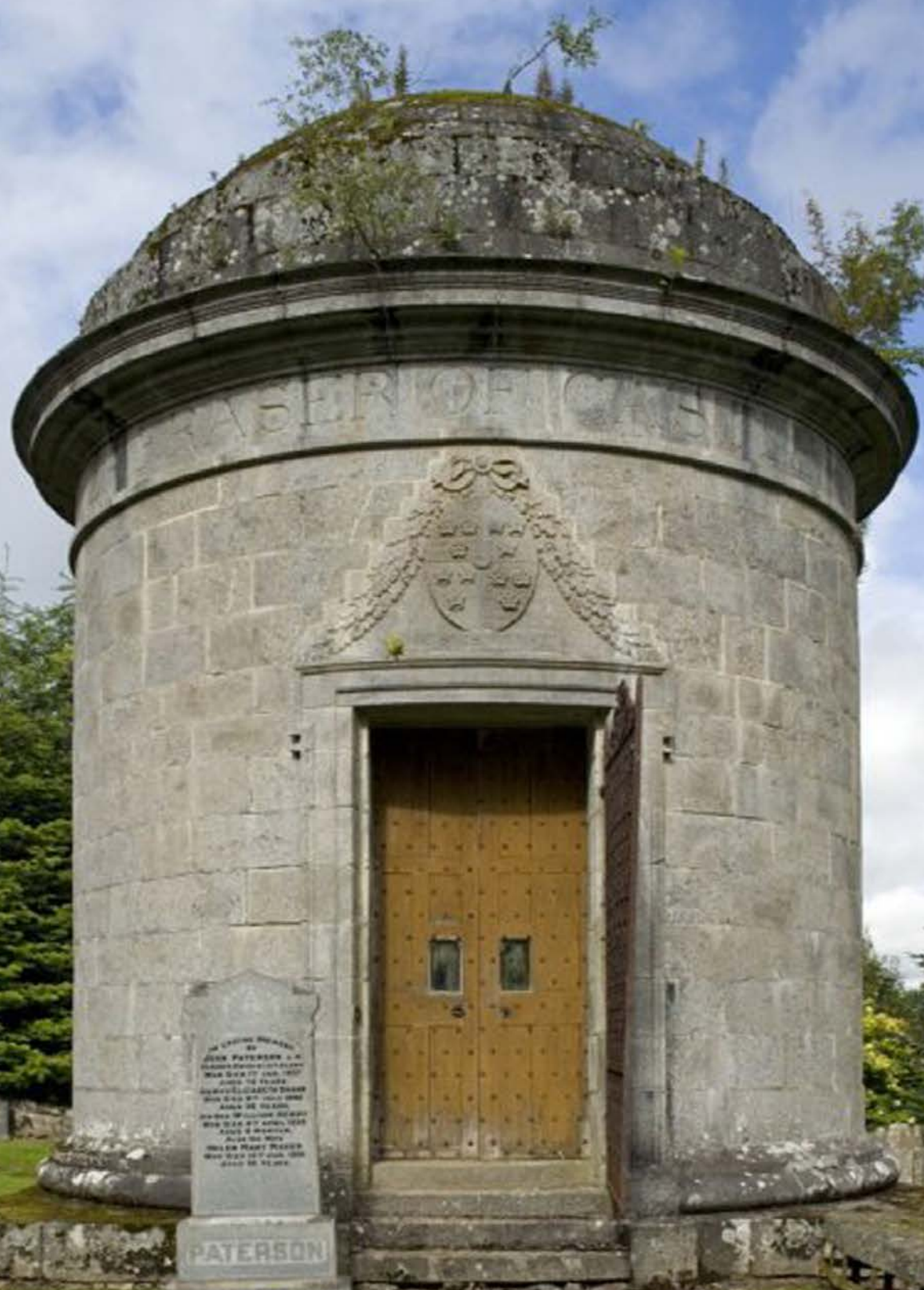


Miss Elyza Fraser's Mausoleum



in
Cluny Old Kirkyard, Aberdeenshire

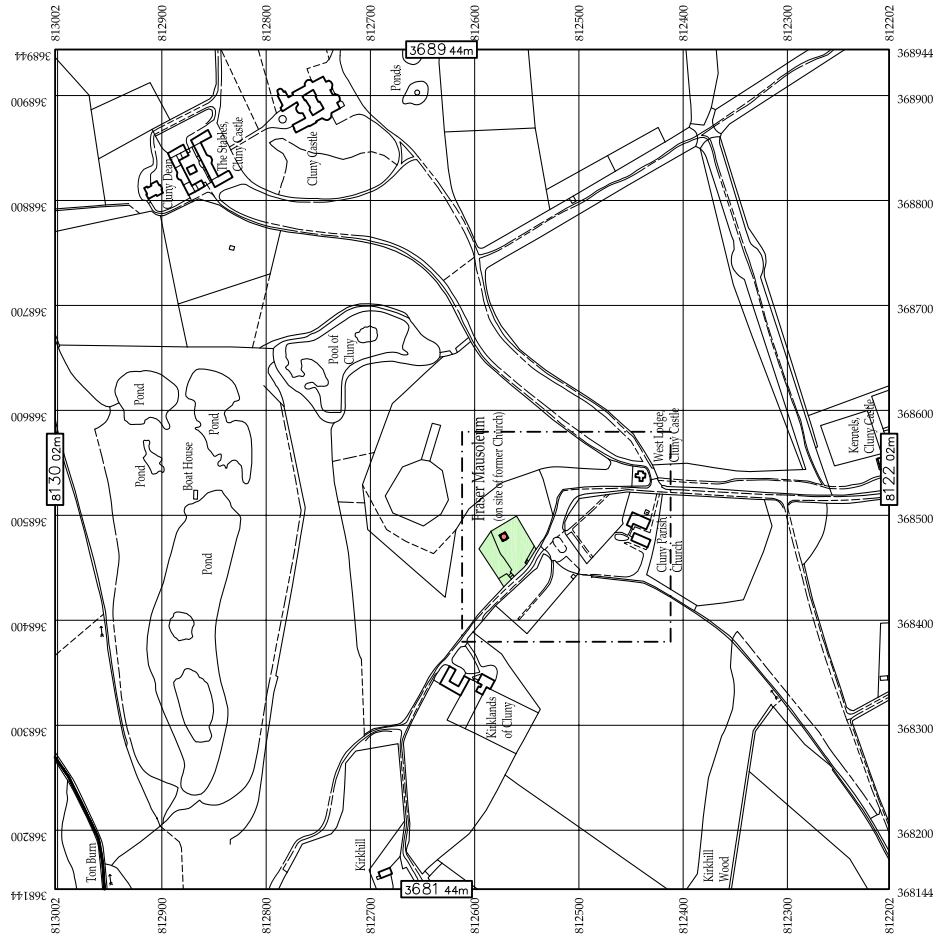
A restoration project

Site Location Plans

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R.I.A.S. Accreditation in Building Conservation
NOTE: Layouts are Indicative and subject to verification

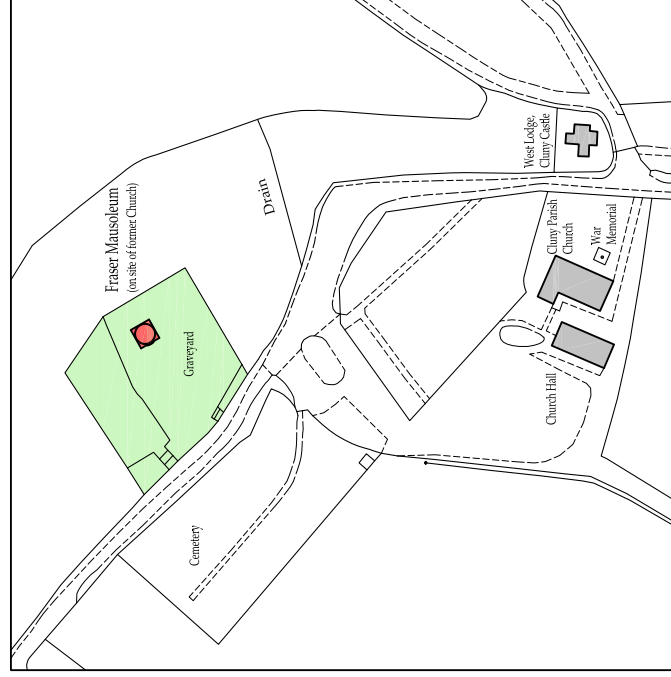
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PROPERTY LOCATION PLAN
Scale 1:4000 at A3

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Fraser Mausoleum



PROPERTY LOCATION PLAN
Scale 1:1250 at A3

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Scale 1:4000 0.0 50m 100m 150m 200m 250m
Scale 1:1250 0.0 20m 40m 60m 80m 100m

Project Title 13.07 Refurbishment of The Fraser Mausoleum, Cluny Kirkyard, Sauchen, Aberdeenshire
Drawing Title (001) Property Location Plans

Date August 2013
Scale 1:4000/1250 at A3

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The Project

Origins

For years, there has been a general awareness of a large and imposing mausoleum in the Cluny Old Kirkyard, Aberdeenshire, without a great deal being known about it locally. The huge lettering around the top: "Elyza Fraser of Castle Fraser" and the high quality of its design and construction all added to its interest. Obvious signs of deterioration in recent years led to enquiries to the Cluny Church of Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) at nearby Castle Fraser. Limited emergency repairs to the roof were undertaken externally by Aberdeenshire Council. The strong links to the castle prompted NTS staff to take the lead in calling together a group of individuals who then became an informal group, the Friends of Miss Elyza Fraser's Mausoleum, in an attempt to save, conserve and interpret the building.

The heritage value of the building

It soon became clear that this was no ordinary building, but instead a small masterpiece by James Byres of Tonley, a leading architect of his day and a mover and shaker in European society, with strong links to those in power and also responsible for the early success of such notable artists as Pompeo Batoni and Henry Raeburn. The story then became even more interesting for two reasons: firstly, it seemed to be the only extant structure designed by Byres; secondly it would appear that no-one can be proven to own the building.

Aspirations

The project which started to take shape thus divided into various pieces of work:

- Determining ownership;
- Making the building secure, through commissioning an overhaul of its faulty lock;
- Assessing the condition of the building;
- Assessing and costing the works needed to consolidate, conserve and interpret the mausoleum.

As Euan Glen, Minister of Cluny Church of Scotland stated at a public meeting in Cluny:

" children have been playing around the mausoleum for years, without really knowing much about it. It would be great if we can ensure that they can continue to play around it safely into the future, as well as knowing a little bit more about it and being proud of it as part of their local heritage."

Work to date

The Friends managed to secure some start-up funding from two sources: the Aberdeenshire Council Area Manager's Discretionary Fund and the National Trust for Scotland's Group Manager's Discretionary Fund. This has allowed the recruitment as project manager of the North East Scotland Preservation Trust, in the person of Paul Higson. Paul has overseen the commissioning of local maps from Ordnance Survey and drawings (kindly provided pro bono). He has also commissioned an overhaul of the external locks on the mausoleum and an outline survey of the condition of the grave covers and wall plaques inside. He has been working with Aberdeenshire Council staff and commissioned experts on the title search, which proved that the building had no owner.

The NESPT applied to the Registers of Scotland to take ownership of the building in spring 2015 but it took until December 2018, and the intervention of Fiona Hyslop, MSP, to finally be awarded title. Conservation Architect Dave Chouman has been monitoring the condition of the building and has produced a fully costed scheme of repair.

What comes next?

Fund raising. It is likely that a significant sum of money will be required to consolidate, repair and interpret the Miss Elyza Fraser Mausoleum. This is likely to be from grant awards and public donations. An indication of support from Historic Environment Scotland has been received and an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is in preparation. The Friends Group is determined to ensure the long-term future of this very important building.

Getting in touch

The contact details for those involved are at the end of this document. Please support the project by joining the Friends Group.

This document

Various individuals, in their own time, have contributed articles and drawings to inform the reader. We hope that you enjoy these and that you will join us in working towards saving the Miss Elyza Fraser Mausoleum.

The Friends of Miss Elyza Fraser Mausoleum
March 2020

The Mausoleum's links to Castle Fraser

Shannon Fraser

The construction of the mausoleum

Unusually for a woman of her time, Elyza Fraser of Castle Fraser spent a great deal of her time travelling independently on the Continent. It may be that in the course of her travels, passing through Italy, she formed an acquaintance with the antiquary and architect James Byres of Tonley. The Byres family had supported the Jacobite cause, and as such would likely have been well known to the Frasers. They were forced into exile in France in 1745; James Byres eventually set himself up in Rome as an art dealer and cultural guide for young aristocrats on the Grand Tour.

Whether or not Elyza Fraser and James Byres first became acquainted in Italy, they certainly became great friends after his return to Scotland in 1790. When she conceived the idea of building a mausoleum for herself in Cluny Kirkyard – the church of which she was one of the heritors – it was James Byres who designed it for her.

Based on Byres's design, a detailed specification for the building was drawn up in October 1807, the mason Alexander Wallace being chosen to direct the work. A great deal of stress was laid on high quality workmanship. So, for example, it was specified that:

“the whole body from base to cornice must be neatly dressed and squared so as to make the joynts closs and pits or hollows taken out by pick and axes to make the surface clean.”

Furthermore, the cornices were to be

“of particularly weel chosen stones as to colure & quality and laid level upon their beds as also the mouldings must be cutt and joynted together neatly so as to appear of one piece round the whole work.”

This can clearly be seen on the building today – the joints between the blocks upon which the inscription runs are almost invisible, giving the illusion of being carved upon a single piece of stone. With 200 years of weathering and repair, the joints have become more obvious on the cornice above, but where the original pointing survives it too can be seen to be extremely neat, again nearly invisible.

Just so everyone was absolutely clear about the level of workmanship expected, the specification ended with these words:

“upon the whole it is understood that every part of the before mentioned work must be done in a manner so as to satisfy James Byres Esqr of Tonley and James Massie who are to be judges of said work and it is agreed upon that the work must be rather better than the front of Miss Frasers green house at Castle Fraser I mean the joynts closer and pits taken out of the face of the stones and cleaner dressed upon the outside.”

Byres took great care with the details of the design, even in this tiny building. For example, the central light in the dome is specified as:

“an opening in the centre of 2 foot 6 diameter checkt above to receive the glass and bevelled below to spread the light within”. The bevelling of the interior edge of the stones surrounding the glass serves to maximize the amount of light entering the mausoleum.”

Construction of the mausoleum took place over the months of September to December 1808. Alexander Wallace employed nineteen men for the project, including a blacksmith for sharpening the masons’ tools. The building material, granite, is an extremely hard stone to work, and it is here that the high quality of the workmanship shines through. The letters of the inscription to Elyza Fraser, for example, are particularly elegant – well-proportioned and beautifully cut. Her coat of arms above the door was carved separately by a certain W. Scott – presumably William Scott – clearly a very accomplished stonemason.

As originally built, the mausoleum was provided with two doors. At some point, the outer door was replaced with a beautiful wrought iron screen, perhaps made to measure, or possibly re-used from another building. The drill holes for the dooks which would have supported the original timber door frame can be seen around the outer entrance.

The first burials and memorials

Elyza Fraser was not the first person to be commemorated in her mausoleum – that was to be another great friend, Mary Bristow, who had died at Castle Fraser in 1805. Elyza met Mary in 1781, and the two women became great travelling companions. The Bristows were a wealthy merchant family, based in Norfolk. One of Mary’s sisters was married to Simon Fraser of Lovat, son of the infamous Lord Lovat. Simon Fraser was a relation of the Frasers of Castle Fraser, and would have known Elyza’s brothers well – he was at Culloden with the eldest brother, Charles, while the second brother was in the Fraser Highlanders, a regiment raised by Simon Fraser of Lovat himself.



Castle Fraser, Sauchen

Elyza and Mary were great friends, and spent a good deal of time together when not travelling through Europe – Mary Bristow designed woodland pleasure gardens at Castle Fraser at the very end of the 18th century, still called Miss Bristow’s wood. Elyza Fraser erected a monument in her memory there, as well as commemorating her in the new mausoleum. The mausoleum also houses a memorial inscription to Mary Bristow’s sister Caroline, Lady Lyttelton, who died at Castle Fraser in 1809.

Elyza Fraser had a rather romantic turn of phrase; a few examples of her poetry survive, including the inscriptions to the Bristow sisters. Caroline Bristow is commemorated thus:

“In this sepulchral dome is plac’d
The dust whom rank and beauty grac’d:
A heart, within whose hallow’d cell
Each pleasing virtue lov’d to dwell:
Affection warm and trust sincere,
For others’ woes the patient ear –
Adorn’d the duties of her life,
As friend, as mother, and as wife.”

After Elyza Fraser

Elyza Fraser died in 1814 and was buried within her mausoleum. The estate was inherited by her sister Martha’s grandson, Charles Mackenzie Fraser. As a captain in the Coldstream Guards, Charles fought in Spain in the Peninsular wars. Charles and his wife Jane Hay are both buried on the south coast of England, but there is a memorial to them in the mausoleum. Sadly, they outlived most of their fourteen children, some of whom are buried in Elyza Fraser’s mausoleum.

Altogether, thirteen of their children are commemorated in the building. A number of them died abroad. They include John Wingfield Fraser, a lieutenant in the 60th Regt. Royal Rifles. He was posted to India, where he died on the island of Colaba at Bombay; he is buried in the Old European cemetery there. Francis Mackenzie Fraser, on the other hand, was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He died on the island of St Helena, in the south Atlantic. Both of these sons were in their early 20s when they died.

Charles Mackenzie Fraser’s last surviving son, Frederick, inherited the estate in 1871. In addition to a memorial inscription, his grave slab lies in the centre of the mausoleum. Like Elyza Fraser, Frederick was a great traveller. He and his second wife, Theodora Lovett Darby, spent much of their time crossing and re-crossing Europe, staying with numerous minor European royalty. Theodora was the last person to be interred within this family tomb, in 1946.

An earlier Fraser inheritance

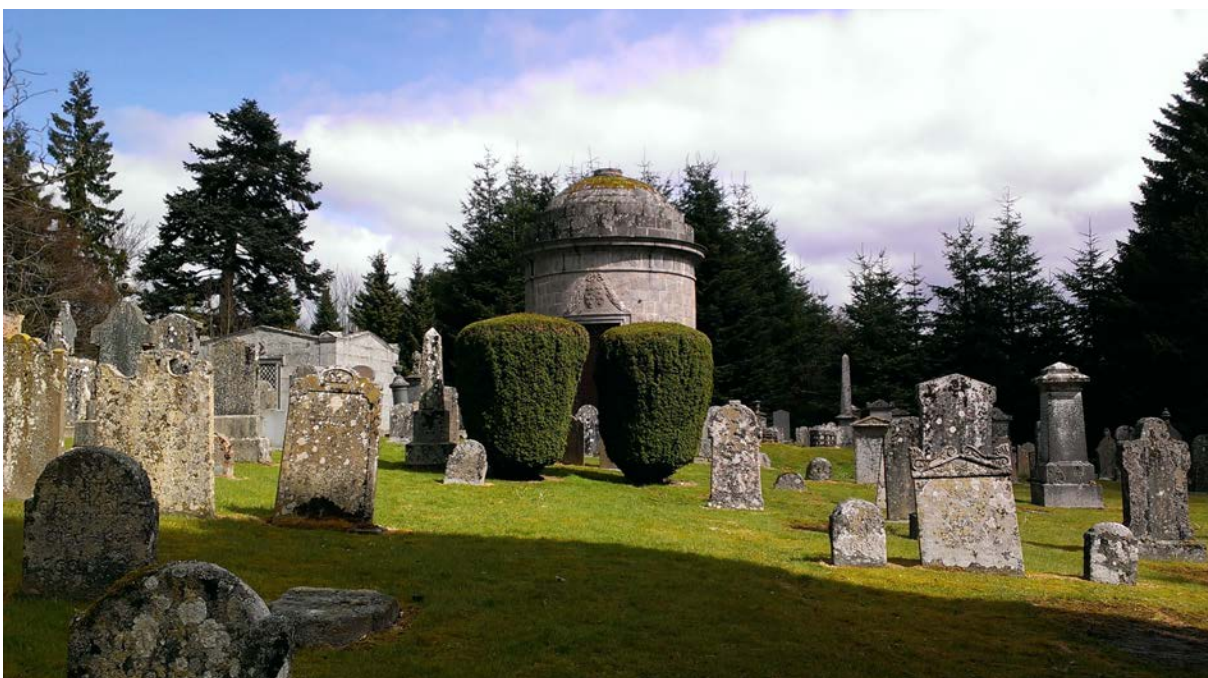
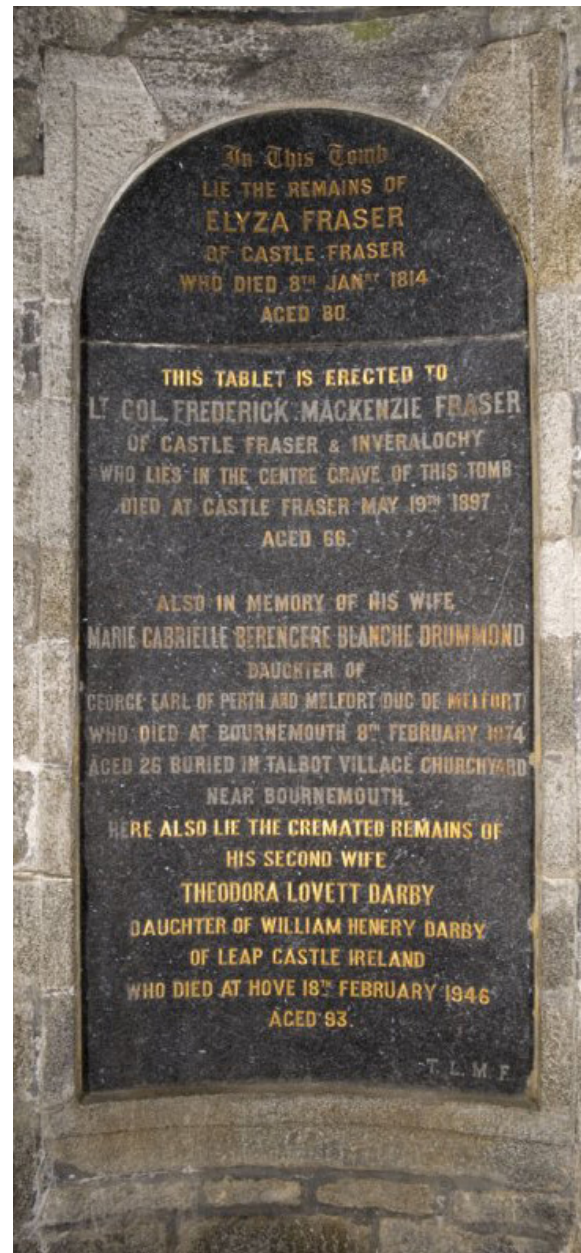
Three carved stone objects within the mausoleum are related to the Frasers of Muchall, the family which held the estate from the mid 15th century until 1716. The first is a monogram panel of Andrew Fraser of Stoneywood and Muchall, who was to become 1st Lord Fraser, and his first wife, Lady Elizabeth Douglas. Their initials are entwined in the centre of the panel, which dates to the late 16th/early 17th century. Its pristine condition indicates that it must have been located inside a building, rather than exposed to the elements on the exterior. It is possible that it came from the Fraser burial aisle in the old parish church of Cluny, which was demolished in 1789.

Two carved stone angels, or *putti* – one with a skull, contemplating human mortality – were probably carved in the late 1600s. Again, they have clearly never been exposed to wind and weather, so they too may well come from one of the Fraser tombs in the old church.

Miss Elyza Fraser's Mausoleum



Miss Elyza Fraser's Mausoleum



Miss Elyza Fraser (1736 - 1814)

From the Castle Fraser Archives

Miss Fraser who by the death of her brother has lately succeeded to the estate of Castle Fraser, is carrying on improvements with great spirit (Statistical Account of Scotland 1793)



Charles Fraser (Auld Inverallochy) and his wife Ann Udny's youngest child, Elizabeth, was born on the 10 July 1736; she was the second of their daughters with that name. The elder Elizabeth had died in 1729, before she was one year old, and the younger Elizabeth so christened in her memory. Throughout her long life, she was to be known as Elyza to distinguish her from her deceased sibling.

Elyza's early life was marred by family tragedy. The Frasers were Jacobites and her eldest brother, Charles, led members of the clan in support of Bonnie Prince Charlie in the 1745 rebellion. He was wounded at Culloden in 1746, and on the day following the battle was murdered, where he lay on the battlefield, in the blood-letting that ensued. Elyza was ten years old at that time, and was to lose another brother, Simon, thirteen years later, at the Battle of Quebec in 1759, during the war to secure Canada from the French.

From her travels abroad, in what was the age of the Grand Tour, Elyza developed an abiding fascination for the continent, delighting in the scenery, arts and architecture and the people. Her love of reading and music grew and she gathered together a large collection of books and scores which eventually found their way into the Library at Castle Fraser. Like most young ladies of her class at that time, she became a skilled needlewoman as the embroideries which she stitched testify; some of her work can still be seen in the Worked Room.

What distinguishes Elyza, however, is her deep knowledge of agricultural matters. This was the age of the Industrial Revolution but also of agricultural improvement, and she would have been very interested and influenced by the well documented work being carried out by Sir Archibald Grant on the nearby Monymusk Estate. The contemporary report made on her tenancy of Knockhall Farm on the Udny Estate showed how informed she was in matters relating to practical husbandry and demonstrates that for her, farming was a business as well as a way of life.

When her last remaining brother, William, died in 1792, the Castle Fraser and Inverallochy Estates were split, with her older sister, Martha, becoming the 8th Laird of Inverallochy and Elyza inheriting Castle Fraser. Each sister was also bequeathed the sum of £6761.16.7d. This unexpected turn of events would have come as an upset to Elyza, now middle-aged and settled in her life. She had no husband to take over the management of the great estate, but with the support of her beloved friend and companion, Mary Bristow, she faced up to this new challenge and set about continuing work in progress and instigating new projects of her own design.

Changes were made to the Castle itself, notably the installation of a new entrance on the south side, (still in use today) and the widening of the west window in the Great Hall, better to enjoy the Aberdeenshire sunset. Elyza was so proud of these and other alterations that she marked them by placing her coat of arms, dated 1795, in the stones of the Castle walls.

Extensive work on 'improving' the estate also went ahead and the 1793 Statistical Account of Scotland recorded that this involved , as with other landowners, taking a *great quantity of land into their own possession in order to enclose and improve it by draining, planting etc. And the people formerly resident on these lands have been removed.* Elyza was a formidable Lady Laird. Her tenant farmers were required to adhere strictly to the terms of their lease, growing only the stipulated crops and improving their farm management techniques.

Thomas White's 1794 'Plan for the Improvement of Castle Fraser, the seat of Miss Fraser' was selectively implemented with major planting of trees both as shelter belts and to enhance the landscape so that by 1811, Castle Fraser was being described as *...a most commodious and spacious mansion, uniting dignity with elegance: And by the good taste of the owner, both the house and the adjoining grounds are laid out to the greatest advantage.*

Before her health started to fail when she was in her late sixties and she subsequently became bed-ridden in the Worked Room for the last years of her life, Elyza had achieved much to honour the family name of which she was so proud by her sheer determination to succeed. Mrs. Lavinia Smiley, the later owner of the Castle, described her as an *erudite and cultured lady of great character;* certainly her life was one of independence and innovation. Perhaps the last words about Elyza, however, should be those which her successor, Charles Mackenzie Fraser, added to Elyza's own monument to Mary Bristow:-

Sacred to the memory of Elyza Fraser, late possessor of this Castle, who departed this life on the 8th Jany 1814, aged 80. Distinguished by her intellectual attainments and polite accomplishments, and still more by those virtues which dignify and exalt human nature. And after a life spent in the uniform and active discharge of every Christian duty, she resigned her breath in the joyful hope of a glorious immortality. That her memory may be cherished by the inhabitants of this place is the sincere prayer of her grateful relation and successor, Charles Fraser.

James Byres of Tonley (1734 - 1817), antiquarian and architect

Peter Davidson

Although the idea of 'The Grand Tour', the aristocratic journey around eighteenth-century Italy, is familiar to many, the name of the Aberdeenshire Catholic who was a pivotal figure in the artistic life of Rome in the period is less familiar. James Byres was the son of the Jacobite and Catholic Laird of Tonley, Patrick Byres, who fled to the Continent with his family after the disastrous end of the 1745 Rising at Culloden. By 1758, Byres was studying painting in Rome. Throughout his life he made architectural designs, although few of them were carried out.



From the early 1760s, Byres was a leading figure in the art world of Rome as experienced by the 'grand tourist'. He acted as an antiquarian guide, most notably to the famous historian Edward Gibbon, showing the monuments of ancient and modern Rome in learned detail and obtaining access for his clients to private palaces and museums. He also acted as an agent introducing potential patrons to painters, arranging sittings with the leading portrait painter of the day, Pompeo Batoni (1708-87), for the most affluent, but also loyally promoting the interests of Scottish artists in Rome.

As an art dealer he handled such fine paintings as Poussin's Seven Sacraments, now in the National Galleries of Scotland. This was shady transaction, involving the substitution of copies for the originals and a considerable element of secrecy. In fairness, though, the standards of the art market of the eighteenth century were not those of today: export licences could be circumvented, attributions were a matter of personal judgement, excavated pieces were usually heavily restored before being offered for sale.

In Rome Byres lived in some state in the Strada Paolina with a household which included at various times his parents, his nephew and the engraver Christopher Norton (c.1740-99) as well as his fellow artist and antiquary Colin Morison (1732-1810). Byres returned to Scotland in 1790 and lived out a long retirement on his Aberdeenshire estates.

Byres made a particular study of Etruscan painted tombs. His book on this subject was printed posthumously in 1842, the plates for its illustrations having remained on the continent for the duration of the Napoleonic wars. Byres was fascinated by the achievements of these 'first people of Italy' and regarded their subjugation by their southern neighbours, the Romans, as barbaric. It is not unlikely, given the eighteenth-century taste for drawing contemporary parallels with ancient history, that Byres thought of the Etruscans as comparable to the Jacobite northern Scots, a parallel which would have been reinforced by his reading of the later books of Virgil's Aeneid (a work much favoured by Jacobite mythographers) in which the indigenous Italians are displaced by the invading Trojans.

Few of Byres's architectural works were executed: he designed the two end bays of the seminary building at Aquahorthies near Inverurie for Bishop Hay. This is now altered, but was thought to have contained a double-height chapel. Amongst Byres's unbuilt designs are a set of drawings for a rebuilding of King's College, Aberdeen in the manner of the university buildings (the 'Sapienza') at Rome, probably dating from 1776. There is an elegant fireplace by Byres in the upstairs drawing room at Fyvie Castle, and a fine white marble fireplace ex situ now at Dumfries House. His austere and beautifully detailed mausoleum for Miss Elyza Fraser of Castle Fraser can be seen in the Churchyard at Cluny in Aberdeenshire, a work of the most refined Vanvitellian classicism, deceptive in scale, successfully reminiscent of the monumental sepulchres of Rome, such as the Castel Sant'Angelo.

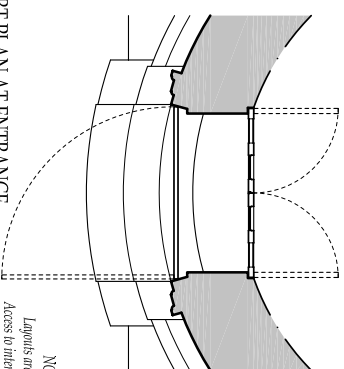
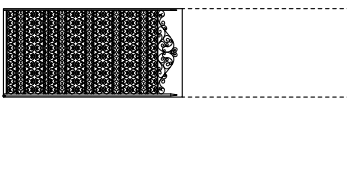
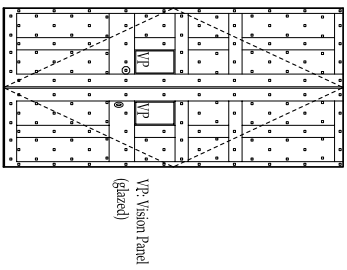
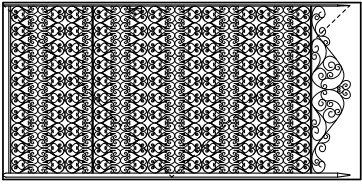
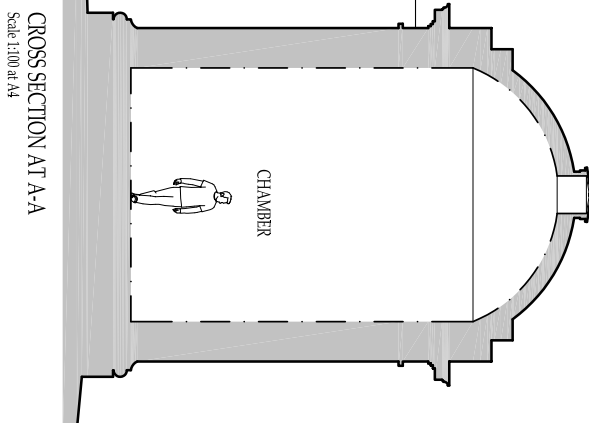
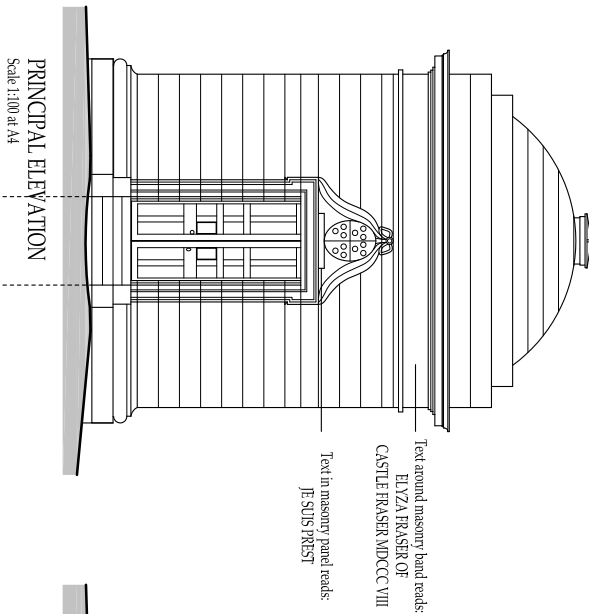
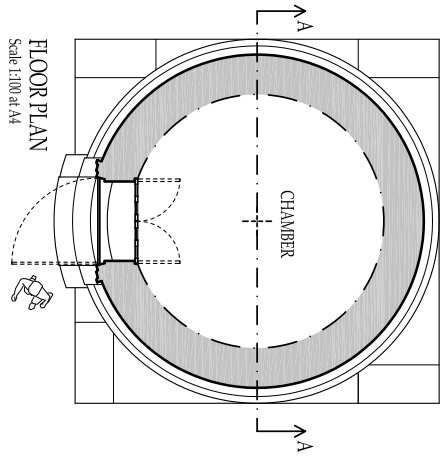
The Mausoleum - architectural drawings

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R.I.A.S. Accreditation in Building Conservation
NOTE: Layouts are Indicative and subject to verification

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ELEVATION OF IRON SCREEN
Scale 1:50 at A4

ELEVATION OF TIMBER DOORS
Scale 1:50 at A4

ELEVATION OF IRON SCREEN
Scale 1:100 at A4

PART PLAN AT ENTRANCE
Scale 1:50 at A4

PRINCIPAL ELEVATION
Scale 1:100 at A4

CROSS SECTION AT A-A
Scale 1:100 at A4

ELEVATION OF IRON SCREEN
Scale 1:100 at A4

Project Title 13.07 Refurbishment of The Fraser Mausoleum, Cluny Kirkyard, Sauchen, Aberdeenshire
Drawing Title (002a) Plan, Principal Elevation, Cross Section at A-A & Details: General Arrangements as Existing (Indicative)

Scale 1:100 0.0 1.0m 2.0m 3.0m 4.0m 5.0m
Scale 1:50 0.0 0.5m 1.0m 1.5m 2.0m 2.5m

Date April 2013
Scale 1:100 at A4

NOTE:
Layouts are Indicative -
Access to interior & high-level
elements restricted during
inspection & subject to survey

The Project Team and contact details

David Chouman



North East Scotland Preservation Trust – NESPT: owns the building and is acting as lead partner and project manager.

Contact Paul Higson at: info@nespt.org

Revd Euan Glen: is Minister of Cluny Church of Scotland.

Contact Euan at: minister@clunychurch.org.uk

The Friends of Miss Elyza Fraser Mausoleum: is a grouping convened for this project, which will happily welcome new “Friends” and keep them informed of progress.

Contact John Fraser, Chairman, at: johnfraser477@btinternet.com

Jill Standing, Membership Secretary, at: jill.standing.t21@btinternet.com

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