

A.S. Dous.

Cromarty Courthouse

Church Street, Cromarty, Ross & Cromarty
Scotland IV11 8XA

Tel: 01381 600418 Fax: 01381 600408

From David Alston:

Dorothy Low
Highland Archaeology Service
Old School
Clachnaharry
Inverness
IV3 6RB

Dear Dorothy,

Many thanks for display material. I have remounted on smaller boards - I left a message for you some time ago to say that the larger boards wouldn't fit but I don't think this can have got to you. I should have made it clear when I spoke to you more recently - I must learn the terminology (A1, A2 etc). Anyway, there are no problems and I think the display will work well since it is quite challenging to interpret the data.

There were some mistakes in your background information which I have corrected. I am not sure if this forms part of your report or not, but in case it does here are the corrections:

It was George Mackenzie of Cromarty who sold the estate in 1741 not George Mackenzie, 1st Earl of Cromartie.

He sold to Captain John Urquhart not Lord Elibank - the plans which survive were drawn for Urquhart.

Elibank acquired the estate in 1764 and it then passed to George Ross, effectively from 1767 but the transfer of title was not complete until 1772.

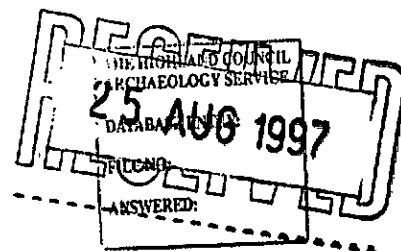
I enclose my revised text.

There is a further point on the well: the plans and other evidence do not show where it was in relation to the castle. It must surely have been within the outer wall but it could have been within the building rather than in the courtyard.

Best wishes.

David

David Alston
21st August 1997



Background

The earliest documentary evidence for the existence of the castle of Cromarty dates to the later thirteenth century. In 1470 the crown granted permission to build a stone tower, replacing an earlier fortification, and this was extended by the Urquharts of Cromarty in 1631. Detailed plans of the building were made for Captain John Urquhart of Cromarty in the 1750s.

By 1772 the Cromarty estate had passed to George Ross of Pitkerrie (near Fearn) who demolished the castle and built Cromarty House in its place. The precise siting of the castle is not clear but its general location is shown in Figure 1.

The drawings and descriptions of the castle which survive indicate that the main tower was six storeys high, had battlements at the top and was roofed in grey stone. The extension to the tower (1630s) was three storeys in height (see Figure 2). There was also a courtyard, paved with flagstone, which extended to a high outer wall with a gateway (see Figure 3). The only part of the castle to survive is a well, which may have been within the courtyard.

MEMORANDUM

To ARCHAEOLOGIST From DIRECTOR OF LIBRARIES AND LEISURE SERVICES
Your ref. Our ref. HWW/JAB Date 24/12/85
Please ask for

CROMARTY CASTLE - MICHAEL NIGHTINGALE

I thought I ought to acknowledge the attached letter, especially since it seems to have taken a week already to reach us!

This particular approach, which has similarities with one or two others you had recently, may be the opportunity to get approval of the Committee for a policy on co-operation with owners of sites: I suppose it is a smaller scale version of Lochindorb.

Would you discuss this one with me before you actually respond to Mr Nightingale.

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E/

? CF 'LOCHINDORB & CROFTCHAY.

81 CARTER LANE . LONDON . EC4V 5EP

01-236 6135

17th December 1985

ES

Dear Mr Gourlay

I am the owner of the site of Cromarty Castle. We have copies of scale plans that were prepared shortly before its demolition in the mid eighteenth century and I would very much like to have the foundations marked out so that the public can see what was what. The only survival is the Castle Well which unfortunately is not marked on the plan. We also have St Regulus Chapel with its burial crypt. Here again I would like to mark out the ground plan.

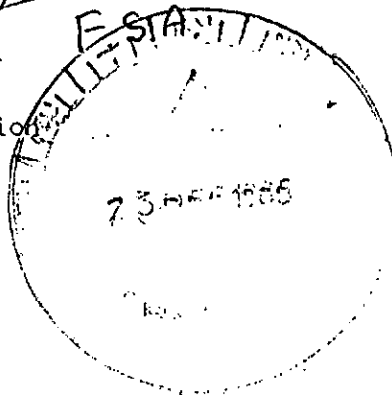
I wrote to Professor Leslie Alcock at Glasgow University, who is an old friend of mine, to seek his advice as to where I might obtain help in setting about a modest excavation and in supervising operations.

Professor Alcock has suggested that I should write to you and I should be very grateful to have your reaction to my proposal. Modest financial help might be available from the Cromarty Trust of which I am a trustee and I suppose we might obtain practical help from one of the Youth Training Schemes.

Yours sincerely

Michael Nightingale of Cromarty

Robert Gourlay Esq
Department of Leisure and Recreation
Highland Regional Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness IV3 5NX



R Gourlay

447

26.2.86

Michael Nightingale of Cromarty Esq., FSA
81 Carter Lane
LONDON EC4 5EP

Dear Mr Nightingale


Please accept my apologies in replying to your letter. I am afraid it got rather lost during recent discussions regarding the Council's involvement in schemes of the kind that you have proposed for Cromarty Castle. These, incidentally, have now been to some extent ratified.

I would be grateful, therefore, if you could outline in more detail what you would envisage being carried out on the site. I take it that this would involve excavation to relocate the foundations, if these survive, and that the area occupied by the castle is not now built upon. I think this might be possible through the medium of the Manpower Services Commission should some financial input be possible through the Cromarty Trust as you suggest.

While I would obviously require to take a look at the site to try to get an idea of the scale of the operation - a copy of the floor plans would be a great help in this regard - perhaps a meeting could be arranged to discuss your proposal and how it might best be achieved. Let me say here that I am very much in favour of greater accessibility to historic remains of this kind and I will endeavour to help to the best of my ability.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course, and apologise again for the delay in replying to you.

Yours sincerely


Robert Gourlay
Archaeologist

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E/

? CF LOCHINDORBS & CROFTCHAY.

NEXT = 27th MARCH:

the Director

HWW/JAB

453

24th December, 1985.

Michael Nightingale, Esq.,
81 Carter Lane,
LONDON, EC4V 5EP.

Dear Mr Nightingale,

I write to acknowledge your letter of 17th December addressed to Robert Gourlay.

Mr Gourlay is on leave until the second week in January, and I am sure he will wish to respond promptly to you when he returns.

I am sure we should be happy to co-operate with you in pursuing your objectives in redefining the site of Cromarty Castle.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Libraries and Leisure Services

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