral hatchment. Hatchments such as these were displayed at a funeral, accompanying the coffin to the cemetery, and were often placed afterwards in the church. The arms are those of one of the Rosses of Cromarty. Hay, on the basis of information from Lyon Clerk, identifies it as the hatchment of George Ross of Cromarty.[132] Ross, however, was buried in Richmond, Surrey.

Improvements of 1798/99

In 1797 the Presbytery minutes record a decision to carry out work on the church including building a new 'bell house', harling and plastering, making new doors, enlarging the windows beside the pulpit and placing flagstones on the passage ways.[133] These flagstones usefully map out the extent of the pewed area at this date. The new belfry is incised, on its north side, with the date 1799.

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[128] NAS CH2/672/2, 219
[129] NAS CH2/672/2, 7th September 1778
[130] My best attempt at the word is: C?om(u?)(i?)ling
[131] NAS CH2/622/3, 248
[132] Geoffrey D Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968
[133] NAS CH2/66/4

The Kirk Session minutes indicate that the roof over the aisle was also renewed and its walls were raised to the level of the body of the church. The aisle was 'to be sealed with Lath and Plaister, and the side walls to be plaistered within and harled without – the present outside stone stairs leading to the Loft is to be condemned and a wooden stair to be erected within in place of it – the area to be laid with Flag Stones, and the Entrances to be altered from the side to the Gable of the House.'[134] Hay believed that the roof over the whole church was probably renewed at the same time, because it appeared to be of uniform construction.[135]

It is possible that the three porches date from this period. They are clearly shown on David Douglas's estate map of 1823.[136] William Mackay Mackenzie states that in 1848 the external stone stairs on the south wall, which gave access to the lofts, were removed, internal stairs created and porches added at the east and west end.[137] Mackenzie had the benefit of local knowledge but it is clear from the description of the construction of the proposed Session House (1836) that the east porch was already in place.

Communion tables, vessels and tokens

In 1755 there was a 'table and forms' for communion, a baptism basin but 'no cups',[138] which were borrowed from other parishes each year.[139] There seem to have been especially large communions at the church from the early 1790s – in 1794, for example, two constables were employed at a cost of 5s each to 'watch the kirk doors during divine service at the time of communion'.[140] This may explain why new tokens, issued to those entitled to receive communion, were made in 1797.[141]

In 1802 the Session bought 'four handsome silver communion cups' at a cost of £10 each. These were to be kept at the manse and on no account lent out to neighbouring parishes.[142] After the Disruption of 1843, the minister, Alexander Stewart, who had joined the Free Church, handed over to the Kirk Session these four cups, along with two metal 'bread plates', a communion table cloth and a box with 1000 new communion tokens and some old ones.[143] The 'new tokens' would have been those made in 1833 and the 'old tokens' those of 1797.[144] In 1852 a 'silver plated wine flagon of German silver' was added to the communion plate.[145] These 'sacramental vessels' – two plates, four cups and the flagon – were noted in an inventory of 1890.[146]

The communion table and forms were set up for the annual communion in the central area of the church.

[134] NAS CH2/672/2, 10th July 1798
[135] Geoffrey D Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968
[136] Cromarty House archive, *Plan of the estate of Cromarty as surveyed by David Douglas*, 1823
[137] William Mackay Mackenzie, 'Cromarty: its old chapels and parish church', *Journal of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* (Edinburgh, 1905), 110
[138] NAS CH2/672/2, 95
[139] For example, NAS CH2/672/2, 351 shows 18d was spent on sending for communion cups.
[140] NAS CH2/672/2, 299
[141] NAS CH2/672/2/, 323
[142] NAS CH2/672/2, 355
[143] NAS CH2/672/3
[144] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 15.8
[145] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 9.74
[146] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 6.35

Other objects associated with the church

In 1757 sixty 'paupers badges' were purchased in an attempt to regulate begging but the poor were unwilling to take them.[147] None of these are known to have survived.

In 1794 a local wright, Thomas Keith, made 'new boxes for lifting the offering',[148] which may be the collecting 'ladles' which remain intact. Three collection plate stands were purchased in 1910 (see below).[149] The three offertory stools which have survived have, however, been usually regarded as earlier, possibly eighteenth-century, pieces.

The Reform Act of 1832 gave Cromarty a Town Council and shortly after it was established in 1833 the Kirk Session sold them their hand bell, which was used both at funerals and for declarations in the town.[150] This may be the same hand bell used by the Town Council until 1976 and now in the possession of Cromarty Courthouse Museum.

In 1847 the Kirk Session bought six chairs, two forms and a large table from James Young, a Cromarty merchant.[151] These may be the six comb-back chairs referred to by Hay, of which [number] remain. There are two forms in the church but these are of quite different design from each other.

The movables in the Gaelic Chapel were taken over for safe custody when the congregation was dissolved in 1919, but these were not specified.[152]

The church building in the nineteenth century

Session House and other works

In 1836 the heritors agreed to build a Session House for the church. The 'most eligible situation . . . was that Tomb immediately behind the Porch of the principal entrance to the Church'. This had belonged to the late Mr Anderson of Udale and the minister has obtained the agreement of the new owner of Udale, Captain Sutherland, who stipulated that the stone commemorating Hugh and Gilbert Anderson should not be covered up and that the grandchildren of Dr Anderson, should they wish, would have the right of burial. As a result the 'architects brief' included constructing the floor so that it might be 'raised for a grave'. Other features were to include a fire or stove, a wood lined press [cupboard] and a 'good sized window'.[153]

In 1846 'an Elliptic fire grate, Fire irons, fender and cinder shovel' were bought from a local ironmonger and a tradesman paid to build a grate and lay the hearth stone in the Session house. A large table and two forms [benches] were also made for it. [154]

In 1844 a meeting of the heritors noted that the 'seating was in very ruinous condition', a great number of slates on the roof were missing, and both the belfry and churchyard dyke required repair. As already noted above, they

[147] NAS CH2/672/2
[148] NAS CH2/672/2, 295
[149] NAS CH2/622/4, 248
[150] NAS CH2/672/3, 213
[151] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 9.61, 63 & 66.
[152] NAS CH2/672/4, 294
[153] NAS CH2/622/3, 243
[154] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers

also pointed out that they had already 'fitted up the body of the church and galleries on the right and left of the pulpit at their own expense'.[155] A number of minor works were also carried out between 1845 and 1848, including repairs to the sarking of the belfry and repairs to the ceiling.[156]

It is noteworthy that so many improvements should follow so soon after the Disruption, when the congregation had been depleted. It may have been out of resentment that in 1849 the church was broken into and some minor damage done about the pulpit.[157]

In 1851, during Mr Russell's ministry (1846–76) a mason was employed to take down the 'gabel tops' and fill two windows.[158]

The kirkyard

Other than its obvious use as a burial ground, the kirkyard acted as an overflow for the church. Communion was celebrated only once a year, with services in both English and Gaelic – the Gaelic service being outside. This practice continued until at least the 1840s.[159] In 1770 there was a payment for the erection of a tent for communion – that is, a wooden preaching booth.[160] For a time, in the 1790s, a constable was employed 'for the churchyard' during the summer and harvest, which included the communion season.[161]

There was some extension – or at least consolidation of ownership - of the churchyard in the mid-nineteenth century. An undated note, probably of the 1840s, queries 'if the Kirk Session repaid Banker Ross £4 paid by him to Andrew Ross Painter and Ann Hood his wife 2nd May 18(?)8 for property at Church Yard sold by them to the Church Session.'[162] This was property at the east end of the church yard.

In 1860 there was a complaint that a cow was being allowed to graze in the churchyard.[163] This may have been seen as a practical means of keeping the grass in order. In the early twentieth century the grass was sometimes not cut and when the Town Council took over responsibility for the burial ground, following the Act of 1925, the agreement was that the grass would be cut three times a year.[164]

The grass bank above the churchyard was part of the glebe. In 1920 the minister, Mr Moore, allowed it to be used as potato allotments but was reprimanded by the heritors who insisted that it be returned the grass.[165]

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[155] NAS CH2/622/3, 248
[156] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers
[157] *Inverness Courier*, 19 July 1849
[158] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 14.24
[159] *Inverness Courier*, 5 July 1849
[160] NAS CH2/672/2, 205
[161] For example, NAS CH2/672/2, 299 (1793 communion), 323 (1797 communion)
[162] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 14.14. From the Register of Sasines it can be seen that Andrew Ross disposed of a number of properties in the 1830s, suggesting that 1838 is a likely date.
[163] *Inverness Advertiser*, 15 June 1860
[164] NAS CH2/672/4
[165] NAS HR704/2

Mr Scott's improvements

Rev Walter Scott was inducted in 1876 and promoted a number of changes. A new bell, dated 1876, was installed, made by John C Wilson & Co, Glasgow. In 1885 an 'American organ' was purchased – with only one dissenting voice among the congregation – but there were problems with it by 1894. By 1896 there were book rests and hassocks for the choir, whose seats were also repaired in an area set aside for them, near the pulpit. [166]

In 1893 there was some cleaning and redecorating of the interior. This consisted of washing and distempering ceilings and walls, washing and painting staircases and washing seats. The West gallery was painted, grained and varnished; the 'centre gallery' varnished and stained; and the east gallery and three pillars painted, stained and varnished. The pulpit was washed and varnished; three outside doors washed and varnished; and the 'inside Cromarty House seats, Arch etc.' painted with two coats. Finally the window blinds were washed.[167] The congregation met in the Victoria Hall while the work was being carried out.[168]

In 1897 Mr Scott prepared plans for a 'new pulpit, platform and lining', 'heating apparatus' and a church hall. Over the course of the next five years much of this was achieved. The pulpit, in oak, was designed by John Robertson on the model of the pulpit in King's College, Aberdeen. It was a memorial to John Scott, farmer, Newton who was commemorated by a brass plaque on the pulpit. The minister pointed out that the old pulpit was not the original oak pulpit of the parish church.[169]

Probably at about the same time, Mrs Scott offered to donate a chair and communion table but 'only if a new table, to replace the old fashioned long table, is desirable'.[170] This long communion table or pew probably ran in front of the pulpit on the wooden bases still visible between the flagstones. It presumably remained until a new communion table was installed in 1921 (see below).

The new heating system discussed in 1897, but not apparently installed, was a proposal for a stove with smoke pipe going up through centre of church, as a replacement for an existing 'hot water pipe system'.[171] As there was no water supply to the church this seems odd. The only reference to the earlier system is an account of 29th Nov 1851, from Robert Johnston, for making '2 Knees for the stove funnell, cleaning the funnell and the water roan around the church'.[172]

It was recognised that there was a need to improve seating in the church, in part because Cromarty was 'becoming each year more of a summer resort and the proposed railway will bring a large influx of summer visitors'. One estimate for £130 included 'renewing entire woodwork of seating of the area

[166] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 16
[167] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 16
[168] *Invergordon Times*, 5 Apr 1893
[169] NAS CH2/622/4, 218
[170] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 3.52 (no date)
[171] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 16
[172] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 9.73

of the church, galleries not included'. Mr Scott thought this would be too sweeping and change the quaint character of the old church, and so suggested having the narrow seats under the three galleries enlarged, 'without spoiling much of the charm of the old church'. In August 1899, the laird, Col Ross, whose permission was required, wrote from Muree, India, on the improvements and the 'pulpit question'. He observed that 'the Cromarty Church holds my earliest recollections' and that he 'would like to see it once more as it always stood' and so requested a delay in the works if possible.[173] The work was carried out after Ross's return in 1901, at a cost of £115 11s 5d (excluding the pulpit).[174]

The church building in the twentieth century

In 1908 an estimate was received from John Grundy, Engineer, London for a 'warm air heating apparatus' to be sited in the body of the church, by the north wall to the east of the North aisle. In 1930, an estimate was received from Mr McClary of Simons, Hunter & Co, Edinburgh for a similar system, to be located on at the opposite side of the aisle.[175] The stove which was installed [do not yet know date] was, in fact, as proposed in 1897, sited between the central passage of the aisle and the pulpit. This was removed in 1951/2 and an electric heating system installed.[176]

In 1905 a new organ was purchased from R&W Pentland, Edinburgh.[177]Other additions to the furnishings included three collecting plate stands in 1910,[178] a communion plate chest, for security, in 1917,[179] and the oak communion table, as a war memorial, in 1921. Placing the communion table required a small alteration to the existing platform[180] – this appears to be the semi-circular front section.

In 1920 the church was inspected by an architect on behalf of the heritors and minor works were proposed – including replacing fifty square yards of harling and twelve square yards of plaster, and renewing the 'bridles and facings' of the hatch in the east porch.[181]

The Church of Scotland (Properties and Endowments) Act of 1925 relieved heritors of their responsibilities and transferred church building to the ownership of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland and burial grounds to the ownership of the local authority. There were negotiations with the heritors as to the expenditure needed on repairs sufficient to bring the church up to a proper standard before it was handed over. The work, at a final agreed cost of £226, was completed by 1930,[182] and is detailed in appendix 3.

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[173] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 16
[174] NAS CH2/622/4, 406
[175] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 3
[176] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 6. 28
[177] NAS CH2/622/4, 228
[178] NAS CH2/622/4, 248
[179] NAS CH2/622/4, 289
[180] NAS CH2/622/4, 308
[181] NAS HR704/3, Report by D Matheson, Architect, Dingwall. 1920
[182] NAS HR704/1-4, Heritors Records for the Parish of Cromarty.

It is worth noting that in 1927 there were thirty-eight modern pews, seven chairs and two forms and a table in the vestry.[183] All the pews were subsequently numbered, in 1939.[184]

There was no water supply in the building in 1927 but, in the following year, the Session sought an estimate to have a WC installed.[185]

The centrally located heating stove, with the pipe going up through the ceiling, was cracked back and front and burned through at the side. The lighting in 1927 was 'by oil lamps mostly suspended from the ceiling, some on brackets, and several ordinary tin domestic oil lamps with reflectors hung against the walls'.[186] In 1931 the minister bought a second hand petrol gas lighting plant from the Royal Hotel. This was installed in the church hall, after which permission was sought from the Town Council to run a gas pipe through the graveyard for lighting in the church.[187]

In 1938 the church was a focus for the Urquhart Celebrations, during which the recently formed Saltire Society unveiled a carved stone in the church commemorating the life and work of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty.[188] A small replica of the Kinbeachie stone, carved for Sir Thomas in 1652, was placed in the east porch. The original stone, now referred to as the Cromarty stone, is on display in the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Geoffrey Hay reported in 1968 information from an elder, Mr Chapman, that the church had been harled in 1946.[189] Further repairs were carried out in the early 1950s by Alexander Ross, architect, Inverness, with financial support from the Baird Trust.[190] This included the installation of an electric heating system.[191]

Further work was carried out between Hay's 1968 report and the supposed 400th anniversary of the building of the church in 1980. A further three offertory pedestals and a board listing the ministers of the church were gifted in 1981.[192]

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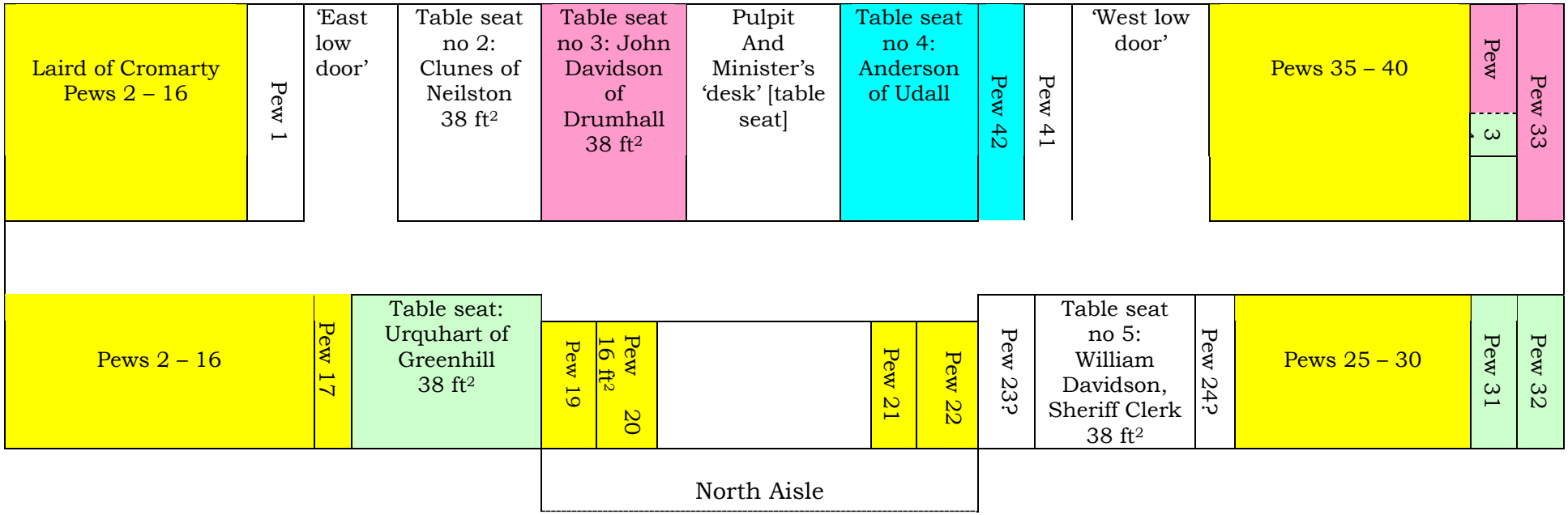
[183] NAS HR704/3, Report by D Matheson, Architect, Dingwall. Feb 1927.
[184] NAS CH2/672/4, 356
[185] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 3.25.
[186] NAS HR704/3, Report by D Matheson, Architect, Dingwall. Feb 1927.
[187] NAS CH2/622/4, 366-8, 374-6
[188] *The Urquhart Celebrations* (Dingwall, 1938)
[189] Geoffrey D Hay, NMRS Technical Report, Feb/Mar 1968
[190] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 6.4 & 7
[191] Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Kirk Session papers, 6, 28
[192] James Lawrie, *Cromarty East Church* (Cromarty, 1981)

Appendix 1: 1758 Arrangement of tables seats and pews (schematic and not to scale)

Below is a possible arrangement of pews and table seats based on the information from the Division of the Church, 1758. Laird's holding marked in yellow



Based on the following descriptions:

Pew 1:	south side, beside the south-east door
Pews 2 – 17:	at east end on both sides
Pews 18 – 22:	north fronting the pulpit and adjacent lower area of the aisle
Pew 23:	on north to east William Davidson's seat [but TS 5 'betwixt pews 22 and 24]
Pew 24:	adjacent *Mr Anderson's* seat [but TS 5 'betwixt pews 22 and 24, so perhaps should read *Mr Davidson's* seat]
Pews 25 – 30:	north side below west gallery
Pews 31 – 32:	west end on north side
Pews 33 – 34:	south-west corner of the church
Pews 35 – 40:	west end at south and by the west low door
Pew 41:	on east side of wester low door
Pew 42:	contiguous to Table seat 4 at the west

There are some unresolved problems in locating pews 23 and 24, and Table seat 5, in a way consonant with all descriptions.

Appendix 2: Objects in or associated with Cromarty Parish Church				
Object	**Origin**	**History**	**Current location (if known)**	**Notes**
Vestry table	Purchased from James Young. Merchant, Cromarty in 1847		Not known	
6 old tables in 'table seats'			In table seats	
3 other tables in 'table seats'			In table seats	
2 other small tables			Vestry and porch	
6 short pews with metal supports	Presumed to be from the former church hall		Various positions in church	
6 comb-back chairs	Possibly the six chairs purchased from James Young. Merchant, Cromarty in 1847	6 wood chairs listed 1908, 6 comb-backed 1927	SRCT	
1 replica comb-back chair			Vestry	Loan from Cromarty Courthouse Museum
1 arm chair	Not known	Listed in 1908, chair 1927	West church	
12 wicker chairs	Not known	Listed 1908	4 in West loft	
1 wooden chair with heart-shaped pattern			West loft	
Kist with army issue bibles			West church hall gallery	
2 forms	Purchased from James Young. Merchant, Cromarty in 1847	1 form only listed 1908		1 form in north porch; 1 in west loft
Photographs of portraits of Rev James Munro and his wife	Not known	In vestry in 1970s	Not known	Location of original portraits not known
Framed photograph of Rev Gordon Moore	Not known		Vestry	

Three collection plate stands	Gifted 1981 in memory of Col Ross			Commemorated by brass plaque in east porch
Photograph of Rev George Russell	Not known	Listed by Lawrie, 1981	Not known	Possibly a misidentification of photograph of Mr Moore which is not listed by Lawrie?
3 collection plate stands	Purchased 1910			Not known unless identified with three offertory stools
3 offertory stools	Not known (unless identified with above]		SRCT	Not listed 1908
Collection ladles (number?)	Possible made by Thomas Keith, 1794		SRCT	
Handbell	Not known	Sold to Town Council, 1830s		Cromarty Courthouse Museum if identified with bell in use by Town Council until 1976
Communion tokens (lead)	1797		Collection deposited with Cromarty Courthouse Museum	
Communion tokens (pewter)	Dated 1833.		Collection deposited with Cromarty Courthouse Museum	
Genealogical chart of the family of Urquhart	Gifted by Charles Urquhart, Hull		West porch	
Two boards listing lifeboat rescues			West porch	Deposited by Clem Watson 1989
Verses in praise of Cromarty lifeboat crew			West porch	
Grave slab	Origin probably 14th century	Discovered near pulpit *c*1980	West porch	
Memorial to William Forsyth	Forsyth enclosed tomb in kirkyard	Replaced in 1888. Moved to church vestry.	West porch	

Small replica of Urquhart stone	Gifted 1938 as part of the 'Urquhart Celebrations'		East porch	
Four silver communion cups	Purchased 1802			
Silver plated wine flagon	Purchased 1852			
Two metal bread plates	Not known	Recorded 1843, 1890		
Communion table cloth		Listed 1908		

Appendix 3: Work carried out at the expense of the heritors 1928

	Works carried out	*Original proposal in architects report 1927*
	Mason work	
1	Re-hang double iron gates in boundary wall	
2	Fill in crack in wall of Vestry with liquid cement	
3	Renew two cracked 'scuntions' on one side of window on south elevation	
4	Dowell two cracked lintels in windows in east and west galleries	Original proposal was to replace lintels
5	Dowel cracked lintel on opening of belfry and point belfry	Original proposal was to replace lintel
6	Renew with cement door sole of north porch	
7	Point door and window dressings with cement	
8	Cut ivy on north wall clear of the rhones	
9	Renew defective harling on the south wall and all round walls at ground level	
10		Original proposal to whitewash all external walls
11	Renew broken parts of heating stove	
12	Provide new damper to Vestry grate	
	Carpenter work	
1	Renew three windows in north wing	
2	Renew one case sill	Original proposal to renew six
3	Overhaul other windows	
4	Fit bevelled skirting plates on north and west doors	Original proposal to renew doors
5		Renew decayed joists in galleries
6	Re-flooring on top of the old flooring at the front of north galleries, cutting the doors of the pews to fit this and renewing six pew doors.	
7		Overhaul all gallery fronts
8	Miscellaneous minor repairs to pews	Renew pews in galleries where rotten
9	Repairs to flooring in the central area of the church	
10	Replace rotten roof timbers and sarking	
	Slater work	
1	Reslate roof of west porch	
2	Overhaul remainder of slated roofs	
3		Overhaul stone ridging and skews
	Plumber work	
1	Overhaul rhones and downpipes	

2	Overhaul lead work on roofs	
	Plaster work	
1	Repair broken plaster	
	Painter and glazier work	
1	Replace 17 panes of broken clear glass sheet	
2	Overhaul all puttying of glazing	
3	Scrape down, clean and distemper all walls and ceilings – done with two coats 'Walpamur'	
4		Paint all woodwork except new pews
5	Paint inside of windows with two coats oil paint	
6	Paint external woodwork with two coats oil paint	
7	Paint rhones and down pipes with two coats oil paint	

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