

Explore the ‘Chanonry’ a walking trail around early Fortrose



***This gentle circular stroll will take about 30 minutes
and begins and ends at the entrance to Fortrose Cathedral.***

***Please note that other than the Cathedral itself
and Saint Andrews Church, none of the buildings mentioned is open to
the public, as all are private homes.***

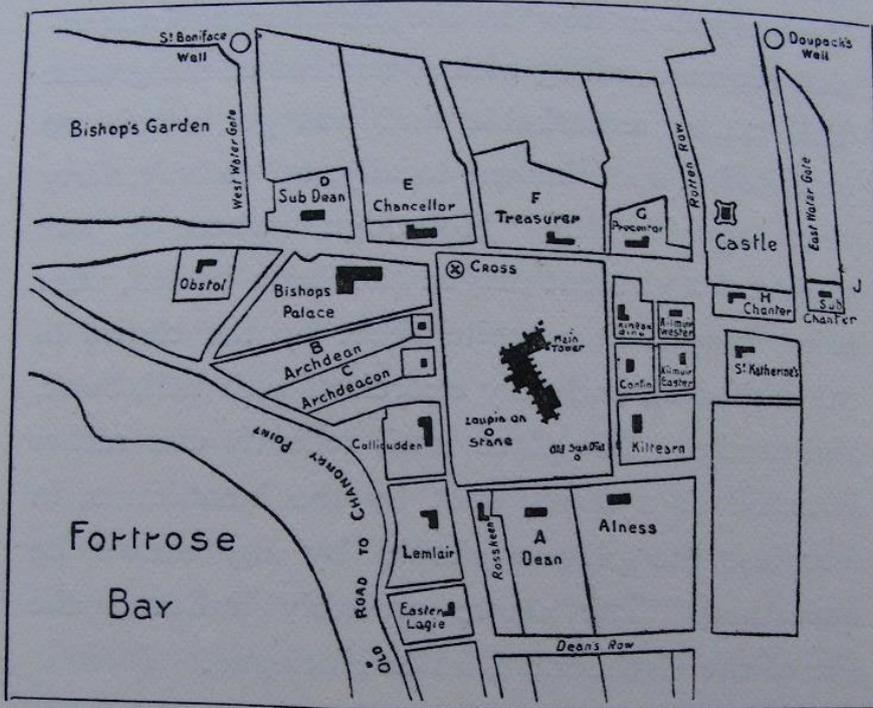
***Please respect the privacy of those who live there
and enjoy their fine architecture from the roadside only.***

***The tour is based in part on a hand-drawn plan
to be found in the ‘Chanonry of Ross’ by C G Macdowall.
There is a copy in the Fortrose library reserve collection.***

The Kirkmichael Trust 2017



Plan of Manses



<i>OFFICIAL.</i>		<i>PARISH.</i>	
A.	DEAN	- - -	ROSEMARKIE
B.	ARCH-DEAN	- - -	KILEARNAN
C.	ARCH-DEACON	- - -	KIRKMICHAEL
D.	SUB-DEAN	- - -	EDDERTON
E.	CHANCELLOR	- - -	KINNETTAS AND SUDDY
F.	TREASURER	- - -	URQUHART
G.	PRECENTOR	- - -	KILCHRIST AND KILMORACH
H.	CHANTER	- - -	AVOCH
J.	SUB-CHANTER	- - -	URRAY

This plan shows the Bishop's Palace on the south side of the High Street, so is based on early post-Reformation documents. The pre-Reformation Bishop's Palace stood opposite it, on the other side of what is now the High Street, and earlier documentary evidence suggests that many of these manses were already in existence on the same location since the Cathedral's construction in the 11th century.

So what do we mean by a manse? More than just a house, as today. It was where the priest had his dwelling-place, garden and livestock, sometimes horses too, although those allocated further-flung parishes doubtless had accommodation there too.

The well-preserved garden of Kirkmichael manse suggests a terraced garden stooping right down to the shore for easy access to fish for supper and boats for transport.

The ground-plan of Fortrose has changed little today. You will be walking around a basic rectangle of streets: Union Street, Castle Street, Deans Road, Academy Street and the High Street. Rose Street crosses the middle of this rectangle.

This is level walking which will take about half an hour at a steady pace. If you choose to detour via the pretty harbour, this is a steep slope down and up again with no footway and it will add fifteen minutes to your stroll. You simply join the High Street a little further west.

If you get lost, just ask a local. The Natives are Friendly! Enjoy the tour.

Verity Walker

January 2017



After you have explored **Fortrose Cathedral (1)** and read the informative interpretive panels which summarise its story, our tour begins at the lych-gate.

The Cathedral is dedicated to two saints jointly: **Saint Peter** (the Gatekeeper of heaven) and **Saint Boniface**, a more local saint with origins within the Celtic church. On the second Thursday in

August, the square to the west of the chapel is brought to life by the **Saint Boniface Fair**, a recreated mediaeval fair re-established in the 1970s and popular with locals and visitors alike.

After the Cathedral was founded in 1260 it became a massive administrative and religious centre of activity in the area, replacing a still earlier building in Rosemarkie.

The Cathedral and its surroundings became known as the **Chanonry** (rather than Fortrose) after the many canons and other clerics who moved in to occupy it. It stood in the centre of a much larger area of land than is visible today, with manses large and small constructed all the way around its 'green'. These connected the Cathedral with its various parishes within the diocese of Ross, as far-distant as Kilmorack near Beaully and Kiltearn near Invergordon, as well as many on the Black Isle itself. The parish priests must have used the sea as well as horses to travel to and from their parishes.

The current wall, the large town houses (and car park area) you see in front of you would not have existed. Those living in Fortrose are still nicknamed '**Chen'ry Divots**' – possibly after the clods of earth thrown up by many hooves going to and from the place. Other local Black Isle nicknames are still less complimentary!

The High Street itself ran along one edge of the main cathedral square, with today's High Street probably arising from an area where trading and market stalls were encouraged.

Please start the trail with your back to the lych-gate. **Walk towards the Anderson Hotel** (beyond the British Legion memorial) and **turn right again to walk down Union Street**. The fine pink house on your left (2a), **St Katherine's**, stands where, according to an early plan, a large Cathedral building of the same name was constructed. Could it be significant that this is specifically a female saint's name - and so may relate to a Culdee establishment or pre-Reformation convent of some kind on the site?



The Culdees were lay people (not priests) who chose to live in communities following a monastic way of life but

without taking vows. They were involved in the very earliest years of the Cathedral.

If so, this establishment may have provided accommodation for female travellers or pilgrims and possibly even a place of basic instruction (sewing skills etc rather than academic work) for girls in the locality – although one St Catherine, whose unsuccessful martyrdom on a ‘breaking wheel’ gave her name to the firework, was a noted scholar (only a brief reprieve when the wheel shattered, the poor girl was beheaded instead).

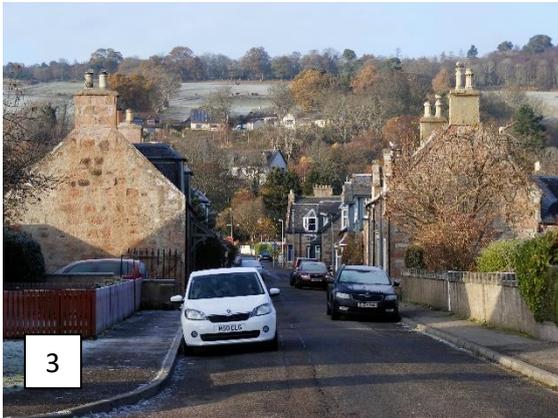
One of several cellars in this house is lined with early tombstones, presumably ‘liberated’ from the burial ground surrounding the Cathedral long ago – practical re-use of early grave-slabs is very common. Peep into the entrance yard and you will see an inscription on the wall above a slatted opening to the left of the door:



*Qui ide semelipso sal bene pernoscit
Leviter valde semelipsum perpendit*

Which translates roughly as ‘He who knows the worth of salt takes his own importance with a pinch of it’. This must have been the entrance to the salt-cellar, for salt was used for preservation as well as flavouring in far greater quantities than today. Much of this house was built for Magister (Master) Robert Burnet, the last pre-Reformation priest of Contin Church, in the late 1500s. These stones may well have been brought from Contin’s manse between St Katherine’s and the Cathedral. Interestingly, **Contin Church** near Strathpeffer has two early wall-

mounted early stones similar to those being displayed at Kirkmichael, but the building is generally kept locked.



Turn left into **Rose Street** and **walk along to where it connects with Castle Street**. **Look left**. At the top of this road today, you can just glimpse the dormer windows of the **Co-op store** (3). This stands on the approximate location of the **Chanonry Castle** in early times. This road continues to join the ancient and historic grassy **Greengates Path**, part of the original pilgrim's way to and from the **Chanonry Point** ferry.

These were volatile times and even priests may have needed a castle to withdraw to from time to time,

probably a simple fortified keep.

Now **turn right** and walk up **Castle Street** to where it joins **Deans Road** [for a detour to Chanonry Point, follow the Greengates path straight on here and follow the coastal path towards the lighthouse in the distance]. **Turn right** again.

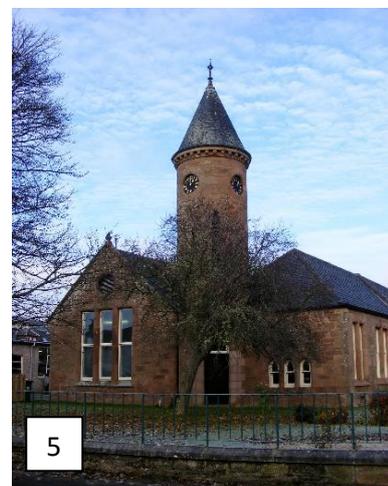
This would have been **Deans Row** (4) in mediaeval times, perhaps suggesting a row of dwellings



in which those who worked under the Dean (who had charge of the cathedral rather than the diocese) would have lived?

On the corner you can see **Fortrose Academy** (5). fine building existed since but you will

see the location of the earlier Academy dating back to 1580 further on.



here

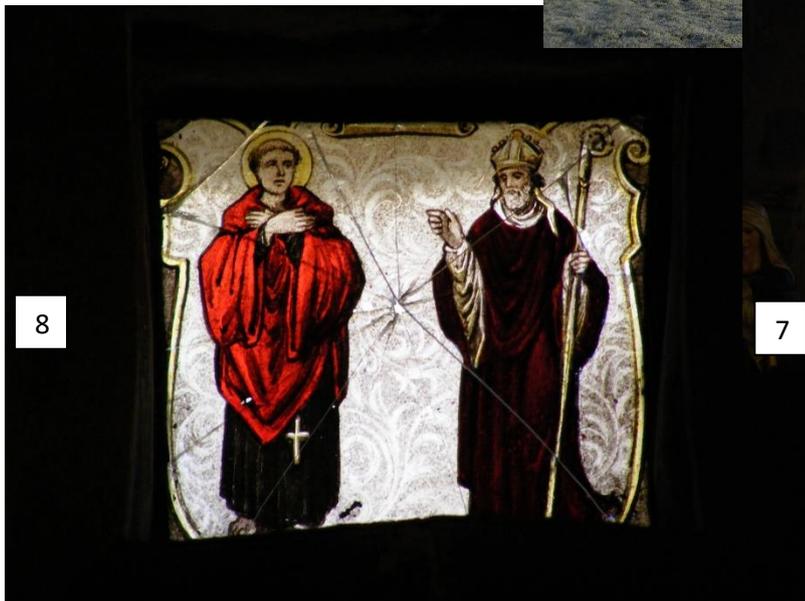
This has 1793 also

Turn right into **Academy Street**. Look out for the large house called **the Pilk** on the left with a pig plaque on its gatepost. This was the location of Pilk's Croft, once a piggery. There may have been a long tradition of keeping pigs and other livestock well away from the Cathedral, where sea breezes might keep the fragrance at bay! The houses which run parallel to the Pilk the whole way along Academy Street on the left were all mediaeval manses. The Pilk is approximately where **Logie Easter** manse was located.

Saint Andrews Scottish Episcopal Church (1827) on your left (6) sits on an artificial mound roughly where **Lemlair** manse is marked. Enter the church (open during daylight hours – upkeep donations appreciated) and enjoy its fine **stained glass** (7), notably in the Baptistry, where a tiny **fragment of glass** which many **believe originates from Fortrose Cathedral** (8) forms the centrepiece of the rose window. Outside, **walk over to the cliff for a fine view of**



6



8



7

Fortrose Harbour. [If you wish to walk down to the harbour and up the narrow lane beyond it, you can rejoin the trail at Bishops Cottage, doubling back down Academy Street

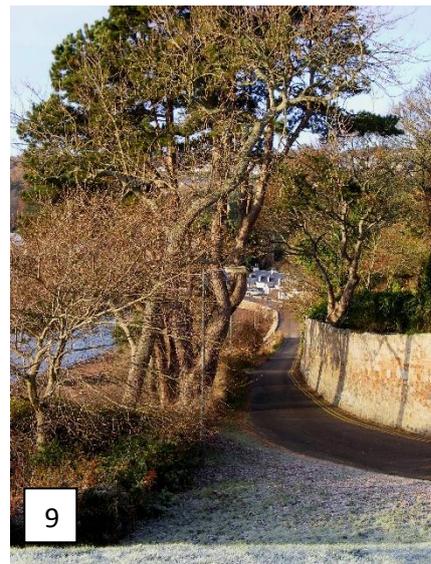
to view the houses now on the sites of the Kirkmichael and Killearnan.]

Within living memory a path ran along the top of the cliff here all the way to Chanonry Point, but most has now eroded back into the sea. **Saint Andrews Walk** (9) may be a fragment of this original road as shown on the early plan. There is certainly a huge quantity of finely-worked blocks of stone on the shoreline below, suggesting large buildings and walls which have been pushed or fallen into the sea.

The large house opposite the church is still called the **Deanery** (10), giving a strong indication of a Dean's residence/manse nearby. It is reputedly the most haunted house in Fortrose!



On the early plan it appears to



fall on a long narrow manse running parallel with the street connected to **Roskean** parish, but immediately behind this was the Dean's own substantial manse.

At the junction with Rose Street you can **take a short detour up to look at the outsides of Rose Court and Angel Court (11)**, probably the location of the original access into the Dean's

manse lands and the earliest buildings in Fortrose.

These have some surviving 11th/12th century stonework. There are the remains of 'secret underground passageways' allegedly connecting with the Cathedral (there may have been one to Saint Katherine's too, as well as other old houses). These double cellars and passages may equally well have been used for storing smuggled goods.

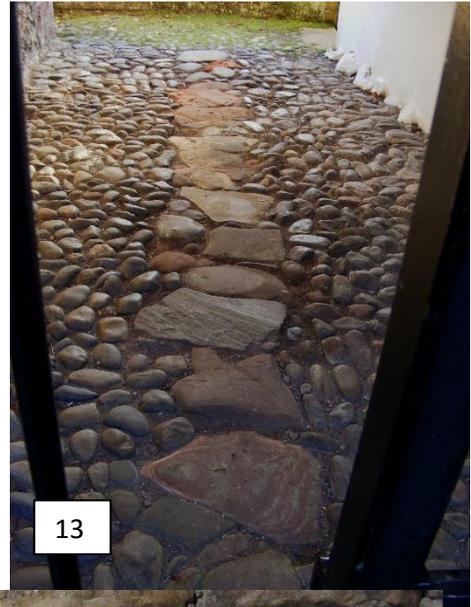
If they were intended as a quick 'getaway' route for the Bishop and senior clerics in times of trouble when



someone laid siege to the cathedral, it did not take them very far. The fine archway through suggests access by horses (the getaway vehicle?) and shows traditional cobbles (12, 13)



complete with a 'croon o' the causie', a row of higher central stones which would allow cleaner access to pedestrians. It is likely there would have been a fine carved rose somewhere on this building, hence the name, but this has sadly been destroyed or lost.



The **Angel** next door (14) has however survived. Fragments were found broken and the current owners have carefully and lovingly searched for the remaining pieces and restored her. NB: she is now kept indoors and is not visible from Rose Street. Angels may well have been considered too 'papist' at certain times in history and similar carvings elsewhere have been deliberately broken or hidden away.



Return to Academy Street and keep walking down it towards the High Street. On your left you have a series of parallel early manses: **Cullicudden** (15) was a large one and is likely to have been located immediately opposite the end of Rose Street, including the lands now occupied by **Meadowbank** (16), one of many houses said to have been built by Kintail Mackenzies who took over control of the Cathedral after the Reformation and used many of its stones to their own ends. **Old Cullicudden burial ground in Resolis** still has the remains of its small church visible, and is well worth a visit.

Beyond this manse there is a wide gap shown on the plan, possibly allowing access to the **Cathedral** (17) directly from the sea. Intriguingly this approximately matches the current open

railed area of the cathedral green beside the St Andrews Hall, now an excellent little charity shop, but once a meeting-house for Episcopalians until



burned down by marauding troops after the Battle for Culloden, then rebuilt in 1788.



Could this pronounced gap indicate that this land may have been an access point to the cathedral from the sea at some time in the past? The priests must have had a way down to the shore to take a boat when travelling by sea.



Next you have **Kirkmichael** (18, 19, 20), the parish of the Arch-Deacon (deacons assisted the priesthood in tending the parishes but could not handle or administer the Holy Sacrament) and **Killearnan**, parish of the Arch-Dean, long and narrow, close together. Please note that these photos have been taken inside the gardens by kind permission of the owners but the gardens



are not fully visible from Academy Street.

NB in some documentation these manses are reversed.

The Arch-Dean seems to be an obsolete ecclesiastical rank but presumably administered all activity of lesser deans in the diocese and at the cathedral in particular.

Incredibly, the most easterly of the two manses, has its lands still intact, with traces of early terracing stooping all the way down to the water.

It is an indication of the value of tithes (donations of a percentage of income in cash or kind) coming from Kirkmichael that the Arch-Deacon, reputedly just one step below the Bishop himself, was allocated Kirkmichael as his parish. It is highly unlikely he would have been a constant presence at Kirkmichael – he would have had a lowly canon for everyday mass – but it is pleasing to think of the Arch-Deacon mounting a fat palfrey here and trotting off up Academy Street in the direction of a bridle-track over the hill to take mass at Kirkmichael on High Days and Holy Days such as Candlemass or Easter.

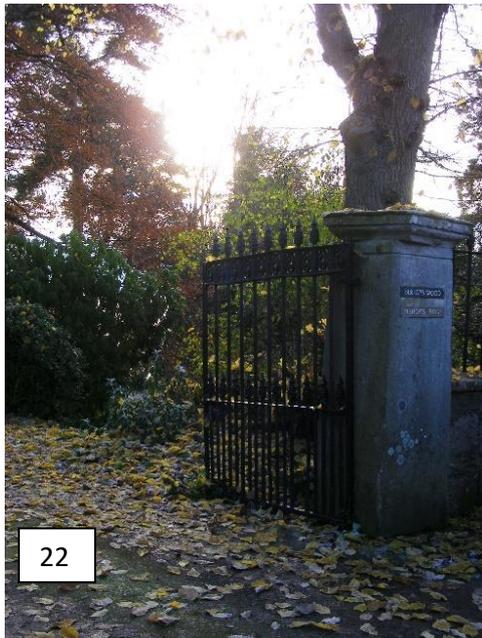
The westerly manse land here appears to have now been subdivided into three more modern house plots, but the tall white building on Academy Street (21) must be quite early (C17th?) given the small size of its windows.

Again, later exteriors may hide surviving earlier foundations, and outbuildings.

Beyond Killearnan manse was the Reformation **Bishop's Palace**, which included what is now the Eilean Dubh restaurant on the corner and **Bishop's Wood** (22) beyond it, now a cluster of modern bungalows in a pleasant wooded setting (most safely viewed from the pavement



walls
post-



opposite). Note the height of the walls! The pre-Reformation Palace stood somewhere on the opposite side of the road from Bishop's Wood, behind Canonbury Terrace, but was, legend has it, destroyed to provide stone for Cromwell's fortress in Inverness, and replaced by 'a field of peas and beans' – or was it?

There are traces of possible early ecclesiastical stonework in the irregularly placed worn pillars (23) outside **Bishops Cottage** (on the corner of Bishops Road) which was once the location of the builder's yard for the large houses which line the road into Fortrose. Could they have salvaged some original stone pillars from one of the two palaces and re-used them?



Precincts Road close by gives another clue as to the proximity of both the old or the new Palace. The post-Reformation Bishop cannily chose to have a garden (hence the peas and beans?) on the cultivated land which would have surrounded the old Palace, so this could refer to the precincts of either. The fine large house opposite also has a name reflecting another earlier cathedral function, the **Priory** although it may not be original to this building (24).



One of the Chanonry's two wells or springs (dedicated to Saint Boniface) was located at the top of this road, which was known as the West Watergate, suggesting that the water ran down the street. This burn still trickles down the cliff to the sea at this point [*and can be seen on the harbour detour mentioned earlier*].

Return up the main road towards the more central High Street and you will see other evocative architectural detailing (25) and road names such as **Canonbury Terrace**.



Over the road on the corner opposite the Eilean Dubh you will see the remains of the mediaeval **Market Cross (26)** which has lost the cross which would have topped it

and the stepped calvary base you can still see on Beaulys's market cross, for example.

This one was moved from a location a few metres further along the High Street (approximately opposite Harry Gows) back in the 1980s to aid public mobility along the narrow footway.



It is likely that it had stood in its previous location since mediaeval times as it is shown in the south-west corner of the Cathedral green on the plan. The modern High Street is much more recent but it would have grown up due to its proximity to the Cathedral and Castle, probably as the Chanonry's popularity as a marketplace grew.



On this corner (27) an earlier **Fortrose Academy** was once located, its roots firmly in the Cathedral, founded back in 1584, although the Cathedral would have been a seat of learning from the date of its founding.

Intriguingly, the **High Street** did not go straight through towards Rosemarkie as it does today: it instead wiggled around the edge of the Castle lands (which extended almost as far as Saint Katherine's in Union Street) and then between one or two smaller manse lands.

Up what is now Church Street to the west of the Co-op/castle site rose the oddly-named **Rotten Row**, always a corruption of *La Route du Roi* or the **King's Road**. Perhaps this is the way James IV rode (or walked, a barefoot penitent) on towards **Tain** during his astonishing twenty-seven guilty-conscience pilgrimages. And parallel with this on the far side of the Castle lands went East Watergate, leading to the second Chanonry well, dedicated to **Saint Doupack** (or **Duthac**), who was appropriately also the patron saint of Tain. There is sadly little trace of a watercourse there today, but it is likely the regular flooding in the car park of the Co-op in winter is the revenge of Saint Duthac for putting his water-course below ground!

St Duthac is a Celtic saint who survived the transition into Catholicism, a ninth century native Scot. He was educated in Ireland (like many early saints), but died in Tain where a chapel was built in his honour and a sanctuary established. This was administered by the Norbertine canons of Fearn Abbey.

His body was later found to be incorrupt – a sure sign of sainthood, it was believed – and his relics moved to the more ornate shrine at St. Duthus Collegiate Church, completed in 1458. These disappeared in 1560, at the time of the Reformation (the Reformation had a lot to answer for in terms of disappearing carvings and other treasures).

You now have only to **cross the road to get back to the Cathedral entrance**, but why not browse Fortrose High street while you are here? We have some excellent little shops: two gift/craft shops, an antique shop, two bakeries, a butcher, a post office, the Co-op and some very good places to eat.

This trail was developed by the Kirkmichael Trust as part of the Kirkmichael 2016/17 restoration project, which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland among many other bodies and individuals.

If you are interested in early church history, be sure to visit Kirkmichael too! You will find full details for getting there on the www.Black-Isle.info website, and on www.kirkmichael.info too.

We would welcome any factual corrections or other feedback on this trail, which is curated by for the Kirkmichael Trust by Verity Walker who lives in Fortrose. She is hoping to put together a

project which explores early Fortrose in more detail. You can contact Verity on Fortrose 620575 or via www.interpretaction.com.

