

QR Trails Stonehaven

Christian's House

At the beginning of Stonehaven's Old Town High Street, some 30yards from the inverted cannon on the corner, is "Christian's House"so named after Peter Christian a writer and Sheriff clerk of the County of Kincardineshire whose family lived there in the 1850s. Peter's father was the chief magistrate for the Stonehaven Baronial Burgh and laid the foundation stone for development of Stonehaven's Harbour in 1826.

The house itself was originally built in 1712. Unusual features include its "thick walls" and a portico of ornamental pillars together with a crown lantern over the front door. Behind the door lies a dramatic period of Stonehaven history as the house was used in the early and mid-18th Century as a meeting place for Episcopalian services and Jacobite sympathisers loyal to King James Stuart and his son "Bonnie" Prince Charles.

In order to control and suppress such support after the Jacobite uprising in 1715, which ended in defeat at Flodden, King George's Hanoverian Government introduced legislation initially forbidding assemblies of more than nine people. At the time of 2nd uprising in 1745 this was reduced further to five people.

On entering the House you can see that it is made up of many rooms branching off from the main stairway. This helped the Episcopalian Ministers to continue to preach and keep within the Assembly Acts.

The Ministers performed their Services out loud to themselves so that their congregation, dispersed in other rooms, could hear and respond but were not actually in the same room as the Minister and therefore technically did not breach the Act.

The small room with coloured windows at the back of the house and off to the left of the main stairway is the room that the Ministers used. A pewter bason or plate at the edge of the door was used to collect offerings from parishioners. This room also had an escape route to the rear of the building in case of emergencies.

The Rev Alexander Greig performed services and prayers in the house for the safety of "Bonnie" Prince Charles after his defeat at Culloden in 1746 and for the comfort of his Stonehaven congregation as many had relatives killed, wounded, imprisoned or hunted as fugitives.

In December 1748 the Reverent Alexander Greig along with two other Episcopalian Ministers John Troop and John Petrie were denounced by local Town's people and Government soldiers. The three ministers were arrested, sentenced and imprisoned in the Stonehaven Tolbooth for 6 months for breaching the Acts of Assembly.

Christian's House today is held in Common Good for the residents of Stonehaven and for the enjoyment of visitors to the Town by Aberdeenshire Council.