



Stonehaven Tolbooth

As you reach the north side of the harbour, you will come face to face with Stonehaven's oldest building, the county Tolbooth. This 16th Century building has stood sentinel at the harbour through Stonehaven's

history, and events within its walls have had a deep impact on the town.

It is generally agreed that the Tolbooth was originally constructed as a storehouse by the Earl Marischal, who owned the village of Stonehaven at that time. The Earl was refurbishing Dunnottar Castle at that time, and this building served as a useful quayside shed for provisions landed in the sheltered harbour.

In 1600 this lowly shed was to find itself raised vastly in stature, as the town also became elevated in standing. The Earl Marischal decreed that the county town of Kincardineshire was to be moved from the inland hamlet of Kincardine to Stonehaven. It seems to have been a sensible choice, as Kincardine was barely inhabited and in no way able to cope with the circuit of courts held there. What this meant for Stonehaven of course, was that not only was the town's prestige greatly enhanced, but they also had to find a venue for the court to sit in, and at this point, eyes turned to the shed at the end of the harbour.

The court was to sit here from this point until 1767, and many varied cases were tried here - including that of one Agnes Moffat, hanged for the theft of five sheep. However, the court and jail was to receive some of its more notable victims after the failure of the 1745 Jacobite Rising.

After William III took the throne in 1688 Episcopalianism, strong in the Grampian area, fell from favour, and things got worse after the 1715 Jacobite rebellion. Following extensive Episcopalian support for the Jacobite cause, harsh penal laws were passed



making it illegal for ministers to preach to more than nine people at the same time. After the Episcopalians renewed their support for the Stuarts in the '45, the full weight of Hanoverian vengeance came down on them - the number of those attending services was reduced to four, and Episcopalian churches were burned to the ground.

It was in this atmosphere that three local ministers were brought to the Tolbooth to answer charges that they had preached to more than the legal limit. In front of an angry crowd, composed mainly of their parishioners, the three clergymen, John Troup, John Petrie and Alexander Greig, were found guilty and sentenced to a period of incarceration in the Tolbooth.

The ministers were to spend six months locked up here, but, despite this, they continued to minister to their flock as best they could, as their congregations gathered outside the window of the gaol for services, after which Mr Troup would entertain them with spirited renditions on the bagpipes. The devotion of the Episcopalian flock of Stonehaven is best illustrated by the womenfolk of the town, who would bring new-born babies to the prison window, after wading through knee-deep seas and scrambling over rocks, in order to have them baptised.

Nowadays, we live in more tolerant times, and the restored Tolbooth serves a different purpose today, serving as a permanent reminder to the history it has witnessed in its capacity as the local museum.

Stonehaven Tolbooth

Coordinates: 56°57′41″N 2°12′1″W﻿ / ﻿﻿ / ﻿

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Stonehaven Tolbooth** is a late 16th century stone building originally used as a courthouse and a prison in the town of Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.^[1] Constructed of local Old Red Sandstone, the prison probably attained its greatest note, when three local Episcopalian clergymen were imprisoned for holding services for more than nine people (a limit established to discourage the Episcopalian religion in the mid-18th century).^[2] Lying midway along the old north quay of the Stonehaven Harbour, the present day Tolbooth serves as a history museum with a restaurant on the floor above the ground floor.



Stonehaven Tolbooth

Contents

- 1 Early history
- 2 History after 1766
- 3 Architecture
- 4 Interior features
- 5 See also
- 6 References
- 7 External links

Early history



Ruined Episcopal chapel from 18th century where the clergymen conducted their services leading to imprisonment

The Stonehaven Tolbooth is thought to have been founded by George Keith, 5th Earl Marischal (c. 1553–1623), with the original purpose of the rectangular building being as a storehouse. In 1600, an Act of Parliament provided that the building become a tolbooth;^[3] text of that act reads: "The shiref of the shiref-dome of Kincardin in all time cum sall sit and hald their courtis at Stanehyve". After 1624, the town business functions were conducted on the upper level of the Stonehaven Tolbooth, with the ground floor being used as the prison.

By 1685, there are further accounts of the Stonehaven Tolbooth functioning as the seat of justice for all of Kincardineshire (the former shire of this district that was eventually subsumed into Aberdeenshire). Over the winter of 1748-1749, three Episcopalian clergy were incarcerated for the crime of holding a religious ceremony to more than nine people at the (now ruined) chapel situated on the estate grounds of nearby Muchalls Castle along the ancient Causey Mounth.^[4] The Episcopalians were associated with the Jacobite cause and discriminated against by the ruling Hanoverians. The imprisoned clergymen's plight was memorialised in a well known painting, illustrating a baptism of an infant through the bars of the

prison. The painting is on loan to the museum by the Diocese at Brechin.

History after 1766

When new county government facilities were built in the year 1767, the Stonehaven tolbooth reverted to its earlier humble use as a storehouse.^[5] In 1963, the Tolbooth was in need of restoration, which resulted in the present day use configuration of a local history museum on the ground floor and a destination restaurant on the above level. The museum holds relics dating to the Iron Age including an original barrow, as well as memorabilia from the eras defined by the Tolbooth's existence.



Stonehaven Harbour as seen from a location near the Tolbooth. Photo credit: Sigvard Richardson

Architecture

The original rectangular building was constructed with the long axis being east-west, with a length of 18.9 meters. The construction is of Old Red Sandstone, a locally derived stone that was used in other local buildings of the same period such as Muchalls Castle.^[6] A 17th century addition was added nearly at right angles to the original block, leading to a 17th century design as an L-Plan, also in the manner of Muchalls Castle.

The gables of the original rectangular block are crow-stepped, with a chimney on the west end. An unusual design feature is that access to the first floor is achieved only via a stonework staircase at the west end of the original block. This design may have been derived from a desire to have town government business conducted without having to enter through the prison level. A paved courtyard lies embraced by the two L-Plan projections.

Interior features

The north block (17th century addition) floor retains original flagstones and cobblestones dating to the original north block. There is also a sizable firepit along the west wall of the north block wing, although the associated chimney above has been filled, rendering the fireplace unusable. At the ground level a partial stone wall partition separates the two large chambers belonging to the sixteenth and 17th centuries.



View of the southern part of Stonehaven Harbour from a point near the Tolbooth

Arrow slits on the south facing 16th century wall are original; however they have been filled in. The height of these slits suggest that the grade level of the building floor has likely been altered. Inspection of the stonework indicates that there was an earlier opening at the centre of the east wall. The upper floor for the present restaurant use has been altered more extensively by interior partitions, although the basic window openings are thought to be original.

See also

- Bellman's Head

THE CASTLE AND TOLBOOTH



Stonehaven is set on the East coast of Scotland, on the Highland Boundary Fault. The "pudding stone" conglomerate can be seen in the cliffs around the harbour, and has left the promontory on which the castle ruins now stand.

The town's history is inextricably linked to the castle. St Ninian may have founded a chapel on the rock at Dunnottar in c400AD, and there was certainly a church there dedicated to him in 1297 when William Wallace besieged the castle. At that time the English occupied the fortress as Edward occupied the country. The garrison took refuge in the chapel, but their lives were not spared. Wallace in fyr gert set all haistely, Brynt wp the kyrk, and all that was tharin." [Blind Harry (Jamieson) p162] The castle was rebuilt, and in 1395 the Pope ordered an investigation into building of a fortalice on the sacred ground there. This led to Sir William Keith, the first Earl Marischal, being excommunicated but his sentence was later reduced. Mary Queen of Scots visited the castle in 1562.

The oldest building in Stonehaven is the Tolbooth. It seems to have been a storehouse for the castle up to 1600 when it became a courthouse and prison, and after the 1745 Jacobite rising secret baptisms were dispensed from one of its windows. Eventually, the dilapidated building was restored by the Council, and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother re-opened it in 1963. The upstairs is now a restaurant, and downstairs a museum.

James Graham, Marquis of Montrose switched sides to lead the Royalists against the Covenanters, and the Earl Marischal shut himself up in the castle and left his tenants to their fate. Montrose burned every house, barn, stable and even ship in Dunnottar and Fetteresso in 1645, and with the occupants left weeping in the street. King Charles I of England was later defeated, and Montrose fled by boat from Stonehaven to exile in Norway. The honours of Scotland were hidden in Dunnottar Castle in 1651-2, and then smuggled out as Oliver Cromwell's roundhead army laid siege. The castle held out for eight months with the English camped on Black Hill (where the 1923 War Memorial now stands), but eventually the bombardment reduced the garrison to a handful of men who were forced to surrender. The governor was George Ogilvy of Barras and his fine 17th century house can still be seen at 51 High Street in Old Stonehaven.

Not everyone thought Stonehaven was a grand place. "At the foot of this pavement (the old road from Aberdeen) there is a small harbour which they call Steenhive, but I take the liberty to call it stinking hive because it is so unsavoury; which serves only for pirates and picaroons (rogues); but it bravely accommodates the Highlander for depredations." [Frank (1656)]

The Rock from which ye are hewn"... Stonehaven Tolbooth

Following the Jacobite uprising of 1745 the Duke of Cumberland on his march north to the Battle of Culloden in April 1746 stopped briefly at Stonehaven. On his orders the Episcopal Chapels at Muchalls and Drumlithie were entirely razed to the ground, on the grounds that all Episcopalians were suspected of being loyal to Prince Charles Edward Stuart. The chapel at Stonehaven was only rescued from a similar fate by the pleading of Sheriff John Young. However, all the furnishings were taken out into the High Street of Stonehaven and burned and the chapel was unceremoniously converted into stables for the King's cavalry.

After Culloden laws were swiftly enacted to ensure the loyalty of all to the Hanoverian monarch, George II. Strict limits were placed on the number of those who might be present at Episcopal Services and all clergy were required to take oaths of allegiance to King George and to pray aloud in divine worship for the King and royal family by name. The penalty for conviction on a first offence was 6 months' imprisonment and for a second transportation to the colonies.

So it was that in the early months of 1748 Alexander Greig, "Episcopal Preacher in Stonehyve" was brought to Court in Stonehaven before Sheriff Young, indicted with performing Divine service with more than 5 persons present and "without praying for the King's most Excellent Majesty, his Heirs and successors by name, and for all the Royal Family". This legal process went on for several weeks with Mr Greig being found guilty.

On 5 December that year Alexander Greig was again tried before Sheriff Young, but this time the Rev'd John Petrie of Drumlithie and the Rev'd John Troup of Muchalls were

also arraigned. Against all three clerics charges of conducting worship to more than the permitted number (40 persons were recorded at Stonehaven) and of failing to pray for the sovereign were found proven and the three were sentenced to incarceration in the Tolbooth on the north quay of Stonehaven harbour. Their six-month imprisonment was over the winter period of 1748/49.

As far as they were able they continued to minister to their congregations and during their confinement they received every attention from their followers who, when the gaoler's back was turned, joined them in divine service. It is said that Mr Greig baptised two persons through the barred window and Mr Petrie none. But John Troup is said to have baptised a considerable number, mostly infants of fishermen's wives from Skateraw. They were often to be seen trudging along the beach and clambering over the rocks with creels on their backs concealing their sleeping bairns and waiting for an opportune moment to approach the tolbooth window undetected by an official of the court.

After their release all three clergymen returned to their homes and continued to minister to their flocks without further intervention. Alexander Greig continued at Stonehaven for many years, but in 1751 there was appointed to an Episcopal meeting-house in Stonehaven a certain Rev'd John Watt, who, having been made deacon by the Bishop of Gloucester and priested by the Bishop of Durham, was more acceptable to the authorities since he had taken the oaths of allegiance to King George.



A little over a century later a young painter named George Washington Brownlow, a native of Newcastle, came to reside in Muchalls for three years. He must have quickly heard of the imprisonment in the Tolbooth, for he probably met people who could personally recall that generation. He also had a sense of capturing a good story. So he reconnoitered the scene and gathered his cast. Although there is a slight uncertainty over the identity of some of the models, most can be accurately named. Of the 12 people shown, 5 were of the Masson family and 2 were Christies. The only "foreigner" was the person posing as the Rev'd John Troup; he was in fact another clergyman - Mr Skinner from Essex - who was in the district on holiday at the time.