

Cromarty East Church Newsletter



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Edited by Caroline Vawdrey

Work to tackle damp continues

Lime mortar, plaster, lime wash and guttering: all of them ingredients to reduce the damp in the church, and all have been in use over the last few months.

Benny and George (pic 1 - George is hiding) have given the lower edges of the roof ridge a lime mortar fillet to seal them against the slates. Lime mortar has also been applied along the edge of the skewes (also just visible in pic 1). Inside the church Andrew (pic 2) lined the very damp vestry and the cills of the two large south facing windows with Newton Tanking (the background pic) to proof against damp and then plastered over it.

The four coats of limewash have been completed (pics 3 & 4), with a final couple of coats to be applied in late summer 2010. The colour chosen was the natural Singleton Birch, also used to harl the building.

The new cast iron guttering (pic 5) is larger than the old, better able to cope with heavy downfalls of both rain and leaves.



Church going Collies



Molly Morison's story is well known amongst Cromarty folk - for she was one of the first on the scene at the rescue of Pilot Flying Officer Duncan Whitely Balden, whose plane had crashed into the sea below her home at Navity in 1938. Molly and Duncan must have had an instant rapport as they were married in the East Church later that year.

Molly's daughter Jill was also married in the church in the 1960s, and so it was with pleasure that David Alston showed Jill and her daughter around the church and learnt more about their associations with the building.

And this is where the collies come in. There is a wooden rail across the window to the rear of the west loft; it may have had an earlier purpose, but in Jill's memory it was the place where farmers would tie up their Border collies during church services. Whether they joined in the singing was not revealed!

To keep up-to-date with what's happening at the East Church

* Check out our website at www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk

* Look for updates in the window of the house next to the church

* Contact the community and education officers - Caroline and David on 01381 600243 or by emailing info@eastchurchcromarty.co.uk



Up in the bellcote . . .



Some repairs have been carried out to the East Church bell and its cote in order to make sure that they are in prime ringing condition for many years to come.

What's been happening?

A good look at the church bell revealed that many years of ringing had unevenly worn the bell clapper, and so this was built up using steel, and a new wedge was also made for the bell to replace the old cracked one. To complete the attention to the bell, its carriage was blasted clean using aluminium oxides and then protected using some black oxide.

To give a strong supporting structure for the bell, and to protect the more delicate stonework of the cote, a steel frame was made. This was fixed to the masonry using stainless steel threaded bar, and then fixed into the

stonework with resin. This means that the load for the bell is now taken from the more heavy duty masonry directly below the tower.

Work completed, it was then just a matter of giving the bell mechanism a good greasing and it was ready for Hogmanay action (see below). Andy was so pleased with the result that he even adopted the tower as an office ... the lengths you have to go to for mobile phone reception in Cromarty!



Meet the New Year bell ringers

Neil Urquhart (pictured right) celebrated his tenth year of ringing in the New Year in Cromarty this Hogmanay. Neil travels up from the south of England to join his aunt, Helma Reynolds in continuing a tradition initiated by her late husband Alleyne as part of the Millennium celebrations.

Up until 2008 Helma and Neil were joined by Willie Hogg (all pictured right in a photo by Calum Davidson) and now together make sure that the bell continues to ring, even in the testing conditions of a church covered in scaffolding, with only an outside bell rope to haul as the snow falls around them.

Given the strong historic Urquhart connection, it seems highly appropriate that two Urquhart clan members should be involved in this way. And as an aside on that theme, on 15 April Helma will be giving a talk to the Cromarty History Society on Sir Thomas Urquhart.

This Hogmanay three of Cromarty's five bells - the East Church, the Courthouse and the West Church - rang out. The other two bells are in the Primary School and in the Gaelic chapel, where the bell may not have tolled since a tragic accident in 1893 when the church officer, William Taylor, fell to his death through the rotten floor of the tower, which he had ascended in order to attach a rope to the bell.



Kirkyard at the History Society

In mid-March several members of the East Church kirkyard group will be presenting the findings of their studies to the Cromarty History Society.

David Alston's kirkyard tours last summer proved a hit with Cromarty residents and visitors alike, and this talk promises to be just as fascinating.

So if you're in Cromarty on 18 March, come along to the History Society at 19.30 in the West Church Hall.

