

## HISTORIC SCOTLAND



John Wood  
Highland Archaeology Service  
The Old School  
Clachnaharry  
Inverness  
IV3 6RB

Our Ref.: AMH/615

11 November, 1996

Dear John,

**REAY BURIAL GROUND**

You may remember that I had a meeting with Primrose Richardson at Reay the day after we met to discuss Dingwall Mercat Cross and the Edderton Stone. Having looked round the site I said that I would contact the Council through you to highlight the burial ground's problems. I realise that you cannot work miracles (at least not every day) and that many of these points will hopefully be taken up if your review of graveyard management is successful. I would appreciate it though if you would consider/pass on the following points.

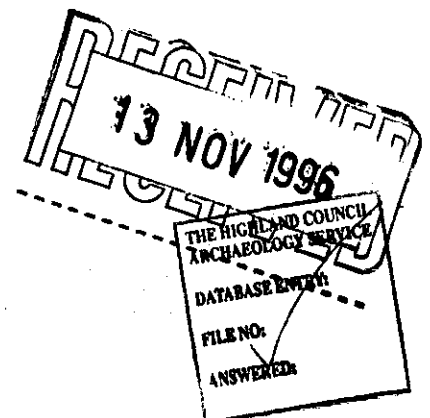
- There are a large number of sycamore saplings becoming established due to a lack of basic grounds maintenance.
- Trees adjacent to the burial aisle are knocking against the walls, opening up cracks in the masonry which is exacerbating water penetration.
- The interior of the burial aisle has been very heavily slaistered with cement mortar by a team from Manpower Services (I believe). While this is unfortunate for the wall it means that the masonry can only breathe through the carved stones set into the wall which may well accelerate their decay.

I would be happy to discuss any of this further.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Bridgland

Direct Dial 0131 668 8773 Fax 0131 668 8765



(c)

Reay Old Bunsel Gd.

Highland Council ownership

HS Scheduling.

Reduce gravel from outside of building?

Dampness

Sycamores to be cut — raise with Caithness

Wy to be cut. Primrose Richards <sup>willing</sup> to cut.

Nire chains.

Gate at entrance replaced by District C.

P. Richards keen to help, paint gate to  
Lair, etc. Make watertight. Mothers' family.

Roof leaking.

\* Memo write to Caithness & HS. Any grant?  
+ write

by coming — roof again.



Would like before autumn.

(01641) 541232.

Director of Cultural and Leisure Services: Alan Jones, Kinmylies Buildings, Inverness IV3 6NN.

Please reply to: Archaeology Service, The Old School, High Street, Clachnaharry,

Inverness IV3 6RB. Tel. (01463) 711176 Fax (01463) 711188

Email: [archaeology@higharch.demon.co.uk](mailto:archaeology@higharch.demon.co.uk)

S.M.  
Caithness

HNC 96 SE 001

A.S. Stephen

Highland  
Region

Victoria Hall,  
Reay, Thurso,  
Caithness.  
20/1/04

R.F.K. Stevenson, Esq.,  
Museum of Antiquities,  
Edinburgh 2.

Dear Sir,

I have recently had the opportunity of looking over some old volumes of the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and, in the volume for 1940 - 50, page 218, I was naturally very interested to see your description of the sculptured Pictish stone found in the outside wall of our church while it was being re-harled in 1947.

While I can tell nothing regarding the origin of the stone I thought that you might be interested to know that the lowel hole you mention was, almost certainly made for the attaching of the old fashioned "jougs."

When the church was built, in 1737, there were two doors on the front of the building. One of these is still in use, and has the original jougs hanging beside it. The other was later built up, harled over and quite forgotten. It was beside

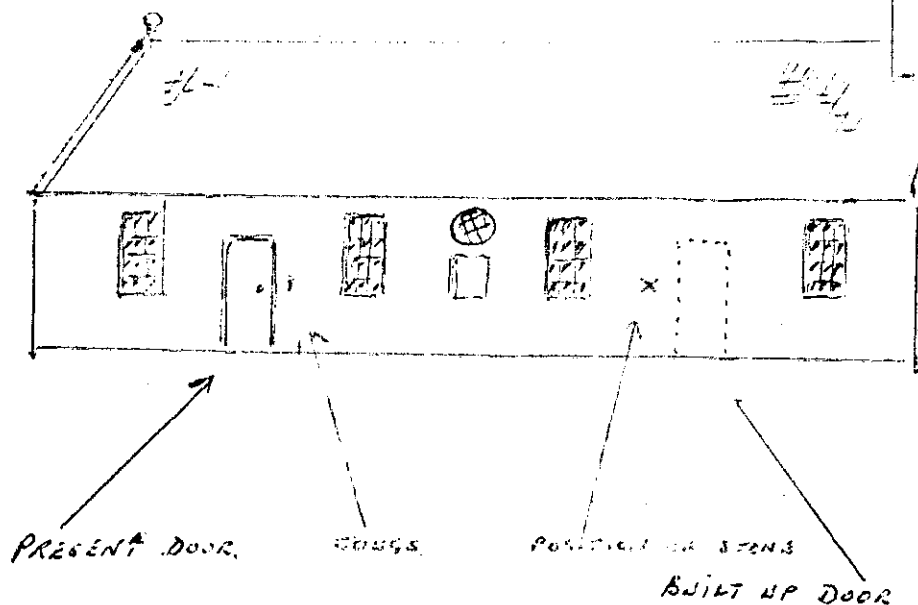
this doorway that the stone was uncovered,  
and in the exact position which the icons  
would have occupied assuring that they were  
to match those still in position beside the  
other door.

I was present when the stone was  
removed from the wall, and can testify that  
the side bearing the stag etc. was outermost.

Perhaps the following rough  
drawing will help to make the matter clearer  
to you.

Yours faithfully,

*Robert S. Stephen.*



17th February, 1964.

R.S. Stephen, Esq.,  
Victoria Hall,  
Reay,  
Thurso,  
Caithness.

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your very interesting letter about the position in which the enigmatic Pictish stone was found built into the church at Reay. Though I have not heard of a church having two sets of joughs, there is no obvious reason why this should not occasionally have happened. I presume that the pulpit has stood between the two doors and the congregation originally entered by both doors. Certainly the hole in the stone is of the right sort of size for this to be the explanation.

Yours faithfully,

Keeper.

Victoria Hall.  
Reay, THURSO.  
Caithness.  
18/2/64.

R.B.K. Stevenson, Esq.,  
National Museum.  
Queen St. Edinburgh.2.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your reply to my letter about the position of the Pictish stone in the Reay church.

I admit that the fact that it would be very unlikely that there would be two sets of iougs on the one building had not struck me. We must have been awfully bad lot up here if one set wasn't sufficient!

I think the answer could be that there was indeed only one set which was originally fixed in the Pictish stone, and that it was only when this door was built up that they were transferred to a similar position beside the other door where they still hang.

There was no steeple on the church when first built, this being a slightly later addition to the east end of the building, and as it included an east door entering the church through the foot of the tower it seems likely that the door on the front would have been built up at

this time as it would no longer be required.

The pulpit, still the original one, does stand, as you say, in the centre of the south wall.

There were originally lofts at each end of the building but these have long since been removed.

Yours faithfully,

R. D. Stephen

P.S.

No need to reply to this note.

10.6.83

Mr J. Gunn,  
Beinn Ruadh,  
REAY,  
Thurso,  
Caithness.

Dear Jimmy,

I have been contacted by a Primrose Richards, whom I believe you have met, concerning the old Burial Ground in Reay. During our telephone conversation she told me that she thought the Pictish cross-slab in the chapel had been tampered with, and that the MacKay inscription across the top had been erased. While I find this hard to believe, I would be most grateful if you would check this out for me, as it is a scheduled ancient monument and is important. Could you let me know, one way or the other, as soon as possible? I would be grateful.

Finally, I hope to have a talk with you about the Dunbeath project when I am next in the county. I had hoped to see you last week when passing through Thurso, but you are somewhat elusive during the day. (I had been at Sandside inspecting the hole in the harbour wall). I will be keeping in touch with Donald Omand as things arise, so he will keep you in touch. With thanks,

Regards,

*Bob*

Robert Gourlay.



R.B. Gourlay

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5.8.1983

Mr P.J. Ashmore,  
Scottish Development Department  
(Ancient Monuments),  
3-11 Melville Street,  
EDINBURGH.

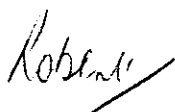
Dear Patrick,

PICTISH CROSS SLAB, REAY OLD CHURCHYARD.

As you will be able to see from the attached photographs, this monument has been recently defaced. The upper part of the cross had previously carried an inscription added in the 18th century when the slab was re-used as a grave marker (see photocopy of the Inventory illustration). This has been neatly - and possibly professionally, judging from the quality of the chisel work - removed, destroying not only the inscription but any vestige of the key pattern which must originally have filled the space. Enquiries locally have failed to indicate how or when this was carried out, but information from a Miss Richards of London (and a summer resident of Strathy) suggests that it was done in the latter part of 1982. I visited the site last August, when it was intact, but apparently it had been defaced by November.

While it is obviously a fait accompli, do you wish me to pursue the matter further? I hope to arrange a small item about the defacement in the local newspaper.

Regards,



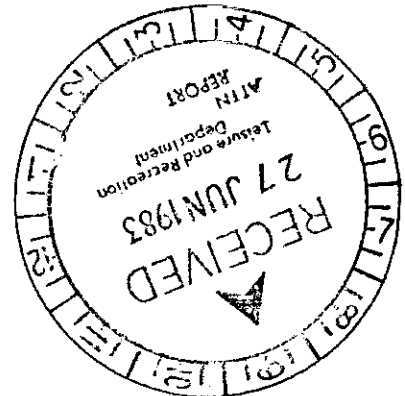
Robert Gourlay.

Mill Cottage,  
Cowlinge,  
Nr. Newmarket,  
Suffolk

Hillhead,  
Strathy East,  
by Thurso.

Work tel: 01 588 2851 (659)

Robert Gourlay, Esq.,  
Regional Archaeologist,  
Highland Regional Council,  
Glen Urquhart Road,  
Inverness,  
Scotland.



*Dear Mr. Gourlay,*

Re the old Burial Ground at Reay and our conversation of the 6th June - I am sorry not to have posted you the enclosed sooner! These records gathered and set down by Miss Cowper and Mrs. Ross of Edinburgh (so carefully) demonstrate (a) their remarkable capacity for extracting information and setting it out in a very clear way, and (b) they highlight the wealth of history which is rapidly lost in any pre-1854 burial ground not being maintained by either private or public support.

I also enclose a copy made for me by the Wick Library of a note on the Pictish Stone in the Mackay Aisle, Reay - set in its present position in 1911 (?) when it was removed from the main ground - for what reason I do not know, but obviously being under cover has helped to preserve it (as compared with the Farr Stone which is not under any cover).

As an additional note I have enclosed, too, a detail of the main line of my mother's family to show the connection with this burial ground - and the absence of connection with the Pictish Stone (although of course I am as keen as anyone to see that it is kept in good condition). Perhaps, with your help, we could one day find out just how long that burial ground in Reay has been in use. I feel sure there must be layer upon layer of burials there.

I plan to be travelling to Strathy next on Monday 22nd August, so if we could arrange to meet then either in your office, or during my stay, at Strathy/Kirton and especially Reay I would be very pleased.

In the meantime, I realise how busy you must be and what an enormous area you have to cover, but if you are able to keep an

eye on the activities at Reay (which I know would help Tony Hall too) so that the area is cleaned up without alteration or loss of records this would really be a happy thought.

Incidentally, possibly Miss Cowper and Mrs. Ross will be up about the same time in August when, if you would like it, perhaps I could arrange a meeting.

*Yours sincerely,*

*P. M. Clunes Richards*

P. M. Clunes Richards