

Field Day Visit to the Parish Church of Dunbar held on 15th March, 1993.

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On March 15th, 1993 members and friends visited Dunbar Parish Church. They were met by the project architect Douglas Laird, himself a member of the Kirk Session at Dunbar, who explained the principles which had determined the rebuilding of the church after the fire in 1987 which had left only the walls standing. At the time of the visit some £1.8m had been spent on the restoration.

Approach to the sanctuary is by way of a spacious narthex designed for meetings, hospitality and social activity. Here an exhibition tells the history of the church and portrays the rebuilding. To one side is a well appointed kitchen. At the other is a stairway to the floor above and the tower. The first floor has a corridor with windows opening onto the sanctuary and leads to Session and meeting rooms. New stairs and floors give easy access to the bell tower.

From the narthex one passes into the sanctuary by way of large sliding doors which may be fully opened to extend the worship area. The radical design of the sanctuary has a breathtaking effect upon the visitor stepping through the doors. The seats for worshippers are grouped so that several aisles lead to the dais. This arrangement, together with the happy choice of colours, combines to give a sense of space. The angle of seating and the forward placing of the Holy Table have used the principle of incorporation to great effect.

Continuity with the past is provided on each side of the dais by a brass angel lectern and, on the opposite side, the marble monument to George Hope, Earl of Dunbar. The latter, dating from 1611, has been carefully restored. A modern baptismal font stands before the monument.

A major feature of the reordering is the substantial pulpit platform and screen which stands before the 19th century apse. Whilst its windows can be seen behind the pulpit, the apse is effectively closed off. A soundboard is suspended above the centre of the pulpit platform which is flanked by foldaway white-boards to be used for visual material. Given, firstly, that the apse was a Victorian addition to what had been a rectangular church with central pulpit at the east end and, secondly, that great care

has been taken to give the Holy Table its proper balanced place, the new arrangement can be welcomed by doctrinal and liturgical criteria.

A vestry is sited in the apse behind the pulpit where a cross made from charred wood salvaged after the fire can be seen.

Two dramatic windows in graphic style to the north and south of the dais are by Shona McInnes of Aberdeen. The tracery in the apse windows is by Douglas Hogg of Edinburgh.

Dunbar is well worth a visit. The church is open from June to September, Monday to Saturday between 10.30am and 4.00pm and, on Sundays between 2.00pm and 4.00pm. Sunday worship is at 11.00am.