

KIPPEN PARISH CHURCH

In the second issue of the Church Service Society Annual (1929-30) there appeared an article from the pen of the Rev. J.M. Younie, the Parish Minister, prompted by the completion of the first stage of a scheme of renovation. That, and subsequent works, resulted in a sanctuary of considerable beauty. It reflected some of the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement and owed much to the knowledge, contacts and taste of the notable Scottish artist Sir D.Y. Cameron who lived in the parish for close on 46 years. When the General Assembly established an Advisory Committee on Artistic Matters in 1934 (an idea, it may be noted, mooted in Mr Younie's article), Sir David was the first vice-convener.

As the 2011 autumn study day of the Society took place in Kippen, members may like to have some knowledge of the setting which provided a visual aid to the topic of the meeting. Accordingly what follows is a somewhat shortened version of that early article supplemented by additional matter, largely to take account of subsequent developments. Mr Younie's text is enclosed in quotation marks without further reference to source. Quotations from other sources are referenced in end-notes.

Ed.

'The ecclesiastical history of Kippen from the tenth century bears record of three Chapels and three Parish Churches.' The date of the erection of the first of these buildings is not known but a visitation of parishes in the (post-reformation) Diocese of Dunblane in 1586 indicated that 'the fabric is riven and ruinous in walls, roof, thatch and lacks all necessary ornaments within.'¹ Immediate steps to rectify the fault were ordered but another visitation a year later found that, although 'the east gable is completely built and bett (repaired) so far as it needs' and progress was being made on the west wall, the work was by no means complete and a start was yet to be made on the roof.² A further visitation in the following March to induct a minister found contributions due from within the parish meant that the walls were virtually complete and that the larger half of the building was newly roofed and thatched but that difficulty was experienced in extracting payments from those outside the parish from whom they were due.³

Less than a century later 'A committee was appointed by the Diocesan Synod of Dunblane, under Bishop Leighton, in 1565 to perambulate the parish and

examine the Church. It reported “that the Kirk is ruinous, both walls and roof, and called for present reparacioune.” They suggested a new Kirk further to the west, and the second Parish Church was built in 1691, enlarged and repaired in 1777, and ultimately stripped and everything moveable sold “by public roup” in 1825.’ The present church has been described as ‘good parish church Gothic of 1823-7, by William Stirling I and William Stirling II.’⁴ The cost was under £1500.

‘In January 1924 the congregation met in Church and unanimously decided to do something to mark the centenary, something that would make the sanctuary more worshipful and facilitate God’s ministry of beauty.

‘It was a great venture of faith for a rural congregation to sanction and inaugurate the scheme then outlined, and estimated to cost £5000. On the first Sunday of September the offerings placed by individual members of the congregation on the Communion Table amounted to £3251.16s.11d. This was considered ample evidence of the enthusiasm of the congregation, which has been confirmed by the fact that by 1928 over £10,000 were contributed in money or gifts. None have been asked to contribute, but with the ideal or idea of making the Church expressive of our sense of fellowship with the Most High, all have seen the Shadow of God and the Shadow of the Cross of Sacrifice upon it – luminous, arresting, searching our hearts.

‘Plans were prepared by Mr Reginald Fairlie, A.R.S.A., Edinburgh, in consultation with Sir D.Y. Cameron, R.A., LL.D., to whose faith and vision the scheme owes its inception, and whose knowledge and resources freely and fully consecrated to the service of the Church have made possible the progress effected.’⁵

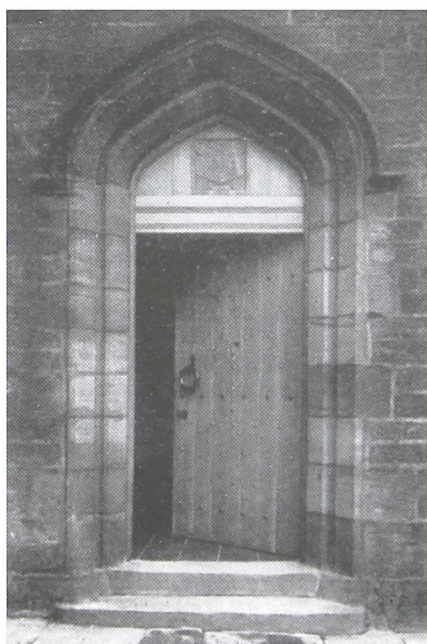
‘The galleries were removed ... a new gallery being erected across the north-west end of the Church to provide the necessary seating accommodations. The original entrance to the gallery from the stone stair in the tower was retained. The south-east gable was broken through, and the apse built with the arch and windows of Auchinheath⁶ stone ... The roof is of oak barrel-vaulted; and the panelling, stalls, floor, and lectern also of oak’.



Crowe & Rodgers

The next step was the removal of the plaster ceiling of the main space, the strengthening of the roof beams and the construction of a seven-bay panelled ceiling in oak with carved and gilded bosses and, above the gallery, an angel holding an open book. At the same time, at the south-east corner, a chamber was built for a new pipe organ for which the case was designed by a young prize-winning sculptor. Among other features introduced before Mr Younie wrote for the C.S.S. Annual was the pulpit, made by Andrew Thom and Sons of St Andrews and, at the main entrance at the base of the tower, 'a massive oak door, studded, with a sanctuary knocker of gun-metal surmounted by a cross, executed by the Artificers' Guild to a design supplied.' The Church was reopened and dedicated in 1926.

The 1930 article concluded: 'The Church now lives and speaks not in a dead language but in terms of our experience of God. Those responsible have thought and worked on the principle that the Scots Kirk has a tradition of beauty worthy to be maintained, and where it has been impossible or inadvisable to follow rigidly its forms have reverently sought to interpret its spirit. They decided that no gifts should be accepted unless they had control of the designs and choice of the craftsmen. Nothing of a merely decorative character has been incorporated in the scheme. Carving, lettering and symbol have been utilised to express their sense of the holy. Congregational interest has been accentuated by the fact that local tradesmen have carried out the work. Even in a country village the hand of the artist-craftsman has not lost its cunning if opportunity be provided as of old for the exercise of his gifts. Much might be done in town and village if only the Church of Scotland would again become the Patron of the Arts and Crafts, and appoint a Fine Arts Commission to guide and advise. The renovation of the Church has meant much to the spiritual life of our own people, and awakened widespread interest. The offerings for Church Schemes and charitable objects outwith the parish have all been increased in spite of, or perhaps because of, the sacrifices involved in putting the mark of our generation on the House of our God. It is our "*Te Deum*", and it has been our privilege to enter more deeply into the mystery of Worship, as the Church has come the more richly to reflect the spirit of beauty at the heart of the "Scots Renaissance of Life and Worship."' "



Photographs by T. & R. Annan.

The quickening of life thus generated manifestly continued in subsequent years. Sir D.Y. and Lady Cameron purchased The Grove, a cottage on a separate site immediately adjacent to the church on the south-east. 'Turning water into wine', the Stirling architect, Eric S. Bell, converted it into Church House in 1931. 'How independently the two architects worked is unclear but they must surely have collaborated on the design of the hall, staircase and buttressed half-octagon entrance bay which unite church and Church House at the angle of their L-plan relationship.'

'Later still, 1938, Bell built the Prayer Chapel. Tucked against the west side of the tower, it is constructed of Locharbriggs stone inside and out. A stone Christ with uplifted palms "as on the threshold of his ascension" rises from the parapet; the work of Hew Lorimer.'

In the interval between these two pieces of construction, further furnishings were introduced. A decade previously the original oak Communion Table 'of chaste design' had been retained but in 1935 a new Table, Lectern and Prayer Desk from the workshop of Whytock and Reid, Edinburgh, were provided, the first of these standing on a base of Iona marble. The minister's chair is of interest in that it served 'as the throne for the Lord High Commissioner to the Union General Assembly in October 1929. ... The Church's other link with that historic General Assembly is the Burning Bush [on the gallery breast]. Designed by Sir D.Y. Cameron, and made by Thomas Good, it stood in front of the Moderator's desk during the days of the Assembly. Sir D.Y. Cameron was responsible for the artistic arrangements which transformed the great garage in Annandale Street, Edinburgh, where the Assembly was held, into a place of singular and seemliness, seating 12,000 people.'

An interesting example of the endeavour to enrich, rather than replace, the legacy of the past is provided by the Baptistry. A stemmed silver bowl of 1848 was provided with a wooden pedestal, the work of a later 19th century minister, for which the 20th century provided a base of Ionian marble from Greece and a canopy in which is housed a bronze statue of Charity by Sir Albert Gilbert.

'The pews, which are of ash, were originally in St Oswald's Parish Church Edinburgh.⁹ Messrs Whytock and Reid cleaned and waxed them, and Messrs J. & N. Miller placed them in the Church (1964). Opportunity was taken

to create the broad central aisle, because this was known to have been the intention of the original renovators.’¹⁰

Mention should also be made of the stained glass both in the Church and in Church House. Herbert Hendrie was the artist in this medium favoured by the Cameron and a number of the windows come from his studio, but there are examples of the late 19th century work of the Ballantyne firms, of Gordon Webster, and of John K. Clark.

It is not, however, within the purpose of this article to provide a complete inventory of the rich provision of artistry and craftsmanship which lies within (and on) these walls. Work, almost all of a high order – needlework, penmanship, sculpture in wood, bronze and stone, figurative and symbolic, a profusion of thoughtfully chosen biblical texts in association with all the doors, paintings and etchings – abounds throughout, but remains subservient to the main purpose of the building as a place of worship and fellowship.

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- 1 Ed. James Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane and other churches 1586*, Scottish Record Society (1984) p.10.
 - 2 Ibid. p.63.
 - 3 Ibid. p.76.
 - 4 John Gifford and Frank Arneil Walker, *Stirling and Central Scotland*, Buildings of Scotland, Yale, 2002, p.560.
 - 5 Elizabeth Cumming, a contributor to the autumn study day, in *Hand, Heart and Soul: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Scotland*, Birlinn (2006) pp.164, 165 describes Fairlie’s work at Kippen as ‘clear, sensitive, and craft-based’ and says, with reference to Cameron that ‘The success of Kippen was due to (his) wholehearted commitment to his faith and his church, his material contribution and, as part of this, his recruitment of craftsmen to provide just the right range of work: no detail was overlooked.’ Of Lady Cameron she writes, ‘She played a part in the work at Kippen alongside her husband, not only in the promotion of textile craft but in devising and producing nativity and mystery plays. As well as working up her husband’s designs, Lady Cameron encouraged the ladies of the congregation to contribute to the furnishings and develop their embroidery skills. The altar frontal, also to his design, was sewn locally by Eliza Harvie Anderson.’ *Hand, Heart and Soul* is a beautifully illustrated volume and an excellent picture of the interior of the church illustrates the paragraphs on Cameron and Kippen.
 - 6 Biggar.
 - 7 For this and the two immediately preceding quotations see Gifford and Walker, op.cit. p.560.
 - 8 R.W.A. Begg, *The Renovation of Kippen Parish Church 1924-1969* p.8.
 - 9 Now an annexe of Boroughmuir School, Edinburgh and one-time scene of the ministry of H.J. Wotherspoon, editor of the *Second Prayer Book of King Edward VI* for the Society in 1905.
 - 10 R.W.A. Begg, op.cit. p.22.

Note on the pictures on pages 41 and 43: These are the pictures which accompanied Mr Younie's article in The Annual in 1930 and show the building as it was as a result of the first wave of improvement