

## CAITHNESS MONUMENTS

### 1. HAROLD'S TOWER by G. Watson

When Sir John Sinclair was enclosing his land at Thurso East, he dismantled an old chapel to provide material for the field dykes. This desecration was noticed by Alexander Pope, the minister of Reay, who was also a noted antiquary. He sent Sir John the following letter in the name of Earl Harold whose grave lay within the chapel grounds.

"Know, Sir, that I was slain in battle, about the year 1190, near your park of Kirkwall. which has its denomination from an elegant chapel built above my grave in the said park. The stones of my chapel are now carried away and built in your inclosures about that ground.

I had once a right to the half of Orkney and Zetland from the King of Norway, and a right to the half of Caithness from King William, the Lyon of Scotland; I had also an estate in Sutherland, where I was born.

I lost my life in battle endeavouring to recover my property, as became a nobleman of spirit, out of the hands of a cruel and daring tyrant, justly called Wicked Earle Harolde, who died ingloriously thereafter, being hanged by order of King the Lyon, who marched into Caithness at the head of a gallant army to chastise that daring and bloody tyrant in the year 1196.

Be pleased to inclose my grave in a decent manner, so as not to become the resting-place of animals, or to have my remains ploughed up. My grave is now all my estate, which ought to be held inviolable.

By so doing, you will show a noble example to others to honour the memory of the brave. Though unfortunate, you make restitution, as the stones of mv chapel are built in your inclosures, you give a caution to others not to violate the sepulchre of the dead; and it will yield you the most manly and sensible pleasure to have done an action commendable in itself, and which will perpetuate your memory to posterity".

As a result of this scholarly humour and flattery, John built Harold's Tower as a family mausoleum.

Surrounding the tower are faint traces of a large circular enclosure, which is presumably the boundary of the ancient burial ground.

A fuller and more accurate account of Earl Harold, is given by Joseph Anderson in his introduction to the Orkneyinga Saga.

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