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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

KINKELL CHURCH



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KINKELL CHURCH

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- Kinkell Church, dedicated to St Michael, consist of the remains of a simple rectangular medieval parish church, of which only the N, W and part of the E wall are upstanding.
 - The church was partly remodelled, perhaps on more than one occasion, including in the early 16th century, when an elaborately carved Sacrament House was built into the E end of the N wall.
 - Within the church is the monument of Gilbert de Greenlaw, killed at the battle of Harlaw in 1411; the stone was re-used for a Forbes burial in 1592
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CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

- The church appears to have come on record in the early 13th century. Kinkell was a mother church, or *plebanus*, and had dependent chapels at Dyce, Drumblade, Kemnay, Kinnellar, Kintore and Skene. This connection, which was of long standing, may have arisen if Kinkell's origins was that of an ecclesiastical foundation, rather like a minster, with an extensive *parochia*. This would push back its origins considerably.
- From the 14th century, certain revenues of the church evidently pertained to the Knights Hospitallers, although it is also recorded as an independent parsonage during the 14th century.
- Any connection with the Hospitallers came to an end in 1420, when the church and its annexes were erected into a prebend of Aberdeen Cathedral.
- From a date and a set of initials on the sacrament house, it is apparent that in 1524 Alexander Galloway, rector of Kinkell and canon of Aberdeen Cathedral, paid for the splendid sacrament house built into the E end of the N wall. He appears to have been paying for further work the following year as a carved stone panel depicting the crucifixion, dated 1525, and with Alexander's initials (three times), is built into the N wall (only a bronze replica survives; the original was removed to Aberdeen Museum in 1934 and subsequently lost).
- The church was abandoned in 1771 when the parish was amalgamated with Keithhall. It was partially demolished to provide building materials for the new parish church.

Archaeological Overview

- There have been no recorded archaeological investigations at Kinkell. The archaeological potential of the monument is extremely high and any excavation is very like to come across human remains, and perhaps also earlier church buildings on the site.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

- The church is fragmentary and devoid of features apart for the sacrament house, the crucifixion panel and a single jamb of what must have been a large, traceried E window. The simple oblong plan of the church suggests that the basic form of the church dates from the early 13th century, with much late medieval remodelling.

- The sacrament house is a particularly fine, and unique, example of this type of medieval church fixture. It was an aumbry, or wall cupboard, designed to reserve the host in appropriate reverential surroundings.
- The sacrament house at Kinkell shares several features with others found in the NE, associated with Galloway, but is unique due to its cross shape. The aumbry is flanked by two buttresses with crocketed finials. Between these is a panel, which although badly defaced, appears to have been ornamented with a monstrance supported by two angels (a very common motif found on other sacrament houses associated with Alexander Galloway). Above this panel is a corbelled and battlemented cornice, and above this is an oblong panel, which probably contained a crucifixion scene, but is now empty. Flanking the pinnacles are two panels, each filled with scrolls, which are of different forms although the inscriptions on the scrolls were meant to be read as one and state: 'Here is preserved that body which was born of a virgin'.
- The crucifixion panel has a representation of St Michael, the archangel (to whom the church was dedicated) to the right of the crucified, the Virgin on the left and under her a priest, perhaps representing Galloway himself as donor, standing beside an altar on which are Galloway's initials.
- The sacrament house and the Crucifixion panel appear to have been part of a liturgical revival in the diocese of Aberdeen during the early decade on the 16th century. Alexander Galloway appear to have been a central figure in the move to ensure parish churches had the fittings for the proper worship of God, and in particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He erected several sacrament houses in churches he was involved in; Kinkell and its dependents at Dyce and Kintore, and at King College, Aberdeen and may have been influential in the decision of his colleagues, Alexander Spittal of Auchindoir and Alexander Lyon of Turiff, to erect those in their respective churches. Galloway also donated a font to Kinkell, which now is now in St John's Episcopal Church, Aberdeen.
- The construction of the sacrament house may have been part of a wider reorganisation of the chancel area of the church, and it is tempting to suggest that the great E window may have been a part of this re-organisation, although details of this moulding may be more consistent with a 14th or 15th century date.

Social Overview

- The church is currently used as a recreational attraction. It receives little other community use.

Spiritual Overview

- As a parish church in use for some six centuries, the site has the potential to inform our understanding of medieval Christianity, the aspirations of the rectors, vicars and ministers who served the church and the congregations who worshipped in it.
- The burial ground was in use until fairly recently, and may still be in use for occasional burials. People still visit family graves and memorials.

Aesthetic Overview

- The church and burial ground are located in the haughs of the River Don, amongst arable farmland which adds to the appreciation of this monument.
- The church has been pointed with a hard cement mortar that give the walls the impression of crazy paving. The sacrament house, the replica crucifixion panel,

the window jamb are fine architectural details which are aesthetically very striking, and provide some idea of the glories of this once very fine church.

- The graveslab of Gilbert de Greenlaw, killed at the Battle of Harlaw, which would originally have been a ledger slab, is a particularly detailed carving of an armed knight.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- Do further historical sources or references survive.
- Nothing is known about the archaeology and earlier history of this site.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- The church is an example, although much ruined, of a church which was remodelled in the 16th century.
- The sacrament house is a particularly fine example of this type of church furnishing, and the only example which takes the form of a cross. Sacrament houses are physical manifestation of an important aspect of late medieval Christianity; the veneration and adoration of the Body of Christ in the form of the consecrated host.
- The church is closely associated with Canon Alexander Galloway, who encouraged a liturgical revival in the diocese in the early 16th century.
- The site has high archaeological potential, but as a place of burial over centuries so the scope for research-led invasive excavation is not high.

Associated Properties

St Fergus', Dyce, Auchindoir Church, St Machars Cathedral, Kintore Church,