

The Churches of Broughty Ferry

By Nancy Davey

By the early 20th century Broughty Ferry had completed a transformation from a small fishing community on the Tay estuary to a prosperous growing suburb of Dundee. An important aspect of that development was the proliferation of churches built to serve this expanding resident population as well as holiday makers. Another factor was the changing pattern of denominations in Scotland; following the Disruption in 1843, the Free Church had expanded and the Church of Scotland had lost members; in 1847 the United Presbyterian Church was formed, and in 1900 the majority of Free Church congregations had united with it to form the United Free Church. Broughty Ferry reflected these different strands of worship and churches of various denominations were opened.

The 1911 Dundee Year Book listed the following churches; Baptist – St Vincent Street; Beach Church – Fort Street; Congregational – Brook Street; East United Free – Queen Street; Queen Street United Free; Our Lady of Good Counsel (Roman Catholic) – Westfield Road; St Luke's United Free – West Ferry; St Margaret's – Barnhill; St Mary's (Scottish Episcopal) Queen Street; St Stephen's – West Ferry; Union United Free – Fort Street; West United Free – Brook Street; and St Aidan's Established Church in St Vincent Street. Not all of these church buildings survive today as places of worship, as some have amalgamated, some have been demolished, and others have been adapted for secular use.

In the early 19th century Broughty Ferry residents had a long walk to their parish church in Monifieth, and so in 1820 discussions began to consider the founding of a Chapel of Ease. Regulations for its management were drawn up and seat rents were to provide its main income. In 1826 the Ferry saw the opening of this Chapel of Ease, which held services but did not have full powers of a church since it was under the supervision of the Monifieth Kirk Session and the Dundee Presbytery. The building, in gothic style, was erected on land belonging to Colonel David Hunter of Burnside, and the cost of the enterprise was met by a collection in all churches at the request of the General Kirk Session in Dundee. A donation of one guinea enabled the donor to take part in the selection of the first minister. In 1843 the chapel lost 400 members to the Free Church, but in 1857/8 the building was enlarged, a spire was added, and a new manse acquired in Queen Street. In 1863 this church – later to be known as St Aidan's - became a parish church in its own right, able to conduct its own affairs without reference to Monifieth Kirk Session, and was long referred to as Broughty Ferry Parish Church, at which the Kirking of the Burgh Council later took place. In 1893 stained glass windows were added, designed by Burne-Jones and made by William Morris. The first recorded burial in the graveyard was in 1831, when William Kinnear erected a memorial to his wife Margaret Neish, and the graveyard also contains a tombstone for a Broughty Ferry benefactor, John Corbet "*late collector of Inland Revenue, who left most of his property in trust for educating the poor of Broughty Ferry, without regard to sect or party*" (1854).

St Stephen's was the established church built to cater for the rapidly expanding population in the West of Broughty Ferry. Erected between 1870 and 1871 to the plans of Dundee architect T.S.Robertson (a founder member of the congregation), the church's simple Gothic lines and

elegant spire (restored in the early 21st century after damage by lightning) were praised at the time. The interior, with its galleries (not part of the original design), was less well received. The splendid window recesses were filled between 1893 and 1915 with fine stained glass windows by Burne-Jones, which are said to be some of his finest work in Scotland. It is noteworthy that when the windows for the North Gallery were being discussed, at a time when militant suffragettes were setting fire to buildings – including churches – the designs included illustrations of famous women from the Bible. St Stephen's soon had a congregation of over 450 individuals, over a third of whom were domestic servants; this fact gives some indication of the social structure of that part of the Ferry at the time. As was the case with other churches, St Stephen's had generous benefactors, including John Watson of Ballinard, proprietor of James Watson's Seagate Bond, and Thomas Taylor of Cambustay, a prominent jute merchant.

St Luke's and Queen Street emerged in 1953 with the amalgamation of two churches. One of these was St Luke's, founded in 1878 with 14 people, meeting in an "iron church", purchased from Aberdeen (the church was said to make creaking noises on windy days!). The present building, a magnificent edifice in early Gothic style designed by Hippolyte Blanc of Edinburgh, was opened in 1884 and cost £8,000. The widow of David Ogilvie gave the land on which the church stands, and also five striking windows in memory of her husband and daughter. These windows were designed by Burne-Jones and made by William Morris of London, but much of the internal woodwork was done by local firms. The original congregation pioneered the use of instrumental music at the Sunday services in the Free Church of Scotland in 1880, and their Harmonium is a link with this tradition. The church which later joined with St Luke's was Queen Street United Free, which came into being after a petition claimed that a rapidly growing population meant that more places of worship were needed. Progress was quickly made, and after using a public hall for worship, the congregation soon had a church in the Gothic style, with a spire, which opened in 1876.

A slightly earlier church was originally the East Free Church, dating from the 1860s. One of the original Elders was Alex J. Buist of Reres Mount, proprietor of Ward Works and partner in Don Bros & Buist. This church benefitted from the work of several distinguished ministers, two of whom went on to be leading scholars in the Free Church College in Glasgow. The Reverend Andrew Balmain (Sandy) Bruce wrote his first notable work *The Training of the Twelve* while he was in Broughty Ferry before being elevated to the Chair of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in 1875. There he was a formative influence on James Denny, who in 1886, no doubt on the recommendation of his mentor and predecessor, was called to the East Free Church. He was a popular preacher and some of his sermons were published in two volumes of *The Expositor's Bible*. The third influential minister was James Moffatt, a biblical scholar and one of the foremost theologians of his day. In 1907 he came to Broughty Ferry from the United Free Church in Dundonald, Ayrshire. His *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, a comprehensive survey of contemporary biblical scholarship, appeared in 1911 while he was minister at what was then Broughty Ferry East United Free Church. In this enterprise he was continuing the United Free Church tradition of combining pastoral care with scholarship. He subsequently became Professor of Greek and

New Testament Exegesis at Mansfield College, Oxford, and in 1915, he returned to Glasgow as Professor of Church History at the United Free Church College.

The building to which Moffatt came in 1907 is located on the corner of Queen Street and St Vincent Street. Erected in 1865 to a design of Andrew Heighton, the church was constructed in snecked rubble masonry with polished dressings, at a cost of some £3,600 (using average earnings as the conversion would make that around £2 million today). It provided seating for a congregation of 600, and a contemporary newspaper account described the building as “..the handsomest Presbyterian church of its size that we have yet seen in Scotland. In design it is most elegant; in material it is substantial and harmonious; and in execution most artistic..Between the windows and the corners are buttresses of beautiful proportions which give the church the air of some fine college chapel” A vestry and small hall had been added in 1870 in Balmain’s time, and a substantial manse at 66 Camphill Road was built in 1877 at a cost of £2,500. It was only in 1888, while Denny was minister, that a harmonium was introduced to replace the use of a precentor in leading the praise. Since Moffatt left, the church at 370 Queen Street has benefitted from a succession of renovations and improvements. In 1929 it became Broughty East Church, and in 2005 its congregation united with that of St Aidan’s to form The New Kirk.

As early as the 1820s the parish church (later St Aidan’s) had started a number of mission stations in Broughty Ferry. The main one was the Beach Mission, primarily for members of the fishing community along the shore, holding services in the school in Ambrose Street. However, most of the fisher folk attended the two established churches, and the East Coast Mission withdrew their missionary in 1887. A meeting was held, with representatives of the two churches and the management of the Beach Mission, and a new Beach Mission Church was planned. Designed in the Romanesque style by architect T.S.Robertson, the building was opened in February 1890, and in 1899 was made a Chapel of Ease by the General Assembly. Eight years later it became a Quoad Sacra Parish Church, with a Kirk Session, and in 1913 a manse was built on the northern outskirts of Broughty Ferry. After the union of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church in 1929 the former Beach Mission at last became the Parish Church of St James.

The eastern part of Broughty Ferry includes the area of Barnhill, with a number of fine residences, whose population expanded in line with Broughty generally. In 1884 a congregation of just over 50 began to hold services in a chapel of ease in the “Tin Kirk” which St Luke’s no longer required and sold for £450. In 1895 a stone building was erected which in March 1907 became the parish church of St Margaret’s. A War Memorial Window was placed in the west gable in 1919, and North and South Transepts were added in 1933.

A Congregational – or Independent – Chapel in Haldane Lane off Brook Street was operating in the 1820s, but it was in 1865 that the Congregational Church at 87 Brook Street was opened. One of the main benefactors was John Methven, a shoemaker and oil merchant.

The Baptist Church was largely the creation of two families – the Cummings and the Gibsons – and was founded in 1876. The congregation was small, around 20 people, and sometimes met in flax merchant John Gibson’s family home in Camperdown Street, but under the leadership of pastor J. Simpson funds were raised to build a church on land owned by the

Cummings family. The building, designed by John Murray Robertson in the Arts and Crafts style, was opened in 1881. Further land was donated by a Cummings family member for the addition of a hall in 1903.

The writer of the New Statistical Account of Monifieth records only 13 Roman Catholics living in Broughty Ferry, but by the early 20th century a congregation was meeting in the Good Templar Hall in Gray Street, served by a priest from St Mary's Forebank in Dundee. Our Lady of Good Counsel, the Roman Catholic Church in Westfield Road, was designed by T.M. Cappon in a Gothic style. The red brick building with pink sandstone dressings was opened in 1904, and the interior was remodelled in the late 20th century.

In 1842 there were 112 Episcopalians in Broughty Ferry; in March 1848 a number of people "*resident in Broughty Ferry and neighbourhood*" met to discuss the possibility of having an Episcopal Chapel in the Ferry. Two prominent individuals were Alexander Penrose Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, and Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, who had already built a small mission hall in Brook Street. At a rent of £2 per year, payable to Dundee Royal Infirmary, services were held here throughout the summer, taken by staff from the cathedral in Dundee. In June a Vestry was appointed and a constitution was produced for the Scottish Episcopal Congregation of St Mary's. The first incumbent was appointed in July 1849, and by 1855 his successor had a congregation which had outgrown the small chapel, so a subscription list was opened and plans were produced by George Gilbert Scott for a new church in Queen Street. The building was ready by December 1858, constructed at a cost of £2,363, with a flat for a verger in the lower part. Within ten years the congregation had increased significantly and Gilbert Scott was again involved in plans for the addition of the south aisle, which was opened in 1870. A new Rector was appointed at this time, and the Vestry purchased the house previously owned by his predecessor for use as a Rectory. In 1911 more improvements were carried out, and the church lengthened to both east and west. A new chancel was designed by Robert Lorimer, who was also responsible for the reredos, carved by Clow of Edinburgh and presented by Col. William Henry Fergusson, with paintings by local artist John Duncan.

There were also various Mission Halls in the Ferry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, often attended by people with no connection to any church, although these Missions were often outreaches of some churches. They included the Beach Mission and the West Free Mission (mentioned elsewhere); the Links Mission (c 1880), an outreach of the East Free Church, serving residents in the Castle Street/ Links cottages area; and the Burnside Mission Queen Street, an outreach of St Luke's Free Church. Many of the Missions also provided practical help and care for the needy.

In general, churches built in Scotland in the second half of the 19th century were more ornate, both internally and externally, than earlier ones. These developments reflected the wealth of the congregations and some of their benefactors. Broughty Ferry conforms to this pattern. Also, perhaps, there was an element of competition, as there was in private housebuilding. Many of the Ferry churches had wealthy patrons, drawn from the business community, not only prepared to donate land or endowments, but also possessing administrative and financial expertise which served their churches well.

Selected Sources and Some Further Reading

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This paper first appeared in the booklet "The Memory of Broughty Ferry" prepared by the Broughty Ferry Community Council in 1913 to mark the centenary of the incorporation of the Burgh of Broughty Ferry into its neighbour, Dundee.