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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

TULLIBARDINE CHAPEL



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

TULLIBARDINE CHAPEL

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SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Tullibardine Chapel dates from the mid-15th century and was enlarged in about 1500. It is cruciform on plan with a short stubby tower to its west gable. Constructed in pinkish sandstone it still retains its original roof structure. It was built for the Murray's of Tullibardine, and is the burial place of many of that family and their descendants.

The chapel is surrounded by a small, walled graveyard with some trees around the boundary and set amid open arable fields some 2 miles north west of Auchterarder in Perthshire.

The site was first scheduled in 1920, and entered State care in 1951. It now operates seasonal opening hours, during which it is free to visit¹.

1.2 Statement of Significance

Tullibardine Chapel, originally dedicated as the Chapel of St Salvator², is one of the most structurally complete non-parochial private chapels to have survived from later medieval Scotland. It demonstrates how the pre-reformation elite addressed their concern for their own spiritual welfare in life, and their salvation after death. It is an invaluable resource for students of architecture, liturgy, heraldry and genealogy. In particular:

- It demonstrates the religious attitudes of the Murrays of Tullibardine, and by extension, other land-holding families of the later middle ages, who constructed private chapels for themselves and their dependents.
- Because of its completeness and unaltered state, Tullibardine Chapel provides an outstanding example of the types of architectural provisions and settings for religious practice that the elite deemed essential to ensure their spiritual welfare in life, and their salvation after death.
- Its partly-restored collar-beam roof, which is one of the few ecclesiastical medieval timber roofs to survive in Scotland.
- The architectural finesse of the cruciform chapel demonstrates an aspiration to splendour above its relatively diminutive scale. The

¹ For access information, see: www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/tullibardine-chapel/

² James Murray Mackinlay gives the dedication as 'the Saviour', *Ancient church dedications in Scotland, scriptural dedications*, Edinburgh, 1910, p. 60.

presence of uncusped loop tracery, indicates a wish to be in the height of architectural fashion, and the fact that these details are found in a relatively securely dated architectural context gives them a heightened significance for our understanding of architectural chronology.

- It is possible to determine the location of a number of, now-lost, altars, as indicated through the survival of liturgical fixtures, including a piscina recess and some aumbries. As such, it contributes to our understanding of the architecture and liturgy of later medieval chapels in Scotland.
- The tranquillity of the rural situation adds considerably to the interest of this site.

The above paragraphs outline the key significance of Tullibardine Chapel. The following sections offer more detailed descriptions and analysis of the site.

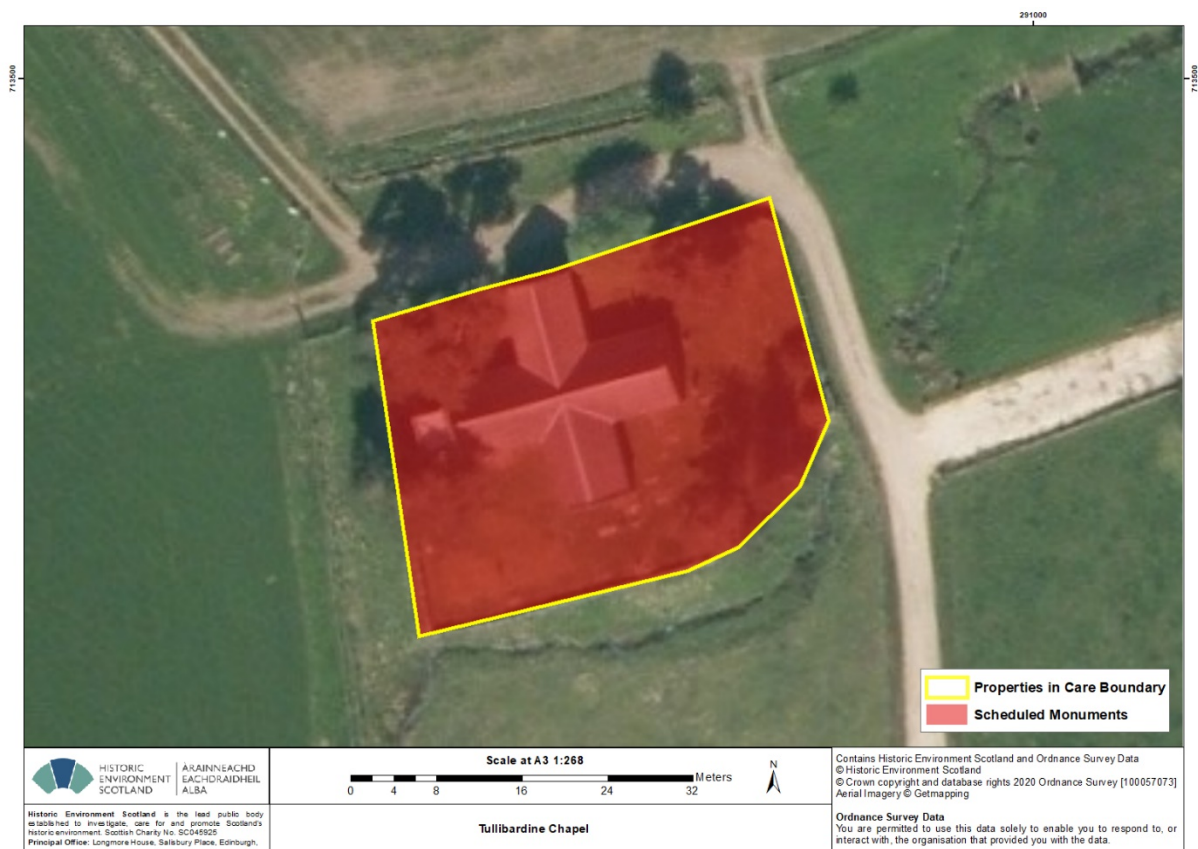


Figure 1: Tullibardine Chapel scheduled area and PIC boundary. For illustrative purposes only.

ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

The chapel was built for the Murray of Tullibardine family,³ who traced the acquisition of their lands here to the marriage in 1284 of Sir William de Moravia (family name later, Murray) to a daughter of the Seneschal of Strathearn. In 1604 Sir John Murray, the holder of the estate at that time was created Lord Murray of Tullibardine and two years later was further advanced, to the earldom of Tullibardine; a title still borne by his descendants, the Earls, Marquesses and Dukes of Atholl. The chapel stood close to the family's principal residence⁴, which is now entirely lost. Many of the greater land-holding families made provision for their spiritual welfare through the construction of a place of worship in the vicinity of their principal places of residence. This appears to have been especially the case at times when those families had risen in status, or when a new residence was being constructed.

The chapel was never a part of the parochial network,⁵ its purpose being essentially to minister to the daily spiritual needs of the Murray of Tullibardine family, their household and dependents. As originally built, it is thought likely to have been of rectangular plan, but it was later augmented to a cruciform plan, through the addition of transeptal chapels; a western tower was also added.⁶ It survived the Reformation in a structurally complete state and continued in use for burials; a function it continues to serve on occasion. It is a rare example of a medieval Scottish church that has also retained its timber roof structure, albeit in a partly restored state.

It is not known how long there was a chapel at Tullibardine. The present building was evidently built by Sir David Murray of Tullibardine. He had considerably expanded the land holdings of his family, and according to Archbishop John Spottiswoode the chapel was built in 1446.⁷ The likelihood that Spottiswoode is broadly correct is supported by the fact that Sir David's arms, together with those of his parents, are prominently

³ The family's history is set out in John 7th Duke of Atholl, *Chronicles of the Atholl and Tullibardine families*, Edinburgh, 1908.

⁴ Shown on Timothy Pont's map of c 1590

<https://maps.nls.uk/pont/view/?id=pont21#zoom=5&lat=347&lon=3893&layers=BT>

⁵ The chapel is in Blackford parish.

⁶ Accounts of the chapel include: R. Fawcett, *The architecture of the Scottish medieval Church*, New Haven and London, 2011, pp. 349-50; J. Gifford, *The buildings of Scotland, Perth and Kinross*, New Haven and London, 2007, pp. 735-36; D. MacGibbon, and T. Ross, *The ecclesiastical architecture of Scotland*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, 1897, pp. 330-37; T. Ross, 'Tullibardine Collegiate Church', *Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society*, vol. 4, 1912-15, pp. 166-70.

⁷ J. Spottiswoode, *An account of all the religious houses that were in Scotland at the time of the Reformation*, included in R. Keith, *An historical catalogue of the Scottish bishops down to the year 1688*, new edn, Edinburgh and London, 1824, p. 473.

displayed on the chapel's walls, albeit not all of those armorial panels are likely to be in their original locations.

In addition to meeting the daily spiritual needs of family members and their household and tenants, the clergy serving such chapels would be expected to offer prayers for deceased members of the family in order to speed their passage through Purgatory. To achieve this end, the complement of clergy serving such private chapels might be augmented by later generations, and at Tullibardine an additional priest was endowed in 1455 by Sir David's son, William, possibly diverting funds that had initially been destined for Muthill Church.

This augmentation raises the possibility that there could have been an intention to establish a college ('collegium') of clergy within the chapel. This was a course followed by several of the greater families, both for the spiritual benefits it afforded them and for the way in such an establishment reflected the high social standing and powers of patronage of those families. It may be noted that the chapel is referred to by a number of post-Reformation writers as having been collegiate,⁸ though there is no evidence to suggest that such a college was ever in fact established here.⁹ Nevertheless, there may have been little to differentiate the forms of daily worship at a non-collegiate chapel such as Tullibardine from that at the chapels of other great land-holding families, which did achieve formal collegiate status.

2.2 Evidential values

Due to its complete state and lack of significant alteration, Tullibardine Chapel is an invaluable resource for students of architecture, liturgy, heraldry and genealogy. MacGibbon and Ross¹⁰ note it as "unused, though in almost perfect state of preservation" in 1897. They further note that "This is one of the few collegiate¹¹ churches in Scotland that were entirely finished and still remain unaltered".

Its evidential values spring from its physical features and the potential for sub-surface deposits and features. While these features provide a greater understanding of this particular site, several aspects provide knowledge which enhance understanding of other medieval sites more generally. For

⁸ As in Spottiswoode, *op. cit.* and T. Ross, *op. cit.*

⁹ See I.B. Cowan, and D.E. Easson, *Medieval religious houses, Scotland*, London, 1976, p. 229.

¹⁰ D MacGibbon and T Ross, *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, vol 3, Edinburgh, 1897, p330.

¹¹ Though as n8 above, there is no evidence that Tullibardine was formally established as a collegiate church.

instance, features which enhance understanding of medieval liturgical practises and the dendrochronological potential of the roof timbers, which could contribute to wider Scottish dendro databases. The architectural values of the site are detailed at 2.4, and the following paragraphs outline particular aspects of evidential value



Figures 2a and 2b: Photographs from 1929. a) View of north transept gable, including window with uncusped loop tracery. b) View of round-headed south doorway. Both © Courtesy of HES (B C Clayton Collection).

2.21 Chapel roof

The chapel has retained its roof, albeit in a partly restored state. It is one of the most complete examples of a type of construction which survives: a comparator would be the roof over the collegiate aisle at Guthrie Church¹². At Tullibardine the scale of the building necessitated two levels of collars, while the sole pieces and wall posts at the base of the rafters were partly embedded in the wall-head masonry, a frequent cause of failure in Scottish roofs as a result of water ingress. It may be that the roof originally provided the framing for a boarded, and possibly painted, ceiling, as was certainly the case at the Guthrie aisle. The roof has not been examined or sampled for possible dendro-dating. Sampling results could potentially tie

¹² Canmore ID 34894: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/34894/guthrie-collegiate-church>

down construction dates more securely and, if native wood, contribute to Scottish dendro chronologies.



Figures 3a and 3b: 1951 images of interior, showing rafters, and arch to south transept. Both © Crown Copyright.

2.22 Features indicating ecclesiastical practice

The chapel has retained a number of features reflecting its medieval ecclesiastical and liturgical use. No traces remain of the altars that would have stood at the east end of the chancel, against the east walls of the transeptal chapels, and probably against a screen that would have separated the chancel from the nave. As the places where the mass was celebrated, and it was believed that bread and wine were transformed into the body and blood of Christ through the process of transubstantiation, the altars were usually the first targets of those who ‘cleansed’ churches at the Reformation in the years around 1560.



Figures 4a and 4b: Ogee-arched recesses in a) east end of south wall of chancel and b) east respond of south transeptal arch.

Faintly visible on the plaster fragments surviving on the south wall of the south transept is one of the twelve internal consecration crosses that would have been anointed with holy oils by the bishop when dedicating the chapel for worship. Towards the east end of the south wall of the chancel area is an ogee-arched recess that probably contained a piscina basin, in which the celebrating priest washed the sacred vessels and his hands at mass. Another ogee-arched recess is cut into the east respond of the arch that opens into the south transeptal chapel; it may have held a votive image associated with the adjacent altar. Holes in the masonry to each side of the recess suggest that whatever was within it was protected by a metal bar of some kind.

There are a number of small rectangular aumbries. That in the south nave wall, to the west of the arch into the south transept (visible in Figure 3a), may have been associated with the nave altar in front of the screen that would have separated the nave from the chancel. Within the south doorway is a recess for a holy water stoup, where those entering the church would have ritually cleansed themselves. In the east wall are a number of chases for timber straps, indicating that something has been fixed against the wall here. Related strap chases are to be seen in the east

wall of the south nave chapel at **Dunkeld Cathedral**¹³, and in each case it may be wondered if they were provided as the fixings for an altar retable.

The chapel survived the Reformation, possibly through remaining in use for clandestine worship. It was also used as a burial place for the descendants of the founder. A vault was constructed for this purpose below the chancel area, which is entered down a steep flight of steps that is usually covered over by stone flags. While this action will have destroyed some potential below ground deposits, there remains the potential that evidence of liturgical divisions, fixtures, furnishings and burials will survive below floor level in other parts of the building. It is also a possibility that some of the paving may prove to be recycled commemorative “ledger” slabs (i.e. inscribed memorial stones).

2.3 Historical values

2.31 Ecclesiastical context

The chapel has to be understood in the context of the medieval Church’s teaching on the threat of the soul’s eternal damnation as a consequence of sins committed in the course of life. To make atonement for those sins it was taught that individuals should live in a spirit of charity with their fellows. It was also considered important to make provision for prayers to be offered for the welfare of the individual in life. Perhaps even more importantly, it was considered that provision should be made for prayers to be offered after death in the hope of making expiation for unrequited sin, and in order to speed the progress of the soul through the cleansing pains of Purgatory.

For the majority, the best that could be aspired to during life was regular attendance at worship at least on the great feasts, preceded by confession and penance. Following death, provision would be made for as many masses as could be afforded. For those who could afford to do so, endowments might be set in place to pay for the celebration of a larger number of masses, possibly with sufficient funding for those masses to be offered in perpetuity by a succession of priests until the time of the Last Judgement. The intention might be that those masses should be celebrated either at an existing altar or at a newly provided altar, in many cases in close physical association with the burial place of the individual setting up the endowment.

¹³ Throughout the text, site names in **bold** are managed by Historic Environment Scotland and are publicly accessible. Access information can be found at: www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/

At an even higher level of provision, and as was the case at Tullibardine, a new church might be provided as the most appropriate setting for the altars at which masses were to be celebrated. Successive generations might augment the initial endowment by funding additional clergy, sometimes with the intention that the clergy might be incorporated into a collegiate body, whose daily round of worship would reflect favourably on the high social standing of the family they served while meeting the spiritual needs of the family and their household. In many cases these churches were also intended to house the burials and memorials of family members, becoming in effect family mausolea. It should be said that no pre-Reformation memorials have survived at Tullibardine, so we cannot know if it was intended to function as a dynastic mausoleum. This absence of memorials may be, however, because any such were removed when the post-medieval burial vault was constructed below the chancel area, while any commemorative ledger slabs set into the floor could have been lost when the floor was re-paved in relatively recent times.

In context, the chapel is therefore an outstanding example of the provisions that might be made by the greater land-holding families to house the worship that they deemed to be essential to ensure their spiritual welfare in life and their salvation after death. The continuing significance of their foundation for successive generations of the family is demonstrated by the later augmentation of the complement of clergy. It is possible that at some stage there was the intention to incorporate the clergy into a collegium, and a number of later commentators have assumed that this did in fact happen. However, although the differences of religious observance between a private chapel staffed by a body of clergy on the one hand, and a formally constituted rural college on the other hand were probably a matter of degree rather than of absolute difference, there is no evidence that a college was ever established at Tullibardine.

The insight provided by the chapel into the religious attitudes of the Murray of Tullibardine family, as representative of the attitudes of such families in the later middle ages, is also of high significance.

2.32 Association with the Murray family

The chief historical association of the chapel is with the Murray family who continued to use it as a place of burial for many centuries. In drafting this Statement, no detailed historical research was carried out into the family. This could be remedied by a future research initiative which might allow a better profile of the family's position and status during the pre and post reformation period to be constructed.

The chapel survived the Reformation because of this, though was possibly in use for clandestine worship. A vault was constructed for this purpose

below the chancel area, which is entered down a steep flight of steps that is usually covered over by stone flags.

Of the castle of the Murray family that stood to the north-east of the chapel, the chief evidence is a drawing of 1789 in the collections of General George Hutton in the National Library of Scotland.¹⁴ It is depicted as a structure of at least four storeys that was by then in an advanced state of ruination. (A smaller house, that was perhaps part of a farm, is shown to the west of the chapel in that view.) There had been proposals to replace the castle by a substantial house to the designs of William Adam. As shown in *Vitruvius Scoticus*, this was to have had a main block of four storeys connected to stable and kitchen pavilions by quadrant colonnades. The proposal was, however, never executed.¹⁵ At the time of that proposal, the castle was probably occupied by the brother of the second Duke, Lord George Murray, a leading Jacobite. On 31 August 1740 Lord George wrote to his brother to say that he had just deposited the body of one of his children, who had died of smallpox, in the chapel, and asked if the bodies of himself and his wife could also be placed there in due course. Sadly, because he died in exile, this was not to be possible.¹⁶

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

The chapel is a delightful example of a small late medieval rural church, whose final cruciform arrangement suggests an aspiration to architectural splendour above its relatively diminutive scale. A number of the details, including most notably the uncusped loop tracery, indicate a wish to be in the height of architectural fashion. The fact that these details are found in a relatively securely dated architectural context gives them a heightened significance for our understanding of architectural chronology. The chapel is also of very high value because of the survival of its roof structure.

The chapel is constructed of pink uncoursed rubble with polished ashlar dressings. Internally the walls are now of exposed rubble masonry, but they were originally plastered, fragments of which remain. As originally built, Tullibardine Chapel was probably set out to a rectangular plan. It was later to be augmented to a cruciform plan by the addition of laterally projecting transeptal chapels, and with a diminutive western tower.

¹⁴ National Library of Scotland, 30.5.23, 126.

¹⁵ William Adam, *Vitruvius Scoticus*, Edinburgh, 1812, pls 101-103.

¹⁶ John 7th Duke of Atholl, *Chronicles of the Atholl and Tullibardine families*, Edinburgh, 1908.



Figure 5: Quartered arms of Murray and Stewart of Innermeath.

The initial phase of construction is approximately dated by a number of re-set heraldic panels relating to Sir David Murray.¹⁷ Set into the internal north wall of the chancel area are the quartered arms of Murray and Stewart of Innermeath (Figure 5), in reference to the marriage of Sir David's parents: another Sir David Murray and Isobel Stewart (three stars within a double tressure flory counterflory quartering a lymphad with a fess chequy in chief). Now located above the doorway in the north wall of the north transept is a panel with the family arms of Murray of Tullibardine (three stars within a double tressure flory counterflory). On the east side of the north transept window is a panel with the arms of arms of Murray impaling Colquhoun, in reference to the marriage of the chapel's builder to Margaret Colquhoun (three stars within a double tressure flory counterflory impaling a saltire engrailed within a bordure).

On the evidence of heraldry on the skewputts of the south transept (Figures 6a and 6b), one and probably both of the transepts were added by a later member of the family, Sir Andrew Murray, together with his wife Margaret Barclay, who married at a date around 1499. Sir Andrew was, however, a younger son, and in 1527 he made provision for himself and his wife to be buried in the chancel at Arngask Church rather than at

¹⁷ For the family's heraldry see G.H. Johnston, *The heraldry of the Murrays*, Edinburgh, 1910.

Tullibardine. (Sir Andrew's arms on the west skewputt are a cross patty between three stars within a double tressure flory counterflory. Dame Margaret's arms on the east skewputt are three crosses patty.)



Figures 6a and 6b: Heraldry on skewputts of south gable: a) Sir Andrew's on west, b) Dame Margaret's on east.

In its final state, the chapel displays a number of features characteristic of work around the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the gable walls of the transepts are windows with un-cusped loop tracery (Figure 2a) related to those found at a number of other churches in the years around 1500. The south transept window, for example, has slightly compressed tracery of a similar design to that at Dalkeith Collegiate Church¹⁸. The round-headed south doorway has the common late medieval moulding of a filleted roll flanked on one side by a segmental hollow; the mouldings are punctuated at the junction of jambs and arch by a simply detailed impost rather than a capital (Figure 2b).

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

The chapel is charmingly set in a secluded wooded churchyard between the valleys of the River Earn and the Allan Water. It is in a fertile area that has been occupied over a long period, and through which two major Roman roads pass and within which a number of Roman forts and signal stations are located.

¹⁸ Canmore ID 53417: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/53417/dalkeith-east-kirk-church-of-st-nicholas>

The chapel is likely to have had a relationship to the castle and its landscape setting, but this has not been assessed in this document and is acknowledged as a lack.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The area within State care largely comprises amenity grassland, and at the time of writing (February 2020), is not protected by any natural heritage designations. Protected species are present within the chapel. Natterers bats are recorded roosting in the tower and brown long eared bats in the roof space. Some plant species of local importance, brittle bladder fern and maidenhair spleenwort, are found on the exterior walls.

The bedrock geology of the site belongs to the Dunblane Sandstone Member, with superficial deposits of Devensian Till.



Figure 7: Aerial photograph of Tullibardine chapel, taken from the north-west. © Crown Copyright: HES.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

The chapel is no longer in use for worship, but the Earls of Perth still have rights of entombment in the burial chamber below the chancel area. The vault currently contains the coffins of several Viscounts and Viscountesses of Strathallan and of Earls and Countesses of Perth, and of their children who died in infancy. The last known deposition was that of the ashes of Anna, Countess of Perth, who died in 1967.

Concerns over the potential health risks from decaying coffins and the leakage of what was assumed to be embalming fluid in the burial vault led to a decision to partially infill the vault with earth.

The main function of the chapel is now as a visitor attraction and as an important resource for historians of architecture, liturgy, heraldry and genealogy. Visitor reviews on online platforms such as TripAdvisor note the charm and peacefulness of the site, its beautiful outlook and photogenic nature, and recommend it as a short walk from the neighbouring Gleneagles hotel¹⁹. The church is estimated to have attracted over 2,000 visitors during its seasonal opening hours in 2018.

In recent years, visitor numbers have increased as a result of Tullibardine's use as a filming location in both *Outlander* and *Outlaw King*. Its promotion on websites such as www.outlanderlocations.com/locations/tullibardine-chapel/ may have attracted a new interest group to visit or learn about the site.

3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

- The construction of a burial vault below the chancel area will have destroyed much of any archaeological evidence in that area, but it is possible that evidence for liturgical divisions, fixtures, furnishings and burials will survive below floor level in other parts of the building. Any management works in this area should include assessment of archaeological research potential and an archaeological watching brief. It may also be considered as a possibility that some of the paving may have recycled commemorative ledger slabs.
- Although a combination of heraldry and family history allows an outline building history of the chapel to be assembled, other approaches to establishing a precise chronology should be explored, including detailed analysis of masonry and worked details.

¹⁹ www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g551796-d11946514-Reviews-or5-Tullibardine_Chapel-Auchterarder_Perth_and_Kinross_Scotland.html#REVIEWS

- Similarly, while the outline of the history of the building and the chief historical figures associated with it is known, an assessment of resources for further historical study should be undertaken – e.g. archival material.
- Can anything be deduced about the original furnishings of the chapel either from documentary or physical research. MacGibbon and Ross speculate that tapestries were hung at the east end (noting laths on the walls); current interpretation is that they supported a retable; could further analysis confirm the type of ceiling installed.
- As one of the few ecclesiastical medieval timber roofs to survive in Scotland, the structure and jointing of the roof timbers should be forensically analysed. Dendrochronological analysis of the timbers is likely to be particularly helpful in determining the date of the roof and in relating the roof structure to the building as a whole, and in contributing to the chronology database for Scottish building timber.
- Geophysical and archaeological investigation of the surrounding churchyard may provide evidence of associated structures.
- The physical relationship of the chapel with the site of the Murray's castle to its north, deserves fuller investigation.

4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Churches with uncusped loop tracery: St Andrews Blackfriars, Edinburgh Trinity College (now largely lost), Midcalder, Pluscarden Priory, Linlithgow St Michael.

Churches retaining medieval collar-beam roofs: Guthrie collegiate aisle.

Churches retaining medieval roofs: Perth St John, Stirling Holy Rude

5. KEYWORDS

Chapel, chaplainry, cruciform churches, uncusped loop tracery, medieval roof, consecration cross, heraldry, Murray family, piscina, aumbry, holy water stoup, burial vault

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Further Resources

Site Number: NN91SW 1

NGR: NN 90955 13470

Datum: OSGB36 - NGR

Scheduled monument description accessible at:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90308>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

No significant archaeological interventions are recorded.

Historic Environment Scotland – Scottish Charity No. SC045925
Principal Office: Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH

APPENDIX 2: TIMELINE

1284	The lands of Tullibardine said to have been acquired by Sir William de Moravia, the ancestor of this branch of the Murray family.
pre-1452	Chapel built by Sir David Murray on heraldic evidence.
1455	Sir William Murray granted a charter by James II to endow (additional?) chaplainries.
c.1500	Enlarged by Sir Andrew Murray.
1740	Lord George Murray entombed his infant daughter in the chapel.
1747	Tullibardine Castle dismantled.
1816	Tullibardine estate sold to James Drummond, later Viscount Strathallan, by his father-in-law, the 4th Duke of Atholl.
1902	The 11th Viscount Strathallan succeeded to the earldom of Perth.
1920	Scheduled as a monument of national importance.
1920	Offered into State care by the Earl of Perth, but refused.
1951	Entered State care through Guardianship agreement.
1967	Main roof (not transepts) reslated.
1978 & 1985	Some repairs and conservation work to roof timbers.
1987	Grille over burial vault renewed in cast iron.
1999	Following health and safety concerns, lead coffins in the vault assessed and covered with topsoil (2000).
2018	Chapel scanned as part of HES RAE project.