

P312 Papers relating to St. Peter's Kirk, Thurso

RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT

Reference number: GB1741/P312

Alternative reference number:

Title: Papers relating to St. Peter's Kirk, Thurso

Dates of creation: c.1900-1989

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 5 files, 18 items

Format: Paper, microfiche

RECORDS' CONTEXT

Name of creators: Presbytery of Caithness and St. Peter's Kirk Session; James Grieve; H. Gordon Slade and George Watson

Administrative history: St Peter's Kirk, Thurso

The ruins of St Peter's Church are situated in the old part of Thurso adjacent to the river. It is cruciform, without aisles, measuring externally across the transepts 79ft E-W by 82ft transversely, and has a low, vaulted apsidal cell at the E end of the choir. Adjoining the S side of this cell is a curiously planned staircase tower placed acutely to the main wall, and with a long vaulted passage leading from it into the church. The building is unlikely to belong all to one period, nor to have been planned originally as it now appears. The apsidal cell has more affinity to a 12th century structure such as St Margaret's Chapel, Edinburgh Castle (NT27SE 1.3) than to the 16th or 17th century, to which the nave and transepts belong. The dedication of St Peter suggests an early date and it is stated that Gilbert Murray, Bishop of Caithness (d. 1245) founded a church in Thurso.

The church, occupied as the parish church until 1832, appears to have had a part use as a court-house and prison in the early 18th century and is now roofless

and rapidly falling into ruin, though the walls of the church are almost entire.

In the W wall of the burial ground is a tablet with initials TW and GC with the date 1357. Date and initials bear the characteristics of a later date, probably 16th century.

(canmore.org.uk)

James Grieve

Slade and Watson discuss Grieve in their article [P312/4] noting that, "In addition to these written sources there is a survey of the church made by James Grieve, which is held in the Thurso Public Library. This is a most peculiar work: from the notes on the drawings it was carried out between 1900 and 1904, but the drawings are signed James Grieve *FSA Scot*, and Grieve was not elected a fellow until 1922. It is possible he added his name to a set of drawings completed many years earlier; it is equally possible that like so many surveys and post-excavation reports these drawings were recollected in tranquillity, for certainly they are only partially accurate. Grieve has removed several parts of the building which he found confusing, added a teampull or ancient chapel containing a bishop's grave, designed a complete system of roofs together with studded doors and a pulpit, and included a seagull on the roof 'which had its nest in the tower and watched me measuring the church'. Clearly Mr Grieve must be taken with some caution.' (H. Gordon Slade and George Watson, 'St Peter's Kirk, Thurso, Caithness c.1150-1832', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 119 (1989), p. 298.)

A James Grieve is also mentioned in *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* as having served as minister in Berridale, 'James Grieve transferred from North Ronaldsay and admitted 15th Nov. 1904; transferred to Logiealmond 14th Sept. 1916' (*Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, Hew Scott. D.D., Vol

VII, 1928, p. 113.)

It is unknown whether the James Grieve who created the plans of St Peter's Kirk is the same James Grieve who was minister at Berridale.

Custodial history: Deposited by a member of the public

RECORDS' CONTENT

Description: Correspondence, article relating to the history of the church and microfiche pictures and plans

Appraisal: None

Accruals: None expected

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: P566/82/163 - A History of Old St. Peter's Kirk Thurso' by David Rosie
P183 - Printed article taken from The Scots Magazine entitled "Life in Old St. Peter's: The Records of a Thurso Kirk" by C. Keith

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue: March 2012 (catalogue appraisal Jan 2023)

Ref.	Description	Dates
P312	Papers relating to St. Peter's Kirk, Thurso	c.1900-1989
P312/1	Bundle containing correspondence regarding a case between St Peter's Kirk and the Caithness Presbytery, the Kirk Session were accused of breaking church by-laws by employing an unordained minister before the current minister had left his post (1 file) [see also P312/2-3]	1934-1935
P312/2	Further correspondence regarding a case between St Peter's Kirk and the Caithness Presbytery (1 file) [see also P312/1 and P312/3]	1934-1935
P312/3	Further correspondence regarding a case between St Peter's Kirk and the Caithness Presbytery (1 file) [see also P312/1 and P312/2]	1934-1935
P312/4	Article by H. Gordon Slade and George Watson, 'St Peter's Kirk, Thurso Caithness, c.1150-1832' taken from The Society of Antiquities Journal, 119, 1989, pp. 279-325 (1 file)	1989
P312/5	Microfiche slides of drawings of St Peter's Kirk, ground plans, photographs and drawings by James Grieve (10 items)	c.1900-1910
P312/6	File containing subscriptions for a testimonial to the Rev. Donald R. Mackay; accounts of 'the situation at the church'; and documents regarding charges of breaching the laws of the Church of Scotland (1 file)	1934-1935
P312/7	Plans of Old St Peters Church drawn by James Grieve F.S.A. Scot. (8 items)	c.1918