



The Story of
The Old West Kirk
Of Greenock
1591–1898

by

Ninian Hill

Greenock
James McKelvie & Sons
1898

To
THE MEMORY OF
CAPTAIN CHARLES M'BRIDE
AND 22 OFFICERS AND MEN
OF MY SHIP THE
"ATALANTA" OF GREENOCK,
1,693 TONS REGISTER,
WHO PERISHED OFF ALSEYA BAY, OREGON,
ON THE 17TH NOVEMBER, 1898,
WHILE THESE PAGES ARE GOING THROUGH THE PRESS,
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME
IN MUCH
SORROW, ADMIRATION, AND RESPECT.

NINIAN HILL.

PREFACE.

My object in issuing this volume is to present in a handy form the various matters of interest clustering around the only historic building in our midst, and thereby to endeavour to supply the want, which has sometimes been expressed, of a guide book to the Old West Kirk. In doing so I have not thought it necessary to burden my story with continual references to authorities, but I desire to acknowledge here my indebtedness to the histories of Crawford, Weir, and Mr. George Williamson. My heartiest thanks are due to many friends for the assistance and information they have so readily given me, and specially to the Rev. William Wilson, Bailie John Black, Councillor A. J. Black, Captain William Orr, Messrs. James Black, John P. Fyfe, John Jamieson, and Allan Park Paton.

NINIAN HILL.

57 Union Street,
November, 1898.

The Story of The Old West Kirk

The Church

In a quiet corner at the foot of Nicholson Street, out of sight and mind of the busy throng that passes along the main street of our town, hidden amidst high tenements and warehouses, and overshadowed at times by a great steamship building in the adjoining yard, is to be found the Old West Kirk. Time was when the Kirk of Grenok, surrounded by God's acre where

Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,

and the manse hard by—which still remains—were prominent landmarks that could be seen far off from land and sea. Picturesquely situated by the seaside were they in those early days. No docks or shipbuilding yards had come between to separate them. The clear, pure water, unsullied by the great cities that now pollute it, lapped up in little wavelets at the manse garden, and during the winter gales the spray was driven against the church itself. Away to the south and west were green fields where to-day there is nought but busy streets. There may have been a few crofter cottages, but they were considered out in the country and not in Grenok. The Glebe was as yet unfeued, and the minister's cow shared it with his horse. The church was situated not only amid green fields by the seaside, but also at the mouth of the West Burn. We have lost sight of the burn now. It was robbed of much of its volume by the Shaws Water Works, and finally covered over, and we think of it as a street rather than a stream. In the past, however, the West Burn played an important role.

Many flourishing industries grew up on its banks, and its estuary served as a harbour up which the fishermen brought their boats, as indeed they continued to do until the beginning of this century. The burn became known as the Kirk Burn, and a clachan gradually formed near the church, and to this day lower Nicholson Street is still called the Kirkton. Across the burn, and farther along the shore, stood a row of cottages, thatched with straw or heather, and their gardens stretched down to the sea. The Rue-End still tells us of those humble "cottages, long since passed away. Behind them on the hill above was the good Johnne Schaw's mansion-house surrounded by trees, on the site of the later mansion-house which only recently was demolished when the Caledonian Railway was extended to Gourrock. Such briefly was Greenock in 1591 when the Old West Kirk was built, and such it remained with but little change throughout the following century. Even in 1710, Crawford wrote, in his "History of Renfrewshire"—"At the west end stands the church, a handsome structure after the modern fashion."

There had been earlier places of worship in Greenock. History tells us of a chapel somewhere at the foot of Kilblain Street, but its exact site cannot now be traced. All that remains is the name of the street, which tells us that the chapel was dedicated to St. Blane. It probably belonged to the Culdee period. Another, known as St. Lawrence's Chapel, stood at what is now the south - west corner of Virginia and Rue - End Streets. Part of it existed as late as 1760. A third was situated on the farm of Chapelton, further to the east. Of these there are now no remains. The parish priest of Inverkip would celebrate Mass in them from time to time, and no doubt occasionally they would be visited by a preaching friar from Paisley Abbey. The chapels, which had graveyards attached, were probably small and rude structures, and fell into disuse at the Reformation. As that took place in 1560, we may conclude that for more than thirty years Greenock was without any ordinance of religion, and during that period the good folk had to walk to the Parish Church at Inverkip along what is still called the Auld Kirk Road.

Johnne Schaw of Grinok was a somewhat remarkable man. He was the second son of Sir Alexander Schaw of Sauchie, who obtained for him a grant of the lands of Fynnart and Wester Greenock from James V. At the time of the Reformation he was a young man, and though brought in contact with Mary, Queen of Scots, and James VI., the greater influence of John Knox seems to have moulded his character. He took an active interest in the affairs of the Kirk, and we find him figuring in some of the early General Assemblies. But he was not one of those who tended the vineyards of others while he neglected his own, far less did he enrich himself by despoiling the Church, as did many in his position at that time. In 1589, when James VI. was about to set out for Norway to fetch his bride—who, it is interesting to remember, was to become the mother of unhappy Charles I.—he granted a charter authorising him to build a church and manse, and to set apart a graveyard, on his estate of Greenock. The King, it states, was "movit with the earnest zeill and grite affection our lovit Johnne schaw of grenok hes ay had to goddis glorie and propagatioun of the trew religioun." The church was to be provided so that the "puir pepill," who were "all fischers and of a ressounable nowmer, duelland four myles fra their parroche kirk, and having ane greit river to pas over to the samyn, May haif ane ease in winter seasoun." The charter is dated Halyruid-hous, 18th November, 1589.

The founding of the Old West Kirk therefore takes us back to the time when Scotland had her own King and Court, and when Elizabeth reigned in England. Only two years before, the unhappy Mary, Queen of Scots, had been released from her long captivity by the tragedy of Fotheringay, and only one year had elapsed since the Protestant parties in both kingdoms alike rejoiced at the disaster to the Spanish Armada.

In 1591 all was ready, and on the 4th October the church was opened, and Mr. Andra Murdo, an M.A. of St. Andrews, was appointed the first minister. Its cost was 3,000 merks Scots, or £166 13s. 4d. sterling. The following year Parliament passed an Act approving of "the kirk bigget by Johnne Schaw of Grinok," and it is an interesting coincidence that on the same day was also passed the well-known Act which has been called the Great Charter of the Church of Scotland. This Act provides for the administration of the Kirk by General Assemblies, Presbyteries, and Kirk Sessions, as we have them at the present time. The Old West Kirk was therefore not only founded by royal charter but was thus the first Presbyterian Church confirmed by the National Parliament.

Of the church then built but little remains and less can be seen. The growing prosperity of the town has caused various additions and alterations at different periods, and the wear and tear of three centuries have necessitated more or less extensive repairs from time to time. It is impossible to trace all the various additions and alterations to the building. Originally the church seems to have consisted of the nave, lying approximately north and south, with gables to the east and west. The pulpit appears to have been then placed at the north-west angle. It was changed to its present position before 1694. The eastern transept, or Schaw aisle, if it was not part of the original structure as has been stated, must have been a very early addition.

Possibly it was built over the grave in which Johnne Schaw was buried only three years after the church was opened. At any rate, in 1657 there was a proposal to take down the east, yavill of the east isle and extend it twenty-four feet, but the laird objected, as he had been in continual possession of that part of the kirk since the erection of the said kirk. The addition was never made, as the aisle is but sixteen feet in depth. Towards the end of the century Sir John Schaw's retiring room, now used as the vestry, and the mortuary underneath, were added. The date 1696 is to be found on the Clark mural tablet at the back of the mortuary wall. About the same time the Carts-burn aisle and the north gable were extended fifteen feet and the south gable ten feet. In 1767 the walls were raised about three and a half feet, and the roof was renewed.

Previous to this it would appear that the walls had been about the same height as those of the Schaw aisle. The line of the added courses of masonry may be seen on the east side. It must be confessed that the church has suffered, in common with many other old buildings, at the hands of injudicious restorers. The walls were in many places rebuilt in 1864, and faced with polished ashlar in the most approved fashion of the time. The gable tops were raised and the north window enlarged. The tower was built at the same time. Within, nothing of the old work can be seen. Formerly the main entrance was in the centre of the south gable, and its position there is indicated by the new masonry. A passage, rather more than two yards wide, paved with stone, led to the other end of the church. In the middle of this passage, and occupying its whole length, was the Communion Table, with a seat on either side; an arrangement now only to be found in the more remote country parish churches. These seats, except on Sacrament Sundays, were set apart for the accommodation of the poor. Their's was the place of honour. They sat at the King's Table. The minister officiated from a little recess about the middle of the table, with his back to Sir Michael's gallery. In Mr. Steel's time all the pews in the area were square ones, with tables in the centre, but when Dr. M'Farlan was inducted in 1832 most of them were converted into narrow, uncomfortable pews of the type once so familiar. The pulpit occupied the same position as at present, but it was much less spacious. It has been described as being like an egg-cup. A canopy sounding board, with a finial of a pine apple, surmounted it, and below the pulpit was the precentor's desk, and a bench for the elders, the whole being railed off from the pews. It was painted a dark mahogany colour, but the woodwork of the pews was quite plain, being neither painted nor varnished.

The galleries were lower than at present, and very nearly, if not quite, level. Their fronts were painted a sort of umber colour. The walls were white-washed and very damp, and the ceiling, which was flat, was plastered. The wall between the Sailors' Loft and the pulpit was adorned with some black boards, with yellow or gold lettering, recording legacies to the parish. Nine of these boards, recording eleven legacies, have found a resting place in the steeple of the West Kirk. The largest measures four feet six inches by two feet seven inches, and is mounted in a frame painted in imitation of red marble. The inscription, which is remarkable for its spelling, runs—"William Scot Rope maker in Greenock Died July 10, 1730 aged 40 years and left to the 'Poor of the Sailors' Box Five Pounds Sterling. Archibald Zuill Shipmaster in Greenock Died Novr. 24th 1764 Aged 97 years Left to the Marine Society Five Pounds sterling."



The Old West Kirk from Nicolson Street

Another board gives us a glimpse into perils of the sea now happily unknown. "Mr. John M'Kinlay, Commander of the ship Perthshire who was killed in an engagement with a privateer 28th Nov. 1812. Mrs. Isabella M'Lean his widow died 28th Jan. 1820 and left the poor of the Clyde Marine Society Fifty pounds sterling." The flooring under the pews was little better than open sparring, leaving the earth below quite visible. As the graveyard outside was two feet higher than the level of the floor, the church got into a very damp and insanitary condition. In summer the doors were all kept open, regardless of draughts, otherwise the atmosphere would have been unbearable. When the old floor was removed in 1864, the basement was dug out and re-laid with asphalt. The level of the floor was lowered by six inches. The foundation stones of the walls were found to be rough boulders, which had evidently been taken from the shore. Between seventy and eighty coins were discovered embedded in the earth under the floor. Some dated as far back as 1637 and had doubtless been lost when the collection was being taken on special occasions, by the long-handled ladles which were then used. The windows were filled with small square panes of clear glass. A great chandelier was suspended from the roof. There were seven doors to the church, and three outside stairs to the galleries, situated in the following places, viz.:— 1, South gable; 2, West gable; 3, Stair and door to Sir Michael's Loft; 4, North end of the east wall; 5, Stair and door to the Farmers' Loft, on the site of the heating apparatus house; 6, Stair and door to the Cartsburn Lofts, on the site of the tower; 7, Pulpit door. The old doorway to the Farmers' Loft is now occupied by the Grieve memorial window. Sir Michael's Loft entirely filled the Schaw aisle from side to side, and the minister, in order to get from the vestry to the pulpit, had to leave the church by the door at the back of the gallery and the outside stair. After proceeding round the south end of the church, he entered the pulpit from the outside by a door, which can still be traced, immediately to the west of the angle of the wall. Sir Michael's gallery had a remarkable appearance. The front was higher than at present, and projected about a couple of feet from the line of the wall, and was adorned with a gilded escutcheon. It was surmounted by a canopy supported by two pilasters and two pillars of oak, with carved Corinthian capitals, giving it the appearance, it is said, of three private boxes in a theatre. Behind the spacious family seat, which was furnished with chairs, were two or three pews, rising in tiers, for the accommodation of the servants. There were six galleries in all, that is, two in addition to those which have been restored. One extended from Sir Michael's gallery to the Farmers' Loft, and contained only three pews. The other formed the family seat of the Crawfurds of Cartsburn, and was situated against the north wall of their aisle, and separate from the west gallery. It is said to have been similar in appearance to Sir Michael's, and looked like a posted bed. In 1710, a few years after the erection of these family seats, and a thorough overhaul of the old building, an old chronicler naively records: "The last laird, Sir John Schaw, hath singularly repaired and beautified the church."

Although much transformed, in its main features the church has probably been much as it now is for about the last two hundred years. Let us take it as it is. The Old West Kirk is cruciform in plan, — a. and measures roughly seventy - four feet from „ t north to south, and sixty-three feet across the transepts. In 1864 the interior was entirely gutted, and refitted in a modern manner. The ceiling is lined with wood, stained a subdued tone, and the walls, which are lathed and plastered are painted a warm cream colour. The pulpit is hexagonal in form, and is adorned with five carved panels. The centre one, under the book-board which is supported by an angel, has for its subject

the Agnus Dei. The other panels have the emblems of the four Evangelists. A Communion Table and Font are placed in front of the pulpit. The woodwork of the church

—the pulpit and the fronts of the galleries

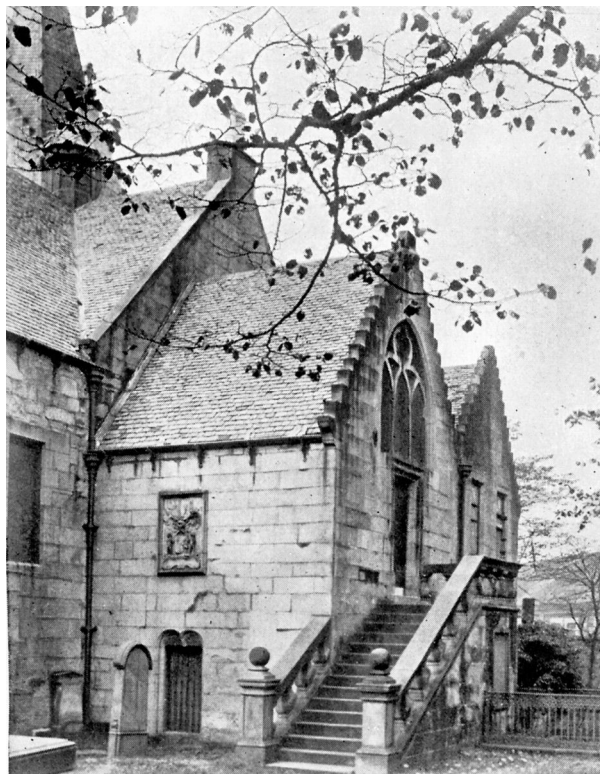
—may be thought somewhat heavy in design, and the yellow varnish not in irreproachable ecclesiastical taste, but the dim religious light, streaming through the stained glass windows, softens much of these defects and lends a beauty and charm to the interior that disarms criticism.

There are now only three entrances to the church—viz., the old door at the back of Sir Michael's gallery; a new door to the mortuary, which now serves as a porch; and the main door in the centre of the west gable, or Cartsburn Aisle. This "yle," as the old records have it, was built by Thomas Crawford of Cartsburn, for the accommodation of his feuars and tenants. A seat, however, was reserved for the minister's family, measuring nine feet long by two and a-half broad. He had a right of burial in the south side of the aisle, to the extent of fifteen feet square, and the seat-holders were bound to remove their desks on the occasion of an interment. In 1864 the old vault was permanently closed, and a new one was constructed under the adjoining tower by the present laird, Mr. Thomas Macknight Crawford of Cartsburn. Cartsburn, or Carseburn, was formerly part of the barony of Kilbirny in Ayrshire, and passed, in the reign of Queen Mary, into possession of a younger branch of the family of Crawford of Kilbirny. In 1669 it was disposed by Lady Kilbirny to her cousin Thomas Crawford, second son of Cornelius Crawford of Jordanhill, and was erected into a burgh of barony the same year. This privilege had been conferred on Greenock in 1635, so that there were two burghs in the parish, each having a share in the parish church. The first baron died in 1695 and was succeeded by his son Thomas, the first-mentioned in the mural tablet noticed below. The old mansion-house, which Crawford describes as being well planted and the principal messuage of the barony, was situated on the east bank of the Cartsburn, immediately behind the Cartsburn Sugarhouse. It ceased to be inhabited many years ago, and no longer exists, and it is to be regretted that there is no residence for the laird on the property.

There are three mural tablets in the Cartsburn Aisle. The oldest, on the west wall under the gallery, bears the following inscription:—

THE CHURCH.
HERE ARE DEPOSITED THE REMAINS
THOMAS CRAWFURD OF CARTSBURN
who departed this life 3rd February 1743
in the 81st year of his age
ALSO
ANN, HIS DAUGHTER:
AND
MARGARET SEMPLE HIS FOURTH WIFE;
ALSO
ARCHIBALD CRAWFURD OF CARTSBURN
who departed this life on the 13th January 1783
in the 74th year of his age,
AND
MARGARET CUNNINGHAME HIS SPOUSE
who departed this life 23rd August 1787
AND
THOMAS CRAWFURD OF CARTSBURN
THEIR SON
who departed this life 24th September 1791
in the 46th year of his age.

This monument was erected to their memory by Christian
Crawfurd of Cartsburn, daughter to the first and aunt
to the last-mentioned Thomas Crawford 1792.



The Schaw Aisle

Christian Crawford succeeded her nephew, and on her death the estate passed to her daughter, also named Christian, who married Thomas Macknight of Ratho, the grandfather of the present laird. Mr. Macknight assumed the surname of Crawford in virtue of the deed of entail. George Crawford, who wrote the "History of Renfrewshire" published in 1710, was a younger brother of the first-mentioned Thomas Crawford.

Another tablet on the south wall, near the pulpit, bears this inscription:—

I
IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE
OF
JANE WARDROP CUNNINGHAM
only Daughter of
JOHN ALLAN WARDROP
of Dalmarnock
and Wife of
THOMAS MACKNIGHT CRAWFURD
of Cartsburn
by whom this tablet is erected.
Born 12th December 1826
Died 26th December 1879

The last tablet was erected in 1884, and is to be found on the north wall. The inscription runs:—

ERECTED
BY
THOMAS MACKNIGHT CRAWFURD
of Cartsburn
in memory
of his Father and Mother
WILLIAM CRAWFURD
of Cartsburn
Born 22nd March 1784
Died 4th November 1854
AND
JANE CRAWFORD
Daughter of John Crawford
of Broadfield
Born 9th December 1796
Died 12th December 1833
and both buried

in the family burying ground
in this church.

In front of the door leading to the tower, and directly under the Cartsburn family gallery, is the site formerly occupied by the Watt family pew, where James Watt, as a boy, must have often sat with his father. On the wall beside the door is a brass tablet bearing the following inscription:—

Under a Charter of King James VI.
Given at Holyrood-house 18th Nov. 1589
This Church Was Built
By Sir John Shaw of Greenock in 1591
These are the Ministers of the Church
Andrew Murdo 1591
John Layng 1598
James Taylor 1640
Neil Gillies 1679
Alexander Gordon 1688
John Sterling 1694
Andrew Turner 1721
David Turner 1721
Allan Macaulay 1786
Robert Steele 1792
Patrick M'farlan D.D. 1832

Disused in 1841 after having been for 250 years
The Parish Church and for 150 years of these
the only Church in Greenock
Restored and Re-opened on Christmas Day 1864
Through the Liberality of the Parishioners
Presented by James Rankin, M.A.
Ordained Minister Here July 21st, 1865.

It is greatly to be regretted that subsequent research has not confirmed all that is recorded here. The Church, as has already been stated, was built by Johnne Schaw. It was his great grandson who was the first of three successive Sir John Schaws. He gained his knighthood on the field of the battle of Worcester, from Charles II., in 1651; and in 1687 he was made a baronet by James II. The baronetcy became extinct on the death of his grandson without a male heir. It may be of interest to trace, in a sentence or two, the succession of the estate. On the death of the last Sir John Schwa, the estate passed through his sister Margaret, who married Sir John Houston, and their daughter Helen or, who married Sir Michael Stewart of Blackball, to their eldest son John, who thereupon took the surname of Schwa in addition to Stewart. Afterwards he dropped the letter c in spelling his name, and became known as. Sir John Shaw-Stewart. He was the great grand-uncle of the present laird, Sir Michael Robert Shaw-Stewart, 7th Baronet, of Greenock and Blackball.

Mr. George Williamson, the author of that monumental work, "Old Greenock," to whom the writer is indebted for much of the local history here retold, gives a list of ministers, with notes regarding each, which differs in one or two particulars from the apostolic succession given in the tablet. It is as follows:—1, Andra Murdo, 1591; 2, John Layng, 1599; 3. James Taylor, 1640; 4, William Cameron, 1667; 5, Andrew Cranstoun, 1681; 6, David Mitchell, 1682; 7, Alexander Gordon, 1687; 8, John Stirling, 1694; 9, Andrew Turner, 1704; 10, David Turner, 1721; 11, Allan M'Aulay, 1786; 12, Robert Steel, 1792; 13, Patrick M'Farlan, 1832. To this list may be added, in order to bring it down to date—14, James Rankin, 1865; 15, Charles Strong, 1868; 16, W. W. Tulloch, 1871; 17, A. E. Shand, 1875, 18, Adam Currie, 1898. James Taylor had the distinction of being the only minister in the Presbytery of Paisley, in which the parish of Greenock was then situated, who conformed to Episcopacy under Charles II. All the other ministers were "outed" from their parishes in 1662. John Stirling became Principal of the University of Glasgow, which office he held for twenty-six years. He is known in church history for the great services he rendered in promoting the extension of the Presbyterian Church in America. Andrew and David Turner, father and son, ministered for the long space of eighty-two years.

They are buried in the churchyard, adjoining the stair at the east end of the church. On the death of Robert Steel, or Bishop Steel, as he was familiarly known, the church was offered to the great Dr. Chalmers. He, however, declined it, and recommended his friend, Patrick M'Farlan, who was appointed instead. During his ministry the new West Kirk in Nelson Street was erected, and the congregation removed there in 1841. Two years afterwards Dr. M'Farlan seceded and joined the Free Church, and was succeeded by Dr. M'Culloch, of school-book fame, whose honoured memory is still fresh in the recollection of many in town.

To return to the Cartsburn aisle. The present gallery was erected in 1873, and the organ was placed there in the following year. It is a two-manual instrument, built by Hill & Son, London. Opposite to the Cartsburn aisle is the

Schaw aisle, now generally spoken of as Sir Michael's gallery. It rises from the top of a low wall on a line with the nave, about four feet from the level of the floor, and contains four pews on a steep incline, one above and behind the other. Underneath this inclined platform is the family vault. In the east end of the church, probably adjoining and possibly in this aisle, lies buried Johnne Schaw, the pious founder of the kirk, who died in 1594. It is surely strange and unfitting that amidst the many memorials of the dead in the church, there should not be one to commemorate its builder and to mark the place of his sepulchre. This might be remedied by removing the present front of Sir Michael's gallery and erecting in its stead a memorial in alabaster, or carved wood. There is length for a recumbent figure in bas-relief. This would be immediately over Johnne Schaw's grave.

The only remaining outside stair—and very picturesque it is—leads up to a door at the back of the gallery. Alongside of the Schaw aisle to the north, is a room which was built at a later period for a retiring room for the family. It was lined with pine panelling and cornice. It is now used as the vestry. In those early days a vestry was not needed, as the manse was so near at hand. Underneath this room is the mortuary. It is open to the east, and a massive pillar supports the arches which carry the wall above. An iron railing formerly enclosed the open space, and the marks showing its position may still be seen on the walls and pillar. Here were placed any bodies found in the river or elsewhere pending identification and burial. When the steamer "Comet" was sunk by collision off Kempock in 1825, by which catastrophe seventy-three lives were lost, a number of the bodies recovered were brought here. Amongst them six, who were servants of Sir Joseph Radcliffe, were buried in the churchyard adjoining Rope-work Street, where a monument is erected to their memory. A door now leads from this old mortuary into the church. In the north end of the nave is the Farmers' Loft, which was set apart for the accommodation of the country folk from the landward portion of the parish. Opposite this, and occupying a similar position in the south end of the nave, is the Sailors' Loft. Formerly the stair leading to it was at the other side of the passage from where it is now. It was the only stair inside the church. This Loft was originally erected in 1698, according to a minute in the old session record dated 9th December, 1697, which runs as follows:—

"Qlk day after prayer, the Sess. being met, a Petition was presented to them by the Masters of Ships and Seamen in this parroch wherein they desired the Sess. might consent to their building a Loft in the South Yle of the Kirk. The Sess. considering the Same find it reasonable and consent thereto withall appointing Mr. Kelsoe and William Rowan to recommend to them suppleing the poor belonging to seamen out of their own box providing always this loft be built upon their own proper charges and not off money already mortified."

The front seat at one time was resplendent with blue cloth, brass nails, and cushions, whereon none sat under the rank of captain. The second seat, lined with blue cloth, but minus the brass nails and cushions, was allotted to mates; and the two other seats, unadorned in any way, accommodated poor Jack. An old sailor stood sentry at the door and saw that all kept their proper places, and guarded its sanctity against any female intrusion. A well-known character called "Baldy Pin" discharged this duty. In addition to his wooden leg, he was distinguished by having a blind eye, which he could use as effectively as Lord Nelson when occasion required. When any stranger who had no right to the gallery approached, Baldy kept his blind eye upon him till he heard the sound of his offering drop into the Sailors' Box. Then he brought his other eye into action, and—seeing a stranger—promptly turned him back. Above the loft, and suspended from the roof, is the model of a 20-gun frigate. This replaced a former ship which hung in the same place before the restoration of the church. On the wall between the Sailors' Loft and the pulpit, is a small brass tablet bearing the following inscription:—"In memory of James Stewart, Merchant, Greenock and Newfoundland. Born 13th Nov., 1785: Died 11th Nov., 1837." This was erected by his daughter, Miss Helen Stewart, of Ashcraig, Skelmorlie, in 1886. James Stewart lived at Clyde-bank House, on the Esplanade. He was Provost for only one day, having been elected when he was lying ill with fever. He died the following day. His son, James Stewart of Garvocks, succeeded Mr. Grieve as Member of Parliament from 1878 to 1884.

The old bell was transferred to the new West Kirk, but as it really belongs to the Old West Kirk it may be noticed here. There was a previous one, but it became "riven" in 1675, and it was replaced by the present one in 1677. A view of Greenock, published in 1768, shows a belfry on the roof at the intersection of the nave and transepts. Latterly the bell was hung in a simple belfry on the top of the west gable, and could be seen swinging to and fro. It was rung by a rope from the outside. The bell was familiarly called "Tarn o' Lang," from the sound it gave when rung. When the steeple of the new West Parish Church was completed in 1856, it was hung there, where it now does duty as the second bell in chiming the quarters. The bell has thus been in use for more than two hundred years, and has voiced the joys and sorrows of many generations. Besides being tolled at funerals, the "passing" or "soul bell" was also tolled at the time of death.

e

It is one of the oldest bells in use in Scotland, and as it is a very heavy bell for its size, and shows but little signs of wear, it may be expected to have a long life yet before it. It measures eighteen inches across the mouth, and fourteen inches in depth inside. Around the crown it bears the following inscription:—

R.P. : FOR : THE : CHURCH : OF:
GREENOCK : 1677

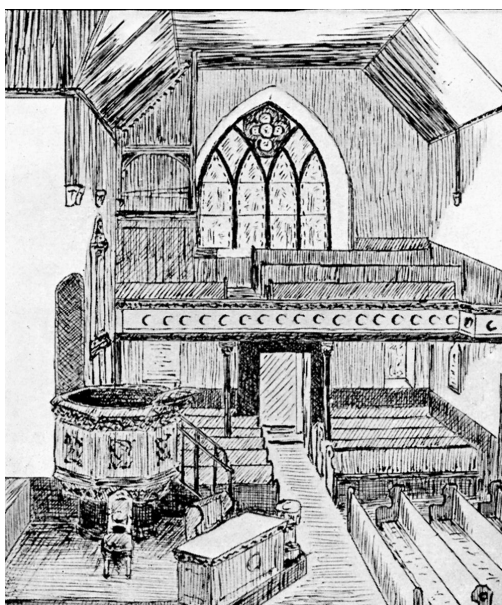
The initials R. P. stand for Richard or Rodger Purdue, who were well-known bell-founders in Wiltshire during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The tower stands silent, and Tarn o' Lang has not yet got a successor. This should prove some one's opportunity to present a new bell to the church of their fathers.

The Old West Kirk was the only church in Greenock till 1761—a period of one hundred and seventy years, when the New Parish Church, now known as the Mid Kirk, was opened. The old kirk subsequently became known as the Old Parish Church, and afterwards as the West Parish Church, which latter name it retained till 1841. At that time the church had fallen into the state of disrepair already described, and its accommodation was quite insufficient for the increasing population of the parish. As it could not be enlarged owing to the graves surrounding the walls, it became necessary to build a new church, on a different site. Accordingly, the West Kirk in Nelson Street was built, and when the congregation removed there in 1841 the old church was closed. It was temporarily occupied again under interesting circumstances. At the Disruption, in 1843, the Minister of the Gaelic Parish, with the majority of his congregation, joined the Free Church. While their new church was being erected in Jamaica Street they were granted the use of the Old West Kirk, then standing unoccupied, and there the Free Gaelic congregation worshipped for about thirteen months. For about twenty years thereafter the Old West Kirk stood deserted, and in course of time fell into an almost ruinous condition. In 1864 it was restored at a cost of £2,573 ios. gd., which was all raised by voluntary subscription. There were many large gifts that might well be recorded here. One contribution only is of general interest. Dr. Norman MacLeod gave a reading in the Town Hall of his story "Wee Davie," which added £40 to the funds. The following is a list of the Committee appointed to carry out the restoration:—

Provost Grieve, Chairman.

Rev. Dr. M'Culloch
Rev. F. L. Robertson
Rev. Jas. Rankin
Wm. Allison
George Arbuckle
David Balderston
James Ballantine
Robert Blair
Andrew Boyd
Matthew Brown
Neil Brown
Colin S. Caird
Robert Cowan
Alexander Currie
R. B. Finlay
John Hamilton.
J. Ramsay Hill
V Matthew Hill
John Hislop
J. C. Hunter
David Johnstone

Thomas Kincaid
Wm. Lamb.
V D. M. Latham
Wm. Lindsay
Claud Marshall
Alexander M'Kenzie
John M'Aulay
James M'Bride
Peter M'Bride
W. M'Clure
John MacCunn
John Macdougall
J. A. MacFarlane
John Neill
Allan Park Paton
H. T. Patten
F. R. Reid
Alexander Rodger
Robert Sellars
John Thomson
Wm. Watt

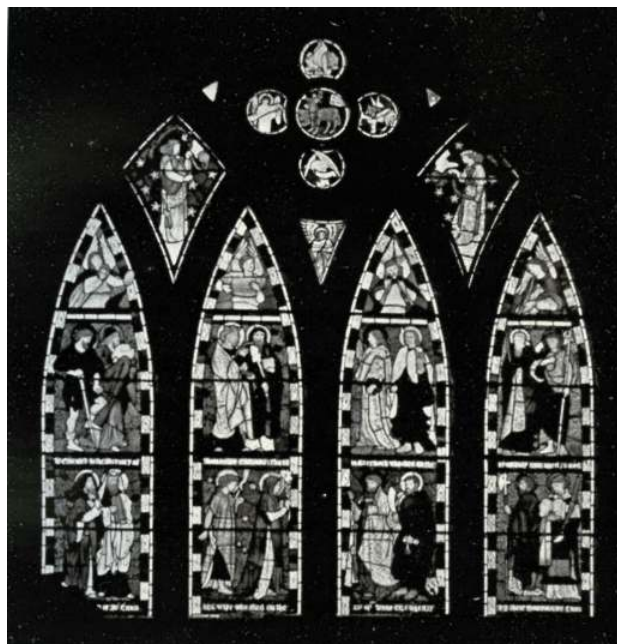


The Cartsburn Aisle

The church was re-opened on Christmas Day, 1864. Dr. M'Culloch, minister of the parish, officiated in the morning; our distinguished townsman Professor, afterwards Principal, Caird in the afternoon; and the Rev. Dr. M'Farlane, of Nicholson Street U.P. Church in the evening. In 1872, on the erection of the North Parish quoad sacra, for which purpose a sum of £2,396 13s. 3d. was raised locally; the church became the North Parish Church, which is now its official designation; but, popularly, it will ever be regarded as the Old West Kirk.

The Windows

On entering the Old West Kirk one is impressed by the rich effect produced by the stained glass windows. They are to be found not only in the gables, but also in the most irregular positions, and no two of them are of equal dimensions. The place of honour in this picture gallery of Scripture is by common consent held by four windows, made by the firm of Morris, Marshall, Falkner & Co., London. Among those who composed this famous company, beside William Morris, the managing partner, were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Sir E. Burne-Jones, all men of renown. To Mr. Allan Park Paton, for many years librarian of the Greenock Library, we are indebted for having such art treasure in our midst. Acting on behalf of the donors, he consulted Rossetti, and, on his advice, the commissions were given to Morris & Co. The result is that we have four masterpieces of unsurpassed beauty; Chief among them is the four-light window in the west gable. It was designed by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES Bart. The cost of this now priceless work of art amounted to £187 7s. 6d. The subject is the "Adoration of the Lamb," and it is treated in a marvellous manner, both as regards the conception of a theme so sublime, and the exquisite colour and technique of the execution. Mr. Paton has thus described it:—"In the treatment there are shown nearly thirty figures. These personages, who are ranged against a background of foliage, are, as they have been most aptly associated by the artist—Adam and Noah, David and Isaiah, Mary Magdalene and John the Evangelist, Elijah, and John the Baptist—these form the higher row; below are Abraham and Moses, Eve and the Virgin Mary, Peter and Paul, and Stephen and Matthias; and as regards expression, form, and the use of accessories, each figure will repay a thoughtful study. Above this assemblage of prominent Scripture characters are four Angels praising with cymbal, dulcimer, and trumpet; on either side over these is a floating Angel swinging a censer, and in the head of the arch is the Lamb, surrounded by the emblems of the four Evangelists. The effect, from the body of the church, is rich and sparkling, caused chiefly by the large use of white, which sends out the deeper colours with brilliance. The glass being almost entirely transparent, and there being little enamel employed, the light is allowed to pass freely, as if through clear precious stones. Looked up to from the floor of the church or from the opposite gallery, this window forms a most charming sight ; but the reading of it—for it resembles a manuscript or a book—should be entered upon, looking back from any of the seats in the organ gallery, in some spare hour of a bright week day, and, where possible, with a good magnifying glass ; for one can think over every inch of its contents, from the Agnus Dei to the Angels with ruby wings and chain-swung golden censers; from Adam in his coat of skin, sorrowfully musing, with the apple in his hand, on that ' first disobedience,' to Stephen meekly bearing the fury of his destroyers and ' faithful unto death.' Near the stars and blue clouds, where the Angels adore, to the leaves and flowers at the feet of the Prophets, Apostles, and others, there is a continuous scintillation of great colouring, here and there thrown out in yellow and crimson, and darkening through greens and blues to the deep purple of Adam's shaggy covering, while the border, consisting of only white, blue, red, and green, adds to the charm."



The McCunn Memorial Window

Burne-Jones

This window bears the following inscription: —

Dedicated to the Memory of Thomas M'Cunn, Merchant in Greenock who died on the 18th of June 1830 aged 70; and Mary Ryburn or M'Cunn his wife who died on the 20th of June 1841 aged 77; by their son John M'Cunn."

Their grave is to be found in the west end of the kirkyard, and is marked by a mural monument on the south wall. Thomas M'Cunn was a West India merchant, and lived in West Stewart Street. John M'Cunn lived at Ardallow, Dunoon.



The Park Memorial Window

Burne-Jones

Under the Organ Loft in the west wall is another Morris window, also designed by BURNE-JONES. The subject is, two angels with harps, and the treatment is very characteristic of the school of artists associated in the firm. The inscription runs —

"To the memory of the Reverend Doctor John Park born at Greenock 14th Jany. 1803 who was at one time assistant clergyman of this church, who died at St. Andrews minister of first charge there on April 8th 1865. This window is inscribed by his nephew Allan Park Paton."

Dr. Park was an accomplished musician, and published a volume of songs. He died during a performance of the "Messiah" at St. Andrews, while the "Hallelujah Chorus" was being sung. Mr. Allan Park Paton was secretary of the Restoration Committee.

In the south wall of the Cartsburn aisle are two windows. That to the west was inserted in 1884. The subject is Hope, typified by a female figure looking upwards, clad in a figured white robe, against a background of foliage, and surmounted by an aureole, on which is the word "Spes." On a medallion is the text—"Rom. viii. ver. 25, But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Underneath is the following inscription:—

"Daniel Cottier glass painter places this window in the Old West Kirk to the memory of his grandfather Archibald M'Lean master mariner of this port who died in the year 1847 aged 80 years."

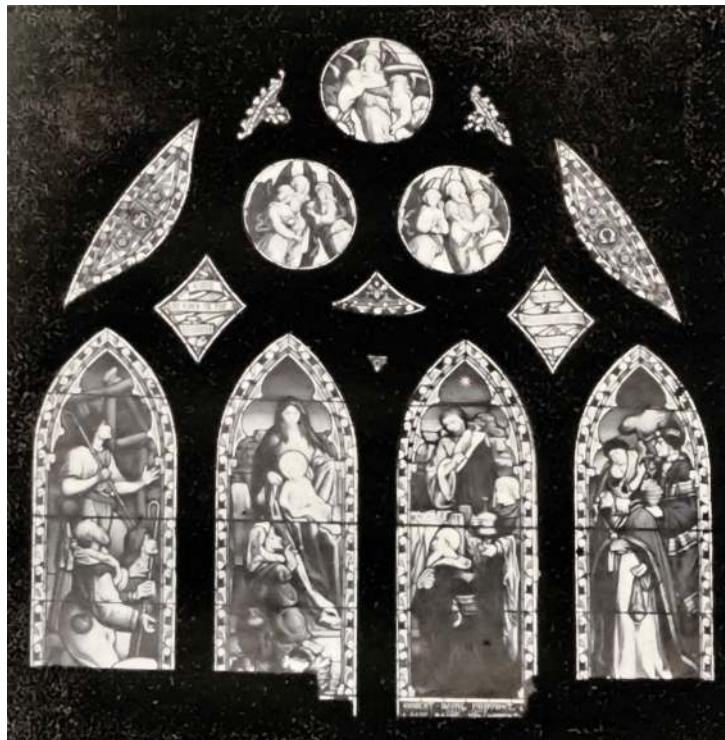
The window is in the artist's well-known style, but is not seen to advantage in the position it occupies. Alongside, and between it and the pulpit, is the other window referred to. The subject is "The Presentation in the Temple." It bears this inscription—

"Jean Fairrie Denniston Mater pia in humo vicino sepulta MDCCCXXII."

This lady was a sister of Adam, Thomas, and John Fairrie, well-known names in Greenock history. She married Bailie John Denniston, and lived in the Glebe at 10 Clarence Street. The window was erected by her son, Archibald Denniston, writer. His eldest daughter married the Rev. Charles Strong, minister of the church.

In the north gable is a fine four-light window, with a touch of the second pointed style in the tracery, by Messrs. Ballantine & Co., of Edinburgh. This firm furnished all the windows not otherwise specified, with possibly the exception of the Arbuckle and Denniston windows. The subject is "The Adoration of the Shepherds and of the Magi," two lights being devoted to each, while above, within the tracery, are angels and the Gospel proclamation, "Glory to God in the highest" and "On earth peace and good will towards men." The inscription runs—

"In Mem. Thomas Ramsay Merchant obit 1824 Andrew Ramsay obit 1814 Robert Baine Provost obit 1849 Walter Baine Provost and M.P. obit/ 1850 Erected by Andrew Ramsay and Jane Baine his spouse MDCCCLXIV."



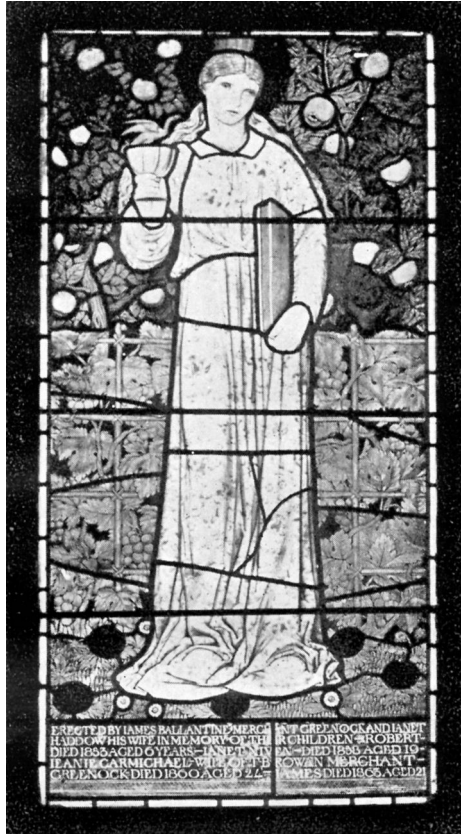
Ballantine

The Ramsay Baine Memorial Window

The Ramsays and the Baines have all died out, though both families have representatives in the female line. Thomas Ramsay lived in a house at the foot of Boyd Street. He had large rope spinning works in the Glebe, at the end of Rope-work Street, which he acquired from Messrs. Laird & Co. when they left for Liverpool, where they became in course of time famous shipbuilders. Both the house and works were swept away to make room for the Albert Harbour. Thomas Ramsay's portrait is in the Lecture Hall of the Watt Monument. Andrew Ramsay, who died 1814, was a brother of Thomas Ramsay. Andrew, who married Jane Baine, a sister of Robert and Walter Baine, was a son of Thomas Ramsay. Robert Baine was engaged in the herring curing business, then an extensive and lucrative industry which flourished under the stimulating influence of a bounty from our own Government. His yard was situated at the mouth of the West Burn, adjoining the church, and his boats used to unship their masts and pass under the old bridge at Dalrymple Street. They proceeded up the burn and lay alongside of the cooperage, which was behind his house, now No. 6 West Burn Square. When the bounty was withdrawn the industry collapsed, and Robert Baine subsequently became the first agent of the Bank of Scotland in town, and lived in a house on the site of the Court-House in Nelson Street. In 1833 he was elected the first Provost of Greenock. Walter Baine was Provost in 1840, and held office for four years. In 1845 he succeeded Robert Wallace of Kelly as Member of Parliament, when the constituency numbered only 962 voters. His majority over Alex. Murray Dunlop, who afterwards represented the burgh, was the narrow one of six votes. He retired in 1847. In business he was a merchant and shipowner, and his firm of Baine & Johnston is still in existence. Walter Baine, who never married, lived in George Square, in a house on the site of the Baptist Church, and latterly in the villa at the eastern corner of Margaret Street and the Esplanade.

Under the Farmers' Loft in the east and west walls are two more Morris windows. That to the west represents a single female figure, clad in a figured white garment, against a background of foliage. The tone is light and the colouring very delicate. It was designed by BURNE-JONES. The subject is "Faith," as described by Spenser in the *Faery Queene*," Canto x.

"She was araied all in lilly white, And in her right hand bore a cup of gold, With wine and water fild up to the hight, In which a serpent did himselfe enfold, That horroure made to all that did behold; But she no whit did chaunge her constant mood: And in her other hand she fast did hold A booke, that was both signd and seald with blood: Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be understood."



Burne-Jones

The Ballantine Memorial Window

It may be of interest to recall here that the first edition of the "*Faery Queene*" was published in 1590, while the Old West Kirk was being built. The inscription runs—

"Erected by James Ballantine Merchant Greenock and Janet Haddow his wife in memory of their children—Robert, died 1853 aged 6 years; Janet Niven, died 1858 aged 19; Jeanie Carmichael, wife of T. B. Rowan Merchant Greenock died 1860 aged 24; James died 1863 aged 21."

James Ballantine lived in Houston Street, where his widow happily still survives.

To the east, the window has a figure representing Charity. In her arms are two infants, while four more play at her feet. The composition is strikingly graceful and the colouring very rich and harmonious. The style is somewhat different from the other Morris windows. It was designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. A scroll at the foot bears this inscription—"In Memory of Menzies Sinclair Hamilton who died on the 18th July 1861 aged 73." This window was erected by Archibald Hamilton, London, in memory of his mother, who was the wife of Hugh Hamilton and sister of Robert Sinclair of Garvel Park.

In the same wall, a little to the south, is a window representing Christ and the Centurion, with the words, "Jesus saith unto him, go thy way thy son liveth." It is inscribed—"In memory of Andrew R. Grieve died 7th August 1864 aged 23 years. Erected by his father." This unnamed father was James Johnstone Grieve, who has left his mark on Greenock as few have done. He was Provost from 1846 to 1849, and from 1860 to 1868, and Member of Parliament from 1868 to 1878. Among the works carried out under his regime, may be mentioned the following:—The Victoria Harbour, Albert Harbour, Princes Pier, Esplanade, the purchase of the Garvel Park Estate, and the Gryfe Water Scheme. He was chairman of the Restoration Committee. He lived at Belmont, Thorndean, Castle Levan, and latterly in Edinburgh, and died in 1891, in his eighty-first year.

At the end of the nave, under the gallery, is a two-light window representing, on one side, Christ teaching Mary, who is kneeling at His feet, and, on the other side, Christ blessing a child brought by its mother. The inscription is in Latin, and is as follows:—

"Sponsor Mese Agneti Cuthbert: ob Maii 4 a.d. 1859 AEt. 29. Hoc moerens sperans posvi. Filiolo Roberto Hope Moncrieff: ob Jan. 23 A.D. 1862 /Et. 5 menss. David Johnstone."



Rossetti

The Hamilton Memorial Window

The donor here named was a partner in the Gourock Ropework Company, and lived at Belleaire. He was treasurer of the Restoration Committee, and gave most munificently to the fund. He died at Croy, Row. His bride here commemorated was a daughter of Mr. Robert Cuthbert, shipowner, who built and lived in the villa called The Craigs, in Newark Street.

The east gable of the Schaw Aisle, contains a three-light window representing the Last Supper. It was the gift of Sir Michael Robert Shaw-Stewart. Above the Sailors' Loft, in the south gable, is a three-light window with the appropriate subject of Christ calling His fishermen disciples. In the centre is the figure of our Lord standing on the shore, as it were saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To the left are "Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea." To the right are "other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father mending their nets." A circular light surmounts this, showing an angel bearing a scroll with the words, "The sea gave up the dead." This window, which bears no inscription, was erected by subscriptions collected chiefly from sailors and those connected with the sea, by Captain Alexander Taylor, of Clyde House, Esplanade. Among the subscribers were the inmates of Sir Gabriel Wood's Mariners' Asylum, who each gave one shilling.

Under the Sailors' Loft, in the south gable, is a window representing the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan by John the Baptist. It is inscribed—"In memory of Margaret Arbuckle died 19th December 1865 aged 49. Erected by her husband George Arbuckle." The donor of this window was an elder of the church.

To the east, the subject of the window is Christ raising Jairus' daughter, and the inscription runs:—"In memory of James Fraser Paton M.D. died 25th Dec. 1864 aged 31 years. Erected by a few sorrowing friends." Dr. Paton, brother of Mr. Allan Park Paton, was indeed a beloved physician, and died during an epidemic of typhus fever in town, which caused the death of no fewer than five doctors. He died on the day on which the church was re-opened. His uncle Dr. Park, already referred to was, by this bereavement, prevented from conducting the evening

service on that day, as had been arranged. Opposite is the last window remaining to be noticed. It represents Christ walking on the sea, and bears the following inscription:—

"In memory of John Hunter shipmaster who died and was buried at sea 5th Aug. 1833. Erected by his son John C. Hunter."

Captain Hunter used to sit in the Sailors' Loft when at home. He is referred to in "Tom Cringle's Log," a favourite story book of former days as "worthy Jock Hunter of the Peggy Bogle." His mother was a sister of Thomas Ramsay. John Crawford Hunter presented the Communion plate now in use, to the church. He died at Finnart House in 1890.

The Services

As we wander through the old building the sacred memories of three centuries arise unbidden before us, and we cannot but think of generation after generation worshipping within these walls and—passing away, each accomplishing its allotted task, and helping to make the present what it is. James Watt, the great inventor and engineer; Charles Morrison, the first to send messages by the electric telegraph; Jean Adam, who wrote the song "There's nae luck about the house"; John Caird, the Principal of Glasgow University; and many hard-headed, far-seeing pioneers of industry, known only to local fame as makers of Greenock, must have heard the name of the lord proclaimed here. Others more adventurous, who embarked from Cartsdyke for ill-starred Darien or some happier colony, and fearless mariners, who carried the fame of Clyde-built ships far and wide, some of whom, in the fortune of war, languished in French prisons, must have cherished the memory of the Old West Kirk at sea and in distant lands.

As we pursue such thoughts the question arises, what were the services like in which our fathers joined? Unfortunately we have no local records from which we can furnish a reply, but if it may be assumed that the services did not materially differ from those held in other parishes, then we can get a fairly good idea of what they were like by drawing upon Church history. Two periods stand out prominently, and they are not those of Presbytery and Episcopacy, as might be supposed. We must banish from our minds the picture of a priest in a white surplice reading the English Prayer Book in the Old West Kirk. Episcopacy in Scotland was never much more than a form of church government, and the ill-advised attempt of Charles I. to impose Archbishop Laud's liturgy came to a somewhat abrupt termination by Jenny Geddes' stool in St. Giles'. So far as an obscure country parish kirk such as Greenock was concerned, it affected the services little whether the superior ecclesiastical authority was the Presbytery of Paisley, or the Archbishop of Glasgow, or both, for the old Scottish Episcopacy was very different from the modern Anglican form. The only change, if any, that Episcopacy brought, was the reversion to the use of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Doxology, as had before been provided for in the Book of Common Order. The ministers probably recognised this; at any rate, they were neither "outed" nor "rabbled," and whatever our opinions about this may be, there can be little doubt that, in consequence, Greenock was spared much of the persecution and suffering of the Covenanting times.

The two periods referred to are bounded by the year 1645, when the Westminster Directory for Public Worship succeeded the Book of Common Order. In practice there was no abrupt change, but in the course of half-a-century a very decided alteration took place in the character of the services. Indeed, the Directory may be regarded rather as the expression of this, than the cause.

Let us look at the first period, when the good folk were still proud of their new kirk. The first bell would be rung at seven o'clock to awaken the people, and before eight they might be seen wending their way westward to the church across the burn. At the entrance to the kirkyard, standing beside the turf wall—at a later period if not then—was a sentry box, where two worthy elders or deacons mounted guard over the collection plate. There are two large metal plates 20 1/2 inches in diameter preserved in the West Kirk. They bear no inscription or date. The church inside looked very different in those days from what it does now. It must have been cold and bare. The floor was probably paved with rough stones. There were no pews, and the laird and his family had about the only seat. The rest of the congregation had to stand, except those who brought stools. There was no heating apparatus, and the cold wind would likely come through the unglazed windows. Some of the old men kept their hats on, but the women, contrary to the Apostolic injunction, removed their plaids from their heads. At a later period it became a great offence that many of them preferred to cover their heads. It was held to be "contrairy to civilitie cum to the kirk in time of preiching and prayers to keip their playdis about their heids." At Monifieth the Kirk-Session took heroic measures to suppress so grave a scandal. The sum of five shillings was disbursed to buy a pint of tar to put upon the women who were guilty of such unlady-like conduct.

On entering the sacred building each worshipper engaged for a little in private devotion, some kneeling, some standing. In some churches the men kept to one side and the women to the other. At eight o'clock the second bell rang out, and the reader took his place at the lectern, or precentor's desk. He was provided with a volume variously called "The Book of Geneva," "The Book of Common Order," or "John Knox's Liturgy." Its real title is "The Forme of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, &c., used in the English Church at Geneva approved and received by the Church of Scotland whereunto besydes that was in former bokes are also added sondrie other prayers, with the whole Psalmes of David in English meter. M.D.LXV." A liturgy, in the popular sense of the term, it can scarcely

be called. The book is more correctly described as a directory of public worship, with forms for optional use. Such a book supplied a very real want in those early days after the Reformation, when the supply of qualified ministers set apart to give themselves up to "prayer and the ministry of the Word" was quite unequal to the demand. In the course of time this naturally rectified itself, and the printed prayers fell into desuetude. The reader likewise disappeared about the same time. His office was a temporary expedient instituted for a period when printed books were scarce and readers few. He conducted morning and evening services on the week-days, consisting largely in reading portions of the Bible. Usually the schoolmaster acted as reader and precentor. After the Reformation many of the canons, monks, and friars became readers. At the Sunday morning service he began by reading a general confession of sin, the people kneeling "with humble reverence, sighing and groaning accompanying the prayer up to God." In some churches this was followed by reading the Ten Commandments and the Belief, as the Creed was then commonly called. Then a psalm was sung, concluding with the doxology, or "Gloria Patri" in metre. This was to emphasise the doctrine of the Trinity and to avoid any tendency towards Unitarianism. Some of these old doxologies are very quaint. Take the following to Psalm lxxvii. as an example :—

To God our Father
And to his deir Sone And to the halie Gaist
Quhilk three are all one Be gloir as it was
In all tymes bygone Is now and sail be
Quhen tyme sail be none.

In one edition of the Psalter, published in 1595, there is a collection of collects for every psalm. Whether they were for public or private use appears somewhat uncertain. This is the collect for Psalm lxxvii., of which we have given the gloria:—

"Eternal God, the Father of all lights, without the knowledge of Whom we are more miserable than the very brute beasts: extend Thy blessing over us, and make that Thy most holy name may be known throughout the whole earth, and may be worshipped of all people and nations: so that all men, feeling Thy merciful benediction, may walk in Thy fear, as we are taught by Jesus Christ, Thy Son."

In addition to the psalms, there were several paraphrases or hymns, such as "The Ten Commandments," "The Lord's Prayer," "The Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary," the "Veni Creator," &c., &c. Not many tunes used prior to the issue of the Scottish Psalter in 1635 have survived the test of time. The "Old Hundredth," "Old 124th," "Soldau," "Winchester," "St. Flavian," and a few others are all that are ever heard now.

The old Psalter was remarkable for the variety of metre, while the Psalter of 1635 was distinguished for the preponderance of common metre. The practice of reading the line, as it is called, was unheard of in Scotland before 1645. It was an English custom, adopted on account of the backward state of education in that country. The issue of the new version of the Psalms in 1650, which is that still in use, doubtless helped to introduce the custom, but it must remain a mystery how such an absurd custom ever gained so firm a hold on the Church. In the case of the Old West Kirk it was only abolished in 1832, when Dr. M'Farlan was inducted. Following upon prayer and praise, the reader proceeded to read several chapters from the Old and New Testaments, as previously directed by the minister, from the Geneva Bible, which was the only one in use till 1611, when the Authorised Version was issued. At nine o'clock the bell rang a third time, and the reader's service came to an end as the minister entered and took his place in the pulpit. He was dressed in black in the fashion of the day, with a black gown. After kneeling in private devotion, he offered what was termed a "conceived," or extempore, prayer for illumination. He then announced his text and preached the sermon. The men in the congregation meanwhile having their hats on and applauding from time to time. The sermon was followed by a prayer for the whole estate of Christ's Church, concluding with the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed. Another psalm, and the benediction brought the service to an end. In the afternoon there was another and somewhat similar service, during which the children were catechised in the presence of the congregation. The catechism in general use at that time was John Calvin's. The Shorter Catechism was not issued till 1647. Baptism was always administered in church after the sermon — the child being presented by the father, in the presence of one or more godfathers.

The Lord's Supper was usually celebrated quarterly in towns, and twice a year in country parishes. The old Romish idea that the Sacrament should be taken fasting lingered for fifty years after the Reformation, during which time it was the custom in Edinburgh for the bell to ring at four o'clock. The sermon began at five, and the Lord's Supper was celebrated at six o'clock in the morning. Marriages were always celebrated in church, and frequently took place on Sunday.

An important article of church furniture in those days, and for long after, and which still remains to be seen in the Vestry, was the stool of repentance, or the "cutty stool." It is a good stout seat about five feet long, supported by four turned legs. It probably was placed near the pulpit, where the penitent might be seen of all during the sermon, for he or she, in ordinary circumstances, had to stand without during the prayers. There were doubtless "jougs" outside the church.

These were iron bands or collars, fixed to the wall, generally near the door. They were fastened round the necks of the penitents, who meekly stood there, sometimes bare headed, bare footed, and clad in sackcloth. In the Book of

Common Order there are very elaborate Services or Oillers of Public Repentance, of Excommunication, and of Absolution, in which little is, perhaps wisely, left to the discretion of the minister. The subjects of discipline were much what we might expect, viz.: Drunkenness, cursing, quarrelling, and breaches of the seventh commandment. In the old records of the Kirk-Session, which go back as far as 1694, we frequently read that so-and-so requested to be allowed to make a public repentance. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Kirk-Session were very zealous for the sanctity of the Sabbath, and we find in their records some striking instances showing to what lengths they proceeded. Thus, Margaret Watson was cited to appear before them for carrying water, Anna Paterson for carrying a bag of pease, and Isobel Paterson for cutting kail in the yard during time of sermon. Marion Moore was delated for exposing sweetmeats for sale on Sabbath morning. Instead of holding conferences and talking eloquently on the Temperance question and on the non-church-going problem, our fathers met the difficulties by taking action. Thus we read that the bell was ordered to be rung on Friday and Saturday nights at nine o'clock, to warn all who were sitting in and haunting taverns to repair to their houses, and the elders were appointed to see that this was duly observed. When Moody, the great evangelist, was asked— "How shall we reach the lapsed masses?" he answered with characteristic wit, "Go to them!" This is precisely what the Kirk-Session did. Two elders, accompanied by one of the town's officers, were appointed to go through the town during the time of Divine Service, and secure any found "vaging" or walking disorderly. Other matters also engaged their attention. In 1696 the minister, Mr. Stirling, reported that some mountebanks, including a quack doctor, had come to the town and had erected a stage for play acting and dancing. A deputation consisting of John Clerk, (whose grave, with the mural tablet dated 1696, and his grandson's name inscribed, is to be found at the north wall of the mortuary); Thomas Watt, grandfather of the great engineer; and another elder, were instructed to suppress the performance. They, however, allowed the doctor to sell his drugs, which seems to indicate that they had more regard for the morals of their people, than for their bodies. Such instances, and they might be multiplied indefinitely, all go to show that Church discipline was a thing to be reckoned with; and though the methods appear strange to us now, they were doubtless suited to the age, and exercised a salutary influence on the community. These, and other affairs of the church at this period of activity, were conducted quite on the lines of the early apostolic church by a staff of twenty-one elders, in addition to the minister, and eight deacons.

The second period of public worship to which we have referred, viz., that subsequent to 1645, under the Westminster Directory, does not call for any lengthy description, chiefly for the reason that there is little to describe. It is remarkable principally for what was wanting. Certain influences had been at work which gradually changed the character of the services. Presbyteries and Assemblies strove against "the innovations," as the discarding of the established usages were somewhat curiously termed, but in vain. The teaching of a sect of Irish origin named the Brownists, and the influence of the English Puritans, leavened the whole of Scotland, and thus it came to pass that the reading of prayers, the repetition of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, the singing of the Doxology at the end of the Psalms, and kneeling at prayer, were all abandoned. The reader and his service disappeared and extempore prayer grew exceedingly lengthy. It became the custom for ministers to lecture on the portion of Scripture read, and then to preach a sermon from a text, and sometimes from the same text for several successive Sundays. In course of time this excessive loquacity in some cases quite excluded the reading of Scripture, which had formed such an important part of public worship in the former period.

We may understand what was the general tendency of the Westminster Directory when we read how the divines themselves engaged in devotional exercises. Baillie, one of the Scotch brethren, gives the following description:—

"We spent from 9 to 5 very graciously. After Dr. Twiss had begun with a brief prayer, Mr. Marshall prayed large two hours, most divinely confessing the sins of the Assembly in a wonderful pathetic and prudent way. Afterwards Mr. Arrowsmith preached an hour; then a psalm; thereafter Mr. Vines preached an hour and Mr. Seaman prayed near two hours. After Mr. Henderson had brought us to a sweet conference of faults to be remedied, Dr. Twiss closed with a short prayer and blessing."

No wonder the hour glass became a necessary article in the equipment of the pulpit at this time, but it would have required some more effective contrivance to curb such "exuberant verbosity." Time, which works many wonders, modified this considerably during the later years under review.

The Communion Services were characterised by a deep sense of the solemnity of the occasion. The roll was first purged and offenders were urged to make a public profession of repentance. Then the "Privie Censures" were held, at which each of the elders was dealt with in turn. The Fast Day was held on a Thursday, when all business was suspended, and services were conducted as on an ordinary Sunday. The tokens were then given out. They are mentioned for the first time in the Session records in 1706, and it is worthy of note that the Old West Kirk is one of the few churches in town where tokens are still used. All those illustrated on this, and on another page, have been used in the church.



Services were also held on the Saturday and on the Monday following. The celebration of the Sacrament was made the occasion of great family gatherings, absent members returning from the surrounding district. For the convenience of the large numbers attending, a temporary shelter or waiting room, in form like a mason's shed, was erected over and on either side of the south door. On the Sunday, "that great day of the feast," the communicants entered the church by this door, and took their seats on either side of the Communion Table which, as already described, extended the whole length of the church. After one set of communicants had been served, they moved along during the singing of a few verses of a psalm (generally Psalm 103, to the tune "Coleshill"), and left the church by a door, which can still be traced at the north-east corner. Others then took the vacated places, and so on in relays until all had communicated. As only a limited number could be accommodated at one time, the service, conducted by a succession of ministers, lasted from ten o'clock in the morning till late in the afternoon. Meanwhile an open-air service was conducted in the graveyard. The people sat on the tombstones, and the minister preached from a small pulpit tent, generally described as being like a Punch and Judy show. After the last table was served, a thanksgiving-service was held in the church. At this service the 116th Psalm was usually sung. There are four silver Communion cups and two pewter flagons which formerly belonged to the church, but are now in the possession of the West Parish Church. Each cup bears this inscription:

"POCWLA X EWCHARISTICA X ECCLESIAE X GRINOCENSIS X IMPENSIS X CONSESSWS X ECCLESIASTICI 1708. MR. ANDREAS TWRNOR, PASTOR."

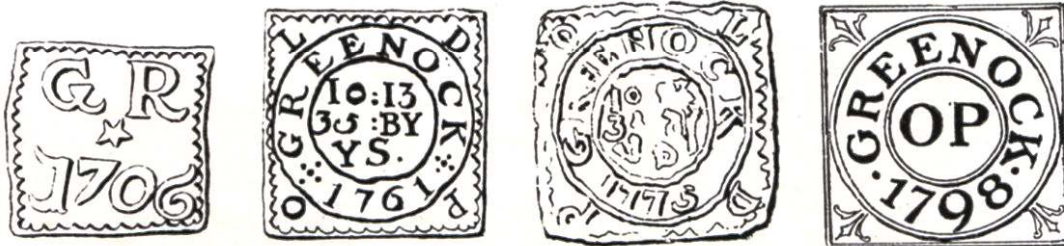
This may be translated: "The Communion cups of the Church of Grinok purchased by the Kirk Session. Mr. Andrew Turner, pastor." The cost was £19 19s. 2d.

Baptism was dispensed from the pulpit. A metal ring jutted out from the side of it, which supported the bowl placed there when required. This bowl is still to be seen in the West Kirk. It measures eleven inches in diameter and three inches in depth, and is made of pewter. Under the rim is the following inscription: "For the West Parish of Greenock 1786." A story is still told by one who was present on the occasion, of an amusing incident that occurred when Mr. Steel was minister. One Sunday a sailor presented a child for baptism, with its head resting on his left arm. Mr. Steel wanted its head on the right arm and said to the man, "Turn it round!" Jack immediately turned it face down. "No, no," said the minister, "Turn it round!" Jack thereupon repeated the operation and brought it into the status quo. His commander, who had been watching these naval manoeuvres with an anxious eye from the 'breist of the Sailors' Laft," could restrain himself no longer and cried out, "End for end, Jack!" "Aye, aye, sir!" was the ready reply, and the baby was promptly placed to Mr. Steel's satisfaction. It is said that an audible smile passed over the congregation.

To these two periods future historians will add a third, dating, in the case of the Old West Kirk, from the restoration in 1864. The introduction of the organ and "The Scottish Hymnal" are two outstanding features which indicate the desire that so widely prevails, to improve the services of the Church. It is impossible at this stage to tell where this desire will lead. There are those who would revert to the type of the last century, and there are others who would have something like the Book of Common Order. Others again sometimes whisper that the Reformation was a mistake, and would go back beyond it. Such are more or less pious dreams. The past has a charm about it, and the mist of ages tinges it with a beauty which perhaps it did not possess. The path of progress is never backward. The pillar of God's presence is ever going forward, and the Church of Scotland, in the enjoyment of a spiritual liberty such as no other state church ever possessed, and unfettered by the chains of a compulsory and unalterable liturgy, will in the future, as in the past, adapt her services to the wants of the age.



THE OLD COMMUNION PLATE.



TOKENS.



THE "CUTTY" STOOL.

NOTE.—In the Tokens dated 1761 and 1775 the letters "O, L, D, P," in the corners stand for "Old Parish." In the centre the lettering is "10:13:35 BY YS," and signifies "John xiii. 35, By this"—"shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

The Kirkyard

The Old West Kirkyard is sometimes thought to have a deserted, ill-cared-for aspect, and from time to time suggestions are made that something should be done to improve its appearance. There is, however, a quaint, old-world air about it, and it may well be questioned whether any "improvement" would not take away from the venerable and picturesque simplicity which tells of bygone days. It has a pathos and poetry of its own in the very absence of any suspicion of trim walks and carpet gardening.

Originally the church was situated in the centre of the graveyard, which was surrounded by a turf dyke. With the increase of the population of the parish it became necessary to enlarge it on more than one occasion by enclosing additional ground to the west. This has had the effect of making the church appear to be now located at the east end of the graveyard. The principal entrance was formerly in Nicholson Street, near the corner of Ropework Street. A smaller gateway, with a stone arch over it on which was carved the date 1675, occupied the site of the present entrance. In the north wall a wicket gate led to the Manse. The walls of this old specimen of domestic architecture, bearing the date 1625, are still standing. It was a two-storied building, and until within recent years, an outside stone stair led to the upper flat. There are two features of interest to be seen. One is the large kitchen fireplace, measuring six feet in width and the same in height. The other, in a different apartment, is what appears to have been a safe in the wall, where doubtless the Communion plate was kept.

On the 4th April, 1592, the Synod of Glasgow authorised the burial of the dead in the graveyard, and for nearly two hundred years it was the only place of burial in Greenock. It continued in partial use till 1859, when it was formally closed, but exception was made in the cases of four individuals. The last surviving of these was Mrs. Ann Macnaughton Black, mother of Bailie John Black, who died on the 1st and was interred on the 4th December, 1876. This is the last burial in the Old West Kirkyard. The three oldest stones bear the date 1675. They are to be found on the south wall, on either side of, and quite close to, the entrance. It is remarkable that the two which are the best preserved bear the same name, though spelt differently—Telour and Tylor. The stones bear interesting masons' marks. Many such marks are to be found on the stones of Glasgow Cathedral. A modern Old Mortality is greatly needed to rescue many of the inscriptions from becoming illegible. The soft sandstone on which for the most part they are carved, has proved how vain have been the hopes of those who sought thereon an enduring memorial. Of those whose names are still legible but few have representatives in Greenock to-day. Not for them alone has the Old West Kirkyard an interest. Towards the centre of the ground are two graves of more than local interest. They are those of the father and grandfather of James Watt. Both were noted men in their day. Thomas Watt, the grandfather, was an elder of the Kirk, Baron Bailie, and Professor of Mathematics in Crawfurdsdyke—in other words, he was a teacher of navigation. James Watt, the father, as the great engineer records on the stone which he placed, "to his revered memory," over his grave, was "a benevolent and ingenious man and a zealous promoter of the improvements of the town."

There is another grave that attracts visitors, or shall we say pilgrims, from far and wide—from wherever the genius of Robert Burns has made itself known. It is the grave of Highland Mary. Mary Campbell, for such was her name, was not a native of Greenock, but was born at Dunoon. She emerged from obscurity to fame at Ayr, where she was in service as a nursery maid, when she crossed the poet's path. A sudden and passionate attachment was formed which was destined soon to come to a tragic end. They had a romantic parting on the banks of the Ayr on a Sunday in May, 1786, the day before the term, when they exchanged Bibles and plighted their troth to each other. They never met again. The next day Mary returned to her home at Campbeltown, where her father was employed as a sailor in the revenue cutter. In the early autumn she accompanied her brother Robert to Greenock when on her way to a new situation in Glasgow, but there seems to have been some arrangement to meet Burns and say good-bye to him before his projected departure to the West Indies.



Highland Mary's Grave

The brother was then just starting life as an apprentice carpenter in Messrs. Scott & Co.'s shipbuilding yard, then located in that portion of Messrs. Caird & Co.'s yard just beyond the West Burn. They lived with a cousin of Mary's mother, who was married to a carpenter named Peter M'Pherson, in a house no longer existing, but which was situated at 31 Charles Street. Robert Campbell's initiation to the craft was celebrated by the usual festivities, at which Mary assisted. The following day he was very ill, and it was soon apparent that he was suffering from something more serious than the effects of the previous night's dissipation. It proved to be the malignant fever so prevalent in former times. Mary faithfully nursed him back to health, but alas! her devotion cost her life. She also took fever. It is said that her friends believed that she suffered in consequence of the cast of an evil eye, and they prevailed on her father to take seven smooth stones from a place where two burns met, and having boiled them in milk, they gave her the milk to drink. Despite all that their skill and fears could suggest Mary rapidly became worse, and in the course of a few days died on the 20th or 21st October, 1786, at the early age of eighteen. She was buried in her cousin's grave. It is situated at the extreme west end of the kirkyard, and is marked by a simple stone bearing the following inscription:—"This burying place belongs to Peter M'Pherson ship carpenter in Greenock and Mary Campbell his spouse and their children 1787." Above this are the emblem of his trade and the date 1760. The explanation of this date is found in the old register of the kirkyard. Another carpenter had purchased the ground in the latter year for £60 Scots. On the 12th October, 1786, he transferred it to Peter M'Pherson. This date lends some colour of truth to the story that is told of him, when informed by Mary of her brother's illness after the "brothering" feast. "Oh, then," he said, jocularly, thinking it was caused by feasting not wisely but too well, "in case of the worst it's just as well I have agreed to purchase that lair in the kirkyard." Within a fortnight she was lying there! Mary left many poems and letters sent her by Robert Burns, but her friends carefully destroyed them all, in unhappy ignorance of their value, being under the impression that they were protecting her character. This was shortly before Burns became famous through the issue of the Kilmarnock edition, and it was perhaps natural enough that they should not, at that time, think him a very desirable friend. It is generally admitted that he wrote no finer poetry than that inspired by the memory of this simple Highland girl. How tender the chastened love and sorrow of the song, "Highland Mary," and the poem addressed "To Mary in Heaven!" A few lines of each may well be recalled here.

Highland Mary

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace,
 Our parting was fu' tender;
 And, pledging aft to meet again,
 We tore oursel's asunder.
 But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
 That nipt my flower sae early!
 Now green's the sod and cauld's the clay,
 That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And clos'd for ay, the sparkling glance,
That dwelt on me sae kindly;
And mouldering now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core,
Shall live my Highland Mary.

To Mary in Heaven

Thou lingering star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care;
Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

The monument at the head of the grave was erected by some admirers of the poet in 1842. Considerable controversy arose about it, as it was generally thought that another design by Kemp, with panels by Ritchie, was much superior. David Macbeth Moir ("Delta") wrote the following beautiful epitaph for it, and it is to be regretted that it was not inscribed over the grave :—

ERECTED
IN MEMORY
OF
MARY CAMPBELL
Whose Youth, Beauty, and Innocence Won the Heart
AND
Inspired the Immortal Muse
of ROBERT BURNS
With those strains which are unsurpassed For moral Dignity
and Depth of Pathos.

HER MORTAL REMAINS
Have lain unnoticed in this Spot
For half a Century
Yet
"The Fame of Her Name "
Has pervaded the civilised world
And the Tears of Millions have been shed
For the untimely Fate
OF
HIGHLAND MARY.

© McLEAN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, GREENOCK / INVERCLYDE COUNCIL