

April 2023

A tree down in the manse garden with the library in the background c 1914?



Photo Dunblane Museum

Progress

All the render has now been removed. It is fair to say that the condition of the underlying stonework is bad, the mortar is crumbling and many stones are loose. Restoration will probably involve more repair work than we had originally expected and this may well extend the time works are undertaken.

We knew that removing the harling would reveal a few surprises. A number of interesting features have appeared, particularly at the north end of the building. It has been established that the north wall was originally an internal wall with the Dean's Manse, demolished around 1829, which would have stood between the library and what is now the Manse driveway.

Both chimneys have been taken down, recorded and the stones set aside. The north chimney has revealed a fascinating find. Within the splayed base of the chimney, we have found a beautifully carved stone marked M G K. We have also found an old fireplace with an unusually large lintel and a press, still backed with lime plaster.

Stone and mortar samples have been sent away for analysis. A pointing mix has been identified. Dunaverig, a local Perthshire stone, will be used for piecing in the walling.

We have applied for Planning and Listed Building Consent to repair and reinstate the cartouche. The fixing is a complicated issue, as it was originally installed in a very robust and sophisticated way.

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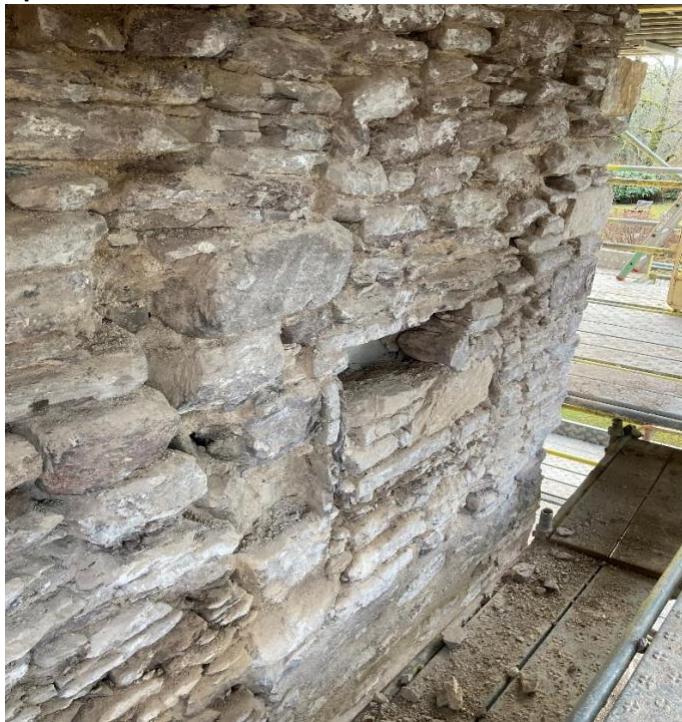
We believe the initials 'M G K' refer to Magister Gaspar Kellie. We have his actual signature on the 1691 Library foundation manuscript. He graduated M.A. Edinburgh, 18th July 1664. He was licensed by George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, 28th September 1670, and was appointed Dean of Dunblane in April 1674. Church records show that he regularly attended the meetings of kirk session, presbytery and synod, frequently chairing the session and the presbytery. He was evidently respected and conscientious. In 1689 he was deprived for not reading the Proclamation of the Estates (to determine the settlement of the Scottish throne after the deposition of James VII and for not praying for William and Mary). However, he continued to live in Dunblane for around three years. The Dean's Manse was a two-storeyed house to which the Leighton Library had recently been attached. Hearth Tax on each hearth in all occupied buildings was due by Candlemas 1691, though payments were difficult to collect on time. The Hearth Tax returns show that "Mr Gaspar Kellie Dean of Dumblane" duly paid for 8 hearths ; his manse was the largest house within the city of Dunblane apart from Viscount Strathallan's lodging, which had 13 hearths.

The filled-in fireplace on the north wall. Note the size of the lintel.



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A press still backed with preserved plaster on the north wall

Cartouche surround template

Below you can see Colm Farrell working on the template for the stone surround of the cartouche. You can see (right) that the top of the surround had been replaced in the past with inappropriate stones and the original red sandstone below is badly eroded.



Photos Alan Clevett/Tom Astbury