

A very warm welcome to

## *Kilbarchan West Parish Church*



Please accept this little booklet for you to take away  
as a reminder of your visit to our church.

We trust that you were inspired by your visit  
and we look forward to welcoming you back at some time in the future.

## KILBARCHAN WEST PARISH CHURCH

The first church in the grounds of the present West Church is reasonably assumed to be St Barchan's Church or Cell in the 6th Century, thereafter succeeding churches have been built in the same general location.

The church in Kilbarchan was raised to the dignity of a Parish Church in 1199 when Jocyn was Bishop of Glasgow. It was in the Diocese of Glasgow, and its parish boundaries were very extensive taking in adjacent villages and covering an area of 10,000 acres.

In those early days the life of the village was centered around the church. The form of worship was, of course, Roman Catholic, and in keeping with the spirit of the times a local landowner, Thomas De Crawford, Baron of Auchinames, built a new Chapel in 1401 as an act of piety. This was called St Katherine's Chapel and the reputed site of this chapel is within an enclosure in the old graveyard.

The grave of Robert 'Habbie' Simpson a village worthy of the 16th Century, from whom all natives of the village take their honorary name of 'Habbies', is adjacent to the south wall of St Katherine's enclosure. 'He is also depicted in a statue on the village steeple,

The present Church Hall was built as the Parish Church in 1724 and reputedly erected on the site of an earlier church, at a cost of £126 and replaced the existing building of which little is known. The Latin inscription above the East Door (now closed up) tells us that "This church fell down and was rebuilt while under the care of M (? gen .of magister; = laird) who gave great help to this work (i.e. the rebuilding) and R. I. (= Robert Johnstoun, minister at the time) enthusiastically supported it. In the



*Old and New Churches Kilbarchan*



year 1724."

This inscription confirms that there was a church on the site prior to 1724 (it probably fell down because the heritors failed to keep it in proper repair). We know that part of the original church, known as the Craigends Aisle, was not demolished, but was incorporated into the rebuilt church and still stands today.

The plan of the 1724 church shows its layout and it is interesting to note that it contained a Communion Table over 60ft long at which minister, elders and communicants all sat, a common feature of churches of this period. The seating capacity of the 1724 church was 400 persons.

In 1791 a new Session House was built, near the site of the present church, with rooms for the minister and the elders. In addition, it contained storage area for the Parish Hearse, the Palls or Mortcloths and the Mortsafes or Iron Cages used to prevent body snatching. From this building the elders used to watch the parishioners as they entered the church to make sure that they dropped their offering into the plate which stood at the entrance.

In 1858 the church was considerably extended at a cost of £940. The plan of the 1858 building shows the changes which increased the seating capacity to 550 persons. A photograph, taken about 1880, shows how the church looked when it was still in use. Sadly all the furnishings have gone as have all the balconies. However, parts of the two large stained glass windows have been preserved in the doors of the Vestry and Session House of the present church and the coats of arms around the balconies are on the walls of the present church.

## **THE PRESENT CHURCH**

This cost £7,128.00, was built between 1899 and 1901 and was opened on 13th January 1901. This church had only one ancillary room which was incorporated into the building and this room had to be all purpose; Vestry; Office; Meeting Room; Cloakroom etc., and it was obvious as we approached the 21st Century that, to meet the expectations of existing church groups, additional dedicated space would be required.

A review of seating had indicated that the areas under the side and rear balconies had sparse usage and a draft plan was drawn up which cleared the seating from under the side and rear balconies and replaced them with:-  
A new inner Vestibule, with Toilet for the Disabled,  
A Children's Crèche,

A Session House, which could double as a small Chapel and/or Meeting Room and a Vestry.

These new rooms would then allow the original all purpose room to be used as the Church Office.

An access ramp was provided from the Car Park for Wheel Chair users and a designated area allocated within the church.

The opportunity was taken to increase the size of the Chancel, carpet the passages, Chancel, and ancillary rooms, and to repaint the interior of the Church



Pulpit, Communion Table, Organ and Font



The font was dedicated to the memory of Humphrey Barbour and gifted to Kilbarchan Parish Church (as was) by his grandsons on the building of the present church.





Interior of church

## STAINED GLASS

The church has stained glass windows in the East, West and South walls.

**East wall** (above gallery), Jesus as child, man and God also Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four evangelists dedicated to John C Cunningham of Craighends, d 1917 (artist and date unknown).

**West Wall** above organ, the parable of the sower, dedicated to Matthew Anderson d 1885 and family, by **Michael Mayer of Mayer & Co** of Munich (fl 1876-84) (date unknown).

**South wall**, from left to right:

1st: Jesus as a child with Mary and Christ risen, dedicated to Rev Dr Rbt D Mckenzie, d 1937, (?) by **James Wright**, d 1947 (date unknown) .

2nd: Jesus being anointed at Bethany (Mark 14:8) dedicated to Catherine Glen, d 1901. (Artist and date unknown)

3rd: St John and St James, 1st portion dedicated to Rev Dr Rbt Graham, minister 1847- 1895, 2nd portion to Archibald & Henrietta Glen (artist and date unknown).

4th: The walk to Emmaus, dedicated to James Stevenson & family, latest death 1885. (? re-sited from the former church), by **Stephen Adam**

(1846/8-1910) (date unknown).

**Office:**

The two heraldic shields were formerly the centrepieces of the two large windows to left and right of the pulpit in the south wall of the former parish church, now the church hall.

The left hand shield is Cunninghames' of Craighends, with the motto 'So Fork Forward'.

The right hand one is that of the Milliken Napiers of Milliken Park, combining the Napier's motto 'Sans Tache' ('Without Blemish') and the Milliken's 'Regardez Bièn' (Watch Out').

**Session house and vestry doors** have the chief parts of two stained glass windows moved from the former parish church in the early 20th century and then to their present position in 1995.

**Kilbarchan West Church Hall**

(built 1724, tower 1858) Windows with decorative margins by **John Cairney** c1850.

**COMMUNION TABLE FRONTAL**

(Attribution by Chrissie White, retired lecturer at Glasgow School of Art)  
(September 2010)

This is rather good embroidery of the classical Arts and Crafts movement whose purchase date is likely to coincide with the date of the church.

The frontal has all the signs of professional embroidery made by one of the better English firms or Whytock and Reid in Edinburgh.

At that time the quality of professional embroiderers was very high.

Organisations such as the Royal School of Needlework taught what is called Gold work, as used in churches and on military uniforms and mason's aprons.

Companies might teach their own embroiderers.

Some then worked from home as 'outworkers'.

Some companies still exist in England but with nothing like the quality of design, the quantity of embroidery or the amount of Gold work available before WW1, the time this frontal was made.

The reasons for the attribution are as follows.

The central cross is created formally.

The lilies are identifiably naturalistic and follow the revival of interest in mediaeval forms led by the Arts and Crafts movement.



It was not made by a group or individual or by a graduate of Glasgow School of Art.

The Glasgow School of Art style is fluid and stylised.

Their work is carried out in silks and wool on linen, rather than the gold work of this piece because Gold work was not taught there.

## HERALDIC SHIELDS

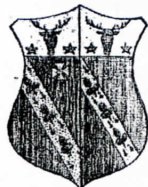
These coats of arms were originally in the old church on the front of the galleries.



1. Cunninghame of Craigends: Impaled, *Dexter-Quarterly*, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> arg., a shake fork gu. [Cunninghame]; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> or, a fess cheque az. And arg. [Stewart]. *Sinister-Gu.*, a dexter hand couped at the wrist grasping a sword point downward ppr., and in chief two mullets of the last [McHardy].



2. Crawford of Auchinames: Quarterly, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Gu., a fess cheque arg. and az. [Lindsay]; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> or, a lion rampant gu., debruised of a ribbon sa. [Abernethy]. The shield is that of the Earl of Crawford and was probably introduced by mistake for Crawford of Auchinames.



3. Harvey of Castle Semple: Impaled, *Dexter-gu.*, a bend erm., charged with three trefoils vert, and in the sinister chief point a cross pattee or; on a chief arg., a stag's head cabossed sa., between two mullets of the 1<sup>st</sup>. *Sinister-the* same but omitting the cross pattee. The shield is that of Harvey, but why is it impaled?



4. Napier of Milliken: Quarterly, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> arg., a saltire engrailed between four roses gu. [Napier]; 2<sup>nd</sup> az., a lion rampant ppr. Crowned with an antique crown or [Maddowall]; 3<sup>rd</sup> arg., two bars gemelle between three demi-lions, two in chief issuant from the uppermost bar and one in base issuant from the base of the shield or [Milliken].



5. Speir of Blackston: Az. Two tilting spears in saltire, between four boar's heads couped or; on a chief arg., a mullet between two crescents gu. [Speirs of Burnbrae].

## THE ORGAN

A feature of the church is the organ. It is a three manual built in 1904 by William Hill & Sons and is considered one of the finest in Scotland. The story is told of the surprise of Hill's organ builders, who travelled with this large organ by train from London. at finding themselves in a small rural village when they arrived at Kilbarchan station! However when they reached the rather large Church, built some three years earlier, they understood why they were installing such a large instrument.

The "Dictionary of Organ" (1912 edition) tells us that the specification was drawn up by Sir Frederick Bridge, and that it was opened by Dr E. E. Harper, L.R.A.M., presumably the same Dr Harper appointed by the Kirk Session as Organist. It tells us that the Organist in 1912 was William Griffith, MUS. BAC. DUNELM, F.R.C.O., LMUS. T,C.L. It also makes the comment: "Diapasons very fine and noble".

It has recently been awarded a Grade 1 Certificate by the Institute of Organ Studies in recognition of it being an outstanding instrument in its original condition.

