

layout of the gazetteer, particularly as regards provision of illustrations and plans. In terms of quality there is no flaw in the photographs selected, but their being bunched together in the centre of the volume detracts from their value. In the present day and age with computer setting of texts and scanning-in of illustrations, there is no bar to placing photographs alongside the text to which they relate, and any architectural guide is seriously weakened when it is done otherwise. As regards building-plans, there are simply too few, and the use of block outlines with no differentiation shown between phases of building in the one structure detracts from their value and does not help clarify the text as they should. It is a pity, too, that incomplete plans have been used in some cases. At Fortrose, for example, the plan of the south aisle of the cathedral – misleadingly labelled as being the whole cathedral – fails to give any indication of the scale of the original structure and misses out the equally-substantial sacristy, the undercroft of which was part of the original thirteenth-century building-scheme.

In conclusion, it must be said that *Highlands and Islands* is a disappointing volume. Certainly, it is no match for either the RIAS *Illustrated Architectural Guide* series, or the new-style Royal Commission district surveys. Having set itself up in the past as a quickly-produced, non-academic and affordable alternative to the Commission's output, it must be said that the *Buildings of Scotland* series has failed to move with the times. Adherence to outdated editorial constraints has handicapped this series and it must be asked if further productions in this format are merited. For the series to continue to serve any useful purpose in a world awash with technically more competent and physically manageable alternatives, it is time for a radical rethink before the next volume hits the shelves.

Richard D. Oram

**Elizabeth Beaton, *Ross and Cromarty. An Illustrated Architectural Guide* (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, 1992). 112 pp. + c.250 photographs and drawings, £6.95.**

Elizabeth Beaton's contribution to the RIAS series is a worthy successor to the excellent Fife and Orkney volumes which precede it. Compact and light-weight, but by no means shallow, it provides an invaluable introduction to the architectural heritage of a district which spans the north of Scotland. Her approach to the area, working in a circular pattern through the component sub-regions, preserves the flavour of the country in a way which other studies do not, highlighting rather than underplaying the contrasts between the fertile 'lowland' east and the rugged, 'highland' west.

The introduction is brief, following the style laid down by Charles McKean in the first volume of the series, and makes it clear that this is an architectural guide rather than an all-embracing historical/archaeological one, thus steering well clear of some of the pitfalls which have plagued other recent studies of this region. In general terms, 'architectural' seems to describe the structures of the historic period, but the outstanding examples of Early Christian sculpture from Ross are included. Otherwise there is no consideration of archaeological sites and monuments and only brief notice given to historic monuments with little or no physical remains. This may be criticised as selectivity, but surely it is better to establish a clear basis for inclusion rather than produce an imbalanced volume.

In terms of technical content the guide cannot be faulted. The juxtaposition of text and illustrations gives an immediacy lacking in other architectural guides, enabling it to be used truly as a handbook. The illustrations are small, but generally clear – the digital process of

scanning in has produced some queer effects, the illustration of No. 7, Cathedral Square, Fortrose on page 19, for example – while the use of architects' drawings and seventeenth and eighteenth-century engravings serves both to enhance clarity and to give an impression of local development. It is unfortunate that some of the technical drawings have been over-reduced in scale, leading to the disappearance in places of some of the finer lines, or the merging into blocks of darker shading of others. But these are simply quibbling points. All in all, this is an excellent volume and Elizabeth Beaton and RIAS are to be congratulated on its production.

**Richard D. Oram**