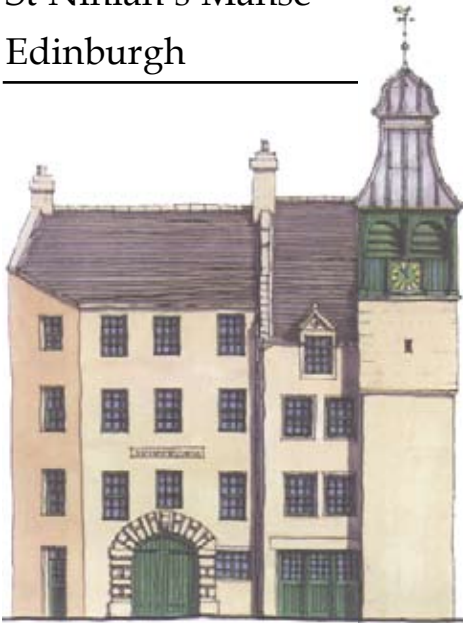


# St Ninian's Manse Edinburgh



The work undertaken by Simpson & Brown at St Ninian's Manse demonstrates the way in which minimum repairs and alterations can provide a sustainable new use.

St Ninian's Manse played a vital role in the development pattern and identity of Leith because it stood at the head of the first bridge to North Leith and makes its first religious foundation. It contains masonry from the only pre-reformation building to survive in the area and is an unusual example of a 17th century clergy building associated with an urban church.

The adaptation of the manse building to offices was based on thorough documentary and physical research. The St Ninian's church records were consulted, as were late 19th century drawings and photographs. The forms of the chimneys, weathercock, stone dormers and clock faces were all revealed from this research.

Physical evidence resulted in the reinstatement of the stone ridges that had been on the adjacent granary building. It was also apparent that the belfry openings had been boarded up using the original louvers which were re-set in their proper position. The coppersmith examined the original gilded copper weathercock which has been in the possession of the National Museum of Scotland since around 1900, before making the reproduction. A detailed examination showed up other facts about the building such as fragments of the original lime coating and limewash colour on part of the building which had been covered up by later construction. One of the louver panels from the belfry was analysed to reveal the entire history of paint layers since the construction of the belfry in around 1675. This informed the choice of colour for the belfry. The louver that was used for the investigation has been mounted within the belfry so that the research process and conclusions can be understood.

The interior has been conserved as found except for the removal of modern partitions in poor condition and recent wall linings on the first floor. The original fire surrounds have been retained and lime plaster reinstated directly onto the wall in the earlier parts of the building and on chestnut lathing in the 18th century part. The bulk of the alterations to a new use were confined to the ground floor, which was the area that had been altered the most radically in the 20th century.

A conference room, storage and a reception area were formed on the ground floor. The reception area stands within the pend that originally led through the 18th century building to the interior of the church. The character of the pend has been retained as far as practicable by repairing the original outside walls and by forming a glazed timber screen and retaining the stone paving which had survived on the floor.

