

# Church Buildings in New Abbey



The earliest church was on the little island in Loch Kindar. It served the people of the ancient parish of Lochkinderloch, and was probably reached by an underwater causeway leading to the North-East bank. There are still two fields on Inglestonford Farm called the Glebe fields - the "Glebe" was a part of Church land given to the Minister for the pasturing of a cow and the growing of crops and vegetables for his own use.

In 1275, Lady Devorgilla, having assigned the "pleasant level holm" at the foot of Criffel to the Order of Cistercians for a monastery, the building of the Abbey of St Mary was begun. The Abbey was founded in memory of Lady Devorgilla's husband, John de Baliol, who had died six years earlier. She had his heart embalmed and placed in a casket which she carried with her everywhere, her "sweet, silent companion". When she died in 1289 she was buried in the Abbey Church with her husband's heart on hers and henceforth the Abbey was known as Sweet Heart Abbey, though it had been referred to for many years beforehand as the Abbey of Dulce Cor.

During the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the Reformation spread across Scotland and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church declined. Lacking financial support the monks were unable to maintain the fabric of Sweetheart Abbey or continue with their agricultural and commercial interests. In 1539 the Abbot, John Broun and his brethren, in an effort to safeguard the Abbey, appointed Robert Maxwell of Kirkconnell as Bailie of their lands of Lochkindelow for a period of nineteen years. Gradually, however, the domestic buildings and parts of the Abbey Church itself were demolished to provide stone and other construction materials for the village which was growing up outside and within the ancient Abbey walls. During this time one of the monks, Patrick Coull, became the first Reader or Minister in New Abbey when the Parish Church was meeting in the old refectory of the Abbey. A later Minister, William Wright (ordained in 1769) caused a sum of money to be raised in the Parish in 1779 by means of which a contract was made with two men, designated 'proprietors' of the old Abbey, to cease from selling the stones of the Abbey Church. It is believed that this saved the beautiful ruin from further destruction.

In 1731 a new Parish church was built against the ruined wall of the Abbey on the edge of what had been the Cloister Green. This church was dismantled in 1877 when the present New Abbey Church was built. The stones for this new church came from the old Kindar Mill which was being demolished after its business had failed. Tradition has it that the people of the village walked up to the viewpoint of Barrhill to watch the explosion when the Mill was blown up. Mrs Wilson, the wife of the Minister, left drawings of the old church and the building of the new one. These were framed and are now hanging in the church.

Not all the Reformers were happy with the way the Presbyterian Church in Scotland was being governed. Some 'seceded' from the established Church in 1733, but the main break was 'The Disruption' in 1843 when the Free Church of Scotland came into being. The Free Church was based in Beeswing, and Lochend Church was built there in 1868. The Free Church Minister also covered New Abbey. It is recorded that Free Church Office-bearers were instructed to attend the rous selling off material from the dismantled Parish Church in 1877. It is not recorded if they were successful but the new Free Church at Bridgend in New Abbey was built in 1878. The idea of recycling materials is not a new concept!

In 1900 after many divisions and comings-together there emerged the United Free Church to which New Abbey Free and Lochend Churches belonged. In 1929 the two branches were united with the Church of Scotland. Lochend Church and New Abbey were linked in 1952, sharing one Minister who resided in the Manse at New Abbey. The old Free Church at Bridgend in New Abbey became the Woman's Guild Hall and was used by various organisations over the years including the Parent and Toddler Group and the Freemasons.

The two Churches formed a Union in 2006 under the Ministry of Rev. William Holland. The Church building at Lochend was sold and the congregation of Lochend and New Abbey now meets regularly in New Abbey Church. When Mr Holland retired in March 2008 a rationalisation of Church property took place and the old Free Church or Woman's Guild Hall was sold to a private buyer in 2010.

The old Manse was sold and a new Manse created from the property at 32 Main Street. Rev. Mrs Maureen Duncan was inducted to the charge of

Lochend and New Abbey on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and retired on 11th March 2018.

The Roman Catholic Church of St Mary was founded and built in 1824 by Father Thomas Bagnall who was the Catholic pastor at Kirkconnell House for thirty years. This church lies within the ancient Abbey Wall and was designed by Walter Newall, a well known architect, who was a native of New Abbey. The house and Church is a single integrated building, a very unusual feature. This design hid the Church behind the house as the Catholic Emancipation Act did not come into force until about 1830. Presently the Church forms part of St Andrew's Parish, Dumfries. The house, as the Thomas Bagnall Centre, is available for spiritual or pastoral uses for small groups within the Christian community.

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