

HIGHLAND KIRKYARDS: Ross and Cromarty Pilot Project



1. Name of Kirkyard: Urquhart Old Parish Burial Ground
From HER

2. National Grid Reference: NH 5802 5849

3. Civil Parish: Urquhart and Logie Wester

4. Description:

Old kirkyard with vegetation covered ruined chapel on the south shore of the Cromarty Firth. The ruined church dates to 1747-51, and was abandoned in 1795. There are many flat slabs underfoot in the area surrounding the chapel site and the raised ground indicates many burials over time. Many different styles and dates of gravestones including early 18th century uprights.

The more recent portion of the graveyard lies to the north, where the gravestones are mostly upright, often with low iron railings surrounding them and date from the 19th and 20th centuries.

5. Setting: The site is rural, on the edge of the south shore of the Cromarty Firth, with views to the south over the firth. Open aspect fields lie to the west and east of the site. To the north a house and garden lie adjacent to the site. The site has a very open feeling.

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6. Designations and Significance: The burial ground has many layers of history in evidence through the range of gravestones contained within. Table tops, flat slabs and uprights are all in evidence,. The 18th century is well represented with early 18th century uprights, (eg Andrew Junor June 2 1733) and good examples of both a c.1700 burial enclosure and a mid18th century wall monument retaining its nicely carved angel and skeleton figures.

The post-reformation church still stands, although it is difficult to see how much exactly is there. Urquhart Old Burial Ground and Remains of Previous Parish Church were B-listed 25 March 1971. The site is also a scheduled monument.

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Listed Building

7. Elements:

Redundant Kirk/Chapel: Built 1747-51 and out of use by 1795. The rectangular church structure is aligned east-west. The ruins are heavily overgrown, making it difficult to see to what extent the walls are still standing, or any architectural details that remain.

The west gable is still standing but is covered with heavy vegetation. The east gable is also presumably there but is completely screened by foliage.

The south elevation of the structure is also overgrown with plants. There may be an opening in this wall behind a Yew tree, but close inspection was not possible as the approach to the south elevation was also heavily overgrown.

The north wall may be intact to wallhead height, and a structure, described by Gifford as, 'an 'aisle' rebuilt as a mausoleum in the 19th century', projects from it.

Boundary Walls: Rubble walls with triangular coping-stones enclose the site. The original boundary wall must have been closer to the church site as presently the entrance leads to a modern track which runs the length of the western edge of the site, and a landscaped lawn with bushes and no graves lies between the roadside boundary wall and the graveyard proper. The older wall outline can be seen to the east of the modern track, still retaining a few courses of stones, and has curved corners. Within the burial ground a change in ground level between the older graves to the south and the more recent to the north shows where the old burial ground boundary must have been.

Railings, Gates and Gateways: A black iron gate in good condition is set between two square gatepiers with pyramidal tops in the south wall skirting the road.

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Burial Enclosures: In the south-west corner of the old wall boundary lies an overgrown stone built burial enclosure with a rusted iron gate said to date to c.1700. Initials, (HF and AF and others) and writing are carved into the stone around the entrance lintel. Some of the moulding round the entrance has chipped. There are some loose stones over the balustrade. Inside and around the edge of the enclosure, vegetation is starting to obscure it
There is also an iron railed burial enclosure which contains table slabs.

Mausolea: Gifford describes the overgrown structure projecting from the north wall of the ruined chapel as an early 19th century mausoleum.

Wall Monuments: On what appears to be the line of the old northern boundary wall:

A stone monument set in a rubble wall, to James Gray, died 1745 with a fine carving of three angels and a skeleton above the plaque. Viewed from the back the monument appears to be missing some stones.

Also to its west, another monument dated 1741 erected by Alexander Falconer, minister, for his wife and children.

8. Ownership of Kirkyard:

Highland Council X

Private

Other

9. Risk: The redundant kirk is so heavily overgrown that it is difficult to properly assess what is there. There is a risk that removal of the vegetation may destabilise the east and west gables.

Both the James Gray wall monument and the c.1700 burial enclosure have problems with the stonework. They should be dealt with now, as ignoring these problems could lead to loss of fabric. Vegetation in the burial enclosure should also be dealt with before it gets to the stage the church structure is now at. The remaining line of the old boundary wall should be retained as without it there would be a lesser understanding of the site.

On No

10. Ancillary Issues:

ACCESS: There is no car park, only a small parking space at the side of the road outside the modern gate and wall. The site is on a single track road, but not far from the A9. A modern path runs the length of the graveyard and around the more recent section, but the older part to the south has no paths and the ground is uneven.

INTERPRETATION: There is no interpretation on site.