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GALSTON PARISH CHURCH

An Historical Synopsis
by Irene Hopkins

First published in 2000 for the Millennium
Revised 2015 Updated 2016

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In a book entitled Ayrshire and Arran, An Illustrated Architectural Guide, compiled by Rob Close, on pages 127-128, one can read the following comment: "Galston Parish Church, 1808, John Brash. Redeemed from austerity by its pilastered doorway and simple steeple, it displays a continuation of elegant late 18th century character. A slightly jocular attitude is struck by the ornamentation at the corners of the east tower from which the spire rises: they can only be likened to Indian clubs. A correspondent of the Air Advertiser in 1809 said: I was lately passing the village of Galston and had the curiosity (while the horse was feeding) to visit the Parish Church lately built there. I must indeed confess that I was fully gratified on seeing one of the national churches erected agreeably to a most simple, convenient and elegant plan, which may serve as a correct model to other parishes for generations to come. The mason and wright work appear to be well executed."

And indeed the work of the mason, Peter Menzies of Auchterarder, and of the wright, John Stewart of Galston, was well executed and we see here today in the Year 2015 the same building resplendent after a £500,000 restoration and the subsequent work to its fabric.

But that comment is of the present building - there were more before it. There was a religious presence in Galston, well documented, going back to the Celtic era of Columba and beyond. So let us pause a while and consider what has gone before us.

Galston had been an important ecclesiastical centre in the 12th century under the direction of the monarchy. It had been established by the Trinitarian Order of Friars from the monastery at Fail, now Failford, who caused a building and enclosures to be erected soon after 1252. It was probable that they were used initially as a halfway house, close to a crossing point of the river, on their way to other houses in Glasgow and further afield. Surrounding place names support the claim of early church lands in the area, e.g., Lanfine is a corruption of Lann Fionn, sacred enclosure, and the lands were granted to John Charteris, chaplain of Galston in 1489. Three churches were linked together at that point - Barnweil, Symington and Galston. The power and influence of the Friars and their appointees were considerable as there were no great landowners or an overlord in the area.

The Galston church was dedicated to St. Peter, the Rock. A fair was held annually on the 29th of June on the eve of which day, beacons were lit on the surrounding high ground. The fair owed more to jollification and light relief than to religion and was probably the only Holy day (holiday) the local inhabitants enjoyed. This state of affairs continued until the Reformation in 1560 when calamitous days overtook the church. The Monastery of Fail was razed to the ground, as were many other large religious houses around the country. The power of the Catholic Church, and of similar closed orders, was swept aside and the law of Scotland placed the onus of preaching and

THE AUTHOR



Irene Hopkins was born and brought up in Galston and has been involved in the church and other local organisations all her life. Irene was a schoolteacher in Darvel and Galston Primaries, retiring from the latter as depute headmistress. She is the daughter of the late Anna and Andrew Clark and was brought up with a strong church background, her mother being involved in the Guild and her father an elder for 40 years. Irene has a great interest in local history and spends much of her time in Kilmarnock's Dick Institute delving into the past. She wrote *The History of the Belgian Refugees in Galston*, her own family having been involved at that time and she also wrote *Growing Together in Faith - the History of Galston Parish Church 1909-2009* when the church celebrated its bicentenary. *Galston Parish Church - An Historical Synopsis* was published as part of the congregation's millennium celebrations and Irene happily agreed to this revision and update which is available as an e-book on www.kirknews.org.uk and is printed in this booklet form for Doors Open Day 2016 which celebrates the Bicentenary of the Stirling Engine.

KIRKYARD



This, then, is our church and its artefacts. I hope you have enjoyed wandering around it and reading some of its history. Please now go outside and look at the Kirkyard and its graves. Those that can still be read are most interesting and none more so than the two at the south side door to the Covenanters, most recently renovated this year in 2016. But the names you would read as you wander round include the names you have read already, viz., John Hendrie; his parents; the Hutchesons; the Fairlies; Revd George Smith; Andrew Blair, Longhouse; the Campbells.

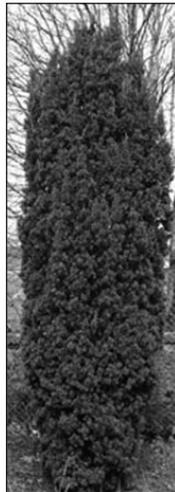
Notice where some of them died: Cartwright in Canada; Interlaken, Switzerland; Peringapatatu, India; Hastings, Canada; Toronto, Canada; Buffalo, USA; Staffordshire - all this before 1900 - and we thought it was our generation who invented travel.

Notice the grave of Andrew Blair, Longhouse, late Baron Baillie of Galston 1823 . . . left his whole fortune to found a free school in the village. This, of course, is the building in Polwarth Street, inscribed Blair School.

Look at the occupations, viz., farmer, banker, merchant, clock and watchmaker, student of divinity, soldier, minister of religion, gardener, parochial schoolmaster, tailor, master mariner, paper maker, in fact a whole spectrum of society and all connected to our church, otherwise they would not have been interred here. Unfortunately, most of the stones are now illegible but a survey of the kirkyard was done in 1985 and is part of a booklet covering all graveyards in the old Kilmarnock and Loudoun district which can be seen in the reference section of the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock and in the Burns Monument Centre in the Kay Park.

See also, in a corner on the north-west side of the church, a Yew Tree planted by Loudoun Rotary Club in June 2002 to mark 750 years of Christian worship in the Parish of Galston.

This, then, is the Parish Church of Galston, its forbearance, its possessions, its people. And what of the future? Isn't that up to us?



teaching on the landowners, or the Heritors, as they came to be known. They were responsible for the construction and maintenance of church buildings and properties; for the parish school and the payment of the schoolmaster and, if they so desired, they had the power to augment the stipend of the minister. Needless to say relations between the Heritors and the minister were not always amicable and John Galt, in his *Annals of a Parish*, throws light on the matter.

However, relations in Galston Parish would appear to have been less fraught than many might have supposed, possibly because there was no single overlord in the area but rather a concensus of minor landlords, viz., Campbell of Cessnock, Lockhart of Barr, Nisbet of Greenholm, Shaw of Sornbeg, etc. Shortly after the Reformation we read that one Ranken Davidstone was appointed "to preach, give religious instruction and baptise bairns." The practice of burials being allowed inside the church building was banned but one at least was conducted in 1570. However, the first minister was John Barron (1563-1567). He was a native of Edinburgh, had studied in Geneva and spent four years in Galston before moving to the Parish of Whithorn.

Twenty-five years pass with no sitting minister, the services of itinerants and exhorters being used under the auspices of Dr. Primrose of Mauchline. But it was during this time, possibly around 1569, that a church was finally built. It would have been a plain oblong building running east to west, fairly low in height and certainly single storeyed. There would be four doors; two on the south side and two on the north. Inside, repentance stools would be at the west end and the pulpit would have been situated in the middle of the south wall. The floor would be of beaten earth and the congregation either stood or brought their own seats. This explains just how it was possible for Jenny Geddes to throw a stool at the minister.

Finally, in 1592, a minister was appointed to the position. Alexander Wallace, with a degree of A.M. from Glasgow University, was "presented to the vicarage by James VI" in 1592.

Life in Galston seems to have passed easily and tranquilly for the next 40-odd years and the Session records make uninteresting reading. That changed, with a beautifully written copy of the National Covenant of 1638 transcribed in 1640. There are the names of Alex Wallace, minister at Galstoune, Cessnock, Lockhart of Barr, Stewart of Galstoune, Patrick Shaw of Sornbeg and an almost complete record of every adult male in the Parish. These were stirring times. 1592 saw the Great Charter of the Church of Scotland. 1603 was the Union of the Crowns. 1611 gave the world the translation of the Bible and a Kirk Byble was bought for Galston in 1638 and in that same year the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was held in Glasgow.

During that time also changes were occurring in the church building in Galston. In 1626 a small gallery was added to the east wall of the church and some seating allowed. Transepts were added to the north and south sides

giving the church the form of a cross and in 1634 the Session granted the Lairds of Barr (Lockhart) and of Galston (Stewart) and of Sornbeg (Shaw) "leave to build aisles joined to the church, with windows glassed, for the purpose of burial." These were on the south side of the church while on the north permission was granted to Campbell of Cessnock and Lockhart of Barr. Beside the gallery was a loft containing the bell house and the clock. This was known as the Clock Loft which succeeding generations have corrupted into the "cock laft."

Alex Wallace died in 1643 and his place was taken by Alexander Blair, the Covenanter. He graduated from St. Andrews University in 1638 and came to lodge with the laird of Blair until his full ordination in 1643, the start of a stormy ministry. He fought against the Royal Army at Mauchline Moor in 1648. He was summoned to the Royal Court at Perth in 1649 but refused to go. He was imprisoned by Parliament and deprived by the Privy Council in 1662 for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy to King Charles. He was sentenced to be banished from the kingdom, which sentence was remitted by the Privy Council, but he was stripped of office and Galston was declared a vacant charge. In 1669 he was rigorously dealt with by Major Cockburn and in 1673 he was imprisoned in the Tolbooth in Edinburgh where his health became so bad that he died soon after.

Two hundred men of Galston had joined the Covenanting Army with him, 25 not returning to the town. The name of Alexander Blair can be seen on the flat stone in the Covenanters' Corner situated at the south porch entrance of the church near the Andrew Richmond gravestone. This was moved from its original position at the front of the church when the 'Corner' was established in 1993. In the succeeding years this corner has been upgraded and slightly changed. There are now three stones, the Richmond stone, the original stone to five covenanters and the latter's replacement, but the area remains a memorial to the Covenanters of Galston and surroundings. The Scottish Covenanter Memorial Association undertook further restoration of the two stones still standing in 2016 at a cost of £1500.

Then into the vacant charge, in 1664, came an Episcopalian curate, Robert Simpson. To say he was not popular was an understatement but it was only after the defeat of Claverhouse at the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 that the congregation in Galston took matters into their own hands. Simpson was given time to collect his breeches, pushed across the River Irvine out of the Parish and told never to return. He had been a graduate of King's College, Aberdeen at a time when Episcopacy was well established. This period was just about the start of the Killing Times and Simpson sided with the Government. He preached to an almost empty church as more and more of his congregation attended conventicles abhorring his stand on the National Covenant so it was no wonder that he got short shrift. He ceased to be a minister in 1689 and died some 20 years later in Edinburgh.

church. Common sense finally ruled and an extension to the Hogg Hall was decided upon. This would be built out to the west as far as was possible to the electricity sub-station that was already there. So in 1985 this work was undertaken. The hall was enlarged, a small part was cordoned off for an office, new toilets were put in place and the kitchen refurbished.

But it is said that one should build a house to practise and one to use and that was the case with the hall. By October 2000 talk of an addition was again on the cards. This time they were looking south towards the boundary with Dunblane Gardens which would involve covering over four gravestones. However there was another delay and an expensive one, as archaeological work had to be carried first. At that point the Erskine Hall had been sold and the money from that sale could be used. Finally in November 2004 the Hall Extension was ready for rededication. The stained glass windows from the old Trinity church were set into the south side of the building and the



the Communion Table and Chairs presented to Trinity Church by Mrs Mary Hopkins in 1945 set in front of them. These had been taken to the New Parish Church at the time of the Union in 1948 and then transferred to the newly formed Parish Church in 1980.

The brass lectern on the communion table was a gift from 1st Galston Boys' Brigade. It marked the 50th anniversary of the Company from 1900-1950 and graced the communion table in the chancel for many years.

A memorial window to Andrew Clark, former senior elder, was placed in a window on the east wall. It was presented to the church by his daughter and received by T. Loudon Blair at a service in the Hogg Hall in November 2004. It was made by Paul Lucky of Kilmaurs Studio and is named Growing Together in Faith. Hanging on a window in the west wall is a stained glass gift from our partner church in Ahrensfelde. This newest part can be screened off for small funerals and church services. In one corner of the hall, there is a glass case, in memory of Jim Mathieson and John McManus, containing more memorabilia from our long association with Ahrensfelde.

HOGG HALL

Leaving the Session House we come into a corridor leading to the Hogg Hall. On display there are two old paintings of Galston by R. McCulloch. But of the most interest is a frame containing a hand written double page of the outgoings for the first building in 1809. It was compiled by James Jardine, schoolmaster and records the names of the various trades people and the amounts they were paid. The total of just over £3000 is shown, double underlined - how much would it cost today?!

Around 1964, Mr Jamieson foresaw the need for new accommodation and, after negotiations to acquire the property at the edge of the kirkyard fell through, a decision was taken to build a hall. The only available suitable space was on the south side of the church entering via the corridor leading to the Session House. It would be on top of graves but, as these were over 100 years old, this was permissible provided any memorial tablets were preserved. On completion it was decided to name it in honour of James Allan Hogg, minister of Galston Parish, later Galston Old Parish, from 1887 until 1951, although he had been actively retired since 1931.

James Allan Hogg was the son of the headmaster at Springburn. He was a graduate of Glasgow University and was ordained in Galston in November 1887. Two years later he married and four children were born - Robert 1891, Helen 1895, George 1897 and Mary 1900. He was a forthright, outspoken, god fearing man, an evangelical rather than a moderate. He visited his parishioners on a regular basis and never accepted a lift in a carriage on a Sabbath preferring "to do God's work on my own two feet." He was involved with the Ayrshire Mission to the Deaf (his wife had a hearing problem), Scottish Church Hutments, War and Refugee work, and all the minutiae connected with Kirk and State. After his retirement he spent most of his time at Buckie and on the east coast. Minutes in the Kirk Session note a reference to gifts sent to acknowledge his Golden Wedding and his Diamond Wedding. He died at the Manse of Creich, Cupar, in 1951 at the home of his daughter Helen, Mrs Sidney Warnes. His grave is in the cemetery at Cupar.

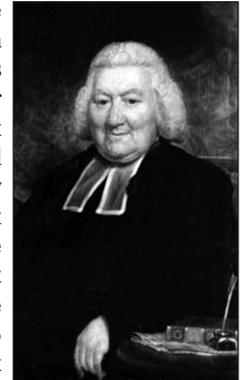
But what was sufficient in 1967, when the Hogg Hall was built, to provide room for the Sunday School, the choir, various meetings and events in due course that was not enough. The hall was becoming crowded, especially so for the Sunday School. There was the thought of trying to buy the properties at the side entrance to the church but that cost was too prohibitive when the state of their fabric was taken into consideration. For a time the older children met in the Erskine Hall and then a Portacabin was sited behind the



In 1674, the year of Blair's death, Adam Alansoun became minister to the Parish. Sir Hew Campbell on his own, and the rest of the elders' and heritors' names, wrote to him in Galloway. He only remained in Galston until 1680 when he died and left debts amounting to "more than his assets."

It took some time for these two scandals to abate. Galston was an unwanted charge and it was not until 1692 that Andrew Rodger was appointed. He came at a time when peace was restored to the land and to the Kirk and it is interesting to note that the Session Clerk of the day began a new volume with his ordination and these Session records continue with hardly a break to the present day. Andrew Rodger remained in office until 1735 when he was succeeded by John Campbell, the minister of Muirkirk. He had married a daughter of Hugh Fawside, minister of Loudoun, and the draw of a family plus a larger stipend brought him to Galston. He remained here for only 10 years and it was during this time that the first secession took place in Galston. Mr Steven's Society came to be formed in protest against the reading of the Government Edict in connection with the Porteous Riots in Edinburgh.

In 1745, the year of the Prince Charles Rebellion, the Revd Robert Findlay, D.D., (right) came from Stevenson to Galston. He was only here for nine years when, in 1754, he moved on to Paisley and then further to Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University but during that time he became a much loved and respected man. His name lives on to this day, as many a household in Galston will have a Findlay Bequest Bible in their possession. In his will he left £40 to the Kirk Session "to be given as premiums to the four best English readers at the Public School." Records state that the first readings were heard on 11th October, 1816 when prizes were awarded to John Findlay, Robert Scott, Hugh Taylor and Mary Findlay.



Dr. Findlay was succeeded in 1754 by Robert Wait, a preacher in the Gorbals Chapel of Ease. He was presented to the living of Galston by Lord Marchmont to whom he dedicated a book called Gospel History and it is recorded that during his day a new clock for the benefit of the church and the town was subscribed. It was put in place only months before he died in office in 1777 to be succeeded by Dr. George Smith. We shall learn more about Dr. Smith but it was during his tenure from 1778-1823 that the main change occurred in the actual building of Galston church.

By this time the dilapidated state of the old church, the increase in population and in church going habits, demanded more and better church accommodation. Statistics show that by 1801 there were some 1100 inhabitants, most of whom attended church on a regular basis. The heritors, at a meeting, unanimously resolved to build a new church and to facilitate this

the material of the old church was sold for £150 in 1808, with the clock and the bell reserved for the new building on the same site.

Church records faithfully inscribe the names of these heritors for posterity. They were: Nicol Brown of Waterhaughs; George Douglas of Rodinghead for the Marquis of Titchfield and himself; Colonel Hughes of Milrig; Mungo Fairlie of Holmes; Revd Archie Lawrie of Windyhill; Andrew Blair of Longhouse; Matthew Norton of Gowersbraehead; Thomas Morton of Ladybran; John Young of Burnfoot; James Borland of Piersland; Francis Findlay of Crofthead; Thomas Borland of Greenbank; David Campbell of Meikleyard; Francis Findlay of East Laigh Dalloy; and Thomas Meikle of Strath.

The architect, whose plan won the day, was John Brash of Glasgow and John Stewart, Wright of Galston, and Peter Menzies, Mason of Auchterarder, gained the contract for the work. We learn that the total cost including architect's fees, extras, church gates and walls, was £3,200. It was dedicated on 18th June, 1809, by Dr. Smith and the collection uplifted was £1 6s 7¼d. The church was built to seat 1,020 people. It was well lit, high in ceiling and its spire rose 120 feet. 70 years later the area was entirely re-seated, a new floor was put in and a new platform pulpit to replace the double-decker octagonal pulpit with the preacher's desk in front was installed.

This then is the historical background to the church and the presence of an ecclesiastical centre in Galston. Let us now enter the main door in the east wall of the church and visit the interior and view the interesting artefacts and mementos in situ.

FRONT ENTRANCE AND CHURCH INTERIOR: UPSTAIRS

Plain double wooden doors lead into a compact square vestibule laid with black and white tiling. These were put in place in 1920, a gift of John Littlejohn of Nelville, coal master and elder who features later on. He felt that the entrance to the church was in need of enhancement and so the work was done. On the wall facing is a memorial plaque dedicated to Dr. Robert Stirling D.D, who was minister of Galston Parish Church from 1824-1878. This remarkable man took great interest in things scientific. His pleasure, apart from his church, was tinkering in his workshop at the manse especially in the field of engines and where he produced the Stirling engine, still innovative today and which was the subject of a BBC2 programme, Local Heroes, in 1998. The plaque was erected in his memory by the Kirk Session, members of the congregation and others. Under the plaque sits a silver bowl. Filled with flowers, it graces many a wedding photograph and was presented in memory of Mrs Annie Paton, a lifelong member of the church, a staunch supporter and a lady who used her talents with flowers to fill the church with scent and colour.

In one corner is a bell dated 1696. This was presented by Sir George Campbell of Cessnock to replace a previous bell of 1596 which reputedly now

friendship between Mr Blair and a German friend he had met during his time of study in Germany. Many reciprocal visits have been made over the years and many new friendships have been formed. It was also at this point that a massive restoration of the church took place.

Revd Blair was one of five nominations in 2004, an ordinary Parish minister, to serve as Moderator of the Church of Scotland for 2005-2006. That he did not get the nomination is rather immaterial, as the very fact of his inclusion in the list of those thought to be suitable for the post shows how much he was thought of by his peers and not just his congregation. When the final decision came to appoint the Revd David Lacy of Kilmarnock to the Moderator's position, perhaps T. J. Loudon Blair, though no doubt disappointed, was also a bit relieved. He had already intimated that he planned to retire in July of 2005 and now he was able to hold to that plan.

He retired to Girvan. In March of 2006, a scant eight months after his retirement, he was diagnosed with a terminal illness to which he succumbed in June of that same year. His funeral service, led by the Presbytery, was held in Galston Parish Church and was massively attended.

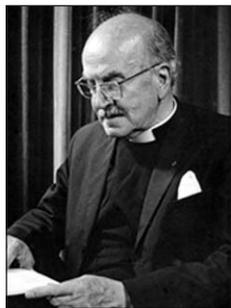
The final photograph in the Session House is of Revd Graeme Richard Wilson. He was born in East Kilbride in 1965. After school he took up a job with the Bank in London in 1986 and remained there until the summer of 2000. Graeme Wilson was ordained an elder in 1985 at the early age of 20. When he went to London he became a member and elder of St. Columba's in Pont Street where he remained until transferring to Galston in 2006. He left London and began to study Divinity at New College, Edinburgh, then at Princeton Theological College for a year. In May of 2004 he was awarded the degree of Master of Theology and returned to Scotland. He translated to Bearsden in 2013, his seven years of ministry marking the shortest period any minister had remained at Galston since John Barron in 1567.

There is also a framed mention of the link with the Covenanters and a framed list of past ministers.

The Charge has been vacant since Revd Wilson's departure and the congregation has been served by an Interim Moderator, Revd John Urquhart, Ordained in 1993 and Minister at St. Maurs Glencairn Church, Kilmaurs. Revd Alistair Symington has been serving as Locum Minister, conducting Sunday worship, baptisms, marriages and funerals, acting as school chaplain and visiting the sick and elderly. Licensed in 1971, Alastair is a Chaplain-in-Ordinary to HM The Queen in Scotland, has served as Assistant Minister at Wellington Church in Glasgow, as a Royal Air Force Chaplain, as Minister at Craiglockhart Parish Church and as Minister at New Kilpatrick Parish Church. He had just retired from Old Parish Church in Troon and agreed to act as Locum at the vacant charge in Galston. Since coming to Galston with wife, Eileen, he has proved to be very popular and has become very much a part of the congregation.

continued here until he translated to Elie and Earlsferry in March 1944. On leaving he presented his photograph to the Session to hang on the wall. The Session paid for it!

On 29th November, 1944, Revd Herbert MacLean was inducted. He had come from the church at Coldstream. He was a son of the manse and was a young man with a young son. Two more sons were born in Galston, the only children of the manse to be born in Galston Old Parish manse this century. He, along with Mr Hannah, (Congregational), Mr Gillespie (Erskine) and Mr Gilfillan (Trinity) introduced Sunday evening services on a rotating basis. However, both these services and the tenure of Mr MacLean only lasted a short time as he accepted a call from the Presbytery Church of New Zealand in August 1947 leaving Galston on 15th April, 1948. In New Zealand he served the parishes of South Clutha, Epsom and Winton before retiring to Gore in 1973 and dying in 1974. His photograph was given to the church by Mr and Mrs Andrew Clark, lifelong friends of the MacLeans. Mr Clark had been an elder 1939-1981 and Mrs Clark had also been active in church work including secretary of the Woman's Guild.



Following Mr MacLean came Mr Robert C. Jamieson. Educated at Glasgow University and Trinity College, he came to Galston in September 1948 from Gateside in Fife. He proved a very popular and efficient minister leading the church forward into the second half of the century. He was a "ken-speckle" person in the town and always had a cheery word for those he met, whether they were 'his' flock or not and worked diligently behind the scenes to get things done. During his stay in Galston, which lasted until 1980, a large project was mooted, discussed and brought to a successful conclusion. This was the need for extra accommodation for Sunday School and other youth groups. In 1967 the Hogg Hall and adjoining necessities were built.

After the union the first minister in charge was Revd T. J. Loudon Blair. The Union, which took place in 1980, was a marriage of Galston Old Parish Church and of Galston New Parish Church which in its turn had been a union of Erskine Church and Trinity Church. Mr Blair graduated from Glasgow University and came to us from Dundee Wallacetown. During his time in Galston many changes, apart from the union, occurred. We have corresponded with partner churches in India, Malawi and Nepal; a conversation with a sister church in Ahrensfelde was set up before the fall of the Berlin Wall. This came about due to a



hangs over the chimney tower of Cessnock Castle. The bell was made by John Meikle of Edinburgh and was in use until 1885 when the congregation raised £200 sterling for a new bell. In the other corner is an oak lectern gifted as part of a larger gift in memory of John Hendrie, elder and banker. It was the lectern used in Galston Parish Church, becoming Galston Old Parish Church, until the union in 1980.

To left and right are staircases sweeping their lofty way to the gallery. On each staircase are collages which came from the New Parish Church at the time of the Union. On the top landing is an old wooden table and chair, recognised as the original Communion Table and Chair. On it stands a Time Capsule, courtesy of Dr Robertson and John Yeudall. It contains several items of historical interest



including some of the pewter communion vessels that used to be in the Session House. This capsule was created in 2000 as part of the Millennium celebrations. From the gallery one gets an almost bird's-eye view of the body of the Kirk and chancel. On the walls are four plaques. To the left of the door is one dedicated to the memory of Archibald Nisbet of Greenholm 1689-1764 and his descendants. They were a farming family, minor landowners, who had property at Greenholm and at Sornhill. They were involved in the Covenanting Movement, (one of their ancestors having been executed at Kilmarnock Cross), in farming innovations and in their kirk. As heritors they had the right to be buried in the burial aisles and the new, or present, building would disturb any stone marking this. Thus the plaque on the wall: a mark of memorial and an embellishment to the church.

Further round, on the south wall, is a small brass tablet dedicated to the memory of James and Agnes Carswell. James Carswell was a gardener at Holmes and lived in the little house on the corner opposite Dunblane Gardens. To generations of Galston people this corner is known as Annie Cassell's Corner. Their daughter, Ann Bell Carswell, was a schoolteacher, instructing pupils at Galston in English and History. On her death in 1940 she left money for electric light to be installed in the church providing a memorial plaque to her parents was affixed to the wall near where they weekly sat. The cost of this 'new-fangled' scheme was £313 in all for work, material and fittings. Previously, the church was lit by gas and a previous minute of the Kirk Session states that the church was needing painted because "of the coom from the mantles." Her name also lives on in the Carswell Prizes. These were to be given to pupils who had strived long and hard but were not necessarily among the top ten per cent. The local primary school carried on this tradition for many years.

On the right hand side of the door is an interesting plaque. It commemorates George Hutcheson, late lieutenant - colonel in the 98th

regiment of foot Aid de Camp to Honorable Earl Percy in the American War and Deputy Adjutant of the Grand Army, and also of his brother Lieutenant Hutcheson, both killed in India. They were born in Galston and a third brother was Baillie Hutcheson, a man of great prominence in Galston. A sister married well and her grandson was Lord Ovanmore while another sister continued to live in Galston. The family home was Underwood which then became Goatfoot, now Barrwood Gate. The Hutchesons, too, would be heritors and have access to the burial aisles.

The fourth plaque upstairs, that on the north wall, is really a double one. The topmost commemorates Mrs Tait of Milrig. She came to Milrig in 1840 when she married Alexander Duncan Tait, a retired captain of 4th Dragoon Guards, grandson of Admiral Lord Duncan of Camperdown, landowner, elder and Commissioner to the General Assembly. He threw open the grounds of Milrig to children for play and picnics and was ably supported by his wife who saw a need in the parish and attended to it. There were a large number of cases of poverty especially among the women who only found seasonal employment on the surrounding farms. Winter often found them in dire straits dependent upon a mere pittance begged from the Poor Law Act or on the generosity of friends and neighbours. Mrs Tait set up a soup kitchen from November to April where 70 persons were supplied three times a week with bread and soup. The work was carried out under the supervision of Miss Hendrie and a band of ladies of the congregation. The kitchen began in 1843 and continued until the death of Mrs Tait in 1888 aged 82 when it was calculated that she had spent in excess of £1,200 on the venture. After a short gap, Miss Hendrie and volunteers took over the charity and it continued for several more years. Mrs Tait also presented the Galston Farmers' Society with a handsome piece of plate to be competed for in the St. Leger class at the annual cattle show. She supported the Zenana Mission, Fund for Aged and Infirm Ministers, a home orphanage for the Kilmarnock Ragged School and held a Sabbath Sunday School every Sunday evening at Milrig at which she dispensed milk and biscuits with religious instruction. The family grave is in Riccarton New Cemetery and the plaque here, on the wall, was put up by public subscription at a shilling a head.

The bottom plaque of the pair commemorates the three Misses Jackson. They lived in Milrig from 1896 to 1932 and carried on most of the work begun by Mrs Tait. Their father had been Thomas Jackson of Coats Iron Works in Old Monkland. They had come to Milrig when their old home, The Mansion House at Calder, Baillieston, was sold to the railway company and Milrig was, at that time, empty. As you look around you will notice that many of the pews have brass plates affixed which read Duke of Portland while a few stalls contain chairs. This reminds us of the time when churches had no compulsion to provide seating and those that did sought rent for the use of the pews.

Some in Galston obviously provided their own seats while the Duke of

untimely, while the other was purchased by the B.B.

Hanging from the central balcony is a banner, designed by Mrs Nessie Glover and sewn by ladies of the church. This is one of two that were done, the other being sent to Ahrensfelde.

SESSION HOUSE

If we leave the chancel by the door immediately behind the pulpit we enter the Session House. It is the original meeting room built in 1912 with its square dimensions and linenfold panelling.

On the chancel wall is an array of the old pewter communion ware dating from pre-1900. These are probably the ones bought by the heritors in 1852 to replace those stolen from the manse. Also on the shelf is a pewter bell bearing the date 1722. This was the funeral bell. From 1762 the sexton, i.e., gravedigger, was allowed to charge "2d per mile going, in ringing the small bell, never to ring under 2d and to charge another 2d to ring the big bell." It is interesting to note that in 1674 the Session ordered two coffins "with hinged lids so that the pair might be cairrit dacent to the kirkyaird."



On the east wall are photographs of the Kirk Session of the various churches while facing are photographs of sundry ministers. Robert Stirling and George Smith we have already heard about and Mr Hogg is to follow, but let us look at the others.

Revd John Brown succeeded in 1878 having first arrived as assistant in 1876 to aid the failing Dr. Stirling. It was through his efforts that the Mission Church, now the Mission Hall, was built and a permanent post of assistantship inaugurated. To the regret of the congregation he accepted a call to Bellahouston Parish, Glasgow in 1887. He is credited with writing Three Centuries of Clerical Life in Galston and several other treatise. He was the principal preacher at the centenary celebrations in 1909. There is a poignant note in the Kirk Session minutes of November 1918 when a letter of sympathy was sent to Dr. Brown on the loss of all four sons in the Great War.

After Dr. Brown came Revd J. A. Hogg, followed in 1931 by Walter Davidson. He came as assistant and successor from Bluevale in Glasgow as sole nominee and was inducted on 8th September 1931. He was a gentle family man who carried out his duties in a dignified and competent manner. During his tenure the first mention of a Union of churches in Galston occurred and there was some acrimony. Nothing came of it, however, and Revd Davidson

Mansefield and of Holmes. He sat on the Boards of the Browns Institute, the Blair Trust, the Parish School, the Licensing Court and the Gas Company; in short, a very busy business man. But he always had time for his church and served it in the capacity of elder and Session Clerk. In most fund raising schemes his name and that of John Littlejohn is in the forefront. It was John Hendrie who compiled the book History of Galston Parish Church printed in 1909 and his grave is in the Kirkyard.

When the chancel project was afoot a decision had been taken not to have a communion table. Previously, communion boards had been set along the pews and people came "to the table" to be served by the minister, the precentor, the Session Clerk and the Senior Elder. No doubt many people did not want the old traditions completely swept away and it was not until



February 1920 that this decision was reversed. Mr Hendrie, Mr Littlejohn and some ladies of the congregation formed a committee to consider the matter of acquiring a communion table. It was commissioned from Mr Richmond, "the cাবে", a local cabinet maker. Light oak was the chosen wood and Gabriel Steel drew up a design. It was to be dedicated nine months later. During that time permission was sought from the heritors to extend the chancel "in a semi-circle to within three feet of the front pews." The dedication service was held in December 1920 at which service the collection was uplifted by salvers for the first time.

On either side of the table at the front of the chancel stand an oak lectern and an oak baptismal font. These were presented to Trinity Church in 1944 by Mr and Mrs John Morton of Jeanfield, Cessnock Road, Galston and were transferred to Galston Parish Church in 1980. The original laver is now on display in the Session House while the one in situ is a memorial to Mary Cowan, wife of James Cowan, who died in 1997.

On a shelf above the font is another memorial gift. The silver Quaich is to commemorate June McCrone, church member, elder and Sunday School teacher who died at an early age in 1989. Also in the chancel are flower stands presented in memory of Mr & Mrs Richmond and of Mrs Margaret Denim.

The brass lectern on the communion table was a gift from the congregation of St Sophia's Church in recognition of the help received when their church was closed for refurbishment and their services were held in the Erskine Hall. Also in the chancel there are flags on display. The flags at the back of the chancel are the colours of the 1st Galston Company and the two at either side of the chancel are the colours of the new joint Brigade - 3rd Galston. The Saltire was presented in memory Of Jim Mathieson, a BB Captain who died

Portland, possibly the largest employer in the Parish and who was insistent that his employees were church attenders, paid sufficient to cover seating for his workers, thus ensuring against an excuse of poverty for non-attendance.



DOWNSTAIRS

On returning downstairs enter the main body of the church by the door leading to the south aisle, i.e., on the left as you enter. Pause for a moment and look at the architecture and symmetry of the interior with clean cut lines and lack of fuss. Try to visualise what it would have looked like pre-1912, pre-chancel. In the style of a typical old Scots Kirk, the pulpit, reached by twin stairs, was in the centre of the west wall. A door at either side led to the robing room on the right and the meeting room on the left. The choir pews extended in front of the pulpit with a special seat for the precentor, as there was no organ. Above the pulpit were two stained glass windows in a traditional 19th century design. Fragments of these windows are supposed to be in the basement of the Dick Institute, Elmbank Street, Kilmarnock. The present lighting was installed in 1999. Previous to that flat ceiling lights with pendants under the gallery had been in place since 1940.

Let us look now at what are on the walls of the downstairs portion of the church. To the right of the doorway is a framed Belgian flag. In 1914 when Belgium was overrun by Germany many fled to other countries. Some of these refugees were washed up in Glasgow and from there they found their way to Galston. This was through the offices of the Revd J. A. Hogg and of Provost J. A. Yeudall. Mr Yeudall persuaded the authorities that Galston was a fit place for some refugees to come and Mr Hogg co-ordinated a committee to organise housing and employment. In all, some 11 families, in excess of 100 people, were welcomed to Galston, housed, fed and befriended. While they were here - from November 1914 to February 1919 - babies were born, couples were married and a few died. On their return to Belgium the ladies sewed a flag and it was brought back by Isabella Fleming, a Galston resident and Red Cross volunteer who had gone back to Belgium with them. The flag was displayed in the Council Chambers, dropped from sight at re-organisation and was resurrected from a cupboard in 1994. After restoration by Felicity Walker, Gloria Ritchie and a band of willing sewers it was framed and laid up in the

church on Remembrance Sunday, 1994. The flag was handed over by Madame Irene Steenackers, a grand-daughter of one of the original refugees.

In the centre of the south wall is a memorial plaque to Revd George Smith D.D. and his widow, Marion Freer. He had been minister of Galston Parish Church from 1778-1823 and died in office. He, too, was a remarkable man. George Smith had been born in the manse at Cranstoun and was educated at Glasgow University. He was a forceful preacher, a popular pastor and a hospitable host. Many an impecunious scholar found bed and board and no doubt some fatherly advice at the manse in Galston. One of his daughters married Mr Balfour, the minister of Sorn and their grandson was Robert Louis Stevenson, author and poet. But this was not his only connection with literature, for living as he did at the end of the 18th century and in Ayrshire and a minister albeit of the moderator variety, Smith soon came under the pen of Robert Burns. His name crops up in three poems - The Holy Fair, The Twa Herds and The Kirk's Alarm. Two verses in The Holy Fair run as follows:

*But hark! The tent has chang'd its
voice;*

*There's peace and rest nae langer;
For a' the real judges rise,
They canna sit for anger.*

*(Smith) opens out his cauld
harangues,*

*On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in throngs
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.*

*What signifies his barren shine,
Of moral powers an' reason?
His English style, and gesture fine
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,*

*Or some auld pagan heather,
The moral man he does define
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's right that day.*

This was supposed to be a compliment but it was not received as such by Smith and therefore the poet attacked him:

*Irvine-side, Irvine-side
Wi' your turkey cock pride
Of manhood but sma' is your share
Ye've the figure tis true
Even your faes will allow
And your friends they dare grant
you nae mair.*

It was during the long and tireless ministry of George Smith that the heritors were persuaded of the need to add to the religious life of the community by building a new church and as we have seen it was preached in by him on 18th June 1909. He was buried in the Kirkyard and his grave, and that of his son, is at the back on the north side.

On either side of the chancel archway are War Memorial Plaques The one on the left commemorates the men of the congregation of Erskine Church who fell in the 1939-45 was while the one on the right is to the fallen of Trinity Church during 1914-1919. These plaques were brought from the New Parish Church at the Union in 1980.

Presbytery elder and Commissioner to the General Assembly.

John Littlejohn's generosity of time was complemented by his generosity of giving. It is recorded that he had the marble tiling laid in the vestibule 1927; stained glass windows in the chancel 1912 and 1920; the balance of the account for rounding the chancel steps 1920; 10 silver salvers to uplift the collection 1920 (these are now used as bread pattens at communion services); the portraits of Dr. Stirling, Dr. Brown and Mr Hogg 1923; the painting of the interior of the church 1927 and what more did he do that is not recorded? He died at Thornwood, Clocksland Road in 1932 aged 78.

Between the two stained glass windows stands a brass cross of Celtic design. This was presented to the church to mark the untimely death of Archie McNeill, elder and Session Clerk (1979-1990). Below it is a tapestry of The Last Supper sewn by Jean Logan, church member, Sunday School teacher and elder. Jean later sewed a similar tapestry which was presented to our sister church in Ahrensfelde, Germany in 1998.

Along the bottom of the wall stand a row of Communion Chairs. These, along with the ones that stand at the front communion table, were gifted by Mr and Mrs Wm. Donald of Parkerston Farm in 1913. Crafted in light oak to match the other wood, this set of 14 was ready to be in place at the dedication of the chancel. Ordained in 1889, Mr Donald was another staunch supporter of the church and the latest in a long line of Donalds who had served their church well.

In the south corner at the back, is a communion table which came from a church in North Lanarkshire while in the north corner is the baptismal font which originally stood at the front of the chancel. This was designed by Gabriel Steel, architect of Kilmarnock, but Galston-born, and is made of Portland stone. It cost £51 in 1936 and the money was raised by the Girls' Guildry, the Boys' Brigade and Life Boys and an anonymous donation. The laver in the centre was an antique pewter basin inscribed Galston Church 1809. On the font is a pottery ewer which is a present from our sister church in Ahrensfelde, Germany. At the side of the font stands a Victorian corner chair. The plaque on it says The Robert Stirling Chair, presented by Mr Adam Currie to the Ministers of Galston Parish Church. Unfortunately it does not say why it was presented but a search of Session Minutes tells us that it was in 1875. It sat in the study at the Manse until 2005 when it was moved for safe keeping to the church.

The set of choir stalls was dedicated in January 1913. The inscription tells us that they were given as a memorial to John Hendrie, elder 1849-1886, by his family. Born into a farming family, whose descendants still farm locally, he matriculated in law from Glasgow University in 1834 and set up business in Newmilns. He was Clerk to the Town Council and a Police Commissioner. In 1839 he came to Galston as agent of the Union Bank and was partner in J. & J. Hendrie and Cunningham, writer. He was factor for the estates of

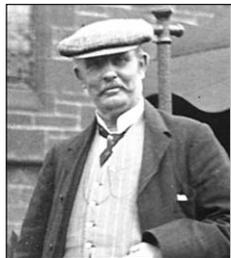
roundabout route. It was also said that his name should have been spelt with an 'e' such were his sterling qualities. In all of this he was ably assisted by his daughter who was largely responsible for starting a Sabbath School in the church and was a staunch supporter of Galston Parish until her death in Ayr. Four sons became engineers, one with Glasgow and South-West Railways, one with South-Eastern Railways and two went to Peru. Another son became a Church of Scotland minister and was for some time in Craigue.

Along the wood panelling of the south wall of the chancel are three plaques. The middle one commemorates the addition of the chancel in 1912 during the ministry of James Allan Hogg while the outer two are war memorial plaques of the 1914-18 war brought from Erskine Church, then the New Parish, in 1980 at the Union. Above them are two war memorial plaques. The top one to Susan Fairlie, only child of the late Major Edward Fairlie, whose name is on the plaque below. The Fairlies of Holmes were heritors of the church and permission was granted for these to be placed in position. Mungo Fairlie made his money in trade with the Indies but Holmes House can now barely be seen, as a ruin, among a copse of trees at the bottom of the Long Luik. The Fairlie burial ground can be seen next to Dr. Smith's at the back of the church.

The back, or west wall, of the chancel is pierced by two magnificent stained-glass windows. These were donated in 1920 by Mr John Littlejohn, coal master, of Nelville, Glebe Road, as part of the church war memorial and replaced the existing early windows. The work was commissioned from Mr Oscar Paterson of Glasgow in September of 1919 and was ready for dedication, along with the memorial plaques on either side, on Sabbath, 27th June, 1920.

The memorial plaques were by Messrs. Milne of Edinburgh, red and black lettering on a brass plate set on slate with a border of alabaster supplied by Messrs. Galbraith and Winton of Glasgow. The bill for the two tablets came to £254. The dedication was by the Revd George Hendrie of Dalmellington Church whose text was "The memory of the just is blessed," *Proverbs 10v7*.

It might be appropriate here to give a word picture of Mr John Littlejohn. Born into a farming family, he first became employed with the railway at Troon. He then came to Galston as cashier to Messrs. Robert Horn & Co.,



proprietors of several pits. On the demise of that company, he took ownership of Holmes Colliery and Streethead pits to which he added Maxwood and Barrmains. He was active in local government and a contemporary of, and believer in, the doctrines of Keir Hardie and, along with Bailie John Brown, set up the Ayrshire Miners Union in 1886. But most of all he loved serving his church. He was an elder and also Session Clerk, superintendant of the Sunday School,

In the centre of the north wall is a plaque that marks the place of the burial aisle of the Campbells. Campbell was a common name in the surrounding countryside. There were Campbells in Cessnock, Campbells in Mayfield and Campbells in Waterhaughs among others. They were minor landowners, influential in the community and heritors in the church. As we have seen, their burial site was behind this area.

On the east wall to the right of the north doorway is another memorial tablet. It is dedicated to Dr. Alexander Browne who died in Buenos Ayres in 1868, his brother, Hugh, who died in Darvel in 1872 and was erected by a third brother, John, who was at that time in Australia. These three were sons of John Brown, gamekeeper, of Lanfine Estate. The one who concerns us most is Hugh, a radical, a poet, and the schoolmaster of Barr School 1839-48. At that time this was the new school attached to the Free Church until the Parish School opened in 1848 (now known as Burnside). There is documentation which says that during the opening ceremony of the Muckle Brig in 1839, Captain Patrick, factor at Loudoun, "interrupted a fiery, radical speech by Hugh Brown, master at Barr." He had been born in Newmilns and taught first at Drumclog before being appointed to the new school of Barr. From there he went to Lanark, to Glasgow and died in Alpha Cottage in Darvel. He had a poem, *The Covenanters*, along with several other pieces, published by Messrs. J. Symington of Glasgow in 1838. Many of his works were given away to friends without note being taken. Also he is mentioned in a book, 'Poets and Poetry of the Covenant' which is held in the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock and one quatrain quoted is:

*The lover of freedom can never forget
The glorious peasant band,
His sires, that on Scotia's moorlands met;
Each name like a seal on the heart is set.
The pride of his fatherland.*

Others of his poems were *The Martyrdom of John Brown* and in a lighter mood, *The Farmer and his Plough*.

CHANCEL

And now let us turn around and look at the Chancel. This addition came almost by accident, as many good ideas do, and what a magnificent accident it is. It speaks volumes of the workmanship, craftsmanship and imagination of the people involved in 1911-1912. Unfortunately no records remain to put names to these people. We can only admire the result.



And why was this addition conceived and brought to fruition? In 1910 Galston Parish Church still had a precentor, viz a man who sang the tune and led the singing of the congregation. All other churches in the Valley had some form of organ. Then the precentor, Alexander Young, Provost of Galston, elder in the church, decided to retire. He was by this time an old man and had held the post for 36 years. The idea of installing an organ was met with much opposition. "There will be nae kist o' whistles in oor kirk" was the attitude of those against. However, the pro-organ lobby won the day and in typical "what the Valley can do Galston can do better" manner.

A committee was formed, avenues were explored, a subscription list was opened and an inspired decision to approach the Carnegie Trust was taken. Andrew Carnegie, born in Dunfermline, had become a millionaire, in steel works in the USA, and a philanthropist. His great loves were books and music, hence the Carnegie Library in Ayr and the Carnegie Halls in New York. Many churches, libraries and schools have benefited from his generosity and we, in Galston, certainly did. The Carnegie Trust put up half the money for the organ - a gift, not a loan - and the congregation found the rest. It was built by J. & J. Binns of Leeds to definite specifications and is one of the finest examples of its kind in the West of Scotland. It cost £1000 in 1912.

But where to house this organ? It needed a large organ chamber to be built to hold the pipes and the powering engine, hydraulic at first, and an area to

act as a sounding chamber. So the idea of the chancel took shape. It was pushed out from the west wall with a barrel ceiling and raised three steps above the floor of the existing church. The organ chamber was built to the right and a new robing room and meeting room to the left, i.e., the present vestry and session house.

The chancel was dedicated in 1912, the pulpit and organ in February 1913 and the choir stalls in October 1913. (100 years of the magnificent JJ Binns Organ was commemorated on Sunday 10 February 2013 with a Songs of Praise and an Organ Recital on 19 October 2013 by Ian Hare). The wood panelling is unstained oak as is the organ wood and the floor is black and white Carera marble as supplied by Messrs. Galbraith and Winton of Glasgow. The original stained glass windows were replaced in



the new windows in the centre of the back wall and three additional small windows on the south wall were filled with stained-glass depictions of a dove, a burning bush and a ship in full sail. These last three were the gift of Mr John Littlejohn of Nelville.

Most of the furnishings in the chancel were gifts from that time and from elsewhere. The pulpit, for example, was the gift of the family of Dr. Robert Stirling. It is made from Austrian oak by a local craftsman, Provost John Yeudall, elder and townsman. It greatly reflects his skill and craft and has well stood the test of time. A memorial to Dr. Stirling is carved on the side. In the space beneath the pulpit now stands a model of a Stirling engine, presented to the church by Willie Kidd of Ayr; and nearby is a memorial poppy, one of 888,246 ceramic poppies of the art installation Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red at the Tower of London in 2014. It was presented to the church by Irene Hopkins. Look also for a matchstick model of the church building built and donated by Jim Miller of Kilwinning on 22 May 2016.

And what of Dr. Robert Stirling D.D.? It was said of him that if he had chosen to go into science in all likelihood he would have achieved fame and fortune but his chosen occupation was the ministry and he achieved great respect and devotion. He came to Galston in 1824 from the Laigh Kirk in Kilmarnock and remained minister of the Parish until his death in 1878. His tombstone may be seen in the cemetery in Cemetery Road.

The original stone had fallen into such a state of disrepair that in May 2015, a new stone, raised by subscription, was dedicated by Rev. Alastair Symington, our locum since February 2013, both in church and at a graveside ceremony. In his time Dr Stirling was greatly respected and greatly loved for his kindness, generosity and strong Christianity. He took his share in the struggles that led to the Disruption. Indeed, according to Hew Scott in Fasti, he was "suspended, with nine others," by the General Assembly, 30th May, 1842, for nine months for "holding communion with the deposed ministers of Strathbogie." But that decision only served to underline the loyalty of his flock.

Then, in 1848-49 when cholera, that great scourge, inflicted Galston and the Valley, there was no-one more conscientious in his ministrations. He moved among them, he tended them, he prayed with them and he buried them while the world at large passed by, by a

