



The Story of Kirkcaldy's Cathedral

Backdrop to the Formation of a Free Church



As a young boy, I remember pondering on why there appeared to be so many churches in the Town's central area? There were St. Brycedales, the Old Kirk, Abbotshall, St. Andrews, West End and Bethelfield, to mention but a few. Although church attendance was far greater in those far off days, it still seemed that there were an inordinate number of churches serving what was not a vast area. In later life, I became aware of the 1843 disruption and also two earlier events which, as the catalysts, led directly to the sprouting of new churches in the town. It also explained why I was baptised in what had once been a 'Free Church', but what by that time was a Church of Scotland.

However, 1843 should not be viewed only through the prism of the disruption. The year was a remarkable one for Kirkcaldy. A number of events took place which had a profound effect on both the population and the town itself.

The year 1843 commenced with Richard Cobden being granted the "Freedom of the Burgh" on the 16th January. Cobden was instrumental in the monumental efforts to have the Corn Laws repealed and also strongly advocated the principles of Free Trade. His connection with Kirkcaldy was

covered in *object 12* (The Freedom of the Burgh). There is little doubt that the town was strongly supportive of Cobden's ideals and his aim of abolition.

In terms of education the year saw the foundation stone laid for the new Burgh School. The building in St. Brycedale Avenue, which cost over £2,500, was completed in 1846. One of the first pupils to transfer from the old school in Hill Street was Sir Michael B. Nairn. Nairn's recollections of the move make interesting reading and will appear on our site early in 2022.

The year also saw the laying of the foundation stone of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Townsend Place.

In terms of the development of the Burgh's trading capability, the 1843 reconstruction of the harbour was a significant step. The East Pier was extended by some 100 yards. This work continued until 1846.

However, by any measure, it was the Disruption for which the year will best be remembered. The importance of this cataclysmic event and its consequences held good throughout Scotland not just in Kirkcaldy. In essence the Disruption was a schism which saw the Established Church lose significant numbers of ministers, elders and members, almost in one day!

The issue mainly revolved around the inability of congregations to choose a new minister. There had been

vehement protestations surrounding patrons being able to appoint a minister, even when their choice was against the wishes of the congregation.

In basic terms the conflict boiled down to whether the Church of Scotland or the Government had the power to control clerical appointments.

It is reasonable to ask what the Government had to do with clerical appointments. The answer is that the Church of Scotland was recognised as the national church through Acts of Parliament. However, the church had always claimed the right of jurisdiction over its own affairs. It can be argued that this was enshrined in law by the *Claim of Right* of 1689. This legislation ended both royal and parliamentary interference in church affairs. This position was ratified in the 1707 *Act of Union*.

There was soon however a fly in the ointment with the passing of the *Church Patronage Act in 1711*. The purpose of this act was to allow the patrons to recover control over the affairs of their parish church. Their presumed right had been lost some decades earlier in what was termed the *Glorious Revolution* of 1688/89. This 'revolution' saw the deposition of the catholic James II and VII. He was replaced by his protestant daughter Mary II and her husband William III. Many members of the church firmly believed that this *Patronage Act* infringed the independence of the church.

The Act gave local lairds/patrons the legal power to choose ministers. In simple terms, this meant congregations had no say in who both administered their worship and preached to them. This quickly led to unhappiness and resentment. Not surprisingly, this resulted to two secessions – firstly in 1733 followed by the second in 1761. The first was led by Ebenezer Erskine (Minister of Portmoak) and the latter by Thomas Gillespie (Minister of Carnock). The consequences of the *Patronage Act* simmered for over 100 years.

However, the simmering tensions were ignited by the passing of the *Scottish Reform Act of 1832*. The architects of the act were Francis Jeffrey and Henry Cockburn fresh from their successful defences of John Stuart and David Landale in the previous decade (*object 14 – Twelve Paces Aim and Fire*). The result of the act was that overnight the numbers of individuals allowed to vote in Scotland rose from 5,000 to 65,000. Prior to this change in the law only 0.2% of Scotland's population of 2,300,000 held the franchise.

People now clearly wished more say in their affairs and this was particularly true of their religion. There had been a gradual build up of evangelicals within the Kirk. This group was led by Thomas Chalmers (once Minister of Kilmany) and the result was undoubted 'tension' with the so-called moderates who ran the church and accepted its links with the state, the patrons and the lairds.

As this 'rebel group' increased in size, so did their vociferous demand that the link with the government be relaxed. In addition, the age-old chestnut of congregations being allowed to have their own choice of minister rose to the surface yet again. In truth, it had seldom been far below the surface.

The response by the Kirk's General Assembly of 1834 was to pass the *Veto Act* which allowed a majority of the male heads of families, within a congregation, to reject a patron's choice of minister.

The Crown has given the choice of a pastor to supply the vacancy in **Kirkcaldy** parish church, occasioned by the lamented death of the late Dr. Martin, to the male heads of families belonging to the congregation. — *Scotsman*.

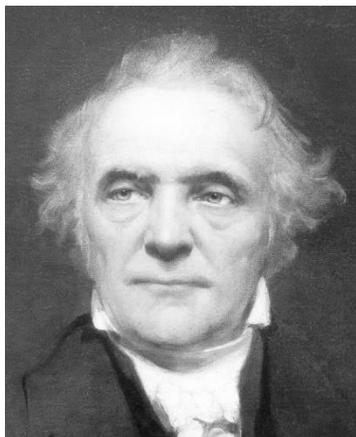
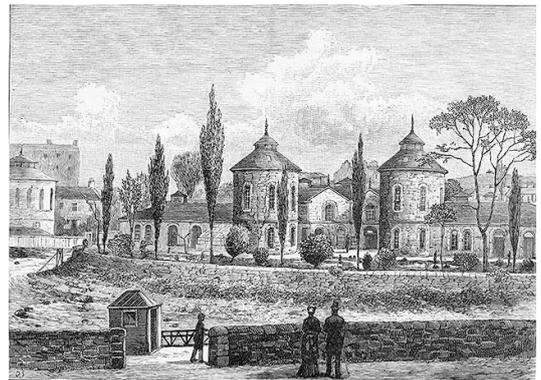
This should have been a major step forward which should/would reduce the tensions, but no allowance had been made for the actions of John Hope, the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, who challenged the ruling. The result was that it created greater tensions and made matters worse, ultimately going as far as the House of Lords.

The delay effectively placed the church in crisis. Ultimately, the House of Lords ruled that the General Assembly did not have the legal right to amend the Patronage Act. All that achieved was a greater tension and matters being made worse.

As a last, possibly desperate measure, ministers met in Edinburgh and attempted to convince the Government that they were acting with integrity and on principle. As the meeting broke up it was learned that Robert Peel, the then Prime Minister, had rejected their demands. It was his belief that the Kirk was trying to create a position where it was above the law. This rejection was the final straw.

At the opening of the 1843 General Assembly the retiring Moderator read out a prepared protest, bowed to the Queen's Commissioner, and immediately walked out. He was followed by 200 ministers and elders.

The group proceeded to nearly Tanfield Hall where they declared the establishment of The Free Church of Scotland. It has to be both



assumed and expected that this was not spontaneous but a planned action. The much respected Anstruther born Thomas Chalmers was elected as the

first Moderator.

In total, 474 ministers left the Established Church as a result of the Disruption. These men



sacrificed their living, their stipend, their manse and their church. Basically, they rendered themselves homeless and often with no income.

Chalmers knew this presented a financial problem which had to be solved quickly. His answer was the Sustentation Fund. The idea was that each member of the new church gave one penny each week. This was calculated to be sufficient to provide ministers with an income of £150 per annum. Overseas appeals also helped raise further funding.

So, a second major national church was born. It could be nothing other than a formidable force because the church comprised of around one third of the ministers and worshippers who had formerly been adherents of the Church of Scotland. Make no mistake, the new church set about with relish, building an infrastructure of its own. Within a few years it had built several hundred churches and manses. All this was often in the face of great difficulties – especially in the Highlands, where its members were often persecuted by local lairds. They were also often denied building sites. All that said, its viability was never in doubt and that proved to be the case in its near hundred years of existence.

The Queen has been pleased to present the Rev. John Alexander, to the Church and Parish of Kirkcaldy, in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, and County of Fife, vacant by the death of the Rev. John Martin.

Nothing demonstrates the core issue more clearly than the two newspaper

clippings shown here. We have the Queen Victoria presenting the Reverend John Alexander to the Church and Parish of

Kirkcaldy in 1837. In August of 1843, we find the Queen presenting Mark Johnstone Bryden, as successor to the Reverend Alexander –

The Queen has also been pleased to present the Rev. Mark Johnstone Bryden to the church and parish of Kirkcaldy, in the presbytery of Kirkcaldy, and county of Fife, vacant in consequence of the Rev. John Alexander, late minister thereof, having ceased to be a minister of the Church of Scotland.

who had ceased to be a minister of the Church of Scotland. Both were well liked and popular ministers, but the problem was that the congregation had no say – either before or after the Disruption. It was only in 1874 that Parliament finally abolished patronage and this opened up the prospect/possibility of a re-union with the 'Right to Call' having been achieved.

This took time and was achieved in stages - with the final coming together taking place in 1929.

The Effect on Kirkcaldy

As previously suggested, Kirkcaldy was certainly not immune from the actions and consequences which flowed from the 1843 Disruption. There was an earlier event which had its roots in the secession of 1733 when, in 1737, a number of members left Abbotshall Church leading to the founding of Bethelfield/Linktown Church. The original church was built at the point where Abbotshall and Kirkcaldy intersected – hence the name. This collision was as a direct result of a decision made by the General Assembly in 1732, despite widespread disapproval of the majority of the presbyteries. It allowed Heritors and Elders the sole right to nominate a minister – if the patron had not himself nominated within six months of the vacancy occurring. It has to be borne in mind that, by tradition, most ministers were the younger sons of aristocratic families. It was therefore possible that these same families were the local landowners and the owners of the ground on which the church stood. The resulting situation was that these patrons, along with gifting money, could also supply the ministers from amongst their relatives.

It would be wrong to suggest that all ministers came from a privileged background. That said however, it was often the case that, without connections, these men found it more difficult to climb the ladder.

The best known minister of this new church was the Rev. Shirra – he, of John Paul Jones fame.

The 1843 events had far-reaching consequences for a number of the town's places of worship and, as a direct consequence, seven new churches were formed. They were:-

Kirkcaldy Free Church

Abbotshall Free Church

Dunnikier Free Church

Dysart Free Church

Gallatown Free Church

Invertiel Free Church

Pathhead Free Church.

The Established Church was, if wounded, still strong in Kirkcaldy and remained represented by -

Kirkcaldy Parish Church

St. James Parish Church

Abbotshall Parish Church

Invertiel Parish Church

Pathhead Parish Church

Sinclairtown Church

While there is always a temptation to explore the forming of all of these Free Churches this story will only concentrate on one and that is Kirkcaldy Free Church which in time became St. Brycedale. It was from Kirkcaldy Old Kirk that the minister

and members left to form the new church. So, even a place of worship which stretched back to at least 1244 experienced tremors from the disruption. It was possibly more akin to an earthquake, as it is believed that two thirds of the Parish Church members left to join the “Protesting Church”!

The man who led the Old Kirk walkout on the 18th May 1843 was the Reverend John Alexander who had been the minister since 1838. We have recently mentioned John Alexander in *object 15* (The Elder Family) as he had married George Elder’s daughter Elizabeth. George Elder was one of the eight elders who were appointed at the first meeting of the Session of the Protesting Church.

The *Fifeshire Journal* of the time mentioned that the long expected separation of the members of the parishes of Kirkcaldy and Abbotshall had taken place. “Mr Alexander preached in the Port Brae Chapel in the forenoon and Mr Laird in a flat within Mr Bremner’s factory during the day and in Bethelfield Chapel in the evening”. Further research has disclosed that the factory mentioned was that of John Bremner who had been born in Arbroath in 1800. He had married Isabella Fleming in Kirkcaldy on the 30th May 1825. Isabella died on the 22nd November 1849. John Bremner took an active part in local affairs and had been both a Councillor and, for a time, the Dean of Guild. The 1851 census discloses his employing 48 people in his factory. Again, it gives a further indication of important and influential individuals leaving the established church.

The Port Brae Chapel is probably better known as the former St. James Church. It dated from 1842 when it was built to house a United Secession congregation. The congregation had previously worshipped at a church in Cowan Street. Interestingly, while researching, we came upon an article from March 1826 in which the ministers, elders and members, had submitted a petition to Parliament indicating they were praying for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies (*Globe* 21st March 1826).

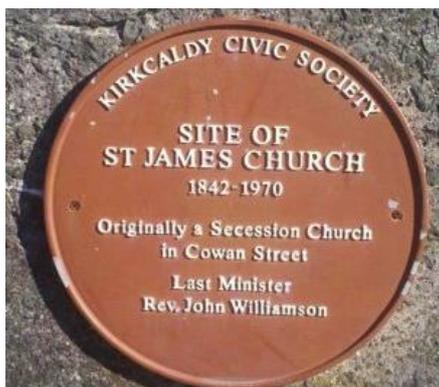


In 1929 the congregation of St. James rejoined the Church of Scotland. The building remained in use until 1960 when it was deemed unsafe. The dwindling numbers attending, and especially their minister, refused to accept this state of affairs. They continued to worship in the open air, on an old bus and in the Y.M.C.A.

In 1928 the church had seen the appointment of the Reverend John Williamson who remained in place throughout the remainder of its existence. The Rev. was no stranger to conflict during his term in post. Most notably was his grave exception to the Council's Development Plan of 1952 which may well have seen his church demolished. The manse, his home,



was also under threat from plans to build the new bus station. The manse survived, but its neighbour *St Olaf's* did not. It was demolished to make way for the link road from Hunter Street to Whytescauseway (*object 15* – the Elder family). The manse, often mistaken for the Baptist Church manse, is now a solicitor's office.

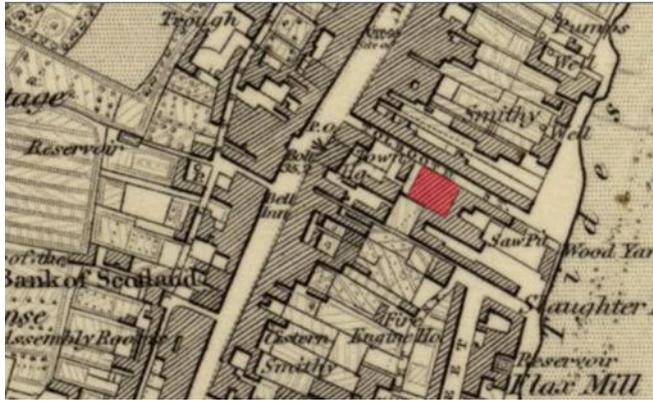


The Rev. Williamson, even in advanced old age, maintained his attempts to save the building which was finally demolished in 1970. Interestingly, there had been discussions around a proposed amalgamation of St. Brycedale, the Old Kirk

and St. James, in the early 1950s. The issue was declining congregations as the Council built new housing in the landward areas to replace those which were by now sub-standard and ready for demolition. These plans and actions had an obvious effect on the population heartland between the High Street and The Esplanade.

The Free Church congregation and their minister continued to use St. James for worship over a period of a year and a half. The rental charged was £45.00 per annum. However, plans had been laid almost from the first to build their own church. Land was bought in Tolbooth Street from a Mr Alexander Ferrier, corn merchant, who had been provost between 1837-8. The cost of the ground was £225. It was resolved to set up a fund to secure subscriptions for the

project and soon had over 200 subscribers. It was agreed that with 'necessity being the mother of invention', speed was of the essence. The decision was that the building should be "the plain, unadorned, economical plan, recommended by



the leaders of the Secession". It was believed that the cost would be circa £2,900 and a large part had already been subscribed. In December of 1843 the foundations

were laid for a building with accommodation for 1,000. It was intended there were to be no galleries, but the frontage would consist of three separate gables facing into Tolbooth Street. At this stage the membership stood at 477. The church was opened on the 10th November 1844 with the congregation now having a building to call their own. Given the Disruption had only occurred in May of the previous year, it is highly commendable that the building was planned and executed within eighteen months. There has to be a suspicion that plans were afoot before the actual event. That suspicion was probably more a reality as many of



KIRKCALDY FREE CHURCH, TOLBOOTH STREET

the town's major players, including Patrick Don Swan, were in the new congregation.



On that opening morning it was reported that the church was well filled but, in the evening, it is believed that 1,400 had squeezed into the building with many more unable to gain access. Mr Alexander was presented with “a handsome pulpit gown and cassock on the occasion of the opening of the church, together with a sofa, in testimony of the respect and gratitude they entertained for him as their pastor”.

The Reverend married Elizabeth Elder in 1853 and they had a daughter Joanna in 1857. Sadly, Elizabeth died in March 1858 followed in 1863 by the minister himself. He had been in poor



health for some time. His health had deteriorated since 1858 and a collegiate minister and probable successor were required. In April 1860 health issues forced Mr Alexander to resign his charge and he was given a testimonial of £56 as a token of the high regard he was held in.

Young Joanna, now an orphan, went to live in Adelaide House with her grandfather's second wife. This must have been rather difficult for her as, from the front windows, *St. Annes* – the Free Church Manse could be easily seen.

John Alexander was held in high esteem during his twenty five year ministry in the town. He had overseen the stabilisation of the new congregation and been the first minister of Kirkcaldy Free Church.

The year 1860 also saw a new member join the congregation who came to play a significant part in the affairs of the church. He was Michael Barker Nairn who, in time, became Kirkcaldy's greatest benefactor.

The church continued to make progress despite the shortcomings which stemmed from the haste in which the building had had to be erected. In 1856 it was closed for three months while painting and alterations were carried out. During this period Bethelfield Church offered a warm invitation to the members to join their congregation in worship. When the church did reopen – the ceiling caused consternation to some – it had been painted blue with a red border! Many thought this too theatrical.

In November of 1862 further work was necessary with a new roof costing £250 being required. This time communion was delivered in the Corn Exchange. The day before and the day after communion – a Saturday and a Monday, saw

Whytescauseway Chapel (now the Baptist Church) allow services to be held there.

It was in 1874 that another important figure arrived on the scene. This was the Rev. James Stalker who was ordained as minister at the age of only 26. It was at his ordination that the idea of a new church was first mooted. We were surprised to discover it was brought up by Stalker's predecessor, one George Webster Thomson. Why Thomson did not raise this subject during his seven year tenure is strange – why wait until you are heading for *Free St. George's Church in Glasgow* before raising your voice?

In 1876 there was an intention to build a mission hall in the Glebe Park area on ground offered by the Nairn family. However, it was decided to build a new church as the congregation was growing and the work extending.

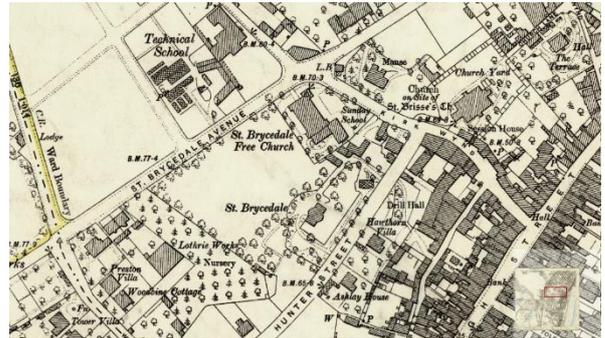
The proposed building offered accommodation far beyond that of Tolbooth Street. The intention was a church to seat 1,150 persons, a vestry, a ladies' room, a young men's hall to hold 150, and a Sunday school room to hold 300. The spire was to be 200 feet high. The cost was estimated to be circa £7,500.



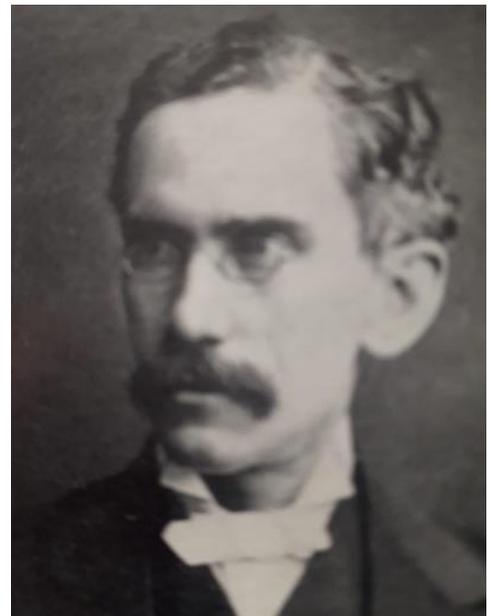
Patrick Don Swan gave a fine site at the top of Kirk Wynd which was part of the

policies of *St. Brycedale* where he had his home.

The work was entrusted to a Building Committee and what a Committee:- the Reverend Stalker, Patrick Don Swan, Robert Douglas, Michael B. Nairn and John T. Stocks. Certainly small in number, but all were very impressive figures in the town.



It was on Sunday, the 13th March 1881, when the final sermon was preached in the Tolbooth Street building. There were two services and each saw the church at full capacity. It was the Reverend Stalker who preached at both. The morning service was built around part of the book of Exodus, but the afternoon saw – “in parting with a church with which so many holy memories clung, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was most appropriately observed”. The keynote of the minister’s address before communion was *thanksgiving*, followed by *consecration* as the keynote message after that final communion.



The Reverend Stalker delivered his final sermon and much of its content became the recurring theme which was delivered,

almost ad nauseam, the following Thursday. It was similar to and probably was a type of party line.

The initial point was that it was a large congregation and the minister hoped that everyone would make an attempt to get to know each other better. He wished to see determined efforts made to become better acquainted and treat each other as equals.

He then moved on to ensuring that people understood and appreciated that the opening of a new building was not the end, but in fact was the beginning of a journey. The new church offered the opportunity for evangelism as never before. Families were encouraged to “try and bring one other family unconnected with a church to a service”. Young men were encouraged to try and bring other young men, especially those who had just arrived in Kirkcaldy, to a service.

The final sentiment was directed at the sadness of leaving a church that had been home for 37 years. The minister appreciated that there were memories for many within its walls and that it would be difficult to leave the old seat and the old home. Many may feel that the new church could/would never be like the old one. He offered his assurances that in time to come fresh memories would undoubtedly form. His concluding words were well made, well structured, and even over 140 years later, still make good reading:-

“I know how full your hearts are now. It is not this day the church is full for you, but many past days come crowding in. It is not this congregation that you see now. It is another congregation – a congregation of those that are gone and whom you used to see sitting in these seats. As you look from



pew to pew you can fill it with the old congregation. It is not I who speak to you just now. You are hearing your dear ministers of the past, who here broke to you the bread of life. It is not my poor words you are hearing

now, but many a blessed message of the past is still sounding in your ears and hearts. Yes, it is sad to recall these things which still bind our hearts here.

And yet, I am sure, it is with the voice of hope that they would like to speak to us and now, although with sadness, we can with great happiness and trust say to our dear old church – farewell, farewell”.

They do seem fitting last words.

As the doors closed for the final time in Tolbooth Street, only four of the initial office bearers from 1843 remained alive; Provost Patrick Don. Swan and Robert Duncan, a manufacturer, both remained in Kirkcaldy. Henry Burt, a warper, now lived in Glasgow and was an energetic missionary for the church, with George Hepburn, a now

prosperous merchant residing in New Zealand. The pioneer minister, John Alexander, was also in his grave.

Of the original congregation only around 30 still remained on the roll. Most had simply passed away, with others scattered throughout the country or abroad. Mr Milne, the builder of the church was also still alive.

The congregation had always been liberal with financial assistance to the church, but they had also ensured that their minister had a manse to live in. The original manse had been



built at 2 East Fergus Place at a cost of £750. In 1871, the church roof was replaced by one of corrugated iron. At the same time, by selling the manse and adding £1000, a new manse was built in West Fergus Place.

Strangely, some years later, Bethelfield Church bought property in the same street and then built a manse for their minister – the Reverend Maxfield. It was this gentleman who brought the opening day's proceedings at St. Brycedale to a close with the Benediction.

The Opening on 17th March 1881

The best way, or one way, to proceed is to start with the opening and then work back through the highs and lows encountered in the construction.

Before that, it is important to note that this was the first time since its inception in 1843 that the church was known as St. Brycedale Free Church. St. Brise or Bryce was a 5th century saint, who rose to be Bishop of Tours. It was the *1796 First*



Patrick Don Swan

Statistical Account which indicated that the parish church was said to have been dedicated to St. Brise and the lands around the church named after him. Possibly quite correct, but it would be hard to believe that, as Provost Swan lived in St. Brycedale House and gave the land for the church to be built on, any other name would be considered.

It is certainly worthwhile to reflect on the coverage offered by the *Fife Free Press* on the 19th March 1881. If anything is required to demonstrate the importance of the building then the leading candidate must be the three full pages from an issue totalling eight which were devoted to the event:-

“The opening on Thursday last of the new Free Church, one of the finest ecclesiastical buildings which has yet been erected north of the Firth of Forth, is an event of no small significance in Kirkcaldy and one which Fife itself may well be proud of. *St Brycedale Free Church*, which succeeds the Disruption building, reflects the wonderful progress of the denomination and particularly of the Kirkcaldy congregation since its infancy in 1843.

But besides, it is a monument to the growing taste and enterprise of the community, the new building being “without exception” the most beautiful and costly building which has been reared in Kirkcaldy and is an architectural ornament of the highest kind.

If, to meet the exceptional demands of the times, the plans for the old church were quickly drawn up and the walls rapidly thrown up. It has been quite different in the present instance – neither the founders, nor the builders, of the structure being under the necessity of exercising even the least haste.”

There was mention of the 1874 suggestion for a new building, as it was considered to be inadequate for anything other than the Sunday Services. In the intervening years the Rev. Stalker was given a great deal of credit for “consolidating the congregation and in leading it on the nobler deeds.”

The session carried out a great deal of research into the proposal and found that a considerable number of members were prepared to subscribe towards the estimated cost of £7,000.

On the 12th July 1876 a meeting was held at which the recommendation to build a new church was put to the congregation. The tack was based on the fact that for some time the need had been manifest and the following is a summary of the reasons expounded.

1. The growing size and importance of Kirkcaldy and the fact it was the presbytery seat, as well as being one of the seats of the Synod of Fife. "It is very desirable that we should be represented by a structure which would strike the public eye and be an ornament in the town".

2. The internal operations of the congregation were hampered by the lack of accommodation. All the activities could be carried out more efficiently and comfortably if rooms were available.

3. There was insufficient room for all of those who wished to attend and often this lack of space led to families not always being able to bring their children.

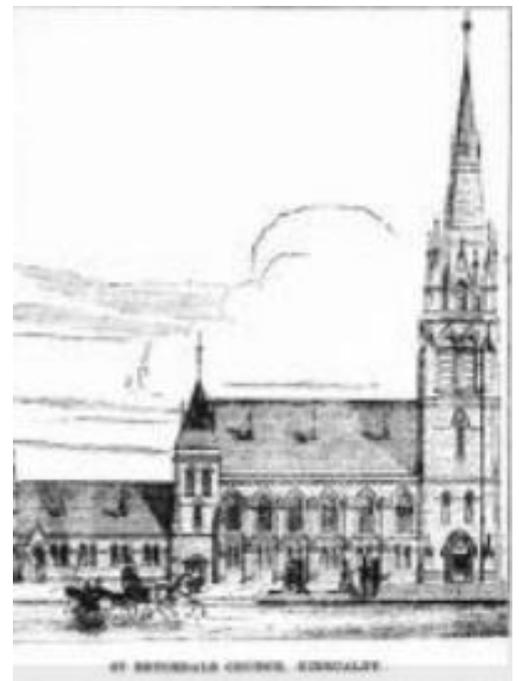
4. The congregation were finding great difficulty in carrying out much of the mission work they wished to do. This appears to centre on insufficient space being available to

invite those who were “unevangelised” to attend church – given it was already full.

5. The rapid growth of housing in the Glebe Park and Victoria Road areas fell inside the jurisdiction of the church and was therefore their responsibility to minister. There was a need to provide church accommodation – hence the earlier suggestion of a mission hall. However, a more central church was seen as the best option.

With the confidence gained from the monies which had already been promised the decision was taken to proceed. Plans were sought from a number of the best known architects in Scotland and those submitted by Messrs. Mathew and MacKenzie of Aberdeen prevailed.

There was a surprise in store when estimates to carry out the work were received. In fact, the cost was now estimated at £15,000. This meant that the plans had to be either cut down or started again! However, “three gentlemen in the congregation who had already liberally subscribed came forward with further handsome subscriptions.” The work commenced in August 1877.



Initial progress was slow with two factors contributing to this. The first was the fact that an old quarry was discovered

under the tower. Boring operations went down 55 feet to the bedrock and then had to be filled with concrete. In addition, a national masons' strike lasted for a total of 16 weeks. Both these issues were dealt with and progress was soon seen. Provost Swan was not in favour of a foundation stone but was happy to have a memorial stone incorporated into the building. This was carried out on a warm summer's evening on the 15th July 1878. The *Fife Free Press* reported that thousands of townspeople had turned out to witness the event.

The ceremony opened with a hymn (*the Old One Hundred*). Then the Reverend Stalker paid a fulsome and eloquent tribute to Provost Swan for both his generosity to, and his assistance, towards the project. The Provost was then handed a silver trowel and asked on behalf of the Building Committee to place the memorial stone in its designated spot. This, he did with some style – the probable reason being that in his day he had previously laid a foundation or memorial stone in seven churches.

There is an interesting addition in that before the stone was cemented in place a sealed bottle was placed in the cavity behind it, almost as a time-capsule. It contained an assortment of coins, newspapers of that day, and specifically, copies of the *Fifeshire Advertiser* and *the Fife Free Press* of the 13th July. Several ecclesiastical papers and a document

outlining the reasons behind the building of the structure and those involved also found their way into the bottle.

The *Fife Free Press* wrote that – “since that fine summer’s evening in 1878 the building of the church has gone on slowly but steadily till it now stands with its beautiful heaven-pointed spire, a finished structure, a credit to the Free Church denomination in Kirkcaldy, a decided ornament to the town – architecturally speaking – “a thing of beauty” and, in a word, one of the most elegant ecclesiastical edifices which has risen in the County within the memory of the present generation.

The formal opening ceremony of the church took place at 3.00 pm on the 17th March 1881. The Church was well filled and many of those attending had travelled a considerable distance to be present. There was a plethora of ministers from all parts of Fife and also Leith and Dundee.

It was the Rev. J. H. Wilson from Barclay Church in Edinburgh who was in the pulpit. He delivered what was described as an “able and stirring discourse from the gospel of Mark”. He concluded with reminding the congregation that this was not just a monument to the Saviour but a workshop to carry out God’s work. His sermon had again emphasised the need to embrace the new building and soon it would become as familiar as the old one. He knew that many had tender thoughts of the place that they had left but was sure that before long the new building would be similarly endeared. It

was understood that the collection was around £500 for this opening day.

In the evening there was a public meeting in the church which seemed to be a hybrid of a service, of preaching, of speeches and all round congratulations. This assembly was chaired by the Reverend Stalker. The Building Committee were supporting the minister at the top table and again a galaxy of ministers was in the audience. The Reverend W. Milne, of Inveriel Church, opened the meeting with a prayer. The opening hymn printed on a card was found on each seat. This was especially composed for the occasion by the Rev. Robert W. Barbour of Bonskied. The Rev. Stalker commented that the card "would be preserved by many as a memento of the proceedings of that day". The card showed that the name of the hymn as - "*St. Brycedale Free Church, Kirkcaldy, March 17th 1881*" - a mouthful perhaps! Interestingly, the Rev Barbour was the best-man at the Rev Stalker's wedding to Joanna Alexander.

"St Brycedale Free Church, Kirkcaldy, March 17, 1881," which was sung to the tune of Troyte's Chant, as follows:—

Founder of all things, Father, see
The house our hands have raised for Thee:
Thy Spirit fill the perfect shrine,
Take Thou this place and make it Thine.

Here, when the Day of Rest comes round,
Come Thou and make it holy ground;
Here be for ever fresh illumed
The bush that never was consumed.

Inhabit here our praises; here
Lend longing hearts a listening ear;
Speak Thou Thy word, and let it be
Confirmed with miracles by Thee.

Accept our gifts, our labours crown;
God bless our Queen, our land, our town;
Instruct our youth; our rulers guide;
Bind the whole people side by side.

Heal thy divided Zion, Lord,
Strike yet again that thrilling chord—
ONE SCOTTISH CHURCH—and let it ring
A tuneful and triumphant thing.

And when these secular sands have run,
When shines the never setting sun,
When Thou the people countest, write—
"This soul and that there saw the light."
R. W. B.

The minister began by outlining the twofold purpose of the meeting. These were firstly to "congratulate each other on

the completion of a not unimportant undertaking, and in the second place, we are met in order to hear some fine words of counsel and good cheer from the friends on the platform". He then gave a wide-ranging speech which opened with his laughingly questioning the old adage that 'everything comes to an end'. At times he thought the building would never see completion, such were the issues and delays, but the great day had arrived at last. He again thanked the Provost for the gift of the ground, especially as some had suggested that he was being rather foolish in devoting part of his beautiful grounds to the building of the church. It seems that Provost Swan believed that he was doing the opposite by having this stunning edifice built in this spot. He also anticipated that, as the town grew, the church would soon be in the centre of Kirkcaldy – not on the outskirts.

The Rev. Stalker also expressed delight that in the construction of the building no lives had been lost. He then moved on giving his and the congregation's thanks to those involved in the project.

He began with the architects by remarking that "the beautiful design reflects credit upon the genius of the architects". James Matthews, the principal architect, was present at the event. The minister expressed the hope that this wonderful building may bring fresh ecclesiastical work to the practise.

The records of the time praise the work but offer little or no background on the man who designed the building. James

Matthews had been born in Aberdeen in 1819. His mother was the daughter of the architect William Ross who had built the Union Bridge in the city. He was apprenticed to a local architect, but in 1839 took the radical step of moving to London to work under George Gilbert Scott where he honed his design and business skills. On returning to Aberdeen in 1844 he set up in partnership with Thomas MacKenzie whom he had known from his apprenticeship days. MacKenzie had a short life – dying in 1854. Matthews carried on as a sole trader, although retaining the firm's name. In 1877 he took on his former partner's son, Alexander M. MacKenzie, as a partner. While most of his work was carried out in the north of the country – three Fife commissions were found in his considerable body of work. These were Markinch School in 1875 and St. Brycedale and St. Margarets Episcopal Church in Leven both in 1877. However, the good wishes of Mr Stalker for new work did not come to pass as, two years later in 1883, James Matthews retired. Possibly, the difficulties in dealing with Messrs Swan, Nairn and Stocks proved too much for him, but the explanation lies in that between 1883 and 1886 he was elected Provost of Aberdeen! He was mainly known as an architect of schools and churches with some remodelling of country houses and castles flung in. His style was mainly baronial. *The 1872 Education Act* saw him becoming involved in the wave of necessary school building.

The Reverend Stalker then moved on to the contractors by admitting that there had been issues but wished to say that,

if there had been any unpleasantness in the past, “they wished to forget it and smoke the pipe of peace with everybody and acknowledge this is a really good piece of work”. He also noted that it was “a really good and substantial work from top to bottom and that is as good a thing as you can say to any class of men”. Next, the committees were thanked with particular reference made to John T. Stocks who had acted as secretary throughout. He was credited with devoting an inordinate amount of time, especially over the past two years, to seeing the work successfully completed.

Michael B. Nairn was then profusely thanked for the work he carried out in relation to the acquisition of the church bells.

The minister then reiterated the theme which had been expounded earlier in the day by the Rev. J. H. Wilson. He stressed that this opening of the church was not the end - but in fact only the beginning - of using the purpose built new church as a workshop for widening their work especially in evangelism.

Mention of the gifts which had been received finished his round of thanks. These included a minister’s cloak which had been presented by Mrs Nairn. An anonymous lady had gifted a bible and psalm book for the pulpit. Michael Nairn had laid the whole building with floorcloth as a gift to the congregation and ex-Ballie Gibb had provided carpeting for the pulpit and rooms. An ex-member of the congregation,

now resident in London, had made a gift of a new set of communion plate, and James Barnet provided handsome stands for the collection plates. Mr A.B. Young, Linktown Potteries, gave a lovely engraved set of glasses and water jugs for each of the rooms.

The minister expressed anxiety in case he had perhaps omitted to mention any other gifts and hoped if he had the donors would forgive him.

His final words were that “with these remarks, and with the expression of hope rising in all our hearts, this new building may be a blessing not just to us as a congregation but to the whole community at large”.

John T. Stocks should have followed but he was unable to attend and Michael Nairn spoke in his place. His main topic was that there had been some criticism that the bells were not loud enough. His explanation was that the louvres were directing the sound downwards and that after an adjustment they would be heard up to four miles away – which does seem ambitious in such an industrialised town as Kirkcaldy!

At this point it would seem appropriate to mention the bells themselves as they are a weighty matter. They were the work of Gillett and Bland of London and prior to installation were stored in Messrs. Swan Brother’s warehouse in Kirk Wynd. There were eleven in total which were arranged in two tiers, one above the other. The crown of each bell was bolted to a huge cross beam. There was a beam for each tier. The higher

tier contained the six smaller bells with the lower tier the five largest bells. The largest bell was four feet in diameter with the smallest just short of three feet. They were/are pitched in B flat and range from F up to G. In total, the bells weighed 4,267 kilos – the largest at 711, with the smallest weighing in at 203 kilos.

In front of each row of bells runs a plank to which the hammers are hinged. There were two for each bell and they are restrained by wire ropes which pass down thirty feet to the chamber where the chiming apparatus is housed.

The chiming mechanism itself is worthy of mention. The mechanism was again designed by Gillett and Bland and worked on the same principal as a music box. The automatic mechanism allowed the bells to be rung to call the congregation to church, or play a selection of tunes. Both the chiming and playing were achieved by means of wooden cylinders set with pins. These revolved inside the chiming mechanism; the pins touching the wire ropes which stretched up to the bell hammers, thus allowing the hammers to drop onto the bells – another cylinder pulled the pins and hammers back into place.

St. Brycedale had purchased three cylinders – one for chiming and three to play tunes. Each cylinder could play up to seven tunes. Some of the tunes were, *the Old One Hundred*, *There is a Happy Land* and *Adeste Fidelis*. The

cylinders cost between £10. and £15. Therefore by purchasing more cylinders the tunes could be multiplied ad infinitum. The chiming cylinder was the only one used on Sundays, but for the rest of the week – tunes would be played at – 7, 9, and 10 a.m.; and 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9 p.m.

Two points of interest are that the bells were in place to enable them to be rung in the New Year of 1881. Jessie Patrick Findlay wrote a poem “honouring the new bells”.

Mr Nairn also made the point that bells required to be ‘broken in’ and treated gently in the first instance.

After what was described as an anthem by the choir – “As a Fair Dream has Faded” – it was the turn of the Reverend Alexander Skene to speak.

Once again, the reoccurring theme of the night centred on embracing the new building while remembering their old home. He had known the minister Rev. Stalker in the days before he came to Kirkcaldy. His message certainly struck a chord and is worthy of

ST. BRYCEDALE BELLS

St. Brycedale bells fling crisply forth
Their octaves to the frosty sky,
And life's low jangled chords are stilled
Within the trenchant harmony.

In clamour swift they strike upon
The wintry silence born of snow;
Soon earth's white pathways will be blurred
By trudging folk that churchward go.

Lo! from the sweet bells' surge and fall
A withered fancy blooms again—
A sudden voice awakes that long
Bound in their iron tongues has lain.

“ Oh, faith is good, and faith is best! ”
(So ring the bells across the land.)
Yea! Through life's tangled circumstance
Faith can discern the guiding Hand.

Alas! ye faithless cynic souls,
Your creed is cold. What cheer have ye
For those that walk earth's burdened ways
In doubts' most sad calamity?

For still you walk your barren round,
And in a sneer you strangle good—
Call piety the brain's disease—
Religion but a thing of mood.

But some day when your careless feet
Have in the net of God been caught,
You will be glad that walls of flesh
Can hide your soul's despairing thought.

Ah, there are some who walk this earth—
Like saints of old their faces shine;
May such bright living souls touch yours
And fan dead faith to fire divine.

But rather will I wish for you
That, somewhere on your trivial road,
You'll meet a sorrow beckoning
With hands that lead you back to God.

“ Oh, faith is good, and faith is best! ”
(So ring the bells across the land.)
Fain thro' life's tangled circumstance
Would we discern the guiding Hand.

mentioning its crux or central theme – “You are glad, I am sure, to get into your new place of worship, with its larger and more cheerful possibilities of worth and its advantages of many kinds, especially as you have had to exercise a good deal of patience in waiting while it was being built for you. But I daresay, I am sure, you are sorry to leave the old church too. I can fancy that there are some of you who will never have the same tender feeling to this new building that you have to the old. Some of you were baptised there: some of you went to church for the first time there: some of you took in your hands the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ for the first time there. In those pews some of you have sat, read and sung, with those who are now worshipping in the church of the first-born in heaven; – with your father or mother, with husband or wife, with brother, or sister, or child. From that pulpit you have heard words that were the very message of God to your soul; some of them such words as you will never hear again, for they made you Christ’s men and women once and for all”.

There was considerably more to the content but the above was probably the most eloquent and striking.

The Rev. D. M. Ross of Dundee was next to speak and the content did not vary overmuch from the previous speaker. It was once again focussed on the old and the new, the fact this was a beginning and not an ending, plus the advantages of

this building creating an opportunity to carry out their work with greater zeal.

He did however make some individual points by comparing the services in an Episcopalian environment with those of the Presbyterian Church. His feeling was that the Free Church could learn from the brighter style of services on offer (Hear, hear). His argument was that if services were brighter and a little more relaxed, people may get more from them. He also had the message that he felt that the Free Church over the last ten years had not made the progress it should have. He was, as he termed it, a 'younger minister' and perhaps the younger people did not have the "zeal of the men of the Disruption. Perhaps there is some truth in what is often said, that we are the degenerate sons of a noble race". It does seem like a potentially contentious argument, but he warmed to his theme with – "At any rate we do not seem to be going ahead with our work as men did 30 or 40 years ago. I suspect that we have been resting on the Disruption and glorying in it". He again hammered home the theme of the work only beginning with – "If people are to make progress, they will make mistakes; but it is far better to be making progress, though making mistakes, than be rotting in dead orthodox stagnation (applause). You, the people of Kirkcaldy, have work before you – you are to be the missionary church in this town". The message which ran through the whole evening was that there was work to be done "In proportion as you rise to the height of your mission you will not only

bless Kirkcaldy but the Free Church of Scotland (applause). Despite including what could be construed as tacit criticisms he certainly secured both, “hear, hears” and, at some points, applause.

Perhaps his remarks were not contentious? It is always foolhardy to look at 19th century events through 21st century eyes. Decisions, actions and analysis belong with their times.

The Rev. J. Hood. Wilson who had been such a large part of the opening service was next on the programme. His message was rather different in that his theme was the minister himself. He made it very clear that the St. Brycedale minister was held in very high regard and that he had a bright future in the church.

His words were certainly far seeing and almost a prophecy as James Stalker rose to the highest echelons in the Church. Although he served as minister of only one other church, *St Matthews in Glasgow*, he was known as a pulpit giant. He spent much of his working life at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, as Head of Church History, and once declined the post of Principal. It was said that at one stage he was better known in America than at home. He wrote a substantial number of books on religion, many of them still in print today. If we revert back to young Joanna Alexander, who was so cruelly orphaned at an early age – it was she who married James Stalker on the 16th July 1878 in Adelaide House. Less than two years later on the 12th April 1880, at the age of 23,

she passed away in the Free Church Manse which was yards from her former home.

After the Reverend Wilson had completed his address, the Reverend Stalker made an announcement which certainly chimed with the oft mentioned mission work which had been one of the themes of the night.

In fact, an Iron Church had been secured and was being brought from Dalkeith. The intention was the same as had been mentioned all these years ago. It was to be placed in the Victoria Road area and was to be used for Sunday Schools and Sunday evening meetings and also as a base for mission work in the vicinity. There had been some unrest amongst some Elders that perhaps more unnecessary expense would be incurred at this time. However, Michael Beveridge (of park fame) immediately indicated that he would personally organise subscriptions from private individuals to cover the preliminary costs involved in transporting and fitting out the new building. Interestingly, the site chosen is where the Victoria Hall was built (now flats) – for so long synonymous with Major Harris Stocks and the Boys' Brigade in Kirkcaldy. This was certainly a declaration of intent in the cause of evangelism.

The Reverend Stalker then indicated that “we will hear a few words from two of our neighbours”. At this juncture, we have to say that Mr Stalker's idea of a few words differs markedly from ours!

It was the Reverend George McHardy of the Congregational Church who spoke first. His message was wordy, but simple. He had been present five years previously at the announcement of the intention to build a new church and offered congratulations to the congregation on completing the task albeit, from time to time, facing difficulties. He did not see difficulties as a problem – rather he saw overcoming difficulties as helping create a “band of brothers”. “He saw no issues with the existence of different denominations standing side by side, as long as they kept clear of the spectre of bigotry and sectarianism. I think it is quite possible to have the unity of the spirit, while at the same time, having varied modes and forms of administration in the Church of Christ; and I do not think these are times for waving the denominational flag very conspicuously. We have a great need, it seems to me, to rally round the standard of our common Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and do our utmost to secure success for His Cause, seeing that, especially in the present day, we are surrounded with a veiled and pervading scepticism and, perhaps even worse, we are also surrounded by a very decided spirit of indifferentism and therefore we all need to be united in the defence of the gospel of Christ.”

He also made mention that his own church had some years previously gone through an upheaval in moving to a new building. We can only find one building which has housed *Pathhead Congregational Church* and that was built in 1869. Therefore, West End Congregational Church must have been

McHardy's charge as it was established in the old *Cowan Street Chapel* in 1873 and by April 1874 was in its present home at 51A High Street. That seems a remarkably swift construction!

We must assume that the Rev. McHardy did eventually sit down! He was followed by Dr. Baxter of Loughborough Road Church. The good Dr. continued the theme of the previous speaker in mentioning the different and contrasting denominations. He gave a little discourse on the type of people he hoped would always fill the pulpit and the pews. He felt that the current minister and congregation had set a very high standard.

His message was - "thus labouring together let us all go forth with a determination to do more than we have hitherto attempted for the furtherance of the gospel; and by whatever name ecclesiastically we be called, let it be manifest that we are allies not rivals".

It was now obvious things were overrunning as Dr. Baxter was halted with "I am sorry the Doctor has had so little time; but we will hear him at greater length by and by". To add insult to injury, the next sentences were "We will now have a few words from our old friend Dr Ewing (applause). Oh, I see you are brightening up at that". Obviously not intended to sound that way – but it is hardly a compliment to Dr Baxter's ability to engage with his audience.

Rev. Ewing, it transpired, had a sense of humour and he made good use of it throughout his speech. He had been present at the induction of the Reverend Stalker and had been the first to speak on that occasion. Therefore, he had been present at the moment when the building of the new church was first aired.

The Rev. Ewing covered the points previously mentioned, but also spent a great deal of time in praising Provost Swan. He believed that the Provost's personality, fame, sheer presence, and outstanding public service record, would suggest that he was renowned not as just the Provost of Kirkcaldy but that of the whole of the East of Scotland! He then remarked that "Fife has a number of features – a lot of old castles – Fife has a ruined cathedral and Fife has a palace, but it has no complete cathedral and now you have stepped into the gap and produced this building".

The team had been attracted to the notion of producing a story on "Kirkcaldy's Cathedral" when researching the "Freedom of the Burgh". Sir Sandford Fleming had noted in his acceptance speech that "an edifice of great dimensions I have now seen for the first time. It forms a conspicuous landmark in an elevated position in the centre of the burgh – it could well be called the Cathedral of St Brycedale". It was this comment which provided the spark which led to this story. The comment was made in November of 1882, so it appears that the Reverend Ewing beat him to the punch by using the epithet on opening night! As a complete aside, which is irrelevant to this story, we noted that the Reverend

Baxter was the cleric attending Fleming's presentation – this time without being cut short! Revenge is sweet?

Dean of Guild Douglas was next in line with what had all the hallmarks of a vote of thanks which normally signals the conclusion of an event. Beginning with the three "R's" which he believed were familiar to the congregation – he then advised that they know that the three "S's" – Provost Swan, who both gave the site and handsome contributions – John Stocks, who had acted as the convenor/secretary of the Building Committee and finally the Rev. Stalker. All had made major contributions particularly, in his eyes, the minister without whose energy, influence and hopeful spirit he did not think the church would have been built. This statement was met with loud applause. He carried on by saying that as a member of the Building Committee he had taken a keen interest in the construction from first to last and considered it to be a building of the most substantial kind. As a result of over forty years experience in the construction industry with stone, timber and iron, he was bound to say that this great building was safe and sound, despite early issues with the ground under the tower.

He moved on to thank the speakers – especially Mr Wilson who had spoken at both services. He also thanked the other friends of Mr Stalker, together with the neighbouring ministers for their kind interest and words. His final words

were for the choir and he hoped that they would benefit from the enhanced accommodation they now had.

The Chairman then called for Provost Swan to say a few final words. He was certainly correct in saying that the occasion could/must only end in this way. Swan was, without any doubt, Kirkcaldy's most important and influential figure of the 19th century. A man born in Whytescauseway in 1809 – a man who was Provost of the town for an unprecedented 37 years – a man who strode Kirkcaldy's stage like no other before or since – a man who was Provost at the time of the Disruption – a man who walked out to join the Free Church – a man who was Provost when the Free Church was built in Tolbooth Street and, finally, a man who was Provost when St. Brycedale opened – there could be no other.

On rising to speak, Provost Swan, was met with a wall of cheering and clapping. He began by saying he was a proud man on several fronts – as Provost of Kirkcaldy, as a member of the congregation and, thirdly, as a Kirkcaldy man. He was pleased to have been spared long enough to see the church completed. He had long set his heart on Kirkcaldy having an 'appearance' and as the town's spires were not of any great height this building, with its tall tower and spire, would significantly enhance the town's skyline. He confirmed that he was happy to use a corner of his policies as the site. It would soon become central and in a place where the main roads from the west, east and north converge. He was

delighted that such substantial funds had been secured to allow the building to proceed as planned and also secure such a fine set of chimes (bells). The minister was again praised for being the figure that had done so much to see the work completed. The Provost firmly believed that this was the finest church in any of Scotland's provincial towns.

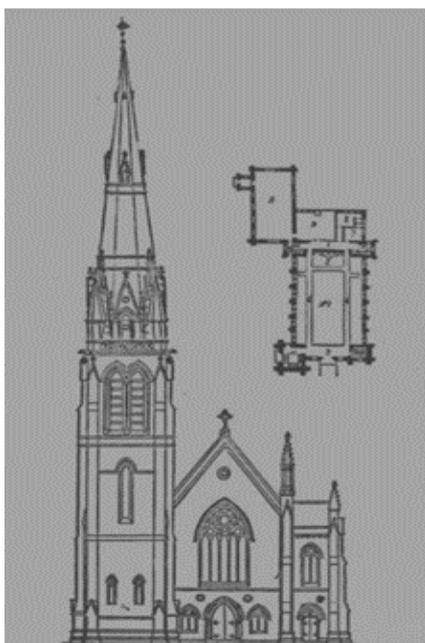
His closing remarks are worthy of inclusion – “I think not only the Free Church but the other churches in the neighbourhood should rejoice over it. He is not a true Kirkcaldy man – to whatever church he may belong – if he does not say we have done a grand work in getting such a magnificent structure as this, such a noble spire, and such fine chimes. I hope every person in Kirkcaldy will look upon the work with delight and we will be glad if they come to hear Mr Stalker's sermons. I hope everyone will take a pride in conserving for generations to come the edifice we have put up. Of course, as you know, I cannot expect to be long here. I have done a good deal for Kirkcaldy, but nothing has given me better comfort or pleasure than the part I have taken in the erection of this Church and spire along with the bells. But above all that, my dear friends, I hope that better work will be done; that the gospel will be faithfully and fully preached; that hard work will be done by all the parties connected with it; that we all may be able to rejoice over the happy work accomplished today and that it will exert an influence on generations to come”.

The only remaining item was the Chairman reading out letters of apology for absence, several of which enclosed cheques for the collection plate. Two of these alone totalled £125. One of the apologies was from an interesting source – the Rev. Buchan of Pathhead – the father of John Buchan, the novelist and politician.

The finale was the singing of the 122nd psalm by the choir.

Description of the Building

The *Fife Free Press* in its extensive coverage included a description of the building, presumably supplied by the architect, James Matthews of Aberdeen - although some elementary errors cast doubt on that.



The piece included drawings showing the front elevation and also a floor plan, to a much reduced scale, which shows just how little change has taken place since then. They pointed out that the spire was visible from miles around and even from across the Forth and it was the finest ecclesiastical edifice in Fife - an accolade which may indeed still hold. They also state that the church stands east and west although

actually it would be more accurate to say south north. And the brass panel giving the name and date of the church is at the base of the tower - not the spire!

The walls of the tower are 1.37m thick at the base and gradually reduce at each of the stages to just 23cm at the top of the spire, where the apex stone was topped by what was said to be a wrought iron Maltese Cross. (It's not). Anyway, the finial supplied by a London firm, was gilded and rose 3.05m (10 feet) above the stonework. The engraving on the cover of P.K. Livingstone's 1957 book shows the brand new church with what is clearly the present finial and NOT a Maltese cross. It was said to have been sunk into the spire for a distance of 10.67m. The total height of the spire was 71m (210 feet) and the copper lightning conductor was supplied and fitted by a Glasgow firm. As well as the main spire there are two smaller towers with pyramidal slated roofs at either southern corner of the nave and several minor turrets elsewhere.

The main stonework came from Fordell quarry and is a whitish freestone for the polished ashlar dressings around the doors and windows with a warmer cream coloured stone for the bulk of the rock-faced external wall surfaces. The inside walls of the tower are of hard stone from Gallatown quarry while the steps at all the doors are of white Aberdeen granite - showing absolutely no signs of wear even after all this time.

The main entrance door is within a large, pointed arch with paired pillars with richly carved capitals and mouldings - the work of a townsman. Above is a five-light stained glass window 4.27m wide and 7.62m high which was reported to have been the finest of its kind in Fife. (This was replaced in 1923/24 by Douglas Strachan's War Memorial window). The Rose Window at the southern end of the nave is 6.49m in diameter. They noted that the church was particularly spacious with the interior measuring 28.98m in length, 16.46m wide and 13.72m high, and with passages to either side or two blocks of pews in the centre and a row of single pews on either side.

The length was divided into six bays by cast-iron pillars supporting the galleries and the roof, with the ceilings of the nave and side aisles being of stained and varnished wood. Within arches springing between the pillars at high level are contained quatrefoil openings which were not simply decorative but were for ventilation through tubes running up and vented at the top of the tower.

The pulpit was described as being roomy and of richly carved and wrought woodwork matching the front of the opposite gallery, and the wall behind was panelled to a height of 3.97m while the other walls just went up to 1.37m high with the panelling.

The seating - for 1100, was said to be 'most comfortably shaped' as the seats and backs both sloped backwards. These

were all provided with specially made cushions and hat rails were provided beneath the seating and umbrella stands at the aisle. The haffits, or ends of the seats, had handsome mahogany copings and carvings, and each pew was numbered with a small metal plate. The woodwork throughout was of yellow pine stained and varnished to dark oak.

The lighting was by ten large brackets projecting over the capitals of the pillars above the galleries and by a further 30 brackets on the side walls. The pulpit had two 'very handsome pillar lights,' and all the gas fittings were of polished brass and wrought-iron work, 'tastefully decorated with colours.' The heating was by hot-water pipes around the nave and gallery.

There was also a large, well lighted hall for Sunday School



and other purposes measuring 18.29m by 9.14m and glazed with cathedral glass to give a soft subdued light. The session house adjoined the hall and was 10.06m by 6.09m, and a retiring

room 4.57m by 3.66m with a cloakroom, lavatory and WC. Those rooms along with the pulpit and pulpit stairs were carpeted thanks to a gift by one of the elders.

The site was terraced, laid out with shrubbery, and enclosed by a highly ornamental cast iron railing with two large gates and a smaller gate by the church hall. Gas lamps and the guide plates on which the gates ran can still be seen today one hundred years later.

The report ended by saying that a 'powerful set of bells, sweet, clear, and harmonious,' had been fitted up in the tower. There were eleven bells weighing over 4 tons altogether and ranging in size from more than 1.21m in diameter to less than 900mm.

Finally they gave a list of the contractors involved; as follows.

Mason work, Mr John Mackersie, Kirkcaldy; carved stone work, Mr Taylor, Kirkcaldy; joiner work, Messrs Little and Sons, Kirkcaldy; plasterer, Mr Grant, Alloa; plumber work, Mr Wood, Kirkcaldy; gas fitting, Messrs Blackie & Sons, Aberdeen; glazier for church, Messrs Adam & Small, Glasgow; and for adjoining buildings, Messrs Haxton & Melville, Kirkcaldy; slater, Mr W Mair, Kirkcaldy; painting, Messrs Simpson and Scott, Kirkcaldy; heating apparatus, Mr C Ritchie, Edinburgh; cushions, Messrs Wylie & Lochhead, Glasgow; granolithic pavement, Messrs Stuart & Co, Edinburgh; railings, Messrs W Macfarlane & Co Saracen Foundry, Glasgow,

Mr John Ogilvie discharged the onerous duty of superintendent of works.

There were some snippets added in at the end of the article – some worth mentioning.

There were 751 communicants on the roll of the congregation in March 1880.

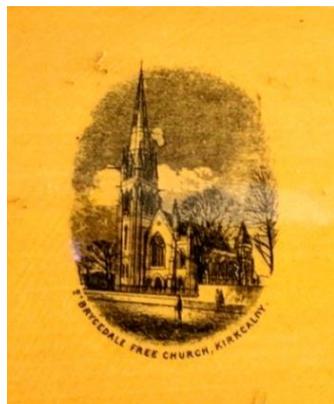
The major individual contributors to the building were; Robert Russell with £3,000 and a further £500 towards the bells, Provost Swan with £2,000 and also the site which was valued at £2,000. Messrs Nairn provided a further £2,000. Other records suggested that the Nairn contribution was £3,150, with Robert Nairn adding another £1,000. From Australia, Sir Thomas Elder (object 15) sent £2,000.

To put the figures in context £2,000 then now equates to circa £250,000.

The spire is estimated to have cost £3,000, the bells £1,000 and the total project cost is given at £20,000.

Interestingly, the article made mention of what they termed a 'change of posture'. It seems in prayer the congregation would sit instead of stand and vice versa when in praise.

We learn that Archibald Beveridge was engaged in the preparation of the large and beautiful lithograph mentioned above. It was indeed featured on the dustcover of P.K. Livingstone's fine work *St. Brycedales Church* Kirkcaldy. As it mentions that they would be on issue next week – the presumption has to be that they were being printed as a souvenir or as fundraising for the church. An Mauchlineware example of a souvenir money box is illustrated.



In case you are wondering the Tolbooth Street building was sold for £1,415

KIRKCALDY.
SALE OF THE OLD FREE CHURCH. — We understand that the Deacons' Court of St Brycedale Free Church has this week disposed of the old church in Tolbooth Street to Mr R. H. Paxton, architect, for a client, at £1415.

It was in 1892 that the Church itself secured its first organ, although Michael Beveridge had earlier gifted a small organ for the Church Hall. The cost of the Church organ and its installation was said to be £ 2,000. It appears that a member of the congregation donated £ 1,000 towards the cost on the condition that the congregation, which they did, raised the remainder. Mr M. B. Nairn agreed to pay half of the expense of cleaning and redecorating the Church after the structural

alterations to accommodate the organ were completed. Mr T.B. Hood was appointed first organist and it was first played on 14th December 1893.

So ends our story of the events leading to the building of St. Brycedale Church and the stepping stones ultimately leading to its completion. It is a story of some important and many ordinary people whose principles demanded that the 'right to call' had to be achieved, by whatever means necessary, irrespective of the potential cost to themselves.

It is also a story of ministers who put themselves in the firing line, as in those days when religion was all powerful, it was a brave person who stood up, was counted and then walked.

Every story should have a happy ending and it was the Ladybank born Rev. Evan MacDonald Ross who, during his 33 year ministry of St. Brycedale, saw in 1929 his Church and Congregation re-join with the Church of Scotland.

St. Brycedale remains in use today and is still testament to great architecture and outstanding construction work.