

## ST MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEWPORT-ON-TAY

### CHURCH HISTORY

The Episcopal church in Newport came into existence in 1883 as a mission charge, with members worshipping in the small Blyth Hall. Rev Samuel Baggeley Hodson had been sent to Newport by Bishop Wordsworth of St Andrews to set up this charge. This was despite strong discouragement from the local Episcopalians, who were all attached to St Paul's in Dundee.

However, the charge quickly flourished, and it was decided that church premises were needed. Major Thomas Martin Cappon was appointed as architect, and an estimated £1000 was required for the construction.

Fundraising was begun, and by the time the foundation stone was laid on 27 August 1886, most of the money had already been raised, thanks to generous contributions from the Misses Guthrie, and Miss Stewart. The foundation stone was laid by Miss Stewart of St Fort. A service was first held in the small Blyth Hall, then there was a procession to the site, where after a brief service, the stone was laid. Mr Cappon the architect deposited in the cavity a box containing current coins, a list of the office bearers of the church, along with copies of the Dundee Advertiser, Evening Telegraph, and other newspapers. Boys from the training ship The Mars attended – see the right hand side of the photo. The Captain of the Mars from 1870 to 1892, Charles Casely Scott, and his family, were church members, and some of the "Mars boys" would be marched along to the Sunday service, and then they would be taken back to the ship with the promise of fish stew for lunch! We have evidence of their presence in the church from the carving of initials in the back pews!

The original reredos behind the altar was given to the church in 1891 by Mrs Scott, Captain Scott's wife, after his death in 1892, and that of their daughter Caroline in 1891. This reredos was subsequently donated to St Margaret's Episcopal Church in Tayport, in 1956.

The church was to seat 240, 18 clergy and choir, and 222 pew seats. (People were either very thin in those days, or expected to sit very close together, because I doubt very much whether the church would now seat remotely that number, despite about 4 pews having since been removed!)

The church was originally to be known as St Paul's, but was consecrated on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1887 as St Mary's.

A description of the building by Kirsty Owen in 2007 from Scottish Church Heritage research:

*St. Mary's is located on sloping ground overlooking the High Street to the west. The church is set in gravel grounds. It is of squared sandstone rubble with a Scottish slate roof. The build consists of a main cell, an apsidal east end, a north transept and a north porch.*

#### *East Elevation*

*Looking west from Kiln Burn, seven cusped windows with stained glass are visible in the apsidal east end of the church. The tapered slate roof is crowned with an abstract clay finial. There is a stone cross behind this, which sits on the gable of the main body of the church.*



*The north transept is joined to the apse on the north. This has a steeply pitched slate roof topped with decorative clay ridge tiles interrupted by a metal finial towards the northern end.*

#### *South Elevation*

*There are eight stained glass windows with ashlar surrounds in this face. These are separated into three sets of two and two single lights by buttresses. The windows are located above a sandstone projection. A further projection below this divides the elevation into three stages, the lowest of which is of hammered coursed sandstone which contrasts with the evenly faced stonework above. The steeply pitched roof has a blocked dormer window with a finial towards the west gable which is similar to that of the north transept.*

#### *West Elevation*

*The kneelered west gable is supported on the north and south by angle buttresses. It is capped by a stone bellcote which appears to clasp the face with dental footings. Below this is a trefoil vent, the shape of which mirrors the base of the bellcote above. The arched west window has cusped tracery and is set in hoodmould with stiffleaf detail. A course of ashlar runs into the window at both sides, joining the surrounds at the edges of the hoodmould. An ashlar ledge divides the window from the lower part of the face. To the north a single cusped light is visible in the west face of the porch.*

#### *North Elevation*

*The main body of the church has five single light windows with figurative stained glass, which are divided into two sets of two and a single light by two buttresses. An ashlar projection runs between the buttresses under the windows. To the west of the windows is the north porch, which is described below. The steeply pitched roof has a blocked dormer window with a finial identical to that which was visible to the south. The north transept is entered through an arched door in its west face. It has three lancets in ashlar on its northern elevation. Above these is a trefoil which serves as a vent.*

#### *North Porch*

*The north porch is of coursed sandstone and ashlar. It has a mansard slate roof with decorative clay ridge tiles and a finial identical to that of the transept. It is entered on the north through an arched door with hoodmould and stiff leaf decoration. It has a single light window in its east and west faces, both of which are recessed in ashlar surrounds.*

It has also been described as "A plain interior, beautified from 1920 onwards." This is certainly true, because most of the furnishings and the beautiful stained glass windows that we see now were added later by various donors, often in memory of loved ones. Right up to the present day, the church has benefitted from generous donations, both of items to beautify the church, or monetary donations. Without these, it is doubtful that the church would have survived. Without wishing to name donors for fear of missing anyone, (and many donations were anonymous anyway), the late Miss A Maude Pilkington must be mentioned. Many times when the church was fundraising for repairs or other necessities, Miss Pilkington would quietly contribute. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.