

## Memories of Kilfinan Church from 1950, by Duncan MacIntyre

Where do I start? This is not going to be a factual historical record of Kilfinan Church, rather a note of the things I remember relevant to the church and its congregation. Memories are not always as accurate as we think, so I will, in advance, apologise for any errors and omissions. It might help to give a bit of my family background in relation to the church. My maternal grandfather, Andrew Duncanson, was technically a lay home missionary originally with St Fothad's Church in Cardenden, in Fife. When he retired I think there was controversy over the future of his church, which it seems he had been leading very successfully but without being a fully ordained minister. I did not know until I was probably in my late 20's that my mother felt so badly that his work would not be continued on his retirement in 1946 that she took her church "lines", that certificate which members carry from one church to another when they move, and she threw them in the fire. This then probably explained why she was technically an "adherent" and not a full member, though she took a very active part in church affairs and was faithful in her attendance. She did not take part in Holy Communion, and as children we thought that was because she did not believe that the bread and wine literally became the flesh and blood of Christ. But as a family we did attend communion services, sitting towards the back of the church. My mother was one of three sisters, her elder sister Agnes was one of the earliest ordained female ministers, and served the congregation in Patna, in Ayrshire, before she married Roddy Murray of Inverryne. Sadly Agnes died in childbirth in Inverryne in 1952, survived by Andrew who came to Lindsaig. I was two at the time, so remember no life without Andrew being as good a brother as anyone ever had. Our household at Lindsaig for the 50's and 60's consisted parents Archie and Isa, Gran Duncanson, Jessie my sister born 1947, me 1950 and Andrew 1952.

My earliest recollection of any church activity was going to the manse with Mother when the Rev MacDougall and his family were leaving, presumably to say goodbye, probably in about 1953/4. The new manse family were the Glovers, with several children, may not be correct list but Sheila, Robert and youngest John, same age as me. There may have been another brother. Sunday school was led by Mrs Glover and possibly helped by Sheila who was a bit older, but I am not certain. I would involve the children leaving the church every Sunday after the childrens' address and hymn. The organist from then until mid to late 60's was "Queenie" McLachlan who ran the village post office. Elders in these days would, I think, be Col Nichol of Ardmarnock, Jimmy Ferguson of Shore Cottage, John MacKay of Lindsaig Mill, and Jimmy McAlister, whose wife Phemie was the last school teacher of Kilfinan before it closed about 1952/3.

The layout of the church has changed somewhat since these days. The lairds of Ardmarnock, Otter and Balliemore had special enclose pews set aside, Ardmarnock beside the pulpit on the left, Otter at the back on the left, and Balliemore on the right, with a door to their pews just inside the entrance. The manse family generally sat at the right side of the pulpit, near the organ. The general members families usually sat in the same pew, not labelled but everyone knew. Bibles and hymn books were often left there from Sunday to Sunday.

During the tenure of Rev Glover it was decided to purchase fancy oak chairs, a bigger one which seemed like a throne to us kids, for the minister, and one for each of the four elders, to sit on while presiding over Communion. For some reason the Rev Glover did not stay long, and on his leaving a stooshie arose because the elders had each paid for their chair, but the minister had not paid for his as agreed. Of course as a 5 year old I did not really know all the ins and outs. At that time Kilbride Church was linked to Kilfinan, with Kilfinan service at 11am and Kilbride in the afternoon.

When Rev Glover left it may have been the case that Tighnabruaich and Kames churches were also vacant, because a new arrangement was proposed linking Kilfinan with Tighnabruaich, and Kames with Kilbride. Like many Presbytry decisions it was not popular. Mother must have been on the vacancy committee although only an adherent, and was very perturbed that the Presbytry meeting with the representatives of Tighnabruaich and Kilfinan had been so hostile. I think several members of Presbytry came to Lindsaig for a cup of tea on their way home, the new road to Ormidale not even being a dream at that time. One of the major disputes was, I think, the timing of Sunday services. I think those from Kilfinan thought being by far the older of the two churches they should continue with a morning service. But that was not to be, Tighnabruaich services were fixed at 11am and Kilfinan at 2.30pm.

The Kilfinan/Tighnabruaich vacancy was filled by Rev Herbert Marshall Gibson, generally known as Marshall. It was his first charge, and I should think quite a challenging first charge for a newly ordained minister. He was about 25, single, but determined to do a good job. To keep the Sunday school going he changed it to a Monday after school. The school but would stop at Drum, most of us would pile out and into Betty Paterson's kitchen, and we all had tea round the kitchen table. To this day I have no idea how that was paid for. After a quick tea we all moved to the sitting room and the minister and Jenny Paterson and maybe others led the Sunday school on Monday night. Count your blessing name them one by one, count your blessings see what God has done, Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Mr Gibson usually drove us home afterwards. Happy days. Rev Marshall ran various Sunday school picnics, to Innellan and Lochgoilhead both being memorable. We travelled in Simpson's 14 seater minibus, which usually did the school run at the time. On the way to one of these we stopped at Strachur to see a 16ft Basking Shark which had been caught in fishing gear and was lying on the shore. Operettas performed by the youth of Tighnabruaich also took place, in the Royal Hall. Curly Black was a leading performer and lost his voice for one, and mimed to Marshall Gibson singing from the side.

The call of missionary work took Marshall Gibson away from us. He was followed by Rev William McIntyre, I think he would be past retiral age, and had come from serving the St Andrew's Church in the Holy Land. By that time the Kilfinan manse was occupied by Margaret and Norman Blaikie. I think Norman became an Elder, and Margaret led the Sunday School in the manse. My sister Jessie was in senior years at Dunoon Grammar School and took the little ones Sunday School. Mrs McIntyre was very keen on doing all the formalities correctly, and I was given a green note book to take brief minutes for every meeting, attendance, what each class had done, and record the collection. I did have the book for many years but sadly no longer.

Kilfinan Sunday School 1963-6

