

STENHOUSE PARISH CHURCH

1900~1950

FOREWORD

WHEN the Kirk Session decided to publish a book to commemorate our Congregational Jubilee, I do not think any of us foresaw the work that such a project would involve. Nor do I suppose anyone turning these pages and reading the smooth-running narrative will realise the painstaking labour it represents.

My first and main object in writing this foreword is to pay tribute to Mr. John S. McLachlan for the enthusiasm and determination with which he has tackled a long and difficult task. The result, I think, does him great credit and I am sure all the members of Stenhouse will join me in thanking him for this valuable memento of the first fifty years of our existence.

As I write I also imagine that I hear ghostly clapping—the harbinger of that heartfelt vote of thanks which will undoubtedly be given most sincerely by those who, in A.D. 2000 are saddled with the responsibility of writing the book entitled “Stenhouse 1900-2000.”

There are few members left now who remember the early days. Of the original Congregational Roll only Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Turnbull remain. It is good, therefore, that the story is now in print before the memory of it has altogether faded.

I also wish to record our thanks to Mr. J. N. Walker for the photographs of the present Church and Session; the *Falkirk Herald* for permission to quote from its pages; and the printers, Messrs. Robert Cunningham & Sons Ltd., for their valuable help and advice.

A. A. FLEMING.



THE CHURCH IN 1950

short ministries of this kind are an occasion of great weakness for the Church.

The work which Mr. Merrow accomplished in Stenhouse lives on after him; it can still be seen in the lives of those whose characters he influenced, and who learned much from the unspoken sermon of his daily life. Fortunate indeed is the parish which for so long a period can have a man like Mr. Merrow as its minister.

G. S. DUNCAN,

*Moderator of the General Assembly
of the Church of Scotland.*

September 1949

From the Moderator of the Presbytery.

SAINT MODANS CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
FALKIRK.

Dear Mr. Fleming,

On behalf of the Presbytery of Linlithgow and Falkirk, it is my privilege to convey to you the congratulations and felicitations of the Presbytery on the attainment of the Jubilee of the Congregation and Parish of Stenhouse.

Throughout the past fifty years, the congregation of Stenhouse has maintained its faithful witness to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and under the guidance of God has increased in power and influence in the community to which it ministers. Its growth has been as natural, and as lovely, as a native flower.

A Church takes upon itself something of the character of those who have worshipped in it and laboured for it. There is in the Church of Stenhouse a dignity and seemliness, a beauty which is like unto that of holiness, and which by its nature cannot but give comfort and uplift to all who take part in its life and work.

People form themselves into all sorts of societies and organisations, but none of them is quite like a congregation of Christian people. Of this I am sure that, without its presence, it would be just a matter of time before the community would go bad.

For the past fifty years, the Church of Stenhouse has been at work, even as leaven works. The end is not yet, and proud though the record of the past has been, I am confident that it will be true of those who follow after—"Greater works than these shall ye do."

The Presbytery, along with the people of Stenhouse, gives humble thanks to God for all His goodness and mercy, and prays that in the years still to come, the rich grace of God will continue to bless the Congregation and Parish of Stenhouse.

Yours very sincerely,

NEIL CAMPBELL,

Moderator,

Presbytery of Linlithgow and Falkirk.

IN THE BEGINNING

STENHOUSE PARISH CHURCH was erected to commemorate the Jubilee of the Rev. John McLaren, D.D., the minister of the United Parishes of Larbert and Dunipace. It was originally known as the McLaren Memorial Church, but when the church and district were raised to the status of a Parish Church and Parish *Quoad Sacra* in December 1904, the name was changed to the Church and Parish of Stenhouse. Dr. McLaren was a native of Edinburgh, where he was educated at the Royal High School and the University. In both institutions he had a career of exceptional brilliance and at the early age of nineteen he was appointed classical master in George Watson's College, and a little later he had the offer of a professorship in India but resolved to give his talents to the Church. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1847, and after being assistant for three months to Dr. Auld in Ayr, he was presented to the living of the United Parishes of Larbert and Dunipace in succession to the Rev. Francis McGill. Ordained on the 16th September 1847, he laboured faithfully in his important charge for the long period of over fifty years and was only released from his duties by death on 5th January 1898.

Dr. McLaren was a faithful pastor and a preacher of distinction and he held a commanding position in the Presbytery and in the General Assembly. He was also an educationist of outstanding ability and his services in this connection to his parish and country were pre-eminent. On his appointment to the United Parishes of Larbert and Dunipace, the parish schools came under his immediate supervision and were brought by him to a very high standard of efficiency. He became a member of the School Board on its formation and for many years he filled the position of Chairman. His services to education were recognised by the Educational Institute of Scotland, of which he was elected a Fellow, and he also held for a time the position of President of the Institute.

Towards the close of Dr. McLaren's career, when his ministry reached the great length of fifty years, it was felt by his friends that something should be done to commemorate his long life and service. With Dr. McLaren's approval, it was decided that the memorial should take the form of a church to meet the needs of the large and increasing population in the East End of Stenhouse-muir. The first sod of the foundation was cut on the 16th September 1897, by Mrs. Sherriff of Carronvale, and the address was given by the Very Rev. Dr. Marshall Lang. The Very Rev. Dr. Mair (Moderator of General Assembly), Rev. A. Gunn (Moderator of Stirling Presbytery) and Rev. James Steel (Interim-Moderator of Larbert Kirk Session) also took part in the Service. The building was completed on 25th October 1899. The completion stone being laid by Mr. J. J. McLaren, Chairman of Carron Company. The completed building was dedicated on Saturday, 20th January, 1900, the Very Rev. Dr. John Pagan, Moderator of the General Assembly, preaching the sermon, assisted in the service by the Rev. Alexander Bryson, Interim Moderator of Larbert Kirk Session, and Rev. Archibald Jamieson, Moderator of the Presbytery of Stirling.

The cost of building the Church amounted to £7,389 and this was partially met by grants of £1,500 from the Baird Trust and £678 from the Home Mission, and Subscriptions and Church Collections amounting to £3,938. The main subscribers were: Mr. George Sherriff of Carronvale, £1,200; Messrs. Dobbie Forbes & Company, £500; Lady Dawson-Brodie of Gairdoch, £350; Miss Dawson, Powfoulis, £350; Mr. J. J. McLaren of Ratho, £150; Major Robert Dobbie, £100; and Mr. John Bell Cochrane, £100.

The balance of £1,273 was more than cleared off from the proceeds of a Bazaar held in the Town Hall, Falkirk, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 27th and 28th February, and 1st March 1902. In those three days the net proceeds amounted to £1,675.

The General Committee responsible for raising this large sum was as follows: Mrs. Sherriff, Carronvale; Mrs. Roy, Mount Carron; Mrs. Cochrane, The Cross; Mrs. J. S. McLachlan, Muirside; Mrs. Pryde, South Broomage; Miss Rae, Stenhouse View; Miss A. Binnie, Tryst Road; Miss Leslie, Tryst Road; Miss Binnie, Burnhead; Mrs. Walker, Burnhead; Mrs. McKay,

Annfield House; Mrs. Reid, Bloomsbury House; Miss Stewart, Munro Street; Mrs. Chesney, Munro Street; Mrs. Kinniburgh, North Road; the Misses Pearson, Munro Street; Mr. William Morrison, Tryst Road; Mr. William Walker, Rae Street; Mr. J. C. Ferguson, Braevar; Miss McLellan, Glasgow; Miss Jones, Torwood Hall; Miss Graham, Larbert House; Miss Young, Stepps Road; Miss Campbell, Munro Street; Mr. W. R. Ferrier, Church Street; Mr. R. Simpson, Tryst Road; Mr. P. Simpson, West Park; Captain Grainger, Mount Gerald; Mr. A. Miller, Stepps Road; Mr. Wm. Kemp, Church Street; Mr. John Peebles, Stepps Road; Mr. William Parker, Church Street; Mr. James Murray, Rae Street; Mr. T. B. Jones, Torwood Hall; Mr. James Jones, junr., Torwood Hall; Mr. G. Binnie, Tryst Road; Mr. Wm. McLaren, Tryst Road; Mr. James Bain, Munro Street. Convener, Rev. D. S. Merrow; Secretary, Mr. J. A. Walker, Post Office, Stenhousemuir; Assistant Secretary, Mr. R. C. Ostler; and Treasurer, Mr. J. B. Cochrane, The Cross.

The Bazaar was declared open on the Thursday by Lady Alice Shaw Stewart, Carnock, and the Chairman was Major Dobbie of Beechmount. On Friday, the Very Rev. Dr. Donald McLeod performed the opening ceremony, and Mr. W. D. Gillies, Denovan, was Chairman; and on Saturday, Mr. J. J. McLaren, of Ratho Park, opened the Bazaar, and Mr. Thomas Bamforth, Carron Grange, presided.

There were eight stalls and the stallholders were as follows:

STALL No. 1.—Congregational Stall.—Mrs. J. B. Cochrane, The Cross, Stenhousemuir (Convener); Mrs. J. S. McLachlan, Muirside, Larbert, and Miss Binnie, Burnhead, Larbert (Deputy Conveners); Miss Jones, Torwood Hall, Larbert; Miss Leslie, Fernlea, Stenhousemuir; Miss Maxwell, Public Health Hospital, Camelon; Miss Reid, Allanbank, Larbert; Mrs. Ronald, Heathcote, Larbert; Miss Whyte, The Hollies, Larbert.

STALL No. 2.—Larbert Congregational Stall.—Mrs. Graham, Larbert House (Convener); Mrs. Pryde, Broomage Knowe, Larbert (Deputy Convener); Miss Graham, Larbert House; The Misses Dick, Beechmount, Larbert; Mrs. Jamieson, 67 Nile Grove, Edinburgh; Mrs. Masterton, Laburnum Cottage, Stenhousemuir; Miss M. Jones, Torwood Hall, Larbert.

STALL No. 3—Carron Stall.—Lady Dawson Brodie of Gairdoch and Miss Dawson of Powfoulis (Conveners); Mrs. R. P. Roy, Mount Carron, Larbert; and Miss McLellan, Glasgow (Assistant Conveners); Mrs. Sykes, Glasgow; Mrs. Barnforth, Carron Grange, Larbert; Mrs. Baillie, Roebuck Park, Carron; Mrs. Robertson, Roebuck Park, Carron; Mrs. McPhail, Blacktown, Carron; Mrs. M. Robertson, Glasgow.

STALL No. 4—Carronvale Stall.—Mrs. Sherriff (Convener); Mrs. Gillies, Denovan; Mrs. Nimmo, Westbank, Falkirk; Mrs. Orr, Kinnaird.

STALL No. 5—Manse Stall.—The Misses Merrow.

STALL No. 6—Ironmongery Stall.—Mr. John Morrison, Dawson Terrace, Carron (Convener); Mr. William Morrison, St. Margaret's Cottage, Stenhousemuir; Mr. J. Watt, Falkirk; Mr. W. Walker, Northcote, Stenhousemuir; Mr. R. Taylor, North Road, Larbert; Mr. F. Love, Gairdoch View, Carronshore; Mr. James Clelland, Bainsford.

STALL No. 7—Provision Stall.—Mr. John B. Cochrane (Convener); Mr. James Walker, Mrs. William Ferrier, Mrs. John Taylor, Mrs. Service, Mrs. Chesney and Mrs. William Morrison.

STALL No. 8—Flower Stall.—Miss Anderson, Queen's Nurse, Larbert.

The Café was in charge of Mrs. Grainger, Mount Gerald, Larbert (Convener); Mrs. Waddell, North Road, Stenhousemuir; Mrs. Fraser, Willowbank, Stenhousemuir, and Miss Bauchop, Graham's Road, Falkirk.

The Town Hall was fitted out as a Japanese Village. The *Falkirk Herald* described the scene as follows: "Full advantage was taken of the picturesque irregularities of Eastern architecture to effect a realistic scene. The quaint edifices characteristic of the 'Land of the Chrysanthemums' were most effectively reproduced, while the colouring was most harmonious and natural. Additional realism was lent by a fine river scene which occupied the platform, while strings of gaily tinted lanterns were suspended round the hall. The decorations were by Messrs. Fred Williamson & Brother, Liverpool."

There was a prize-draw during the Bazaar, and some of the prizes were: an upright grand piano, pony and trap, organ, silver tea and coffee service, bicycle, and a Singer's sewing machine.

Another article offered as a prize in the subscription sale was a rather unique piece of needlework in the shape of an autograph bedspread. The groundwork of the quilt was of Irish linen divided into 2,000 inches square by means of threadwork. On one of these squares patrons could have their initials worked for the payment of 1/-, the latter being wrought in old gold in the case of gentlemen, and those of the ladies were sewn in a lighter shade. The whole work was planned to form a Maltese Cross. In the centre were the initials of Mr. Merrow. The quilt was the work of Miss Leslie, Fernlea, and Miss Craig. This unusual prize was won by Dr. Robertson, Larbert.

The Masonic Hall was used as a restaurant, the walls being tastefully hung with flags and coloured draperies.

The Committee made a decided hit in introducing a Ping-pong Tournament. A competition was held each day, and the following were the finalists:

LADIES.—Thursday—Mrs. Andrew Hunter, Lynwood, Falkirk, beat Miss Kennedy, Falkirk. Friday—Miss Muirhead, Rosehall Terrace, Falkirk, beat Miss Kennedy. Saturday—Miss Wilkie, Grangemouth, beat Miss Muirhead.

GENTLEMEN.—Thursday—Mr. P. F. Jones beat Mr. Henry Elliot. Friday—Mr. Harry Smith, Falkirk, beat Mr. W. S. Barr, Arnotdale. Saturday—Mr. George Muirhead, junr., Falkirk, beat Mr. W. W. Mitchell, Falkirk.

There were also hat-trimming and box-making competitions, a shooting gallery, marionettes and lightning sketches. During the whole of the Bazaar, orchestral selections were played by the Fitzpatrick and Binnie Orchestras. In these days of austerity it is interesting to read what the café had to offer for lunch at an inclusive cost of two shillings, and the following was the menu:

SOUPS

Hare and Brown

MEATS, HOT

Roast Beef
Rabbit Pie

Roast Mutton
Steak and Kidney Pie

MEATS, COLD

Round of Beef
Chicken

Turkey
Ham and Tongue

SWEETS

Rhubarb Custard Tart	Angels' Food
Lemon Sponge	Pineapple and Whipped Cream

JELLIES

BISCUITS AND CHEESE

There was also on sale a cookery book called the "Larbert Book of Recipes", compiled by Mr. Jas. Jones, junr., of Torwood Hall. It was sold at a shilling and contained about 200 choice recipes.

On the Thursday following the Bazaar, the stallholders and assistants held a dance in the Dobbie Hall, the promenade being led off by Mrs. Grainger and Mr. R. P. Roy.

THE CHURCH

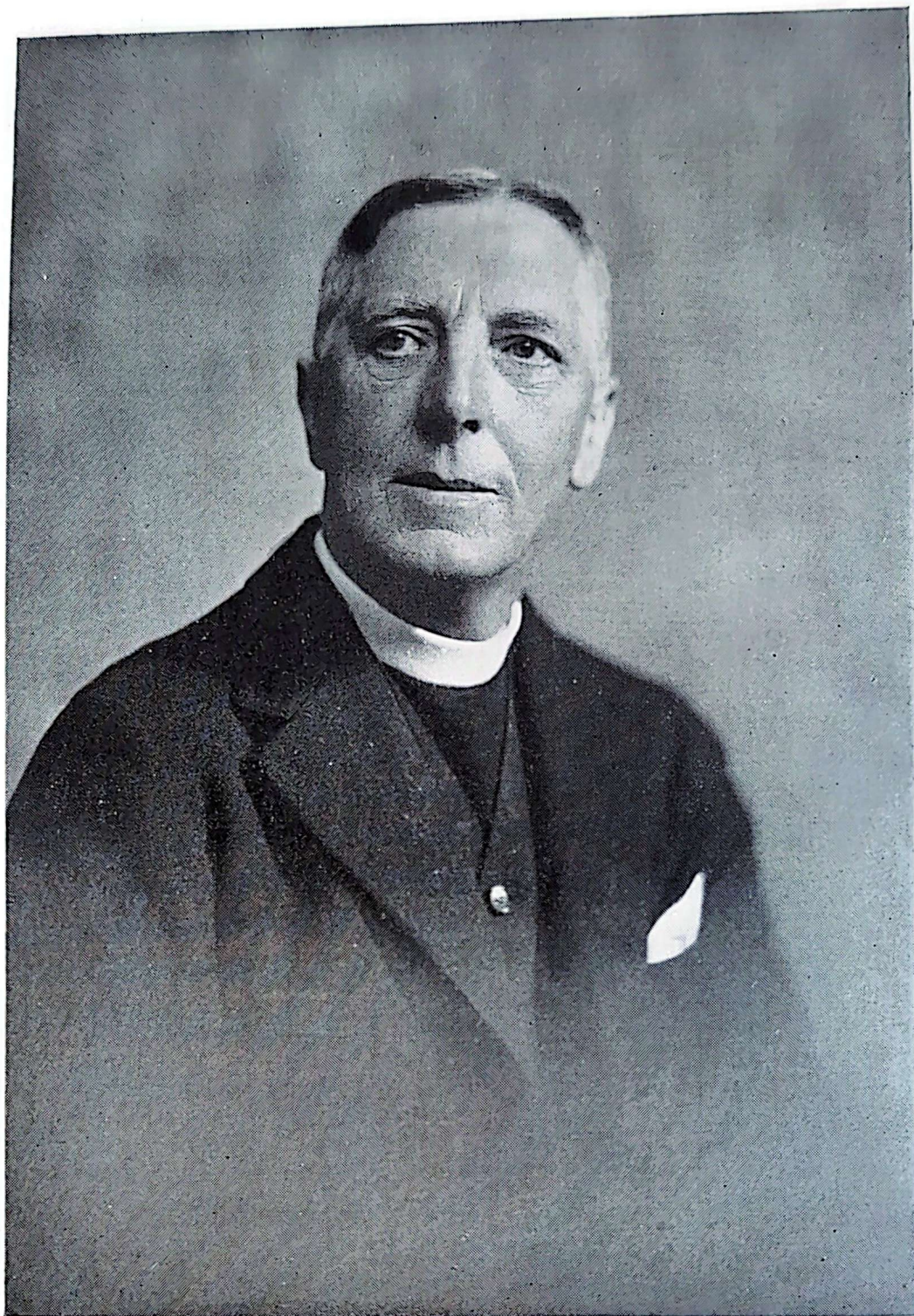
The Church is one of the finest in the country and is constructed of red sandstone from the South of Scotland, and roofed with red tiles. It owes its beauty not to any ornament, but to the simplicity and dignity of its form. It consists of a nave and aisle, separated by a series of bays of simple stone arches. It is oriented and at the east end is the chancel with pulpit and prayer desk, choir stalls and communion table. Continuing the aisle is an outer chancel with organ chamber. At the west end of the nave is a massive tower in which is placed the only gallery in the Church. The hall, seated for about two hundred, leaves the outer chancel at a right angle, and is divided from it by a stone arch, with folding screen which may be opened, allowing the hall to be used as a part of the church. At the end of the hall are situated the session-house and vestry, and adjoining is the manse. On a memorial stone in the centre of the tower there is the following inscription around the *arbor vitæ*: "Erected by public subscription to commemorate the Jubilee of the Rev. John McLaren, D.D., as minister of the United Parishes of Larbert and Dunipace, A.D. 1897". The Architect was Sir J. J. Burnett, LL.D., and the principal contractors were Messrs. J. J. & P. McLachlan, Larbert.



THE KIRK SESSION IN 1910

Back Row—J. Forrester, W. Semple, T. Dalgetty,
A. Carmichael, J. Taylor, W. Ferrier.

Front Row.—J. Cunningham, R. Simpson, Rev.
D. S. Merrow, Capt. Grainger, J. C. Jeffrey-
Smith.



REV. D. S. MERROW, M.A., B.D.

There are three stained glass windows of great beauty and all are the work of Dr. Douglas Strachan. In the chancel is the east window consisting of three lights, and bears the signature of Dr. Strachan. It is understood that in only one other instance has Dr. Strachan used his signature. The window is a representation of St. John's vision in the 4th and 5th chapters of the Book of Revelation. The bottom of each of the three lights represents the earthly scene and life; on the left, looking towards the window, is industry (Carron Works!), then a country scene; and on the right St. John shades his eyes as he looks up at the heavenly scene. Above the earthly part is the Sea of Glass. In the centre light the Lord holds the seven stars in the blue firmament in His right hand; around are the seven golden candlesticks; from His head flashes a ray of light (to reproduce "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" would be grotesque if directly reproduced). At His feet is the Lamb of God, around Him the four and twenty elders, and then the worshipping hosts of heaven. On the left is shown a soul rising from earth to heaven and being received by an angel in red (charity). Underneath is the following inscription "In memory of George Sherriff of Carronvale and Stenhouse 1856-1908. 'Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus'. Given by Catherine J. Sherriff, September 1914." In the small window on the north side of the chancel is a representation of the end of the walk to Emmaus, and shows our Lord breaking bread with the two disciples (St. Luke 24, verses 13-31), subscribed by the words, "their eyes were opened and they knew Him". Below is a medallion showing Cleophas and his companions inviting Jesus to enter the house. The whole is surrounded by the signs of the four evangelists and surmounted by the dove of peace. This window was gifted by the widow of Mr. John B. Cochrane, and carved on the stone at the side is the following inscription: "To the glory of God in memory of John Bell Cochrane, a founder and benefactor of this Church 1842-1914. J. H. C." This window was dedicated on 2nd December 1922. The third window is in the nave on the north side, and consists of two lights. It represents the Crucifixion; the west light shows Mary Cleophas, Mary and John, behind them the Centurion on horseback with a background of houses. The east light continues the background

THE CHURCH'S ACTIVITIES

The balance remaining from the Bazaar, after paying off the debt on the Church, was used to form the basis of a fund to endow the Church. To augment this fund the following sums were received: £800 contributed by Mr. George Sherriff and £500 from the Baird Trust.

The purpose of the fund was to guarantee the minister's stipend and thus enable the trustees to petition the Court of Session to have the Church and District raised into a Parish *quoad sacra*. This was done in 1904 and on the 2nd December in that year the Court of Session granted the trustees' petition. It was at this time that the name was changed to Stenhouse Parish Church.

Immediately the task of building the Church was completed, the trustees had to decide upon the appointment of the first minister. During their deliberations, services were conducted in the Church each Sunday by visiting ministers, the first four of these being: Rev. Macadam Muir, D.D., Glasgow Cathedral; Rev. D. Niven, Pollokshields, Glasgow; Rev. Principal W. Herbert Storey, Glasgow University, and Rev. Robert Armstrong, M.A., B.D., St. Matthew's Parish Church, Glasgow.

In a very short time the trustees fixed their choice on David Scribner Merrow, B.D., a young man thirty years of age, at that time assistant to Rev. Dr. Donald MacLeod, Park Church, Glasgow. The choice was confirmed by the congregation, and Mr. Merrow accepted the call, commencing his work in Stenhouse on Easter Sunday, 15th April 1900. On the 28th June of that year he was ordained by the Presbytery of Stirling.

At that time there was no manse and Mr. Merrow lived first in the Temperance Hotel at Larbert Station, a building now occupied by the Clydesdale and North of Scotland Bank Ltd., and later in Maybank, Allanbank Road.

For the first four years the congregation was attached to Larbert Church and was under the jurisdiction of Larbert Kirk Session. It had, however, its own managers and trustees who were responsible for its temporal welfare. The original trustees were: Messrs. George Sherriff of Carronvale, Archibald McLellan

(manager of Carron Company), John B. Cochrane, W. D. Gillies of Denovan and Major Robert Dobbie.

During this period the nucleus of the congregation was formed mainly by people living in the east end of the village, for whose convenience the Church had been built, and by 1904, when the Church was disjoined from Larbert, it had a membership of 280.

The first organisation formed was the "Helping Hands", a meeting for the ladies of the congregation, which was inaugurated almost immediately after the arrival of Mr. Merrow and his two sisters. Under the leadership of the Misses Merrow, the ladies quickly proved themselves of very great value to the life of the Church. Much work was done to augment the finances of the congregation and also to produce clothing, etc., which was sent to the mission fields or to Quarrier's Homes in Bridge of Weir.

The "Helping Hands" became very popular among the ladies of the congregation and the Misses Merrow never lacked enthusiastic and efficient assistants. Chief among these were: Miss Jane Bauchop, Miss Jean Rae, Mrs. Grieve (wife of the church officer), Mrs. Morton (later to become the first president of the Woman's Guild), Mrs. Howden, Mrs. Forrester, Mrs. Muckhart and Miss E. Pearson.

After the petition to raise the Church to parish status was granted, the first Kirk Session meeting was held at Maybank on 24th December 1904. The Session consisted of Rev. Mr. Merrow (Moderator), Rev. Messrs. Fairley of Larbert and Dunipace, Hendry of Airth, and Hutton of Bothkennar, assessors appointed by the Presbytery to act until such time as elders could be ordained from the congregation. On the 24th February of the next year the first elders, Messrs. Alexander Baird, Andrew A. Carmichael, Jonathan Cunningham, James Forrester, Alexander Grainger, Robert Simpson and John Brown Taylor were ordained. Mr. Robert Simpson, who in 1902 became the Clerk and Treasurer to the Managers, was appointed Session Clerk on 24th November 1905. Previous to Mr. Simpson's appointment Mr. Merrow had carried out the duties of Session Clerk.

During this early period much valuable work was done by Mr. A. Masterton in developing the musical side of the worship in the capacity of choirmaster.

In 1906 the manse was built and occupied. The architect

was again Sir J. J. Burnett, and the main contractors Messrs. J. J. & P. McLachlan. The total cost, including interest on borrowed money, amounted to £1,880 which was met by subscriptions of £515, proceeds of sales of work, jumble sales, entertainments and "Helping Hands" which brought in £1,222, and the balance was made up from Church collections amounting to £152. The chief subscribers were Mr. George Sherriff of Carronvale, £200; Sir John and Lady Graham, £100; Miss Dawson of Powfoulis, £50; Mr. John B. Cochrane, £30; Mrs Orr of Kinnaird, £25, and Mr. J. J. Maclaren of Ratho, £25. The cost of the manse was not finally cleared until 1912 when a sale of work was held in the Dobbie Hall on the 12th and 13th of April, and a sum of £385 was raised. The Church was indebted to the Misses Merrow for organising plays and other entertainments for the purpose of raising money for the Manse Building Fund. Some players who took part in these dramatic entertainments were: Misses Martin, Rae, Orr, Francis Orr and A. L. Merrow. In this year Mr. A. A. Carmichael was appointed Clerk to the Congregational Board, and Mr. R. Simpson, Kirk Session Treasurer.

At a Kirk Session meeting on 8th February 1907 it was decided to hold a series of special services at Easter. These services were held in the Church at 8 o'clock from Monday 25th to Saturday 30th March inclusive. Mr. Merrow writing about these services in the *Parish Magazine* of that time says: "It was felt that we do not use our Church nearly as much as we might and it was hoped that such a departure, varying the necessary routine of our Church life, may bring to those who use it faithfully a real increase of knowledge and quickening of faith." Thus began the tradition of Holy Week services which has continued ever since. At that time such services must have been almost unknown in the Church of Scotland and it is only comparatively recently that the practice has been widely adopted.

Miss Clark, who had been organist from the opening of the Church, resigned in 1907, and Miss Bamforth was appointed in her place.

The opening of the year 1908 was saddened for Stenhouse by the loss of Major Dobbie, who was one of the founders of our Church and who gave most generously to its funds. The organ

which adds so much to the beauty of the services was his gift. Towards the close of this year Mr. George Sherriff of Carronvale also died. Mr. Sherriff was also one of the founders of the Church and a most generous giver. The remaining founder of the Church, Mr. John B. Cochrane, died in 1914. Stenhouse was indeed fortunate in having these three men to look after its affairs in these early years and we are indebted to them for their guidance and also their numerous gifts.

In 1912 Miss A. L. Merrow was appointed organist on the resignation of Miss Bamforth. Thus began Miss Merrow's faithful services which continued until 1936.

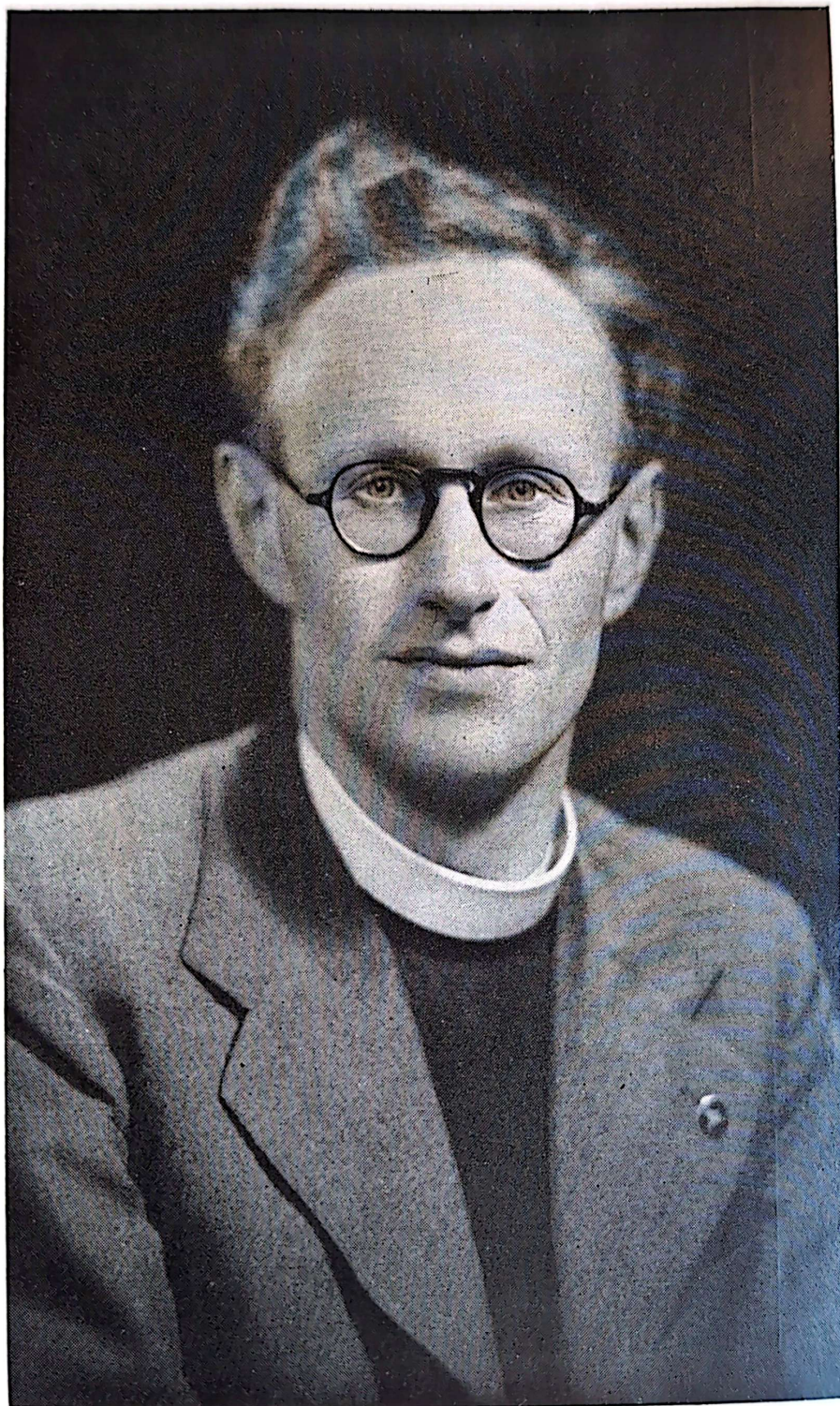
Mr. A. A. Carmichael, who had been Clerk of the Congregational Board for the past eight years, resigned in 1914, and Mr. James McGregor succeeded him. The next year also saw the resignation of a faithful servant of the Church, Mr. William Grieve. Mr. Grieve had been church officer from the beginning until the end of 1915. During the whole period of his service he and Mrs. Grieve looked after the church buildings and grounds with loving care and devotion. Mr. Roderick McKenzie was appointed church officer in his place.

In 1915 the Church was left a legacy of £1,000 by Lieutenant J. G. Sherriff of Stenhouse who was killed in action during that year. Under the terms of the legacy half was to be used to augment the minister's stipend and the other half used at the discretion of the Kirk Session.

For four months during 1917, Mr. Merrow was on duty with the Y.M.C.A. in France. During this period joint services were held with the East Church, and the Rev. G. D. Hutton acted as moderator.

In 1920 the Church again received a legacy, this time from Miss Helen Harley, a member of the congregation. Miss Harley under her will left £300 to the Kirk Session, and also left the residue of her estate, which amounted to £369, to the Kirk Session for the poor of the parish. This was a fine gift from one who was always poor herself and lived very sparingly.

On the 5th June 1925, the celebration of the semi-jubilee of the Church and Mr. Merrow's pastorate took place in the Dobbie Hall. Mr. George Pate of Carron Grange, occupied the chair, and the platform party, in addition to Mr. Merrow, was the Rev.



REV. A. A. FLEMING, B.Sc.

of the Church, how he stood at the door at the close of the service and shook hands with the congregation. That morning, twenty-five years ago, he [the speaker] had wished that Mr. Merrow's ministry might be a long and happy one. The question as to whether or not that wish had materialised he would allow Mr. Merrow to answer himself. Of this he was sure, however, they as a congregation had great cause to be proud of the fact that they had for their minister such a one as Mr. Merrow. Mr. Merrow did not believe in advertising his sermons by fancy titles or anything savouring of the sensational, but the subject matter was always there and the language was such that anyone attending the service could not leave without feeling the better of having been there. Example was better than precept and he made bold to say that no one in the congregation, much less the parish, more consistently practised what he preached than Mr. Merrow himself. The whole congregation were delighted to have a visit from the minister; he had such a genial disposition, while as a friend and counsellor no one could wish for a truer and better. If the growth of the congregation had not been rapid, it had at least been steady, and any members they had lost had been removed by death or by change of residence. They had nearly 500 members and if these would resolve to attend each Sunday, then that would be the best thing they could possibly do to show their appreciation of their minister's work. In making the presentation of a silver salver and canteen of silver, Mr. Simpson read the inscription on the salver: 'Presented along with a canteen of silver and other gifts to Rev. David S. Merrow, B.D., by past and present members and adherents of Stenhouse Parish Church on the occasion of his semi-jubilee as minister of the Church, in token of their appreciation of his services and of their respect and esteem, 5th June 1925.' In the name of the subscribers he asked Mr. Merrow to accept the gifts and a cheque for £151. They hoped he would be long spared to enjoy and use the silver, and continue the good works as he had in the past. Mr. Merrow, on rising to reply, met with prolonged and enthusiastic applause, and speaking of events leading up to his connection with Stenhouse Church and his twenty-five years among them, said one of the greatest gifts of his ministry there was that he had been blessed with two sisters; all who were interested in Stenhouse

Church knew how incessant their work had been for the welfare of the congregation. He felt more deeply grateful than he could describe to the members and thanked them with his whole heart. Rev. Dr. Montgomery Campbell, Sheriff Hamilton and Rev. John Fairley all expressed their congratulations. An excellent programme of music was rendered by Fitzpatrick's Orchestra and Miss Cowan with Misses Strathearn and Anderson, vocalists, with Mr. McAinsh at the piano. The usual votes of thanks were accorded and the proceedings terminated with praise and the pronouncing of the benediction by Rev. John Fairley."

In 1925 Mr. Robert Simpson also received a presentation of a pocket book and cash from the congregation in recognition of his twenty years' faithful service as Session Clerk and Church Treasurer.

During the next year the Church received a legacy of £500 for the augmentation of the minister's stipend from Mrs. Cochrane's estate. Mrs. Cochrane, widow of Mr. J. B. Cochrane, was always generous to the Church.

During 1927 electric light was installed in the Church and manse at a cost of £479. This money was raised by means of a Garden Fête, Whist Drive and Envelope Collection, which accounted for about £260, the balance being met from investments. Mr. Roderick McKenzie who had given faithful service as Church Officer for about twelve years, resigned and Mr. Robert Gillespie was appointed in his stead.

Mr. Robert Simpson in 1935 gave up the office of Church Treasurer which he had held for a great number of years and Mr. John G. Davidson was appointed to succeed him. During this year Mr. John Binnie was appointed Clerk to the Congregational Board on the death of Mr. McGregor.

In the next year Miss Merrow who had been organist since 1912, resigned and Mr. W. Clarkson was appointed in her place. We as a congregation will be for ever indebted to Miss Merrow for her long service as organist and also for her help in many other ways. On her retiral, Miss Merrow was the recipient of a gift from the congregation.

On 26th October 1941, Mr. Merrow retired after forty-one years as minister of the Church. He conducted both services that day and there were large attendances on both occasions.

On the succeeding Sunday the Church was preached vacant by the Rev. J. J. S. Thomson, the interim moderator.

On Saturday, 18th October, Mr. Merrow was presented with gifts from the congregation and friends. The presentation took place in the Church and the *Falkirk Herald* reporting the event, said:

“ There was a large gathering of members and invited guests. The chair was occupied by Mr. Robert Simpson, Session Clerk, who was accompanied by Mr. and Miss Merrow; Rev. J. J. S. Thomson, M.C., M.A., Larbert and Dunipace Old Parish Church (interim moderator in the vacancy); Rev. J. Wilson Fulton, M.A., Larbert East Church; Rev. Gavin C. H. Boyd, M.A., Larbert West Church; Rev. J. A. F. Dean, M.A., Erskine Church, Falkirk, and Sheriff Hamilton, K.C., an old schoolmate and fellow-graduate of the guest of honour.

“ Prior to the Chairman's remarks the 23rd psalm was sung and a prayer was offered by Mr. Fulton. Thereafter Mrs. McGregor initiated a delightfully varied and interesting vocal and instrumental programme.

“ The Chairman then said they were gathered to do honour to one who, for forty-one years, had been their guide and counsellor. During all these years Mr. Merrow had preached the gospel of Christ crucified, and in private life he had been an example not only to the congregation but to the whole parish. Sermons, Mr. Simpson observed, after all, were but part of a minister's duties. There was the visitation of the sick, the poor and the needy, and he made bold to say no one could have discharged those duties better than Mr. Merrow, whose familiar figure and kind and cheery voice would be missed.

“ Continuing, Mr. Simpson said the congregation had not been unmindful of Miss Merrow's work. She had been for many years organist of the Church and in addition had been the stimulating influence behind the ‘ Helping Hands ’ organisation and the annual sales of work by which the schemes of the Church had been considerably augmented. As souvenirs of the occasion Miss Merrow had chosen electric lamps for the new house in St. Andrews, while the minister had selected books, the balance of the subscription being in the form of war stock. He [Mr. Simpson] felt he could speak for all when he expressed the wish

that Mr. and Miss Merrow would be granted health and strength to enjoy their well-earned leisure.

"In conclusion Mr. Simpson explained that, by the law of the Church, when a minister retired, the congregation had to pay a certain sum annually to augment his allowance. In the case of Stenhouse the allowance was £50 but Mr. Merrow had arranged with the Treasurer to deduct the sum from his allowance and leave it with the congregation. This, the Chairman said, was typical of the man and showed that, although leaving Stenhouse as their pastor, he still had the interest of the congregation at heart.

"The presentation was made by Mrs. Dalgetty, one of the oldest members of the Church, who said she was deeply honoured in being asked to discharge the duty. Mr. Merrow, she said, had been all that could be wished for as a minister. In sympathy and understanding he had never once been found wanting, and although it might be said that the members of the congregation had not been as grateful as they might, their affection and esteem was nevertheless deeply rooted. Asking the acceptance of the gifts Mrs. Dalgetty said the best wishes not only of the members of the congregation but also of a wide circle of friends, accompanied the tangible tokens of regard and love.

"Acknowledging the gifts, Mr. Merrow at the outset said it gave his sister and himself additional pleasure to receive them from the hands of Mrs. Dalgetty who, with her husband and members of her family, had always been loyal and valued members of the Church. Mr. Merrow went on to say he was old enough now and knew himself too well to take too literally all the things said—it would be foolish to be otherwise. Yet he could say that he had a feeling of pleasure in being able to say he had at least tried to do his best during his ministerial sojourn in Stenhouse and Larbert. During his ministry, Mr. Merrow continued, he was not aware that he had achieved any conspicuous success, but the question of what was real success or real failure could be left at the moment. What he did know was that his work had been enjoyable and creative of much happiness. He had the prettiest manse in Scotland and a beautiful church which could not but inspire reverence in all worshippers. More than that, he had been blessed with sisters who had done more than himself for

the people of the place and in all these he had found the deepest friendship and appreciation for what he often thought was imperfect worth. In conclusion, Mr. Merrow said if he spoke all afternoon he would not be able to say enough nor express Miss Merrow's and his own admiration for the splendid gifts which had been bestowed upon them and which provided light for the body and light for the mind so that they would not be in darkness in St. Andrews. He understood that in addition to members of the congregation a multitude of kind friends had contributed to the presentation and he thanked them all from the bottom of his heart and begged them not to forget his sister and himself entirely.

"Other speakers during the proceedings included Rev. J. J. S. Thomson, Rev. J. A. F. Dean, Sheriff Hamilton and Rev. G. C. H. Boyd, the latter proposing the vote of thanks. In addition to Mrs. McGregor the musical programme was sustained by Mr. Ollason and the organist, Mr. W. Clarkson.

"The function concluded with the singing of hymn 354 and the pronouncement of the benediction by Mr. Merrow."

The Vacancy Committee, after hearing various candidates, decided to put forward Rev. A. A. Fleming as the sole nominee. Mr. Fleming conducted both services in Church on Sunday, 15th February 1942, and the congregation approved.

On 25th March Mr. Fleming was inducted, the service being conducted by Rev. A. Berrie, Denny Broompark, who gave the charges, and Rev. J. R. Anderson, M.A., St. Andrews, Cumbernauld, preached the sermon. On the 27th March a social to welcome Mr. Fleming was held in the Central School. Mr. Robert Simpson occupied the chair. The artists were Miss Nicol, Messrs. George Corbett, D. Munro and Irvine Smith, with W. Clarkson as accompanist. Mr. Fleming received a book and cheque as a gift from the congregation, the presentation being made by Miss McKenzie. Rev. J. J. S. Thomson (the interim moderator) and Rev. G. C. H. Boyd also spoke.

Shortly after Mr. Fleming's induction, Mr. Robert Simpson resigned as Session Clerk, and Mr. J. A. M. McOustra was appointed in his place. Mr. W. J. Bryce succeeded Mr. Binnie as Clerk to the Board during this year, and Mr. Robert Gillespie resigned as Church Officer.

The Kirk Session initiated discussions with neighbouring Sessions with a view to increasing the co-operation between the Churches in the district.

This led to the development of the Larbert and District Christian Council consisting of representatives of all the Protestant denominations in the district with the object of fostering Christian co-operation. For the first few years of its existence Mr. Fleming acted as Secretary.

During the war the Church hall was occupied by the Army, which meant the suspension of much of the social life of the congregation including the meetings of the "Helping Hands", that unique ladies' meeting which had flourished under the capable guidance of Miss Merrow.

When the hall was vacated efforts were immediately made to revive the meeting. After some discussion it was finally decided that a branch of the Church of Scotland Woman's Guild should be formed. The first meeting was held on 15th February 1943, and Mrs. Morton was elected president. From the first night it was obvious that the Guild was going to be of real value in the life of the congregation and it has continued to gather strength ever since. Among its many activities special mention must be made of the garden fêtes which have been held each year since 1945 in the Church and manse grounds and for which the Guild is largely responsible. These are not only of value from the financial point of view but are very pleasant social occasions when the members of the congregation and others have the opportunity of spending an afternoon together in the beautiful surroundings of the Church.

Since the inauguration of the Guild, Mrs. Jardine and Mrs. Fleming have also held the office of President. The Secretaries have been: Mrs. McLintock, Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. McOustra, Mrs. Leishman and Mrs. Watson. Treasurers: Mrs. Fleming, Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Godfrey and Mrs. Ross. Vice-Presidents: Mrs. Fleming, Mrs. Howden, Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Jardine.

During 1944 Mr. Fleming was granted leave of absence to serve with the Church of Scotland Huts and Canteens and in the same year Mr. A. Ferrier was appointed Church Officer.

In 1946, in an effort to give the celebration of Christmas a more prominent place in our congregational life, the Kirk Session

sanctioned two experiments: the introduction of a midnight service on Christmas Eve and a celebration of Holy Communion after the morning service on Christmas Sunday, in addition to the service on Christmas Day which had by this time become part of the Stenhouse tradition.

The experiments have been increasingly successful during the past three years and may now be considered to have become part of our normal worship.

In the next year Mr. J. G. Davidson resigned as Church Treasurer and Mr. Jas. Jardine was appointed to succeed him. On the occasion of his retiral Mr. Davidson and his wife and family gifted two brass offering plates and stands to the Church.

During this year there was a change in organist, Mrs. M. Anderson being appointed in place of Mr. Clarkson.

1947 saw more changes in the Church, Mrs. Anderson and Mr. W. J. Bryce resigning as organist and Clerk to the Board respectively, and were replaced by Messrs. D. Russell and G. Taylor. At the close of this year the Church sustained a great loss through the death of Mr. Merrow; he died at St. Andrews on 6th November 1947. The minister and four members of the Kirk Session travelled to St. Andrews to represent the congregation at the funeral. A memorial service for him was held in the Church on the 16th November; the Address was given by the Rev. J. A. F. Dean. Mr. Fleming and Rev. W. J. Gordon, B.D., S.T.M., of Larbert and Dunipace, Moderator of the Linlithgow and Falkirk Presbytery, took part in the service.

In 1948 the Church received a legacy of £200 under the will of Mr. Wm. Hogarth, who was a member for a number of years. On 25th July of this year the Communion Table, with the names of those who made the supreme sacrifice in the war of 1939-45 added, was dedicated by Mr. Fleming. On 26th November of this year Mr. Robert Simpson died and the Church lost one of her most faithful members. Mr. Simpson had been Session Clerk for thirty-seven years and Congregational Treasurer for thirty-two years. Mr. Fleming, in a pulpit reference to his passing said: "Mr Simpson had carried out his double task with an efficiency and concentration that will serve as a model to his successors so long as men and women worship within these walls. That firmness of the foundation upon which we are established is



THE KIRK SESSION IN 1950

Back Row.—Thomas Hamilton, Andrew Bryce, James Anderson, William Grieve, John Yuill, George Taylor, William J. Bryce, William Bruce, James Dickson.

Front Row.—Robert Turpie, James Langlands, Alexander Masterton, J. A. M. McOustra, (Session Clerk), Rev. A. A. Fleming, James Jardine (Treasurer), John Glegg, Robert Morton, John S. McLachlan.

Absent.—James MacKenzie.

three Guide Companies, a Ranger Company and two Brownie Packs.

The Church has also always maintained a close connection with the School which stands in its Parish. Mr. Merrow was a constant visitor in what was then Larbert Central School, now Larbert High School.

Mr. Fleming, by a change in the attitude of the Education Authority, has been able to extend this work further and is now the officially appointed Chaplain to the School. He is greatly helped in his work by the co-operation of the ministers of the East and West Churches, who share the work with him. It is now the practice not only to have weekly visits to the school by the ministers but for the whole school to come to Church for a service at the close of each term.

charge of two Mission Stations. In 1938 he went as ordained assistant to the Rev. H. C. Whitley, Newark Church, Port Glasgow.

In 1940 he was appointed Leader of Port-Glasgow House in Lille, the first canteen to be opened in France by the then newly formed Huts and Canteens Committee of the Church of Scotland. After the fall of France he was sent to open a canteen on the island of Flotta in the Orkneys. On his return he was appointed *locum tenens* in Viewfield Church, Stirling, and commenced his Ministry at Stenhouse on 25th March 1942.

THE KIRK SESSION

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| 1905. Alexander Baird
Andrew Agnew Carmichael
Jonathan Cunningham
James Forrester
Alexander Grainger
Robert Simpson
John Brown Taylor | James Langlands
William Pearson |
| 1909. Thomas Dalgetty
William Reid Ferrier
William Semple
J. C. Jeffrey Smith | 1936. Robert Morton
John P. Mackenzie
John S. McLachlan
J. A. M. McOustra |
| 1920. Hugh Binnie
Robert Bishop
John Glegg
Alexander Masterton | 1942. Andrew Bryce
William J. Bryce
Robert Turpie
Thomas Hamilton
David Marshall
Robert A. Jamieson |
| 1925. Peter Simpson
James Andrew
Richard Davidson Muckhart
James Murray
James S. McGregor | 1944. Adam Grossert |
| 1931. James Bryce
John G. Davidson
Charles Douglas
William Jardine | 1946. James Jardine
John Walker |
| | 1947. John Yuille
Joseph O'Berg |
| | 1948. William A. Grieve
George Taylor
William D. Bruce
James Anderson
James G. Dickson |