

P93 St. Fergus Chapel Font
RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT

Reference number: P93

Alternative reference number:

Title: St. Fergus Chapel Font

Dates of creation: undated

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 1 sheet

Format: Paper

RECORDS' CONTEXT

Name of creators:

Administrative history: There have been three church buildings on the present site, the first it is thought, was the original Kirk of St Fergus, A remnant only remains of the original church on the present site, a small chapel or transept, known on the survey maps as Saint Fergus Chapel but known locally as The Sinclair Aisle. The oldest memorial in the Sinclair vault is dated 1576 and the oldest burial stone in the surrounding graveyard appears to be 1639 so it might be that the old graveyard at the east end of the town was still used for some time after the church was moved. The first recorded minister was Andrew Philip 1567 - 1576 who then translated to Thurso.

Back in 1613 the incumbent in Bower, Dr. Richard Merchiston also described as Archdeacon, a noted iconoclast, took to visiting the Parishes in Caithness and seeking out graven images on which to vent his wrath. He visited Wick in that year and came upon the image of St Fergus in the old Kirk which he duly attacked and defaced. The townspeople were incensed at the treatment meted out to their saint and would have dealt with Merchiston quite severely on the spot but the magistrates intervened and gave him safe passage out of the town. However the people were not to be denied and a

party of them ambushed Merchiston as he rode out along Wick River, dragged him into the water and drowned him. At the subsequent enquiry, witnesses swore on oath that they had seen St Fergus astride the unfortunate minister holding him down in the river.

In 1726 we have a short description of the church written by the minister Mr. Oliphant. In it he states, "The church stands at the west end of the town of Wick, the head burgh of the shire. It is called St Fergus Church and there is at the east end of it on the north side under a little pend, a hewn stone with a man at full length on it which is said to be his effigy engraven on stone. The steeple on the west end seems to be a very ancient work; but there are neither letters nor figures to know its antiquity. On the north side of the church stands the Sinclair's Aisle, the ancient burial place of the Earls of Caithness where many of them lie interred in a vault. To the east of that on the same side of the church stands the Dunbar's aisle, the burial places of the family of Hempriggs and in it a handsome monument in hewn stone."

There is a more detailed history of the church on its website –

www.wickstferguschurch.org.uk

Custodial history:

RECORDS' CONTENT

Description: Anonymous manuscript of the history and previous locations of the St. Fergus Chapel font

Appraisal:

Accruals:

RECORDS' CONDITION OF ACCESS AND USE

Access: open

Closed until:

Access conditions: Available within the Archive searchroom

Copying:

Copying permitted within standard
Copyright Act parameters

Finding aids:

Available in Archive searchroom

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material:

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue:

September 2011

Ref.	Description	Dates
P93	St. Fergus Chapel Font	n.d.
P93/1	Anonymous manuscript of the history and previous locations of the St. Fergus Chapel font [1 sheet]	n.d.