



# Cromarty East Church Newsletter



Issue 9: Autumn 2010 Edited by Caroline Vawdrey

## Much admired

*The chance to have a look at the East Church has been taken up enthusiastically on all our summer and autumn open days.*

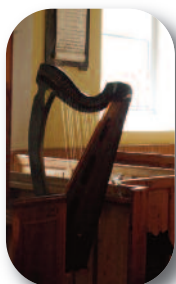


Visitors on 'Doors Open Day' were able to appreciate the church from all angles

Two events in particular have allowed a large number of visitors to see the work as it nears completion. In September the church was part of a special Cromarty 'Doors Open Day' - promoted by the Highland Council as part of events held throughout the Highlands.

With over 300 visitors to the church, Caroline and David were delighted by the level of interest in the building, and had a thoroughly enjoyable time sharing their knowledge of the building's history and the current conservation work. Some of the East Church friends came along and made a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the day.

The church played literary host on 11 September when it was used as the venue for the Black Isle Words festival afternoon dedicated to Black Isle author Jane Duncan, the centenary of whose birth is celebrated this year ([www.blackislewords.co.uk](http://www.blackislewords.co.uk)).. There were talks by writer and illustrator Mairi Hedderwick, Jane Duncan fan and archivist Fiona Thompson and a lively storytelling with harpist Heather Yule.



The acoustics in the church were perfect for appreciating the harp. It is hoped to have many more concerts once work is completed.



The Georgian colour scheme has attracted appreciative comments. Paint layer investigation suggests that this is how the church would have looked when it attained its present form in 1800.



It was great to see the church full of people and in rapt attention as Mairi Hedderwick talks about her illustrating work for Jane Duncan's childrens books.

## Winter visiting

The kirkyard is open every day and once building work is complete we aim to have the church open too. There's not too much left to do - and all being well, we should be able to open the church before the next newsletter is out.

We'll be keeping people up-to-date on the East Church website, and will send an email to all subscribers once the church is open.

*Daily opening of the church is dependant on a willing band of volunteers - we've a number of generous offers already - but as the saying goes 'many hands make light work' - so, if anyone in or near to Cromarty is willing to join the rota, just get in touch with either Caroline or David to find out more.*



There's still a few things to complete in the church - the light fittings being one.

## Meet ...

### David Alston

David is working with Caroline Vawdrey, sharing the community outreach activities during conservation work on the church, but has links with the building from long before the work started – as neighbour, councillor and historian.



David's work on the history of the church began in the early 1990s when he was curator of the Cromarty Courthouse Museum. At that time he collected archive material and worked with a group of volunteers to carry out a complete survey of all the gravestone inscriptions.

More recently, David wrote the history of the East Church for the SRCT – a document that is now being revised in the light of new evidence found during work on the building. *History, gravestone survey and a list of all the archive documents can be found on the East Church website.*

David has been thoroughly enjoying his link with the East Church conservation work, as he said: "After all the community's and the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust's effort it was fantastic to see this project get underway. It has been fascinating to learn more about the church's history as work has progressed and to observe the skills of building conservation specialists. Sharing all of this with the many visitors to the church is always stimulating and a pleasure to see how much it means to people."



## Hatchment conserved

More than 200 years old, the colour and detail of 18th century Cromarty laird George Ross's hatchment remains remarkably vibrant. The hatchment would have been displayed outside George Ross' London family home for up to 12 months after his death before being moved north to hang in the church. Hatchments, funeral banners developed from the early 17 century onwards, are unusual in Scotland, being found in only around a dozen churches.



The items illustrated on this hatchment: armorial shield, motto, helmet and crest painted against a dark background are a pattern common to all hatchments. In some instances a skull may be displayed, or one side of the hatchment painted white to illustrate the earlier death of husband or wife.

To keep the hatchment in good condition it was removed and worked on by conservators from AOC archaeology group, who cleaned and stabilised the paint pigments and supported the canvas with a fine nylon netting. The full report of their work is available on the East Church website.

## Church cleaning

Caroline has been going grey so that others don't have to – it's the dust – and there's plenty of it!

We're now past the stage where the sight of the sheer amount of dust is enough to turn you instantly grey, and this look is the result of North Loft cleaning.



*After a couple of basic cleans, the East Church Friends move in – brushes and dusters primed for action. We've had our first session, which tackled the lofts with impressive efficiency, and now we're going to be meeting at 10.00 am on the first Friday of every month.*

For anyone in or near Cromarty – we're still looking for volunteers, so do come and join us. We can promise there'll be no grey hairs, just a relaxing mid morning coffee break. If you'd like to find out more, just get in touch with either Caroline or David via the contacts below.

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

\* Check out our website at [www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk](http://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](mailto:info@eastchurchcromarty.co.uk)