

A Survey of Corrugated-iron Churches in Scotland

Graham M Clark

Since the mid-nineteenth century, immeasurable numbers of corrugated-iron (CI) buildings¹ have been erected across Scotland. They served multitudes of community, industrial, commercial, agricultural, military and domestic functions, such as the practicality of the strong, durable, yet lightweight and inexpensive CI sheets with which they could be quickly constructed. Amongst their earliest community purposes were churches, schools and halls. Although there is no substantive research to back the claim, it is often suggested that in the early twentieth century there were about 700 CI buildings in use across Scotland as places of worship. Today, in 2020, less than 10% still exist and barely 2% are still in use for worship. This article records those that remain and categorises them in the light of the socio-economic and ecclesiastical circumstances that prevailed at the time of their construction.

Scotland's early ventures into corrugated-iron buildings

The history of CI² dates from April 1829 when the architect/engineer Henry Palmer patented 'indented or corrugated metallic sheets' with which he roofed an open-sided turpentine shed at the new London Docks. This is credited as having been the world's first CI building.³ Palmer's corrugated sheets were made of wrought-iron and were prone to rusting. However, by 1837 this problem had been solved by Stanislav Sorel who 'galvanised' CI sheets by dipping them in molten zinc. This process was observed by Commander HV Craufurd RN, who patented it in Britain. He is said to have erected the world's first galvanised CI buildings (storage sheds) at Pembroke Docks in 1844.⁴

The earliest record of a CI structure in Scotland dates from the 'Disruption' of 1843 when one-third of the clergy and congregations of the Church of Scotland seceded to form the Free Church of Scotland. Many landowners refused to allow new churches to be built on their land, including Sir James Riddell of Ardnamurchan. In response, the Free Church contracted John Reid & Co. of Port Glasgow to build, at a cost of £1400, an iron ship on which was erected a large shed capable of holding up to 400 people.⁵ This 'floating church' was towed in June 1846 to Ardnastang Bay, near Strontian on Loch Sunart, where it was anchored about 150m offshore, beyond the jurisdiction of Sir James. However, on an uncertain date (possibly as early as September 1847) the floating church broke from its anchors during a storm and was blown ashore, where it continued in use until 1869.⁶ One of its anchors and a length of chain were found by a local diver in 2016. A 'crowdfunding' campaign has been set up with the aim of recovering these items for conservation and local display.⁷ Although it is not irrefutable that the floating church's shed

was built with CI sheets, and the supplier is unknown, most of the contemporaneous illustrations⁸ suggest that it was. If so, it would certainly rank as the earliest CI church in Britain.

The early manufacture of CI was dominated by English companies, for example: Bellhouse & Co of Manchester; Richard Walker, William Cooper and Frederick Braby of London; Francis Morton and Isaac Dixon of Liverpool. These companies also developed readily-transportable self-assembly kits of churches and cottage-style housing for emigrants to the British colonies. The oldest surviving CI building in Scotland, and probably in the world, was of a type manufactured at the Eagle Foundry of Bellhouse & Co and exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 as a pre-fabricated 'kit cottage' for British gold-rush emigrants to Australia.⁹ However, Prince Albert purchased one for use as a temporary ballroom at Balmoral castle. With minor alterations, it was converted into a joinery in 1882 and relocated within the castle grounds where it still stands.¹⁰ Several Bellhouse cottages from the early 1850s still exist in South Melbourne, preserved by the National Trust of Australia.¹¹ One, known as Patterson House, still stands on its original site.

The earliest Scottish manufacturer of CI buildings was Robertson & Lister of Glasgow. Founded in 1852, they disbanded in 1855. Robertson joined Charles D Young & Co of Edinburgh, but this firm became bankrupt in 1858. Recent research suggests that they had been copying Bellhouse's designs.¹² It was not until the mid-1870s, when the Glasgow firm of A & J Main & Co opened their Clydesdale Iron Works in Possilpark and Frederick Braby & Co Ltd opened their Eclipse Works in Springburn, that Scotland achieved any significant presence in the market for CI buildings. A & J Main specialised in large structures for industrial fabrication, garaging, warehousing and agricultural shedding. Their distinctive diamond-shaped nameplate can still be widely seen today. Braby & Co were general engineers who already had manufacturing plant in London and Liverpool when they expanded into Scotland.¹³

The most important, but enigmatic, Scottish manufacturer of 'design and build' pre-fabricated buildings was Speirs & Co of Glasgow. No business records have survived but their diversification into CI buildings can be traced through advertisements placed in the Glasgow Post Office directories,¹⁴ where they were first listed in 1893 as contractors of 'iron and steel churches, houses and weatherboard buildings'. In 1895 they opened a works in Port Dundas to manufacture galvanised corrugated-steel, which is lighter, stronger and less susceptible to corrosion. As a consequence of the introduction of the Bessemer and open-hearth steel-making processes, by the early twentieth century wrought iron corrugated sheeting had gradually been replaced by mild steel. Despite this metallurgical change, the appellation 'corrugated-iron' persisted and indeed still continues to be used.

By the early twentieth century, Speirs & Co was supplying the domestic British market with buildings 'suitable for hospitals, sanatoria, churches, schools, cottages, reading-rooms, motor sheds, club houses, etc'. Around 1912¹⁵ the company formed a co-operative alliance with FD Cowieson & Co of Springburn that in 1913-14 successfully won large Government contracts for temporary housing at Rosyth Dockyard and for wartime military billeting.¹⁶ The Speirs name was retained as Speirs Ltd, a company that is associated with the sobriquet 'Speirsesque', which describes wooden-framed buildings that could be clad variously in CI, wood or composite materials, as for example plaster or cement. Although the market for CI buildings declined after World War 1, Speirs Ltd survived until 1939.

Surviving Corrugated-Iron Churches

General review

A previous survey¹⁷ estimated that there were 45 surviving CI churches in Scotland. This present survey has identified 62 existing CI buildings that have, at some time, served as places of worship in Scotland. For the purposes of this article, they are numerically listed in Table 1 in alphabetical order of their current Local Authority area and civil parish. It should be noted that 13 (21%) of the buildings are no longer in their original locations, having been dismantled and re-erected at some stage in their history, in one case twice (Table 1, No.11). National Grid References and condensed histories are also included.

TABLE 1: SURVIVING CORRUGATED-IRON CHURCH BUILDINGS IN SCOTLAND (2020)

REF No	CURRENT LOCATION			BRIEF HISTORY & CURRENT USE	GROUP
	LOCAL AUTHORITY	CIVIL PARISH	OS GRID REF		
1	Aberdeenshire	Banchory	NO 7022 9631	Braemar: RC chapel [ca1870-90]; relocated to Banchory: private residence [1890-present]; B listed	A
2	Aberdeen City	Peterculter	NJ 8414 0042	Ballater: St Saviour's SEC [1897-1907]; relocated to Peterculter: St Peter's SEC hall [1907-1999]; St Peter's Heritage Hall [1999-present]	A
3	Angus	Bervie	NO 8276 7230	Inverbervie: St David of Scotland SEC [1922-present]	A
4	Angus	Brechin	NO 6007 6005	Brechin: Ebenezer hall [late C19- mid C20]; Arts centre [mid C20-early C21]; currently unused/derelict	C
5	Angus	Kingoldrum	NO 3604 5879	Pearsie: FC [ca1920-late C20]; Shooting hut [late C20-present]	A
6	Argyll & Bute	Ardchattan & Muckairn	NM 9154 3411	Connel: St Mary's SEC [1903-76]; 'The Antiquarium' shop [1976-late C20]; Keltia Celtic art studio [late C20-present]	A
7	Argyll & Bute	Campbeltown	NR 6955 1988	Stewarton: CoS mission [ca1910-late C20]; Stewarton & District village hall [late C20-present]	A
8	Argyll & Bute	Dunoon & Kilmun	NS 1350 6787	Tayvallich: UFC [ca1905-1929]; CoS [1929-1950]; relocated to Toward: Church hall [1950-present]	B
9	Argyll & Bute	Kilbrandon & Kilchattan (Seil)	NM 7555 1679	Balvaric: UFC [1908-29]; FC [1929-ca1955]; renovated as self-catering holiday rental [2005-present]	B
10	Argyll & Bute	Kilmichael Glassary	NR 9776 9615	Minard: Lochfyneside UFC [1910-1929]; CoS [1929-2016]; currently unused	B
11	Argyll & Bute	Lismore & Appin	NN 0071 5726	Portree: SEC mission [1881-86]; relocated to Duror: SEC school [1886-1920]; relocated to Kentallen: Hall [1920-late C20]; currently unused	A
12	Argyll & Bute	Lochgoilhead & Kilmorich	NS 1918 9508	Carrick Castle: CoS [1892-2008]; C listed; currently unused	A
13	Argyll & Bute	Torosay (Mull)	NM 5834 4281	Salen: Glenforsa estate house [early C20-1948]; RC mission [1948-73]; Private residence [1973-present]	D
14	Borders	Yetholm	NT 8201 2794	Town Yetholm: Evangelical Gospel Mission [1931-late C20]; Yetholm Heritage Centre [early C20-present]	C
15	Dumfries & Galloway	Dryfesdale	NY 1286 7922	Lockerbie: Hallmuir PoW camp RC chapel [1942-47]; Ukrainian chapel Greek Orthodox RC [1947-present]; B listed	E
16	Dumfries & Galloway	Kirkmahoe	NX 9417 8499	Dalswinton: Barony mission church [1881-present]; B listed	D
17	Edinburgh City	Edinburgh	NT 2400 7243	North Merchiston: UPC mission [1882-1900]; UFC [1900-1929]; Hall [1929-48]; Scrapyard offices [1948-present]; partly demolished	A
18	Edinburgh City	Edinburgh	NT 2398 7103	Slateford: CoS [1876-84]; relocated to Morningside: Royal Edinburgh Hospital church centre/The Hive activity centre [1884-present]	A

19	Fife	Elie	NO 4843 0005	Earlsferry: SEC mission [1905-24]; relocated to Elie: St Michael and All Angels SEC [1924-present]; B listed	A
20	Fife	Forgan	NO 4226 2808	Newport-on-Tay: St Fillan's RC Church [1886-present]; C listed	A
21	Fife	Strathmiglo	NO 2176 1005	Strathmiglo: South FC/UFC [1876-1929]; Church hall [1929-ca1950]; relocated to Strath Light Engineering Co [ca1950-present]	A
22	Highland	Ardnamurchan	NM 4475 6894	Sanna: Faith mission [ca1893-mid C20]; shared CoS/FC mission [mid C20-present]; storm damaged in 2020	C
23	Highland	Arisaig & Moidart	NM 7675 8240	Kinlochailort: Snooker room [early C20-ca1950]; CoS mission [ca1950-present]	F
24	Highland	Assynt	NC 1201 3285	Drumbeg: Library/UFC [1909-1929]; FPC/APC [1929-2013]; currently unused	B
25	Highland	Boleskine & Abertarff	NH 3791 0924	Fort Augustus: UFC [1906-29]; CoS [1929-34]; Mackay hall [1934-86]; The Millshop [1986-present]	B
26	Highland	Canisbay	ND 3480 7223	Canisbay: continuing UFC [1932-mid C20]; FEC [mid C20-present]	B
27	Highland	Clyne	NC 9061 0422	Tain: St Andrew's SEC [1880-87]; Hall [1887-1909]; relocated to Brora: St Columba's SEC [1909-present]	A
28	Highland	Cromarty	NH 7215 6521	Newmills: UFC [1906-29]; relocated to Jemimaville: Scott's Garage [ca1932-present]	B
29	Highland	Dores	NH 5630 2258	Errogie: UFC [ca1910-29]; CoS [1929-87]; currently unused; C listed	B
30	Highland	Duirinish (Skye)	NG 3456 5250	Borve: Flashader FC [early C20-late C20]; currently unused	A
31	Highland	Farr	NC 7865 6439	Armadale: CoS [ca1930-ca1975]; Village hall [ca1975-early C21]; currently unused	A
32	Highland	Farr	NC 8831 6467	Melvich UFC [ca1905-29]; CoS [1929-late C20]; Mission Hall Art Studio [early C21-present]	B
33	Highland	Farr	NC 8926 5580	Strathy & Halladale: UFC [1910-29]; CoS mission [1929-ca1955]; renovated as village hall [2008-present]; B listed	B
34	Highland	Farr	NC 6937 4393	Syre: FC mission [1891-1900]; UFC [1900-29]; CoS Strathnaver mission [1929-present]; C listed	A
35	Highland	Gairloch	NH 0302 6188	Kinlochewe: UFC [1907-29]; CoS [1929-present]	B
36	Highland	Kildonan	NC 8611 3153	Kinbrace: UFC [1900-29]; CoS mission [1929-late C20]; Village hall [late C20-present]	B
37	Highland	Kiltarlity & Convinth	NH 5216 3853	Foxhole: Possibly originally a school; Faith mission/Sunday School [mid-C20-late C20]; currently unused	C
38	Highland	Kincardine	NH 4732 9096	Croick: CoS mission [ca1915-ca2010]; renovated in 2018 as holiday accommodation	D
39	Highland	Kingussie & Insh	NN 7260 9958	Leanach: joint FC/CoS mission [1905-87]; relocated to Newtonmore: Highland Folk Museum [1987-present]	A
40	Highland	Lairg	NC 5866 0628	Lairg: UFC mission [ca1900-29]; CoS hall [1929-39]; Masonic hall/mosque [1939-late C20]; currently unused	B
41	Highland	Lochbroom	NH 0183 9201	Badcaul: UFC [ca1905-29]; FC [1929-late C20]; currently unused	B
42	Highland	Lochcarron	NG 8320 3530	Ardaneaskan: FPC mission [late C19-early C21]; currently unused	A
43	Highland	Moy & Dalarossie	NH 8026 2896	Tomatin: UFC mission [ca1905-29]; CoS [1929-2016]; dismantled in 2020; currently in storage for use in new house	B
44	Highland	Resolis	NH 7170 6512	Jemimaville: CoS mission [1902-ca1945]; Village hall [ca1945-late C20]; currently unused	A
45	Highland	Strath (Skye)	NG 5222 1428	Elgol: CoS [1898-present]	A
46	Highland	Tongue	NC 6730 6243	Skerray: FC [late C19-1988]; currently unused/derelict	A
47	Moray	Duthil & Rothiemurchus	NH 9968 2477	Dulnain Bridge: CoS mission/hall [1912-present]	A
48	North Ayrshire	Kilbride (Arran)	NS 0112 3592	Benbecarrigan: FC/UFC/CoS [1894-1950]; relocated to Brodick: St Bride's CoS hall [1950-present]; B listed	A

49	North Ayrshire	Kilmory (Arran)	NR 8739 4475	Lenimore/Pirnmill: FC hall [1920-94]; Pirnmill CoS [1994-present]; C listed	F
50	Orkney	Holm	HY 4884 0063	Lamb Holm: Italian PoW camp RC chapel [1943-44]; restored as Visitor centre [1964-present]; A listed	E
51	Perthshire	Comrie	NN 7698 1979	Cultybraggan: PoW camp chapel [1941-47]; Army training camp [1947-2004]; Development site [2007-present]; B listed	E
52	Perthshire	Dull	NN 8057 4922	Aberfeldy: Our Lady of Mercy RC church [1885-2004]; relocated to Dull: private residence [2004-present]	A
53	Perthshire	Aberfeldy	NN 8585 4936	Camusvrechan: UFC [1907-29]; FC [1929-54]; relocated to Aberfeldy: Fisher's Laundry store [1954-2016]; currently unused/derelict	B
54	Perthshire	Methven	NO 0262 2608	Methven: St Columba's RC chapel [1899-late C20]; currently unused	A
55	Shetland	Lerwick	HU 4681 4209	Lerwick: UFC [1914-40]; Wool Broker's office [1940-present]	B
56	Shetland	Yell	HU 5100 9891	Dalsetter: continuing UFC [1932-55]; Store shed [1955-present]	B
57	Stirlingshire	Killin	NN 3849 2538	Crianlarich: UFC [1910-29]; CoS [1929-late C20]; Hotel staff residence [early C21-present]	B
58	Stirlingshire	Killin	NN 5737 3316	Killin: St Peter's SEC [1876-1948]; St Fillan's SEC [1948-present]; C listed	D
59	Western Isles	Lochs (Lewis)	NB 2476 1754	Arivruach: School [1893-1952]; CoS mission [1952-late C20]; currently unused	F
60	Western Isles	Lochs (Lewis)	NB 3769 1559	Gravir: CoS mission [1905-late C20]; Private residence	A
61	Western Isles	Lochs (Lewis)	NB 3644 1200	Orinsay: inter-denominational mission [1935-2011]; CoS mission [2011-present]	C
62	Western Isles	Uig (Lewis)	NB 1123 3036	Loch Croistean: CoS mission/Sunday school [1879-2018]; currently unused	A

KEY:

A/F/UPC = Associated/Free/United Presbyterian Church
 CoS = Church of Scotland
 FC = Free Church of Scotland
 FEC = Free Evangelical Church
 RC = Roman Catholic
 SEC = Scottish Episcopal Church
 UFC = United Free Church of Scotland

NOTES:

1. Year dates are prefixed 'ca' when available reference sources/maps provide a discrepancy of dates up to ± 5 years. When there is greater discrepancy, period dates are given as early/mid/late C19/20/21
2. 'A/B/C listed' means this building is categorised by Historic Environment Scotland to be an outstanding/major/representative example of its type.

There are several searchable online databases¹⁸ that specifically hold historic information about Scottish churches. However, their coverage of CI churches is sparse. For example: Places of Worship in Scotland, Churches of Britain and Ireland, and Scotland's Churches Trust respectively record only 27, 18 and 7 of the CI churches listed in Table 1. Information is also held on Canmore (which currently records 27 CI churches) and on the 15 Scottish Historic Environment Records (HER), only some of which are searchable online.¹⁹ Though interconnected, Canmore and the HER are not always consistent. There are churches recorded in Canmore but not in the local HER (for example Nos 46 and 51 on Table 1) and *vice-versa* (for example Nos 5 and 41). Similarly, architectural compilations of Scottish buildings provide negligible coverage. The combined 15 volumes of Pevsner record only 20 CI churches and Hume's combined texts record only 9.²⁰

Of the 62 buildings in Table 1, only 16 (26%) remain in, generally infrequent, ecumenical use: 9 by the Church of Scotland; 4 by the Scottish Episcopal Church; 2 by the Roman Catholic Church; and 1 by the Free Ecumenical Church. A further 25 (40%) have been converted for secular uses: 7 private residences; 5 museums/heritage centres; 3 village/community halls; 2 each as

art studios, church halls, offices and garage/engineering works; and 1 each as a retail shop and shooting lodge. The remaining 21 (34%) stand unused or derelict, although several still retain their internal fabric. Linskaill¹⁷ estimated in 2012 that 13 CI churches were still in use for worship, 14 others had been converted for other uses and 18 were disused or 'unknown'.



Fig.1: Syre Church of Scotland, originally a Free Church Mission (erected 1891).

Listed building designation has been given to 14 (23%) of the 62 surviving buildings: 1 in category A; 7 in category B; and 6 in category C. Only 7 of those remain in use for worship and 5 have been converted for secular use. The two others, Carrick Castle (Table 1, No.12), which is also on the Buildings at Risk Register²¹ and Errogie (Table 1, No.29) are closed.

An analysis of the data in Table 1 shows that, of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities, only half have surviving CI church buildings. Furthermore, of the 16 most densely-populated (urban) Authorities,²² Edinburgh City, Aberdeen City and Fife have a combined total of only 6 (10%) surviving examples. On the other hand, the 16 least densely-populated (rural) Authorities have a combined total of 56 (90%) surviving examples, only South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and East Lothian being devoid. A century ago there were many more CI churches in urban areas than in rural areas. Presumably the much lower urban survival rate is related to historically high demand for re-development sites.

A Categorisation of the Surviving Corrugated-Iron Churches

The surviving Scottish CI church buildings can be categorised into six distinct groups that reflect the local socio-economic and ecumenical circumstances that existed at the time of their original erection. The group into which each individual building is assigned is shown in Table 1. Brief descriptions, with photographs of some specific examples, are given below.

Group A

The numerically largest group comprises 28 buildings in Table 1 that were primarily erected in direct response to Scotland's enormous nineteenth century population growth²³ and increasing numbers of summer visitors. During this period all the major Scottish churches were engaged in founding new congregations and their success is reflected in the denominational distribution of the CI churches that survive to this day: Church of Scotland (9); Free Church (6); Scottish Episcopal Church (6); Roman Catholic Church (4); United/Free Presbyterian Church (2); and shared Church of Scotland/Free Church (1). When a new congregation had raised sufficient money to build a permanent stone church, the original CI building was either retained as a hall or sold and re-erected elsewhere. Of this group, 11 (39%) have been relocated.



Fig.2: The Royal Edinburgh Hospital Church Centre, originally located in Slateford as a Church of Scotland church building (first erected 1876).



Fig.3: St Columba's Scottish Episcopal Church, Brora; originally located in Tain (first erected 1880).

It is notable that 17 (61%) of group A were originally erected during the late nineteenth century. Of these, Newport-on-Tay (Table 1, No.20), Syre (No.34, Fig.1) and Elgol (No.45) have remained in continuous use on their original site. The building (No.18) that was erected in the new Edinburgh parish of Slateford in 1876, was relocated to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in Morningside in 1884 as a Church Centre, recently re-named 'The Hive' (Fig.2). It is now the largest surviving CI church building in Scotland. The Scottish Episcopal Church (No.27) that was erected in Tain in 1880, was retained as a hall before being transported to Brora by rail in 1909 for use by English summer visitors. It was fire-damaged in 2016 but was restored and re-dedicated in 2019 and is now one of the finest examples of a CI church in Scotland (Fig.3). Another of the oldest surviving churches was 'Our Lady of Mercy' erected by the 3rd Marquis of Bute in 1885 for Roman Catholic summer visitors to Aberfeldy. It was saved from demolition in 2004 and rebuilt in 2008 as a private residence in Dull.²⁴ It is noteworthy that the Marquis also funded the 'tolerable tin' St Columba's Roman Catholic Pro-Cathedral in Oban in 1886. It was in use until 1934 and was the largest CI church ever erected in Scotland.²⁵

Group B

The second largest group comprises 19 buildings in Table 1 that were erected by the United Free Church after its secession from the Free Church of Scotland in 1900. Initially, many of the smaller rural congregations held their services in schools, libraries or farm buildings before sufficient finance, even for a CI church, could be raised. All but three of the surviving buildings in this group are located in rural villages, the others being in the small towns of Fort Augustus (No.25, Fig.4), Lairg (No.40) and Lerwick (No.55).

The re-union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland in 1929 was delayed by many of the rural churches until property disposals were agreed. Some United Free Church congregations refused to accept the merger and remained as 'continuing' churches, erecting their own CI buildings. Two examples, both erected in 1932, still exist, at Canisbay (No.26) and Dalsetter (No.56)²⁶, although these buildings are no longer in use for worship.

In practice, only 12 of the buildings in this group transferred to the Church of Scotland after 1929, ten as operational churches and two as church halls. Three others transferred to the Free Church, one to the Free Presbyterian Church and another was relocated for use as a garage. Subsequently, of the 14 buildings that passed directly to other denominations, eight have been



Fig.4: Fort Augustus Mill Shop, originally a United Free Church (1906).

converted for secular purposes and four others are no longer in use as churches: Minard (No.10); Drumbeg (No.24, Fig.5); Errogie (No.29, Fig.6); and Badcaul (No.41, Fig.7). Tomatin (No.43) is now dismantled and in storage awaiting incorporation into a new private residence. Only Kinlochewe (No.35, Fig.8) remains as a well-maintained active church.



Fig.5: Drumbeg Free and Associated Presbyterian Church, now vacant; originally a library (1909).



Fig.6: Errogie Church of Scotland, originally a United Free Church, now vacant (c.1910).



Fig.7: Badcaul Free Church, originally a United Free Church, now vacant (c.1902).



Fig.8: Kinlochewe Church of Scotland, originally a United Free Church (1907).

It has been suggested that during the first decade of the twentieth century Speirs & Co alone supplied 75 CI churches for the United Free Church. It is not known how many of these still survive as there are few primary records available to provide authentication. Known examples are Minard (No.10), Fort Augustus (No.25), Newmills now Jemimaville (No.28), Errogie (No.29) and Strathy & Halladale (No.33, Fig.9). There are Speirs & Co manufacturer plaques in Nos 10 and 29.



Fig. 9: Strathy & Halladale village hall, originally a United Free Church Mission and Missionary's residence (1909).

Group C

This group comprises five buildings in Table 1 that were erected by evangelical missions. Most are simple utility buildings but the Christian Brethren Ebenezer Mission Hall in Brechin (No.4) is a

substantial late-nineteenth century building that is now included in the Buildings at Risk Register.²¹ The Sanna Faith Mission (No.22) also dates from the late-nineteenth century and was still in seasonal inter-denominational use when its roof was blown off in February 2020. See Note 1 on page 40 of this journal.²⁷ Technically, it remains capable of holding open air services as its ex-cinema seating remains bolted to its concrete base. The Foxhole Faith Mission (No.37), probably first used as a school, was re-located after World War 2 for use as a mission hall and Sunday school. Like the Sanna Faith Mission (No.22) it was fitted with ex-cinema seating, but has now fallen out of use. The two others remain as working buildings. On the Western Isles, the Orinsay West Coast Fisheries Mission Hall (No.61) is still used for occasional evening services, whereas at the other end of the country the Yetholm Gospel Mission Hall (No.14, Fig.10), erected in 1931, is currently being renovated by Yetholm History Society as a local heritage centre.



Fig.10: Yetholm Heritage Centre, originally an Evangelical Gospel Mission (1931).

Group D

Following the purchase of the Balmoral estate by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1852, it became fashionable for the aristocracy and the wealthy upper class to acquire Scottish estates. Associated estate workers required houses, schools and places to worship, which were commonly provided in CI buildings erected on-site. Four estate churches still exist: Salen (No.13) is now a domestic residence and Croick (No.38) is now a holiday let. The others are two of the finest remaining examples of CI churches in Scotland. The B-listed Dalswinton Barony mission church (No.16, Fig.11; see also front cover of this journal) was manufactured in 1881 by Isaac Dixon & Co of Liverpool as a place of worship for employees of the Dalswinton estate. It remains in use as a venue for inter-denominational services and is probably the best maintained CI church in Scotland. The C-listed St Fillan's Scottish Episcopal Church in Killin (No.58, Fig.12), probably manufactured by the London Iron Church & Chapel Co, was erected in 1876 for the 7th Marquis of Breadalbane as a place



Fig.11: Dalswinton Barony Church (1881).

of worship for shooting guests and thus became locally known as the 'Grouse Chapel'. It was extensively repaired and renovated in 2011¹⁷ and today serves both Scottish Episcopal and Roman Catholic congregations. It is probably the oldest surviving CI church in Scotland, although the Church Centre at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (No.18) may also have a claim to that title.

Group E

Three CI churches still stand on sites of World War 2 Prisoner of War camps. The A-listed Italian Chapel on the Orkney island of Lamb Holm (No.50) is the best known.²⁸ It was constructed as a Roman Catholic Church from two Nissen huts in 1943-44, restored in the 1960s and 1990s and is now a visitor centre. The B-listed Prisoner of War camp chapel at Cultybraggan (No.51) is also a Nissen hut, dating from 1941. The camp closed in 2004 and is now owned by Comrie Development Trust. The church is no longer in use for worship but is open to visitors. The B-listed Hallmuir Roman Catholic chapel (No.15) is constructed of both CI and corrugated-asbestos panels. It was built for Italian Prisoners of War in 1942 and is now used as a Ukrainian Orthodox (Greek Catholic) chapel.

Group F

This small group consists of three Church of Scotland buildings that were not originally built as churches. The most striking is the C-listed mission at Pirnmill (No.49) that was erected in 1920 as a Free Church hall. When the Free Church closed in 1994 it was leased by the Church of Scotland and remains in regular use. The tiny mission hall at Kinlochailort (No.23) was originally a snooker room for guests of the nearby hotel. The nineteenth century school building at Arivruach (No.59) was in use for its original purpose until 1952 when it was taken over as a mission hall by the Church of Scotland.²⁹ It is no longer in use for worship.

Concluding Remarks

The corpus of the 62 surviving corrugated-iron church buildings in Scotland is deteriorating and diminishing. Visual assessments of their current condition suggest there could be as few as 30 remaining by the end of the next decade, fewer than 10 of which might still be in use for worship. Although concerning, in a Scotland-wide context this is not yet a national crisis as at least 20 of these buildings are already conserved, maintained to high standards or protected by listing.

What is of more current concern is the deficiency of accessible historic information about these buildings. It is the author's intention to augment Canmore with the research data and images that he has already assembled, which also covers community halls, schools and domestic residences. It would be much appreciated if any reader who knows of primary or secondary sources relevant to any of the 62 churches noted above, especially individual church records and local newspaper articles, can contact the author about them.

Notes & References

All photographs in support of this article are by the author, Graham M Clark.

1 It is difficult to define a 'corrugated-iron (CI) building' in a comprehensive way. For the purposes of this article the term refers to a building that: (i) is substantially free-standing (not an annexe or lean-to); and (ii) has at least two-thirds of its external wall cladding and roofing comprised of traditional CI/steel sheets (normally of sinusoidal profile). In general, this means that buildings without a CI roof can be included if their walls are entirely clad in CI, but buildings having only a CI roof are not included.



Fig. 12: St Fillan's Scottish Episcopal Church, Killin (1876).

- 2 For example, see: (a) I Smith, *Tin Tabernacles: Corrugated Iron Mission Halls, Churches & Chapels of Britain* (Camrose, 2004); (b) I Smith, *Tin Tabernacles Postcard Album* (Camrose, 2010); (c) N Thomson, *Corrugated Iron Buildings* (Shire Publications, 2011); (d) N Thomson, *A Study of Early Corrugated Iron buildings in Rural Scotland* at <https://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/Downloads/ichs/vol-3-3097-3115-thomson-pdf> (2014); (e) N Thomson & P Banfill, 'Corrugated Iron Buildings: an endangered resource within the built heritage', *Journal of Architectural Conservation* 11 (2005), pp.71-87; (f) B Walker, *Corrugated Iron & Other Ferrous Cladding*, Historic Scotland Technical Advice Note 29 (2004); (g) B Walker, 'Not just "Crinkly Tin"', *Vernacular Building* 40 (2016-17), pp.9-20 [This article is a reprint of an original article published in *Scots Magazine* 123 (1985), pp.17-22 and includes a letter to the Editor entitled 'Corrugated Iron' and published in *Scots Magazine* 123 (1985), pp.428-32]; (h) A Mornement & S Holloway, *Corrugated Iron: Building on the Frontier* (Frances Lincoln, 2007); (i) L Induni, 'The cultural significance of corrugated iron', *Vernacular Building* 39 (2015-16), pp.95-104; (j) L Induni, *Tin Tabernacles* at www.buildingconservation.com/articles/tin-tabernacles/tin-tabernacles.html (2002); (k) T Nicholson, *Corrugated Iron Architecture* at www.buildingconservation.com/articles/corrugated-iron-architecture/corrugated-iron-architecture.html (2013).
- 3 A Plan of London Docks by Henry Palmer, 1831, Bodleian Library 020167168. The building is annotated 'Turpentine shed'; it is situated close to the Wapping entrance to the Docks.
- 4 Prints showing the early CI sheds designed by Commander HV Craufurd RN for Pembroke Dock Yard are available from Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre at www.sunderlandtrust.com
- 5 Records of the building of the floating church of Loch Sunart (or Strontian) can be found at: (a) Caledonian Maritime Research Trust, *Database of Scottish Shipbuilding* at www.clyde-ships.co.uk; (b) National Records of Scotland, *Architectural drawings of iron floating church for 400 sitters [for Strontian]*, RHP38150 (1845); (c) National Records of Scotland, *Free Church Committee on Sites*, CH3/138/4 (1847).
- 6 Many articles have been published about the floating church, some of which are factually incompatible. Probably the most reliable account is by L.A. Ritchie, *The Floating Church of Loch Sunart*, an article fully referenced to original sources at www.genuki.org.uk/big/sct/ARL/Sunart/floatingchurch
- 7 www.crowdfunder.co.uk/raise-the-anchor
- 8 Illustrations of the floating church can be found in: (a) T Brown, *Annals of the Disruption* (Macniven and Wallace, Edinburgh, 1893), pp.656-7. This image, entitled *Towing the Iron Church into Loch Sunart*, is attributed to JM Corner and is also reproduced in S Urquhart, 'Saving, moving and rebuilding a B-listed Tin Tabernacle in the Highlands', *Vernacular Building* 36 (2012-13), pp.23-30; (b) GP Fox, *The Floating Church, Eaglais Iaruinn (Iron Church)*, Sunart Archives (1986), in which the images are attributed to M Gascoyne.
- 9 A detailed history of ET Bellhouse & Co, Engineers and Iron Founders, is contained in Chapter 4 of DR Bellhouse, *David Bellhouse and Sons, Manchester* published at www.uwo.ca/stats/davidbellhouse/hobbies/bellhouse-family-history/pdf (2001).
- 10 *Balmoral Castle, Iron Ballroom, Joiner's Workshop*, Historic Environment Scotland, Category A listed building 51479 (12 March 2010). See also Canmore 199168 and Aberdeenshire HER NO29NE0063.
- 11 www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/portable-iron-houses contains historical information and images.
- 12 P Guedes, *Firm foundations or shaky ground? Unravelling tangled threads of attribution*, presented at the 28th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia & New Zealand, Brisbane (2011).
- 13 For details of British manufacturers of CI buildings see G Herbert, *Pioneers of Prefabrication: the British contribution in the 19th century* (John Hopkins University Press, 1978).
- 14 Glasgow Post Office Directories 1893-1920 can be viewed at <https://digital.nls.uk/directories>
- 15 Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, Directory of Scottish Architects at www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=203716.
- 16 *Engineer*, 9 October 1914, p.356.
- 17 (a) S Linskaill, 'St Fillan's Episcopal Church, Killin: conservation of a Tin Tabernacle', *Vernacular Building* 35 (2011-12), pp.21-38; (b) S. Linskaill, *An Account of the Heritage Restoration of St Fillan's Church, Killin* (2012).
- 18 The principal online databases that record Scotland's CI churches are: (a) *The Places of Worship in Scotland (PoWiS)* project, hosted by Scottish Church Heritage Research (SCHR) at www.scottishchurches.org.uk; (b) *The Churches of Britain and Ireland* project at www.churches-uk-ireland.org; and (c) *Scotland's Churches Trust* at <https://scotlandschurchestrust.org.uk>
- 19 (a) Canmore is Historic Environment Scotland's searchable online catalogue of historic sites at <https://canmore.org.uk> (b) Historic Environmental Records (HER), also referred to as Scottish Monument Records (SMR), are maintained by 15 groups of Scottish Councils and National Parks. The individual HER/SMR can be accessed through the Scottish Monument Record Forum web-site at <http://smrforum-scotland.org.uk/her-contacts>.
- 20 (a) N Pevsner, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: the Buildings of Scotland*, 15 volumes (Yale University Press, 1980-2017); (b) J Hume, *1000 Churches to visit in Scotland* (NMS Enterprises Ltd for Scotland's Churches Scheme, 2005); (c) J Hume, *1000 years of Scottish Churches*, 6 volumes (Stenlake Publishing, 2018).
- 21 The Buildings at Risk Register is at <https://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk> Despite there being numerous candidates, only two Scottish CI churches are on the register: Brechin Ebenezer Mission Hall and Carrick Castle Church of Scotland.
- 22 Local Authority population densities are taken from National Records of Scotland corrected data for 2005 at www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data. They range from Glasgow City (highest density, with 3298 residents per km²) to Highland (lowest density, with 8 residents per km²).
- 23 Scotland's population grew from 1.608 million in 1801 to 4.472 million in 1901.
- 24 S Urquhart, 'Saving, moving and rebuilding a B-listed Tin Tabernacle in the Highlands', *Vernacular Building* 36 (2012-13), pp.23-40.
- 25 Information panels and photographs of the 'tolerable tin' pro-cathedral can be viewed at the entrance to St Columba's Cathedral in Oban.
- 26 See No.144 in <https://www.preceden.com/timelines/150324-the-history-and-the-here-and-now-of-shetland-s-christian-family>, the web-site of Shetland's Christian Family.
- 27 GM Clark, 'Sanna Mission Hall 2020', *Scottish Local History* 108 (2021), pp.40-1.
- 28 A full history of the Italian Chapel is given in P Paris, *Orkney's Italian Chapel: the True Story of an Icon* (Black & White Publishing, 2010); see also Historic Environment Scotland, Category A listed building 12728 (4 June 1987), Kirkwall Archives D31/27 and Canmore 2380.
- 29 See items 39420 and 22020 in <https://www.hebrideanconnections.com>