

Lismore Church - Recent History Timeline

This is a list of links to free, public information about Lismore Church. The information is either online or may be viewed in the library at Lismore Heritage Centre.

1750-1790: Remains of ancient cathedral choir rebuilt as Lismore Church. Floor level raised around 0.75m and walls shortened by 2-3m. Three windows on south wall, no windows on north wall. Big gallery on west, north and east sides, accessed by external stairway on east side and internal stairway on west side. Main entrance at west end. Long communion table down centre of church.

1820: Drawing in George Henry Hutton's collection shows the church as seen from the south west.

<https://digital.nls.uk/74635302>

1861: Thomas Scott Muir wrote in 'Characteristics of Old Church Architecture etc. in the mainland and Western Isles of Scotland' (1861) p67 'Of the cathedral at Lismore nothing remains but the choir – a poor and extensively modernised oblong without aisles, internally 52 feet in length. There are buttresses on the east and south, the last dividing the wall into three bays pierced with square windows of quite recent date, and an old doorway, round in the head and of two orders. No windows appear in the north wall; but there are traces at the east end of it of a sacristy, the entrance to which from the choir by a sharp-pointed doorway is still entire though now walled-up.'

1866: The old graveyard was enclosed with a stone wall by Duncan Carmichael of Achuaran and Donald McGregor of Bailegarve.

The Scotland's People website requires free registration to view documents.

https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/virtual-volumes/volume-images/volume_data-CH2-814-3/REX00869?image_number=117

1870: Alexander Carmichael draws plan of church in field notebook Coll-97/CW106 and comments on bones found when the graveyard wall was built a few years earlier.

<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEcar~1~1~23153~100013:Field-Notebook%2C-ff-14v-15r>

1877: Seating plan of church showing allocation by estate

https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/image-viewer/maps_plans/maps_plans-12796419_504779_RHP8188_PL787

1882: How the church looked when Erskine Beveridge took photos in 1882:

<https://www.trove.scot/image/500617> Exterior from south-west

<https://www.trove.scot/image/742979> Exterior from south-west (not north-east)

<https://www.trove.scot/image/742998> Interior from east (not west) shows south and west walls

<https://www.trove.scot/image/742999> Interior from west shows north and east walls

<https://www.trove.scot/image/743000> Exterior from south-west (not north-east)

<https://www.trove.scot/image/743001> Exterior from south-west (not north-east)

<https://www.trove.scot/image/743010> Memorial slabs on east wall

1894: There is a short article with illustrations in MacGibbon & Ross 1894 The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland Vol 2

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/63978/63978-h/63978-h.htm#fig_667

1894: Plans drawn up in Oban in February 1894 for a rebuild of the church to today's layout. Architect unknown, but copy of plan in Lismore Archive, likely from

NRS reference GB234/HR/506 Lismore and Appin Parish Heritors Records 1751-1934

<https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/scancatalogue/details.aspx?reference=GB234%2fHR%2f506&>

Plans of ground and gallery floors with seating marked

<https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=RHP8182>

North, south, east and west elevations

<https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=RHP8183>

Longitudinal and through sections of current (1749) church and of church showing alterations

<https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=RHP8184>

1895: Three-day bazaar at Argyllshire Gathering Halls in Oban raises £450 in aid of church rebuild.

1896: Photo by Canon Edward Greatorex, Durham shows church just before renovation

<https://iif.durham.ac.uk/index.html?manifest=t1mpv63g038g>

1896: Pulpit moved from south wall to west end, gallery at east end only and new pews all facing west. Communion table moved from centre of church to west end. New wooden floor resting on previous stone flags, raising floor level by around 5cm. New hammer beam roof echoes circular Romanesque arches on windows and doorways. Three new windows in north wall. Porch and new entrance door at east end. Bell-tower moved from west to east end. Vestry including heating boiler at west end, feeding heating pipes under new pews. Lighting by oil lamps hanging low from centre of roof beams. Large Boyle-type ventilators in roof.

1897: Photo by Canon Edward Greatorex, Durham shows church just after renovation

<https://iif.durham.ac.uk/index.html?manifest=t1mmw22v566d>

1897: Photo of workers involved in renovating Lismore Church, with the architect in the middle of the front row, thought to be Alexander Shairp of Oban.

<https://oldappin.com/isle-of-lismore/>

https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/architects?p8_id=200310

1897: Church re-opened Sunday 19th September after renovations lasting nearly 13 months.

1897: Oban Times article 2nd October about 17th September fund-raising concert at Balgrundle School to finish paying for the renovation mentions Alexander Shairp giving details of the work done.

c1905: Valentine's postcard (in Heritage Centre) shows Lismore church from south-east with stovepipe through blocked south wall doorway.

1911: Colourful stained glass 'The Good Shepherd' and 'Dorcas' by James Benson, Bothwell Street, Glasgow, installed in centre and west windows on south wall in memory of Carmichael family.

1913-1914: Old manse built 1740, extended 1840, modernised with new water supply and flush toilets.

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537752> Drain Plan

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537753> Section AA; NW & SW elevations

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537754> Sections BB & CC; Roof Plan; SE & NE Elevations

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537755> First and Ground Floor Plans

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537756> Annotated First and Ground Floor Plans

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537757> Colour floor plans and sections

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1537758> Colour floor plans and sections

The colour plans distinguish between the old manse as built before 1840 (grey) and later additions (brown).

c1925: Architect Ian Gordon Lindsay visits Lismore to research book The Cathedrals of Scotland.

1926: The Cathedrals of Scotland published by W & R Chambers with chapter on Lismore.

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525247> Exterior view from south-west

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525248> Interior view from west showing oil lamps

1928: Moluag and Columba windows by Mary Isobel Wood installed in east wall above gallery in memory of Beatrice, wife of Angus MacLaine Gregorson.

1930: Photograph by Violet Banks shows Moluag and Columba windows from outside, and a tall stovepipe with rotary cowl at the north-east corner of the vestry.

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2262313>

1950s: Architect Ian Gordon Lindsay visits to supervise excavations 1950-1953, started privately but taken over by the Ancient Monuments Board, and plan renovations to church including exposure of medieval stone wall around piscina and sedilia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Gordon_Lindsay

https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/architects?p8_id=202407

<https://www.trove.scot/place/23100>

<https://www.trove.scot/image/707394>

<https://www.trove.scot/image/707455>

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1408308> Annotated survey plan prior to renovations

Paper on excavations in the Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society

Brown A L and Duncan A A M (1957) 'The cathedral church of Lismore', Trans Scot Eccles Soc, vol. 15, 1, 1957. Page(s): 41-55 illust RCAHMS Shelf Number: D.11.13.LIS.P

available at the Heritage Centre, is referred to in the website article

<https://www.lismoregaelicheritagecentre.org/the-cathedral-church-of-lismore/>

1956-1957: Grant from The Pilgrim Trust enables exposure of medieval wall around piscina, sedilia and blocked south wall doorway.

1957: Valentine's postcard JV-D-2589 shows Lismore Church

<https://collections.st-andrews.ac.uk/item/the-parish-church-lismore/97897>

A tall chimney is shown at the north-east corner of the vestry. The 1930 photo above shows a stovepipe with rotary cowl in the same location. It is possible that the associated boiler was installed between 1925 and 1930 and the chimney changed during renovations to improve the draught.

1959: Article in Oban Times 14th November 'The Ministry of Works is to take over the ruins of the nave of the old cathedral church of St. Moluag on Lismore, Rev. William Macdonald, Oban, told the Presbytery of Lorn at their meeting last week ...'

1963: Scottish Development Department visit Lismore.

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525130> View from north west showing vestry and boiler house

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525131> View from south east

1970: Electricity comes to Lismore

1970: RCAHMS visit

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1690137> Plan showing different ages of walls

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525151> View from north west showing nave foundations

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525152> View from south west

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525153> West gable, vestry and boiler house

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525154> South wall blocked doorway, patched stovepipe hole

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525159> North wall excavation details

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525161> Interior from gallery showing gas lighting

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525162> Interior from north east showing gas lighting

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525163> Doorway to vestry, heating pipes each side

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525164> South wall blocked doorway, heating pipes

<https://www.trove.scot/image/2525165> North wall blocked doorway, heating pipes

1971: Photo of vestry showing tall chimney, boiler room door, skylight, overflow pipe and electricity

<https://www.trove.scot/image/709583>

1980s: Old manse sold to become guest house and then private house; replaced by kit-build three-bedroom bungalow built in the glebe across the road from the church.

1983: Scottish Development Department Investigator photographs the church, suggesting there may have been funding to upgrade the heating

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977645> Church entrance showing roof ventilators and chimney

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977646> Church from south-east showing roof ventilators

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977647> Electric lighting, mix of gas and electric radiant heating

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977648> Electric radiant heater on south wall

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977649> Electric radiant heater on south wall

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977650> Electric radiant heater on north wall, old gas piping

<https://www.trove.scot/image/1977651> Electric air curtain fan heater over door to vestry

During the 1980s the heating pipes under the pews were replaced by electric convactor heaters and the roof ventilators on the church and old boiler room in the vestry were removed.

1987: Stained glass 'Follow Me' by Roland Mitton installed in east window on south wall.

1990: Pulpit fall showing church, embroidered by Elizabeth Odling and Valerie Livingstone dedicated.

1991: Aerial photo of church with roof ventilators and chimney removed

<https://www.trove.scot/image/450267>

1994-5: Lismore Cathedral appears on TV with Harry Secombe.

1995: Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mòr founded.

1996: Stained glass 'The Sower and the Seed' by Roland Mitton installed in centre window on north wall. The Roland Mitton windows were funded by the Wedd family, who had a cottage near the Achuaran steadings.

<https://collections.st-andrews.ac.uk/item/achuaran-looking-up-to-port-appin-lismore/97905>

2005: Lectern transferred from Ferenish Church (now a private house) on Morvern.

S G E Green 24th June 2025

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