

The
North Church
Buchlyvie

Bi-Centenary
1952

THE
BI-CENTENARY of the NORTH CHURCH
BUCHLYVIE

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AS it is impossible, owing to the heavy cost of printing, to reprint the "Ter-Jubilee Record" of Buchlyvie North Church which contained the history of the congregation from 1752 to 1902, it has been felt that in this Bi-Centenary year some extracts about the origin of the Church might be published and some notes might be added to bring the history up to date.

PRE-SECESSION

To carry out this purpose we now take the following interesting extracts from the historical account of the first hundred years given by the late Rev. John Russell:—

"In the year 1675 the Lord's Supper was dispensed in this parish under the cloud of night at a spot on the farm of Arnbeg" . . . "In the year 1679 took place the Battle of Bothwell Bridge where Ure of Shirgarton was leader of a large band from this parish amongst whom were—Alexander Buchanan of Buchlyvie; Donald Connel, portioner there; Walter Leckle of Mye; Thomas Miller there; James Galbraith; Arthur Dougald of Arnmanuel; John Dougald, his son; John McKenzie there. A sentence of forfeiture of their land was pronounced on some of these." Two of the above-named were sentenced to be banished to America but the ship in which they sailed was wrecked and they were drowned.

ORIGIN

After the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, of Stirling, started the Secession Movement in 1733 he found many adherents in Buchlyvie neighbourhood, and he sometimes preached at a quiet spot near Honeyholm on the banks of the Endrick, and before long a church was built at Edenbelly not far off. This church was usually known as the Holm Associate Church and its first minister was the Rev. John Cleland who was ordained there in 1742. Ten years later, the Seceders from Buchlyvie

left that congregation and took the minister with them to become the first minister of the Associate Congregation of Buchlyvie. They purchased from the Laird a site for a church and burial-place, and erected the building which is now called the North Church. From the first minutes of the congregation we learn that the following persons were appointed as managers to carry out the work:—

"James Buchanan of Garnsterry; Andrew Lennie there; John Buchanan in Woodend; John Forrester in Ballochneck; Thomas Morrison, feuar in Buchlyvie; William Morrison, Heights of Buchlyvie; James Fairlie, miller there; William Buchanan, wright there; James Gardiner, feuar in Kilmaronock; David Robertson, Easter Garden; Alexander Yule in Buchlyvie; Mungo Mitchell in Garban; John McFarlane, merchant in Aberfoil; John Risk, weaver in Buchlyvie; Hugh Galbraith in Garden; Walter Parlane there; John McClaws in Arngibbon; William Gilfillan in Arnprior; Andrew McGibbon in Cardross; James Harvie there; Thomas Harvie in Drum; John Fairley in Loanenfoot; William McVey, weaver in Buchlyvie, and Patrick Morrison, merchant there."

THE BUILDING AND COST

The work of building proceeded with great harmony and self-denial, for "the people had a mind to work." They gave contributions willingly in the form of manual labour, and the farmers gratuitously undertook the transport of materials. The slates were brought from Aberfoyle on the horses' backs along a track, there being no road. Managers were appointed to arrange weekly for help in the buying of wood, stones and slates and in the erecting of these into a place of worship. The fact that so much work was done by the people themselves as a labour of love made the cost small. The list of expenditure is as follows:—

Paid to the Laird for Ground	...	...	£5	0	0
Building	...	...	26	3	0
Wood and Wright Work	...	...	48	5	0
Slating and Slates	...	...	20	4	0
Lime	...	...	11	0	0
Raising Stones and Sand	...	...	10	4	0
Sundries	...	...	32	9	0
			<u>£153</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>

The Church was opened for worship on the first Sunday of May, 1752. Few congregations have begun under such favourable conditions for Buchlyvie had now a comfortable meeting-house, a congregation to gather in it and a minister.

It is impossible in this booklet to give particulars of the successive ministers of the congregation, but these can be found in "The Ter-Jubilee Record."

BIBLE, BAPTISMAL BOWL AND TOKENS

An interesting Pulpit Bible is in the possession of the Church, bearing the following inscription in the handwriting of the Rev. William Speirs, minister of the congregation, 1813-1825:—

"This Bible is a present to the Associate Congregation of Buchlyvie from David McEwen, Esq., St. George's, Grenada. He transmitted it from Grenada under the care of Mr. Moses Risk, who, having been taken prisoner by the French on his return from the West Indies, and having carefully preserved it during a captivity in France of five years and four months, conveyed it afterwards at his own expense, and presented it for Mr. McEwen.

Buchlyvie, 17th June, 1814."

This Bible is a "Fishes" Bible, so-called because in Ezekiel chapter 47, verse 10 the word "fishes" is printed in error for "fishers." It is a rare edition and contains only this one typographical error.

It is interesting to know that the Baptismal Bowl inscribed thus:—"To the Associate Congregation Bwchlyvie 1752" is still in use.

Mention should be made also of the Communion Tokens inscribed on one side, As.C. BUC (Associate Congregation, Buchlyvie) and on the other side, M. J.C. 1752 (minister, John Cleland, 1752).

A GIFT OF TODAY

In place of the old Communion Sets, there is now used an Individual Communion Set which was given anonymously by a member in 1950.

An interesting fact worthy of reference is that the Rev. William Watt, minister of Buchlyvie Chapel of Ease (now called the South Church) which was built in 1835, left the

Established Church at the Disruption in 1843 and, with his followers, went to the barn of Splttal Farm, and conducted services there, thus forming the Free Church in Buchlyvie.

On 8th March, 1900, Mr. G. W. S. Cowie was ordained and inducted as the eighth minister of Buchlyvie North Church (then called the United Presbyterian Church). The union of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Churches in the village, anticipating the larger union of the two sections into the United Free Church of Scotland (which took place in October, 1900) had already been effected, and the new minister found a loyal-hearted people around him.

1900-1952

In the concluding paragraph of the "Centenary Sketch" by the Rev. John Russell, marking the completion of the first hundred years of the North Church, we have these words:—

"Long ere another centenary meeting, we shall, every one of us, have gone to the land of silence... The voice of the preacher will no more be heard by us, the Communion Table will no more be spread before us, and the places which we are now occupying in the sanctuary will be assumed by others."

We are the "others" who are called to mark the closing of the second century of work and worship in this building, and to express our gratitude to God for all that He has been to His people in this House of Prayer.

REV. G. W. S. COWIE: AN APPRECIATION

At the Ter-Jubilee celebrations, the Rev. G. W. S. Cowie wrote of his predecessor, "Undismayed by the continuous depopulation of the district owing to the rush for the centres of industry, Mr. Berry fought bravely on, and never for a single hour lost sight of the chief purpose of his work." Little could he then realise how much there would be to dismay him in his ministry that was just beginning, for, in the central period of it there took place the First World War which shattered, in many ways, the old pattern of life. Other changes were also happening. The motor car and the regular bus services were quickening the pace of village life and altering the ways of living. The later period of Mr. Cowie's ministry witnessed the introduction of Broadcasting which has changed the whole outlook on the world.

Mr. Cowie realised that the Union of the Churches in Scotland in 1929 was an Act of the Providence of God to meet the challenge of the times, and, therefore, he did not shrink from the hard duty to resign his charge in 1931 in order to make way for the union of the two local congregations. Shortly after his retirement he was laid low by a serious illness from which he recovered, but never to the extent of taking up the work of preaching. While on holiday during the summer of 1938 he contracted a bad cold which proved too much for his heart condition, and in the home of his third daughter at Townhill Manse, Dunfermline, on 12th September, he passed to Higher Service. After a funeral service in the North Church, his body was laid to rest in a grave alongside that of some of his predecessors and but twelve yards from the pulpit from which he had ministered for thirty-one years. The Rev. H. W. Hunter of Kippen, an intimate friend and helpful neighbour conducted a Memorial Service on the following Sunday in the North Church. In the obituary column of a local newspaper of that date we read:—

"One of the old type of country ministers, who gave unstintedly of all their talents to the people among whom they served, was the Rev. George W. S. Cowie, who passed away suddenly at Dunfermline in September. A native of Airdrie, he studied at Glasgow University, and at the United Presbyterian Hall in Edinburgh. He was assistant to the Rev. Dr. Steel in Greenhead Church, Glasgow, when he was called to Buchlyvie in 1900... Mr. Cowie held his Charge in a bond of affection for close on thirty years. He interested himself in everything pertaining to the welfare of the village, and was always a helpful counsellor and a good friend to the members of his congregation."

MINISTERS OF UNITED CHARGE

In every local union of congregations, by nature of the circumstances, there are difficulties to be resolved, but under the ministry of the Rev. Charles M. Maclean, B.D., who was called from Haymarket, Edinburgh, and who had a brilliant career at University and Theological College, relationships were righted and the congregations cemented into one body. In the year 1936 Mr. Maclean was called to Aberdeen, and the second minister of the united charge was the Rev. G. K.

Mortimer, who hailed from Paisley. A man of genial personality and an able preacher, he brought to bear upon the situation the mind of youth. Mr. Mortimer was inducted in 1937, and the Second World War opened in September, 1939. It was a time of great stress and strain, increased by the Government Evacuation Scheme which brought an additional population into the village from the cities. During that period Mr. Mortimer remained with his people, except for a short time of service with the Churches' Canteens. In 1949 he accepted a Call to Carntyne Old Church, Glasgow, and was succeeded by the present minister, the Rev. A. M. Moodie, M.C., M.A.

THE FUTURE

We are beginning to recover from the post-war situation, but he would be a bold man who could prophesy what the next century holds for the Church in Buchlyvle and the Church in the world. The advent of Television is widening the scope of Broadcasting; the release of atomic energy and the international situation as we see it today are apt to create in our heart feelings of misgivings about the future; and Communism is presenting a strong challenge to Christian thought and to the Christian way of living.

As we look forward to the next hundred years, we do so, feeling sure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is still powerful to change human hearts, to solve our present problems and to re-mould the pattern of life today.

"The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."