

The Parish Church of Caputh

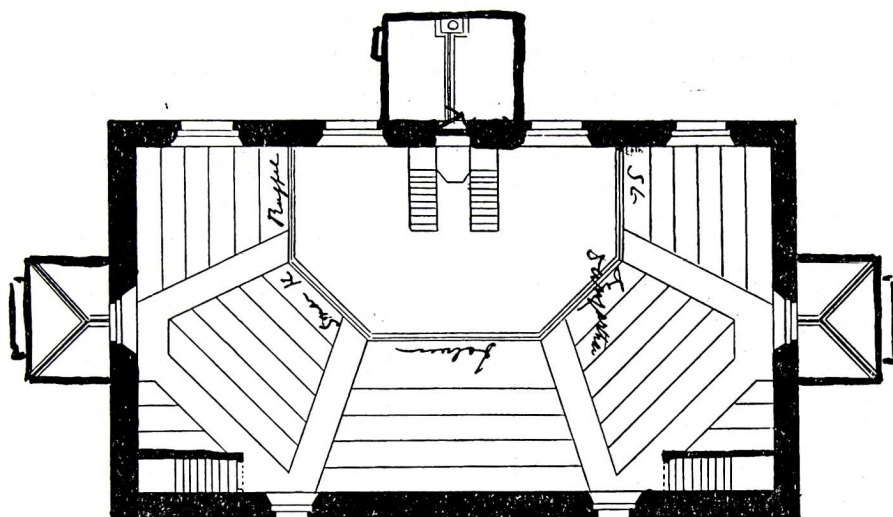
THE Parish of Caputh, originally part of a much larger entity, was disjoined in the year 1500 by Bishop Brown of Dunkeld. Part of the original called Logie-Mached was in the possession of the Abbey of Scone and comprised much of the lands between the rivers Garry-Tummel-Tay and the Isla and the Shee. Chapels are mentioned at Tullymet, Dunfallandy and Kirkmichael, and closer at hand there was St Jerome's in Dunkeld, St Ewan's in Kincairney and St Katherine's in Clunie, all in the parish.

The site of the original Parish Church built by Bishop Brown upon the Mote Hill of Caputh was within a stone's throw of one of the pilgrimage crosses marking the route from Brechin to Dunkeld, and at the point where the River Tay comes out of the hills and enters into the flat lands of the Upper Stormont. The parish then included the whole of Dunkeld village, except the ground immediately round the ruins of the Cathedral, and with the Tay and the Isla as the southern boundary extended to two miles eastwards of Meikleour. Northwards it stretched in a triangle into the wilderness of hills beyond Butterstone as far as Lochan a Chait, some eight miles.

As the mensal Parish of the Bishop there were many extras still reflected in the numerous detached portions of land in the neighbourhood, only recently annexed *quoad sacra* to their surrounding parishes. These are Dalrulzion in Glenshee, where for a period each summer the minister once catechized and preached; East and West Logie in Clunie, Gormack in Kinloch, Bandirran in Collace, Balbeuchly in Auchterhouse, Mylnfield near Dundee; the Castle and Harbour of Broughty Ferry with the fishings thereof; the ferry ground of Ballathie and Batholmie in Cargill, and a Glebe of forty acres at Foffarty in Kinnettles, still called the Glebe of Caputh.

Of the original church not a great deal is known, save that within the chancel were the burial vaults of the Mackenzie family of Delvine, with some fine memorials in marble. Burial rights within the church were obviously exercised by many people, for the earliest tombstone on the site dates from 1600. This is given as one of the chief reasons for building afresh.

Ground was offered by Sir Alexander Muir Mackenzie on condition that there be no burials in the new church or surrounding yard, and on August 30th, 1794, it was resolved to advertise for plans and estimates for a church to seat 1000 people ; “ to be of rubble work with hewn corners, rabbets and lintels, roofed and seated with the best foreign wood, slated with blue slates, ridged with lead or copper, properly plastered and ceiled and floored with flags.” When in 1798 the plans tendered by Alexander Thomson of Longforgan were accepted, seating for eight hundred was considered sufficient ; but a porch was erected outside the Minister’s door and a belfry added on the west gable. The new church was typical of the period : the pulpit on the north wall with direct access from the porch outside ; a gallery with two flights of stone stairs in the south corners of the building ; and in the centre, in front of the pulpit, two long communion tables suitably railed.



PLAN BEFORE 1865

At the official opening of the church on January 12th, 1800, the Rev. William Innerarity preached on the “ Duty and Benefit of Public Worship ”, and the thirty-nine pages of his address, subsequently published, make long reading. Thus at the turn of the century the new church made a brave show, and all the more so since at the same time a new school was provided with a school-house, and increased croft. It is interesting to note in passing the finances of the schoolmaster who was allowed five feet of pew-room free of charge. “ 15th October, 1804, resolved that the School Fees of the



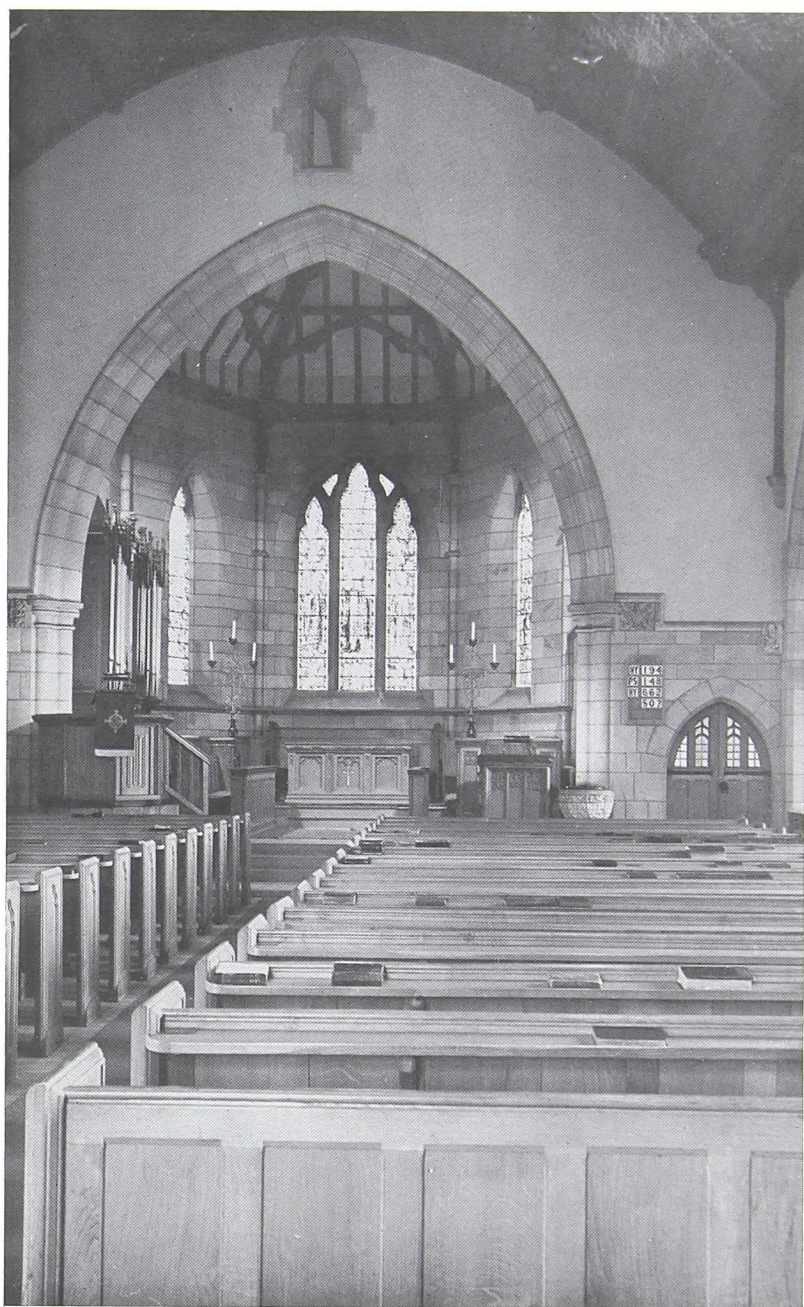
THE CHURCH OF THE THREE BRETHREN, LOCHGOILHEAD: INTERIOR

By Courtesy of the B. B. C., Glasgow



THE PARISH CHURCH OF CAPUTH : INTERIOR

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THE PARISH CHURCH OF CAPUTH: INTERIOR

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THE PARISH CHURCH OF CAPUTH: A DISTANT VIEW

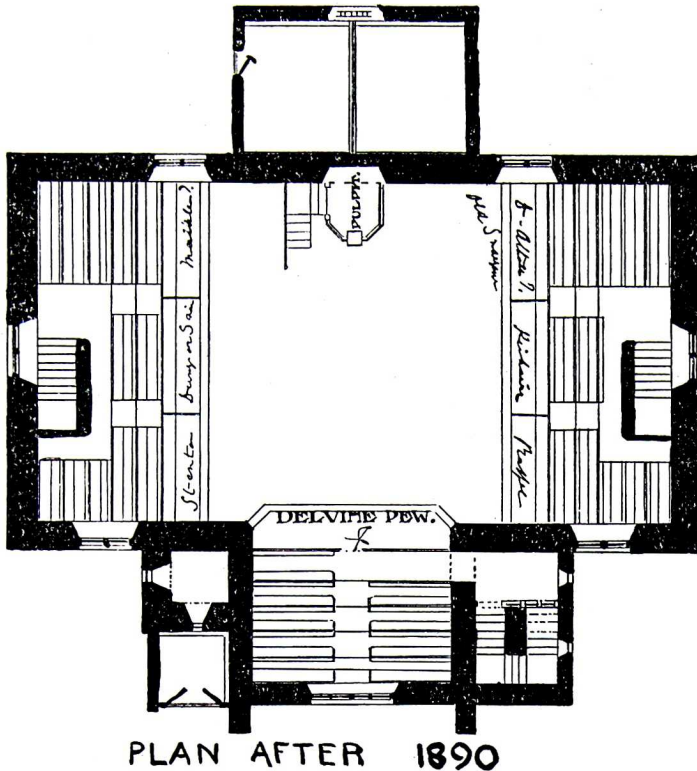
Parish of Caputh be : For Reading English, two shillings. For Reading and Writing, Three shillings. For Writing and Arithmetic, Three shillings. For Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, Three shillings and sixpence. For Latin and Greek, Five shillings ; all per quarter. Fees from 100 pupils and in addition some £28 and a croft". The stipend of the Minister at this time was about £210 and a Glebe of £22 10/-.

The only matter which proved difficult to solve was that of seating. There was available some 1177 feet of bottom room, and the various Heritors laid claim to 1226 feet 10 inches. This, however, was settled skilfully by the Duke of Atholl, who ignored the claims of non-resident heritors as well as those who had incontinently failed to provide their representatives with a written mandate.

In 1839 there began the first of many alterations and additions which today make Caputh one of the finest parish churches in Perthshire. The building, in need of repair, was inspected and the heritors decided to build a porch over each door and repair the wall round the yard.

It is interesting to note that the Disruption of 1843 passed off without notice in the books of the Kirk Session, save that a new Schoolmaster was needed. Advertised for at a salary of £45 and fees, the advertisement in the file of the local paper bears the rider : " No one who is not a member of the Established Church need apply." What appears of much more importance is the installation of heating in the church for the first time. This merits several pages of warm discussion.

In May, 1865, the gallery directly opposite the pulpit was removed and in its place an aisle built outwards for the tenants of Murthly Estate. Living in the neighbouring parish of Little Dunkeld they were able to attend at Caputh by crossing the ferry at a cost of one halfpenny for the double journey. The normal fare other than to church was one penny for a single journey. Above the aisle the gallery was replaced as a Laird's Loft for the Delvine family and a private outside stair added. At the same time the bell was removed from the belfry and hung in a bell tower, and the vestry on the north side was enlarged as a Session House. The furnishings were altered and the old long tables were removed and a small one placed in front of the pulpit. A Font in Portland stone was gifted by the Rev. Theodore Marshall and the area of the old style tables filled by the choir and Precentor.

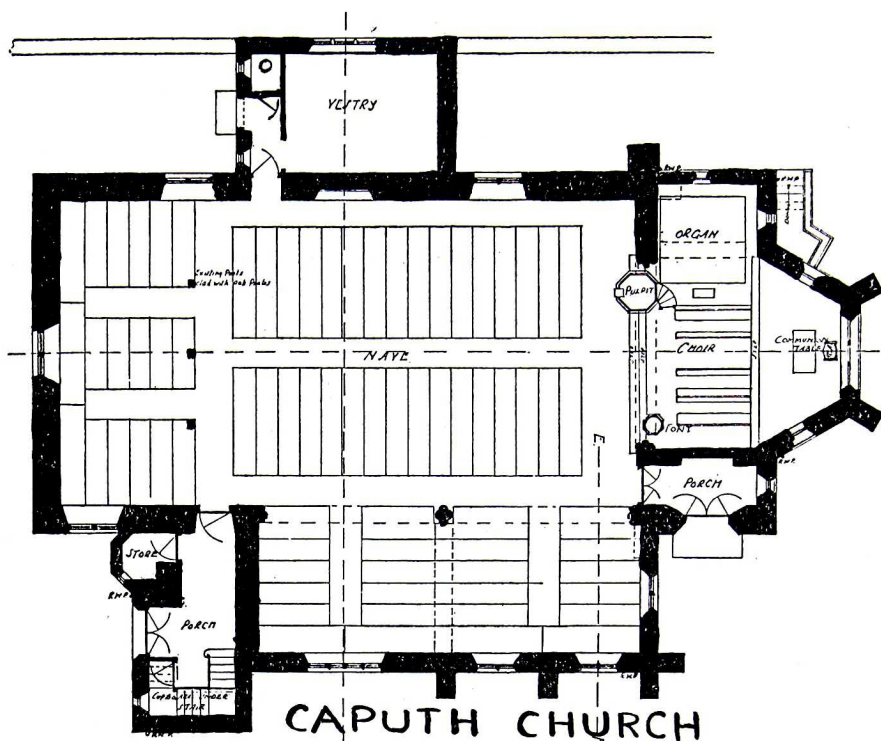


In 1887 a harmonium was installed on four weeks' trial and it remained till the present organ was gifted in 1909. In the following year, 1888, an oak Communion Table and chair were gifted by the Dowager Lady Mackenzie, and a red oriental carpet, still in use, by Lord Dunedin. Four years later a vestry was built in the back of the Murthly Aisle and an entrance porch erected on its west side. The gable doors were closed, the porches removed, and the direct entrance to the pulpit was also closed. A door to the session-house was opened through the north wall. Access to the gallery was gained by new stairs in the centre of each gable.⁽¹⁾

This then was the form of the church till it was extensively and completely altered and renovated, 1912-1914, save that in 1899 acetylene gas lighting was introduced and very handsome brass lamps were gifted in memory of Mrs Valentine Hagart by her son. This brings to mind a family connection with the Parish Church that had lasted from the Reformation. One of their forbears had been amongst those

⁽¹⁾ See plans on pages 26, 28 and 29.

originally appointed by the Bishop of Dunkeld to measure and value the Church Lands of Caputh.



This last renovation was thoroughgoing. The south and east galleries were removed. A chancel was added to the east wall with a loft for the organ on the north side. The entrance porch to the east of the Murthly Aisle was removed and an extra aisle, called The Delvine Aisle, was added and a new door and porch on the south-east corner. The work was done by 1914, with the most graceful arches let into the old walls of the church, fronting both aisles and the chancel. A new half-round wooden ceiling replaced the old plaster one. These sweeping changes were due to the generosity of Mr A. P. Lyle of Glendelvine and to Mr W. H. Cox of Snaigow, whose personal interest and munificence alone made them possible. The Chancel window is filled with stained glass of a most pleasing colour and appearance and its side-lights form a memorial for the 1914-18 war with the legend: *See that ye conquer by living as we conquered by dying.* The furnishings were all in keeping with the new church. The organ, rebuilt and installed in its loft, was fronted with oak to match the pews and the chancel benches and table. In

1938 the church was lit with electricity, and in 1956 a new Communion Table was provided in memory of the late senior elder, Hugh Hogarth, Esq., Delvine.

As well as the practical gifts of furniture, there are many pleasing memorials too numerous to mention individually ; but noteworthy is the stained glass in the north window, in memory of Mrs A. P. Lyle ; and the lych gate into the kirk-grounds from the main road, also gifted by the generous proprietor of Glendelvine.

The whole effect of the renovations is to provide a large and lightsome church in which it is both a pleasure to minister and to worship. As one enters, the Chancel presents a most pleasing appearance. The Holy Table, proportionally correct, floodlit and with a large silver cross let into the central panel and also illuminated, is the immediate object of attention. The benches in the chancel, finely carved, are fronted with linen-fold panels, as are also the pulpit and reading-desk. They contrast warmly with the Turkey and Persian carpets and the floor stones and steps from the famous Leoch Quarries.

To the south the large clear-glass windows allow sunlight and warmth into the aisles and the church, as well as providing for the wandering eye a view that stretches to the Sidlaws a dozen miles away. Flowers, often tastefully arranged, are set upon special stands and may be behind but not upon the Communion Table.

One last item of interest is that the present alms dishes are, as far as is known, those gifted to the original church in 1500. Two of a set of three remain with the Kirk Session, and the third has been in the Museum of Perth since 1836, where it is described as a Font or Basin. About sixteen inches in diameter, with a raised round centre which looks as though it might purpose to hold a candle, an embossed edge and a text repeated three times in meaningless letters, they are said to be fifteenth century Flemish in origin. That they were often well filled is evidenced from the Offering Register for 1680 onwards, which opens : " At the Church of Caputh, now vacant by the transportation of Mr William Nairn, Andrew, by the Mercy of God, Lord Bishop of Dunkold, appointed Mr Robert Gordon, Minister at Dunkold, to look after the giving of Capeth" Entries average six to ten shillings per Sunday and the sixth one reads : " November 23rd, 1680, Collected at Marriage—16/-."

What is remarkable in all the records of the Church and Parish is the manifest goodwill between the Minister, his

Kirk Session and the Heritors, and the readiness with which those who had been endowed with the pre-Reformation properties of the Church subscribed to its welfare. What is only becoming clear is the effect of the hasty and ill-advised efforts to compound with those who felt that the income derived from the piety of other ages was in some way tainted. The Teind system was eminently fair, and easily adjusted ; and its hasty execution has produced many problems for those who minister in the country amidst shrinking populations and ever increasing costs. In the last decade Caputh, like many another country parish, has lost one third of its inhabitants and the building, once proudly planned to seat one thousand, and eventually completed to seat eight hundred, would today still have two hundred vacant seats if every residenter man woman and child in the parish were present.

F. ROUTLEDGE BELL