A Short History of All Souls'

Episcopalians have worshipped at All Souls’ since the last decade of the nineteenth century. Before that, they had for a while gathered in a private chapel on the Rossie Estate, near Inchture. There were, of course, Episcopalians in the Carse of Gowrie well before that time, so it may be worth considering what had happened to them.

The roots of the Scottish Episcopal Church, in common with the other Scottish Churches, can be traced to the saints who first brought Christianity to Scotland. However, the churches as we now know them did not emerge as distinct bodies until the years following the Reformation. From 1560 until 1689, the Scottish Church went through several phases of organisation, sometimes for theological reasons, and sometimes for political reasons.

Whatever theological divisions there were in the Church, the downfall of the Episcopalians was the result of politics. James VII of Scotland (and II of England) was deposed for refusing to renounce his allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. The Scottish Bishops, having taken an oath of allegiance to the old King, found themselves unable to break that oath and swear allegiance to the new King and Queen, and consequently lost their position as leaders of the Church. Since that time, the Church of Scotland has been Presbyterian.

Some of the clergy were ejected; some stayed in their charges, more or less willingly, ‘under new management’; others left, with or without a proportion of their congregations. Generally speaking, episcopalianism died out fairly quickly in the South west of the country, but only very slowly in the North and East. Its decline was hastened by the failure of the Jacobite cause (as episcopalians found themselves on the losing side in two rebellions) and (at first) by the social changes of the Industrial Revolution.

Invergowrie did not exist as a village until the coming of the railway, but the following facts can be established about the fortunes of Episcopalians in the surrounding area. For the following account, I am indebted to David Bertie’s ‘Scottish Episcopal Clergy, 1689-2000’.

The Episcopalians of Benvie held the parish church until Revd. Alexander Rankin moved to Dundee in 1706. His son, John, later became Minister of Inchture.

The Episcopalians of Longforgan held the parish church until the death of Revd. David Forrester in 1696, but an episcopalian ministry in the locality continued under Revd. William Elphinstone. He attended the Episcopal Presbytery meeting in Dundee in 1714, re-occupied Longforgan Parish Church from September 1715 until February 1716, and waited upon the ‘Old Pretender’ at Glamis. When the rebellion failed, he was deposed from the Presbytery of Dundee, and moved to Edinburgh, where he continued to be active as an episcopalian priest until his death in 1723.

There was a short revival of episcopalian ministry under Revd. James Dundass from 1743 until 1746, the parish being known as ‘Rossie and Longforgan’. Mr.Dundass probably began his ministry as a private chaplain, and was (1727-1736) Chaplain to the Earl of Strathmore at Glamis before moving to Kinclaven, and then to Longforgan. He was not always on the best of terms with Bishop Rait, and is said to have fallen upon evil days after 1746.

Rossie was the home of the restoration of episcopalian worship a century later. The old parish church at Rossie (on the estate of Lord Kinnaird) had been abandoned since 1670, when the parish was united with Inchture. However, a chapel was built at Rossie Priory by the 9th Lord Kinnaird in 1866, and was used for episcopalian services until his death in 1878. The abandoned church, meanwhile, was restored as a family mausoleum.

The officiant at the first services at Rossie Priory Chapel was Bishop Forbes; after that, occasional services were taken by visiting anglican clergy, then by clergy from St.Pauls’, Dundee. The chapel had its own priest from 1871, when Charles Cole-Webb was appointed. In 1873, William Simons was appointed to the charge, but the chapel was closed in 1878 after the death of Lord Kinnaird. Later that year, his widow, Frances, opened a temporary chapel at Knapp, on the second floor of two cottages. The main focus of mission activity moved to Invergowrie when a temporary building was fitted up as a church in 1883, and the Knapp chapel was closed in 1901. Meanwhile, the charge had ceased to be a private chapel and become an incumbency (in 1884), with Mr.Simons as rector, and plans were well under way to build the present church, with Hyppolyte Blanc (of Edinburgh) as architect.

The foundation stone was laid in 1892, and the church was dedicated as All Souls’ in 1896. Frances, Lady Kinnaird, provided a benefaction for the building of the church and the endowment of ministry there in memory of her husband, the 9th Lord Kinnaird, and of her three children. A plaque at the front of the nave bears the following inscription:

*Ad majorem Dei Gloriam, et in piam memoriam Georgii Guilielmi Fox, Baronis Kinnaird IX de Inchture et liberorum ejus Victoris Alexandri, Caroli Fox, et Oliviae Barbarae, Reginaldi Howard Alexandri Ogilvy Conjugis, Hanc ecclesiam aedificavit Francisca Domina Kinnaird de Inchture Vidua et Mater A.S.N. MDCCCXCVI*

*(To the greater glory of God, and in loving memory of George William Fox, the 9th Baron Kinnaird of Inchture, and his children Victor Alexander [Fox], Charles Fox, and Olivia Barbara the wife of Reginald Howard Alexander Ogilvy Francis, Lady Kinnaird of Inchture, widow and mother, built this church in the year of our salvation 1896.)*

The building work included not only the church and hall, but also the magnificent rectory, and the coach house with the accommodation above it. The first rector must have been a man of independent means to live in such splendour. His successor had no such means, and his elder daughter used to remember dressing for a winter walk merely in order to practise the piano, as they were unable to keep the house warm. The rectory and outbuildings were sold by the All Souls’ Trust in the 1970s, when it was thought that All Souls’ had no future as an independent charge.

The first rector, Mr.Simons, died in 1917, and was succeeded by George Duncan, formerly of St.Salvador’s, Dundee (whose daughter was a much-loved member of All Souls’ until her death in 1998). It was said that the choir was somewhat depleted at this time, as Canon Duncan was unable to follow the example of his predecessor in giving each of the choir men a new suit at Christmas (!). Since his time, All Souls’ has been served by John Macrae (1924-1947), Rudolph Henderson-Howat (1947-1957), Samuel Magowan (1957-1966), Noel Burt (1967-1976), Hugh Magee (a curate at St.Paul’s, Dundee, 1976-1979), Nigel Peyton (1979-1985), George Greig and Kenneth Rathband (from St.Paul’s, 1985-1988), Idris Jones (1989-1992), and Ashley Cummins (1992-present). Messrs.Simons, Macrae, and Henderson-Howat also served as deans of the diocese, and Idris Jones was consecrated as Bishop of Glasgow in 1998.

Since 1989, the charge of All Souls’ has been linked with Anglican Chaplaincy at the University of Dundee. The congregation is small, but active, and aims to make use of the many gifts of its members in ministering to the community. In the year 2000 the congregation adopted the following statement of its aims and intentions:

**The Purpose of our Life**

We gather to celebrate the presence of God in worship and prayer.

 We aim to be a community in which God’s love is shared,

and to serve Christ among friends and strangers.