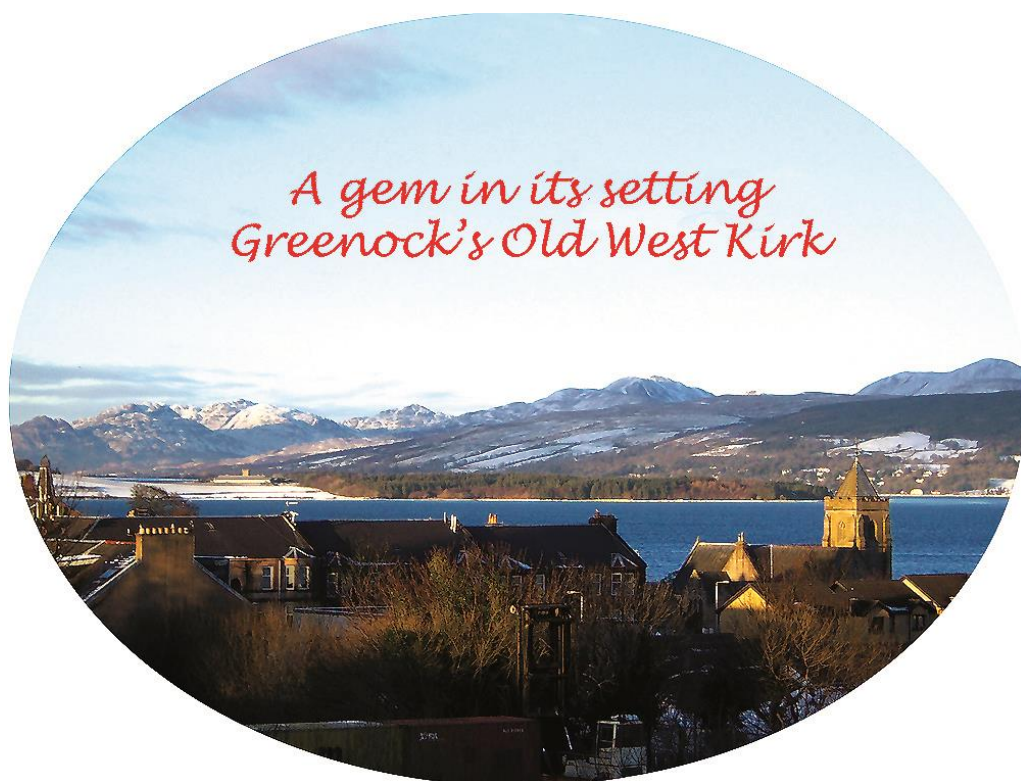


The Old West Kirk and its significance to Greenock's heritage



An assessment by
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The Old West Kirk, situated at the T-junction of the Esplanade with Campbell Street, in the elegant West End of Greenock

Background to the kirk and its founder within the Scotland of their epoch

To most Greenockians the ‘Old West Kirk’ is a weel kent landmark at the T-junction corner of the Esplanade with Campbell Street. However, not everyone appreciates its importance to local lore. Associated with religion of course, yet it was not Greenock’s earliest Christian witness. Kilblain Street commemorates an 8th century chapel, dedicated to St. Blane by the culdee (i.e. *cèile Dè* - ‘companion of God’) community of the ancient Celtic Church. And St. Lawrence’s Bay is named after an also long vanished chapel, this of the Roman Catholic faith - dedicated to a 3rd century Christian martyr, St. Lawrence - its site now beneath a Rue End Street supermarket carpark. A third chapel, of bygone vintage, was situated almost at the present Greenock boundary with Port Glasgow on a now long disappeared farm aptly named Chapelton.

Nevertheless, the district’s oldest *extant* religious fabric *is* contained within the above-noted church on the Esplanade, where a plaque on its (nowadays) southeast facing wall proclaims its venerability as: ‘The Kirk of Grenok, Built by Johnne Schaw, AD 1591’.

Today his name would be ‘John Shaw’; his descendants’ forenames are ‘John’: but not till the 18th century was the ‘c’ in ‘Schaw’ - merely a sibilant re-enforcement - dropped.

Greenock, thenabouts, was a feudal barony; i.e. an extent of land with jurisdiction over it, granted by the king to a ‘laird’ (i.e. lord); this being Johnne Schaw’s status. Another name for a laird, in this context, was ‘feudal baron’. So, Johnne could interchangeably be referred to as ‘Laird of Greenock’ or ‘Baron of Greenock’. Anyway, it meant that he had the unilateral power of administering the Law of Scotland - as judge *and jury* effectively - over his tenants as well as being their landlord. A village, also called Greenock, was located within the barony in the Rue End Street area of the present town.

{Technically, Johnne was laird only of Wester Greenock Barony. There was an Easter Greenock Barony which will enter this narrative at a later stage. The Easter barony was owned by the Craufurd’s of Kilbirnie as a subordinate estate to the latter family. Nevertheless, the territorial designation of the Schaw family was habitually rendered just as ‘of Greenock’.}

Johnne administered his domain from his castle. Later progeny would extend it to become a mansion. It was located at today’s northernmost extent of Lyndoch Street where a now derelict site is (sadly) all that remains of its former presence.



Of a much later date than Johnne’s is the painting: ‘**Greenock**’, 1811, by Francis James Sarjent, . Approaching the town from the east, it shows the Greenock Castle/Mansion (the *baronial ‘caput’* or headquarters, from Latin = head/capital) towering alone on its raised site above the other buildings in the town - or, in Johnne’s day, largish village.

Johnne Schaw's kin provided hereditary wine-tasters ('Masters of the Wine Cellar') to the Scottish kings, this being for protection of their being poisoned. The beverage, once poured into a goblet and if not immediately drunk, was 'capped', by the wine-tester, to prevent tampering, indicating the significance of the motif in the Schaw armorial shield which adorns the Old West Kirk on a present northwest wall.



{Within the shield, depiction of the motif, in gold, is arrayed as two goblets above with a third centred below (on a blue ground). Such 'triplication' is a typical heraldic aesthetic artifice in such emblems and does not - as a recent visitor to the Old West Kirk postulated: "Obviously, one goblet was for white wine, another for red wine, but what was the third one for?"!}

In a then clan-conscious society, prestige of family obligated advertising its importance politically by its estated members, among them, Johnne Schaw for his lineage. Hence, also the Schaws of *Sauchie*; of *Bargarran*; and of *Sornbeg* used the 'capped cup' motif.

However, although Johnne's grandfather James, father Alexander, and brother James, followed the family tradition of wine-tasting in royal service, Johnne Schaw did not. Despite him incorporating the 'capped goblet' motif within his own coat of arms shield - this undoubtedly for its familial prestige value - *he* was too busy, certainly in his mature years, pursuing *quite a different* profession, as will become apparent.

The 1560 the 'Confession of Faith', formulated by six leading Scottish theologians advocating a radical religious reform in protest against the excesses of the then Roman Catholic Church, sounded a clarion call for the Scottish Parliament, in August, to ratify, in principle, inauguration of a **Protestant-Reformation**, national 'Church of Scotland'.

George Williamson, in his book, 'Old Greenock' (1888), on page 15, states: "Born about 20 years before the Reformation... John Schaw devoted himself to ecclesiastical business for a series of years. We first hear of him as one of the 'Barroness of the Kirk' at the Assembly of 1567, his name appearing as one of the parties to the articles then subscribed. And next in 1571... the name of 'John Schaw of Grinock' is found among the 'superintendents, commissioners to plant kirks...', etc., throughout the land. The 'Assembly' was the new church's highest 'Court' (of which more is under-noted).

During the 1540s Alexander Schaw, Johnne's father, died. (Williamson, in a footnote on page 13 of his book, assesses this as an "earlier date than 1547". For later figures which Williamson was to state on page 19, Johnne would have had to have been born in 1535 with Alexander's demise in 1542. Overall, there is some leeway in such dating.

Anyway, Johnne was young when becoming Laird of Greenock, although from when he was resident in his Greenock caput is not clear as the family possessed several feudal baronial estates, the chief one being Sauchie, in Clackmannanshire, where Johnne was born and presumably, raised. His character, habits and predilections seem to have been moulded under the strict supervision of his widowed mother, whose aegis also shielded him from contamination by the cancerously corrupt, vicious Royal Court of that epoch. Probably his upbringing explains, respectively, the underpinning essence of the motto within his personal coat of arms: "*I mean well*", plus his choice of the above-noted voluntary work on behalf of the then nascent Protestant-Reformation Scottish Church.

Although this new church had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church, by which it rejected the authority of its pontiff, the Pope, plus outlawed the holy mass and some other doctrinal aspects of the Catholic denomination, nevertheless, at this point, the 'reformed' church retained the Roman Catholic Church concept of priests (but now renamed as 'ministers') and bishops (now called 'superintendents') appointed by a hierarchy. The church was thereby still orientated 'episcopally' (Latin: 'episcopus' = bishop), which, within the concept of the hierarchy of such a denomination, would not preclude the head of state being the appropriate head, likewise, of the church: this, in Scotland's case, its monarch. Therefore, Johnne would pass his mature years serving an infant church wherein such an ecclesiastical philosophy - *inclusive of monarchism* - still lingered. And, indeed, he might well have believed in this (or, at least, have not been averse - and definitely not antagonistic - to it). Perhaps, he might have regarded himself as a 'moderate' amongst church reformers, rather than a 'zealot' for revolution.

It would not be until 1592 - having by then expunged priests and other prelates, indeed, execrated all of the trappings of Roman Catholicism - that a fully-fledged 'Presbyterian' system was formalised, although this had been, in effect, gaining incremental currency as the intervening decades passed. (I.e. *Protestantism* came to Scotland by revolution, *Presbyterianism* more by evolution.) 'Presbyterianism' (deriving from the Greek word 'presbuteros', meaning 'elders' (and this term construed in the context of being *wise by a lifetime's experience*) became enlisted to represent a type of ecclesiastical governance based on rule by sagacious laymen. And herein - although, theoretically, representing a rudimentary democracy - such rule was *restricted to males*. I.e. this was a patriarchal church whose sacred rituals couldn't (apparently) be trusted to any of the female sex!

The new church's membership was assumed - *indeed, enforced* - to include potentially everyone in the realm! Scottish Presbyterianism possessed a pyramidal structure of legislative 'courts', all overlaid on top of its membership, these being, respectively:-

- **Kirk Session** - one allowed per church, its composition being 'elders' drawn from the congregation by existing 'Session' members or appointed by the congregation itself, and the minister accorded the convenership with the title of 'teaching elder';
- **Presbytery** - (hence the name of the system, as perhaps the most powerful day-to-day 'court' of the church with responsibility to oversee the spiritual *and temporal* conduct of the congregation.) one presbytery allowed per 'parish' (the latter term representing the administrative ecclesiastical districts into which the entire country was divided). A local presbytery was composed of 'elders', delegated by the 'Kirk Session' of each church within the parish, who, from within their number, elected a 'Presbytery Moderator' (i.e. someone to *moderate* any debate which might become heated!) Eventually, the members of a church's congregation would have the right to select their own minister, although subject to the relevant presbytery's guidance;
- **Synod** - the 'court' of administrative ecclesiastical 'regions', a region comprising a number of parishes for which the same method of nomination to membership and leadership prevailed as with presbyteries;
- **General Assembly** - (the highest 'court' within the Church of Scotland) convened annually with delegates from all of the subordinate categories, and a new overall 'National Moderator' appointed by all of the constituent churches each year.

However, how and where the *monarchy* fitted into this new ecclesiastical system was to prove a running sore for all concerned...

16th century Scotland was blighted by acrimony between King James VI (who was later to articulate his fundamental belief in ‘The Devine Right of Kings’ for him to rule in Church and State answerable only to God) and an equally strident, ascendant Church of Scotland parliamentary regime which, in some ways, harboured similar despotic aspirations! Anyway, this often led to partisan tussling over the demarcation of power within the respective secular and heavenly realms. Indeed, sometimes it is difficult to discern, thenabouts, which craved apotheosis more! Governance of the country was, consequently, constantly contumacious and often adversarial betwixt **King** and **Kirk**.

In 1596 the tension and contention, festering over the years, climaxed in an altercation between King James VI and a leading Presbyterian (in fact, he served several times as National Moderator of the Church of Scotland) Andrew Melville. There the monarch rebukingly reminded the clergyman of being *the king’s vassal, particularly in matters ecclesiastical*. However, this provoked the unequivocal riposte: “Sire, we will always humbly reverence Your Majesty in public, but having opportunity of being with Your Majesty in private, we must discharge our duty or else be enemies to Christ!” Then a punchline! “Sirrah, *YE* are God’s silly vassal! There are twa kings and twa kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of the commonwealth [i.e. the secular realm] and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member!”

{Undoubtedly, King James VI would have preferred that the Church of Scotland had remained (as indeed it had begun) within an ‘episcopal’ (i.e. bishop-based) mode: this, in fact akin to the contemporary Church of England where much of the Roman Catholic paraphernalia - such as bishops and archbishops, etc., had been retained within a denomination ‘Reformed’ mainly by being independent of Rome, but of which the king, not the Pope, was acknowledged as the anointed ‘head’. This was a situation in which James would later revel when resident in England after succeeding to its throne in 1603. However, meantime, in the 1590s, it irked him to have it emphasised that, in Scotland, he was not ‘head’ of the Presbyterian Church and that it was too powerful for him to punish Andrew Melville by anything more than banishing him from his sight!}

Consequently, at the time when Johnne Schaw considered having a kirk within his own domain (an *active* one not existing then), the Church of Scotland was still in the throes of denominational ambivalence, swithering betwixt Protestant Episcopal and Protestant Presbyterian, although the latter psyche would prevail - *eventually, if incrementally*.

“I mean well” would later become the habitual motto of all of Johnne Schaw’s lairdly descendants. However, it does seem to manifest a heartfelt maxim of his *personal philosophy* which, it might be surmised, gives some clue as to his motivation in various delicate instances. Devout and sincere was; without ego and having humility. Nevertheless, in light of the above-noted inflammatory atmosphere prevailing, Johnne would also need to act with acumen and astuteness if attempting to reconcile loyalty to *both* kirk and king protagonists, this *never easy, and sometimes downright impossible!*

In essence, the Presbyterian authority expected the king to give a lead to his people in the State religion, **but** it abrogated to itself the right to be sole mentor and monitor of all - including the king - in how this religion was promulgated and administrated. And it wished this macrocosm at national level to be mirrored in microcosm at local level, with the laird leading by example, but the ‘Kirk Session’ having sway over the behaviour of everyone (laird included) in the parish - as will be encountered further in this narrative.

It must be said that the incipient Church of Scotland was no less inclined than the Roman Catholic denomination which it had displaced, to deliberately - when it suited - blur the distinction between religious heresy and criticism of the church's doctrinal-ideology, hierarchy and/or clergy. Brooking no dissenters, proponents of either foregoing 'fault' might find themselves consigned to Hell when they would die, with their soul damned for all Eternity! This was quite a profound deterrent where members were inculcated that the Church's leadership spoke, *always*, on behalf of the Godhead.

{Opposing a purely secular regime might result in persecution of one's mortal body by proponents of that regime, whereas opposing a religious regime risks reaction from proponents of that regime, which could apparently jeopardise one's immortal soul. So, in addition to the many exercising such authority properly, the foregoing enabled those possessing a church position to misappropriate this under the guise of religion. Such abuse could lead to pettifogging bullying or, at higher level, even politicking.}

{Whereas the word 'kirk' - phonetically rendered in 'Scots' from the original Anglo-Saxon, 'ciric/circe' for 'church' - had been used on occasion in connection with Roman Catholic chapels, it began, henceforth, to be used primarily for Presbyterian places of worship, in deliberate contradistinction for those of any other branch of Christianity. Thus, the word 'kirk' would be used interchangeably with 'church' if referring to an individual edifice, whereas 'The Kirk' would become a synonym for the Church of Scotland, or - later on - any other of its subsequent Presbyterian variant-derivatives.}

Originally, Johnne Schaw's Greenock Barony plus all of his other landholdings were accounted as part of the Parish of Innerkip (nowadays rendered as Inverkip) to whose Parish Kirk, situated in the village of Innerkip some four miles distant over difficult intervening terrain, Johnne - and every inhabitant within his lands - was expected to attend every Sunday, all year round and in all weathers, it being the closest church to them in the parish. This must annoy Johnne; and accounts for his subsequent actions.

In fact, surely it was his experience, as a commissioner, in persuading other lairds to plant kirks (and to pay for them!), in their respective domains, that ultimately prompted him that he should likewise undertake the same within his own domain. Indeed, it is surprising that it took him almost a score of years, when in the job of commissioner, before he made this bid to have a kirk of his own as this could have made his task easier if he had been able to evince himself as an exemplar of what he was asking others to do.

In Daniel Weir's 'History of the Town of Greenock' (1829), on page 12, relating to the above-noted St. Lawrence **Roman Catholic** edifice, he states that "about 1670 the chapel was in high preservation". So, presumably, in Johnne's day, it would have been - arguably - possible to rehabilitate and convert it for use in a Presbyterian capacity.

The mindless wanton defacing of icons, frescos and statues, even the smashing-up of buildings associated with the Roman Catholic Church which had marred the Christian ethic and besmirched the ideals of the Reformation in its early 1550-1560s years, had, by the 1580s, abated. Notwithstanding, there could be no question of Johnne risking riling-up latent anti-Catholic prejudice which might thereby re-ignite such vandalism by reconstituting a relic of the disavowed old religion, in order to fulfil his desired purpose.

Therefore, he must build a *new* kirk. And that is what, in 1589, he set in motion to do.

First Phase : Kirk of Greenock Parish : 1589 - 1591 : the foundation

The Biblical Gospel of St. John, Chapter 1, Verse 1, states that, “In the beginning was the Word”. ‘The word’ of this particular ‘beginning’ was to come, respectively, from Johnne Schaw, Laird of Greenock. and King James [Stewart] VI of Scots.

Johnne Schaw wouldn’t normally have needed *anyone’s* permission, to build something on his own land at his own expense. However, with his Greenock Barony being incorporated within the Parish of Innerkip, if Johnne unilaterally set up a rival kirk to that of Innerkip, this would undoubtedly have incurred legitimate, ferocious opposition from the latter due to its consequential loss in control - also revenue. The latter was not so much from the meagre offerings from the ordinary parishioners but from the ‘stent’ (taxation, for upkeep of the fabric, levied against all landowners in the parish.) Johnne, to forestall this anticipated protest, seems to have pre-emptively cleared the matter with the appropriate church ‘courts’. His presbytery was, circa 1589, that of Dumbarton but soon after would become that of Paisley. But, Johnne seems, also, to have gone *even higher* in the Kirk’s hierarchy, soliciting support on this subject. And, as a *clincher*, he *then* sought, for proceeding with his project, the assent of the monarch, King James VI.

There is no evidence that the two had ever met, so Johnne could not presume on any grounds of acquaintanceship, far less friendship. His approach must simply be an appeal by a loyal subject to his sovereign. As a clever strategy, he intimated intention to undertake building the kirk but not asking for any royal financial contribution whilst, nevertheless, deferring to the prerogative of the king to grant permission for it. Indeed, thereby transferring to the king all credit and kudos would be a gesture to delight an embattled monarch who could, consequently, appear to exert arbitration in the matter. And, if that was indeed Johnne’s stratagem, it was about to pay off handsomely by his receiving no mere letter of kingly assent to his project but, instead, a *royal charter*.

A charter was, within the feudal system, a ‘tool’ which may be defined as a document - arraying in formal, legal terminology - the sovereign’s conveyance and/or confirmation of ownership of land, and/or other property, and/or privileges, all delineated in precise detail. Moreover, it would be recorded, in its essentials, in the ‘Register of the Privy Seal’, so called as ‘the Great Seal of the Realm’ was used to cast a wax seal (one side featuring the reigning monarch, the other depicting the Scottish Royal Coat of Arms) affixed to all such official documents as a sign of their authentication. *The* charter, now received by Johnne Schaw, was entered into the Register on 18th November, 1589.

The charter’s *total verbatim content* appears on pages 13-14 of Daniel Weir’s ‘History of the Town of Greenock’ (1829). In George Williamson’s book, ‘Old Greenock’ (1888), its salient content appears, on pages 17-18, wherein Williamson translates the 16th century ‘Scots’ into modern English with, additionally, the text segregated by semicolons which slightly helps to clarify the confusing syntax in some parts of the original whose rambling is not helped by its total absence of punctuation throughout!

The charter preambles by a declaration of “JAMES by the grace of god king of Scots” to his various administrative officials, then expresses his “being movit with the earnest zeill and grite affection our lovit [typical royal platitude, devoid of significance!] Johnne schaw of grenock” (who) “hes ay had to Goddis glorie and propagatioun of the trew evangel sen(se) the first professioun of the samyn within this realme...”. Etc.

Johnne's petition (either original or copy) to the king is not now available for scrutiny. However, by reproducing its wording, the charter itself acknowledges that Johnne "is willing nochd onlie on his awin coist to erect... ane parroche kirk upon his awin heritage but also to appoint and designe manss and yeard to the samyn" (i.e. manse and graveyard)... with the whole profit "belonging to the kirk for the help and supporte of the sustentation of ane minister" (i.e. for providing a stipend or salary for the latter.)

The charter also rehearses the justification that Johnne must have made to the king in his petition, ostensibly (and perhaps actually) made on behalf of the plight of "the puir pepill duelling upon his lands" which "are all fischers" (this can only be true of the men of Greenock *village* as those of the extensive inland area of Johnne's landholding would be, instead, involved in farming) "and of a ressonable nowmber duelland four miles fra their parroche kirk" (i.e. Innerkip) "and, having a greit river to pas over to the samyn, may have an ease in winter... to convene to goddis service on the sabboth day..."

(Actually, the only single aquatic obstacle, the 'greit river' cited in the charter - which can be assumed to be the River Kip - becomes pluralised, as 'diverse burns and waters' in a clerical minute, formulated in a later re-affirmed justification for having a kirk, this reproduced in 'The History of Greenock' (1921), by Robert Murray Smith. On page 244, it states: "Of auld, 'Greenock' was a pairt and pertinent of the parroche of Innerkip and... far distant frome the Kirk of Innerkip four large myles with dyveris great burns and watteris in the way, quhill (which) in the winter sessone are unpassable".

The booklet, 'Inverkip Parish - A Brief History' by Allan A. McArthur, on page 4, describes the route taken: "From Greenock, it passed up towards Barr's Cottage, then along the south-facing bank of Spango glen by Flatterton and Wellyyards, crossing the present road to catch the Loch Thom road end which moves down towards the Kip, then unbridged, up again to Dunrod farm and down to the unbridged crossing of the Daff. The so called Roman bridge was not built until late sixteenth century. The road then followed the present on downhill and so to the east door of the 'Auldkirk'..." So there was *at least two* obstructing waterways to be negotiated by the Greenock churchgoers.

McArthur, in common with all historians and folklorists of Inverkip, uses the name 'Auldkirk' to signify the ancient church of Innerkip in order to distinguish it from its ecclesiastical successor which was inaugurated in the early years of the 19th century after the 'auldkirk' had become ruinous, with "the roof leaking, the once stout walls weakened" so that, as McArthur notes on page 7 of his booklet, "services were held at times in the open air". The landed family connected with it and the appurtenant village and Feudal Barony of Innerkip were the Lindsays of Dunrod (of which more, later, will appear in this narrative, of one member of the family in connection with witchcraft.

Anyway, to revert to the Greenock situation of the 16th century, it was certainly true, that, despite age or infirmity, man, woman and child must endure a muddy trudge - as few would possess horses - often wading through such icy streams in spate when travelling to Sunday church services. Attendance was theoretically compulsory during that era when (likely unaffordable) fines would be levied for any unauthorised absence. Nevertheless, could this ordinance by the church authorities *really* be strictly enforced ubiquitously throughout the extensive rural hinterland? Or would it be practical *only* within the village of Greenock and its environs? The charter does, after all, refer only to 'fischers'; presumably the coastal dwellers. Also, anyway, could Innerkip Kirk have accommodated, simultaneously, *everyone* resident within Innerkip Parish at that date?

The royal charter goes on to reproduce an assertion by Johnne - presumably within his petition to the king - of his proposal to build a kirk having been “allowit to proceed... baith by the generall assembleie of the kirk and synodall assembleie”. It would be interesting to learn *how* Johnne was able to procure such a hierarchal consent - although assuredly, it would be a correct protocol in such a case - and why this evoked no protest from Innerkip Kirk Session. Was the latter even aware of this negotiation occurring?

Anyway, in light of all of the foregoing, the king “...gantand and commitand to the said Johnne schaw of Grenock Oure full power and speciall libertie and licence to erect ... the said kirk... upoun ony pairt or place within the bounds of his awin landis” where he shall think most commodious and convenient, “to be callit the parroche kirk of grenok”.

Furthermore, in light of Johnne’s expected large financial outlay in fulfilling his project, the charter excuses him “his airis and tennents... fra all keeping and convening to their auld parroche kirk in ony tymes cuming bot at their owin will and pleasr... An declairis them to be frie and perpetuallie exonrit and dischairgit of all charge... in stent bigging butting” [taxation towards building/repairing] “or ony other manner... in tyme coming”.

In summary, Johnne, through the terms the foregoing charter, gained, cumulatively:-

- The king’s enthusiastic endorsement for his wish to build a kirk on his own land, plus an excellent character reference, citing him for selfless devotion to religion;
- The king as a personal champion against any backlash from Innerkip Kirk Session;
- The king’s acceptance of his claim to have the support of the Church of Scotland in establishing his kirk; a *fait accompli* that would also not be in the Kirk hierarchy’s interest to later contest and jeopardise this new church that it would want anyway;
- Permanent exemption from financial obligation towards Innerkip Kirk and Parish, even *despite* that, at this date, his landholding still remained part of Innerkip Parish, such a considerable concession defraying the expense of his building his new kirk;
- A royal *command* for this new church ‘to be callit the parroche kirk of grenok’ which tacitly paved the way for a follow-up creation of a ‘**Parish of Greenock**’;
- Undoubted gratitude from his tenants (by relieving them of an arduous journey) on whom (he doubtless appreciated) he relied upon for support in all of his endeavours. Nevertheless, there is no indication that his seeking a kirk on his own land was in response to a plea from his tenantry rather than it being *entirely* his unilateral wish.

In **1592** a parliamentary act, known as the ‘Great Charter’ is now accepted as having effectively consolidated the Church of Scotland as the national *Established Church*.

Purely co-incidentally, another **1592** act *retrospectively* recorded for: “Johnne Schaw of grenock his Maiesties full power... and licence... to erect... ane kirk...”, this obviously synthesising the terms of Johnne’s royal charter. By this happenstance, Johnne’s kirk can claim to be the first kirk to have been *ratified* by the post-Reformation Scottish Established Church. However, it would not have been the first kirk, nor the only one, *built* during the three decades since the Reformation had begun in Scotland in **1560**. As previously noted, Johnne was among ecclesiastical ‘commissioners’ for promoting just such new church building and, presumably, he plus his colleagues in this role had met with considerable success during this era of Church of Scotland major expansion.

Moreover, probably such other new churches had been inaugurated without any need to obtain either royal (or parliamentary) assent. **Johnne's kirk is thereby *very special***

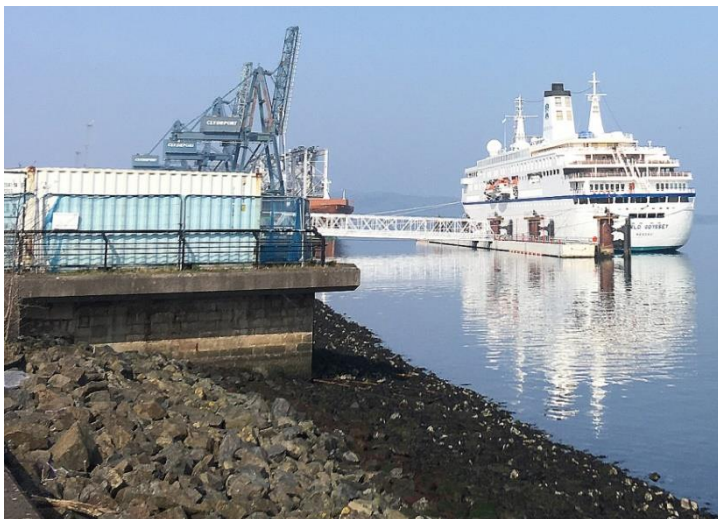
As a belated, but direct, derivative from the royal charter to Johnne of 1589, in 1594, a further Act of Parliament, created a new 'Parish of Greenock', this by carving it out from the Parish of Innerkip. The Presbytery of Innerkip, in light of the royal charter depriving it of Johnne's stent towards upkeep of Innerkip Church, doubtless, would not complain; indeed, would have been pleased to be rid of this now unprofitable territory!

The new parish would coincide with all of Johnne Schaw's landholdings, namely: Greenock, Finnart and Spango. That would have afforded an optimal consolidation of the ecclesiastical with secular authority throughout his domain, this - in theory anyway - conducive to good governance and control. Unfortunately, Johnne wouldn't personally long benefit as he "died in July or August, 1594, two months after the disjunction of the parish, and before he had attained his 60th year, having possessed the estate 52 years." (I.e. Greenock Barony estate.). Thus computes George Williamson, in 'Old Greenock', on page 19. Johnne was succeeded in his various estates by his son: James Schaw.

Although there would ultimately be inaugurated a 'Greenock Presbytery', to begin with and for some considerable time, Greenock Parish remained in the Presbytery of Paisley.

In doing the foregoing, Johnne's motivation might have been venial, contriving to give the king - even *conniving* with the king - a pretext that enabled the latter to obtrude into kirk business, wily underhandedness intended, by Johnne, to concurrently curry royal favour *and* gain influence in the Church. Or it may be charitable to contemplate it as him seeking to reconcile *both* of his loyalties, epitomising his 'I mean well' philosophy: but *notwithstanding*, this coupled with being a *shrewd strategist in getting his own way!*

It has been noted above that Johnne's landholding was not restricted only to Greenock.



Walkway protrusion which is the present outlet of the culverted West Burn into the River Clyde, with, a short distance westwards from it, the pontoon of Greenock Ocean Terminal, used now by all visiting cruise liners.

Of yore, from where the photo was taken, was located in Greenock Feudal Barony, whereas where the pontoon connects with the shore was in Finnart Feudal Barony

Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, Elizabeth Terris

A waterway - other than the River Kip - now takes centre stage in the story of the new kirk's inception. **The West Burn**, (culverted now) flows into the River Clyde between the present-day waterfront cinema and the new cruise reception centre. The burn was so-called due to its use in demarcating the western extremity of Greenock Barony.

Bordering on here and stretching westwards to the present boundary with the town of Gourock, was the separate and totally independent Finnart Barony, later encompassing the 'West End' and much more besides of what is, nowadays,

within the town of Greenock. Finnart Barony seems to have had a diffused population. Moreover, it was bereft of any large nucleus-settlement similar to Greenock Barony's population hub - this dating from quite early times - i.e. the *village* named *Greenock*.

In 1539, the royal architect to King James V, Sir James Hamilton (and who, at the foregoing date urgently needed money), had 'pawned' Finnart Barony of which he was laird, to Johnne Schaw's father, Sir Alexander Schaw of Sauchie (Clackmannanshire). Alexander, in addition to Sauchie, was also the laird of Greenock (Wester) Barony. However, this pawning would be transmuted to an outright grant to Alexander by King James V of Scots in 1540, after Hamilton had been executed - due to trumped-up accusations of plotting regicide - and all of his properties forfeited to the Crown. From Alexander, Johnne Schaw inherited both of Greenock and Finnart Baronies, so was laird of both, although he was designated usually only as 'Johnne Schaw of Greenock'.

The 'Kirk of Greenock' (whose intended concept incorporated a manse and a graveyard as promised to King James by Johnne Schaw) was collectively known as the 'Kirkton').

The kirk was *originally* built, straddling awry, an area at the extremity of today's bingo hall carpark and the adjacent roadway, i.e. the modernly constructed Container Way. The site is shown in the photograph and is commemorated by a signpost (insert) located at the passageway in the hedge between the white-coloured bingo hall carpark and the pavement of Container Way.



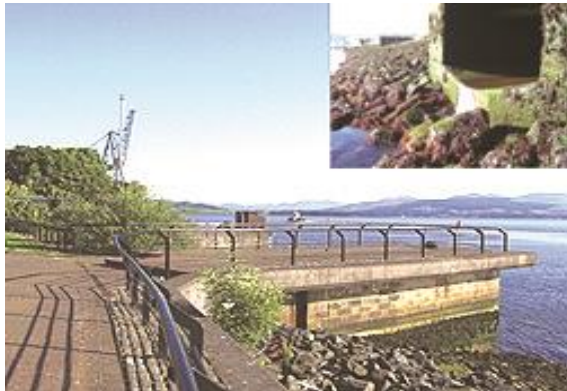
The kirk was situated in the east of its encompassing graveyard. Much of the latter lies now below the carpark of the neighbouring supermarket (from the top tier of whose carpark this photo was taken). The graveyard stretched - at least at its southernmost extent, almost across to the present-day Dalrymple Street, and, westwards, it bordered onto the part of Laird Street which runs between Dalrymple Street and Container Way. Actually, the distance between the kirk and the shore of the River Clyde did not, of yore, even reach the front of the bingo hall which, along with its companion cinema situated to its right, is built on land which was reclaimed from the river in the 1840s.

The course of the West Burn lies now underground, just to the left of the cinema. This means that that, Johnne Schaw's kirk, at the date of its construction in 1589-91, was actually situated, *not* in Greenock Barony but within Finnart Barony by at least hundred or so paces. However, it was not Johnne's petition to the king seeking permission to

build his kirk but, ironically the royal assent to it which, by **stipulating** that the edifice “be callit the parroche kirk of grenok”, inadvertently created the anomaly of the kirk’s descriptor being a mismatch with its actual location at the time of its inauguration!

To be semantic, the so called **Parish Kirk of Greenock** (per royal edict) should more accurately be rendered as the **Kirk of Greenock Parish** *except* that there was not any Greenock Parish at the date of the charter: and, just to confound and confuse the matter further, the kirk was not actually (at the time of construction) built in Greenock Barony!

The above-note royal assent to Johnne’s petition also affirmed that it could be “**upoun ony pairt or place within the bounds of his awin landis**”, which, of course, did include the Finnart Feudal Barony. Notwithstanding, there was, at that date, adequate unoccupied space between Rue End and the West Burn, which - even if leaving a suitable distance for sake of hygiene between the village and the graveyard - the kirk and its graveyard could have been accommodated totally within Greenock Barony, thereby making it in truth the “kirk of grenok”. Furthermore, building it there would have saved Johnne the expense - additional to that of building the kirk “on his awin coist” - of having to provide a bridge in order to enable Greenockians to access the kirk



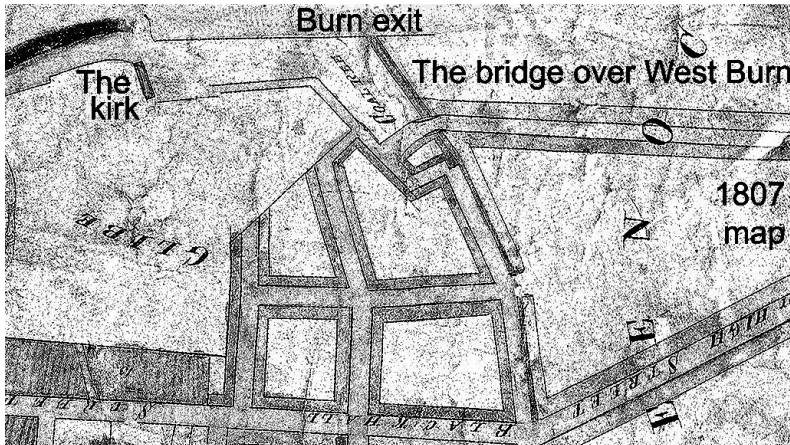
dryshod over the West Burn. This is nowadays a *tame trickle* (as the photo here shows) by comparison to a broad torrent of yesteryear owing to its headwaters having been drawn off elsewhere since. Also, the burn was once so wide that its estuary served as a harbour where fishermen brought their boats. A bridge of few planks would not have sufficed to span the divide, moreover, to enable the boat-masts clearance to sail beneath it. (The photo of the outlet was taken before construction of the ‘Greenock Ocean Terminal’ pontoon.)

An extract from an etching (under-noted), ‘**A View of Greenock**’, 1768 by Robert Paul, depicts the bridge as a large structure, hump-backed and thus presumably constructed of stone, not wood, possibly dating from the inauguration of the kirk itself in 1591.

The etching employs some artistic licence in depiction of the kirk whose principal entrance - for instance - is shown as facing toward the viewer at a date when, due to the orientation of the kirk relative to the river, it would actually be pointing inland. (I.e. it would lie about 90 degrees clockwise to how it is depicted) and consequently not visible from the viewpoint of the etching.



Also, the illustration depicts the church as having a steeple which was, indeed, a feature by the later date of the etching but was not present in the early structure of the kirk. Both the bridge and kirk are depicted as being located exactly on the shoreline. But, that too is figurative rather than strictly accurate. As above-noted, although the site of the kirk and bridge were closer to the riverbank than nowadays due to land reclamation, notwithstanding, they were never situated directly *on* the shoreline. There was always a corridor of land in between. The bridge was upstream of the wide estuary of the West Burn - maybe about Dalrymple Street, as shown on early 19th century maps, viz:-

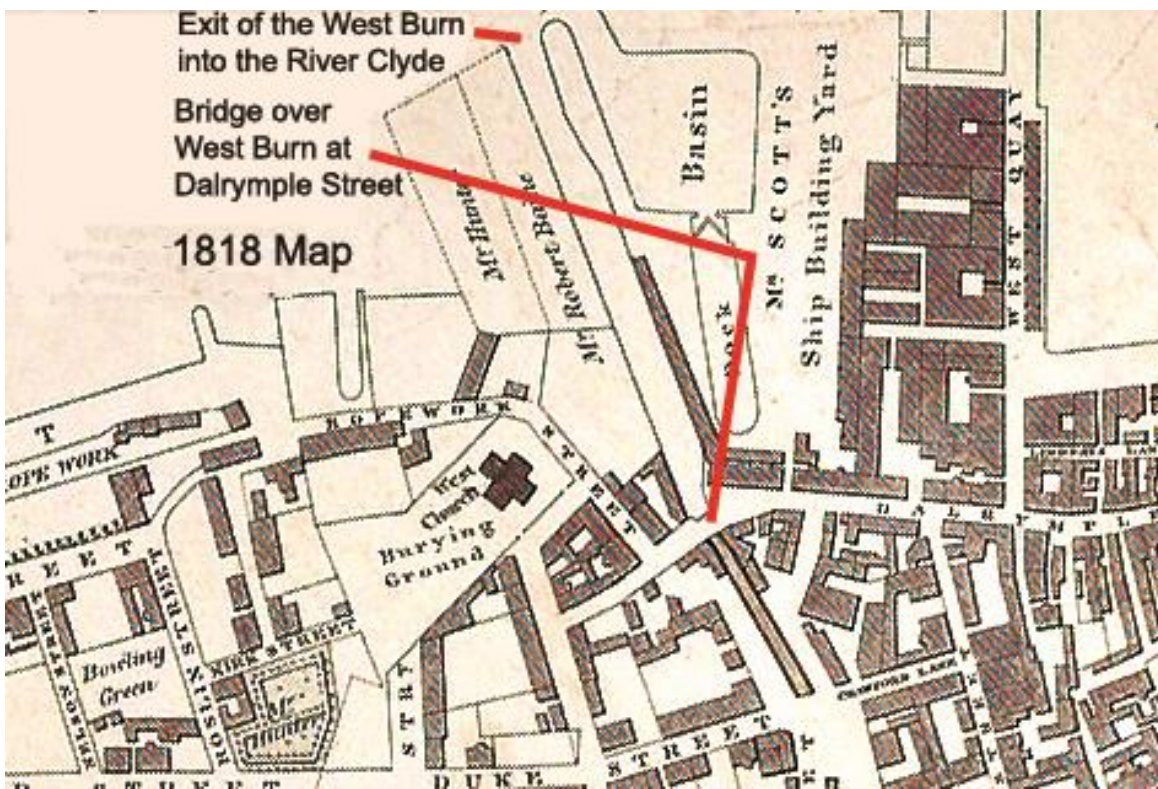


Left

An extract of the 'Plan of Finnart Barony commissioned by Sir J. S. Stewart', in 1807.

Below

An extract of the 'Town of Greenock and its Environs' map, by David Reid, in 1818, show the bridge within the context of the growing townscape.



The maps contrast too how, in just 11 years, the original track to the kirk had become crowded with other streetways. Throughout the duration of the kirk's proximity to the West Burn it was known alternatively, for that stretch of its course, as the 'Kirk Burn'.

In addition to accommodating a graveyard to surround a kirk, there was also need to provide a 'glebe' (from Latin 'glæbba' = clod of earth). This was a piece of land allocated to the incumbent minister on which he might cultivate vegetables or keep domestic animals to augment his stipend. (In fact, whilst toiling in it on weekdays, he

could be ruminating on the theme of his sermon for the coming Sunday!) Anyway, there was a legal requirement for the glebe to be of a certain size.

At the time - as George Williamson, in his book ‘‘Old Greenock’’ (1888 edition), notes on page 36 - Johnne Schaw protested to the Presbytery (although it is not clear if his expostulation was accepted) that he should not have to carry the financial burden *alone* for making such a provision, and that it ought to be shared by all of the other ‘heritors’ (i.e. proprietors of inheritable estates) within the Presbytery of Paisley to which Greenock, after exiting from the Innerkip one, at that time, belonged.

Over and above the foregoing, there was a legal stipulation for any allocated glebe to be located contiguous or close to the kirk involved. Although that would still have been practical on the Greenock side of the West Burn, it might have been argued by Johnne that, for some reason it was not convenient and thus he could not fulfil the condition of adjacency for glebe and kirk if it were all to be located within the Barony of Greenock.

And *the foregoing* seems to be the nub of the facile excuse which George Williamson, also on pages 36-37 of his book, hints on behalf of Johnne, *despite* questioning why the laird - having cited kirk-bound Greenockians having to cross a large ‘‘unpassable’’ burn on route to church in Innerkip as a justification for building his new kirk - should, incongruously, be quite prepared to substitute another large burn which he must now anyway bridge! Williamson - as though to re-assure himself, then writes on page 37: ‘‘The difficulty connected with the unpassableness of the [West] burn would appear to have been met by throwing bridge over the stream near the church, to connect the Kirktown or New Town with the Old Town. This bridge, we do not doubt, is the one represented in the earliest extant pictorial view of Greenock(1768) being sufficient to span the burn, and allow the free passage of a considerable volume of water, which then rose very rapidly after heavy rain, as it still does...’’ (The flow - as noted-above - has very much reduced today from Williamson’s 1888 time of writing.)

Notwithstanding Williamson’s aforementioned advocacy, Johnne’s decision to place his ‘Kirk of Greenock’ in Finnart could alternatively - and much more realistically - be inferred as his deliberate intention to impose a Greenock identity onto Finnart in expedient pragmatism to assimilate it and its inhabitants into a Greenock homogeneity. Was this intended as his ‘‘*I mean well*’’ altruism plus yet more shrewd strategising as a precaution to obviate friction between the original two communities?

Anyway, in the interim since, the two communities have in fact long since coalesced, but Finnart’s submergence into Greenock has effectively eclipsed even remembrance, locally, of it as a former entity in its own right. Nevertheless, it would be 1670 before Finnart’s Barony would be finally, legally and inextricably annexed into Greenock’s.

To revert to the glebe: it probably covered an area occupied by today’s Clarence, Haig and Roslin Streets, although there appears to be no existing map to be found, illustrating its delineation.

Johnne Schaw’s kirk began public worship on Sunday morning, October 4th, 1591, with, officiating, the Reverend Andrew Murdo(ch) of whom little is now known.

Second Phase : Kirk of Greenock Parish : 1591 - 1617 : the early years

The new kirk's structure was initially a basic oblong box, constructed - anyway its foundations - out of handy boulders from the nearby Clyde River-shore, closer to it than later due to sizeable land reclamation since. The building possibly had a barrel-shaped stone roof, certainly unglazed window apertures and a packed-down earthen floor.

The above-noted glimpse into this long past period is afforded by Jess. S. Bolton through her book, 'The Old West Kirk, 1591-1991', (1991), on its pages 7 and 9.

She continues by indicating that on either side of the interior, for listening to the oft long-winded sermonising of preachers thenabouts, "long wooden forms on either side of a plain wooden table were for accommodation of the male sex only." Womenfolk, apparently, were expressly forbidden to sit upon the latter and "must bring with them 'ane stool to sit upon or be content to sit low upon the floor.'" They must not "lie down in the kirk on their face in time of prayer, sleeping... or they would be roused by the beadle [a church official]. He "had other duties such as carrying a 'red wand' in church to remove greetin bairns furth of the kirk"! (Herein were two consequences clearly exhibiting congregational *boredom!*)

The female seating, referred to, was almost certainly a '**creepie stool**'. In English a 'creepy-crawly' is a crawling beastie with its body near to or touching the ground. In the 'Scots' tongue 'creepie' signifies 'close to ground' but without any movement implied.



{The foregoing type of low, backless stool comprised of five flat wooden panels easily assembled. Its horizontal top had a finger-or-handhole to enable the owner to carry it to any gathering attended; e.g. social/wedding, or a church service. The peasant cottages of the period were often bereft of a proper flue with thereby the smoke from the open fire left to filter through the thatch roofing (incidentally, thereby fumigating it of vermin such as mice etc.!) but also accumulating in an acrid fug downwards within the room in which such a low-down seat would prove conducive to improved healthy breathing! Such a stool would, apparently, be gifted to a child for a lifetime's use and would be all the seating womenfolk had, as noted. In a patriarchal society, in most households only the husband would qualify for an actual chair! The 'male-only' benches in the kirk replicated such domestic discrimination!}

One seat that no churchgoer would want to occupy was every Presbyterian kirk's 'stool of repentance', out in front of the congregation, shamed in the glare of neighbours, to be upbraided for setting a bad example - lambasted by the minister, lowering above in the adjacency of the pulpit - for misdemeanours which could be civil as well as religious.

{The church regime held itself to be the arbiter of all morality, even general behaviour. Unfortunately, this could afford licence for those who, by purporting piety, insinuated themselves into the Kirk Session, to thereafter, as bullies, intimidate, or, as busybodies, snoop on ordinary congregational members, under the guise of regulating rectitude.}

Biblical edicts were pedantically interpreted and punitively promulgated; such as that within the Book of Exodus, Chapter 20, Verse 10, wherein it was enjoined of Sunday as: “the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant”; etc. Even drawing water from a well on that day would be accounted a holy sin with the transgressor punished by being, for some consecutive Sunday services, degraded on the ‘stool of repentance’.

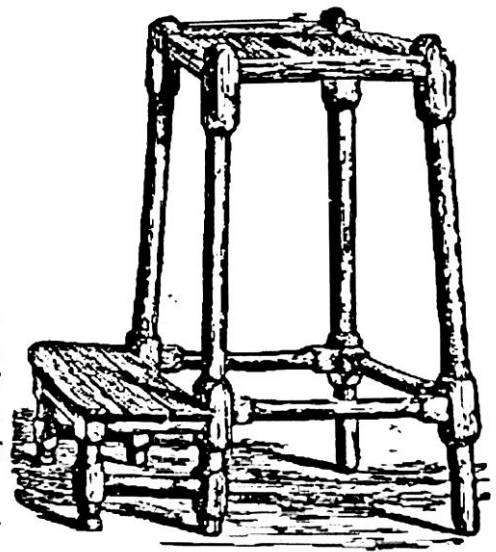
Further minutiae that merited recriminatory expiation included playing an instrument or apparently even not looking solemn enough for a Sunday! Robert Burns, in his poem, ‘Address to the toothache’, groups - with other *vexations of everyday 18th century life* - “...the numerous human dools (woes), ill hairsts [harvests], daft bargains, cutty stools”! Unsurprisingly, sexual and/or alcoholic insobrieties were foibles *explicitly* included too!

The above-noted ‘**cutty stool**’ was the name for a particular type of stool of repentance. In order to stand on the most uneven of floors, it was normally three-legged but could be four: it was usually round topped but could be square. ‘Cutty’ - related to ‘cut’ - is in ‘Scots’ that language’s word for ‘short’. The seat’s appearance, resembling/replicating a milking stool, enabled it to be easily procured from the local carpenter who - even with rudimentary woodworking tools - would be well practised in crafting such items due to many local households keeping a milk-cow. A kirk probably had one on permanent, indeed prominent display as a salutary warning to the congregation of its penal purpose but also having several replicas in reserve for those Sundays burdened with multiple miscreants!



{Equally as readily made and as acquirable as the cutty stool - but less often enlisted for exposing penitents - might be the above-noted creepie stool. In the case of either stool being thus used, especially if the malefactor were a man - squatting upon it with knees up to his chin, he must feel - in addition to being humiliated - emasculated by relegation to this female and/or child’s seating-mode!}

{A third type of repentance stool went to the other extreme; i.e. its seat-surface was not low relative to the floor but raised up due to being perched on ‘stilts’ and accessible by climbing up a step. This elaborate (and rare) contraption was probably resorted to for use only in larger churches (such as the one in Edinburgh referred to in the drawing depicted). The height was so that kirk attendees even at the back, could see to scorn the penitent. However, whether ridiculed lowdown or reviled on high, none would seek to sit on any of these various pedestals of iniquity!}



THE REPENTANCE STOOL FROM OLD GREYFRIARS CHURCH.

Social civic ‘control’ of Greenock Parish’s populace was further reinforced by a large bell, located on the kirk roof and activated by a rope or chain from ground level.

George Williamson's 'Old Greenock' on pages 27-8, tells of how, with a peal loud enough to be heard from the village, it tolled for funerals and as the advent to Sunday services. However, it also re-enforced the peremptory caveat that, by decree of the 'Kirk Session' - as the regulatory body of the kirk comprising of its wisest (ostensibly) and ecclesiastically esteemed members (males only!) - "it is appointed that sitting in and haunting taverns on Friday and Saturday nights be abstained from after 9 of the clock at which time the bell of the kirk is... rung to give advertisement to all to repair to their own homes." This blunt proscription menacingly observed, furthermore, that backsliders in obeying this command would be dealt with upon the following Sabbath!

Anyway, it is wickedly satisfying to note a *cock a snook*, to such officious interference in everybody's private and secular life, being effected through impudent ringing of the bell as a "frolic for the diversion of the mischievous urchins domiciled in the vicinity"!

When the original bell cracked, its 1677 replacement - 18 inches across the mouth and 14 inch inside - was familiarly called 'Tam o lang' in onomatopoeic mimic of its clang.

In 1617, the Barony of *Easter* Greenock - which bordered that of Greenock Barony on its east - had been dis-enjoined from the Parish of Kilbirnie and added to that of Greenock Parish. This was a subsidiary estate of the Craufurd Laird of Kilbirnie. When the last male of that line died in 1661, it passed to his daughter who wished to sell. There is no record of her having taken anything to do with Johnne Schaw's kirk.

The pan-Greenock religious alignment was greatly strengthened in 1669 when Johnne Schaw's great-grandson, John Schaw, bought most of Easter Greenock, the exception being a western sliver of land sandwiched between the newly purchased territory and the Barony of (Wester) Greenock. That same year, this enclave was erected as the Barony of Cartsburn in favour of Thomas Craufurd, a Glasgow merchant-burgess, whose elevation thereby to lairdship within the parish, brought to him entitlements and responsibilities with regard to its kirk, equivalent to those of the Schaw lairds. These he seems to have fully embraced. (As noted previously, proprietors of inheritable estates, having a connection with the church within the parish involved, were termed 'heritors'. So, there were now two such *active* ones within the Parish of Greenock.)

{The surname 'Craufurd' was then often spelled as 'Crawford' but nowadays is usually found spelt as 'Crawford'. However, spelling, even of one's name (in an era prior to bureaucracy entering into everything - as now!) of old, was never consistent within the nuclear family, nor even as used by any family individual. The Kilbirnie branch affected, indiscriminately, both 'Craufurd' and Crawford, whereas the Cartsburn offshoot seem to have adhered primarily to the latter form, although the former one will also be found in the writings of some historians in referring to them. Moreover, often Crawford lairds of Cartsburn are designated, instead, as Crawford of Craufurdsburn.}

Due to the aforementioned extension, the Greenock Parish area now coincided with that of Greenock town, prior to the development of its outlying districts in the 20th century. Yet, it still had only a single small kirk whose ability to cope with the consequent population increase well outstripped its capacity. To meet the challenge, the two lairds proposed and promised substantial enlargements of the building, but their subsequent vacillation, prevarication and acrimony now, unfortunately, inhibits accurate assessment in the timetable of implementation. Nevertheless, the next century did see favourable changes which would render the kirk no longer so crude and simplistic a structure.

Witch hunting epoch casts a sinister shadow over the Church of Scotland

Another extract from the Biblical Book of Exodus - with ramifications far more severe than banning work on Sundays - would be subject to ecclesiastical misappropriation, not only in Scotland - where it was a blight straddling an epoch - but throughout all of Europe: this namely, Chapter 22, Verse 18: “**Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live**”!

In 1563, witchcraft was made illegal in Scotland with a parliamentary act initiated for inflicting the death-penalty on “all who should make use, in any form, of witchcraft, sorcery or necromancy.” Exploitation of this holy writ, in vindicating the then male-centric Scottish Government’s hostility to any female empowerment, materialised in vindictively targeting the community’s ‘wise women’ who, for aeons, had gleaned, and honed empirical skills in childbirth and contraception (fertility then had an aura of being magical) and creating herbal remedies for treating the ailments of both sexes: a ‘*healer*’. Egocentric male theologians - self-styled ‘God’s elect’ - could not tolerate that *mere* women should be independent of male supremacy and possessed of esoteric knowledge. So they mis-called this all ‘black magic’ and therefore heretical, denigrating its talented benefactors as harridans who cast malevolent spells, and concocted noxious - or at least spurious - potions, which they either utilised for evil purposes or sold to the gullible.

In 1558, John Knox - often a demagogic evangelist within the Scottish Reformation – published in 1558: ‘The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women’, a misogynistic polemic attacking female monarchs (aimed specifically at Mary Queen of Scots) claiming that *rule by women* was contrary to Biblical scripture. Nevertheless, it not clear if he, in any way, influenced formulation of the ‘Witchcraft Act’. By contrast, **King James VI** not only inveighed against witches but interrogated brutally *at least one* of those so accused, in 1591. This **royal precedent** (the same year that Johnne’s kirk opened) saw **incepted a vicious witch-hunt of national proportions**.

‘Hounding’ of alleged suspects became the ‘sport’ of some perverts, baiting to extract a ‘confession’ under duress by crushing fingers and other cruelties: the ‘fun’ of sadists!

Religious mania, lasting until the early 18th century, was rabble-roused into a frenzied hysteria with an unhealthy public ‘entertainment’ encouraged by ‘the **Church**’ + **State** through gratuitous mob-ogling of those convicted of witchery being whipped, branded or otherwise mutilated, strangled, burned in a pyre, ritualistically drowned, or hanged. Many innocents, throughout Scotland, and beyond (although Scotland’s record was particularly bad) suffered such a fate, including those in the categories listed below:

- female homeopathic practitioner-savants in medicine and midwifery as above-noted;
- guileless (often young) lassies, led astray in defiant antidote to the kirk’s repressive attitude toward normal enjoyments and enforced docility, who were titillated in their drab lives by participating in exciting, erotic orgies, involving ostensibly worshipping the Devil (a man dressed up): deplorable conduct *and sacrilegious* - but not satanic;
- women and girls of all ages who were blameless in anything to do with the occult but who were maliciously denounced - under false pretences with ulterior motives for spiteful reasons, e.g. envy/jealousy - by others, usually of their own gender.

{Females might also be targeted out of political or financial expediency. In 1637 King James V would contrive the execution of Lady Janet Douglas by insinuating that she meditated regicide by poison or witchcraft: “For the whilk treasonable crimes the said

Janet be forfeited (i.e. forfeited) to our sovereign Lord, her life, lands goods, moveable and immoveable, and that she had to the Castle-hill of Edinburgh, and there burnt in ane fire to the dead as ane traitor.” I.e. cynical exploitation of the hyped spectre of witchcraft as Janet’s alleged method to assassinate the king, provided the latter with a method for him to ‘legally assassinate’ the lady, simply in order to steal her wealth!}

Church/Parliament persecution, purporting to purge ‘a Devilish conspiracy bent upon undermining Godliness’, so terrified innocent females (and to a much lesser extent men) that they, in hope of terminating inflicted torture, ‘confessed’ guilt and incriminated so-called accomplices that thereby *exponentially widened* the circle of those being accused.

Ironically, contrasting the aforementioned, there *were* women and men who exalted in being practitioners of *witchcraft of the dastardly sort, giddily intoxicated by their imagined possession of pernicious powers*, who, in this superstitions era, by their maledictions and machinations, mentally traumatised not only society’s simpletons but an entire population, indoctrinated into believing that they could thus be bewitched and harmed. Moreover, much more dangerous was a knowledge of poisonous plants that some such *would-be* witches *did use* in schemes to sicken and/or kill victims and/or their animals.

A coterie of such *nasty* witchery practitioners existed in the Parish of Innerkip in the 17th century, the most notorious being the self-confessed Marie or Mary Lamont who, in 1662, was burned alive - a sentence more barbaric and nefarious than the offense itself - probably in front of the Auld Kirk of Innerkip! (Marie, at just 18, would nowadays be ‘diagnosed’ as just in adolescent rebellion, spurning society’s mores.) Her accomplices included a couple from Greenock: Margret M’kenzie in Greinok and Kattrein Scot in Murdiestean (Murdieston), whose fate, however, does not seem to have been recorded.

And one other such is worth highlighting. In the early 17th century, Alexander Lindsay, was laird of the ancient Feudal Barony of Dunrod (this owned by the Lindsay family, as previously noted)... The barony incorporated Innerkip village. Alexander, the witches and its venerable ‘Auld Kirk’ were all interrelated in a rhyme which contains the lines:-

*“In Auld Kirk the witches ride thick, And in Dunrod they dwell;
But the greatest loon amang them a’ was Auld Dunrod himsel’!”*

‘Auld Dunrod’ - as a charlatan - reputedly sold favourable winds, also protection from the Devil, to sailors and fishermen, credulous in an age when wind and water were still widely believed to be controlled by sprites, kelpies and other vexatious fairy beings.

Nevertheless, due to gender discrimination, even today, while witches are traduced as hideous and heinous, wizards are usually represented as virtuous in doing good. Such stereotyping is re-enforced in children’s perception by the celebration of Hallowe’en regarding witches, and ‘Merlin’ (per the story of ‘King Arthur’, etc.) regarding wizards.

{Witchcraft was only abolished as a crime by a 1735 U.K. Parliamentary Act.. In 2008, to “raise awareness of the forgotten victims of witch trials”, an organisation was founded, viz.: ‘RAWS’; i.e. ‘Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland, although this strap line should more appropriately be rendered ‘Remembering those accused of witchcraft...’ to encompass both sexes plus not imply that those accused were witches!}

{A heart-warming and encouraging reply has been received by RAWS to a request to Church of Scotland for an apology to those it once persecuted in this context, Nicola

Sturgeon, First Minister of today's Scottish Parliament, has, also, apologised formally for an "egregious historic injustice" perpetrated by Scotland's then parliament.}

{RAWS seeks a posthumous pardon for all affected. But a 'pardon', in Law, implies an offence committed but the penalty munificently waived. Whereas the delinquent but repentant Marie might qualify for this, the incorrigibly iniquitous 'Auld Dunrod' would not! A pardon is equally inappropriate for those totally innocent of witchery (in its evil connotation), whereas legal 'exoneration', to quash wrongful conviction, would befit.}

During the timespan of Inverkip's problems, its derivative, Greenock Parish with *its* by now own 'auld kirk', seems, by contrast, *not* to have been convulsed by such strife. At least there is no record of such dreadful excesses. Indeed, in spite of the foregoing apparent predilection with public penance as spectated by churchgoers on the 'cutty stool', Greenock kirk's ministers, to their credit, apparently concentrated on preaching the Gospel, disseminating the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Schaw lairds, too, seem to have stood aloof from this hysterical craze...However, a great-great grandson of the kirk's founder, Johnne, i.e. Sir John Schaw of Greenock, (2nd Baronet) - did become embroiled in witchery, although not in a direct Greenock context: this as follows...

One of Scotland's most notorious witchery tragedies concerned 'Bargarran', a collateral Schaw lineage to that of 'Greenock'. In August of 1696, Christian Schaw - daughter of John, 9th Laird of Bargarran (an estate some little distance from the town of Paisley) - was the recipient, from a young household maidservant, of an outburst of bad-temper, this, intemperately, articulated as a curse. Unfortunately, due to Christian's sheltered upbringing and the contemporary widespread brainwashing for such maledictions to be taken *literally* and seriously, the 11 year old girl fell into a state of apparent hysteria.

It was recorded how she vomited pins and other detritus (this, obviously, hidden by her, furtively, in her mouth to be regurgitated in front of an audience). And, thereupon also, she would scream out of being under attack by people whom she named but who no one else could actually see, *because they were, in fact, not present!* Nevertheless, absurdly, such unilateral testimony, given by alleged witchcraft victims, was deemed unnecessary to corroborate in a court of law and so was, for those thus accused, impossible to refute!

As a symptom, not so easy to fake, however, often the lassie's limbs - in fact her whole body - became rigid. She assuredly manifested an alarming physical psychosis but, whether this was self-induced shamming, as an attention-seeking impostor, or a mental illness, has been a matter for speculation ever since. Nevertheless, whatever caused her fits, etc., the upshot of her wild accusations, implicating all sorts of people, resulted in over twenty people accused, with seven innocents being executed in 1697 and the rest stigmatised. A travesty for which deviant religion must be traduced as the root-cause!

In the foregoing instance, as it happens, an unusual percentage of those executed were males: three out of the seven. So future exoneration must encompass both sexes.

Sir John Schaw's involvement in this affair was as one among several commissioners, evaluating the 'evidence' from both Christian herself and those accused by her.

Witchcraft trials would rumble on for almost another forty years. However, it is now meet to revert to the original chronology and to take up the story of Johnne Schaw's kirk in *yet another* episode, with national origins, which threatened to overwhelm it.

Third Phase : West Kirk : 3rd June, 1685 : testing times and a narrow escape

After the bloody and brutal religious wars of the 16th into 17th century, the ‘Restoration of the Monarchy’ - in Scotland and England - in the person of King Charles II is usually hailed now as a relief, characterised by the latter’s soubriquet in history as the ‘Merry Monarch’ due to the hedonism of his royal court. A libertine yes, but any reputation of him as thus ‘laid-back’, and so blessed with religious tolerance, is entirely misplaced!

Presbyterianism, as a result of being persecuted by royalty over the centuries, had resorted to ‘covenants’, i.e. bonds between adherents, based upon the Biblical concept - recorded severally in both the Old and New Testaments - of God’s Covenant (i.e. compact) with particular individuals. These latter, the Kirk, by synthesis and exegesis, had evolved into a policy of *Presbyterianism asserting a direct relationship with God without intromission by king or prelates*. The ‘National Covenant’ of 1638 re-affirmed and expanded that of 1581 and formed the bedrock of the church’s creed and doctrine.

The foregoing, nevertheless, was about to be tested again now, and *even* found wanting.

In 1650 Charles II, displaced from kingship in England by Oliver Cromwell’s ‘republic’ there, was compelled to sign acceptance of ‘the Covenant’ as a condition of being crowned King of Scots and thereby gaining Scotland as an ally in a bid to regain his English Crown. That hope was terminated by the defeat of his largely Scottish army of farm-labourer conscripts by the well-trained, veteran military machine of ‘Cromwell’s Ironsides’ at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. This had forced Charles to flee into exile abroad until, upon Cromwell’s death, he was invited back as English monarch in 1660.

Thereupon, he very soon revealed his mercenary cynicism to the Scots by retracting his ‘Covenant’ support to pursue a déjà vu policy, as ruthless as that of his regal ancestors, by foisting legislation onto the Church of Scotland, to create an Episcopal framework.

Thus, in 1661, acts were pushed through both the Scottish and English parliaments in effect condemning Presbyterianism outright and replacing it with Episcopacy. The date of 24th August, 1662 was set for clergy either to conform to the new regimen or be expelled from their ministerial incumbencies. How this could have been managed through a Scottish Parliament seems inconceivable but, once again, it exemplifies the inappropriate power of monarchy interfering in Scottish church affairs.

Many of those detesting this legislation defected from the subsequently debased church and became ‘Covenanters’, *convening* (in ‘*conventicles*’) for illegal, hence clandestine worship; such gatherings dispersed by marauding State troopers with attendees not only harassed but often slaughtered, in a period which became known as the ‘killing times’.

“The well known Alexander Peden is said to have held a field preaching in Greenock among other places in the West Of Scotland.” So avers George Williamson, in ‘Old Greenock’, in a footnote on page 60, his information deriving from hearsay description by an old woman from which he conjectures the site as “in the line of Hamilton Street, at that time agricultural land”; i.e. approximately where Greenock’s Oak Mall now stands. No date is known for this event but ‘Sandy’ Peden - one of the expelled ministers who became a celebrated itinerant preacher, charismatic orator and fugitive due to this - was very active in this way till about 1673 when he had to flee to Ireland.

Dissenters mustered for armed resistance - these being mainly peasants against veteran soldiers - with battles in which they, consequently, were consistently defeated and sustained large casualties. Individuals suspected of partaking in any the foregoing resistance activities would be accosted by State troopers at home and, if declining to recant Presbyterianism, were murdered on their doorsteps. David Steele, a relative of "Mr. Robert Steele, ordained as minister of the Old West Kirk in 1792", was, according to George Williamson, on page 103 of 'Old Greenock', "shot before the door of his own house". Such summary executions - blatant unpunished murders - were commonplace.

Williamson, on page 54 of his book 'Old Cartsburn', tells how, not content with such savagery, this rapacious king, to further impel his precepts, in 1681, initiated an odious 'Test Act', respectively, **to** enforce the dogma of the royal 'Divine Right' in religion; **to** extract fines for non-compliance in signing affirmation of the Act's conditions; and **to** create a reign of terror throughout the country. Its prosecution spared neither rank, age, nor sex; husbands being held liable for their wives, and masters for their servants. It was chiefly, however, against the landed proprietors that the proceedings were directed as they were considered best able to pay the exorbitant fines imposed".

On page 55 Williamson further avers that the Royal Commissioners appointed to administer the oath of acceptance "had the power of life and death in their hands": and on page 57 he indicates that Thomas Craufurd, Elder [i.e. of Cartsburn/Crawfurdsburn' - the above-noted new heritor of the parish] was one such commissioner. Nevertheless, "This did not screen his son, the young laird, from prosecution". "Because Thomas Craufurd, the younger of Craufurdsburn [the term 'younger', in this context, signifying him as heir-apparent] was not so timeous in giving in a list of the inhabitants of his lands," consequently "he is fined a hundred pounds". However, this "was afterwards remitted", so presumably, young Thomas buckled under duress, supplied the demanded data and subscribed to the oath. A clause in the Scottish Test Act (there was an English counterpart) demanded "obedience to my most gracious sovereign Charles II." "I do affirm and swear, by this my solemn oath, that the king's majesty is the only supreme governor of this realm, over all persons and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil."

In 'Old Greenock', on page 76, Williamson notes that the oath must be "taken on the knees, by all persons in public trust": i.e. they must be *seen to supplicate, indeed grovel*. Moreover that - in a collaboration perfidious to Presbyterian principle - "Its observance was strongly enforced by Presbyteries."! The Church was thus in sycophantic discord!

So much for the tribulations faced by the *newer heritor family* of the 'Kirk of Greenock' (as it now could be truly termed called since Finnart's formal annexation into Greenock of 1670). But, how did its *original heritor family* fare in this divisive predicament?

The contemporaneous scion was Sir John Schaw of Greenock, great grandson of Johnne Schaw, founder of the kirk. His title of address as 'Sir' derived from heroic service at the Battle of Worcester in England in 1651, fighting on behalf of Charles II, when leading a contingent of 200 men drawn from his estates, whereafter he'd been knighted on the battlefield - just prior to that monarch fleeing from it! Past service did not seem to count in the new circumstances. Williamson, in 'Old Greenock', page 74, states that "On 10th December, 1683... Sir John Schaw of Greenock, and about twenty other lairds were indicted "for treason, rebellion, and favour to rebels." (i.e. they were assisting, or not resisting, the 'Covenanters'.) However, Williamson concludes, per page 75, that "Sir John had his own services to plead, and probably did so; at all events, the charges

were not further heard of.” Nevertheless, this illustrates how shortsighted Charles II’s fanatical policy was, due to it potentially estranging subjects otherwise inherently loyal to him, even when such adherence ran contrary to the core ‘Covenant’ of their church.

Also disenchanted by this royal policy was Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyle, chief of Clan Campbell. He refused to subscribe to the Test Act, was condemned to death for treason, escaped from incarceration and absconded to Holland where he prepared with other similar exiles, plans for an uprising in Scotland to be concurrent with a one in England to be led by the also banished Duke of Monmouth (actually a nephew of the king whom he hoped to depose!) However, the venture was blighted from the outset. Monmouth’s invasion - supposedly in sync with Argyle’s - was fatally delayed (ultimately failing with bloody reprisals and Monmouth’s execution). And, in Scotland, Clan Campbell - capable of thousands of warriors - failed to rise for its chief.

{In the clan era, Gaels - although nominally of one religious denomination or another (usually that of their chief) - were lacklustre about ‘doctrinal sectarianism’ as a valid reason for combating with anybody! Many, regularly, additionally practised the pagan customs that predated Christianity, preferring to retain and so accrue the good offices of all ‘deities’, thereby offending none! This happy - arguably sensible - philosophy prevailed till the post-clan era (from the mid-18th century onwards). Thereafter, the SSPCK (Scottish Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) was formed by Royal Charter in 1709 for the purpose of founding schools “where religion and virtue might be taught to young and old” in the Highlands and other “uncivilised” areas of the country, such schools deemed a valuable addition to the Church of Scotland programme of education in Scotland. It introduced/inculcated acute discrimination among pupils regarding the denominational aspect of practising Christian religion.}

Anyway, lacking Campbell help, the Earl of Argyle’s co-insurgents - from a campaign base in June 1685, at Rothesay, Island of Bute - in desperation now urged attempting to raise a rebellion in the Lowlands. In an affray, flattered by the description of ‘*Battle of Greenock*’ but scarcely a *skirmish*, recourse is herein made to interpolating accounts.

Stephen M. Carter, sets the scene for the incident, in his book, ‘*Fighting for Liberty*’ (2020), on page 57, here synthesised: On June 3rd, two ships, containing approximately two hundred men, sailed up the Firth of Clyde, in an expedition, respectively, **to** reconnoitre the readiness (or otherwise) of the coastal defences; **to** send messages to Lowland supporters; and, if possible, **to** purloin vital foodstuffs plus to enlist recruits. Greenock was considered to be a fruitful destination in fulfilling these objectives as there was optimism that the town would rise in revolt, plus that the rebel ‘Cause’ would be joined there by a party of Covenanters, reputedly marching north from the Borders.

However, as the vessels (the ‘David’ and ‘Sophie’) hove-to offshore and presumably anchored against tidal drift, being just short of the town (perhaps? where the present cruise liner pontoon of Greenock Ocean Terminal is located but, anyway, in proximity, then, to the Kirk of Greenock), a large party of presumed hostile horsemen was espied moving *in fast* from the east (presumably on high enough ground for them to be seen above the kirk graveyard wall) to intercept any landing. Speedy disembarkation was therefore essential but, the depth of the (then undredged) water thereabouts, being less than the draught of the ships, meant that reaching land must be by longboats of which three in total were onboard, each capable of holding only twenty men. So, the reaction was to attempt a stalling tactic in order to gain time, to stave-off immediate repulsion.

{*The inshore shallowness of the Clyde, preventing the invading ships to make direct landfall, also explains the present-day need for a pontoon at the cruise liner berth in order to reach out to the natural deeper water channel, gouged by the river's current.*}

Accounts diverge in detail but the nub seems to be that horsemen initially positioned themselves along the shoreline, just a musket-shot away from the ships whose cannon-fire, however, forced them to retire to be out of range, to a ridge (since interpreted as 'Kilblain' Brae, whose top would later become Kilblain Square, only to be, in 1789, renamed yet again to its present George Square, in honour of King George III). This was about 500 paces from and overlooking the shore (at that time a vista devoid of the many intervening buildings which obscure the Clyde from the vantage point nowadays.)

The commander of the **invasion force** - Sir John **Cochrane** of Ochiltree (*younger son* of the Earl of Dundonald), sent off two boatloads to shore under a Major John Fullerton. Carter opines that the invaders were headed to the western side of the kirk graveyard, this, thenabouts, situated very near to the river's edge as previously noted (although that distance would be increased, about a century and a half later, by land reclamation). They landed under musket fire but got safely ashore and into a sort of ditch for shelter.

Meantime, the commander of the **defending force**, Lord William **Cochrane** (*elder son* of the Earl of Dundonald) - who had raised this company of militia-cavalry for royal service - consequently till he could ascertain exactly who the newcomers were, ordered several of his men, officered by John Houston, younger (i.e. heir apparent) of Houston, lieutenant of the troop, plus Thomas Crawford of Cartsburn or Crawfordsburn (i.e. the heritor), its quartermaster, to shadow the strangers when they landed. Houston and his contingent seem to have surreptitiously retraced their steps a little to assume a position nearer the shore (maybe in the vicinity of the present-day West Blackhall Street). Lord William's main force, remained pinned down on the ridge, just out of cannonball range.

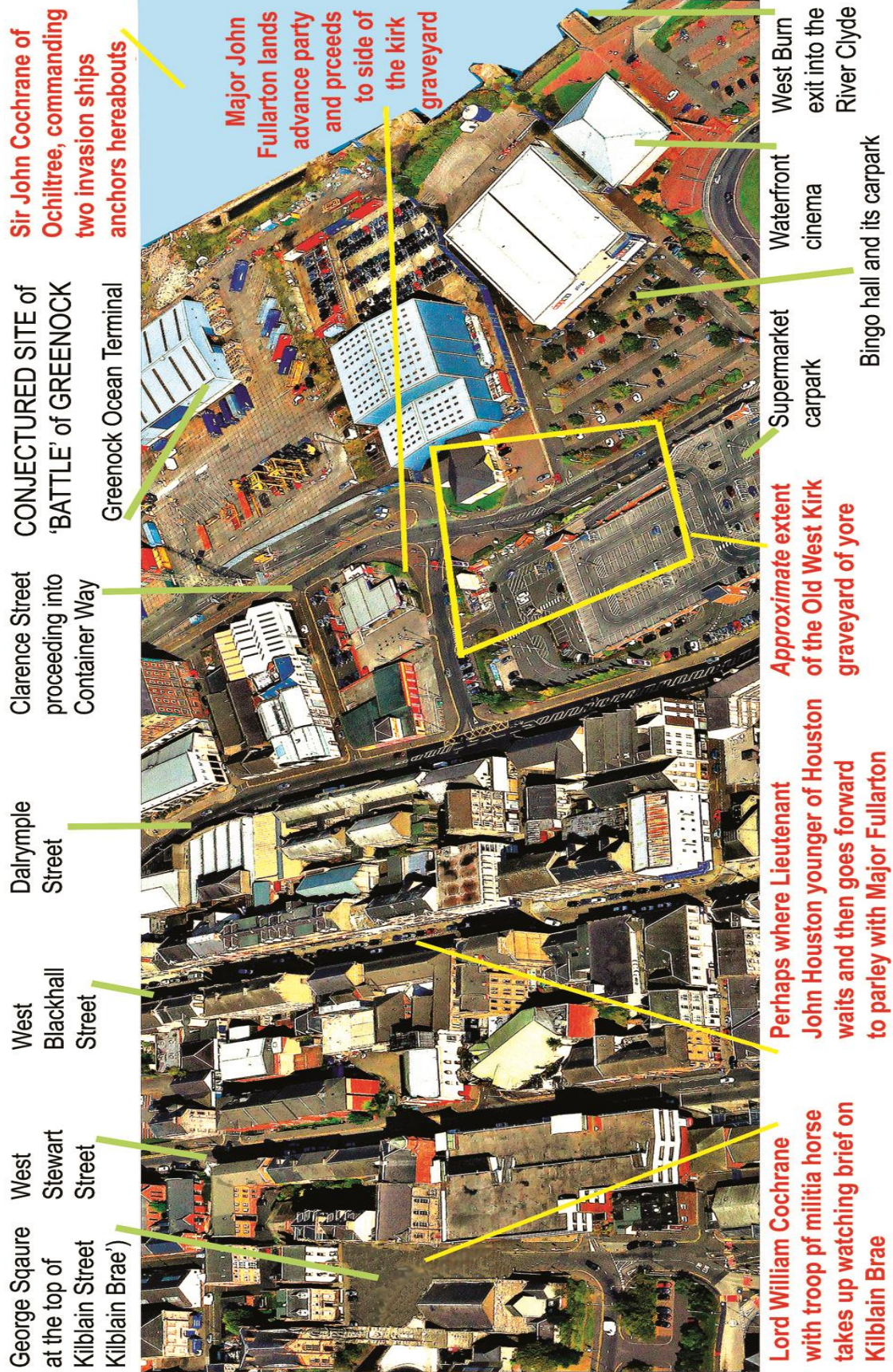
John and William were thus *brothers*. This relationship may be deduced within pages 344-346 of 'The Scots Peerage', Volume 3, (1906), edited by Sir James Balfour Paul.

From hereon in, reference can be made to two witness accounts of the 'battle'; namely:-

- 'The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland', Volume 4 (1832), pages 292-3, by the Reverend Robert Wodrow, (first published, in original format in 1721) wherein Wodrow includes a version of events related by "a worthy gentleman who was present at this little scuffle"! So an *eyewitness* bystander, thus *nonparticipant*.
- 'A selection of the Papers from the Earls of Marchmont', Volume 3 (1831), which relates "Sir Patrick Hume's narrative of the Earle of Argyle's expedition" on pages 47-8, Hume being in the invasion party, so an *eyewitness* but a *partisan* participant.

Unsurprisingly, the witness perceptions diverge in some vital respects. Anyway, Hume takes up the train of events in his 'narrative' - unfortunately in rather disjointed phrases!

As an opening gambit, Hume had ordered the ship guns to fire, intent upon causing the horsemen to retreat "up the hill" (as above-noted, Kilblain Brae), but, due to assessing it as not practical to put enough men ashore to combat the opposition, he had, initially, advised against a landing. But observing the disconcerted withdrawal of the horsemen plus Major Fullerton going ashore anyway, he now reconsidered his own hesitance.



Conjectural overlay on a modern view of Greenock of the 1685 so-called 'Battle of Greenock

Note: photograph pre-dates construction of the 'Greenock Ocean Terminal' pontoon.

Photograph by courtesy of Peel Ports Group, Ltd. Photographed by Guthrie Aerial Photography, Helensburgh

“I had a great kindness for Mr. Fullarton, commanding. I, seeing this, [i.e. Fullarton’s sortie ashore] sent a boat full, and went myself in a little pinnace with other six, all it would hold. Fullarton’s boate only was landed when the pinnace came ashore. He drew up twelve firelocks [i.e. a dozen men so armed with this type of gun] in a little yard, seeing as many horsemen coming towards him. Houston of that Ilk [Houston of Houston] younger, commanding the partie held up a handkerchief; whereupon Fullarton with three went out to parly; but while parlying, Houston fired on him, then ran off, the other [Fullarton] fired after him, and as some other of the horsemen came up to fire, the other three with Fullarton fired and beat them off. By this time other two boates with men landed, and wee came, and joining Fullarton, drew up the whole party together; but our great gunes played over us, as I had ordered; [and the shots] came near the body of horse [presumably still on Kilblain Brae] and made them reell; so they marched off over the hill and left us. Then Sir John landed, and we went in the towne and took some meal out of a girnell and a pretty barque out of the harbour, and returned to Rothesay.”

The version of the ‘worthy gentleman’, who was Robert Wodrow’s raconteur, interprets the same sequence of events - as has been intimated previously - *somewhat differently!*

“When Major Fullartoun landed near the kirk of Greenock, John Houstoun younger of that Ilk [‘of that Ilk’ is another method of saying ‘of Houston’] lieutenant of the troop, and Thomas Crawford of Crawordsburn, eldest [he had a son of the same name], quartermaster to it, with some gentlemen in company, rode down towards Mr. Fullartoun and his men, who had put up a signal for parley; and Houstoun having expostulated with the Major on their invasion, he answered - ‘They were come to their native country for the preservation of the protestant religion, and liberties of their country, and it was a pity such brave gentlemen should appear against them in the service of a popish tyrant and usurper.’ Upon which Houstoun said he was a liar, and discharged his pistols amongst them, as did also the rest of the gentlemen with him, and the Major and his men returned their fire very briskly, but did no execution; only Houstoun’s horse, being of mettle, and unused with the fire, threw him, but he was soon remounted and returned to the troop. Upon their flight, Sir John with the rest came ashore, and entered the town of Greenock, and endeavoured to prevail with the inhabitants to join in defence of religion and liberty. He seized about forty bolls of meal for the use of the army, and then, upon a false alarm, went off in the night...” (The town thenabouts would be little more than the extent of today’s ‘Historic Quarter’: i.e. Rue End and Cathcart Streets, perhaps.)

In ‘A History of Clan Campbell’, Volume 3 (2004), by Alastair Campbell of Airds, on page 46, states that, upon entering Greenock, the invaders “found a marked lack of enthusiasm, although they did manage to obtain some thirty seamen, some of whom had volunteered”. So, *some* recruitment - but with the hint that it was largely pressurised.

Which side, in this sallying and manoeuvring, initiated the parley and what exacerbated the dialogue into mutual recrimination, loud enough for snatches to be overheard by the ‘worthy gentleman’? Actually, it doesn’t really matter. There is no quarrel more toxic than that which divides close-family and friendships. Although dialogue had slipped so soon to slanging, it probably had established - though this not recorded by either of the two accounts - that the opponents were led by brothers. Anyway, maybe there was hesitation by the negotiator-parties to proceed to bloodletting without seeking express permission, each side from its own Cochrane leader. The loosing off of reciprocal pistol shots, that “*did no execution*” at a range at which this would seem unlikely if

meant to hit, hints at this as mere posturing for effect between opponents who, although irascible and peeved, did not want to hurt one another. However, if prudence had not thus prevailed, the fray could easily have escalated into a fierce firefight in which the kirk, its graveyard and Old Manse - sole protection in the area - would have inevitably formed the main battleground, with volleys from snipers using gravestones as cover. And, if the kirk had become a citadel for the defenders, it might have been raked by cannon salvos from the ships and thereby wrecked. Thankfully, confrontation had remained - as Wodrow's 'worthy gentleman' had disparagingly scoffed - a "little scuffle"!

In fact, the entire rebellion would peter out ingloriously. Williamson states, on page 57 of 'Old Cartsburn', that "the Earl, being taken by Sir John Schaw Younger of Greenock, at Inchinnan Water, was carried into the town of Renfrew, and when at some refreshment there, he met Thomas Craufurd of Craufurdsburn, to whom he had a peculiar regard, and to whom he gave a silver snuff box as a token of his respect:

'Thomas, it has pleased Providence to frown on my attempt but, remember, I tell you, ere long one shall take up this quarrel whose shoes I am not worthy to carry, who will not miscarry in his undertaking.'" (He was referring to William, Prince of Orange, who would indeed take away the kingship from the stem Stuart line in 1688.) Thus, despite the Earl of Argyle/Argyll and Craufurd of Cartsburn/Craufurdsburn finding themselves on opposite sides in this conflict "They were old, and had been intimate friends" and, probably, deeply regretted being divided in such matter.

'A History of Clan Campbell' Volume 3, by Alastair Campbell, on page 50 states of the capture: "To young Greenock [i.e. John Schaw, Younger] Argyll gave two purses of gold, his gold watch and a gold box said later to have contained jewels, to look after."

The foregoing exemplifies how this arrantly arrogant despot, King Charles II, had not only fomented civil war, plus internecine rupture among co-religionist, but had also riven asunder "old friends" - and even siblings, such as the Cochranes - as above-noted.

Anyway, despite a narrow escape from envelopment and potential destruction, **the wee kirk had survived it all, unscathed.**



The above present-day photo, taken from the pontoon in Greenock Ocean Terminal, shows Right to Left, the waterfront cinema; the outlet of the culverted West Burn that separated the old Feudal Baronies of Finnart and Greenock; the cruise reception building; the waterfront leisure centre and the West College Campus. The viewpoint simulates from where the crews of the 'David' and 'Sofie', at anchor offshore, would have viewed the militia horsemen converging from the east over green fields then, now obscured by the buildings. Later, the site would be filled by the shipbuilding yards, in sequence, of Scotts, Cairds, and Harland & Wolff, this described in the 'Seventh Phase' of this narrative, beginning on page 46.

Fourth Phase : West Kirk : 1685 - 1832 : further turmoil but also transformation

Although the exigencies of the politico-religious turmoil would continue long unabated, it would not again intrude so close to home as it had in 1685. Thus, the heritors could turn more of their attention to consider the long outstanding transformation of the kirk.

The original core was, by evolution not pre-ordination, transmuted into a cruciform configuration by a transept blended into the nave, but the two stubby transept wrings, however, not added contemporaneously.. One of the wings, so produced, was allocated to Thomas Crawford, as 'The Cartsburn Aisle' (also called: loft, gallery or balcony). The 'Cartsburn Aisle' balcony would become the 'organ loft' in 1874 when such a "kist o whistles with the Devil in every pipe" was allowed by a relenting Church of Scotland.

The wing opposite was 'The Schaw Aisle', this entered at its rear from outside by a handsome stone staircase. Thus the laird did not have to mingle with the holloi-polloi!

(When later historians described these new appurtenances, pews are indicated too, from which may be deduced the existence now of a modicum of flooring plus seating for all.)

Nianian Hill, in "The Story of the Old West Kirk", on page 10, intimates how, toward the end of the 17th century, adjacent to 'The Schaw Aisle', another two-floored extension was abutted onto the outside kirk wall. Its lower chamber, which was entered from the churchyard, was used as a mortuary, especially for cadavers recovered from the adjacent River Clyde. The upper chamber, entered from inside of 'The Schaw Aisle' itself, was a 'retiring room' for the laird and his family. (The photo shows these additions as seen at the present-day but are much as they'd have looked also, of yore.)



The upper chamber - i.e. the laird's 'retiring room' - was redeployed much later as the vestry, but, at the time of being built, it doubled as the 'Kirk Session House' (a name for the room where the kirks ruling body would hold its periodic meetings). Maybe the fireplace, incorporated within the room, would have been welcome in the *weeknight* deliberations of that august group of a winter's evening, but, if it were also used to warm the laird's family prior to their entering the frozen kirk on a Sunday morning, this implies being *pre-lit by a maidservant*, confounding the noted Biblical prohibition of work done on the Sabbath Day! However, this begs the question: would the clergyman dare to remonstrate, on the point, with the heritor of his ministerial incumbency?

{Presbyterian theologians were to debate for years what extenuating circumstances - pertaining to eating, heating and acts of mercy - might attenuate rigid observance of this Biblical blanket-dictum. Also the degree of stricture may have varied per church.}

The erection of a gallery, presumably at the kirk's expense - termed the Farmers' Loft/Gallery' - at the rear of the kirk nave - this, as Ninian Hill states in his book, on page 31 - especially "for accommodation of the country folk from the landward portion of the parish" (i.e. not only actual farmers but anyone from that area and station in life) - prompted a petition in 1697 to the 'Session', by the "Masters of Ships and Seamen in this parroch", to insert a similar loft/gallery for their own kind and at their own expense.

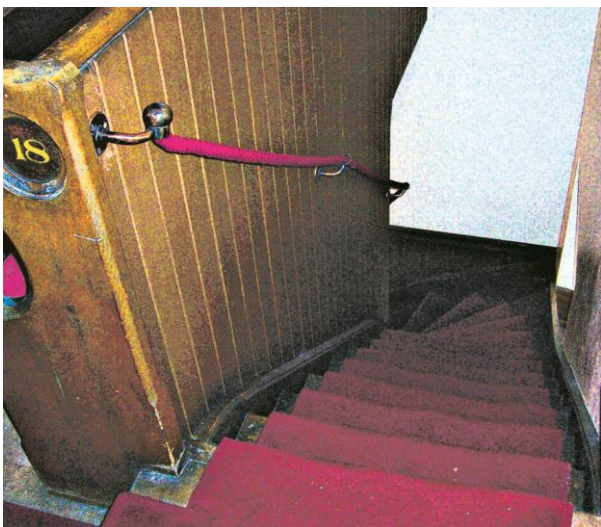
This came to pass at the opposite extremity of the nave from the Farmers' Loft/Gallery, the year thereafter. Within its pew-seating, a hierarchal gradation applied: i.e.: the front row "was covered with blue cloth fastened by brass nails and furnished with cushions, for none under the rank of captain"; the second row had blue cloth but minus the nails and cushions, being reserved for "mates"; whereas the remaining two rows - for the able-seamen - were of bare pine! (It is oft averred that rank has its privileges; in this case obviously entitling pampering of posteriors!) To recoup the financial outlay from creating this 'eyrie', admission was restricted to specific people and, also, was charged per visit by a 'sentry' at the foot. One entrusted such was a retired, 'follically-challenged' seagoer, 'Baldy Pin', he "with a wooden leg and blind of an eye"! "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"! Apart from such overlooked sharp-practice, "his duty was to classify all claimants to the seats and to ward off female worshippers..."! So tells Ninian Hill, in his book, on page 33.

{“The ‘Sailors’ Box’ was [emblematic, during the period involved, of] a sort of corporation possessed of considerable funds, which they lent out at interest.” So states George Williamson in ‘Old Greenock, in a footnote on page 28. Presumably, the fund might, additionally, have been used to succour indigent and/or injured local seamen.}

Formerly the stair leading the Sailors' Loft was at the other side of the kirk from where later placed. Ninian Hill, on page 32, states: "It was the only stair inside the church."

Oh that the apocryphal tale that has been put about could be substantiated; namely that, initially, *no stairway* was provided to reach the loft, so that the matelots must *shin up a rope* from the floor below, being adept in this due to climbing in the sailing-ship rigging! However, mariners of maturer years, not so spry as in their youth, would thus be precluded from engaging in such 'acrobatics'! As, potentially, might also senior naval personnel, veterans in navigation but no longer so nimble through being out of

condition/practice; and conscious, in the need for decorum, not to regress to cavort in an unseemly manner, hence a spectacle for amusement/sly derision by their subordinates!



It is possible that the rope to reach the loft/gallery was a later misunderstanding of the fact that the access stairway to the loft never had a solid handrail but, instead only the **rope-banister** shown, this laced through wall-mounted eyelet/brackets, at intervals of a couple of metres apart over the length of the staircase. For a squeezed-in stairway, steep and surprisingly awkward to climb even for an agile person today, ascent is greatly facilitated by hauling oneself up by this handy rope - *moreover*, clutching it likewise to ensure a safe descent!

Two further lofts within the kirk were eventually created but neither has survived. “One of them extended from the Schaw Loft [Aisle] to the Farmers’ Loft, and contained only three pews.” So states Ninian Hill on page 16. Nevertheless, such an overhang as that must surely have required support by pillars from the main floor beneath.

1767 saw - as Williamson in ‘Old Greenock’ on page 26, states - “The walls to be raised three and a half foot higher” and, presumably by replacement of the barrel-vaulting, the “the whole of the roof... covered with Isdale slates” (i.e. from Easdale, an islet 16 miles south of Oban which once had seven slate quarries - all now defunct).

Around this time too, perhaps the kirk’s most famous parishioner was at the zenith of his career. **James Watt** (pictured right in 1839 by an unknown artist) - Greenock’s technologist and inventor, par excellence, of world renown - had doubtless, from his 1740s infancy until he left his birthplace to work in Glasgow in the mid-18th century, sat regularly of a Sunday in the family pew, located just underneath the balcony of ‘The Cartsburn Aisle’. Later, he would write about how he had received his own kind of *epiphany* (this, be it noted however, with an *engineering* rather than a *Biblical* theme!)



It commences: “I had gone to take a walk on a fine Sabbath afternoon in 1765”. Presumably, this activity did not *theoretically* breach the Sunday non-working embargo, so long as one were musing upon holy scripture! But, on this occasion, James was *not* occupied in such a lofty pursuit, although intellectual in its own fashion. Instead he was - as he admits in this reminiscence - puzzling as to how he could make the fledgling steam engines of his era more energy-efficient. All of a sudden, the notion came to him of introducing a ‘separate condenser’ into the machine which would prevent heat dissipating from the working cylinder during each stroke of

the piston, a loss which, up until then, had consequently diminished the overall thermal efficiency hence mechanical efficacy. His improvement would subsequently enable the same power to be generated by an engine which had a much reduced bulk and weight, thus rendering practical its incorporation into traction vehicles on land and ships at sea.

{Until that time engines had been stationary only but, henceforth, they could be mobile! Watt's simple but genius idea was the 18th century's equivalent, in sense of progress, to the 1967 first moon landing: "One small step for a man: one giant leap for mankind", insofar that it would, in effect, kick-start the industrial revolution! Watt must have experienced great excitement at his brilliant brainwave, but, nevertheless, forbore to commit it, either to paper or experiment, till the Monday morning. This says much for his deference to the religious doctrinal mores instilled during his youth. Unfortunately, as will be seen, further in this story, his morality would be sullied in another context.}

Despite all of the above-noted means to expand the wee kirk's capacity, erection of a second place of Presbyterian worship had become an absolute necessity. Thereby, a congregation formed in 1741, after conducting its services in ad hoc accommodation, obtained a permanent home in 1761, in Greenock's 'Mid Kirk' (since 1966, 'Wellpark Mid-Kirk') this built on ground donated by the then Lord Cathcart in Cathcart Square, which the latter owned.(thus the name). So intimates Robert Murray Smith, in 'The History of Greenock', on page 254. "After the opening... the two churches were referred to as the 'New Parish' and the 'Old Parish'". So states, Jess S. Bolton, in 'The Old West Kirk', on page vi. However, in due course, Johnne Schaw's kirk would be known, and differentiated by its directional location, in the town, as the 'West Kirk'.

Addition of the 'New Parish/Mid Kirk', *still however*, proved insufficient to keep pace with the swelling populace of Greenock. This was the age wherein began transatlantic commerce. However, Greenock's late 17th - late 19th century industry (operated in the financial interest of a societal elite where any benefit to the ordinary people was a by-product, not the intention) was orientated to service the African-Negro slave-driven economy of the West Indies plantations, producing sugar, transported over the Atlantic to be refined in Greenock. Greenock's elite owned both the refineries and shares in the plantations themselves. There were likewise cotton and tobacco imports to Greenock from the also Negro-slave-worked plantations of the southern United States of America.

The Book of Genesis, Chapter 9, Verses 18-27, relates of Noah (saved by God in the great flood which devastated the earth and whose three sons were designated by God to repopulate the continents) that, when one of them, 'Ham' (Hebrew for black, signifying swarthy skinned) inadvertently offended Noah, the latter cursed Ham's progeny to be servants to their (white-skinned) brethren. This Biblical text was conflated, by the 18th - 19th centuries European upper echelon, to contrive, in general, a racial stereotyping of non-whites as inferior, and, in this particular regard, justification for the oppression of black people, victims of the slave trade, a practice condoned then - and thus accorded a veneer of respectability - by most major religious denominations, enabling this elite to *proclaim and partake in* Christian adherence, apparently absolved and conscience-free!

And this was no less evident in the then Church of Scotland - its 'West Kirk' included - still incongruously operating a system to condemn folk, often for trivia, to be hunched, humbled on a stool of contrition **in social disgrace**, while hypocrites to Christianity sat in their kirk's pew stalls - smug **in societal praise**, at least among their *own* peers - for their entrepreneurship in 'trade': however, trade that was entrenched in human misery!

And, among offenders was James Watt's immediate family. The father and brother of James were mired in actual slave-trafficking which, on one occasion in 1762, James too was - if reluctantly - inveigled into complicity due to fulfilling a family commitment. To be fair, but only mitigating, rather than outright exonerating him of the tainture, it is noted that James did, in a statement of 1791, censure the abomination by the somewhat pious and hazy hope that: "...we heartily pray that the system of slavery, so disgraceful to humanity, were abolished by prudent though progressive measures." Ay, *sometime!* *Unquestionably* he was a **technological** revolutionary - but *nowise* a **sociological** one!

Robert Burns - another of Scotland's great heroes - is also similarly compromised, to some extent, by an oblique connection to slavery. 'Highland Mary' (actually baptised *Margaret* Campbell) - affianced (albeit unofficially) to Burns - had come to Greenock, (where she had kin) in 1786, to arrange passage for them both to emigrate to the West Indies where he proposed taking up the position of 'book-keeper' on a slave-operated plantation. She arrived in company with her brother who intended to take up working in the shipyard around the West Burn estuary (this owned then by the Scott family, and which will be returned to, relating to another matter, later in this narrative). Unfortunately, Greenock was, at the time, in the grip of typhoid fever, which was caught by her brother whom she nursed and from whom she contracted it herself, to die therefrom and be buried in the graveyard of the West Kirk in a lair owned by her Greenock relatives.

{Burns subsequently jettisoned any thought of going to the West Indies and was to redeem his humanitarian credentials through his paeon-anthem of social egalitarianism, based upon intrinsic worthiness and ethics, not inherited rank: 'A Man's a Man for a' that!'(1795). Its famous lines, extoll the common bond of all humanity: " Then, let us pray that come it may, as come it will for a' that; that man tae man, the world o'er shall brithers be for a' that!" Also, although probably not the actual author of the lyric of 'A Slave's Lament' - which captures the heart-rending anguish of an enslaved person from Senegal - he saved the poem and its melody from oblivion by including it in his collection published with posterity in mind, of the Scottish folksongs in danger of being forgotten thenabouts.}

*{Such bouts of pestilence as above-noted - caused by Greenock's poorer people having no option but to drink contaminated water - were endemic to the town for another century at least, this even after a splendid new water system (which would later be called Loch Thom) had been inaugurated in 1827. This was due to the fact that the 'hard-nosed' directorate involved in its construction (much of whose money derived, directly or indirectly, from West Indies slavery plantations) would sell the pure liquid only to those who could afford it. Such affluence did not apply to most of the ordinary folk of the town. It was thus only after 1866, when an enlightened Greenock Corporation (the former name for Greenock Council) under its **Provost James Johnstone Grieve** (pictured right) could buyout the water company, that thereafter the malady would begin to be rectified. Increases in supply, to enable all of Greenock's population to benefit (i.e. the poor too) were finally addressed by constructing additional reservoirs*



in 1872, plus heightening the embankment of Loch Thom to increase capacity. Thereby, “the health of the town began to improve gradually as the new developments, which swept away many of the older houses and improved the sewage system, began to take effect.” (It is perhaps apropos of nothing but James Johnstone Grieve was the grandfather to Ninian Hill, the author - much quoted herein.)}

{Paradoxically the slave-driven era co-incided, with the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’ (a name coined later than the 18th to early 19th century epoch which it took place in). This was a phenomenon of intellectual, literary, scientific, medical, technological and artistic attainment which, nevertheless ironically, still managed not to very much ameliorate, far less to counteract the base, commercial exploitation of slavery abroad and the grinding servitude of the poor ordinary workers in the Scottish homeland.}

Despite the turmoils of the foregoing age, significant improvements had been made in the West Kirk by its two heritors, despite their pre-occupation with the era’s politics.

Nevertheless, due to neglect in some other aspects, destitution had also taken its toll.

Just as the recent past had experienced *allegorical* wear and tear in the ‘fabric’ of Scotland and her National Kirk, so there had also been *physical* wear in tear in the actual fabric of Greenock’s original kirk, and this would have devastating ramifications.

In due course, when the importance of ‘Highland Mary’ being buried in Greenock had been recognised in the story of Robert Burns’ life, in 1842, a memorial stone was added to her resting place in the Old West Kirk graveyard. Contemporary press reportage indicated that “this stone has been erected by the contributions of many admirers of Scotia’s Bard in memory of his early love Mary Campbell or Highland Mary.”

These financial contributors would almost certainly be from Greenock’s upper echelon who, despite effusion of romantic pathos, nevertheless, could simultaneously disregard how Mary had died from a pestilence caused by lack of a pure water supply for all!

The pictures below show, respectively, the stone in its former and present locations



See also page 49 for the removal of Mary’s mortal remain to a new resting place Greenock Municipal Cemetery, in 1920, to which site the memorial stone was, thereafter, transplanted.

Fifth Phase : West Kirk : 1632 - 1863 : decrepitude, desertion, and disruption

In 1832, there enters into the 'West Kirk' story the Reverend Patrick McFarlan, Doctor of Divinity, a charismatic, sometimes controversial and, certainly, kenspeckle figure.

By now the 'male only' benches of the Old West Kirk's early days, had been, as Ninian Hill, informs (yet reproaches) in 'The Story of the Old West Kirk', page 12, "replaced by the narrow, uncomfortable pews". Whereas, nowadays the nether-region numbing is somewhat cushioned by padded strips laid along the length of each pew, but then there was no such concession. Frugality not 'falderals' and, thus, fraught discomfort was deliberate lest parishioners might envisage that they attended kirk for luxurious pleasure! And on page 14, Hill goes on to reveal how "the flooring under the pews was little better than open sparring leaving the earth below quite visible." "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."

The Reverend J. Marshall Scoular, 1960s minister of what is nowadays 'Westburn Church,' and author of the booklet about it (and its predecessor, the West Kirk) namely. 'The Old Kirk, Greenock, A History 1591-1791-1970', states regarding Johnne Schaw's kirk, on page 5: "In 1835 a petition was lodged with the Presbytery which stated that the kirk was most uncomfortable and unhealthy. Dr McFarlan maintained that the congregation were sitting 'on a sea of mud'. The graveyard had become so full that the earth outside was two feet above the level of the floor of the church, and in rainy weather it was necessary to place boards to enable the people to step in at the doors"!

Despite the forthright foregoing derogation by Dr. McFarlan, according to the Rev. Scoular: "It took the Presbytery two years before it condemned the building." Moreover, not till 1839 did Presbytery approve plans for a new replacement church.

This spacious replacement was of the non-fancy oblong shape favoured for Presbyterian churches then. The Rev. Scoular describes it on page 6 as: "a square squat building, standing in a quiet wooded thoroughfare". Indeed, such was Nelson Street (named after Admiral Lord Nelson) *theneabouts* at its junction with Brisbane Street. To it, in **1841**, the congregation of the old kirk moved, abandoning the latter to fall into parlous ruin. They took with them anything moveable, including the 'Tam o lang' bell which would only again resound in service after being housed in a fine, tall steeple, eventually added to the new church in 1855. (It remains there today, although totally silent now.)

Also, among things transferred to the new-build, was the church's name. From its outset, it would expropriate the designation '**West Kirk**', whereby its old predecessor would, henceforth, bear the name that it has, ever since, retained: the '**Old West Kirk**'.

And what of the manse? It is necessary to dip back into previous history. George Williamson, in his 'Old Greenock', on pages 31-2, makes various statements relative to his own standpoint at the 1888 date of his book's publication. These are, namely:-

- "there is no doubt whatever that the old manse... now standing is on the original site."
- "No doubt... the manse was a very primitive building, and like all the others, within the bounds, would have a thatch or heather roof."

- “The date 1625, cut upon a gable, indicates its *antiquity*, but not the *date of erection*.” (The italics are Williamson’s)
- “In 1699...it was reported that the manse ‘was not sufficient,’ as it ‘wanted a cellar, was abused with underwater, the office-houses, namely, the barn, brew-house, and stable want riggin, storm boards are wanting for the windows, and lyming for the window tops, and yet the family is much incommoded by reason of smোক.”
- “The complaints of the manse culminated at length in an arrangement... whereby it should be conveyed to Mr. Shaw Stewart (afterwards Sir John Shaw Stewart) ‘in excambation [i.e. substitution by equivalent] for a new manse, offices and garden, to be built more commodious, and on such a situation as should appear most commodious, the heritors to be at the sole expense...” The two heritors of the parish, at that time, would be Sir Michael Stewart 3rd Baronet, (i.e. Mr. John Stewart’s father), and Thomas Crawford 4th Laird of Cartsburn or Craufurdsburn.
- “The new feu [i.e. site] was situated at the west end of Clarence Street... and has now been absorbed by the buildings of the Glebe Sugar Refinery.” (This is still extant in the 21st century, although, for decades, in a dilapidated, unoccupied state).
- “Mr. Shaw Stewart, having thus obtained possession of the Old Manse, sold it by public roup...” This was in 1787 after which, accordingly, it ceases to be in the kirk’s ambit.

The illustration of the Old Manse in Williamson’s book shows it to be commodious. Also, not thatched but slate-roofed.



It would, presumably, look as above at the time of when the old kirk’s congregation, under its minister, the **Reverend Patrick M’Farlan**, (pictured left) migrated, in 1841, to its new home in Nelson Street. (Nowadays that building is called ‘Westburn Church’ due to its location close by the West Burn to its rear and an adjacent sugar refinery which operated from 1896 to 1997, named thus),

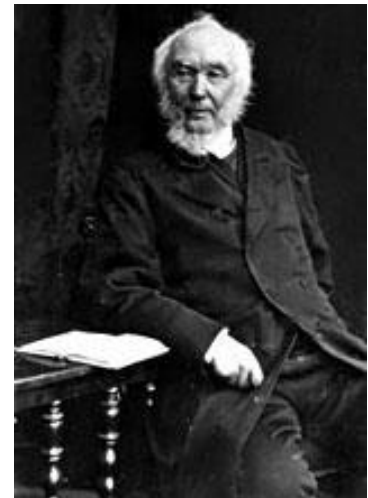
Williamson, on page 108 writes that “Dr. M’Farlan never occupied the old manse, which had been let to tenants.”

Anyway, quite apart from any problems for Dr. M’Farlan in the context of a manse, more importantly was the fact that the tenure, by him and his congregation in its new Nelson Street church was to prove extremely short-lived. To explain the reason for this it is necessary, yet once again, to dip back into history.

In conjunction with the 1707 Act of Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments to form that of Great Britain, another act was passed, guaranteeing that the Church of Scotland would remain the 'Established Church' of Scotland. However, in 1711, the Parliament passed the 'Patronage Act' which expropriated to the heritor landowners of Scotland the exclusive right to choose ministers for the Established Church within their landholdings, this synchronising it with the system prevalent in England but anathema to the Church of Scotland. As has been noted, when that church had been Presbyterian as opposed to Episcopalian, the choice of minister had been the democratic prerogative of each individual church membership plus the Presbytery. Now, however, by being an 'Established Church' within the British 'Union', this tied it to the British State with subservience to the British Parliament's diktat, and thus its English members' majority! 'Established' status had not protected but, ironically, had cost the Kirk its autonomy. Such foreignly imposed legislation, now caused long, ranking controversy within the Church of Scotland which ultimately culminated in a schism termed the 'Disruption'.

Thus in 1843, 450 'resenting' ministers out of 1,200 seceded from the Church of Scotland - including a dozen of Greenock's then sixteen, with the Reverend McFarlan a seceder. Most of the 'flocks' from their kirks followed their respective clergymen to compositely constitute the 'Free Church of Scotland', enshrining the previous right of each congregation to select its minister, subject to no State or other interference. In this principled venture, they forfeited everything but thrived through indomitable zeal to expeditiously construct their own alternative churches plus manses, and even schools.

The Nelson Street (New) West Kirk building, which had remained within the Church of Scotland's ambit and had consequently been denuded probably of the majority of its membership by the intrepid 'Disruption'-exodus, would, nevertheless, because of the continuing surge of incoming population within the district, in due course garner a fresh congregation and likewise prosper under a new well-loved minister, **Dr. James Melville McCulloch** (pictured right). Ultimately his memory would become synonymous with the addition of the steeple in 1855, and, in 1856, a multi-faceted clock mounted within it, but regrettably now removed. The kirk - now named as **Westburn Church**, as previously noted, is pictured below, as it appears nowadays.



By the 1860s, the Old West Kirk languished woebegone - and therefore crumbling.

However, what, in the meanwhile, happened to the churches ‘derivative’ therefrom?

The Nelson Street church, during many years of existence, has had other names during subsequent decades (e.g. St. Luke’s).

The congregation which seceded from it - effectively that that had transplanted from the Old West Kirk - would ultimately aspire to worship in a specially built edifice in Ardgowan Street (No. 4 nowadays) this being located almost at its junction with Nelson Street (and pictured right). The Rev. Scoular’s booklet, ‘The Old Kirk’, on page 6, informs that: “This was known as the **Free West Kirk**” then.



That building was sold to the Methodist denomination in 1862, whereupon “the congregation moved across the road to the building [to that which would later become] St. Mark’s Greenbank Church” (11 Ardgowan Street). This was demolished in 1992 and replaced by a block of flats. However, its congregation had amalgamated in 1985 to form St Luke’s Church, which (due to yet later church amalgamations) would become Westburn Church. Worship of the composite congregation now took place in the latter’s building in Nelson Street.

By the ‘Church Patronage (Scotland) Act 1874’ (163 years after the above-noted 1711 Act) *patronage* was abolished, thus reverting to each Church of Scotland congregation - along with Presbytery approbation - the right of choosing its minister. In the decades following formation of the Free Church, there had been rifts within it, resulting in splinter-denominations formed. In 1929, a majority of ‘United Free Church’ members re-entered the Church of Scotland, although a body, continuing under the name, ‘United Free Church’, exists to this day. So, the deep wounds, inflicted due to the meddling in Scottish affairs, of a Parliament located outside of Scotland, weren’t altogether healed.

However, presumably in light of the above-noted rapprochement, St. Mark’s Greenbank Church had become a kirk within the ‘Church of Scotland’. Thus, it could be argued that its members, in joining St Luke’s/Westburn, by association made its congregation *the* continuity to the pre-1841 Parish Kirk of Greenock. And, due to the foregoing, St. Luke’s was wont to colloquially refer to itself as ‘The Old Kirk’, this causing some contention with the ‘Old West Kirk’ as to which kirk had proper claim to such a title!

To summarise the respective claims: The ‘Old West Kirkers’ possessed much of the original Greenock kirk **fabric**, whereas the ‘Westburners’ included some desendents of its **membership** in an unbroken succession. However, what *both* of the congregations ought factually to *be most proud of is a joint and equal heritage* from the original kirk.

As hinted by the foregoing statement, the Old West Kirk would, ultimately survive to embrace a new future, despite that, in 1841, its fate looked ominously uncertain.

Sixth Phase : Old West Kirk ('North Parish') : 1863 - 1917: renovation & rebirth

Greenock's perennial population explosion of yore being relentless, the 1860s saw local Church of Scotland seating again outpaced. To address this, a "momentous meeting was held in Greenock's Council Hall on Friday, April 17th, 1863: Business: 'the Restoration of the Old West Kirk'" The previously mentioned "Provost Grieve, as Chairman... said that he had recently been one of a deputation to Sir Michael Robert Shaw Stewart to ask his consent to the proposed restoration... and went on the say that Sir Michael had agreed, provided he was relieved of any responsibility in connection with its future repair." So relates Jess S. Bolton, in "The Old West Kirk", on page 21.

{Putting this in family context: in 1752, the male direct descent of the Schaws of Greenock had expired, with the heiress to the lands having married into the Stewart of Ardgowan family. From thence derived the 'Shaw Stewart' hybrid surname eventually adopted by the ongoing lineage which would add the Schaw-owned estates to the Ardgowan ones. In the context of the 'Shaw' Greenock aspect, the Shaw Stewart of the time would thereupon become both Laird of Greenock (plus its ancillary estates such as Finnart) and also a heritor of the Old West Kirk. (It was theoretically still the parish church of Greenock Parish although there were other Presbyterian churches.)}

*{Actually, such double-barrelling of surnames as aforementioned was inimical to Scottish nomenclature as it was reckoned that a person should not be a member of two (perhaps at some stage contending) clans. Indeed, the practice - insidiously introduced from England after the 1707 Union of Parliaments - although it had been accepted before the time of Sir Michael Robert, 7th Baronet, above-noted - it had been resented by some amongst his predecessors. For example, John, the 4th Baronet, had preferred to be denoted as Sir J. S. Stewart, thereby implying, by the letter 'S' in his name, that 'Shaw' represented a middle name. And William Semple, author of 'A History of the Shire of Renfrew', Part 2 (1782), on page 84, refers to this same 4th Baronet as 'John-Shaw Stewart', thereby implying, by the positioning of the hyphen, double-barrelling of the forename, not the surname! (An **uncontroversial** consequence of the marital union was that the silent, superfluous, and even confusing letter 'c' was dropped from 'Schaw', so, henceforth, those of the Stewart+Shaw amalgam spelt 'Schaw' as 'Shaw'.)}*

{In 1747, as a direct consequence of the 1745-6 Jacobite Rising to restore the original stem-line Stuart monarchs (exiled on the Continent) to the Throne of Great Britain and Ireland - and the British Government's recognition that the near success of that Rising had been greatly assisted by lairds' ability to legally call out their feudal vassals for military service, even against the 'State', led to Parliament abolishing feudal baronies. Thereafter, although the cognate title for a 'feudal baron', i.e. 'laird', lingered as a heraldic courtesy, it was henceforth shorn of any jurisdictional power (this retracted exclusively to the 'Crown'). Lairdship was diminished to signify purely a landowner. The political curtailment of authority, however, had no effect upon 'heritor' prerogative relative to the Established Church of Scotland. (And, for that matter, lairds, especially, connected to clans, continued, for a long time, to enjoy a societally prestigious status.)}

Anyway, to revert; the aforementioned Sir Michael Robert Shaw Stewart - although, by the Patronage Act, potentially all-powerful in the affairs of this old Greenock Presbyterian kirk as a 'heritor of the parish' - he was now effectively relinquishing that control. Jess S. Bolton, explains in 'The Old West Kirk', on page 23, that: "he had built his own

Episcopal Chapel in 1856 at Ardgowan and had his family burying place at Inverkip.”

I.e., he (as indeed his Stewart family before him and the Shaw Stewart family ongoing) was not of the same religious denomination as the church over which held dominion. However, it is to his credit that he had the common-sense courtesy to conciliate in the circumstances with those of the Presbyterian denomination who could administrate it.

{The connection of the Cartsburn/Crawfurdsburn heritor family - although it was not completely severed by the time of the 1864 renovation, seems to have slackened. The family had married into a family surnamed Macknight with interests maybe elsewhere.}

Restoration of the Old West Kirk was approved by its backers as it being “well placed”, as noted by Jess. S. Bolton’s book on page 32, “where working men and their families could be accommodated ... within their reach.” There were also many incoming ‘migrant’ workers to this workaday area of the town which would make the kirk handy.

During necessary refurbishment, as Ninian Hill states, in the ‘Story of the Old West



Kirk’, on pages 10-11: “The walls were in many places rebuilt in 1864, and faced with polished ashlar in the most approved fashion of the time. The gables were heightened and the north window was enlarged. The tower was built at the same time.” It even got a steeple of sorts. Also, on page, 14, Hill states: “When the old floor was removed in 1864, the basement was dug out and relaid with asphalt. The level of the floor was lowered six inches”.



The main door to the kirk which, from the beginning, had been in the centre of the gable below where the Sailors’ Loft/Gallery would be, was now blocked and a new entrance to the structure was positioned beneath the Cartsburn Gallery, i.e. ‘organ loft’ of today (now minus an organ!)

The pictorial record (left) appears on lithographs taken from drawings by Patrick Downie of the ‘before and after’ renovation appearance of the kirk.

Williamson, in ‘Old Greenock’ on page 42, states how “The church was planted as near as might be in the centre of the originally gifted ground” [i.e. the graveyard]...but “extensions which took place from time to time left a larger space on the west than on any of the other sides. Originally the enclosure was a turf or earthen dyke [wall] “but as it broke down... cattle were allowed to enter,” (attracted by the nutritious grass fertilised by the humus of the burials?) “There were two entrances to the churchyard,

the principal being at the south-east corner where Nicolson and Ropework Streets meet.”... “This was also the gate by which funerals entered.”... “The other entrance... had an arch over it, with the date 1675 on the top.”

Anyway, about the old graveyard, neglected since 1841, Robert Murray Smith in ‘The History of Greenock’, on page 248, advises that: “In 1858 the Town Council received a letter from the heritors with a view to having a conference on the subject. The heritors had recognised that the graveyard was in a condition dangerous to public health, offensive and contrary to decency and should be wholly discontinued as a place of burial. A large number of coffins were heaped up in the church.” However, despite the Council’s promise to “keep the place in order, a lair-holders’ report in 1864 stated that bones and pieces of coffins were in full view.” Renovation tackled that aspect also during the 1864 upgrade, to produce the above-noted result.



The kirk building had assumed much of the external appearance that it has today. It was **opened anew** for worship - its structure regenerated its spirit replete - **on Sunday, December 25th, 1864**, this, Christmas Day but, thenabouts not the Presbyterian festival-date then that it has become now in Scotland, in harmony with the rest of Christendom.

Due to the formation of other churches in the area, from 1872 (so advises Jess S. Bolton, in ‘The Old West Kirk’, on page vi) it became *officially* designated as the ‘North Parish’ Church, although - she asserts - “it was still familiarly called the ‘Old West Kirk.’” (In order not to confuse the situation by changing the name to another used at the time, in this narrative the ‘Old West Kirk’ name will continue to be used.)

As has already been noted, an organ was installed in the kirk in 1874 (just a decade after the kirk was recommissioned) thereupon to be in tune - literally - with what was occurring quite generally in many Church of Scotland kirks. This did away with the ‘precentor’ whose desk had been previously positioned just below the pulpit in the Old West Kirk - a common such location. Ninian Hill, in ‘The Story of the Old West Kirk’, on page 69, states: “In the case of the Old West Kirk, it [i.e. precenting] was only abolished in 1832, when Dr. M’Farlan was inducted”. It would be interesting to learn what regulated the music in the interim between 1832 and advent of the organ in 1874.

Abolition of ‘the precentor’ ended an age-old tradition, commonplace in Scottish Presbyterian worship at a time when no instrumental accompaniment was permitted to guide psalm singing by a congregation, most of whom were illiterate, so couldn’t read the words either. Consequently, they needed to have the words and music ‘presented’ to them, phrase by phrase. First, the precentor would intone the line, hopefully not only loud enough to be heard but articulately and melodiously too. This would then be imitated by the congregation. Perforce, the entire performance would be monotonously slow; with the congregational responses often a ragged, dragged-out, wailing tuneless dirge: the antipathy of benefitting religious euphoria. By contrast, the organ speeded up the tempo, maintained the tune by drowning out those who were tone-deaf, and made for a continuity by linking up the lines of the text, so adding to the understanding

of these songs of praise to God. In fact, affording enjoyment; an aspect which had been almost previously disapproved of as somehow averse to the gravitas of religion!

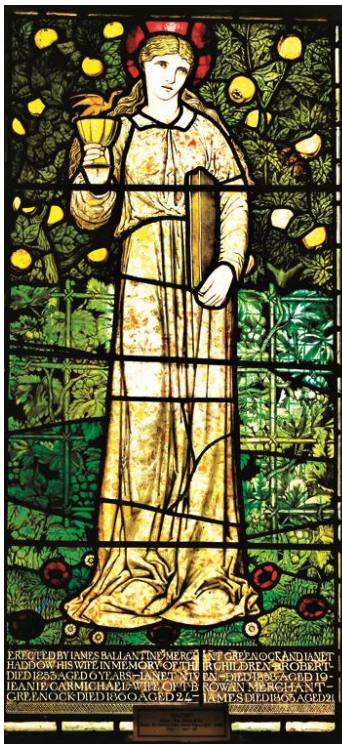
Actually, ‘precented’ psalms - properly sung - can be very evocative and beautiful! (Hymns also became introduced in the Church of Scotland and Free Kirks in the 1870s.)

The focal position of the pulpit (located more-or-less where the Crawford Aisle meets the nave of the kirk) rendered it visible from every seat in the kirk - but, conversely, every seat in the kirk could be scrutinised by the minister when he was in the pulpit: a potential which might deter attendees surreptitiously snoozing during tedious sermons!

Anyway, the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’ - short on ‘humanities’ during its timespan - had, notwithstanding, maybe ushered in an age when the Church of Scotland would soften its hardline attitudes in some respects without surrendering its Christian principles.

For instance, *whereas*, during the Old West Kirk’s early life it had been totally unglazed, with then having had plain leaded-glass panels introduced into its apertures (perhaps only sparsely, initially) now, by contrast, following the 1864 fabric upgrade, the 17th century witnessed a *most dramatic rectification* of this former omission.

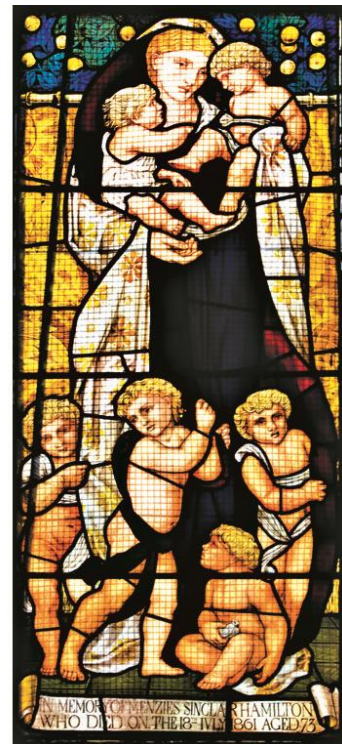
Jess S. Bolton, in ‘The Old West Kirk’, on page 42, tells how the librarian of Greenock between 1868 and 1894, Allan Park Paton, who was also a “well-known patron of the Arts, was instrumental in placing commissions for four stained glass windows with the prestigious firm of William Morris” and “designed by associates of Morris, the Pre-Raphaelite artists, Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as well as a fifth by the elder Cottier... five windows... among some of the finest examples of modern stained glass and have attracted attention from many parts of the world.” For instance:-



**‘Faith’ by
Sir Edward Burne-Jones**



**‘Hope’ by
Edward Daniel Cottier (the elder)**



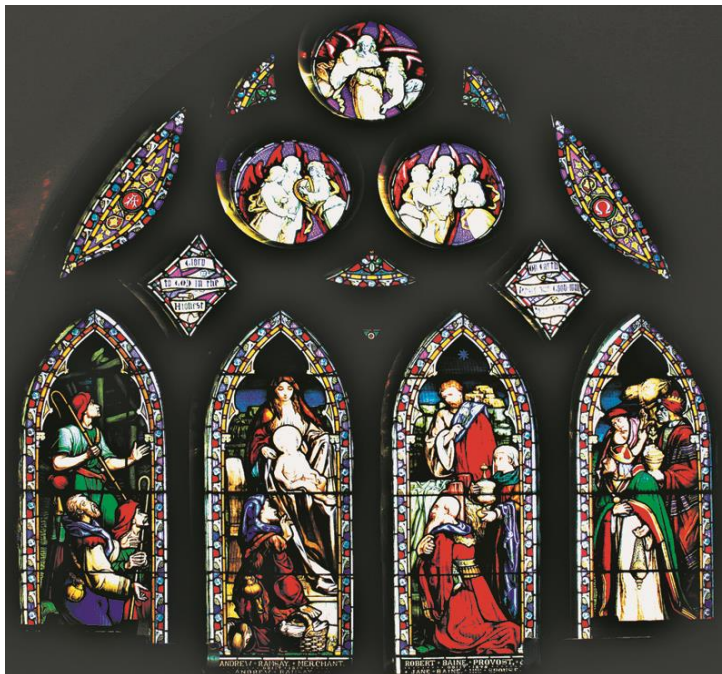
**‘Charity’ (or ‘Love’) by
Dante Gabriel Rossetti**

Photographs of the windows are reproduced by courtesy of their photographer, David Mackinnon

{And what of the name that gave this genre its identity? Raffaello Sanzio - Raphael, 1483-1520 - an eminent painter of his time, chose to emulate the classical, posed and stylised art that was the cultural hallmark of Rome and Greece. Later artists, however, considered this to be staged and staid, so preferred the more realistic, naturalistic, freer, vibrant technique of the Renaissance era which had preceded Raphael. In reverting to this type of artistic expression, they used 'Raphael' as a watershed 'label'.}

These first windows began a collection of 16 'illuminated' panes in the church, such that, "when the sun shines, glorious colours blaze from every gallery and niche, turning the interior into a living rainbow of light." Thus extols Jess Bolton, on her page 42.

It was a measure of embellishment which the intransigent austerity of even a generation before would not have countenanced, but whose beauty did not detract one whit from, but - in fact - greatly enhanced the kirk's ambient pious dignity. Other examples of this "rainbow of light" are the apex stained glass windows, illustrated below.



Above - 'The Last Supper'

Left: hand - 'Adoration of the Shepherds and the Magi'

Photographs reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, David Mackinnon

The Old West Kirk's interior was now an eclectic melding of *traditional* with the *'avant garde'* in contemporary European culture, this reflected probably in its furnishings also.

George Williamson, a doyen among local historians, makes a comment in his book 'Old Greenock' (1888, 2nd edit.) regarding "part of the furniture of the... Kirk Session House. It is about four feet long, of solid oak, with four turned legs. It can accommodate at least two persons, although we can state pretty confidently that it is not now employed as a *stool of repentance*."

Due to this allusion by him of such a



former usage for the item which is, in fact, just a bench of normal adult sitting height, this attribution of previous purpose (for which Williamson gives no source, regrettably) has been repeated, uncritically, in relevant Greenock history books, plus all of the guidebooks, etc., produced for informing visitors to the Old West Kirk, ever since.

Compounding this misidentification, Ninian Hill, in 'The Story of The Old West Kirk' of 1911, captions a photo in the book of the item as THE 'CUTTY' STOOL, obviously unaware that this meaning of 'cutty' in his label of the item even contradicts the design!

Nowadays, the bench still resides in the Old West Kirk, placed, not where found by Williamson, i.e. the Session House (which would later become the vestry) but repositioned just below the pulpit, where indeed would, indeed, have been' located of yore' *any actual* 'stool of repentance'. And, as such it is represented to present-day visitors, many of whom who will have a photograph taken of themselves, sitting on it *in feigned token of misdemeanour!* In fact it is a favourite tourist attraction in the context!

Nevertheless, this item of furniture - so admired by Williamson with its ornate baluster-turned legs, trestle feet and exquisitely rebated top (the latter albeit protruding further out from the legs at one end than the other, giving an asymmetrical, less than finesse, appearance) - would be considered, by kirk purists of yore, as an entirely inappropriate kind of seating to be wasted on 'wastrels' where plain austerity would be more apposite. (Actually, it must be conceded, despite such decoration being unusual in a Church of Scotland 'stool of repentance', nevertheless, it is not unique, though *seldom* met with.)

As previously noted however, 'stools of repentance' were *never of normal adult* seating height. They were always either lower or higher, and always a *single* seat. To have, in a church, only one 'stool of repentance', albeit, with **3** possible seating places, poses the problem, of how to accommodate **4** or more offenders on a 'multi-penitent' Sabbath!

And, a greater problem could occur when having two occupiers guilty of promiscuity , this being a reprehensibility castigated by old-time Presbyterian dogma with a penalty of 3 consecutive Sundays on the 'stool' prescribed for *any* fornication whatever, and 6 if it involved adultery! With the culpable couple seated side-by-side, and unless closely and continually supervised to ensure that they kept suitably apart, there was always a risk of them *improperly touching* (i.e. huddling or, even worse, cuddling!) the very impropriety for which they had been placed upon the 'stool' for public chastening!

In 1841, during the clearance upon deserting the Old West Kirk, it must be presumed that the Reverend McFarlan plus congregation took, therefrom, everything portable of value with them to the new West Kirk (Westburn) in Nelson Street. And, furthermore, that during the 1843 'Disruption', when he and most of his flock seceded from the Church of Scotland, that they took nothing. (The seceders stressed that they took out of their churches only themselves and absolutely no artefacts. Accordingly, had the above-noted piece of furniture been possessed in 1841 (i.e. had it belonged to the Old West Kirk and been taken to the New West Kirk then) it would *nowadays* repose in the *Westburn* Church (unless it had been disposed of from there since 1843). However, the fact that it is *actually* found in the *Old West Kirk* now, signifies that it was *only acquired by that kirk at the time when it was re-opened in 1864 or in the interval since.*

{Among items left behind in the Westburn Church by the seceders was the 'Tam o lang' bell (not in use there at the time of the ;Disruption' as the steeple in which it would

eventually be mounted wasn't built till 1855); also four Communion chalices whereat the Latin inscription around the mouth of each vessel reads 'The eucharistic goblet of the Church of Greenock, purchased at the expense of the Kirk Session. 1708'.}

Anyway, a slackening rigidity in the Church of Scotland regarding unmarried mothers being exposed on the 'stool of repentance' as an appalling 'mark of Cain', perhaps lasting for a lifetime - was growing acknowledgement that "frequent cases occurred where, rather than face the trial, delinquents fled the country, some committed suicide, and many girls in their terror destroyed their offspring in the hope of concealing their fault... Such violent reaction to such a primitive punishment was obviously one of the reasons for the demise of the cutty stool. As the [19th] century advanced... the practice of exacting money fines became more usual, and the funds of parishes were so much enlarged, a third or half... was derived from punishment of transgressors of morality"! Thus notes, on page 32, Murdoch Lothian in his booklet, 'The Cutty Stool' (1995).

So, prevention of infanticide was the imperative: commutation for cash the incentive.

Unfortunately, it would take more than the foregoing to remove the stigma from child-bearing mothers outwith wedlock, plus the unconscionable, unchristian prejudice meted out to their now illegitimate children who were, of course, innocent of *any* wrongdoing.

The painting under-noted, '**The Black Stool or Presbyterian Penance**', 1795, by David Allan,

poignantly illustrates the typical kirk convened 'court' scene in the case of an extramarital sexual affair (fornication) where the distraught mother of the resultant illegitimate child that she holds in her arms, sits weeping on the 'stool of repentance', possibly a 4-legged 'cutty stool', with *her* mother, sitting on a seat of normal height (certainly higher) as she glares upward towards the crestfallen and contrite



father of the child, who, on high in the 'dock' is being lambasted by the minister. And, whereas there is some congregational curiosity as to what would probably be a frequent 'performance' in the kirk, there looks to be little sympathy, for either of the 'accused' pair, being exhibited by any the onlookers. But as the result of that public humiliation, the lassie, plus her child, would have their lives - potentially - permanently execrated.

Undoubtedly there *must* have been, originally, a 'stool of repentance' in the Old West Kirk. But it was *unlikely* to have been the type on 'stilts' and probably of the 'utility' type (i.e. ether a cutty or a creepie stool) this dispensed with when its barbaric use gradually lapsed, as above-noted. Was it (or they, if there were several) left behind to rot of damp when the Old West Kirk was evacuated in 1841, and any remains thrown out when that kirk re-opened in 1864? A progressive urban kirk (such as the Old West Kirk had become by then) was not about to regress by bucking the trend to restore an

instrument of mental cruelty already being phased out in all but a few outlandish kirks, and totally gone *in all* by 1884. George Williamson, a historian of mature years when he wrote his book, had obviously never witnessed, in actual use, a ‘stool of repentance’, which rather substantiates its obsolescence even during the earliest years of his life.

Anyway, the item now present in the Old West Kirk just *isn't* a ‘stool of repentance’: nor is it even a *stool*. It is a *bench*. Nevertheless, it isn't likely, either, that this item of fancy furniture represents some cut-down remnant, reconditioned from the ‘men-only’ benches which once flanked the interior of the early kirk. It is likely that where Williamson noted it to be (i.e. the ‘Session House’, which, in time would become the vestry) is where it had *always* reposed. When that room was the venue for the Session meetings, its members might have sat upon it to toast their toes at the roaring fire in that room's fireplace. As, also likewise might the minister, before venturing into a chilly pulpit, hopefully no longer having to worry that he was contravening the ‘no work on the Sabbath’ prohibition, insofar that someone performed work to set and light the fire.

Commutation of indiscretions to a fine would - as cash having to be accounted for - required a ledger to be kept for which nonesuch is now known to exist for the Old West Kirk. So, maybe, within a kirk congregation which was new in 1864, the whole notion of any such ‘restitution’ of a fine for ‘sin’ had become repugnant and so was redundant.

And what about the Kirk Session's earlier tendency to autocracy? Had it too mellowed from former extremism! Robert Burns was no stranger to the Kirk Session's ‘(s)tool of repentance’ - and many, even of his avid admirers, might opine that he deserved this ‘comeuppance’ on many an occasion for his misdeeds! Nevertheless, maybe he *also* deserves acclamation for achieving the equivalent of yon mischievous urchins who rang the kirk bell as a pinprick to the Kirk Session's petty presumption and pretentiousness.

In a biting satirical poem (composed circa 1785) and entitled ‘Holy Willie's Prayer’, Burns imagines its eponym engaged in his religious devotions. Willie - (based on a real person; an elder and member of his Kirk Session of Mauchline Church, Ayrshire) - represents himself to God, respectively as...

*“a pillar o' Thy temple - an “example to all Thy flock”
“Thy chosen in this place” - and “God's ain Priest”*

He excuses his serial womanising as due to intoxication, but a failing deliberately foisted onto him by God to prevent him from becoming “owre proud”! He castigates - for disobeying the Sabbath rule - those “Wha bring Thy elders to disgrace”, and whom he asks God to curse for setting “the warld in a roar o laughin at us”. And, in fact, the world - in particular Scotland - was evoked to mocking laughter by the popularity of Burns' bardic barbs in this matter, this undoubtedly a contributory factor to Kirk Sessions and the ‘elders’ thereof subsequently redefining, for the better, their image and their conduct during the late 18th and through (as noted) the 19th century. (Plus, of course, the poem has led to the lexicographical definition of a ‘Holy Willie’ as a sanctimonious hypocrite, duplicitous in religion.)

By this phase of its ‘life’ the Old West Kirk was enjoying a ‘renaissance’ as a forward-looking modern kirk, albeit its innovations couched in the ‘garb’ of an ancient edifice.

So, despite all of its vicissitudes, the Old West Kirk had burgeoned yet again to serve the faith' faithfully in the community of Greenock, as it had done in the past.

Seventh Phase : Old West Kirk ('North Parish') : 1917 - 1928: transplantation

As it happens, the next phase in the Old West Kirk's story - just like other episodes before, and noted previously - derives from factors originating outside of Scotland.

In the early 20th century, for politico-economic reasons, the shipbuilding and marine engineering giant, Harland & Wolff, Limited - long established in Belfast - determined to plant a major base for its operations outside of Ireland and within the 'Great Britain' mainland. (A hypothesis for the company's reason for doing this thenabouts, is offered in the book, 'Finding Forgotten Finnart', (2021), by Andrew Pearson, on pages 205-7),

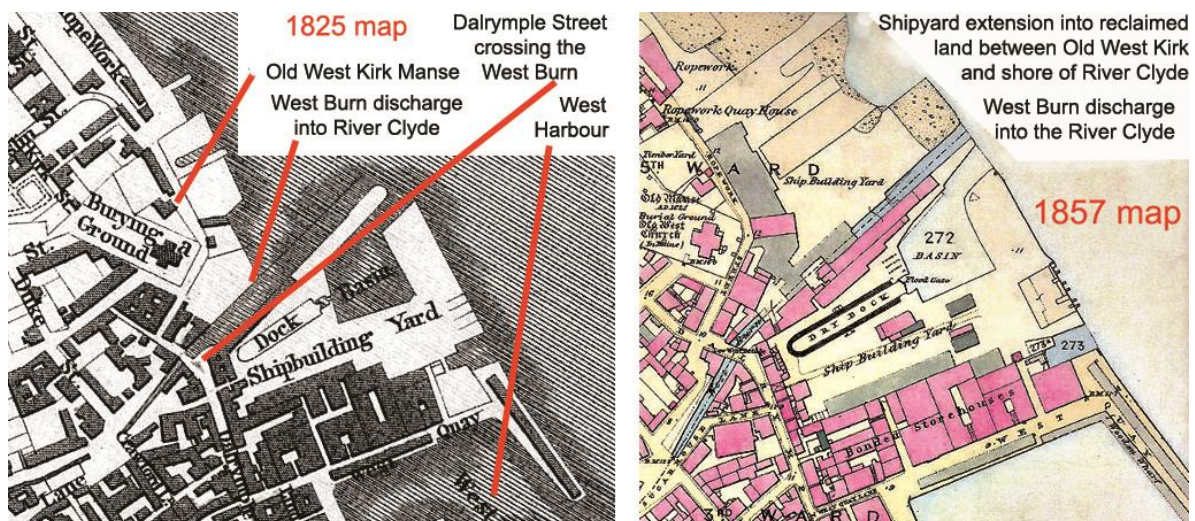
As the initial step, in 1911-12 the company bought and conglomerated three minor shipyards to create a substantial whole at the town of Govan, further up the River Clyde from Greenock. Next, due to unfolding events in Ireland in early 1916, the company set its sights upon initiating a yet even larger 'footfall' within the same general region. However, all suitable river/estuarial sites were already occupied, in one way or another. But replicating the precedent above-noted to achieve the sizeable area desired, might, however, obtain the desired result: i.e. acquiring - in order to conjoin - several smaller contiguous units. And Greenock was chosen in which to attempt such a concoction.

Consequently, in late 1916, H&W bought, though retaining its name - Cairds Shipyard.

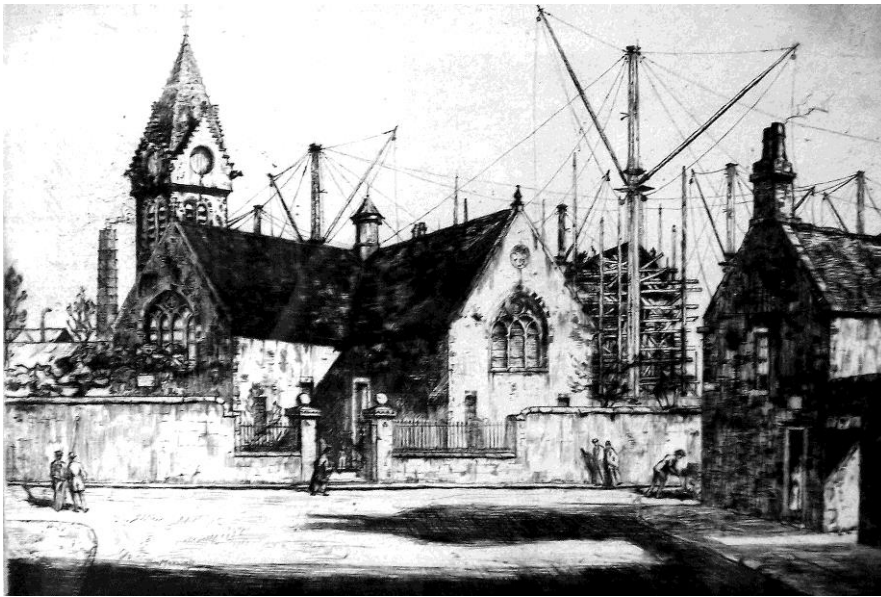
The Caird family had held the foregoing yard since 1871, having - over a period - bought it incrementally from the Scott family which had begun, in 1711, constructing herring busses (fishing boats) in a yard situated at the mouth of the West Burn plus a little eastwards towards, but not encroaching upon, Greenock's 'West Harbour'.

By the 1840s, the Scott family had extended the yard westwards, along the verge that lay between Old West Kirk graveyard and River Clyde shore, plus also reclaiming land from the river to create an area that increased the distance of the churchyard from the water's edge (originally, ca. 10 yards/ 9.1 metres, at its narrowest point) about fivefold.

This may be seen by comparing equivalent extracts from the **1825** 'Plan of the Town of Greenock, by John Wood, with the Ordnance Survey map, '11.5 Greenock', of **1857**.



The kirk now had a shipyard flanking northwest to the kirk's rear, in addition to its



south-eastern side.

Consequently, it was apparently not at all unusual to see the protruding, bow of a ship which was being built on the stocks, and this-overshadowing the eastern side of the old kirk as depicted in a contemporary etching by the local Greenock artist, Tom Maxwell.

A visitor, viewing the kirk on a shipyard working day in the 1870s, diaried that the din of construction was “deafening”. Presumably, too, intrusion of dust and grime into the kirk’s interior would be considerable. Undoubted continuance, then, of Sabbatarianism would restrict shipyard working to Monday to Saturday inclusive, allowing Sunday abstinence to enable noise-free worship. Co-existence of a sort would prevail but there might be kirk incentive to accept any viable option to improve worshipping conditions.

The original humpbacked bridge over the West Burn, affording access from the village of Greenock to the kirk, had been removed through encroachment on its site by the shipbuilding yard and replaced by a crossing further up the burn as part of the embryonic Dalrymple Street in a, by now, town, with a quite extensive crisscross of roads to serve the housing which had long spread out from the initial village site at Rue End. This crossover of the burn, rather than a bridge, can more likely be considered as the first step in a gradual process of culverting the lower reaches of the waterway, as its course became subducted beneath urban sprawl. The burn’s estuary had, by now, been channelled (‘canalised’) and straddled by the shipyard, now on both of its busy banks.

H&W’s strategy, however, of course didn’t stop at acquiring Cairds. The intention was a shipyard employing ten thousand men, this necessitating a further block of foreshore land extending from the eastern extremity of Cairds yard to the Greenock Custom House. And to complete the plan needed the incorporation of the Old West Kirk graveyard, to the south. Due to various insurmountable obstacles, the yard in prospect would, over its length, be curtailed in the distance that it could incorporate inland from the shoreline. Only at its western extremity, by aggregating the strip of the Cairds yard that lay between the shore and the Old West Kirk graveyard to the graveyard itself would an extent of slipway be achievable whereon to construct ships of the length of the ill-fated, H&W Belfast-built, ‘S.S. Titanic’. Thus, even if it entailed an inflated cost,



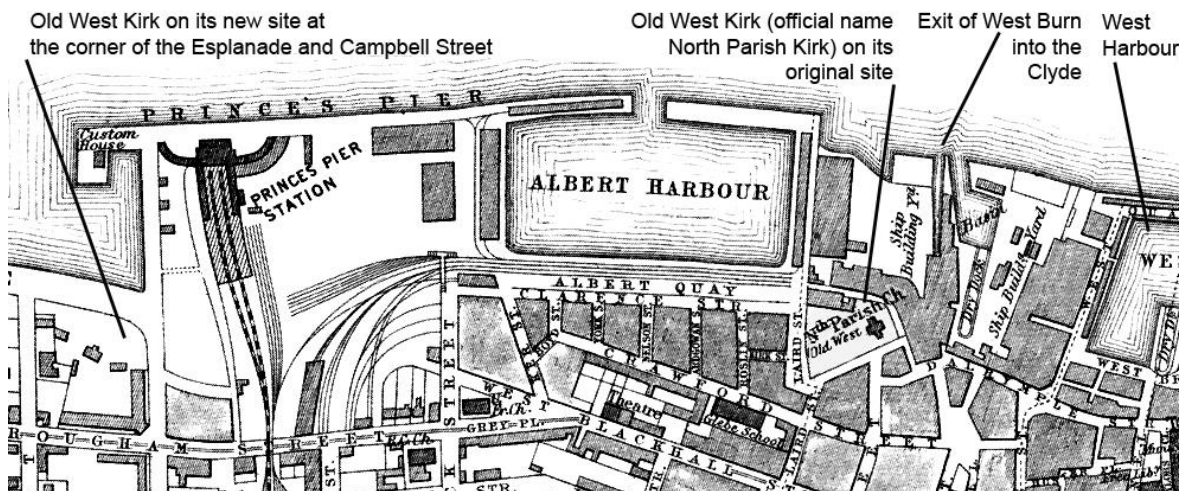
Proposed development of Harland and Wolff on River Clyde

H&W's procurement of the graveyard was crucial to the viability of the entire project.

Consequently, in May of 1917, H&W applied to Greenock Presbytery to buyout the graveyard, this, however, rejected because it implied demolition of the kirk. Between then and 1919, negotiations led ultimately to a 'deal' in which the congregation, backed by the Presbytery, agreed in principal to sell if H&W would pay to transfer the kirk to a new site, this being the present one on the Esplanade. Concurrently, H&W had also negotiated with Greenock Harbour Trust for a lease of the foreshore between Cairds yard and the Custom House, an area which, until then had contained the West Harbour but which would now - H&W proposed - be filled in and the site converted to shipyard slipways. Furthermore, Greenock Corporation had been persuaded to ally with the scheme by H&W being prepared to pay for a gargantuan slum clearance of sub-standard housing which fringed the proposed land acquisitions, also rehousing those displaced.

Due to such impressive backing, in August of 1919 a Parliamentary Public Enquiry upheld the 'Order' for the proposal to go ahead. But this decision had not been reached without its detractors voicing their opinions. One, "Mr R. L. Scott, Chairman of Scotts' Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, in giving evidence for the opposers of the Order, said a number of his relatives were buried in the churchyard and he objected strongly to the churchyard being desecrated for a commercial purpose." The above-noted 1871 Scott family selloff to the Caird family had been the outcome of infighting and bankruptcy among the Scotts. However, a scion of that family had soon relocated to create a new yard situated at the mouth of the Carts Burn. This initiated a shipbuilding dynasty which occupied the site with this enterprise till its 1993 demise. And, in 1919 the chairman of this shipyard was Mr R. L. Scott! So, perhaps, the aforementioned objection at the Public Enquiry was not purely altruistic, bearing in mind that H & W's proposed shipyard would be a direct rival for business with the Scott family's counterpart at nearby Cartsburn! Plus there was the irony which must have irked Scott, that the threatened competition would come from a yard which incorporated the previously relinquished 'crucible' of the Scott family's own shipbuilding venture!

Below is an extract from the contemporaneous 'Plan to Accompany (Postal) Directory', showing the locations of the kirk, 'before' and that proposed 'after' the transfer



With the State's permission - due to success of the public enquiry - secured, H&W then unilaterally and cavalierly (and for which there seems no explanation) sought to renege upon the site to whence the company intended to transfer the kirk, this affront creating a hiatus lasting till 1924 when the original Esplanade site, thus the 'deal', was re-instated.

In the process of incrementally disassembling the kirk, space adjacent would be needed to accommodate the dismantled components prior to their transportation, in batches, to the new site. Such space could be obtained by clearance of the adjacent graveyard. In anticipation that the solution above-noted would eventually be found to the impasse regarding the where replacement site would be, the delicate, hence time-consuming exhumation of those in the graveyard got underway. Descendants of those buried therein were offered alternatives regarding the place of their forebears' re-interment. Whereas most opted for Greenock's Municipal Cemetery in a communal grave there, or for Inverkip Street Cemetery, many chose reburial in the grounds of the new Seafield site itself. Hence, each of the gravestones now contained within that precinct should have buried there the mortal remains of those denoted on the stone. (See **Appendix 1** : Remains exhumed from old kirkyard & re-interred in Seafield site. In the appendix too is Scottish Parliamentary documentation defining the legal protection of internments.)

Other exceptions to communal reburial were James Watt's antecedents and 'Highland Mary', each given, within the Municipal Cemetery, separate and specially marked lairs, since visited as 'shrines' by exponents of James Watt and Robert Burns. On 13th November 1920, a casket containing 'Highland Mary's remains was borne reverently, on foot, by members of 'Greenock Burns (Mother) Club' (i.e. the first in the world to so honour the national bard) to the lassie's new final resting place. (See picture on page 33.) The Watts were transferred thither, to lie close by 'Mary', on 26th April, 1927.

Jess S. Bolton, in 'The Old West Kirk, on page 28, notes further concessions. H&W, in addition to buying the Esplanade ground to which the kirk would be relocated, intimated preparedness to pay for a new and better church tower, also "extra windows, and promised that the existing illuminated windows, mural tablets etc., would be carefully preserved and transferred to the new site: also, the internal woodwork...". Moreover, a parochial hall - to be named after the H&W chairman, Lord Pirrie - would be donated to the congregation, thereby enabling church services to be held throughout the entire period from when the kirk began to be dismantled to when it would be re-opened on its Esplanade site.



The elegant Pirrie Hall occupied a similar location, relative to the rebuilt church edifice, that had been - when the kirk was on its former site - occupied by the prow of a vessel being constructed in the adjacent shipyard. The rebuilt church itself, was - in its Esplanade site - rotated about considerably clockwise to its former orientation, as can be seen from comparing the above photographs of 'after' with 'before' transfer (*and Appendix 2* : *Conjectural* map of Old West Kirk in both past and present locations.)

An interesting comparison is the view past the laird's stairway. Besides the change in background, it is of note that the plaque of the Schaw lairds (above the crypt door) was,

between the old site and the new, changed from a full coat of arms to merely the shield showing the 'covered cups. Maybe the original tablet was damaged during the transfer.



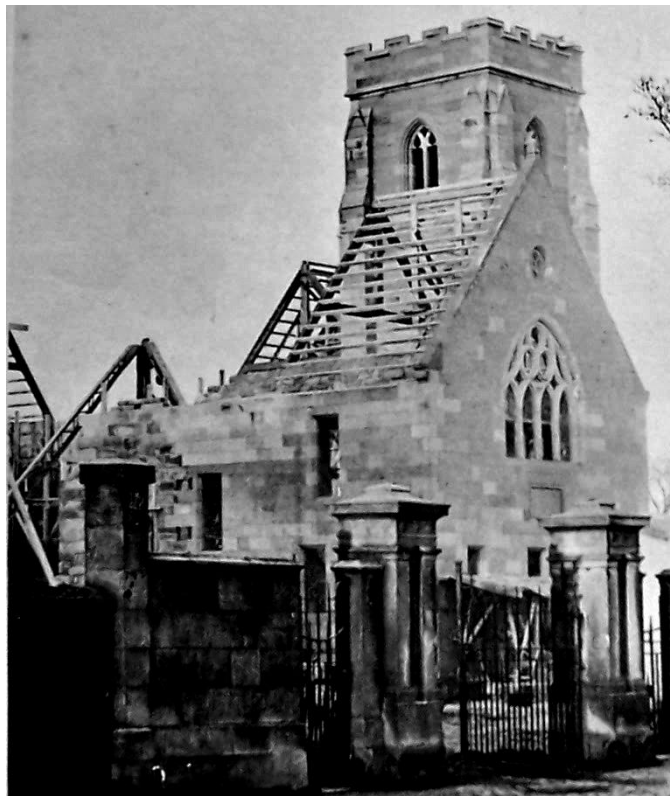
Old site before shipyard building obscured the view of the River Clyde and the hills beyond



Old site with shipyard shed behind - and grime!



New site at the Esplanade - now green! (The heraldic plaque has been changed from the one at the old site)



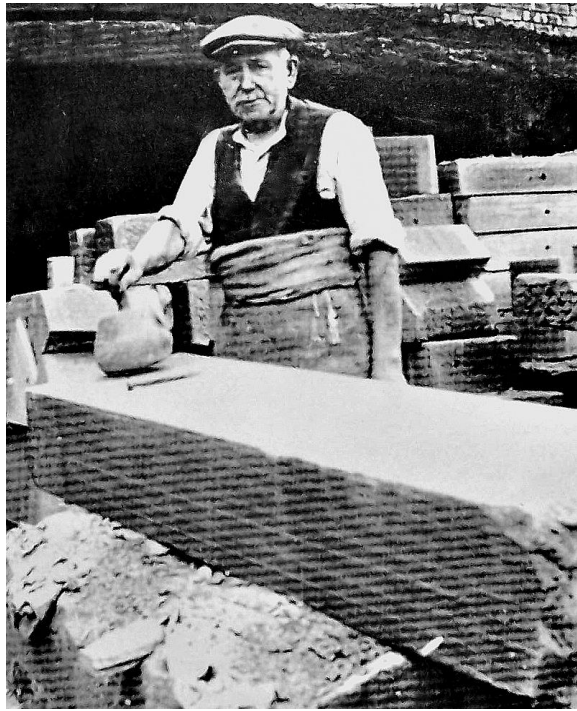
Is that the foreman on the job who is standing below?



And as might be expected, all of this activity was reported at the time by the local press, the adjacent article being typical of public interest at such an unusual occurrence.

Besides the transferring plus alterations and with also any necessary repairs effected - all between 1925-1928 - as much as possible of the existing structure was retained for the reconstruction. J. S. Burt, in 'The Old West Kirk, A History', on page 19, relates that "The first stone hewers to be employed by

the contractors were Mr William Peat and Mr Peter Livingstone” In his seventies in 1958, **Mr Peat** [pictured right, a master mason, who was engaged in dismantling, thereafter also in re-assembling of the kirk on its new site] “recalled that much of the original stonework is still there and that the new stone probably came from a quarry on the Ardgowan Estate. Some of his happiest days as a hewer were those spent at the work of transferring the Church.”



Jess S. Bolton, In *The Old West Kirk*, page 31, adds that: “Mr Peat began work on the first day and carried on for the entire time it took to complete the task, almost four years. Mr Peat’s son, Mr Robert Peat, a lifelong member of the Old West Kirk, remembers the tales told by his father about how the old stones were dismantled, numbered, transported, cleaned and re-built on their new site on the Esplanade. While cleaning the ancient stones, Mr W. Peat told of the strange carvings found on the undersides, of birds, fish, animals, dates and ‘initials’ for over 300 years when in, 1589, work had begun on the first West Kirk.”

The carvings were the masons’ individual marks, vital to prove each man’s claim in a ‘piecework’ system of payment. Having served that purpose, however, the marks were then, by the orientation of the stones, deliberately hidden as the display of such carvings would, at the time of building, be deemed contrary to Presbyterian-Calvinism’s aversion to personal promotion and frivolous decoration *where any glory must only go to God*.

During the re-building, apparently, it had been swithered whether to reverse the stones such that the marks would become visible. However, in fulfilling an injunction for the kirk to be rebuilt as much “as before”, the stones concerned were put back in the same orientation as when removed. Alas, nevertheless, that no photographs were taken when the marks were thus exposed, so that posterity might have shared in the ‘wonder’.

The Peat generations exemplify the stalwart families, whose zest and dedication to the Old West Kirk, in fulfilling its Christian mission and community involvement, would have made its founder, Johnne Schaw, to rejoice.

(See **Appendix 3** : Architect’s 1925 proposed plans of kirk for rebuilding it on the Seafield/Esplanade site.)

Jess Bolton, on page 36 of ‘The Old West Kirk’, advises of a ceremony on Saturday, February 18th, 2028, to hand over the Old West Kirk Keys.’. Thus possessed thereafter relics were a “sarking board and wooden dowel from the roof of the original building, Kirk candle moulds and [the] old keys.”, per the photo to right. Bolton goes on to relate how, “The Dedication Service of the Old West Kirk, on Sunday February, 19th, was attended by a distinguished company...”, per photo of the principal attendees below.



OLD SCOTTISH KIRK REDEDICATED ON NEW SITE

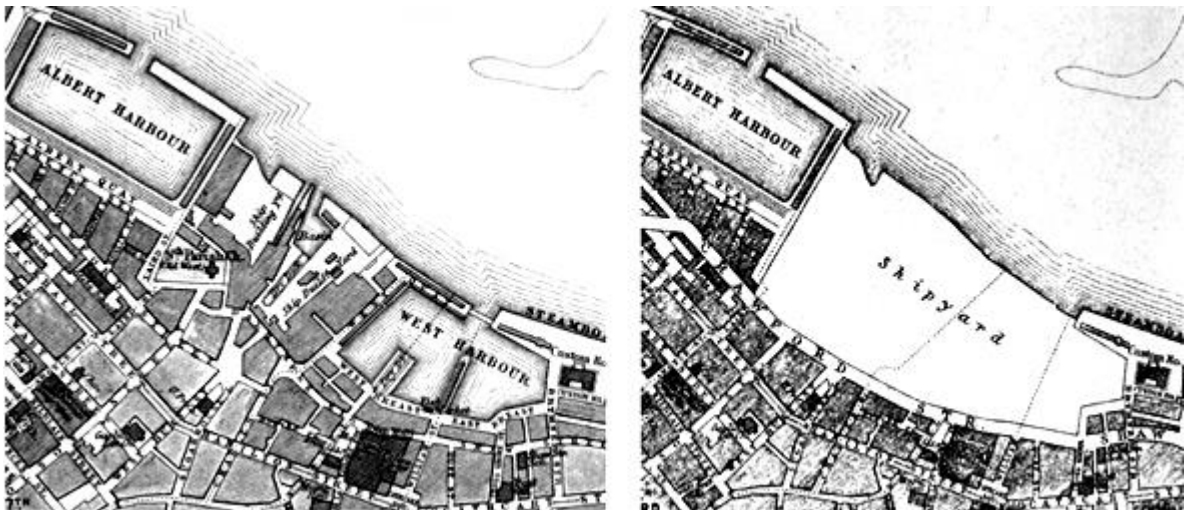


19th February 1928 — Rededication of Old West Kirk. Sir Hugh Shaw Stewart, Bt., standing to the Provost's right and other distinguished guests.

Removal of kirk, kirkyard plus former manse, enabled a space which, when added to the other territorial acquisitions obtained by H&W in the centre of Greenock, formed a gargantuan site that may be appreciated in 'before' and 'after' comparison per, namely:

The 'Plan of Greenock to Accompany (postal) Directory' 1915-16, and that of 1930-31.

(Max. length within yard, from shoreline inland, was at Old West Kirk end, being 274 metres: S.S. Titanic was 269 metres long and H&W desired to build here ships of *at least* that length.)



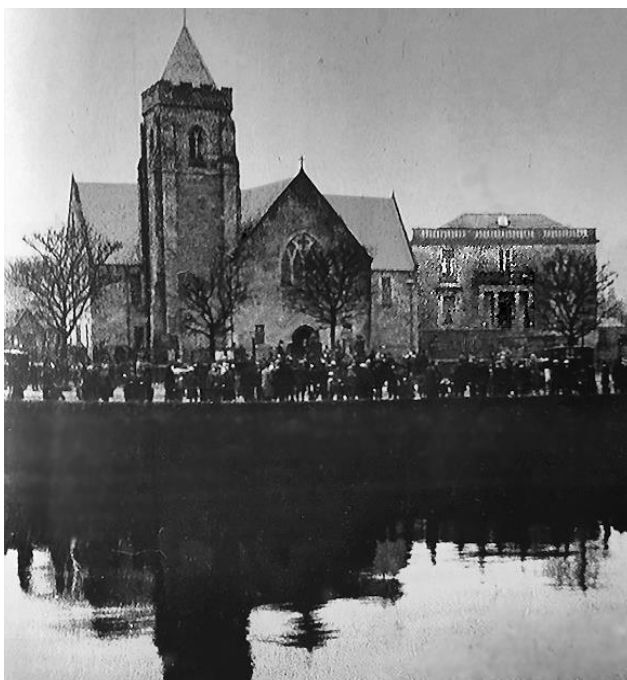
Just as the congregation of the Old West Kirk and the elders of Greenock Presbytery had watched to see if H&W would fulfil its promises regarding the transfer of the kirk - and had been agreeably satisfied in this respect - now the populace and authorities of Greenock waited to see if the company would equally fulfil its promises of employment and prosperity with regard to the new shipbuilding yard being constructed in the town.

(A photo appears at the foot of page 27 of this narrative.) taken at the present-day, from the Greenock Ocean Terminal pontoon, offers a view illustrating the very considerable extent of foreshore which Harland & Wolff's shipyard occupied in the 1920s, stretching between the West Burn outlet into the River Clyde and the Custom House,

Eighth Phase : Old West Kirk: 1928 - 2011: renaissance until amalgamation

By 1928 - Sunday, February, 19th, the transplanted kirk re-opened for worship in its (present) Esplanade location. Intimation of the transfer is included in the plaque positioned on the kirk's southeast facing exterior gable wall. The images below, show:

(Left) southeast gable and tower; (right) the back of the kirk with the laird's stairway;(below) the Pirrie Hall, also the plaque which is situated halfway up the gable wall shown to the left.

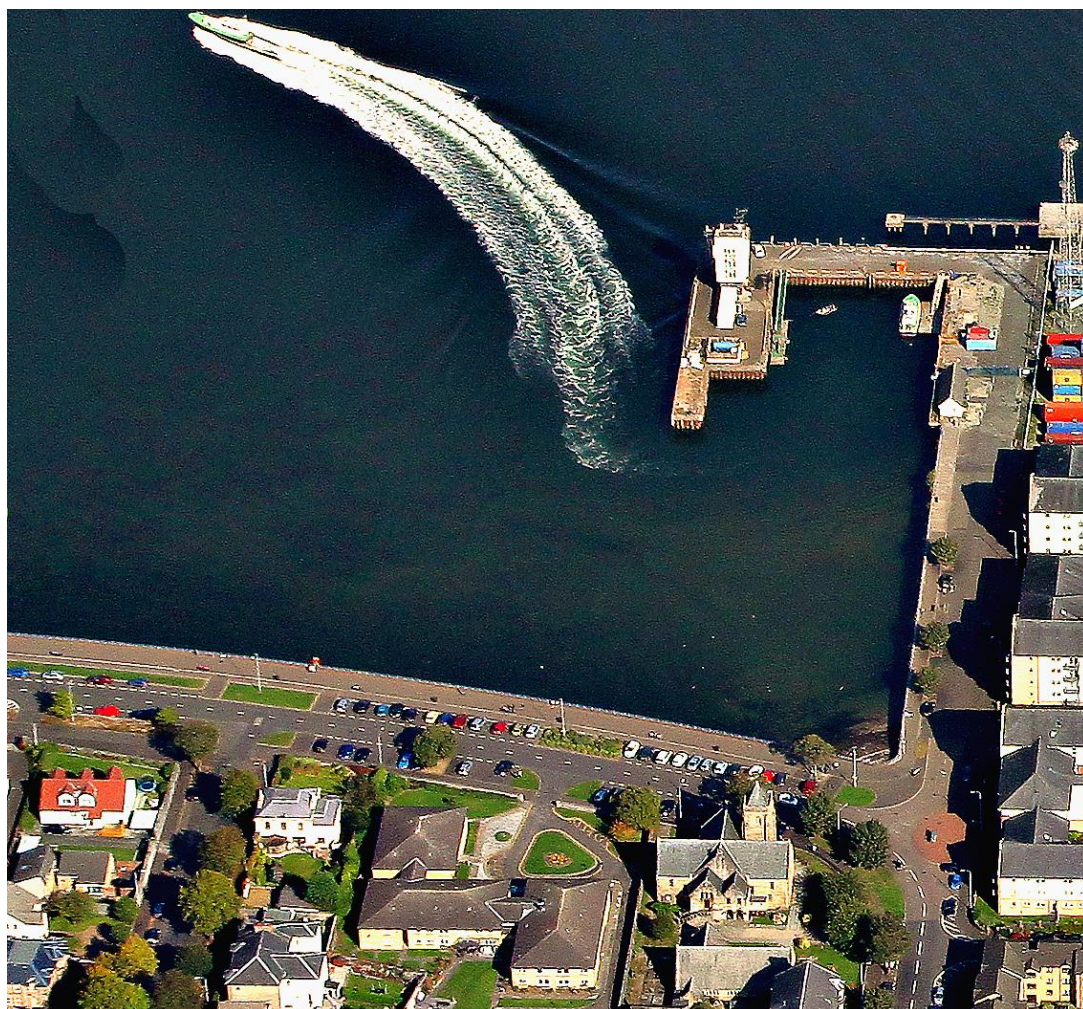


As noted, the new site of the Old West Kirk on the Esplanade was, at the time of transferring the kirk thereto, already occupied by an old (unused) mansion, Seafield House. Constructed in 1837, had been utilised as living quarters for some Harland & Wolff employees involved whilst the translocation of the Old West Kirk from its former to the new site there was underway. For many years thereafter, it and the kirk continued to exist in close proximity, the house a little to the rear of the church (per photo to left). During that period the house had various other uses until, due to ongoing neglect, it was eventually demolished in 1976 by the then Inverclyde District Council.

By 1929, in stark contrast to the kirk, flourishing in its new location, on its old location Harland & Wolff ceased trading in its Greenock shipyard. Since taking over therein, only a couple of ships had been constructed in the yard since becoming operational about 1926 and never a keel was laid in that part of it which had formed the original site of the kirk and its burial ground. Local doom-mongers of the day proclaimed that, as they had prophesised, defilement of consecrated ground had incurred divine retribution. However, 1929 was the year wherein began the 'Great Depression', a calamity that totally devastated economy, the commerce and employment throughout the industrial world. And it does seem a trifle presumptuous to surmise that the Almighty would penalise the entire planet for such a sacrilegious transgression, localised to Greenock!

{In 1937 the political exigency in Ireland which had prompted H&W's impetus to decamp its operation into Great Britain had, some time before this, abated, thereby negating need for this contingency. Consequently, the company had duly divested itself of the Greenock site, selling the land that it had purchased and relinquishing leases for the rest. The strip of real-estate, which had contained the shipyard, is today occupied by, respectively, east to west, the 'West College Scotland' Waterfront Campus, the waterfront leisure centre, the cruise liner reception centre, the waterfront cinema, the bingo hall, and the eastern portion of Greenock Ocean Terminal, the latter also extending in a narrow strip along the shoreline, behind the bingo hall and cinema.}

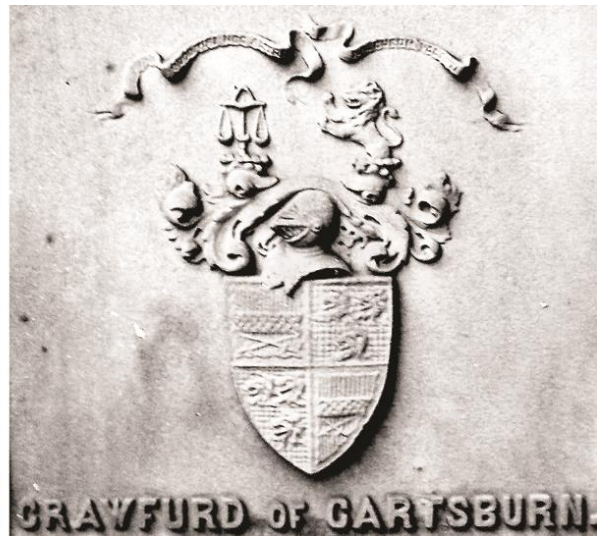
To return now to the kirk in its new environment at the corner of the Esplanade.



Photograph by courtesy of Peel Ports Group, Ltd. Photographed by Guthrie Aerial Photography, Helensburgh

Within the kirk, not only did each of the heritor families - i.e. S(c)haw and Crawford - possess the perk of areas allocated for attending worship within the building when *alive*, they also each had a place of interment allocated for depositing their *dead* within the structure. This had been the case with the structure in its former location and similar re-allocation was thereby demarcated with regard to the kirk in its new location.

That of the Crawford family seems - nowadays on the present site - to be underground adjacent to the Crawford Aisle... Stone slabs on the ground mark the entrance to the Crawford crypt just outside the exterior wall of the kirk (a little left of the present main entrance) with the coat of arms of the family placed above, on the wall itself. Presumably, beneath the slabs, a stairway leads to a subterranean chamber - the crypt.



Although Thomas Crawford was the 1st laird of Cartsburn, the 6th one “designed herself ‘Mrs. Christian Crawford of Crawfordsburn.’” So George Williamson states on page 74 of his book, ‘Old Cartsburn’ (1894). “She married Mr. Thomas Macknight of Ratho in September, 1779.” “Her husband declined to take, at least did not take the name Crawford. It was assumed by her only son and successor, who was, as an instrumentary, witness to charters granted by her at Ratho, and designated ‘William Macknight Crawford of Ratho.’” (I.e. Ratho Byres in Midlothian.) The story continues on page 78: “Mrs. Christian Crawford died on 12th April, 1818, and was succeeded by her only son, William then in his 34th year. He had dropped the name Macknight and designated himself in his Charters simply as ‘William Crawford of Cartsburn’”. Nevertheless, thereafter, the family seems to have reverted to ‘Macknight Crawford’. It is not recorded when the now sealed crypt was last used by the family, nor whether there is any means to contact the descendants. Memorial plaques to the family are wall-mounted within the kirk. On one, the last intimation of a family death is in 1879.

The forenoted coat of arms, marking the entrance to the crypt, contains both Crawford and Macknight elements. Representing the original Crawford family, a device of crossed swords is shown in a saltire motif (presumably alluding to a former military prowess in that branch). This appears in the shield whilst the crest above it is of an old fashioned pan-balance (i.e. for weighing commodities) maybe alluding to the family’s descent from Thomas as a merchant. The Latin motto: “Quad tibi hoc alteri” translates idiomatically as ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. Another motto incorporated in the armorial bearing but pertaining to the Macknight side of the family, and also in Latin: “Nil durum volenti” means ‘Nothing is difficult for the willing’.

{Heraldic mottos - typically, clichés purporting a worthiness that is not necessarily the truth and, moreover, deliberately arrayed in a non-vernacular tongue - are a pretention of aristocratic snobbery which was, and still is, widely resorted to in granting heraldry. Johnne Schaw's 'I mean well' motto was at least in the vernacular and, thus, would be understood by all of his tenants, able to judge for themselves if he lived up to its claim!}

The Schaw crypt is imbedded within the Schaw Aisle but is only enterable by a doorway from outside of the kirk. As previously noted, its entrance is indicated on the external wall above this doorway by a stone tablet the Schaw family shield with its triple 'covered goblet' motif, although, when the kirk was on its original site, a plaque above the crypt door displayed the coat of arms (of 'Schaw of Greenock' ?)



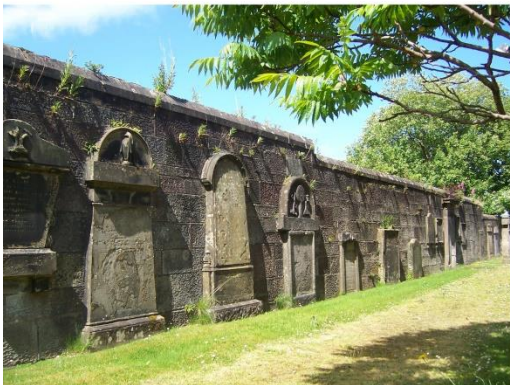
This crypt is a smallish chamber with (per photo) a **barrel-vaulted brick roof** -so, probably not the original, as on the old site, it would have been made of stone. The chamber is sunken slightly below ground level and is empty of any sarcophaguses or other burial 'furniture'. Actually, it now fulfils the prosaic function of a storeroom for the gardening tools, etc., which keep the surrounding lawn and flowerbeds in trim! It is supposed that the "Schaw Aisle"... "was built over the grave in which Johnne Schaw was buried only three years after the church was opened." So Ninian Hill opines in 'The Story of the Old West Kirk', on page 9. Perhaps Johnne's descendants were laid to rest herein too, *but* transferred to lie beside those of the Stewart family in Inverkip after the focus of the family transferred there, and they became the 'Shaw Stewarts'.

The Schaw vault does not seem to have been used ever, by the family (or by anyone else, for that matter) as a tomb, after the 1864 renovation.

As previously noted, It was not only the heritors' families who had to be considered during the transfer to the Esplanade site. There were also the committals in the old kirk graveyard, whose descendants had opted for their forebears to be re-interred in the Kirk's new site. And there the revered bodies lie, undisturbed since, beneath the ground in front of the grave-slabs which grace the length of the western wall or below its recumbent slabs.

Due to this area being, in effect, a cemetery, the kirk was affirmed in an 'A-listed building' category; that is, of national importance, worthy of protection. As also previously noted, proof of this is given in **Appendix 1** : Remains exhumed from old kirkyard & re-interred in Seafield site. In the appendix too is Scottish Parliamentary documentation defining the legal protection of internments.)

The undernoted montage of the gravestones in the kirkyard at the Esplanade site, both along the western wall or recumbent in the ground beside the Pirrie Hall, owes much to the contribution of Lynnette Robertson.



Yet another feature of the transfer to the Esplanade was the new tower - shown below.



J. S. Burt, in 'The Old West Kirk', on page 17 re-affirms that "Furnishings and many features which the congregation had learned to know so well, would also be taken" to the Esplanade site. On page 45 Bolton describes how the "handsome pulpit, octagonal in shape, is carved with the heads of the Apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and also depicts four mystical 'beasts' from Revelations (Chapter 4), the Lion, the Eagle, the Winged-calf, the Beast with a man's face, the centre panel shows the Lamb of God.

Although the wall décor within the church was, perforce, a re-creation, the plethora of original wood internals, restored into the counterpart locations that they had occupied previously, enabled the kirk interior to appear little different than it had previously. In fact, that rich woodwork set the kirk all aglow, as the following pages will amply attest.

Interior of the Old West Kirk on its Esplanade site

Photographs on this page reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, Lynnette Robertson



View looking towards the 'Schaw Aisle' with, to the right, the pulpit and baptismal font



**View towards the Sailors' Loft/Gallery/Balcony, with doorway to its stairway to left
Original main entrance to the church was in middle of the gable where the radiator now is.**

Interior of the Old West Kirk on its Esplanade site

Photographs on this page reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, Lynnette Robertson



View towards Sailors' Loft/Gallery/Balcony and pulpit from the main seating area pews



**View towards the Farmers' Loft/Gallery from the front row of the Sailors' Loft/Gallery
Pulpit is to left below, 'Cartsburn Aisle/Gallery' left and the 'Schaw Aisle' to right**

Jess S. Bolton, in 'The Old West Kirk 1591-1991', on page 31, sums up the translocation. "Built on the... shore in 1591 by Johnne Schaw, it was now... re-built a short distance away on another shore, with almost the same view across the River Clyde to the Argyleshire hills and 'bens'. That it should be within sight of passing ships was fitting, for it had long been known as the 'Sailors' Kirk'." The wee kirk *thrived anew!*

It is apposite to pause here to consider how convoluted fissures and fusions relating to Greenock's Presbyterian Gaelic language churches, during the post-1843-'Disruption' period intertwined with the Old and New West Kirks, this attempted by interpolating among, respectively, 'The Old West Kirk', by Jess S. Bolton; 'The Old Kirk', by the Rev. J. Marshall Scoular; and 'The History of Greenock', by Robert Murray Smith.

The common-denominator seems to be a Church of Scotland "Gaelic Chapel... opened in 1792... on the corner of West Burn and West Stewart Street". (Scoular, p. 13). At the Disruption, the minister and most of his congregation of this chapel "came out from the Establishment", i.e. Church of Scotland. (Smith, p. 262). "The Old West Kirk - closed since 1841 - now opened its doors and became again a place of worship for the Gaelic people, during the 12 months of 1843/1844. It provided a welcome refuge until their new church was built in Jamaica Street." (Bolton, p. 20). "They moved to St. Thomas' Church in 1910." (Smith, p. 262). It is not stated what happened next but, *ultimately*, this congregation was "to form what is now St. Columba's Gaelic Church." (Scoular, p. 13). Probably St. Columba's joined the Church of Scotland in the union of 1929 between the 'United Free' and 'Established' churches. The address of the St. Columba's Church building was originally West Blackhall Street but, with this part of the street becoming part of a supermarket carpark, the address is now Grey Place. The original Jamaica Street building would eventually become a warehouse for secondhand household goods, only to be gutted in a carelessly caused conflagration in January 2021.

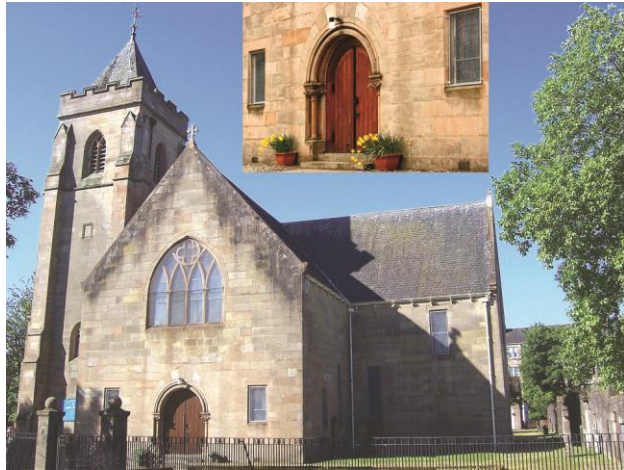
To revert now to the Gaelic Chapel and the mid-19th century. A petition concerning it then "said that there were upwards of 10,000 highlanders in Greenock and district, many of whom were unable to worship in English". With the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland's permission, "the Gaelic Chapel became a Parish Church on the 11th July 1855." "The Church was to have no territorial area assigned to it, and would be known for all time as the Gaelic Parish and Parish of Greenock." (Scoular, p 16).

In 1966 negotiations "resulted in the union of the Gaelic Parish Church and the [new] West Kirk whereby the buildings in West Stewart Street were closed [demolished long ago with the location now a supermarket site] and the buildings of the [new] West Kirk became the buildings of the united congregation to be known as The Old Kirk, Greenock". (Scoular, pp. 17 & 19). This building is the present Westburn Church.

So, just as the Gaelic Parish Church's absorption into the (New) West Kirk in 1966, similarly St. Columba's Gaelic Church would be united with the Old West Kirk, this on January 10th, 1979. Although no longer a church, the St. Columba's Church building is nowadays a restaurant which operates under a Gaelic name: 'Café Mòr' (i.e., big café).

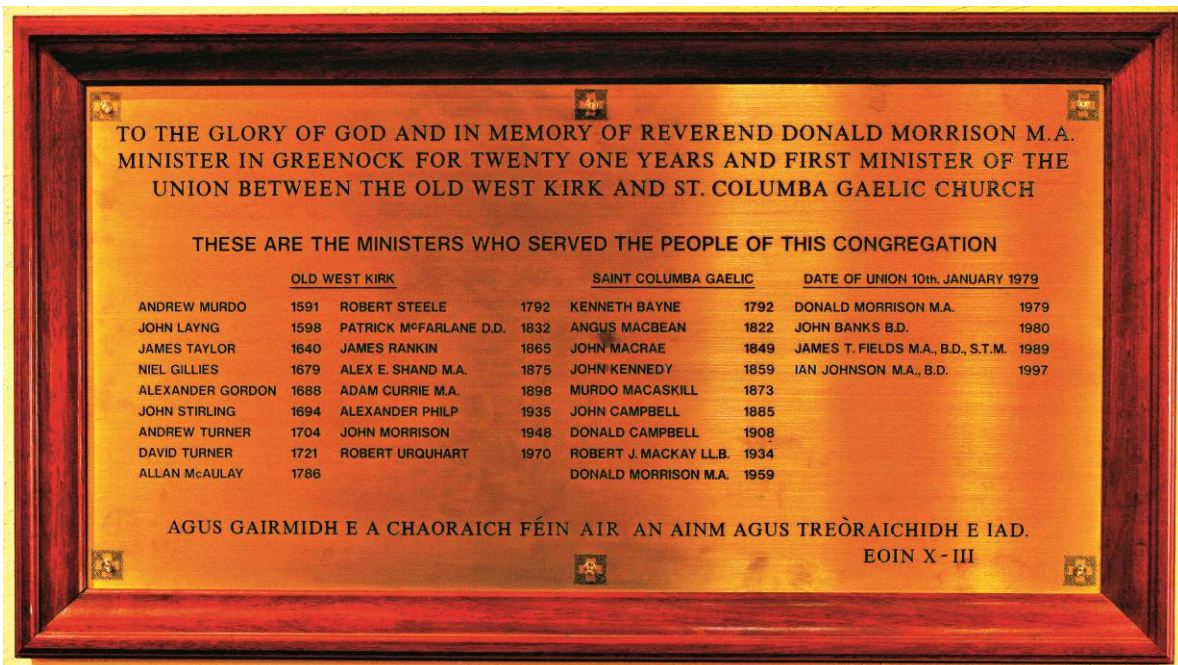
As has been noted previously (and as indicated by Jess S. Bolton, in 'The Old West Kirk', on page vi, since 1872, the official name of the Old West Kirk had been the 'North Parish' Church, - which its parishioners had chosen to completely ignore in preference to using the former name! And doubtless, they would be overjoyed insofar that the name, the 'Old West Kirk', was to be officially resurrected in 1979 for the

newly created amalgamation of ‘St. Columba’s Gaelic Church’ and the ‘North Parish’ Church. And, although the Gaels from St. Columba’s Church had lost the Gaelic identifier of their church, they were welcomed in at the door of the Old West Kirk (photo right). And, furthermore, their Gaelic identity was *not* ignored therein.



On the present-day northeast interior wall of the Old West Kirk, a brass plaque quotes a passage from the ‘Bìoball’ - ‘Eòin’ (i.e. the Book of John), Chapter 10, Verse 3:

“Agus gairmidh e a chaoraich féin air an ainm agus treòraichidh e iad”:
(And he will call his own sheep by their name and he will lead/guide them)



Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, Lynnette Robertson

The quotation pertains to Jesus, as Messiah, utilising a parable to represent himself as the *good shepherd*, calling upon his flock (each by name, so they trust him) and leading them out of the safety of their sheep-fold and into the world. The biblical text has been amended by removal of the word *out* (Gaelic, *a-mach*) in order that it surrogates for the ministers (listed on the plaque) who have led the congregations, respectively, of the Old West Kirk and of St. Columba’s Church since they were each incepted, and then since the amalgamation of the two churches. The listing has been kept up-to-date until 1997.

To summarise the foregoing: the Gaelic Parish Church (situated in West Stewart Street) merged into what is nowadays Westburn Church, and St. Columba’s Gaelic Church merged into the Old West Kirk. With such mergers resulting in churches renaming and/or relocating, tracing a particular congregation after its church has disappeared (this becoming ever more common onwards from the mid-20th century) is often baffling! **See pullout at the back of the book for a sequence/timeline of derivative churches.**

The Old West Kirk complex played an active part during World War 2 - 1939-45. J. S. Burt, in 'The Old West Kirk', on page 25 notes; "The Shaw-Stewart (sic) vault became an air-raid shelter for the congregation [a cramped space for just twenty, even if all standing!] and the Pirrie Hall became an emergency centre. Evening Services had to be suspended owing to lack of a blackout." (of lights that might guide in enemy bombers.)

The previously noted plaque upon the outside wall of the kirk, added post-1928, tells of how the building was built by Johnne Schaw of Grenok. On the interior walls of the kirk there are plaques to various members of the *second* heritor family - the Crawfurds. However, curiously there is not, nor ever has been, within of the kirk itself, any memorial to commemorate its Schaw founder or, indeed, any of his heritor descendants.

Bolton notes, on page 44, that the Pirrie Hall had required to grow "with the times and was enlarged with two extensions. The first was in 1937 when a wish was expressed for an extra meeting place. The men of the church got together to turn this dream into a reality." "They formed a working group, one of whom was Mr Robert Peat... thus carrying on a family tradition of working for the church: it will be remembered that his father, Mr William Peat, a stone mason, had helped to dismantle and rebuild the Old West from 1925 to 1928". "The new extension, opened in 1965, was named the 'John Morrison Youth Hall in honour of the minister...'" "Included in a 'time capsule' sealed into the foundation, was "a copy of the 'Greenock Telegraph' where Mr Peat's daughter, Elizabeth [aged just 7 then] had written her name in the 'Stop-Press' column."

The new edifice - unlike the Pirrie Hall, nowadays a Grade 'C' Listed building - has no architectural pretension and is largely obscured behind high walls, plus the Pirrie Hall, on site. However, it remains functional - and was always busy, as was the kirk itself, despite the national downturn in church membership as the 20th century progressed.

In the early years of the millennium, Alec Galloway, a stained glass artist of local and national standing, was entrusted to undertake necessary maintenance of the precious kirk windows, removing some to his workshop, to totally deconstruct as a prerequisite to replacing any crumbling 'leading' and damaged glass. In effecting this expertise, he regaled of having encountered, on some glass pieces, especially window edges which (normally embedded in the lead slotting and thus never on public view) had derogatory comments etched thereon by perhaps disgruntled apprentices against their employers!

He also came across trinkets and even coins, embedded in the leads, all of which he replaced in situ when re-assembling the windows. With the same attitude as William Peat when dismantling the masonry in 1925 for transfer to the Esplanade, Mr. Galloway treated these 'lucky tokens' left by his counterpart predecessors, as an integral part of the windows' history, and therefore to be retained in perpetuity, "where they belonged".

All seemed well concerning the kirk's future, but a wind of change had been blowing. Nationally, congregational expansion had begun to reverse from the mid-20th century and this accelerating. As the result of such ecclesiastical contractions, locally, there was an amalgamation in 2011 which involved the Old West Kirk. Although the wee kirk still possessed a viable congregation within itself, such merging was purposed to create, an ongoing viable unit overall for the area, this to be designated: the 'Lyle Kirk', comprising of two other church complexes in addition to the Old West Kirk. A vote to merge was ratified by a *composite vote* of the three congregations. Subsequently, by another such vote, the Old West Kirk was declared *surplus to requirements for worship*.

Ninth Phase : Old West Kirk : 2011 - 2022: re-incarnation in some *new* role?

Would this be the *eventide* of community use, *or finding a new lease of life for the kirk?*



Since 2011 it had been devoid of religious or other purpose, so effectively ‘mothballed’.

Two of the Old West Kirk ex-congregational members, Mrs Lynnette Robertson and Mrs Elizabeth Terris (née Peat, granddaughter of William Peat, and daughter of Robert Peat, prime-mover of the above-noted new hall work-party) were permitted to exercise a reporting brief on behalf of the Lyle Kirk, to ensure that the kirk and its associated buildings were kept in a good state of repair and its grounds maintained immaculately.

In 2016 representatives of the Lyle Kirk Session entered into discussions with ‘Historic Churches Scotland’ (HCS); a charity dedicated to saving similar churches redundant in a religious capacity, through working with local communities to redeploy the edifices to a new but appropriate life through expert conservation and creative regeneration. HCS worked long and assiduously to identify, in prospect, a raft of grants plus funding sources through future use of the premises by local community-based organisations, to create a financial ‘package’ to potentially enable the envisaged complex to exist viably. Regrettably, all was put on hold due to the 2020 pandemic Covid-19 with an enforced ‘lockdown’ of activity in the United Kingdom except for that legally deemed necessary.

Upon lifting of restrictions in 2022, a detailed proposal/business plan was submitted by HCS to the Lyle Kirk Session. In the interim however, Church of Scotland, due to *drastic membership contraction nationally*, had adopted the policy of consolidating its diminishing revenue for pursuing its Christian mission, by divesting itself of all surplus buildings, irrespective of historical background. During the resultant selling-off of properties, the Lyle Session set aside HCS as ‘preferred bidder’ for the Old West Kirk and, in August of 2022, its site joined many other churches, manses and halls on the property-market of the Church’s Legal Department, inviting bids for outright purchase.

Of course, because of the kirk being a Grade ‘A’ listed building and with a host of interments within its precincts, any buyer would be extremely restricted in significantly ‘developing’ the church building or its environs. Thus, an optimal best option, for both Lyle Kirk and Inverclyde, might be a local community-orientated group or partnership.

Anyhow, to evaluate: apart from commercial exploitation of this premier location, what, *alternatively*, had the Old West Kirk got to offer to attract an *appropriate* future use?

Undoubtedly, it was/is a both time capsule and mirror of many episodes in the story and traditions of the area that would grow into today’s town of Greenock. In its lifespan of centuries, it had, once before, been discarded but rescued as precious by its community.

It has been a *rock* through times of tribulation and triumph, surviving despite religious and civil controversy. It epitomises *innovation, inspiration* and *ingenuity*. As an initial kirk in the Reformation era, it is pivotal to its Christian denomination but is *also*, nowadays, viewed with affection by people of **all local religions - and none** - such that it has the opportunity to become an ecumenical **symbol of faith and hope for everyone**.

Of course, in the kirk's long lifespan there have been many changes - mostly additions - to the fabric - *but these in a continuum* stretching right back to its **1591 inauguration**.

Having had several names during its existence, a timeline of these is under-noted, viz.:-

1591	'Parish Kirk of Greenock' specified by King James VI of Scots in royal charter
1594	Kirk of Greenock Parish , due to parish created by Act of Scottish Parliament
1761	Old Parish Kirk or West Kirk (due to inauguration of New Parish/ Mid Kirk)
1841	Interregnum when abandoned for worship as 'obsolescent and too small'
1864	Old West Kirk after re-opening; 'Old' to differentiate it from 'New' West Kirk
1925	Interruption of services for 3 years due to transfer of site to the Esplanade
1872	North Parish Church ; but congregation continued to call it the Old West Kirk
1979	Old West Kirk ; resumed as official name after merging with St. Columba's Kirk
2011	Discontinuance from public worship after amalgamation into 'Lyle Kirk'
(Often, in the past, it was nicknamed colloquially as the 'Sailors' Kirk')	

"*A rose by any other name would smell as sweet*" wrote, ca. 1591, William Shakespeare who - had he travelled north from his native England thenabouts - could have seen the planting of this particular 'flower', **which hasn't withered, but indeed blooms yet!**

Even the breaks in provision of worship within the kirk, occurring during, respectively, 1841-1864 and 1925-1928, proved to be, in its resumption, the impetus for introduction of new ideas. *Thus kirk* has also often, been in the forefront of societal improvement.

Set nowadays in the pleasant Esplanade corner of Greenock's superb 'West End', the wee kirk has a *proven record as an esteemed destination for parties of tourists* brought by the Inverclyde Tourist Group and other organisations, or who come in an individual capacity, all wishing to experience its various attractions. Such visitors are **entranced**:

- *to learn of the kirk's history and lore* - this in so many ways, that of Greenock itself;
- *to hear of and enjoy the anecdotes about the people and historical events, national and local, associated with the building and its congregation over the many centuries;*
- *to marvel at its elegant architecture, and unique collection of stained-glass windows;*
- *to scrutinise the old gravestones which tell of past trades and families of the district;*
- *to meditate in spirit within the quiet and peacefulness of the kirk's tranquil interior.*

Despite these obvious attributes, the ancient building, including its present ambient site, nowadays faces a challenging crossroads, whereat a heritage-touristic prospect would appear to be an advantageous way forward in view of the fact that tourism is a present and increasingly important mainstay of how 'Inverclyde' can earn its future livelihood.

It is accepted that future use of the building must not be inimical to religious decorum, although a wish to retain '**Old West Kirk**' in its ongoing designation would be likely.

A tourist destination may have among its attractions, shops and places of entertainment, each of which must be financially viable to justify continuance. And that is how an accountant would approach the subject. If, during a period of touristic *downturn*, such individual businesses disappear, then probably similar will re-established during any ensuing *upturn*. By contrast, a historic building, as a potential touristic asset to attract visitors, is different insofar that, once eradicated, it cannot be retrieved: an irreplaceable loss to future tourism. Too often in the past, Inverclyde has carelessly disposed of such an asset, this because an accountant's philosophy *only* has been applied in the matter.

A historical tourist attraction may not always be able to generate enough *direct* income to sustain itself. However, its touristic value must be judged on the income that it also generates *indirectly* for the area through visitors who, coming to see it, may additionally spend money on accommodation, eating, transport, etc., within the locality. That goes beyond the narrow view of an *accountant* to embrace the wider vision of an *economist*.

Of course, no community can afford to sustain buildings at public expense *only because they are historic*. Thus, some other means must be found to generate income to upkeep them. In the case of the Old West Kirk, in addition to the church itself (which ought to be conserved in as intrinsic a condition as possible) there are the associated Pirrie and Morrison Halls which could be used for ancillary finance-raising purposes. Moreover, to render them more capable of doing so, 'lottery' funding and grants could be sought.

Hopefully, a lead will be taken by the various heritage, cultural and tourist organisations in the district, co-operating to present a business plan for the employment of the Old West Kirk which will encompass and enhance the local community's involvement in it.

Success would, undoubtedly, benefit Inverclyde's touristic and, hence, financial future. Failure would, undoubtedly, be a heritage and social loss to Inverclyde's eternal shame.

The Old West Kirk is a major visitor attraction due to being:

**a beacon of spirituality for all of Inverclyde
an icon of local and national heritage
a gem of vernacular architecture
a kaleidoscope of stained glass masterpieces of worldwide acclaim**



The 'Old West Kirk' - the proud and serene 'sentinel' to Greenock's scenic Esplanade

The foregoing was written before the announcement of a sale and its outcome (this dealt with in the next section) and the wording has been left to reflect the ethos prevailing at the time of it being formulated.

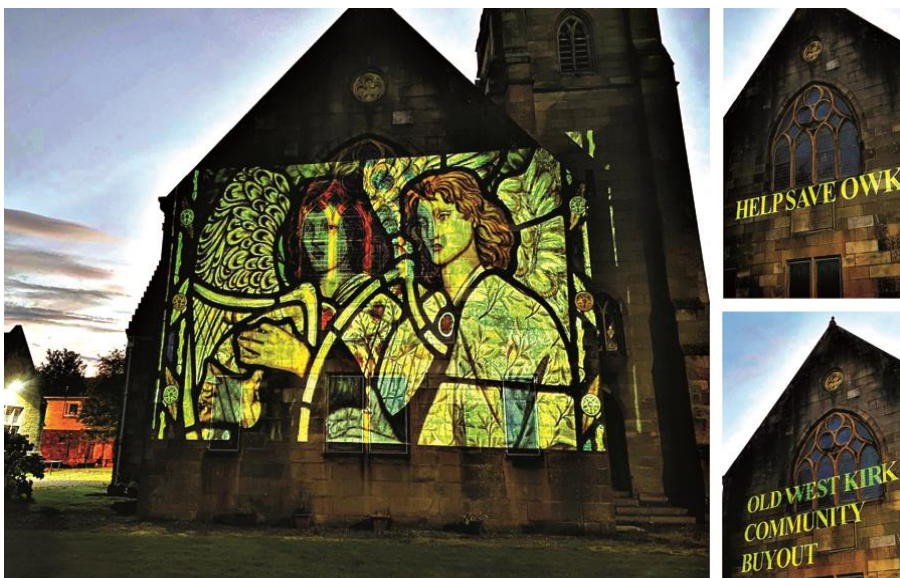
Tenth Phase: what transpired due to the sale of the Old West Kirk in 2022



Even by April 2022, the Old West Kirk had been, by the Lyle Kirk, tentatively floated for sale on the open market. However, as noted in the previous section, a confirmatory notice (photo) by the Legal Department of the Church of Scotland appeared on August 11th, 2022, with the closure of bids to be at noon on 6th September - that is, less than a month later. Whereas such an interval might be adequate time for a commercial enterprise which has only itself to consider in deciding whether or not to make a bid for the property plus raise sufficient funds to do so, by contrast, such a process is more complicated, hence protracted, when considering a 'community buyout' involving multiple parties.

Firstly, although several groups, indeed, proved interested in acquiring the site for some purpose, diversity in the such proposed usages inhibited co-operating toward the goal of compositely bidding for it. Secondly, no group was initially prepared to take the lead in formulating a composite business plan to support a bid, plus allocating facilities in the future use of the site in event that the bid proved successful. Thirdly, no group had unilateral access to the purchase price and potential running costs, and none the wish to carry the responsibility of co-ordinating the others in procuring such monies. Due to the foregoing obstacles, it took time and effort to coax such disparity into coalescence.

However, for just such a community buyout, a 'SCIO' (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) had been registered in 2017 as 'the 'Old West Kirk Trust'. It had several 'trustees' although was effectively latent, with no infrastructure, affiliated groups nor business plan. However, with suitable documentation now provided by members from the dozen local organisations supporting the 'community buyout', a bid was able to be submitted on the due date, incorporating these various organisations, acting under the auspice of this SCIO. Simultaneously initiated, had been social media coverage including a 'crowd-funding' mechanism, gathering monetary pledges towards the effort,



Highlighting the special quality of the kirk's stained glass windows, the local artistic body, **RIG Arts**, projected on the kirk's southeast gable, a selection interspersed with suitable slogans.

A written plea, to the Church of Scotland Legal

Department, was presented by the Secretary of ‘The Scottish Stained Glass Trust’, Mrs Alison Robertson, for this *unique collection* of windows to be retained in situ. In tandem, the Secretary of the ‘Historical Churches Scotland’, Mrs Victoria Collison-Owen, entered a submission also urging that kirk’s future remain in community hands.

The importance of the kirk, to the future wellbeing of Inverclyde through tourism, was emphasised by, respectively the area’s Member of the UK Parliament, Mr. Ronnie Cowan, and the Member of the Scottish Parliament, Mr. Stuart McMillan, in letters, in support of a community buyout, sent to the Church of Scotland’s Legal Department.

The SCIO bid joined those of 7 other hopefuls to be adjudicated upon by the Church of Scotland .

The spectacular photograph (right) was the principal one used in the Church of Scotland’s advert for the sale of the Old West Kirk

Reproduced by courtesy of the Legal Department of the Church of Scotland, and with acknowledgement to ‘Clyde Digital’



In early December intimation, on behalf of the Session of the Lyle Kirk, was made by its Minister, Rev J. Fleming, that:-

“The Church of Scotland is pleased to announce the successful sale of the whole of the site of the former Old West Kirk in Greenock to well-known business man Mr. Marco Medinelli. As part of the sale Mr. Medineli has granted a formal undertaking, by which, **for a period of two years following acquisition, He:-**

- a) **agrees not to sell the Church:**
- b) **will not apply for planning consent or listed building consent for ‘change of use’ of the Church building for any purpose which might conflict with continuing community use;**
- c) **will enter into discussions with representatives of the Old West Kirk Trust and associated community groups to allow them to use the Church building for community activities; and**
- d) **will use his use his best endeavours to ensure that the Church building continues to be available to the people of Greenock for community purposes.**



The ‘Greenock Telegraph’ - having throughout, displayed considerable concern with regard to ultimate fate of the Old West Kirk - in its edition of Friday, 2nd of December, 2022, devoted its front-page, plus a fulsome report on page 5, to publicise this outcome.

The foregoing re-assurances, given to the Church of Scotland by Mr. Medinelli, plus his likewise community-spirited sentiments, expressed in the ‘Greenock Telegraph’ article of above date (and reproduced in full in **Appendix 4**), augurs extremely favourably for evolution, in due course, of a significant ongoing role for the Old West Kirk within a coalition of *commerce, community involvement* and *heritage tourism* which, hopefully, will contribute greatly to the future social wellbeing and financial prosperity of the people and businesses alike, not only of Greenock but of Inverclyde as a whole.

Appendix 1 : Remains exhumed from old kirkyard & re-interred in Seafield site

(See pages 49 & 56 for relevance)

The 'Greenock Telegraph' of the 6th of August 1919 carried the intimation, regarding the above-noted, that: "The more important memorial stones will all have a place in the grounds [Seafield] where the *dust* of the long departed dead will be reverently laid." Of course, it would only be due to the human remains of these forebears being of little bulk (*parcels of dust*, indeed) that they *all* could be accommodated in such a small area!

Two sets of documents attest to this transfer of gravestones and *related mortal remains*.

The first, dated 12th January, 1927, headed '**List of Stones and Remains in Old West Kirkyard to be Removed to Seafield**', is a Harland & Wolff compilation, composed of five (nowadays) very tattered pages, arraying the lairs (and persons within them) to be transferred between the sites. The columns within the format cover, respectively: the name of the person wishing the transfer: location of gravestone in the old cemetery: type and size and any other details of each stone that would facilitate identifying it.

12th January, 1927.

NOTE: Reference numbers are taken from "List of Stones in Old West Kirkyard to be specially dealt with" of 17/8/26. See also Drawing No. 149/127. Stones not marked to be removed unless otherwise stated.

Names	Name on stone and location as given by applicant.	Particulars as located or Stone Register numbers.	Type of Stone	Remarks
Mr. J. M. ...	Wm. Blackwood wife of John Blackwood, Glasgow, 1845. Inscriptions on stones almost obliterated and now quite unreadable to trace sites. Also tall slumped monument erected by Duncan Blair to the memory of his wife, Isabella Blackwood.	Stone No. 317 on Reg. No. 215. also <i>215</i>	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" Stone broken and repaired by cost.
Mr. J. M. ...	Isabella Blackwood at right of entrance gate.	Isabella Blackwood No. 317 on Reg. No. 215. also <i>215</i>	No. 317 Standing	Concrete Foundation 3'0" x 12" x 9"

Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" - ditto
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood, Director	No. 317 on Reg.	Standing	Concrete Foundation 4'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Wall	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick
Mr. J. M. ...	John Blackwood	No. 317 on Reg.	Flat	2 Concrete Foundations 3'0" x 12" x 9" thick

HARLAND & WOLFF LTD
GREENOCK
INCORPORATED IN SCOTLAND
SURVEYORS & ENGINEERS

Illustrated are the top of the first page, and the bottom of last page, with, clearly, the Harland & Wolff stamp authorising the transfer operation to take place to the Seafield site.

Sixty such applications (barely legible today) are listed within the document. The final page is very torn so the number is approximate.

- 5 -

Name of Person giving notice.	Name on stone and location as given by applicants.	Particular local Regis
Mrs. Margaret Johnston, 12 Hutten Drive, Linthoune Green	Headstones and four border stones.	
T.P. MacCallum, 55 Eldon Street, Greenock.	No. 259. Peter MacCallum Merchant and heirs, in memory of Thomas Park, etc. No. 479. Peter MacCallum, Shipmaster, Greenock. (Practically straight in from entrance gate and near to the north wall at Shippard - two stones - Peter and Daniel MacCallum 1879. Inscriptions on back. "Kernal wood birch wood".	No. 259 P. 13 status 1
Other iron stones		
John Macquarrie, "Blairair" Kilnsockin.	Donald and Sarah Macquarrie, 1824.	No. 131
Hector Polson, 23 Cardwell Road, Greenock.	John Polson, H.M. Customs.	No. 472
W. R. S. Love, 17 West Blackhall St., Greenock.	Robert Love, Hunter, 1849, and Marion McFarland, wife d. 1867; son Arnold, d. 1869, and Alex. Love Letter Carrier. In the South-East of	No. 695
Archibald Shearer, (Macfarlan, Shearer & Co) Nogle Street, Greenock.	Archibald Shearer, Cooper, Greenock. Stands next to where monument of Highland Mary stood.	Stone 8 WA
Rev. David Swan, Haybole House, Haybole, Ayrshire.	No. 290. William Swan, Slater, wife and children. (Double Flat stone).	No. 290
Dugald Barroch, 41 Holmcroft Street, Greenock.	Dugald Barroch, Minister, or Pastor, interred 45 years ago.	
G.H. Black, Bessie, Collesnie, Fife.		No. 7, on West
Miss Violet Gray, 59 Finnerart Street, Greenock.	John Wilson, Schoolmaster No. 374 on Plan.	No. 374
Miss Logan per Messrs W.W. & J. McClure.	John MacIver	No. 374 Stone 6 to Green
Greenock Corporation	Thos. McClure	No. 374 P
- Ditto -	Loitch	Same as
- Ditto -	Park	Same as
- Ditto -	W.	Same as

The foregoing confirms that, at the time of removal of the mortal remains from the old graveyard, there was intention to rebury them ALL elsewhere, one option being the precinct at Seafield. Descendants could make this choice by application to Harland & Wolff for the re-interment to take place in the new kirk precinct at Seafield.

The illustration (left) shows the left hand side of a typical page in the 1927 Harland & Wolff listing, detailing the applicants wishing transfer of remains to Seafield. As will be seen from the bottom of this document page, some applicants made multiple applications, these indicated by the word 'ditto'.

Whereas this document shows the extent of Harland & Wolff *intention* to relocate the mortal remains from the old graveyard to the Seafield site, and is dated **1927**, there is a record dated **1928** (see next page down) that details the *actual* transfers which took place to Seafield as the alternative reburial site.

Today, in the Seafield precinct there are 44 gravestones placed against the site's north-western wall; 27 recumbent stones (some doubles); and 3 stones embedded in kirk exterior wall.

It is amazing that this delicate exhuming etc. operation seems to have been achieved between the 7th of January, 1927, and presumably the re-opening date of the kirk on Sunday, the 19th of February, 1928; i.e. little more than 13 months in total!

The 1928 document is headed:

Record of those whose Remains were Removed from the Old West Kirkyard, Greenock, and Reinterred at Other Burying Grounds 1928. It is drawn from the Register & Plan prepared by Greenock Corporation (forerunner to today's Council). It details the mortal remains and the gravestones of those exhumed from the Old West Kirk graveyard, with disbursement to, respectively, Greenock Municipal Cemetery, opened in 1846; Inverkip [Street] Burying Ground, opened around 1786; and the Seafield site for the Old West Kirk. The first page of the latter is reproduced below.

LIST OF STONES AND REMAINS IN OLD WEST KIRKYARD REMOVED TO SEAFIELD.	
No. on Register Plan and Page on 1920 Register.	Name on Stone.
✓ 536 P. 1	ADAMS. The burying place of John Adams, Saddler in Greenock, and his heirs. 1835.
✓ 477 P. 1	ALEXANDER. Here lie interred the remains of Bailie John Alexander, late Writer in Greenock, who died on the 28th February, 1759, in the 41st year of his age, and of Mrs. Elizabeth Campbell his spouse, who died on the 18th November, 1818, in the 83rd year of her age, leaving an only child, Elizabeth Alexander, the spouse of Alexr. Campbell, Esqr., Comptroller of the Customs at Port-Glasgow. Also another stone lettered as under:— This also belongs to J. A. E. C.
✓ 590 P. 1	ARMOUR. This burying place belongs to John Armour, Weaver in Greenock, and Janet Jamieson his spouse, and their children. 1808.
✓ 712 P. 1	This burying place belongs to Arthur Armour, Mariner, and his spouse Mary Dow.
✓ 577 P. 3	BLACK. Arch. Black, Merchant in Greenock, died in March, 1800, aged 76 years; Isobel Black his wife, died 14th October, 1828, aged 83 years; Mary Isabella Black, died 16th August, 1837, aged 5 years. Erected by Archibald John Black, 1852. <i>Stones to Seafield Remains to Cemetery</i>
585 P. 3	Also two Flat Stones marked A. B. M. L. 1762. A. J. B.
✓ 7 P. 31	BLACK. In memory of Robert Stewart Black, son of John Black, d. 1842.
✓ 8 P. 31	John Black, Writer in Greenock, born 28th May, 1797, died 31st August, 1856. A loving husband. A fond father. A generous friend. Jane McNaughton, wife of John Black, born 8th April, 1798, died 1st December, 1876.
✓ 9 P. 31	John Black, Writer, 1829.
23 P. 1	BROWN. Colin Rae Brown (born in Greenock, 1821) erected this headstone in memory of his father, James Brown, Shipmaster, Greenock, and his mother, Marion Rea Brown, also his grandfather, James Rea, Shipmaster, Greenock, and his grandmother, Marion Leitch Rea, whose remains are all interred here. 1890. (On back of stone.) In 1856 during his residence in Glasgow, Mr. Colin Rae Brown originated the movement to erect a National Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig, and was convenor of the Executive Sub-Committee. In 1858 he took the first steps to promote the Universal Celebration of the Burns Centenary in 1859 and acted as Honorary

A national figure; one of a number of local 'notables' reburied herein

Whereas the handwritten note: “Stones to Seafield Remains to cemetery” (relative to above page) intimates a change of mind, it is a unique amendment, implying that the rest in the list *were* actually transferred to Seafield. The document’s 1928 date implies *completion of the transfer*, presumably, underway for some years previously. The document comprises 11 pages, identifying those to be transferred, by applicants listed alphabetically (67 in total, a few more than on H&W’s counterpart list, presumably indicating further applications made during the actual transfer process) and gravestone inscription, affording details of the remains to be transferred. Some show a series of applications under the same surname. The inscriptions list over three hundred named persons. A fair proportion are children, the age at death stated, this often months rather than years. In numerous inscriptions there is merely an embracive term such as ‘*and heirs*’, ‘*and children*’, a plaintive echo of an era of prodigious procreation in families, blighted by rife infant mortality so prolific that there was not even space on the gravestones to include the forenames (hence very existence) of these poor wee souls.

In all, there, it would be no exaggeration to assess that **no less than half a thousand mortal remains** were thus removed to the Seafield precinct of the Old West Kirk. In fact, *probably more than that* as there would be many remains, buried in the original lairs, in the early centuries before the advent of engraved inscriptions on gravestones.

As above-noted, most were probably reduced to a mere handful of mortal dust, but all deserve to be still revered in their new resting place, this making the Seafield precinct *hallowed ground*. In fact, it is recognised by Inverclyde Council as a local burial site.

Below is an extract from page 2 of the 1928 list showing some specialist applications.

Here the ‘coupers’/ barrel-makers exemplify a corporate applicant. Similar is listed in a later page from Greenock Gardeners’ Society.

Notable in this extract from the burial record (to the right) is that the Macknight-Crawfurd family did re-use their family vault - i.e. the crypt situated under the kirk edifice- after the kirk was relocated to its present-day Seafield/Esplanade site. The crypt is sealed and for family access only.

COUPERS’ BURYING GROUND.

This burying place belongs to the Corporation of Coupers in Greenock.

CRAWFURD.

This is intended to mark the place where have been committed to Earth the remains of Archibald Crawfurd, Merchant in Greenock, who died in his 73rd year, the 11th day of February, 1788. Of his children, James Maxwell, born 27th February, 1766, and who died 14th September, 1766; Henry John, b. 1st May, d. 12th May, 1770; Annabella, b. 7th July, 1767, d. 15th May, 1774; Annabella Elizabeth, b. 21st February, d. 27th September, 1776; John, b. 2nd March, 1772, d. 18th March, 1780; Archibald, b. 15th March, 1769, d. 18th April, 1795. And of his grandson Archibald, who was born 12th January, 1791, and died 14th April, 1795. Hugh, eldest son of the first mentioned Archibald, whose eldest son, the last mentioned Archibald was, caused this to be done. 1796.

CRAWFURD OF CARTSBURN.

Crawfurd of Cartsburn Vault, containing Jane Cunningham Crawfurd, died 1879; Thomas McKnight Crawfurd, died 1909.

Also remains from Old Vault under floor of Old Church (eight persons).

CRAWFURD.

This is the burying place of Thomas Crawfurd, Farmer in Stron, Margaret Shearer his spouse, and their heirs.

All of the foregoing documentation is lodged, nowadays - and *open for public access* - within Inverclyde Council’s archival collections at the ‘Watt Institution’, situated at the corner of Union and Kelly Streets, Greenock.

Letter received upon enquiry as to the legal position and the Scottish Parliamentary protection to be applied to those interred around the Old West Kirk within its present Seafield/Esplanade site

Scottish Parliament Information Centre
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 34 85361

5 September 2022

Sale of church and surrounding land

Thanks for your enquiry. You noted an advert from the Church of Scotland for the sale of a church and surrounding land in Greenock. The constituent is concerned that the advert makes no explicit mention of the bodies which may be buried in the ground surrounding the church. He has documentation that suggests up to 500 bodies may be buried there.

You asked for information on what the legal requirements might be for any buyer purchasing land on which bodies may be buried.

The advert

The advert does make clear that the main part of the site is category A listed. This covers the church building, the memorials (gravestones), boundary walls and fencing. It may include much of the garden ground.

A separate church hall is category C listed.

In addition, the site currently falls within "class 10" in terms of planning restrictions on land use. This covers buildings used for public worship (or for the social or recreational activities of religious bodies). It also covers use as:

- a nursery or day centre
- for educational purposes
- a museum or art gallery
- a public library or reading room
- a public hall or exhibition hall
- a law court.

There are references in the advert to the possibility that bodies may have been re-interred in the church grounds as well as in a vault when the building was moved from its original site in the 1920s.

Planning constraints

- Listed buildings consent

Because the site is listed, listed buildings consent from the local planning authority would be needed to make any changes which affected the character of the church. This would include alternations to the exterior or interior of the building – and is likely to include anything which would affect the memorials within the site.

Inverclyde Council's policy on listed buildings can be found in its Local Development Plan 2019 pages 36 to 37.

- Planning permission

The site can currently be used as a place of worship or for the other – broadly public – purposes also covered under class 10 land use. A change of use (for example, to residential housing) would require planning permission.

- The role of the planning authority

As part of the process of considering whether to grant consent/permission, the planning authority has to apply a range of local and national policies. These include, for example, requirements intended to protect cultural heritage.

It would be usual for an application to contain background reports – for example, a geophysical survey to reduce the risk of accidentally dis-interring bodies in unmarked graves.

It would also be possible for the planning authority to attach conditions to any approvals – for example, that certain works are supervised by an archaeological expert.

Broadly, the planning process can be expected to thoroughly consider any risks to cultural heritage (including gravestones) from a proposal, as well as to put requirements in place to minimise the risk of disturbing graves.

Disinterment

The common law is the traditional law as developed by judges through decisions in individual cases. The common law protects a grave from disturbance until at least the process of disintegration of a body is complete.

Broadly, anyone who wants to disinter a body needs to apply to the courts for permission. That permission is not generally granted unless there is consent from the family members of those affected or there are strong reasons for doing so.

There are specific exceptions to this requirement in legislation for some public bodies (including government ministers, planning authorities or “statutory undertakings” such as Scottish Water). They can disinter bodies without additional authority in relation to certain types of development.

Burial authorities (bodies with responsibility for the management of public burial grounds) can also disinter bodies where necessary or expedient in terms of their management functions.

Where someone accidentally disinters a body, there is probably a requirement to report the matter to the police for further investigation. There is also a requirement to treat the remains with dignity and respect. Re-interment should be a consideration in relation to this.

Guidance from Historic Scotland (2006) in relation to how archaeologists should treat human remains describes some of the considerations.

I hope the above information is helpful in responding to your constituent.

Best wishes

Abigail Bremner

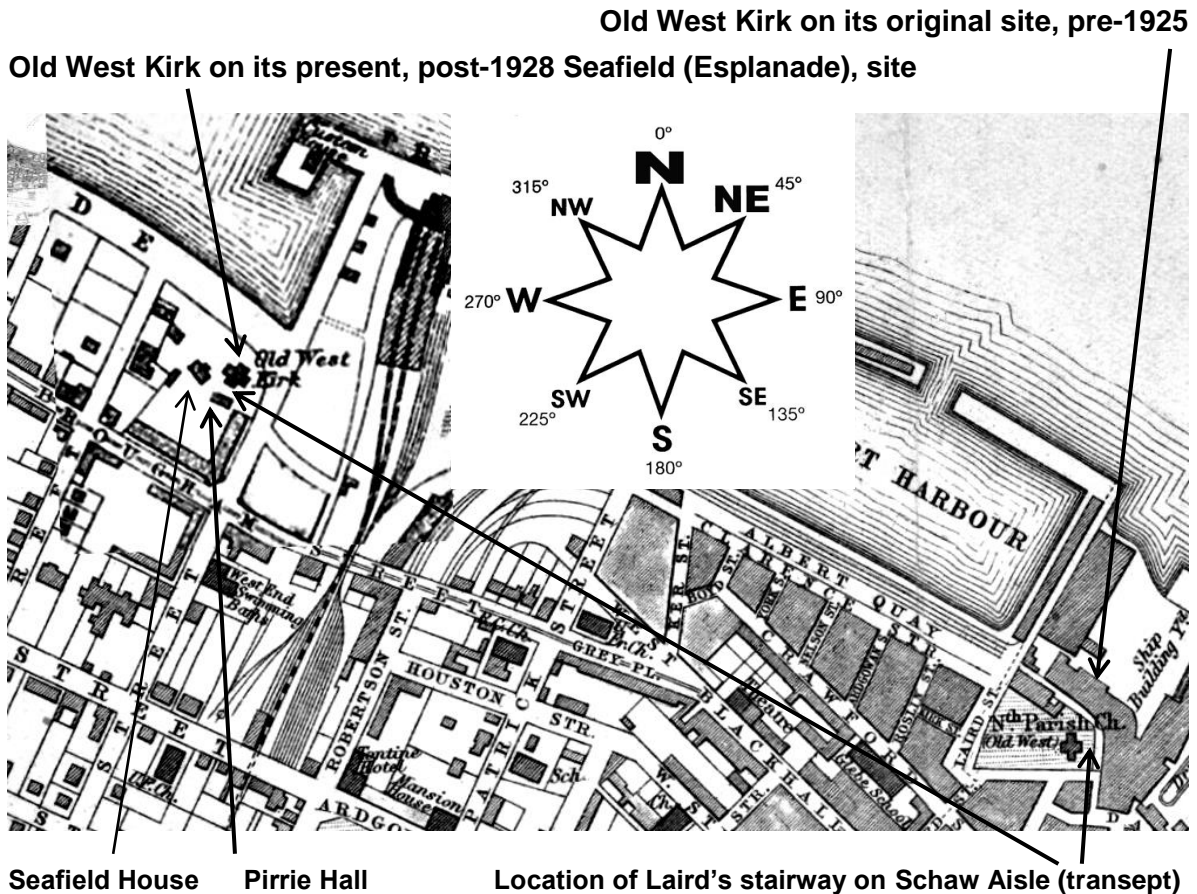
Senior Researcher

Justice and Social Affairs Research Unit

Appendix 2 : Conjectural map of Old West Kirk in both past and present locations

(See page 49 for relevance)

Note: No such drawing as that referred above and depicted below actually exists. What is illustrated is a contrived **composite** in which an actual map of pre-1925 has had, superimposed upon it, the *post-1928* immediate area around the Seafield end of the Esplanade, this simply to highlight the relative 'before' and 'after' locations of the kirk within Greenock. The direct distance between the sites is 0.54 miles / 0.87 kilometres.



A magnetic compass reading of the kirk in its present location finds the Crawford transept gable (i.e. facing the Clyde and containing the main door) on a **Northeast** reading, such precision probably deliberate, facilitating checking that all external walls were at proper right angles to one another by recourse to main axis compass bearings.

By using the compass reading of the long established West Blackhall Street, it was possible to deduce that the kirk, in its former location, was built on a precise North-South axis. Its Crawford gable would then face due **West**. During relocation, it has therefore been rotated clockwise by $1\frac{1}{2}$ right-angles (i.e. 135 degrees). Its original door was on the nave's south facing gable. This gable nowadays faces northwest.

Roman Catholic churches were almost invariably built - for doctrinal reasons - facing east, i.e. an East-West axis - . Why Johnne Schaw chose to build his diametrically opposed may only be conjectured. Perhaps to emphasise the difference with the old religion. Actually, Presbyterian churches have never been constrained to adhere to any specific orientation.

Appendix 3 : Architect's 1925 proposed plans of kirk for rebuilding it at Seafield
(See page 51 for relevance)

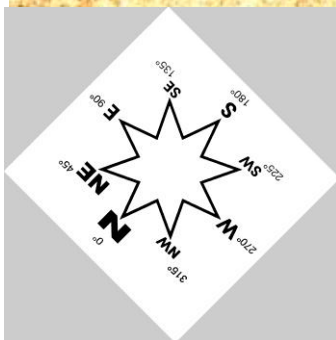
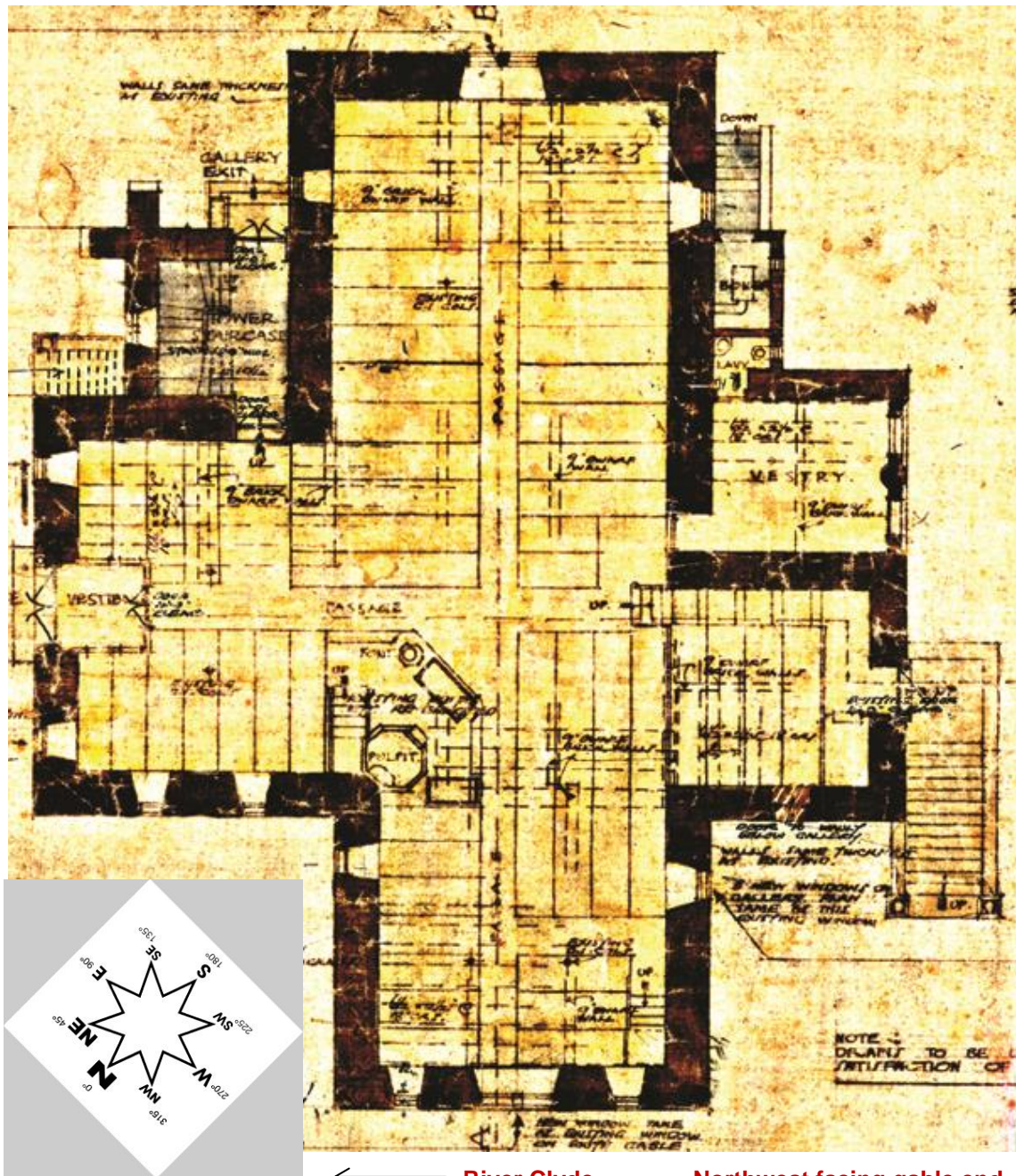
To ensure that the Old West Kirk building, when transferred from its former site to its new one at Seafield, would be a replica of its former self except where there was an improvement of the structure by replacement, or an (e.g. the new tower), necessitated architectural drawings of the proposed structure. The architect engaged was James Miller, ARSA, of 15 Blythswood Square, Glasgow. In addition to detailed drawings of particular features (e.g. window embrasures) in 1925 he produced a set of *overall plans* on linen (now fragile and discoloured with age), submitted and approved by the then Greenock Dean of Guild on 20th October, 1925. Under-noted are reproduced extracts.

Plan view at floor level (orientated at Seafield with the kirk's northeast gable facing River Clyde)

Northeast facing transept

Southeast facing gable end

Southwest facing transept



← **River Clyde**

Northwest facing gable end

(Reproduction of the drawings on this page or subsequent ones is not to any scale, or even to the same scale)

Plan view at gallery level

Northeast facing transept

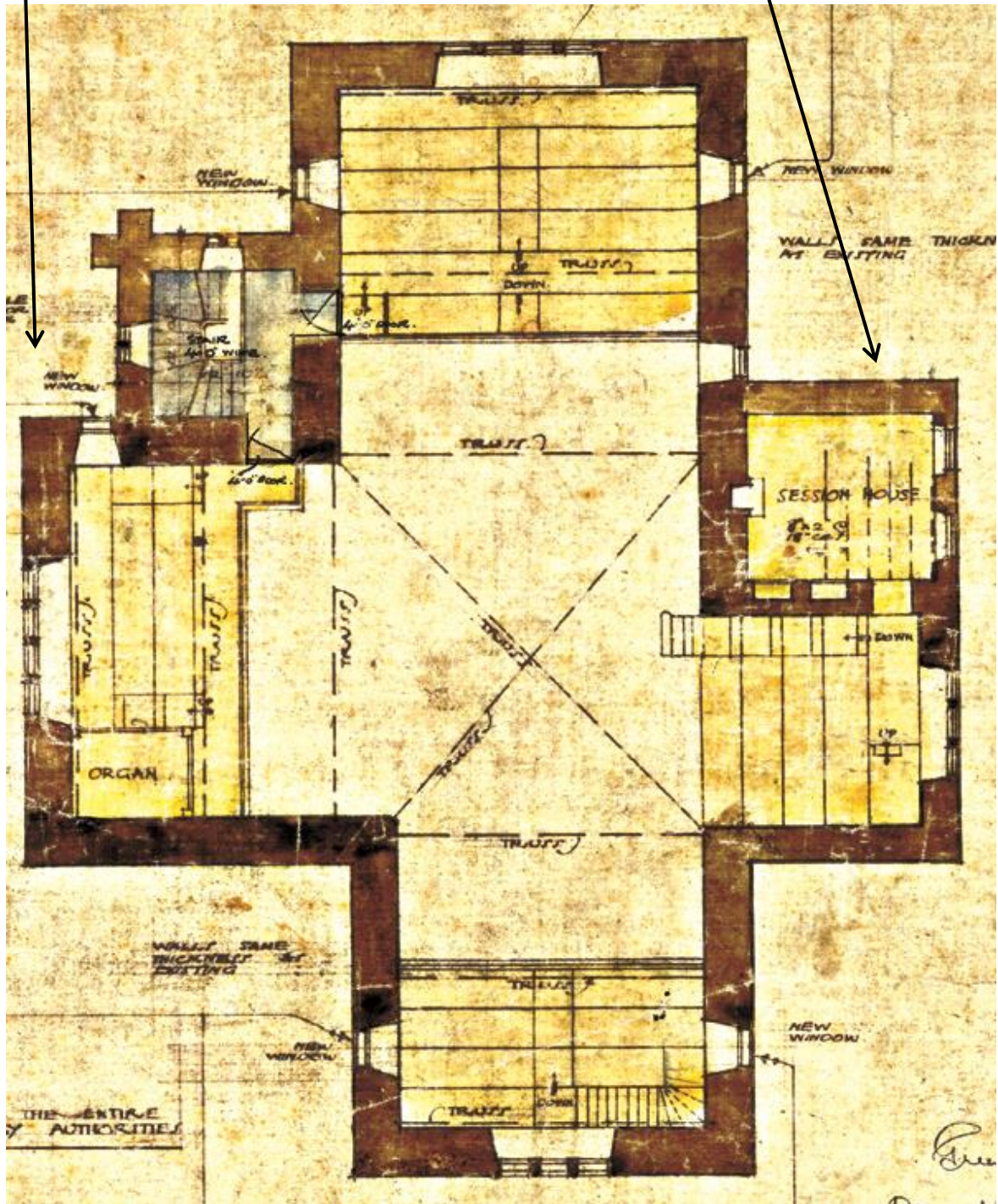
Southeast facing gable end

Southwest facing transept

(Left protruding) Crawford Aisle

(Below) The Farmers' Loft/Gallery

(Right protruding) Schaw Aisle



(Above) The Sailors' Loft/Gallery

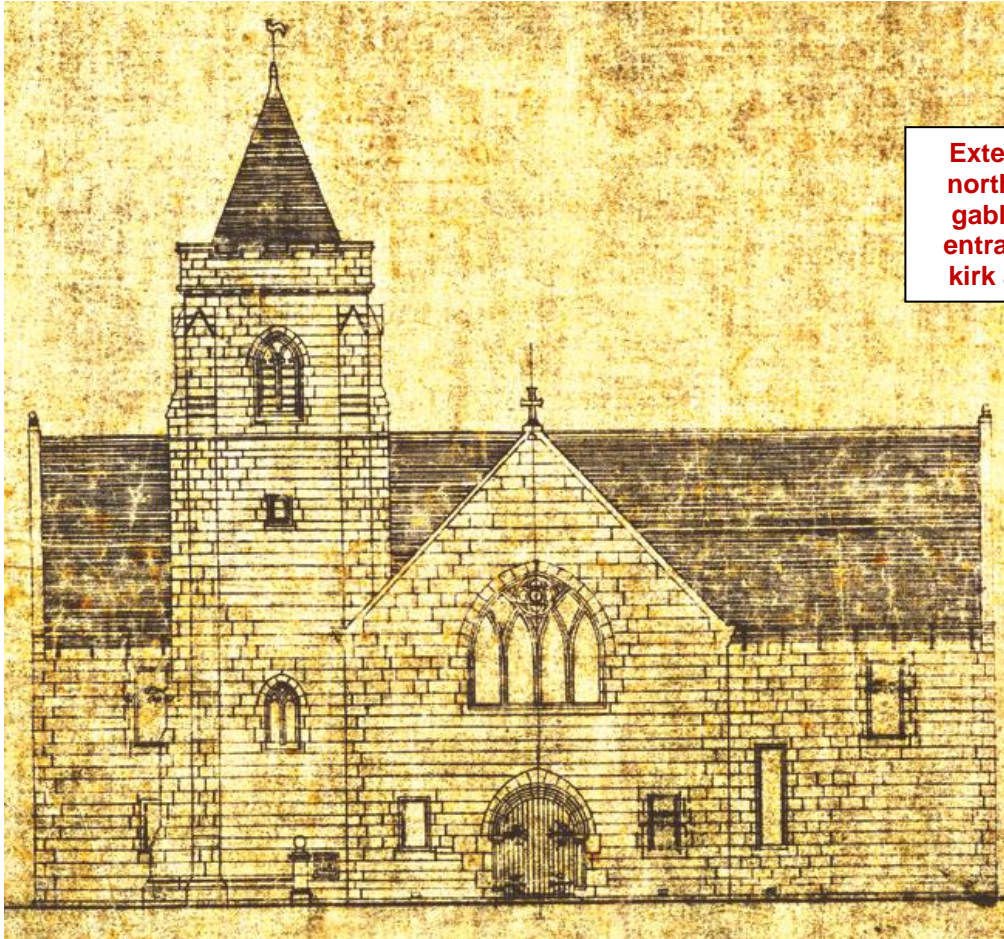
← River Clyde

Northwest facing gable end

All dimensions are in feet, measured from scale on original plans

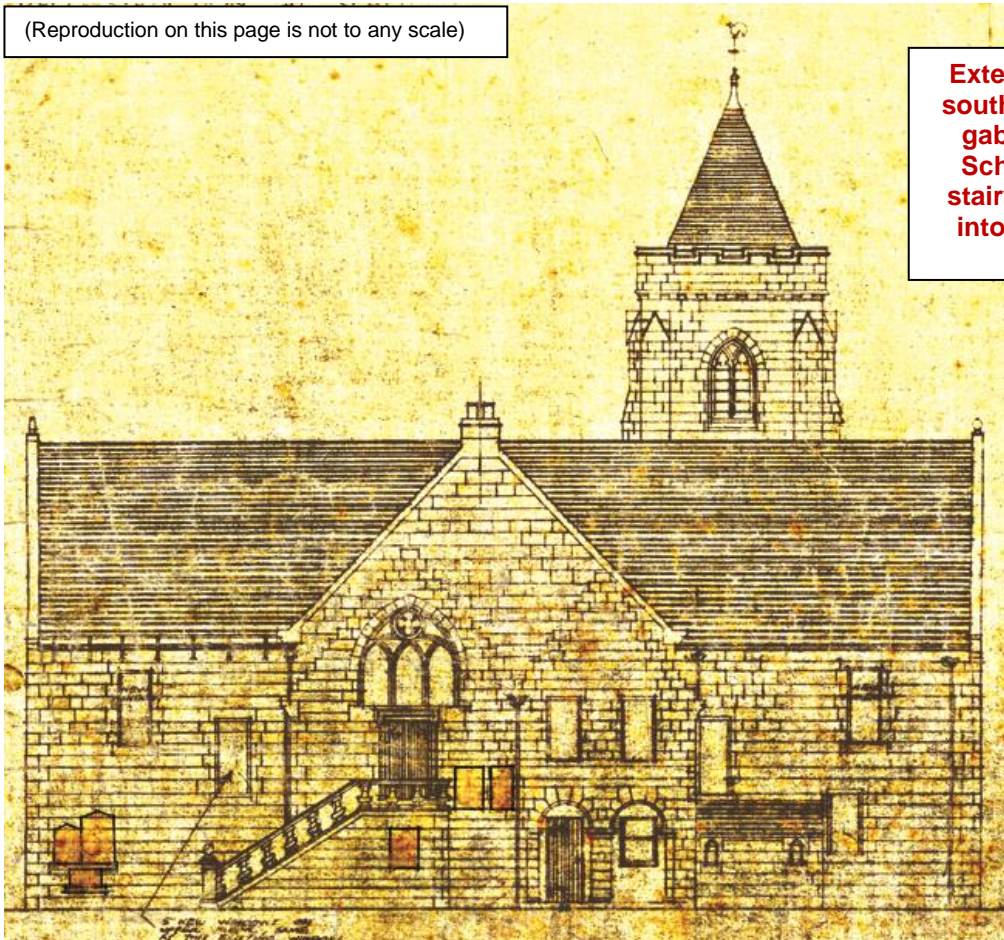
(Reproduction here is not to any scale)

- Length between gables of nave: external 83 internal 75
- Length between gables of the transepts : external 69 internal 61
- Protrusion of Crawford Aisle from nave: external 23
- Protrusion of Schaw Aisle from nave: external 15
- Tower: external, square of 13 x 13
- Laird's 'retiring room' / Kirk Session meeting room / vestry: internal, square of 13 x 13
- External width of Crawford Aisle transept: 33
- External width of Schaw Aisle transept: 35



External view of northeast facing gable with front entrance into the kirk at its centre

(Reproduction on this page is not to any scale)



External view of southwest facing gable with the Schaw Laird's stairway leading into the Schaw Aisle

All dimensions are in feet as measured from the scale on the original plans

Roof height, ground to gutters: 23
 Roof height, ground to roof ridge: 40
 Tower height, ground to parapet top: 56
 Tower height to its roof peak: 71
 Tower external dimensions: 17 x 17
 Laird's stone stairway width: 7
 Stairway height, ground to landing: 9

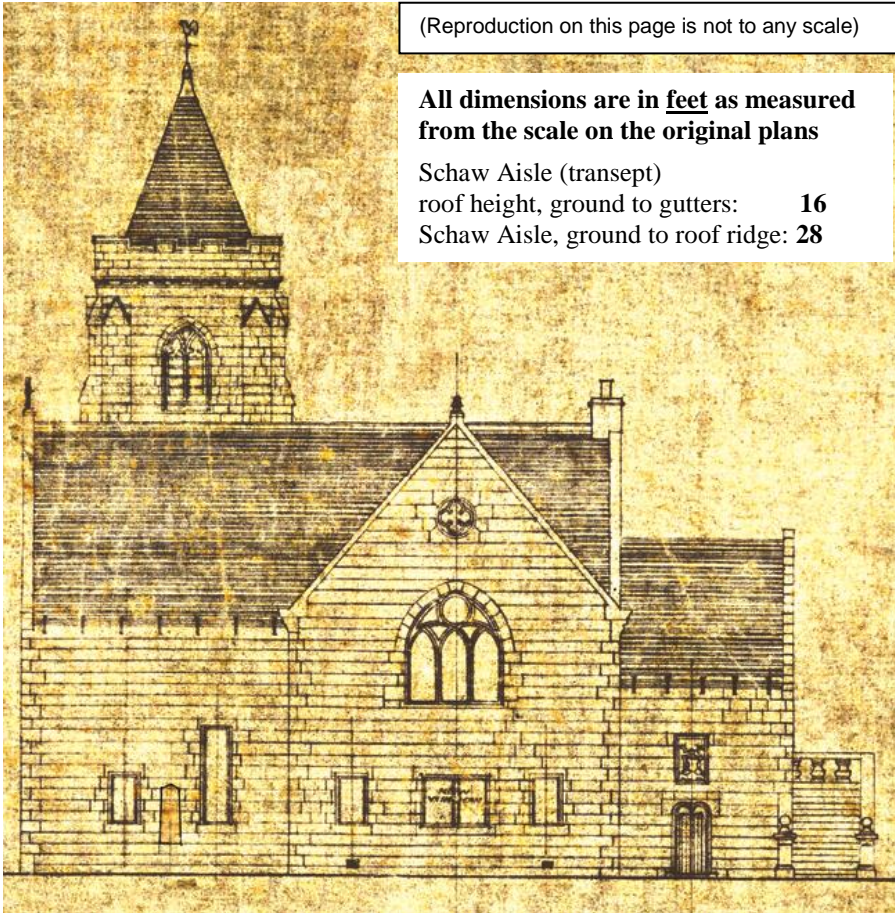


External view of southeast facing gable

(Reproduction on this page is not to any scale)

All dimensions are in feet as measured from the scale on the original plans

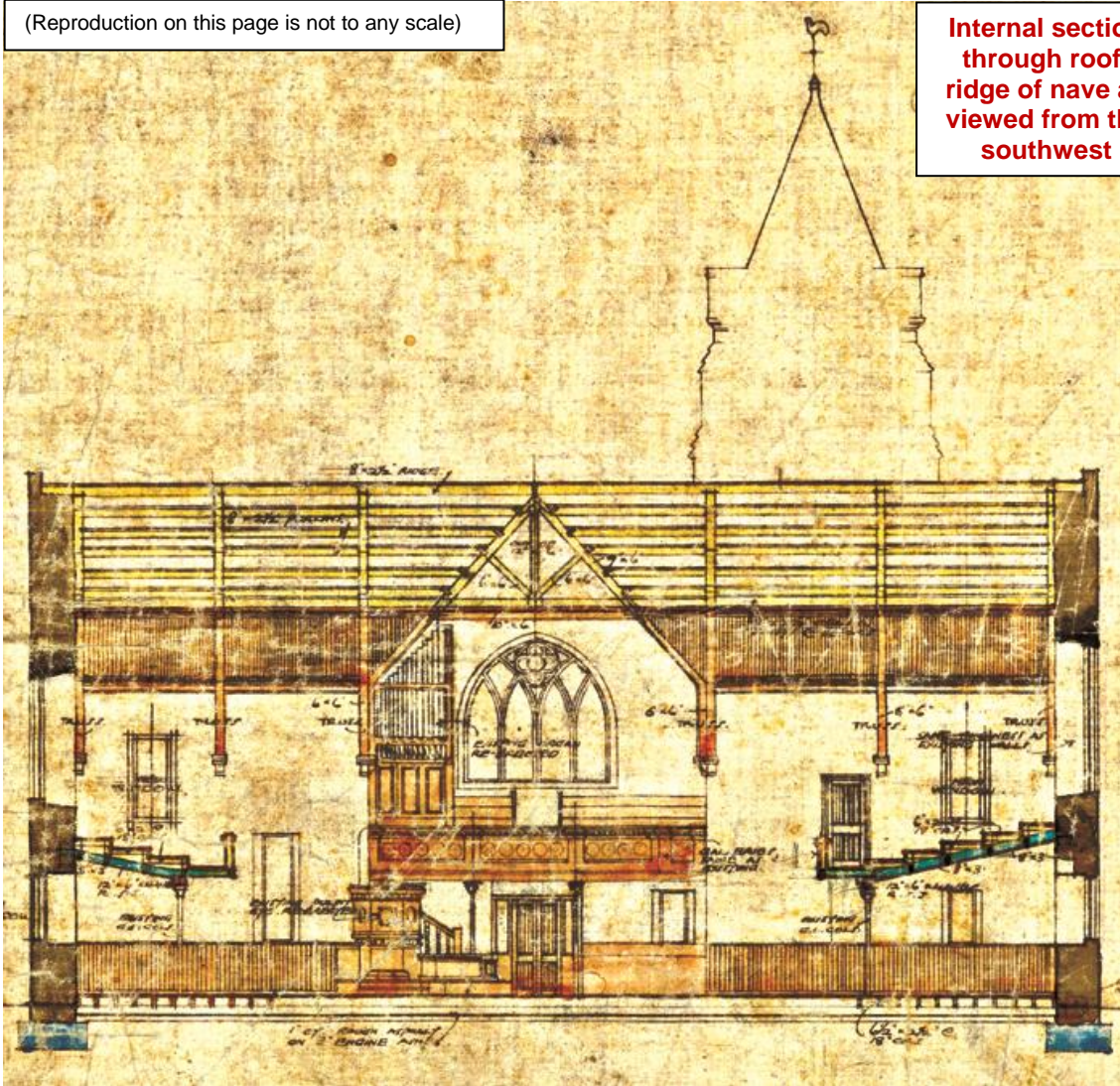
Schaw Aisle (transept)
 roof height, ground to gutters: 16
 Schaw Aisle, ground to roof ridge: 28



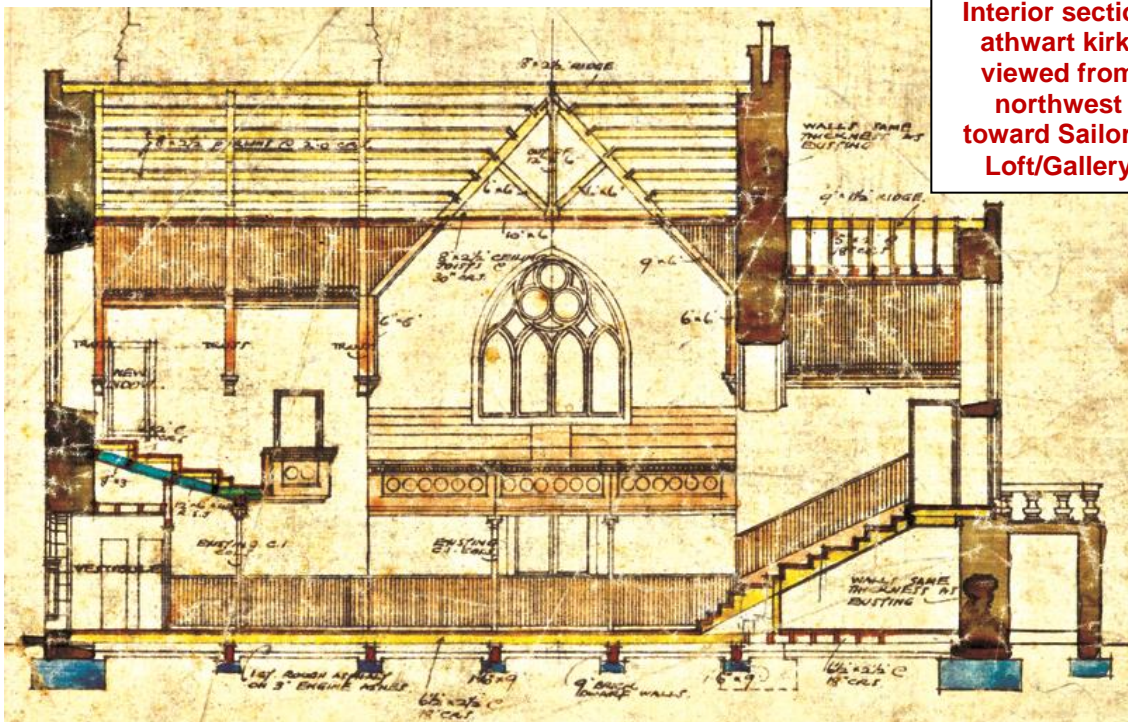
External view of northwest facing gable which once contained the main entrance to the kirk and now has upon it the wall-mounted plaque intimating the original date of building and that of transfer to the Seafield site

(Reproduction on this page is not to any scale)

Internal section through roof-ridge of nave as viewed from the southwest



Interior section athwart kirk, viewed from northwest toward Sailors' Loft/Gallery



Appendix 4 : 'Greenock Telegraph' article stating new owner of Old West Kirk

Greenock Telegraph Friday December 2, 2022

editorial@greenocktelegraph.co.uk www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk

(See page 67 for relevance)



Undernoted is the text of the article, on this matter, which appeared in the Greenock Telegraph' newspaper in its edition of Friday, the 2nd of December, 2022, on its page 5.

The photograph and the text, of the article, is reproduced by courtesy of the 'Telegraph'

By Gordon McCracken

Gordon.Mccracken@newsquest.co.uk

A GREENOCK businessman has stepped in to save an historic Greenock church following fears that it could fall out of community hands.

Marco Medinelli, owner of the Esplanade Cafe, has bought the Old West Kirk from the Church of Scotland in a deal believed to be in the region of around £150,000.

He hopes that the purchase will allay the concerns raised by local groups about the future of the church after the decision was made to sell it off.

Campaigners had mounted a last-ditch bid earlier this year to block the private sale.

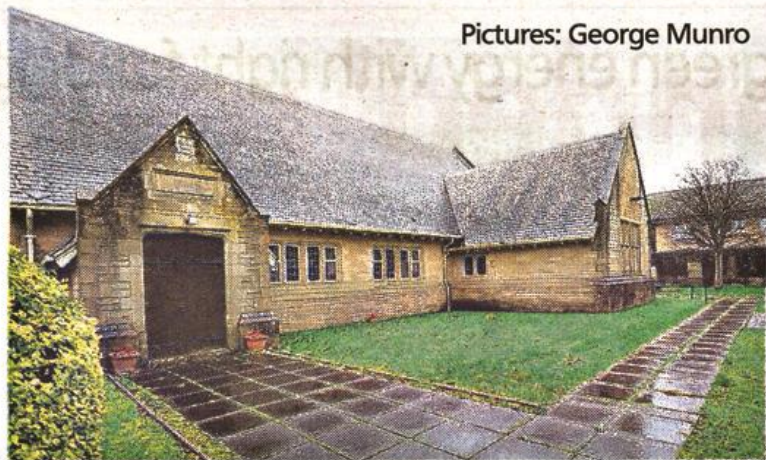
The Old West Kirk was authorised by Royal Charter and was the first Presbyterian church built in Scotland following the Reformation.

It was moved brick by brick from its original waterfront site to the present one, re-opening there in 1928.

Trustees from the Old West Kirk Trust, along with other interested groups, had called for the building's unique character to be preserved at all costs after it was put on the market.

Mr Medinelli says he has agreed not to sell the church or apply for change of use consents for any purpose which might conflict with continued community use, as part of several additional conditions outlined in the sale.

He said: "We bought it to



save it from being turned into a store or a carpet store or that sort of thing.

"It's a historic building and we thought we'd like to preserve it the way it is.

"It's a great place with beautiful grounds and we'd like to keep things the same.

"People don't need to worry, we'll look after it.

"It's always going to be the Old West Kirk, we won't turn it into a pub or a club, it'll always be there the way it is now."

The formal undertakings agreed as part of the sale also oblige Mr Medinelli to enter discussions with the Trust and other associated community groups.

They stipulate that the businessman must do his best to ensure the church building continues to be available to the people of Greenock for community purposes.

Mr Medinelli believes that the building can continue to play a role in the life of the local community while also

producing income.

He added: "I'd like to keep it for the community although it does have to pay its way, it was a sizeable investment.

"I would like to rent it, possibly on a daily basis.

"If it's rented to somebody then obviously they'll get priority but I'd like the community to have a chance.

"For the next two years we won't do anything drastic and we'll consult with the trustees if we want to do anything.

"The church is going to stay as is — the halls are different, we're going to look for tenants for the halls, *inset*, and are looking to rent them out long-term.

"We actually already have somebody interested which is good.

"We'll play it by ear with the church, the church will always be here, it's as safe as it can be now.

"It'll always be the Old West Kirk."

Published Sources Quoted From

'The Story of the Old West Kirk of Greenock 1591' (1911, 2nd Edition)	Ninian Hill
'The Scots Peerage', Volume 3 (1906)	edit. Sir James Balfour Paul
'The Old West Kirk, 1591-1991' (1991)	Jess S. Bolton
'The Old West Kirk, 1591-1958', A History (1958)	compiled by James S. Burt
'The Old Kirk, Greenock - A History 1591-1791-1970' (1970)	Rev. J. Marshall Scoular
'The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland', Vol. 4 (1832)	Robert Wodrow
'The History of Greenock' (1921)	Robert Murray Smith
'The Cutty Stool' (1995)	Murdoch Lothian
'Old Greenock' (1888, 2nd Series)	George Williamson
'Old Cartsburn' (1894)	George Williamson
'History of the Town of Greenock' (1829)	Daniel Weir
'Finding Forgotten Finnart' (2021)	Andrew Pearson
'Fighting for Liberty' (2020)	Stephen M. Carter
'A Selection of the Papers from the Earl of Marchmont' Volume 3 (1831)	
'A History of Clan Campbell', Volume 3 (2004)	Alastair Campbell of Airds
'Inverkip Parish - A Brief History'	Allan A. McArthur
'The Holy Bible' (1611): known as the 'King James Version'	compiled by 47 theologians
The Poetry of Robert Burns in one of its many reproductions	
The play 'Romeo and Juliet' 1591/6 by William Shakespeare for quote "A rose by any other name"	
The 'Telegraph', Greenock newspaper, of 2 nd of December, 2022, article on page 5	

In recent times, the unique and renowned collection of stained-glass windows in the Old West Kirk has been maintained by Alec Galbraith, noted local and nationally acclaimed expert as an artist and master craftsman in his field.



'The Adoration of the Lamb' by Sir Edward Burne-Jones

Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the photographer, David Mackinnon

Postscript

This assessment has not sought to reproduce all of the information encompassed by the numerous and various historical sources which describe the fabric of the kirk, plus the episodes and personages of local and national importance, interweaving with it over the centuries. Instead, the purpose has been to extract and collate sufficient salients to afford a continuity of the Old West Kirk's development and its place in history, plus to analyse, in greater detail than has been done previously, certain aspects (e.g. the royal charter of King James VI to Johnne Schaw in inauguration of the kirk: also the epoch encompassing the lead-up to, duration and aftermath of the 'Disruption') to deduce their profound significance in, respectively, motivations, strategies and consequences, etc.

This compilation is, respectfully, intended as both a *compliment* and *complement* to the above-noted books etc. on the subject, which contain a cornucopia of lore to be gleaned. Very grateful acknowledgement is hereby made to these authors whose erudition has been drawn upon and quoted herein - *even* when it has been, *occasionally*, contested!

This book - begun as an 'assessment' of the kirk's religious and social relevance to its local community historically - became caught up in the Church of Scotland's selling off of its site. It became, thereafter, a contemporaneous unfolding record of a community campaign centring around an 'assessment' of how the kirk's heritage might transmute to a potential future in 'heritage-tourism' and 'community', benefitting Inverclyde.

Sadly, during this same period, it has been decided, by the authorities of the Church of Scotland, that, due its membership, throughout Scotland, having shrunk so drastically in recent times, a much wider rationalising, hence downsizing of church buildings both locally and nationally would be undertaken, inevitably causing distress to parishioners through nostalgia. Consequently, the Lyle Kirk's splendid Finnart St. Paul's Church - due to extensive repairs now being required - is, alas, among those "pending disposal, with a similar fate being proposed for Westburn Church because of its steeple being considered unsafe and the cost of rectification being so very considerable. In the latter case, it should be borne in mind that the 'Tam o lang' bell properly belongs with the Old West Kirk from whence it came, as likewise the set of 1708 Communion chalices.

The Old West Kirk, fortunately, is hopefully saved, in good hands, for a new purpose.



Old West Kirk, pictured in 1958.

30 years after its transference to the Seafield / Esplanade site.

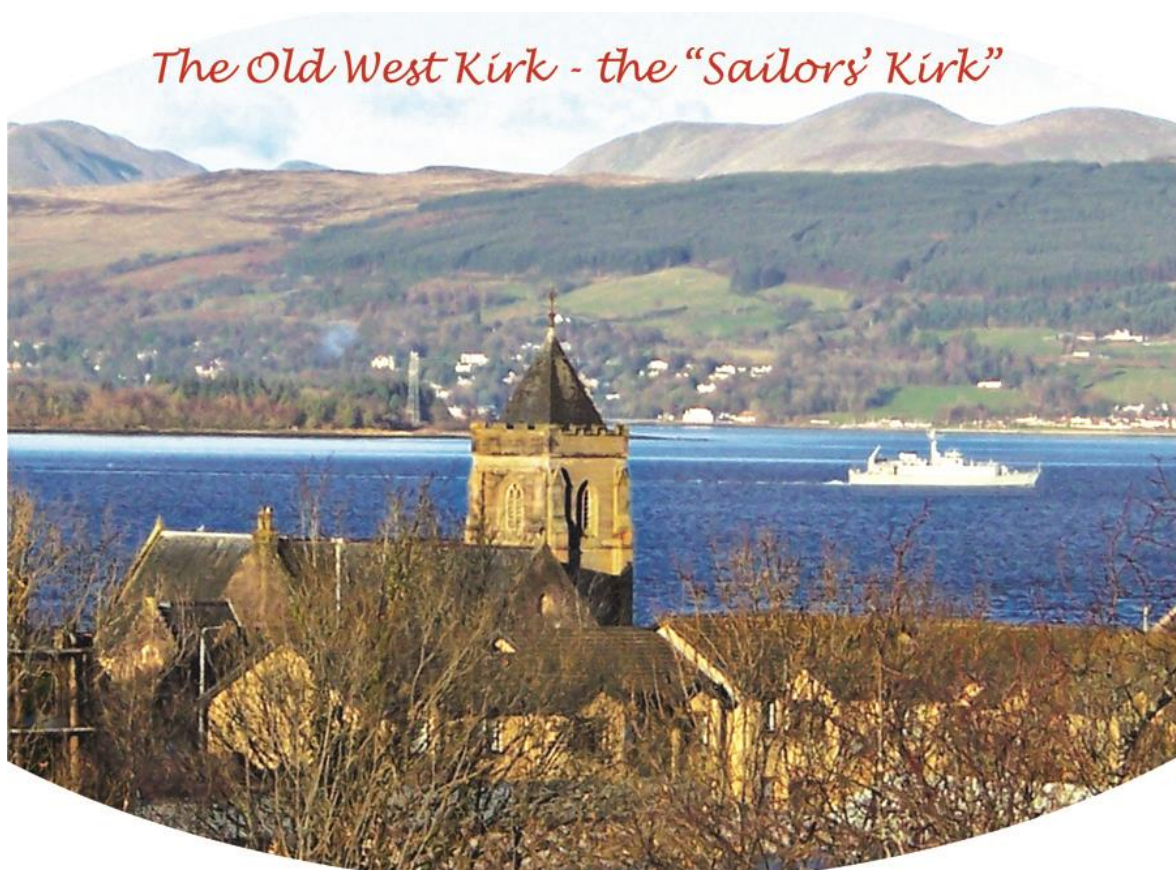
Showing a façade which would later become partially obscured by shrubbery and trees growing into foliage during the interim.

Addendum (attached in foldout format, opposite here)

'Greenock's First Protestant Congregation' - timeline of derivative churches

Attached, in foldout format, is the 'GREENOCK CHURCH TIMELINE', compiled by Messrs J. Gordon Clark (who originated the idea) and William H. Miller. It was produced, in May of 1990, in the drawing office of Kvaerner Kincaid, Ltd., Marine Engineers of Greenock, utilising the (thenabouts new-fangled 'computer aided drawing - C.A.D. - system therein), Mr. Miller being the (retired) technical director of that company to which he had devoted a majority of his working life.

The chart illustrates the complex labyrinth, in both proliferation and uniting, of Presbyterian denominational churches in Greenock, covering the period from the 1591 inauguration of Johnne Schaw's kirk towards its 400th anniversary. The chart was designed to commemorate that event on behalf of the then called St. Luke's Church, Nelson Street, (nowadays designated as Westburn Church).



As Jess S. Bolton penned, on page 31 of 'The Old West Kirk': "built on the west shore in 1591 by Johnne Schaw, it was now to be re-built a short distance away on another shore, with almost the same view across the River Clyde to the Argyllshire hills and 'bens'. That it should be in sight of passing ships was fitting, for it had long been known as the 'Sailors Kirk.'" *Continuity indeed!*

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