

ST. FILLAN'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND  
NEWPORT, FIFE

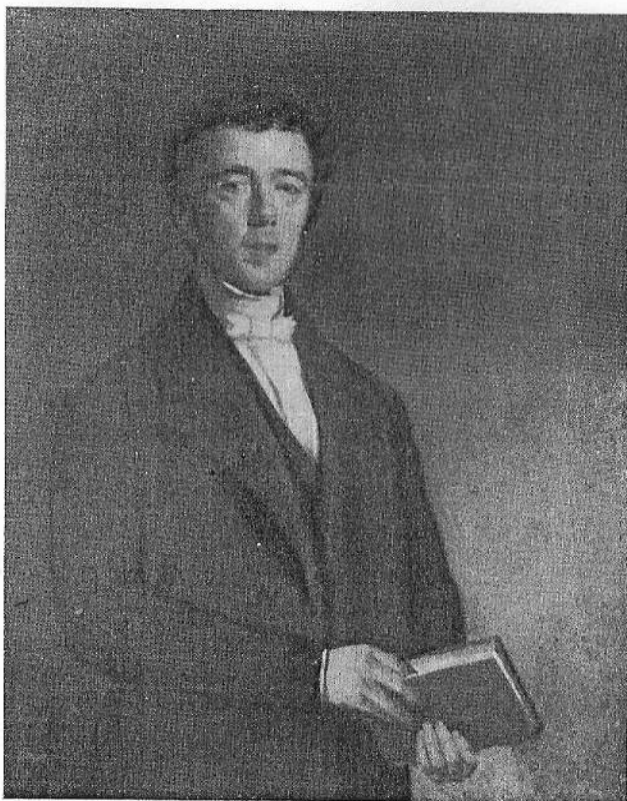
where Mr LEES was Minister  
from 29th November, 1939, to 30th September, 1944

1843-1943

## MINISTERS



REV. CHARLES NAIRN	- - - -	1843—1845
REV. JOHN NELSON	- - - -	1845—1851
REV. NEIL MACLEOD, D.D.	- - - -	1851—1895
REV. F. J. RAE, M.A.	- - - -	1891—1905
REV. PETER MCGREGOR, M.A.	- - - -	1905—1914
REV. JOHN A. CLARK, B.D.	- - - -	1914—1940
REV. A. ROBERTSON LEES	- - - -	1939—1944
Rev. William Paterson		1945 -
Rev. Alex McLean		-



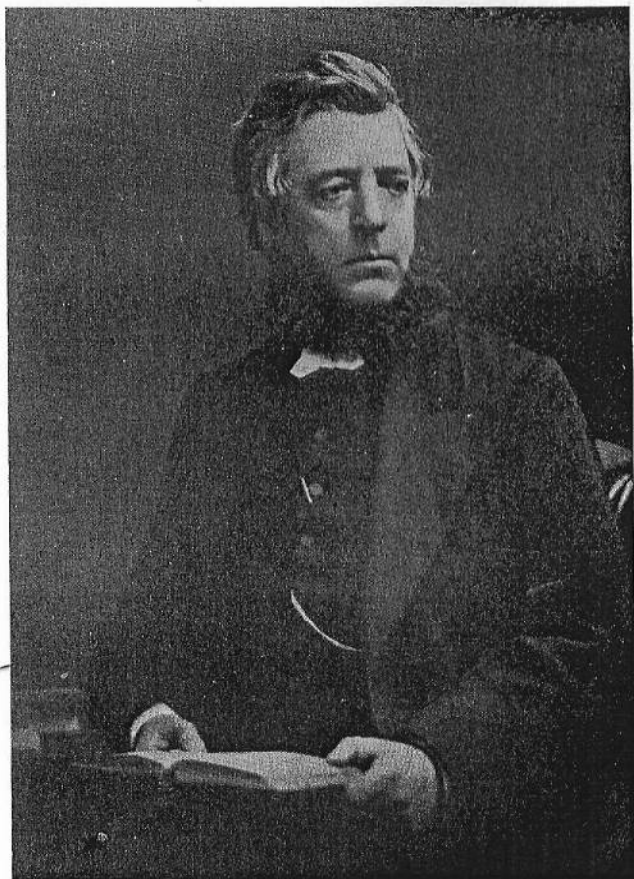
Rev. CHARLES NAIRN

1843-1943

ST. FILLAN'S Congregation has now passed its hundredth birthday. It is perhaps difficult, after the lapse of so many years, to recapture the enthusiasm and excitement of the Disruption. It stands out as one of the greatest events in Scottish history. When we look back on it now it seems inexplicable that the Government of those days should find it impossible to remedy an obvious injustice. It is now the normal right of every congregation to choose its own minister. It was surely a matter to be deeply regretted that such an elementary principle of justice should be denied to every congregation of the Church of Scotland, and that it required the Disruption of our ancient church to convince people that such a serious wrong must find a remedy. Fortunately the right of free choice was ultimately conceded and the way was open at last for the healing of a breach that need never have been made.

It is comforting to reflect that, although the Church of Scotland was rent in twain, the leaders of the two parts remained on a friendly footing. This was as it should be, for if those who seceded were amply justified in sacrificing all rather than submit to an unjust law, those who remained in the establishment were still able to plead that the patient sufferance of wrong must in the end lead to a just settlement. As a matter of fact this was what happened, and after a lapse of years the re-union of 1929 healed the breach. The fine record of the Free Church during the 89 intervening years more than atoned for the damage the Disruption caused.

One may be permitted to wonder, if the spirits of the departed are ever permitted to revisit the scenes of their earthly life, what the Rev. Charles Nairn would feel if he could now revisit his old parish and view the result of that momentous decision he made on



Rev. JOHN NELSON

the 18th May, 1843, when he courageously gave up his church and manse for conscience' sake. Surely he would view with a sense of satisfaction our congregation of St. Fillan's and feel that his sacrifice had not been in vain.

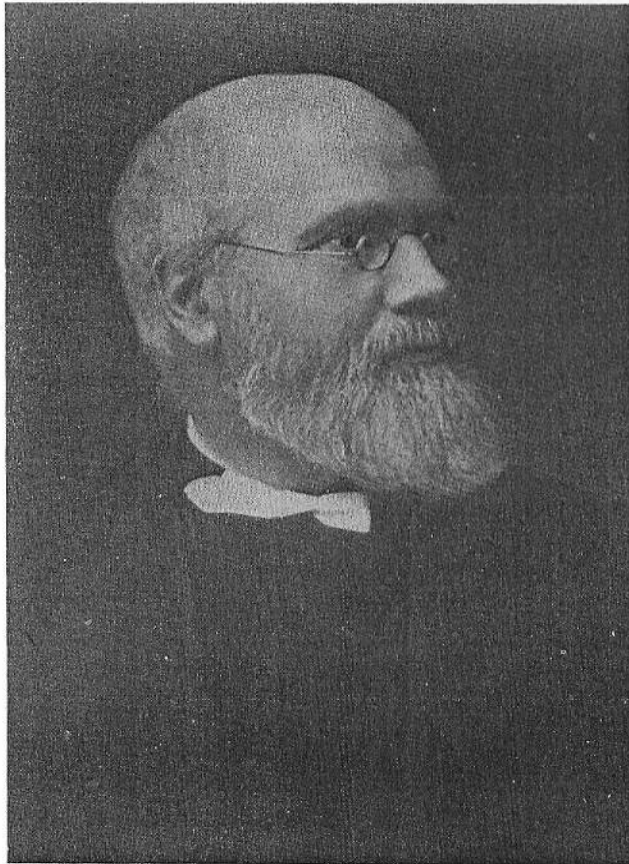
Mr Nairn had done brilliant work as the minister of Forgan. It was due to his enthusiasm that Forgan kirk was built, and with characteristic energy he set about establishing congregational life and worship for those of his parishioners who had followed him at the crisis. He must have set things agoing with speed and energy, for within six months a small church was erected, together with a school. A kirk session and a deacons' court were appointed, baptisms and marriages were provided for, and all the activities of a vigorous congregational life initiated. Amongst his supporters, Alexander Rhynd, the farmer at Woodhaven, stood out conspicuously. Until the small church was ready for occupation, Mr Rhynd put a hay-loft at the disposal of the young congregation, and Mr Nairn seems to have relied freely on his ever-ready and effective help.

Amongst the archives of the congregation there is a letter to the Rev. Charles Nairn from Dr. Chalmers, the great Disruption leader. The letter offers friendly and shrewd advice regarding the means of raising money for the young and struggling congregation. Amongst other items, it urges that even where a member can offer but a small contribution he should associate with it the names of his children, so that all might come in time to be givers.

It has to be borne in mind that before 1872 the church accepted responsibility for the education of the young, and so a schoolroom as well as a church and manse had to be provided. As a matter of fact our church hall was up to 1873 the local school, and the appointment of the schoolmaster and the general arrangement for the education of the young devolved on the minister and his office-bearers.

Mr Nairn was not destined to serve long in his new charge. After two years of vigorous and fruitful work his health gave way and he was obliged to resign his charge. A worthy successor was found in the person of the Rev. John Nelson, afterwards Dr. Nelson of





Rev. NEIL MacLEOD, D.D.

Greenock, who carried on for six years, before his translation to Greenock, the work Mr Nairn had so well begun.

The congregation were particularly fortunate in their choice of a successor to Dr. Nelson. The Rev. Neil MacLeod, who followed him, directed the life of the congregation for the long period of 44 years. He had a fine record as a student, and the promise of his early years was made good in his long and highly successful ministry. His is the principal record in the history of St. Fillan's. Under him in 1853 the school, now the church hall, was built and the small original church was replaced by the present edifice. All debts on church and manse were cleared off, and the steady growth in membership and revenue bore witness to his efficient and faithful work. It is pleasant to recall that the University of St. Andrews sought to express its appreciation of his long and successful pastorate by conferring on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. There may still be one or two of the older members of the congregation who remember Dr. MacLeod, but we are all of us linked with him in memory in that we still have among us his daughter to remind us of what the congregation owes to her father.

Towards the end of his career Dr. MacLeod's eyesight gave him some trouble, and the young assistant provided for his help, the Rev. Fred J. Rae, ultimately became his colleague and successor. There must be many who remember Mr, now Dr., Rae, a faithful pastor and a scholarly and attractive preacher. He later became the Director of Religious Instruction to the Provincial Committee of Aberdeen.

Mr Rae's successor, the Rev. Peter McGregor, was ultimately called to a larger congregation in Greenock, but he spent nine years in St. Fillan's with marked acceptance, being replaced at the outbreak of the Great War by the Rev. John Clark.

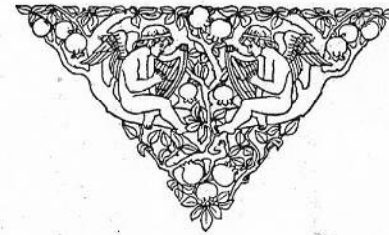
Mr Clark's death, a few years ago, ended a long and highly successful pastorate. His memory is still fresh among us, his happy personality, his thoughtful sermons, his resonant voice and his many gifts as pastor and friend.



Rev. F. J. RAE, M.A.

Our present minister, Mr Lees, has succeeded to a rich heritage. In the history of the congregation there is much to inspire and encourage him. He has taken up his task with spirit and enthusiasm, and he has already endeared himself to all by his unremitting attention to his pastoral duties and his vigorous work amongst the young.

The times are difficult, and the church has to contend with all the distractions and unrest of a materialistic age ; nor is St. Fillan's exempt from the difficulties that beset the church generally. Yet, in spite of all, the congregation is in good heart. Ably led by a succession of splendid pastors it has maintained the high standard reached in its early years. In its work there is both life and promise. We can look back with satisfaction on the century now completed and draw from it encouragement and determination to carry on the good work.





Rev. PETER MCGREGOR, M.A.

## NOTES



Here are some interesting details in the history of the Congregation :—

The Church was opened for worship on 12th November, 1843, and cost £300.

The collections for the first year were as follows :—

Jewish Mission	-	£3
Education	-	£5
India Mission	-	£3

The School, now the Church Hall, was opened in 1853, and cost £1000.

The present Church buildings, opened in 1868, cost £4000.



Rev. JOHN A. CLARK, B.D.



Rev. A. ROBERTSON LEES