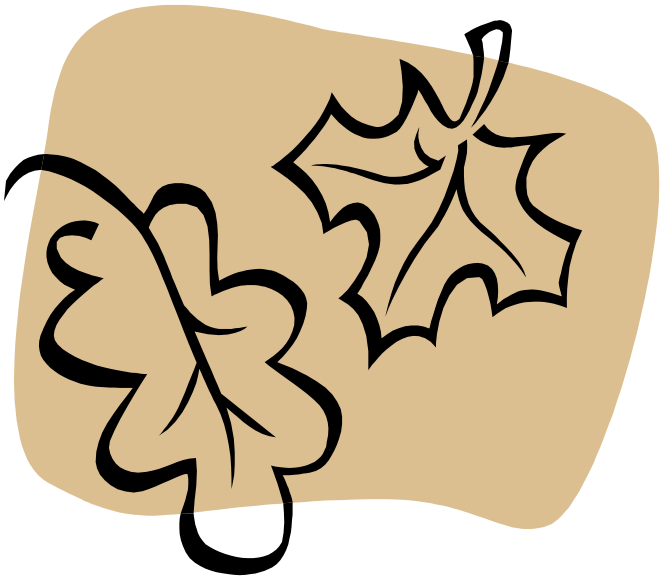
AUTUMN LEAVES

Volume 2



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Eva Publications
Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, Scotland
2013

Foreword

I have much pleasure in presenting the second volume of my *Autumn Leaves*, consisting of items that I wrote as a young man and which I am now re-issuing in my own "autumn" years.

I am very grateful to Scottish Church Heritage Research (SCHR) for kindly allowing me to use some of their copyright photographs in the article on Erskine Church, Dunfermline.

As always, I trust friends will enjoy these contributions from my younger self and will also forgive their many shortcomings.

Alasdair Gordon

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December 2013

Saint Mungo – his Life and Legend

This brief popular paper on Saint Mungo was presented at a meeting of the Edinburgh Sunday School Teachers' Union in 1966. It makes no pretensions to being a scholarly work and readers can make what they wish of the various tales and legends recounted. The text has only been lightly revised.

Saint Kentigern or Mungo was one of Scotland's foremost apostles of Christianity and whose life was one of exemplary piety and sincerity. How he came to be a follower of the great Celtic Christian tradition is one of the most remarkable coincidences in the history of Scotland.

The monastic hagiographer, Jocelin of Furness, wrote a "Life" of Saint Mungo around the year 1185. Jocelin states that he rewrote the Life from an earlier Glasgow legend and an old Gaelic document. There are certainly two other known medieval lives: (1) an earlier partial Life now in the British Library and (2) the later Life, based on Jocelin, by John of Tynemouth.

Mungo's mother was called Thenew. She was the Christian daughter of Loth who held sway over a kingdom in Southern Caledonia during the earlier part of the sixth century AD. The story runs that Thenew became pregnant through a relationship with her cousin Eugenius. Partly through fear of disgrace but mainly to satisfy his own pride, Loth decided to have his daughter executed. She was taken up to the top of Traprain Law and hurled over the precipice in a two wheeled cart. According to legend, she landed at the foot of the cliff entirely unharmed.

Her father, however, was determined not to be thwarted by a mere slip of a girl, so he then had her placed in a coracle and pushed into the River Forth at Aberlady. The little craft drifted out into the water, allegedly followed by hundreds of fish. Next morning, Thenew found that the tide had taken her up river and

grounded the coracle on the north bank of the Forth at Culross, in Fife.

Thenew struggled on to dry land and on the foreshore her son was born. The traditional place for this event was marked by a sixteenth century chapel, built by Bishop Blackadder of Glasgow. The remains of the chapel can still be seen.

Thenew had been singularly fortunate in landing at Culross, as this was the home of (Saint) Serf, known as the Apostle of the Ochils, who also had oversight of a monastic school or college there. Serf came upon the two refugees on the foreshore. The kindly man said "Maghaol! Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord." "Maghaol" has, in the course of time, become Mungo, which means "darling". This was to become his popular name throughout his life, in spite of his being baptised with the more formal name of Kentigern.

Mother and son were given refuge at Culross and Mungo was educated and trained under Serf, whose favourite pupil we was destined to be.

And thare he browcht up Saynt Mungowe
That syne was Byschape of Glasgowe [1]

Unfortunately, the fact that Mungo was clearly the favourite scholar, led to topical school-type bullying by the other boys, who set out to make his life a misery.

There is an account that, on one occasion, the other lads extinguished every fire in Culross knowing full well that it was Mungo's turn to light the lamps in the church on the following morning. When Mungo discovered his predicament he pulled a twig from a nearby hazel tree and immediately it sprang into

[1] Quotation from Andrew de Wyntoun's Chronicle

flames, but was not consumed. On another occasion the lads were playing with their master's pet robin. In the course of the game, the unfortunate bird was killed. Mungo made the sign of the cross and the bird came back to life. We will return to these two miracles later.

In spite of the kindness of the venerable Serf, Mungo still found life at Culross unbearable and decided to run away. Serf, realising what had happened set off in pursuit and caught up with the young man at an unknown location named *Pons Servani* (Serf's Bridge). He entreated Mungo to come home with him, but to no avail. After giving Mungo his blessing, Serf returned to Culross.

Mungo continued on his way; the story runs that the waters of the Forth parted to let him cross just like the waters of the Red Sea had parted for Moses. (It is interesting to note in passing that, around Culross, the River Forth is well known for unusual tides.) Later that day, Mungo arrived at a place called Kernach where we found Fergus, an aged apostle, on his deathbed. Fergus begged Mungo to arrange for him to have a proper Christian burial.

By the next morning, Fegus was dead. Mungo placed his body on a cart and compelled two bullocks to draw it, praying that the Lord would lead them to a chosen place. The bullocks drew the cart as far as a place then named *Cathures* and which Mungo renamed as Glasgow (Dear Green Place). He laid the old man to rest in a burial ground founded originally by Saint Ninian, the father of the Celtic Church in Scotland.

This was to mark the beginning of Mungo's ministry in that part of what we now call Scotland. After a short time, he was created Bishop of Glasgow. It should be explained at this point that a bishop in the Celtic Church had a different role from a

bishop in the modern sense. It was more of an honorary title that was conferred by another bishop in a simple ordination service. It was a position of veneration and respect, rather than political or ecclesiastical authority.

Saint Brigid, one of the patron saints of Ireland, is said to have been created a bishop by accident, as the officiating clergyman is said to have read the wrong service!

From the revived centre at Glasgow, Mungo and his disciples evangelised much of the south of Scotland. After a comparatively short time an unfortunate situation arose. Mungo was forced to flee the country because of opposition from a local ruler named Morken.

There was a great shortage of food in the area. Morken had barns filled with grain yet would not share any of this with his people. The story goes that Mungo commanded the Clyde to sweep away the grain. This is apparently what happened and the grain was miraculously washed ashore, dry, at Mungo's chapel. This enraged Morken, although he died shortly afterwards. His kinsmen took the opportunity to blame Mungo for his death and he was forced to leave the Clyde valley.

We are not reliably informed what happened to Thenew, his mother. It is believed that she followed her son to Glasgow and that she subsequently died there. It is also believed that there was an early chapel at the point when the Molendinar Burn joins the River Clyde. This primitive building eventually took the name "Saint Enoch's" – a corruption of her name. This latter name is still familiar to modern Glaswegians in the St Enoch Centre, built on the site of the former St Enoch Station and Hotel.

When Mungo was forced to leave Glasgow, he made south towards what is now the north of England. In Cumberland, there

are no fewer than eight sites bearing his name plus one dedicated to Thenew, his mother. Similar sites are found in Northumberland. He made his way even further south through England. Saint Mungo's Well was a cold water spring and bath at Copgrove, near Ripon, North Yorkshire, formerly believed effective for treating rickets.

We tend to think that transport would have been very difficult, if not impossible. In fact, some parts of the country had been opened up with the Roman roads. Assuming – and this is a reasonable presumption – that Mungo stopped at Carlisle (Luguvallum), the whole of the north west of England would have opened to him. Even with a detour through the northern counties, it would still have been a simple matter to proceed south, on the road to Wales, by way of Chester (*Deva*).

Once in Wales, Mungo studied for some time under (Saint) David in the south which provided an excellent supplement to the grounding he had received in Culross. Eventually, he moved to the north of Wales guided, according to legend, by a white boar and began new outreach. He even named one of the rivers "Clwyd" after his own beloved Clyde.

His ministry in north Wales was very fruitful. Many gifts were poured on his monastic settlement. He founded a church at Llanlwy that later became known as Saint Asaph's Cathedral. He also restored the sight of a local chieftain, who quickly befriended and protected him.

There is no reliable evidence as to how long Mungo actually stayed in Wales. However, at some point in time, the political situation in Glasgow seems to have improved sufficiently to allow him to return home. It is said that when he arrived back in Glasgow, he was accompanied by no less than 665 monks. With renewed zeal, he and his followers began to restore his work in

the south of Scotland, taking in what are now Ayrshire, Roxburgh, Berwickshire and the Lothians.

Mungo himself soon set off on another expedition. First of all he followed in the steps of his venerable master, Saint Serf. He followed his tracks round the foothills of the Ochil Hills and made his way up Glendevon. On the other side of the Ochils, he stopped for some time at Gleneagles where there was a primitive chapel dedicated to his name. Saint Mungo's Well is still the main source of the River Ruthven. From here, Mungo seemed to have travelled north as far as Aberdeenshire.

In Aberdeenshire, several wells and chapels bore his name. He also followed in the ministrations of (Saint) Drostan of Deer, one of the foremost evangelists of north Aberdeenshire. Among other places, Mungo's name still clings at Kinnoir near Huntly and there is a Saint Mungo's Hill at Glengairn.

After this northern mission, Mungo is believed to have returned to Glasgow. There is a somewhat unreliable account in the *Martyology of Aberdeen* (the dates do not seem to quite tie up) that he was visited by Saint Columba of Iona at Kilmacolm and that the two exchanged pastoral staffs. However, it is almost certain that Mungo was in Glasgow in the second half of the seventh century.[2]

Four items that refer to Mungo are to be found on the Glasgow coat of arms, referred to in the ancient rhyme:

Here is the bird that never flew
Here is the tree that never grew
Here is the bell that never rang
Here is the fish that never swam

[2] There is a reference to his being Bishop of Glasgow at the time of Conwalle, King of Strathclyde, in Adam King's Kalendar published in Paris in 1588.

It was almost certain that somewhere around his later period the famous miracle of the fish and the ring took place. Queen Languoreth of Strathclyde was suspected of infidelity by her husband, King Riderch, who demanded to see her ring, which he claimed she had given to her lover. In reality the King himself had thrown it into the River Clyde. Faced with execution she appealed for help to Mungo, who ordered a messenger to catch a fish from the river. On opening the fish, the ring was miraculously found inside it, which allowed the Queen to clear her name.

So far, we have dealt with three of the four symbols linked with Mungo that appear on the Glasgow coat of arms, namely the Bird (Saint Serf's robin), the Tree (from which he plucked a twig that allowed him to light the church lamps at Culross) and the Fish. One only remains – the Bell, which remains more of a mystery and no one knows for certain why it never rang. Most Celtic apostles seem to have owned a bell, the exact purpose of which is uncertain but probably were used in worship. Very few of these bells have survived. One of the best examples – Saint Ternan's Bell – was carelessly lost in the nineteenth century.

There is a legend that Mungo brought his bell from Rome. This seems unlikely as communications with mainland Europe were very difficult at the time, due to the infiltration of warlike peoples from the Low Countries and Scandinavia. Also, although Rome was increasing in importance as a seat of ecclesiastical power, the Celtic church only recognised this fact slowly and with a degree of resistance. The visit to Rome is more likely to be later wishful thinking and a subtle rewriting of history.

Mungo died in 601 or 612, having achieved a great deal. Because his life seems to have been influenced by later legends, there is the temptation to dismiss him altogether. That would be a mistake. There is no doubt that he was a real person and he left

a valuable legacy behind him. Glasgow Cathedral in a very real sense is a witness to his early work being built on the site of his first chapel.

The City of Glasgow's motto *Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of His word and the praising of His name* and the more secular *Let Glasgow flourish*, are both inspired by Mungo's original call *"Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word"*.

Coat of Arms of the City of Glasgow

Lochore and Ballingry – A Parish History

What follows is a series of three articles, published in weekly instalments in *The Dunfermline Press* in 1961 when I was a schoolboy at Dunfermline High School, approaching my 18th birthday. When I read through the typescript after so many years, I was very tempted to do a complete rewrite. To me now, at age 70+, some of the language presents at times as childlike and at other times, rather pompous. I decided to make no real changes as that would have compromised the integrity of the original. I have made only a very few minor alterations in the text where the original might be ambiguous. Some superfluous and (now) irrelevant sentences have been deleted.

As a matter of historical fact, the articles were written by a teenage schoolboy at that exciting and scary time of life when he was seeking to establish his own identity. Whilst I always welcome constructive criticism of anything I write, please bear in mind that what follows *was* written by a schoolboy!

People who are less well disposed towards me may, of course, consider that my later writings are also childlike and pompous. On that issue, others alone must judge.

Also, it should be kept in mind that the area of which I wrote has changed beyond recognition since the early 1960s, with the closure of the coal mines and the remarkable reclamation of Lochore Meadows, now a country park.

These three articles led to my being awarded the Sixth Year Divinity Prize at school, of which I was, at the time, immensely proud!

Chapter 1 – Ancient History of Ballingry

Ballingry – to those who know only the geography of West Fife, this name brings up a rather uninspiring picture of coal-pits and modern council houses in one of the more run-down regions in the county. However, the bystander should know some of the history of that area before he or she passes judgment.

One of the oldest sites in the parish is the large stone circle on Hare Law, just east of Glencraig. Unfortunately little is actually known about it – some say that it is the site of an ancient battle, others that it is a type of burial mound to some long forgotten chieftain. Excavations have taken place and material, said to be human remains, was found deep in the cairn.

Whatever it is, historians can safely place the date of the cairn between the second and first millennium BC.

The historical event for which Ballingry parish is best known is the battle, said to have taken place on the north bank of Lochore in the first century of the Christian era, around 83 AD.

A battle that might correspond to this is described by Tacitus, the biographer of the Roman General, Julius Agricola. According to Tacitus, the Roman fleet assembled in Bodatria, now the Firth of Forth, and then the soldiers advanced north into Caledonia. Tradition states that he landed either at Aberdour or Burntisland. Both of these places have natural harbours, both with advantages and disadvantages, but there is information that traces of (possible) Roman encampments survived in the Burnisland district until fairly recent times. Some say that he might have come ashore at Kinghorn – it all depends which town you like best!

Tradition also states that Agricola made a line of forts across West Fife, the most famous being those at Lochore and Carnock near Oakley, to the west of Dunfermline. . In the eighteenth century, a horde of Roman coins was found on Carneil Hill near Carnock and last century[3] another similar horde was found at North Bogside, near Ballingry. Coins have also been found near Auchterderran and Strathmiglo.

At the Battle of Lochore, the Ninth Legion narrowly escaped defeat at the hands of the local people (the Horestii) and indeed the position was so grave that Agricola was sent for at his temporary headquarters at Carneil Hill to come quickly with reinforcements. He came at once and was able to turn the tide of events.

[3] i.e. the 19th century

The Roman legion had been asleep and the Horestii (Caledonians) made a sudden rush at daybreak from their own camp on Benarty Hill right into enemy territory. The Ninth Legion fought back bravely and kept the Caledonians at bay until Agricola came with his force, the very sight of which drove them back to their native hills.

The result of this battle was a stalemate but it did two things (a) it made the Romans realise the strength of the Caledonian forces and (b) it gave the Caledonians a fatal confidence in their "rush" tactics, just as at a later date it was the downfall of the Highland Host at Culloden.

There are still people in Fife who state, not without cause, that the famous Battle of Mons Graupius took place somewhere at the base of the Lomonds, perhaps at Strathmiglo. Large numbers of skeletons were found near Gateside, signifying in all probability the site of some ancient battle.

Assuming that Mons Graupius was fought there, is it not possible that the Caledonian forces were routed and that as a result they built the line of camps which run across the country to the south of Crieff as a kind of improvised wall, just as was done under the Emperors Hadrian and Antonine?

After the Battle of Lochore, Agricola was so shaken that he is said to have withdrawn over the Forth to consider the position. In that case it seems unlikely that Galgacus would withdraw his troops back over the Ochils when he had just won a moral victory.

After Mons Graupius, when victory was in their blood, it is quite likely that the Roman legion would pursue the fleeing Caledonians over the range of hills or even further. It is evident from

historical writers such as Livy that the Romans, once victory was in their sight, would pursue a fleeing enemy with delight.

In the days of Agricola, the land around Lochore would not have had its present appearance. It would have been wild and desolate and in all probability much if it would have been covered with thick forest land, inhabited by wolves.

The remains of the Roman camp at Lochore have been almost completely destroyed within the last 200 years. It is said to have stood on the site now occupied by Chapel or Camp Farm on the north bank of the loch. According to historians' reports, the camp measured 2020 feet right round, had three ramparts and ditches and a large watchtower facing out over the dark waters of the loch. Camps of similar appearance are said by rather unreliable period writers to have existed near Burntisland, Kinghorn and Queensferry. This kind of camp would perhaps have been one of the many temporary forts erected by the Romans.

The person who probably knew most about the Lochore camp was Sir Walter Scott, but like the great writer he was, he was apt to make up what he did not know. Sir Walter's connection with Lochore will be dealt with later.

Chapter 2 – The Coming of Christianity to the Ore Valley

To begin a critical survey of Saint Serf whose followers are said to have brought Christianity to the Ore Valley would require a whole volume but, to understand how the faith was brought, a little knowledge is necessary. When exactly he lived and who his parents were has long been a matter of argument among learned men. Indeed it is often argued (with very little evidence) that there were two Serfs or perhaps even three. To keep matters

simple we shall place Saint Serf in the sixth century and attempt to keep him singular!

According to tradition, he died at Dunning in Strathearn and was buried at his place of ministration, Culross. When the Norse invasion came, his followers were driven out of Culross and were given refuge by the Pictish King Brude on the largest island on Loch Leven called St Serf's Inch to this day.

The Priory on St Serf's Inch was brutally sacked at a later date by King David I, the "Sore Saint" who crushed the Celtic church in Scotland while his mother, the Saintly Queen Margaret of the royal line of Edward the Confessor was content to "let sleeping dogs lie". The rather idealised picture of this kindly king peacefully building beautiful churches for the greater glory of God is only one side of the picture.

When Saint Serf's followers fled to this large island (which is now bigger due to the later partial draining of the loch) they gradually began to bring the light of the Gospel to the surrounding wild and barren areas. It will never be known how much of Scotland was actually enlightened by Saint Serf himself or by his followers. He is known to have had a retreat at Dysart where, according to Andrew de Wyntoun, sometime the Prior of St Serf's Inch, he had an argument with the Devil!

If Serf walked between Culross and his retreat at Dysart, he might well have made a detour into the upland country. He himself might well have founded the church of Inchgall, probably near Chapel farm and (possibly) the church at Aucterderran. The ministration of Serf or his followers has been eclipsed by a much later figure – Fothad II, the last Celtic Bishop of St Andrews, who performed the simple marriage service between Malcolm Canmore and Margaret in the humble Culdee church on whose site she built the Church of the Holy Trinity – later built over

again by King David I as the great and impressive Abbey of Dunfermline. Although the Abbey is like a favourite penknife which has had a new handle and two new blades but remains the same old knife, much of the old part of the Abbey is still David's.

If Saint Serf founded Ballingry Parish Church[4] it may be of like age with Culross, Dysart, Tullibody, Tillycoultry, Alva, Dollar, Fossoway and others. If it was founded by his Culdee followers, it may be two centuries younger, but it still ranks as a very ancient parish being between 1,000 and 1,500 years old.

The present church was built in 1831 and although subsequently enlarged, it has not changed fundamentally. It contains two burial aisles and a most unusual bell which peels across the valley every Sunday. It bears the following inscription:

Malcolme of Lochore 1658

Felices quos haec Balingria cimbita Christi ad pia sacra vocant
Ps. 89 vers 15

It may be translated thus: Blessed are they whom these Ballingry chimes call to the sacred worship of Christ. Psalm 89 verse 15 reads: Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

It is interesting to notice that the Latin lines are written in a Classical metre and scan perfectly.

The church of Ballingry is mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his (rather dull) novel "The Abbot" in the following terms: "Send or

[4] Following church readjustment in the area, this building is now named Saint Serf's.

take the body to the Chapel at Scotland's Well[5] or to the church at Ballingry."

The church at Ballingry has passed through three Christian traditions – the Celtic Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland. The last Roman Catholic pastor of Ballingry was Alexander Wardlaw, a member of a famous family. He was a kinsman of the respected Bishop who, in 1411 was the founder of the University of St Andrews. The first Protestant minister was a Peter Watson.[6]

In nearly all of the early Celtic churches there was a school, run by the Culdee fathers. There was certainly such a school at Culross, founded by Saint Serf and where Mungo, the future patron saint of Glasgow was educated. If such a school existed at Ballingry, it probably disappeared long before the Reformation. There is no written record of a school in the parish until 1668.

In addition to the enlargement of the church to accommodate incoming workers and their families, other churches were built in the area. Just over a century ago[7], Lochgelly was still the Fife gypsy headquarters under the influence of the Graham family. It is sometimes stated that Lochgelly was originally part of Auchterderran parish but, in actual fact, what we know today as the Burgh of Lochgelly was in the parish of Ballingry. Lochgelly village was originally nearer to the Gelly Loch, as the name would imply.

At one time, Ballingry would have contained the lands of Lochore, Balbedie, Lochcraig, Navitie, Benarty, Cartmore, Lumphinans (the site of Saint Finan's Chapel), Lochgelly (part),

[5] On the east bank of Loch Leven
[6] It is known that in 1595, the minister, David Anderson, lost an arm in a fight at the Kirk door.
[7] i.e. in the 19th century.

Milton, Crosshill and Glencraig. The Lochore church, Lochcraig was opened in 1904.[8]

Lastly, this might be an appropriate moment to comment on the name "Ballingry". There are two popular suggestions – *bal* – a village, and *INRI* the letters on the Cross of Jesus, still used by the Roman Catholic Church. The second suggestion seems more plausible – *bal –an – rhi*, a king's dwelling or, perhaps, a dwelling fit for a king. There is no evidence that Ballingry was ever a king's residence, although it is believed locally that royalty in some form has stooped there during the last millennium. There is also the story of the "disappearing palace" – a castle mentioned by Kenneth MacAlpine; or perhaps Lochore was the site of the lost city of Orrea? Who knows?

The idea of royalty was very likely meant as a compliment to the former beauty of this much spoiled locality which might, as little as 150 years ago, have been a dwelling place "fit for a king".

With the coming of the modern mining era, Ballingry enjoys prosperity and everyone is glad to see the end of the former squalid miners' rows. It is only to be hoped that the inhabitants are also proud of their church heritage and its ancient connections.[9]

Chapter 3 – Later History

After the coming of Christianity to the valley, the first recorded land owner was Duncan of Lochore who, in 1160, built the castle on the island on Loch Ore called Inchgall – the isle of the stranger. The Lochores were a powerful family of lawyers and produced at least four sheriffs. The name of Thomas de

[8] This area is now served by two church buildings and one united congregation known as Lochgelly and Benarty St Serf's. Lochcraig Church is now demolished.
[9] When the writer first knew this district it was a mining area and heavily polluted. The pits have now all gone and the huge reclamation of Lochore Meadows has been a remarkable success.

Lochore is on the seal of the Ayr Parliament that placed royal rights on the successors of Robert the Bruce.

It has been said that at the Battle of Black Earnside in 1291 there fought under William Wallace no less a person than Sir Constantine de Lochore, the Sheriff of Fife, who had succeeded his brother in that position.

Sometime at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Adam de Valloniss or Vallance married the heiress of Lochore and with her acquired the Barony which comprised the parishes of Ballingry and Auchterderran. The last of the Vallances was Dominus Jacobus Vallance who had no sons, but three daughters. In 1477 Sir Andrew Wardlaw of Torrie married the eldest daughter and received the parish of Ballingry as her dowry. This marked the break-up of the Barony of Lochore.

The Wardlaw faily made very extensive renovations to Lochore Castle and in all probability it was this family who built the causeway connecting the island with the east bank, in place of a drawbridge. Until last century[10] the name "Jacobus Wardlaw" could be seen above the main door that faced out over the loch. The castle today, guarded by two gaunt trees, is only what remains on the surface[11]. Its total circumference was in the region of 200 yards. If a little excavation could be made and some of the rubbish cleared away, more of the actual building might be found and would give experts an opportunity to examine the foundations and structure of the castle. In its present state, it is nothing short of a disgrace. The old causeway has completely disappeared but outlines of the island are quite plain

[10] i.e. the 19th century.

[11] Here I am describing the situation as it was in the early 1960s. In 2013 Lottery funding was earmarked to excavate, restore and feature the castle. Due to draining of the loch, subsidence and subsequent reinstatement, the waters of the loch have shifted and the castle is no longer on an island.

and give an idea of how the size of the loch today compares with what is was formerly.

Somewhere in the middle of the seventeenth century, the parish of Ballingry was acquired by Sir John Malcolm of the Balbedie family. It is his name that appears on the Kirk bell. This marked the beginning of the split-up of the parish. Until they finally parted with it in 1790, the family gradually lost interest in the estate and sold off many small portions of it.

Captain Park, who bought the estate in 1790, has probably left the biggest mark on the parish. He was a highly practical man and decided that he could gain up to 150 acres of land if he drained the loch. He therefore made a cut in the earth beside the castle where the River Ore leaves the loch and, as anticipated, much (but not all) of the water drained away. Had he been better acquainted with the geology of the region, he might have had second thoughts about his plan. As has been found by both miners and farmers there is a surprising amount of rock under the water due to ancient volcanic disturbances, together with the same bluish heavy clay that is found north of Dunfermline and which binds the earth tightly together.

Lochore Castle before coal mining had begun
The River Ore can be seen on the left of the picture.

So, the cut was never a complete success. A century ago[12] according to contemporary accounts, the loch was still

[12] i.e. in the middle of the 19th century.

sufficiently drained to allow a large surface of the bed to be used as a meadow from which local people could gather hay. To this day, the partially drained loch is referred to locally as the "meadies" (meadows).[13]

Anyone looking at Loch Ore today[14] will not find a dark shallow loch inhabited by pike and perch and surrounded with forest land, the home of wolves and wild bore. Instead they will find a large pool of contaminated water, bisected by the railway to the Mary Colliery. The loch is still very much smaller than it was originally and has lost any grace or shape that it would once have possessed. Also, the bed of the River Ore appears to have been deepened by the rush of water when the loch was drained. It is to be hoped that future industrialists will be more careful of beauty spots than their industrial revolution counterparts.

Captain Park, after unsuccessfully attempting to extract minerals from the ground, sold the estate – it is suspected to save himself from bankruptcy.

The estate then passed into the hands of a gentleman called Syme before selling out to a Mr Jobson in 1813. Jobson had only one daughter, Jane ("the pretty heiress of Lochore" as she was called by Captain Hall) who in 1825 married Sir Walter Scott's eldest son. Very soon afterwards he purchased a commission as Captain in the Hussars for the price of £3,500.

The present Lochore House was built around 1825 for the newly married couple and was their home until 1832 when Sir Walter died.

[13] This name was retained when the ambitious reclamation scheme was first put in hand.
[14] i.e. 1961

Lochore House (now demolished)

As well as being attractive, Miss Jobson must have been a shrewd young lady as she succeeded in persuading Sir Walter sign a document to settle Abbotsford upon the engaged parties. This took place in 1824, the year that she made her impression on the assembly at one of the greatest balls ever held at Abbotsford. Scot's biographer, Lockhart, said that the great house was never so crowded until Sir Walter Scott's funeral.

It is said, correctly, that Sir Walter stayed at Lochore House and showed great interest in the planning of the estate. It is often wrongly claimed by local historians that he received inspiration for his novel "The Abbot" when he was staying at Lochore. In actual fact, "The Abbot" was published in 1820, before the house was built. Scott took the notion of writing his novel when he was staying with his friend Chief Commissioner Adam, a member of the famous architect family, at the neighbouring estate of Blairadam, near Kelty. He was a frequent visitor to that estate and got to know much of the history of Fife from Lindores to Dunfermline, of which Burgh he received the Freedom in 1821. Scott was founder member of the Blairadam Club, a contemporary gathering of Scottish literary men.

Although Sir Walter mentions the Loch of Ore in "The Abbot", it is unlikely that he ever saw it in its entire state as it had been partially drained by Captain Park some years previously. Nevertheless we can still imagine Sir Walter in residence at

Lochore House and probably working in its once handsome circular study. He would have seen the planting of the cedar trees by his son adjacent to the house and which still survive.

When Captain Scott became master of Abbotsford in 1832, the estate and house at Lochore were let to tenants. When the Lochore coal mines were opened in 1867, the estate was purchased by the Lochore and Capeldrae Canal Coal Company for £60,000 and since then it has never again been privately owned. (The first written record of coal being mined in the parish of Balllingry is in 1710.)

A few years ago, after a period of use as housing for senior colliery staff, Lochore House became a Youth Centre, marking a new milestone in the history of the house. A grant of £12,000 was awarded for the construction of a gym and there are ambitious plans afoot to lay out the grounds for recreational purposes. [15]

[15] The final two or three sentences about the Youth Club have been omitted as having no current relevance. Eventually, the property was abandoned and vandalised. It was subsequently bought and refurbished by the Scottish Spastics Association [as it was then called]. Sadly, this handsome Georgian house was finally demolished some years ago.

A Brief History of Erskine Church, Dunfermline

St Andrews Erskine Church in happier times
Photograph © SCHR and used by kind permission.

St Andrews Erskine Church as a building at risk

What follows was originally intended to be the basis of a booklet on the history Erskine Church, Dunfermline. I was, at the time, Clerk to the Managers in that church and I was in my early twenties. The booklet was neither completed nor published and a rather rough typescript has been gathering dust since in the 1960s. Events have overtaken me in that the congregation, now St Andrews Erskine subsequently relocated to another part of the town. Erskine Church has stood empty and deteriorating for many years. When the writer last saw the exterior in 2013, many of the windows were boarded up and the property was clearly in a very poor state. There are ambitious plans by a multi-denominational Christian body to turn the old building into a conference centre and café. I am very grateful to Scottish Church Heritage Research (SCHR) for kindly allowing me to use some of their copyright photographs.

The history of what we now know as Erskine Church can really be taken back before the date of the foundation of the church in 1740 to an Act of the Parliament of Great Britain in 1711, generally know by its short title of the Church Patronage Act. At the risk of over-simplification and to avoid too much tedious detail, the purpose of the Act was, contrary to the letter and sprit of the Union of 1707, to reintroduce the practice of lay

patronage which has disappeared from Scotland at the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Lay patronage gave the lay patron – often the local laird – the right to present a minister to the church over which he held these rights.

This Act was rushed through Parliament before the Kirk in Scotland had even time to consider it. It is fair to say that this action was not done entirely in good faith. It was only one of several measures designed by a predominantly English Parliament to humiliate the Scots. Patronage was to prove a divisive and contentious issue over the next two centuries.

In 1732, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland modified the Act as far as the strict letter of the law would allow them. It laid down that the procedure for selecting a new minister would be (1) nomination by the patron and (2) the decision as to whether or not the nominee would be called was placed on "the majority of the elders being protestant". No voice was given at this stage to ordinary communicant members. The patron was not required to be a communicant member of the Church of Scotland. In practice, many of the Scottish nobility are traditionally Episcopalian although, over the years, many have adhered to their parish church.

The Act of 1732 greatly annoyed a minister by the name of Ebenezer Erskine[16], the older brother of Ralph Erskine, who considered that the Act was not sufficiently radical or reforming and gave too many rights to wealthier people. The former had already fallen out with the General Assembly due to his support for a book entitled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Believed to be the work of Edward Fisher of Oxford and published in Oxford around 1646, this work on the nature of the atonement was

[16] More details of the lives of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine respectively can be found in my own *Whose Faith Follows* (Eva Publications, 2013).

rediscovered by Rev Thomas Boston around 1700 in the course of pastoral visiting in the parish of Simprin.

He greatly appreciated the tone and theology of the book and subsequently showed it to the scholarly James Hog of Carnock who arranged its re-publication in 1718. It was not well received in all quarters. Theological controversy was raging at the time on the nature of the atonement[17]. There was also a bitter dispute arising from the heresy trial of Professor Simson of Glasgow University. To us today, some of the points at issue may seem academic and hair-splitting but to many people at the time they were very important and not to be glossed over.

In 1720, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland strongly condemned the Marrow. Twelve ministers including Hog, Boston and the Erskine brothers unsuccessfully challenged the Assembly's decision. Eventually, the controversy seemed to die out although the theological issues were not forgotten. However, it was the matter of patronage that finally led to the formation of the Secession or "Associate" Church with four ministers at Gairney Bridge near Kinross in 1733. There was considerable ill-feeling. The four ministers retained their pulpits and manses in the meantime but did not hold communion with other Church of Scotland ministers.

Later, however, the Assembly felt that perhaps it had been just a trifle harsh. The intended sentence of deposition was not carried out and the ministers were invited to resume their seats in their respective Presbyteries. Ebenezer Erskine was actually elected Moderator of the Presbytery of Stirling. In spite of these conciliatory moves, the four would have nothing to do with

[17] The so-called Auchterarder Controversy around the same time focussed on the problem as to whether or not it was sound and orthodox to insist that a man must forsake sin before he can come to Jesus Christ. Even then, people of staunch and Calvinist evangelical conviction were having difficulties with some of the more rigid aspects of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

any part of the established Church of Scotland. To cut a long story short they were eventually deposed in 1740.

By this time, they had been joined by other ministers, including Ralph Erskine. He was born on March 15, 1685, younger son of the Rev Henry Erskine of Chirnside. Henry Erskine was himself somewhat of a rebel and had refused to accept Episcopalianism even under torture. Visitors to John Knox's House in Edinburgh can still see the thumbscrews used on Henry Erskine. These were not days of moderation and toleration. He was sentenced to be imprisoned on the Bass Rock but due to his poor health, the sentence was not enforced. Instead, he was banished from Scotland. His son Ralph was, in fact, born in England, in the parish of Monilaws in the County of Northumberland.

There is an old wife's tale that Ralph Erskine was born after his mother died. According to this tale, she was thought to be dead and was duly buried. Some grave robbers dug up the coffin and when they tried to cut a gold ring off her finger she suddenly woke up. Her son Ralph was born after this macabre event. Whilst it is a good story, there is no real evidence that it is true.

As a young man, Ralph Erskine attended the University of Edinburgh. He spent his vacations at the manse of his brother Ebenezer, at that time minister at Portmoak and was greatly influenced by him and by his wife.

Ralph's first actual employment was as tutor in the household of distant relative, Colonel the Honourable John Erskine of Cardross, know as the "Black Colonel" who resided at Culross Palace and who had fought in the army of William of Orange. Among his charges was one of the sons of the house, also John Erskine. Later, as John Erskine of Carnock, the latter was to become Professor of Scots Law at Edinburgh University and a

famous jurist and writer. His son, in turn also named John, was the future John Erskine DD, minister of Old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh and the leader of the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland.

Ralph Erskine took the tutoring position at Culross at a time when he was undecided as to his own future. Would it be teaching or ministry? Eventually, he decided in favour of the latter. After declining several calls, he accepted a call to the second charge of Dunfermline Abbey in 1711. In 1716, he moved to the first charge.

He was a popular preacher and pastor and also quite a prolific writer. His publications include *Believer's Dowry* (1717), *Gospel Sonnets (1734)* and *Paraphrase on the Song of Solomon* (1738). In 1737, Ralph Erskine, for the first time, openly associated himself with the Secession Movement, which had officially begun in 1732. In the former year, Erskine had quarrelled with the General Assembly over the choice of certain ministers, notably at Dunfermline and Inverkeithing. It was the matter of patronage, rather than the theological issues surrounding the Marrow of Modern Divinity that finally led to his expulsion by the Kirk in 1740.

In the latter years of his ministry in the Abbey, a bitter quarrel arose between Ralph Erskine and the minister of the Second Charge, Rev Robert Wardlaw, with whom he had previously enjoyed a cordial relationship. In fact, it is known that when Wardlaw was inducted to the Second Charge, he and Erskine entered into a gentleman's agreement that they would each refrain from listening to criticism or gossip about the other or, crucially, the other's wife.

In spite of this honourable pact a bitter quarrel arose between the two of them. The tragedy of this quarrel was that the two

men were basically both on the same side. They were fellow evangelicals, agreeing on matters of theology and both opposed lay patronage. Wardlaw was, however, very much opposed to any form of schism or secession from the national Kirk and denounced such from the pulpit. Sadly, these two former colleagues were never reconciled.[18]

In 1739 many of Erskine's most devoted followers had seen the storm clouds gathering and had made plans to erect a church to accommodate him in the event of his deposition. The church was built opposite the Grammar School and some yards to the south of the present Erskine Church in Queen Anne Street. Ralph Erskine used this new building as well as the Abbey but the date of foundation is always taken to be 12 May, 1740 to coincide with his deposition. Yet even now, Erskine seemed unwilling to finally sever his ties with the Abbey. When Wardlaw died in 1742, the Assembly took the opportunity to declare both Charges of Dunfermline Abbey vacant.

Rev Dr Andrew Mercer in his *History of Dunfermline*[19] records a somewhat unedifying episode that followed this move of the Assembly. On 11 May 1742, a Mr Hardy from Culross had been appointed to take the First Charge and duly arrived to take the morning service at the Abbey. The attendants at the door had been warned that, on no account, was Erskine to enter the church. However, when Erskine appeared on the scene, his supporters forced back the attendants. The latter did not offer any real resistance when they saw the stern and determined expression on Erskine's face.

[18] It is difficult not to see similarities in the current Kirk scene over the matter of so-called "gay" clergy with some congregations and ministers breaking away, others determined to stay and many bitter and intemperate comments flying around. The most important lesson to learn from history is that we generally do not learn from history.

[19] Dunfermline1828. Reprinted 2012

He made his way into the church and announced the first Psalm leaving the unfortunate Mr Hardy shaking like a jelly in the Session House. It is reported that after the event the unfortunate Mr Hardy was shaking so much that he could not say a blessing over the "dram" he had been given to settle his nerves. The episode did not reflect well on Erskine and, on advice, he decided not to return to the Abbey. The new church that was begun for him in 1739 was completely finished by 1741. It was by no means an elaborate building. An illustration can be found on page 437 of Ebenezer Henderson's *Annals of Dunfermline*[20]

We can gather from Henderson that the building was roughly 80 feet in length and capable of seating as many as 1,100 worshippers. Inside there were galleries round three sides. One serious drawback of the building was that the roof was constructed of close-set timber which was well covered with a deep layer of pitch. Apparently on hot days some of the pitch would melt and large drops were liable to fall on the heads of the congregation. In spite of this drawback, this building was to serve the new congregation for roughly 60 years.

Of this simple building, only one fragment remains – an inscribed stone that was built into the south wall above the lintel. This stone was forgotten for many years and was rediscovered among some rubbish. It was rightly agreed to incorporate it into the present building and it can be seen set into the wall at the west door.

It bears the following inscription (translation below)

PASCE FORIS SPARSUM PROVIDE CHIRISTE GREGEM

JEHOVAH-JIRE

[20] Glasgow 1879 Reprinted 1999

RODOLPHUS ERESKIN, V.D.M. MDCCXL

Feed and provide, O Christ, for Thy flock scattered abroad.
The Lord will provide.
Ralph Erskine, Minister of God's Word, 1740

It is known that the famous George Whitefield visited Ralph in Dunfermline in 1741. Whitefield was an English Anglican preacher who helped spread the Gospel in the United Kingdom and was also influential in the movement known as the Great Awakening in the American colonies. He was one of the founders of Methodism and of the evangelical movement generally. He became perhaps the best-known preacher in Britain and America during the 18th century.

It is recorded that when Whitefield announced his Bible text on his visit to Erskine's church in Queen Anne Street he was taken aback and greatly impressed at the rustling of Bible pages!

Unfortunately, not all aspects of the visit were as positive. Erskine was determined that Whitefield was only to preach to seceding congregations on his visit to Scotland. In particular he was not to preach anywhere within the established Kirk. Whitefield would have none of this. He went as far as to suggest that if the Pope would give him his pulpit, he would preach the Gospel from it. This was too much for Erskine and others and the visit to Dunfermline that began so well ended ""rather unpleasantly", we are told.

The following year, 1742, saw that strange and remarkable event in Scottish church history – the Revival of Cambuslang. (It is sometimes known as the Cambuslang Wark. "Wark" is the Scots form of "work", referring to a work of the Holy Spirit.) Whitefield took a leading part in the Cambuslang Revival. The

seceders would have nothing to do with it. Had they done so, the church in Scotland might have fared very differently over the next two centuries.

Dunfermline has sometimes been referred to as the Cradle of the Secession Movement and there is much justification for such a title. Almost every tradition of the Christina church in Dunfermline seems to have split at some time in its history. Is that because people in Dunfermline are more quarrelsome than on average? I hope that is not the explanation!

In 1747, there was an unfortunate split in the Associate Church. There was an argument over the Burgess Oath that required holders of public office in certain Royal Burghs to affirm approval of the religion "presently professed in this kingdom". The issue was seen by some as civil interference in religious affairs, a forerunner of later arguments over the place of a church that is established but not part of the State.

Opponents of the Burgher Oath on theological grounds became known as the Anti-Burghers. They showed a distinctive independence of conviction and unwillingness to compromise over sincerely held beliefs. The Burgher and Anti-Burgher factions thus formed rival, independent synods. The controversy was surprisingly bitter. Erskine supported the Burghers, although one of his sons went with the Antiburghers. The Antibughers actually excommunicated Erskine. He published two pamphlets on the issue *Fancy No Faith* and *Fancy Still No Faith*.

The Antiburghers fixed on the village of Cairneyhill as their first meeting place in Scotland. It was chosen because of its relatively central position. Many of the members were resident in Dunfermline, and the congregation was known by that name until members living in Dunfermline withdrew in 1788, becoming the congregation of Chalmers Street.

Cairneyhill Church (still in use as a parish church) was built to provide 400 sittings. Chalmers Street Church, Dunfermline was built in 1789 to seat 420. The Dunfermline church was replaced in 1862 by a new building, designed to seat 500. That particular building ceased to be a place of worship in 1942 and united with Queen Anne Street Church of Scotland under the name of Erskine Church

Eventually both the Burghers and Anti-Burghers had further splits, this time ostensibly over subscription to the Westminster Confession in its entirety, the Burghers in 1799 and the Anti-Burghers in 1806. Both factions formed their own, separate "Auld Licht" and "New Licht" factions. The more Calvinistic "Auld Lichts" held to the establishment principle. The Auld Licht Burghers returned to the Church of Scotland in 1839.

The congregation of what was to become Erskine Church adhered to the New Licht Burgher tradition. The "New Lichts" were more theologically liberal, although still conservative by today's standards. This liberalisation was a notable and continuing influence in the post-1847 United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Most important was to be the fact that they adhered to the voluntary principle, i.e. they were opposed to being part of any established church.

The Burgess Oath was finally abolished in 1819. In 1820, the New Licht Anti-Burghers and the New Licht Burghers united as the United Secession Church, which in turn united with the Relief Church (founded in 1761 by Thomas Gillespie of Dunfermline) in 1847 to create the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This united with most of the Free Church of Scotland in 1900 to create the United Free Church of Scotland, most of which ultimately reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1929.

The Auld Licht Anti-Burghers became part of the United Original Secession Church in 1822, which split in 1852, one party joining in the Free Church of Scotland, the few remaining congregations finally returning, with mutual rejoicing, to the Church of Scotland in 1956.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, it became obvious that the original church, built for Erskine and his followers was coming towards the end of its useful life. It was decided to build a complete new church to the design[21] of the Edinburgh architect David Whyte.

The work began in 1798 and opened for worship in January 1800 during a heavy snow storm.

The building externally was more or less what we see today, although the twin porches on the east and west gables and the session house on the south wall were added in the course of the nineteenth century. The east porch was demolished some years ago when the church halls were redeveloped.

The building is described in Chamber's Pictures of Scotland as 'rearing its enormous rectilinear ridge over all the other buildings in Dunfermline.' This is probably not intended as a compliment but nevertheless it carries a considerable degree of truth. There is no doubt that this large church with its huge roof is a landmark of the town and can be seen from several miles away.

[21] A slightly smaller church of a very similar design was built by Whyte in Nicholoson Square in Edinburgh and was used as a lecture theatre by Edinburgh University from 1937 to the 1960s under the name of the Pollock Memorial Hall.

Queen Anne Street UP Church c. 1870

The windows have not yet been enlarged. The organ chamber above the session house has not been constructed and the massive roof ventilator has not yet appeared! The gateposts have long since disappeared. Photograph © SCHR and used by kind permission.

We can learn from Henderson's *Annals of Dunfermline* that in 1803 there was proposal to improve the building by adding a steeple. In fact it seems that some £300 – a fair sum of money at the time – was raised. As is only too common in churches, factions arose. One faction wanted to erect the steeple on the west gable; another faction wanted to erect it on the south wall where the session house and organ chamber were later constructed. As the factions could not agree, the whole scheme died a death.

In the view of the present writer it is fortunate that this scheme did not come to fruition. Erskine Church is basically a building of classical simplicity and the addition of a spire would have looked out of place and, frankly, rather pretentious.

In 1825, a schism took place within the congregation over the choice of a new minister. A minority of around 600 people left to former themselves into what would eventually become St Margaret's Church. The congregation took a lease of the Maygate English Baptist Chapel until a new church could be built

for them in the East Port. This building was completed in 1827.[22]

The first minister of the new congregation was Rev Robert Brown of Jedburgh who was inducted in 1826 but who died within two years. It is a strange coincidence that the new minister at Queen Anne Street, Rev Alex Fisher also died within two years of his induction. One wonders if the schism had been worth it!

It is worth noticing in the passing that the nineteenth century (1843) saw another major split in the established Kirk, known as the Disruption which led to the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. In a brief work such as this, there is only space for very general comments. However, to understand subsequent events, this may be useful. The reason for the Disruption was the old problem of patronage. The position was virtually unchanged since the time of the Erskines and the formation of the Associate Synod. However, its unpopularity continued. It became a political battle between evangelicals on one side and the Moderates and patrons on the other.

In 1834 the evangelicals secured passage through the General Assembly of the Veto Act, asserting that as a fundamental law of the Church that no minister should be forced by the patron upon a congregation contrary to the popular will, and that any nominee could be rejected by majority of the heads of families. This direct blow at the right of private patrons was challenged in the civil courts. The most famous cases concerned the parishes of Auchterarder and Marnoch. Judgment in 1738 went against the evangelicals. Patronage was governed by Parliamentary legislation which could not be changed or modified by the General Assembly. To all intents and purposes, the General Assembly's Veto Act was null and void.

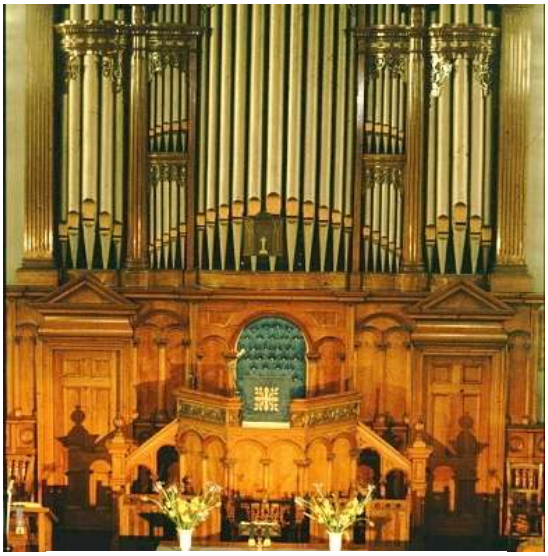
[22] The congregation moved to a new church on the east of the town in 1975. The East Port building was subsequently demolished.

The collapse of the Veto Act was not the direct cause of the Disruption. Indeed, Thomas Chalmers and other leading evangelicals had never been completely satisfied with the Act, feeling that it did not go far enough. What they felt was intolerable was State interference with matters concerning the Kirk. Chalmers and others decided to leave the Church of Scotland and form the Free Church. This church would not be part of the establishment but would support the establishment principle. At the General Assembly of 1843, held in Saint Andrew's Church in Edinburgh, a large number of the commissioners present rose and left the building in a quiet and orderly manner. It was a masterpiece of stage management.

Nearer home, on 27 June 1849, the handsome statue of Ralph Erskine that still[23] stands outside the church, roughly on the site of the pulpit of the older church was unveiled and dedicated. The statue is the work of Alexander Handyside Ritchie, a distinguished sculptor of his time, although he died in poverty. Ritchie's best known works include the statue of William Wallace at Stirling and the Sleeping Lions outside the Hamilton Mausoleum. The dedication address was given by Rev Professor Neil McMichael, minister of the neighbouring Gillespie Memorial Church, which, as a Relief Church, since 1847 had also become part of the United Presbyterian family.

In 1874, Parliament finally repealed the Patronage Act of 1711. It might be thought that this would immediately open the gates towards the reunion of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. However reunion – and even then not full reunion – did not finally take place until 1929.

[23] The statue when last seen by the writer in 2013 was in a poor and neglected state.



Erskine Church Pulpit and Organ
Photograph © SCHR and used by kind permission.

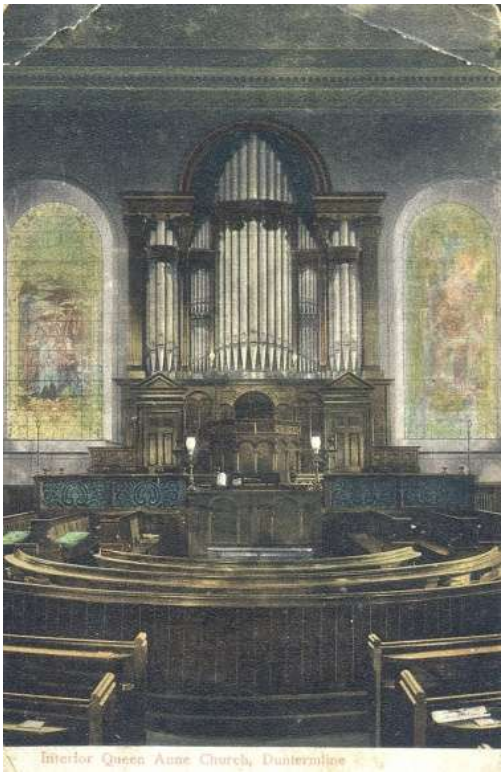
The 1871, a hall was built on the east side of the church and continued in use for many years. At a later date, a further hall in the upper floor of an adjacent building in Pilmuir Street was also acquired and connected by an internal stair. In the latter history of the Queen Anne Street building, both halls were demolished and redeveloped into a community centre.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, various plans came together for the improvement of the building. Some of these came from generous benefactors. The old style pulpit with its high sounding board was removed. A large three manual pipe organ, the gift of Mr Peter Donald of New York, was installed around 1899. This installation required the construction of the organ chamber above the session house with its three dummy windows. Most people are actually unaware that this was a later addition. This magnificent instrument led the praise of the congregation over many years but was feeling its age by the 1960s largely due to lack of proper maintenance. It was eventually replaced by an electronic organ of greatly inferior sound quality. The entire organ case with integral pulpit is the focal point of the front of the sanctuary. Possibly the vast

array of organ pipes is a little overpowering for modern taste. The door on east side is, in fact, a dummy and leads nowhere.

At or around the time of the addition of the organ, the two stained glass windows, one depicting the Last Supper and the other the Empty Tomb were installed and other windows were slightly enlarged. The massive ventilator – presumably to remove the fumes from oil or gas lighting – was added to the roof and is also now a distinctive feature of the building.

It is generally assumed that the interior has not greatly changed since the turn-of-the-century additions and alteration. In fact, the front of the church was much more "fussy" than now as can be seen from the rare photograph of the interior around 1922.



Erskine Church Interior c 1922
Photograph © SCHR and used by kind permission.

One of the great strengths of the building is its excellent acoustics, a factor it shares with many of the former UP

buildings. These were essentially preaching churches[24] and the congregation was seated in an auditorium. Although the large interior may appear to be simply a big box, in fact all the pews are on a slope both in the area and in the gallery and give a clear view of the pulpit. In a sense, it is an amphitheatre. This can be put to the test as, when the church is empty the quiet tick of the gallery clock can be heard from any part of the main auditorium.

In 1900, there was an important change in the Presbyterian landscape of Scotland namely the union of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. The building and congregation changed its name again to Queen Anne Street United Free Church.

One of the early repercussions of the union of the two churches was that an ultra-conservative minority of the Free Church (who are sometimes referred to as "Wee Frees") decided to stay out of the union. They then challenged the ownership of the former Free Church property and the case went to the House of Lords. The Lords found in their favour.

The United Presbyterians held to the voluntary principle (no established church) whereas the Free Church, though not established, believed in the establishment principle. The minority Free Church was thus entitled to all the property and assets of the former Free Church. Though legally sound, the decision made little practical sense and a Parliamentary Commission was appointed to make an adequate provision for the minority.

1929 saw the Union of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland. It is easy to forget that the UF Church was larger than the Church of Scotland at the time.

[24] A prime example was St Vincent Street UP Church in Glasgow, designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson.

Although a minority of the United Free membership stayed out of the union and continue as the United Free Church of Scotland, litigation was not required. Problems in a possible union had been foreseen and there were various steps taken over a period of years to ensure a smooth transition and minimise any possible areas of contention.

In 1921, Parliament approved certain Declaratory Articles in which the Kirk asserted its right to adjudicate on all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline. It was made clear that the State had no jurisdiction on such matters even in the established church in Scotland. This was to put the minds of the UF ministers and members at rest.

In 1925, Parliament approved the Church of Scotland (Property and Endowments) Act which made very sweeping changes to the ownership and maintenance of church property and the payment of ministerial stipends. Traditionally, the heritors (owners of heritable property) of the parish were responsible for the maintenance and, if necessary, the replacement of the parish church. Now ownership of the parish churches passed into the hands of the Church of Scotland General Trustees with local congregations being responsible for upkeep. Most buildings owned by former UP and Free Church congregations continued to be held by local trustees, as is the case with Erskine Church.

Similarly, teinds and similar payments by owners of heritable property to pay the parish minister's stipend were to be commuted into level payments in the longer term.

The present day United Free Church still holds to the voluntary principle.

As time went on, it became apparent that although most of the Dunfermline churches lay cheek by jowl around the town centre,

most of the population had long moved out into residential areas. Chalmers Street Church (which, as explained above was descended from an Antiburgher split from Queen Anne Street) opened a temporary hall church at Headwell on the north of the city on 18 September 1940.

In 1942, it was agreed that a union would take place between Queen Anne Street and Chalmers Street Churches with the first united service taking place on 27 December. The name of the new congregation was agreed as Erskine Church of Scotland. The union marked the healing of an ancient wound. It was agreed that the work at Headwell would continue under the united congregation.

The Chalmers Street building was sold and, for many years, was used as a dancing academy. It was demolished in the 1960s to give access to a new car park.

In 1951, a new Hall Church – a plain but commodious building – was opened and dedicated at Headwell (not very far from where the present-day St Andrews Erskine Church stands) and was dedicated in October of that year by Rev Dr W White Anderson, then Moderator of the General Assembly.

For a number of years, Headwell operated as a semi-independent church. Services were led by the Erskine Church minister on Sunday evenings and the same organist[25] played at both services. There was one Kirk Session but two Sunday Schools and two Guilds. The problem with Headwell was that it was not actually a church in its own right and did feel at times a little threatened. As a long term project, it did not seem viable and the building was eventually sold in the 1970s.

[25] Older people will remember with affection and respect Miss Isobel F Methven LTCL who gave a lifetime of uncomplaining service as organist at Erskine Church. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

At some point in the mid-1950s, the interior of Erskine Church underwent a major redecoration. All the dark woodwork was considerable lightened. The colour scheme was carefully chosen, the predominating colour being Wedgwood blue with features on the gallery panels and on the ceiling being picked out tastefully and carefully in darker blue, light green and white. Members were very pleasantly surprised when they saw the redecorated church.

In 1964, Rev J C Brackenridge retired after a very long ministry in Erskine Church. The Presbytery of Dunfermline and Kinross was seeking for a readjustment at the time and negotiations reached an advanced stage between the congregations of Erskine and St Margaret's. The united charge was to be known as St Mathew's. The minister of St Margaret's would become first minister of the united charge. Headwell Hall Church would close. Erskine Church building would be used. If this union had taken place, it would have healed another ancient wound, going back to 1825. However, when in came to a vote in favour of the union, at simultaneous meetings, Erskine voted for 105[26] and against 68 while St Margaret's voted 102 for and 215 against. The Presbytery allowed Erskine Church to call a new minister without restriction.

In 1975, the congregation of St Margaret's moved out to a new church at Touch on the east side of the town. The old building in East Port was demolished.

In 1974, Erskine Church entered into a union with the nearby Saint Andrew's Parish Church. This congregation originated from a Chapel of Ease for Dunfermline Abbey in 1777. The structure that people will remember at the corner of Chapel Street and Rotten Row was constructed in 1833 to replace a smaller building. After the union, the old St Andrew's building was sold

[26] As a member of Erskine Church I voted for the Union but voiced my dislike of the name.

and used as an auction house until it was demolished in 1987 to allow the construction of a new supermarket for Dunfermline Cooperative Society. The latter building has also been demolished and what used to be St Andrew's Church is now buried under the new Dunfermline bus station.

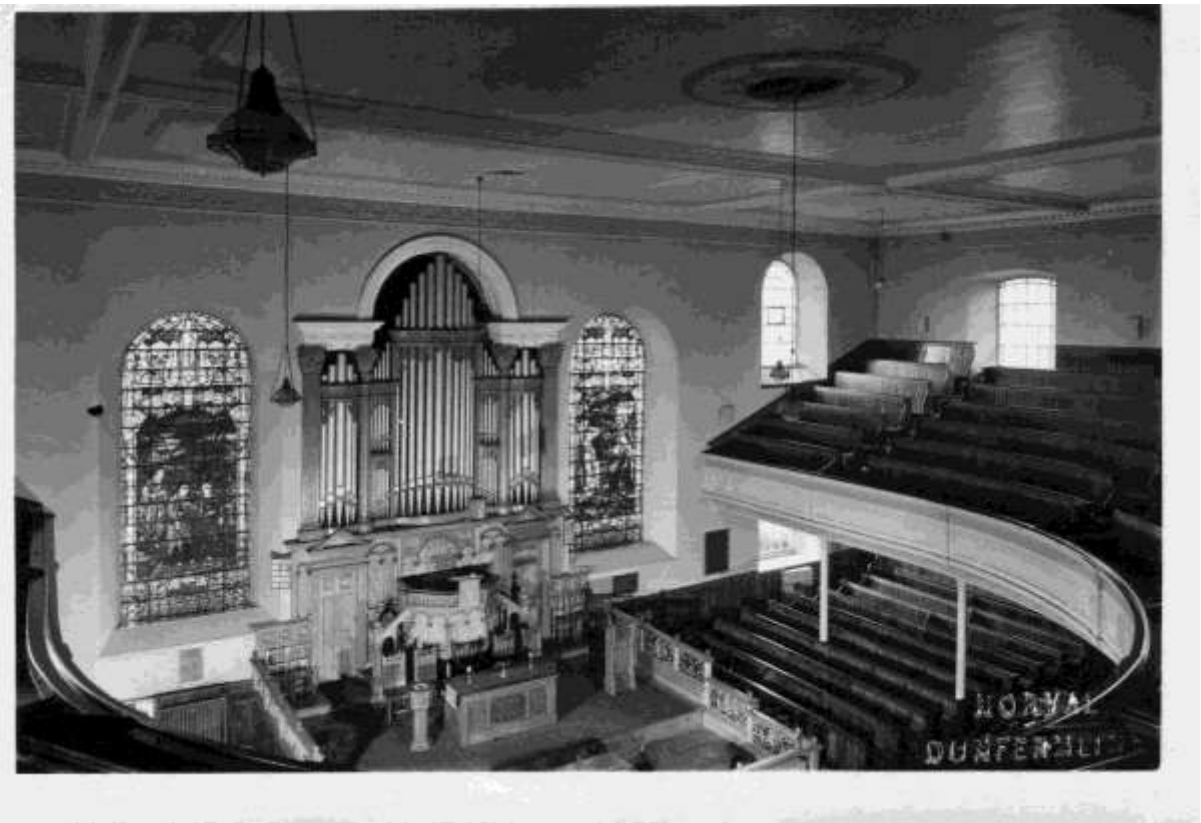
In 1998 the congregation of St Andrew's Erskine decided to leave the building in Queen Anne Street and move to another area of the town. After a nomadic existence, the congregation was finally able to move into a new purpose built facility in Robertson Road in 2004.

The old church building in Queen Anne Street was sold and became a crèche. This only lasted a fairly short time and the building has been in decline ever since. At the time of writing, externally it is a sorry state and is officially listed as a building at risk.

There were plans for the Wetherspoon Pub Chain to take over and renovate the building but the costs of doing so eventually ruled this out.

More recently The Yes U Are Partnership, a multi denominational Christian group has acquired the building and secured considerable funding towards restoration and conversion into a community facility and café.

The building is about to enter a new and different phase of its history.



Interior of Erskine Church taken around 1965 for the then minister, Rev Willis Jones, by Norval, Dunfermline, showing the elegant sweep of the gallery, the organ case and the two stained glass windows. The elegant plasterwork on the ceiling was revealed in the major redecoration of the 1950s.