

THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF KINROSS PARISH CHURCH

Kinross Parish Church of Scotland

Charity No. SC01255, 10 Station Road Kinross, KY13 8TG

Visiting: The church is open Monday – Friday 10am to 12 noon or join the Sunday service at 10.30am. Cars may be parked in the lane at the west side of the church, from where there is disabled access.

Introduction: The documentary history of a parish church in Kinross dates back to 1246 but the present building dates only from 1832, when the church was moved from the burgh's centre to a raised site at the edge of town in the kirklands: the church's own farmland or glebe.

The church is 'listed' (protected) in 'Category B': 'buildings of regional or more than local importance'. It is a good typical example of its time in Scotland.

The 1830s saw many churches being built in Kinross-shire and adjacent counties. Three of the six parish churches in the county - Kinross, Portmoak and Cleish - were all being built in 1832 and a fourth, Blairingone, was started only four years later. The favoured style for parish churches in Scotland by this date was no longer 'classical' but 'Perpendicular Gothic', as at Kinross. These churches were 'modelled on a generic English village church externally, but rather different internally, with a horse shoe gallery and a central pulpit' (from 'Scotland's Best Churches').

The local prototype for this new style was Dunfermline's enormous Abbey Church, in the same presbytery and started in 1818. The more ambitious churches in this area, such as Kinross, 'all with prominent towers and costing far more than the heritors (landowners) were legally obliged to spend, testify to the generosity and architectural interest of at least some land-owners of the time' (from 'Buildings of Scotland'). The cost at Kinross was £1,537. Nearby Portmoak church is a little-altered example of the simpler style often used in more rural parishes.

The Architect: The present church was designed by architect George Angus, who was born in Meiklour, Perthshire in 1792 and was in business in Edinburgh from about 1825 to 1840. He died in 1844.

In 1832 he used the same design for this church in Kinross and, in Fife, at Kincardine and Kingskettle. He based this design on that of Kilconquar church, Fife, designed by architects R and R Dickson in 1821, which was itself a scaled-up copy of Cockpen church, Midlothian, by Archibald Elliot.

George Angus designed buildings all over Scotland from Roxburghshire to Ross and Cromarty but his main impact was on Dundee, where he was responsible for Dundee High School, the adjacent Reform Street and Dundee Sheriff Court.

Exterior: The exterior is almost unchanged since 1832 and is based on the ‘Perpendicular Gothic’ style of Tudor England around 1500. The large scale of the windows and their simple tracery, the flattened pointed arches of the windows and doors, the stone mouldings over the windows and the turret finials to the tower all derive from the original ‘Perpendicular’ style as seen, for example, at King’s College Chapel, Cambridge.

To give the impression of a narrow, cross-shaped medieval church, the architect has disguised the square plan by the use of a double M-shaped roof (giving the lower roof height of a narrower building), projecting gabled ‘transepts’ and an impressive five-stage tower. At the main east door however, the broad double-gable shows the true width and is an unusual feature, because later gothic-revival buildings often disguised this width by a tower on one side of the entrance or by setting back parts of the broad gable (e.g. the church in South Street, Milnathort).

The pragmatic attitude at this date to re-using the Gothic style for a ‘modern’ Georgian kirk is also seen in the orientation of the building, with the main door at the east: the opposite of the normal medieval orientation. Later Gothic-revival churches often have the traditional orientation (e.g. St. Paul’s, Muirs, Kinross).

The church is built of Kinross-shire sandstone, which weathers to a beautiful silvery-grey with some yellow and orange colouring.

Changes: Externally, the only changes to the original design are the installation of a clock in the tower in 1930 as a memorial to the long-serving local GP Dr Oswald and the addition at the west end of a small suite of rooms in 1902. It was common at this time to add meeting rooms with toilets and vestries on to older churches built without these facilities. The extension is also in a Tudor gothic style to harmonise with the main building, with a large ‘Perpendicular’ window lighting the main room.

Graveyard: A walk around the graveyard reveals lots of social and local history, but as the site only dates from 1832 there are no marked graves from before 1841. Occupations are frequently noted on the gravestones. Many of the farmers’ names remain those of farming families in the area today. One of the trades recorded is ‘Surveyor of the Great North Road’ (Alan Watt d.1877). The road passed through Kinross and the stone wall at the eastern end of the graveyard is the remains of the stables for travellers on that road. Some names which would be rare elsewhere appear frequently: Beveridge, for example - the fifth most common surname in Kinross-shire in 1901. Two stones of special interest are, on the north wall, to the Burns Begg family, related to Robert Burns, and the celtic cross in the north-east corner to Rev. Ruthven, a local minister for 50 years, who died in 1918.

Interior

Renovation 2005: The interior was altered in 2005 to provide a welcoming modern church with enlarged entrance hall, central aisle, moveable seats, new lighting and heating, better sight-lines from upstairs, good quality audio-visual equipment and modern toilets, meeting rooms, kitchen and office. This allows the building to be more useful as a church and to host events for the wider benefit of the community.

Original Interior: The basic form of the interior, however, still remains that of the original Georgian kirk. As already mentioned, unlike medieval churches or later Victorian Gothic–revival churches, the worship area has an almost square plan with a gallery around three sides, all in a classical style. There is little ornament and the pulpit is central and raised. There is a flood of clear light as the windows are large and almost all without stained glass. Visitors sometimes ask if this is as a result of the recent modernisation but it is the original character of the building.

All of this is a reflection of the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition of worship practised in this building, with its emphasis on reading and preaching from the Bible by the minister. The plan form, the galleries, the flood of light and the location of the pulpit are all deliberately designed to allow the maximum size of congregation to see and hear the preaching from the pulpit.

To achieve this, the architect has used the modern techniques of his day, including the use of cast iron. The original hand-made cast iron columns can be distinguished from the recent steel columns added in 2005 by their subtle tapering form and by their sound when tapped. Cast iron was also used for the frames of the windows. The problem of condensation was solved by having, at the bottom of each window, a channel to collect drips and feed the water outside through a hole.

Upstairs in the gallery are the some of the original pews from 1832, re-installed at a steeper rake in the 2005 renovations so that there is a better view of the ground floor area. The original pews downstairs had previously been replaced by more modern pews which were not of historic importance and were removed in 2005.

Later Elaboration: As the nineteenth century progressed, kirks became less plain and musical instruments and stained glass were allowed. This national trend can be seen here.

Furnishings: Among the furnishings added to the original plain kirk are the communion table and chairs (a First World War memorial dating from 1923) and the pulpit (gifted in 1951 in memory of Mr Swan). The tall lectern was gifted by the Girls Guildry and the font dates from 1932. These later furnishings are all in a carved Gothic style.

The symbol of the Church of Scotland, the burning bush, can be seen on the communion table lectern and the cloth pulpit fall. This is taken from the Book of Exodus where Moses saw a bush from which God spoke: although the bush burnt ‘yet it was not consumed’ (the meaning of the Latin motto on the table lectern ‘*nec tamen consumebatur*’).

An organ by Norman and Beard was added in 1911 with the pipes behind and dominating the pulpit. Later in the century there was a general reaction to this type of layout and a desire to return to the traditional emphasis on the pulpit. The pipe organ was replaced with an electronic organ in the 1980s and the pipes themselves were removed as part of the renovation in 2005, returning the kirk to its original appearance and allowing the wall to be used as a projection screen.

Upstairs in the north gallery is the communion table from the old East church of Kinross, which is now the Church Centre on the High Street. The previous East and West churches amalgamated in 1979 to form the current congregation.

Stained Glass: Stained glass slowly became acceptable in the Church of Scotland in the nineteenth century but originally only as decorative patterns, as can be seen here in the narrow lancet windows at either side of the pulpit.

Later, it became acceptable to include figures and on the north wall there is such a window, showing ‘The Faithful Man; the Virtuous Woman’. It dates from 1926 and was donated by JB MacIntosh in memory of his parents. It is by the Edinburgh stained-glass designer James Ballantine II. His grandfather, also James Ballantine, founded the firm of Ballantine and Allan in Edinburgh which from the 1830s was at the forefront of the re-discovery of the lost medieval art of stained and painted glass. The elder James Ballantine wrote a number of influential books on the subject including *A Treatise on Painted Glass in 1845*. *James Ballantyne II joined the family firm in 1905 and died in 1940*. Other examples of his work can be seen locally at *Dunfermline Abbey and St John’s Kirk, Perth*.

Memorial Plaques: The interior contains a number of memorial plaques added to the original plain interior, including two war memorials in the downstairs meeting room. Of special interest are the four memorials to members of the Graham family of Kinross House. These were brought here from the ancient parish church of St Peter-le-Poer in the City of London when that was demolished in 1907. The church stood on Old Broad Street near the Bank of England and the sale of its site financed the current St Peter-le-Poer at Friern Barnet in north London.

Thanks for Visiting: We hope you have enjoyed your visit to our church. Please take our *Welcome leaflet* to learn of our various activities, or visit our website at www.kinrossparishchurch.org.

Our leaflet *The Churches of Kinross: A Walk* will guide you through the town to see the earlier churches from which the current congregation is descended.