



The scale of the exodus to the Free Church in Cromarty can be imagined by the size of the West Church.



By 1843, anger at the right of lairds (estate owners) to choose the minister had simmered for more than a century. Communities wanted the right to make their own choice. It didn't happen and so at what is known as 'the Disruption' a large section of the Church of Scotland left to form the 'Free Church'.

After the Disruption, the East Church never recovered its central place in Cromarty worship.

### Fragmentation and new beginnings

The church is open to all to visit, hosts community events and occasional services, and is available for weddings and funerals.

Historic Scotland.

This inspired the creation of the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust, who undertook major conservation work with the support of the Cromarty community and with funding from many sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund and the East Church, rarely used, services were held in both the east and west church. But by the mid 1990s the East Church, rarely used, was declared surplus to requirements.

In a Presbyterian church the minister preaches from the pulpit, with the congregation sitting in pews arranged theatre-like around him.



The priest was replaced by a minister and following the teaching of the Bible, now read in English, was seen as the route to salvation. The congregation took a greater part in church services, singing psalms and celebrating the Lord's Supper together. All burials were now outside.

### Soil Deo Gloria: Glory to God Alone

Former practices were swept away in the years after 1560, when the national Scottish church became Protestant.

### A new Protestant discipline



The United Free Church rejoined the Church of Scotland in 1929 and

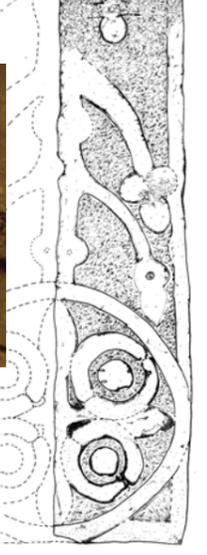
### Passion for a new life



This carved stone, thought to be the step up to the altar, was found during archaeological excavation.



The grave-slab displayed in the church has carved longwords and an open book, symbols of power and learning.



They were Roman Catholic Christians and the church was a simple rectangle. At the east end was the sacred area of the church where Mass was celebrated in Latin by a priest at the altar. The congregation stood in the main body of the church (nave) to watch, listen and pray. Where we now see pews there would have been open space, beaten earth floors and burials beneath their feet.

Enter the East Church today and your attention is held by the pulpit dominating the south wall, and by the pews which surround it. This would have been unrecognisable to the medieval worshippers who built the original church.



### The Medieval church



### Getting to the East Church

The historic burgh of Cromarty lies some 20 miles from Inverness at the north-eastern tip of the Black Isle



You can find out more about the East Church at [www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk](http://www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk)

and all about Cromarty at [www.cromartylive.co.uk](http://www.cromartylive.co.uk)

# East Church

C R O M A R T Y

Historic Parish Church  
cared for by the  
Scottish Redundant Churches Trust



More than 700 years ago a church was built on a spot nestled next to a burn and close to the settlement of Cromarty.

changing religious practice, ups and downs in the fortunes of the townspeople, and new building and design styles.

Now known as the East Church, the former parish church has stood firm on the same foundations ever since, a witness to

The church today reflects many of these changes, and is both a spiritually inspiring and historically fascinating building.



Charity Number SC024407

The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust identifies and takes into care historic churches no longer required for regular worship.

Churches are repaired using best conservation practice and in partnership with the communities associated with them.

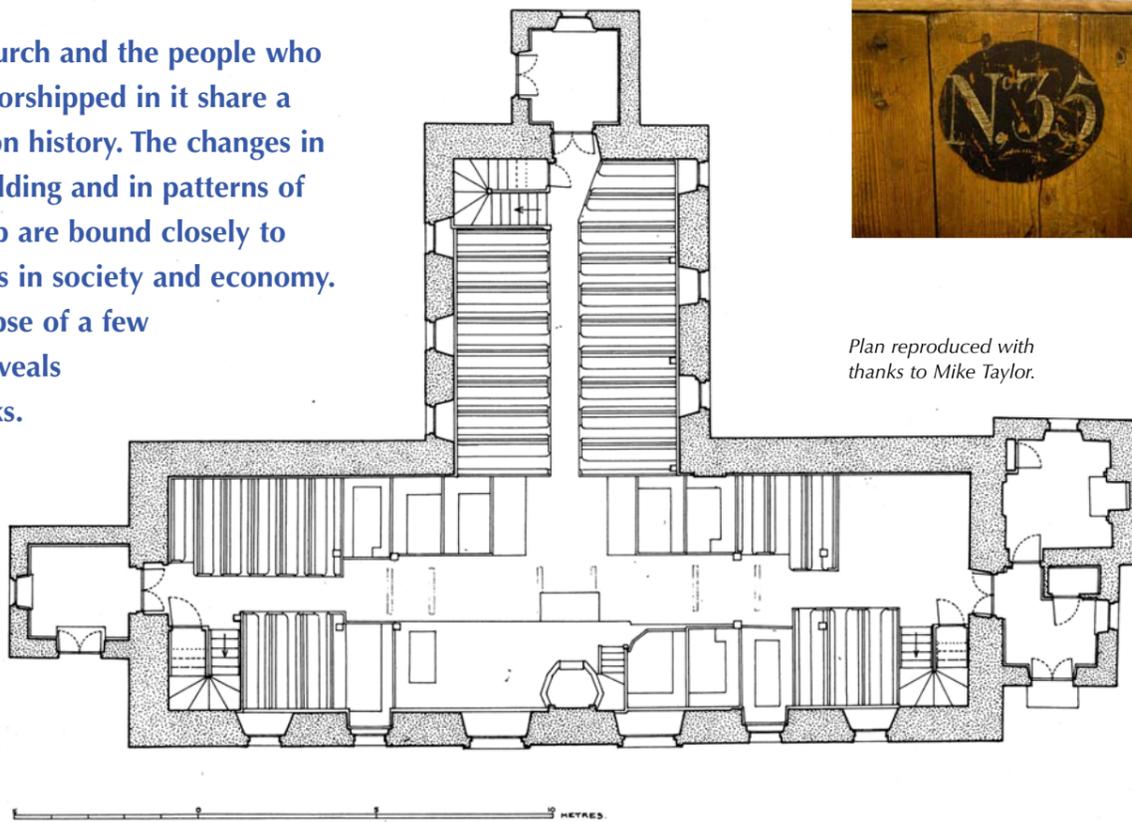


Our work is funded by grants by donations and legacies from our supporters.

[www.srct.org.uk](http://www.srct.org.uk)

# Church, congregation and community

The church and the people who have worshipped in it share a common history. The changes in the building and in patterns of worship are bound closely to changes in society and economy. A glimpse of a few lives reveals the links.



Plan reproduced with thanks to Mike Taylor.



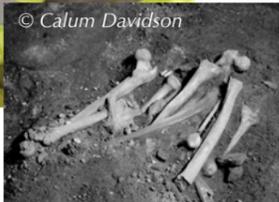
## Victorian disputes and modernisation

### Hugh Miller: disruption and departure

Hugh Miller is known today as a geologist, writer and stonemason, but in the 1800s he was a leading figure in setting up the Free Church. The Miller family pew was at the front of the north loft, and is described by Hugh as 'held by my family through times of poverty and depression'. Some of his finely carved gravestones can be seen in the kirkyard.



Hugh Miller's birthplace cottage is on Church Street next to the courthouse; it is owned by the National Trust for Scotland and open to the public.



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## Medieval origins

### A young woman remembered

Archaeological excavation found that the church floor is packed with burials. One of these, more than 500 years old and found deep in the soil, was looked at in more detail. She was a young woman aged between 25 and 35, possibly suffering from tuberculosis and bone disease.

## After the Reformation

### Sir Thomas Urquhart

Translator of Rabelais, an inventor of a universal language and of a family tree dating back to Adam and Eve, Sir Thomas Urquhart, born in 1611, is commemorated in the church by the Saltire Society memorial. '...more like a scolding tripe-seller's wife than good minister... squirting the poison of detraction and abominable falsehood' wrote Sir Thomas about his minister, Gilbert Anderson, following disagreement over the erection of a seat in the church.



### Ann McCulloch: wife and equal

The 1741 initials on the north loft are those of the first pew-holders to take front seat in the new north aisle, built for an expanding congregation. They are Ann McCulloch and her husband, shoemaker and church elder, Thomas Harper. This pairing of initials is also found on marriage stones above the front doors and fireplaces of some Cromarty homes. The Scottish custom of a wife keeping her maiden name can also be seen on some of the kirkyard gravestones.



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### George Ross: big plans for a small town

Commemorated by his bright funeral hatchment hanging in the laird's loft, George Ross was a man with a vision. Owner of the Cromarty estate in the later 1700s, he invested in its economic development and is responsible for many of the prominent features of Cromarty today. These include the harbour, the old brewery just around the corner from the church, and the courthouse on Church Street – now open as a museum.



### Walter Scott: minister and moderniser

In 1876 when Walter Scott began his nearly 50-year tenure as parish minister the East Church probably looked rather small and old fashioned compared to the large modern Free Church (the West Church). Perhaps it was this that encouraged Mr Scott to modernise the church. He added the present pulpit, dark Victorian pews, communion table and harmonium. Mr Scott also installed a central stove – the heat must have been welcome, but charred roof timbers suggest that we are lucky that the church still stands.

