



*Centenary Celebrations
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church*

'These days should be remembered' - Esther 9, v28

*Researched & Compiled by
Ivan Knox & Mark Knox (2006)*

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Foreword

A lot has changed in Stranorlar village and surrounding area over the last hundred years. A quick look at old photographs or a short conversation with an elderly relative quickly reminds us of the changes the past hundred years have brought. There have been many positive changes, but on the other hand some of the changes have not been so helpful.

In the midst of all these changes worshippers have gathered at Stranorlar Presbyterian Church. As the world has changed around us we have continued to gather week by week to worship and adore the Lord Almighty who does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His love and mercies never fail.

As our church celebrates its centenary we want to give God thanks for His faithfulness to us over the past hundred years. We want to give thanks to God for how He has blessed us over the past hundred years. We want to give thanks to God for how He has sustained us over the past hundred years.

As we celebrate our Church's centenary we want not only to look to the past but also to the future. It is our hope and prayer that God's blessing and presence will continue with all in Stranorlar Presbyterian Church for years and generations to come. We look forward to a day when a new minister comes to lead the congregation forward in worship and witness to Christ. We hope and trust that God's continued goodness and love will be experienced by all who have contact with our congregation.

I hope you find this book interesting and informative as you read of how God has worked among us.

Rev. Stephen Richmond
Vacancy Convenor

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church (2006)

Senior Minister: Rev. Eleanor Henning SRN Dip. H.V. B.D. (Retired)

Vacancy Convenor: Rev. Stephen Richmond, Donegal Town

Minister (Stated Supply): Rev. Tom Luke, Ballymoney

Kirk Session: *Messrs:* William J. Whyte, Robert R. Davis, Roy Laughlin, Jack Neilands, Mrs Elizabeth Henderson, Mrs Irene Scott & Mrs Muriel Whyte

Clerk of Session: Mr William J. Whyte

Committee: Members of Session with *Messrs.* Pat Chambers, Drew Corry, Robin Henderson, Ivan Knox, Mark Knox, Jonathan Cowan, Stewart Woods, Ms Andrena Faulkner, Mrs Christine Stewart & Mrs Monica Woods

Secretary: Mr Drew Corry

Treasurer: Mr Robert R. Davis

F.W.O. Secretaries: Mrs Christine Stewart, Ms Andrena Faulkner, Mark Knox & Jonathan Cowan

S.S. Superintendent: Mrs Audrey Chambers; Mrs Kathleen Lindsay

P.W.A. Secretary: Mrs Louise Lucas

Organists: Mrs Ina Watson, Keith Roulston & Mark Knox

Illustrations:

Front Cover – Stranorlar Presbyterian Church, Manse & Sunday School Building in the 1920's.

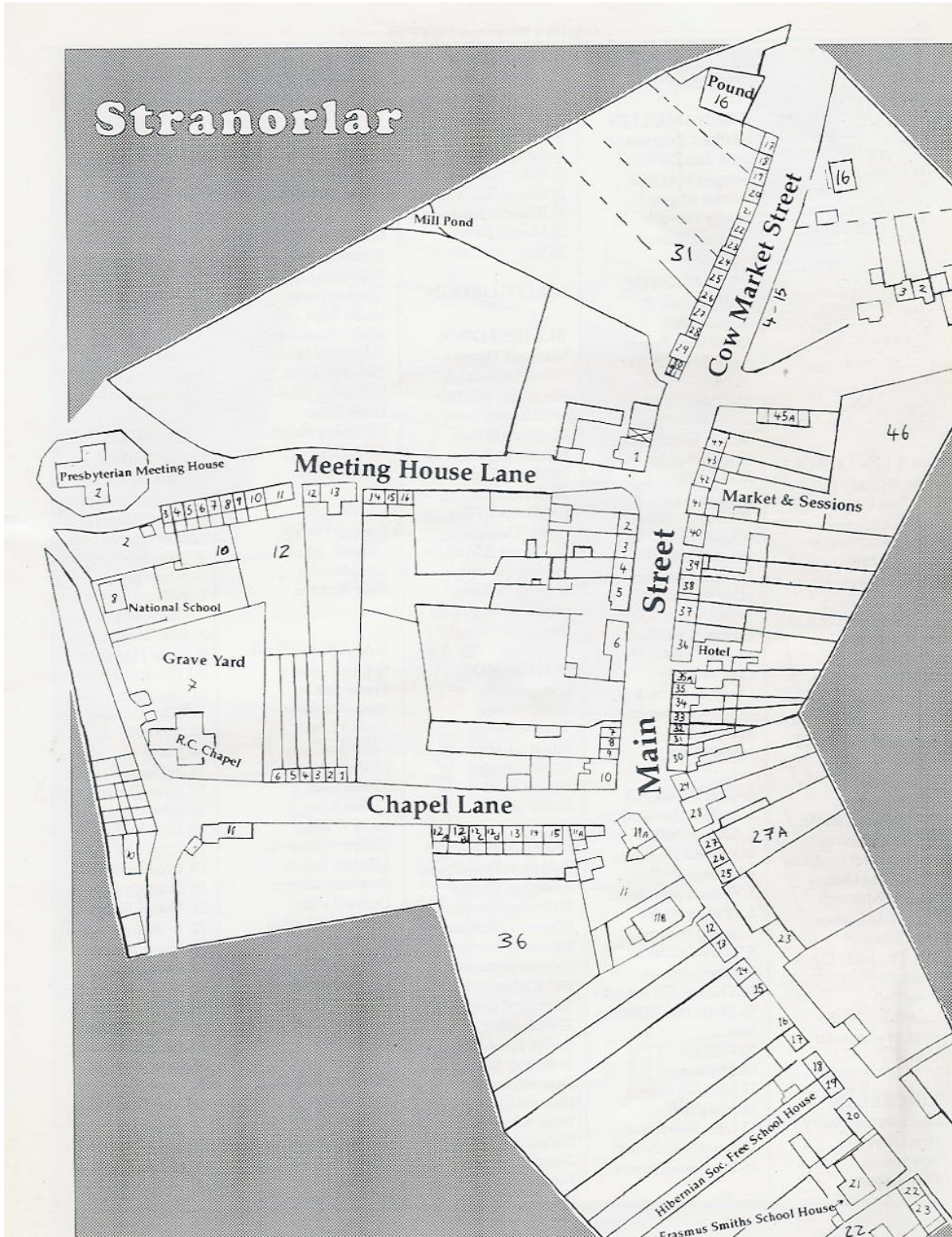
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Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Stranorlar (1858 - 1866)
(Note the T-Shape & Position of the Previous Meetinghouse)

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Introduction

The centenary of the existing Presbyterian Church building in Stranorlar is an important landmark in the long and interesting history of a congregation dating back almost 300 years to its official foundation in 1709. The tercentenary of this occasion will be celebrated in 2009, but further evidence of Presbyterian worship in Stranorlar can be traced back through Presbytery records to as early as 1675.

The general history of Presbyterianism in Ulster since the early 17th century has been widely documented, but individual congregations generally did not keep any substantial records until the early 19th century. Unfortunately, many of these have been lost or destroyed down through the years, rendering the compilation of a comprehensive history for many congregations most difficult.

In Stranorlar congregation, Rev. James Steele D.D., ordained here in November 1821, was the first minister to keep a record of the activities and management of the church. As a result, details regarding the church and the social history connected with the congregation prior to this period are sparse, with the exception of the names of all ministers and the dates of their ordinations, resignations, translations and deaths. Church records since then are also incomplete, but from the information available, it can be established that the first meetinghouse was here from as early as Master Wilson's appointment in 1709. It was later replaced around 1800, and the foundation stone of the existing church building, which is on the same site, was laid on 24th April 1906.

In order to begin to understand our congregation's past, a brief history of Presbyterianism coupled with local history and information from the existing church records and various other sources are examined to provide a glimpse into the lives of the generations of Presbyterians that have worshipped here in Stranorlar.

This is set against a background of various social issues, including the troubled times experienced by many of these people since first arriving here in the 17th century - such as widespread poverty, persecution by the Bishops, uprisings and rebellions, times of famine and disease and later, the two world wars. It was especially during these times that their faith and sense of community within the church stood by them, providing moral and spiritual support, as well as inspiring hope for a brighter future.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Past Ministers of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



| | |
|---|-------------|
| Master Robert Wilson (Congregation dissolved 1727-1744) | 1709 - 1740 |
| Rev. Joseph Kinkead | 1745 - 1755 |
| Rev. Joseph Love | 1767 - 1807 |
| Rev. James Neilson | 1808 - 1821 |
| Rev. James Steele D.D. | 1821 - 1859 |
| Rev. Hugh Clarke Graham (Later Professor and Chair of Metaphysics & Ethics at Magee College) | 1859 - 1874 |
| Rev. William John Macaulay (Later D.D. & Moderator of The General Assembly, 1913) | 1874 - 1880 |
| Rev. James Curry | 1881 - 1940 |
| Rev. John McFall | 1941 - 1947 |
| Rev. Charles McKimm Eadie | 1948 - 1951 |
| Rev. Herbert Courtney | 1951 - 1955 |
| Rev. William J.E. McClure | 1955 - 1965 |
| Rev. John Sproule (Stated Supply) | 1966 - 1970 |
| Rev. William W. McL. Craig | 1971 - 1977 |
| Rev. G Denis Campbell | 1978 - 1986 |
| Rev. Eleanor Henning | 1988 - 1997 |
| Rev. Alan W. Carson | 1998 - 2004 |
| Rev. Tom Luke (Stated Supply) | 2005 - |

This Plaque, bearing all the ministers' names since 1709 was the gift of Justice McMenamain of *Rockfield House*, in memory of his wife, Mrs Martha McMenamain. It was dedicated on Palm Sunday, 1984.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

With hope and with pride they raised these stones a hundred years ago,
They built them firm and they built them sure with every hammer blow;
And an angel of joy alighted on the roof beams o'er their head,
When they came to offer their worship, with a sure and steady tread.

For they knew their faith, and they knew their God, these folk in this valley fair,
And they built a house through gratitude where they could share their care;
They were simply following the leading of the folks that had gone before,
They just did it a little better from their somewhat richer store.

We stop at this time to salute them and the God that inspired their plan,
And we hope we can be their equal, we hope we can follow their van;
And we think of those who led them from the pulpit and the pew,
A special brand of people, a select, a chosen few.

Who met on the mountain like Moses with their God in fervent prayer,
And deep was the will of their spirit, for the folk that was in their care;
We think of men like McClure, who carried his topic the country o'er,
Reminding all and sundry that U R the ChURch's core.

Time it has stilled these builders, but we reap what they have sown,
We rejoice in the fruit of their labours and celebrate them in song,
Bright was the home of their childhood and their virtue has lasted still,
They held forth the beacon of light and love with a clear and steady will.

Their lamps shone bright with the oil of grace while they waited on the Lord,
And sweet was their daily task to trace what was written in His word;
May there ever be those who will scatter afar this wonderful seed abroad,
And deeply blessed the people are who are firmly anchored in God.

The creator God that of grace and faith did first light up the candle
Knew that diversity builds devotion - it's success man cannot handle;
May this firm foundation and heritage the present race inspire,
And looking back o'er things that time has tried forever raise them higher.

By S.F.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Stranorlar since the Plantation (1610)

Stranorlar, or *Srath an Urlair*, literally meaning 'The Holm of the Floor' (referring to the flat stretch of land near the river Finn) is situated on the outskirts of the old Laggan area of East Donegal. Donegal was originally known as *Tir Chonaill*, a name taken from Connell, the son of *Niall of the Nine Hostages* who was a ruling fifth century Monarch. In the early 16th Century, progressing English influence resulted in the area being 'shired' and designated a county, and it later adopted the name *Dun na nGall*, which literally translates as 'Fort of the Foreigner'.

The chiefs of the O'Neill and the O'Donnell clans, known as the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnel, ruled this vast territory for centuries, but due to the continual English threat under James I were forced to flee to the Continent, sailing from Rathmullen on 3rd September 1607. This event, known in history as the *Flight of the Earls*, ended Gaelic Supremacy in Ulster and opened the way for English and Scottish settlers. This process became known as the '*Plantation of Ulster*' and marked the beginning of the development of many of its towns, including the market town of Stranorlar, as well as Ballybofey with which it has since been twinned. Strategically situated on the fringe of the rich and fertile Finn valley, it was inevitable that Stranorlar would be chosen as a prime location for this Plantation.

On the division of the O'Donnell lands in 1610, the Manor of Stranorlar which encompassed a wide and far reaching area, was entrusted to Sir Henry Clare from Norfolk - a favourite of King James I, who duly sold off his newly acquired estate in 1616 to a London craftsman named Peter Benson. He had procured his wealth from various building projects in Ireland, including the building of the walls of Derry and by 1618 had achieved the status of an estated gentleman. He had his residence close to the river Finn at Stranorlar where he built a village of ten houses and cottages close by.

In 1622, Sir Ralph Bingley acquired the estate at Ballybofey from a Yorkshire



man named Robert Redington. It was divided from the Manor of Stranorlar by the river Finn, and it was here that Bingley erected the original Drumboe Castle, which had four large towers, three storeys high, and was later remodelled as pictured here prior to its demolition in the

1930's. Bingley also built a village of twelve houses and cottages on the opposite side of the river, and after he died, his widow Lady Jane and a man named Robert Harrington took charge of the estate. It was later granted to Sir William Bazil in 1641, and remained in this family until a descendant called Mary Bazil married a Dr. Samuel Hayes from London in the early 1700's, and this family occupied Drumboe estate until 1944.

A short History of Presbyterianism

The authority of the Roman Catholic Church remained largely unquestioned until the Renaissance of the 15th Century, when the first printed Bibles enabled many religious thinkers such as Luther, who was a German Professor of Theology and an Augustinian monk, to form differing opinions. As a result the *Protestant Reformation* began and the emergence of a *Kirk* as a distinctive Church, with a special responsibility for the welfare of its people, dates from this time.



Therefore, the Presbyterian Churches of today are the direct consequence of this Reformation (which mainly affected Switzerland, Germany, Holland, England and Scotland) and as a result are sometimes called '*Reformed Churches*'.

It began as a reform movement of the Roman Catholic Church and gradually evolved into doctrines of Protestantism. Calvin, the French Theologian, and Luther, the German religious leader were the original Reformers in France and Germany respectively. John Calvin became known as the 'Father of Presbyterianism' after he felt called by God to put Reformation Principles into action in Geneva. These principles became known as *Calvinism*, later introduced to Scotland by John Knox (pictured above), where he successfully established Presbyterianism in 1560. He described Geneva as '*The perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth from the days of the Apostles*'.

Ireland was largely untouched by the Reformation until the Scottish Presbyterians arrived here prior to and during the Plantation of Ulster in 1610. Until 1600, Ireland was traditionally the most 'Irish' province of Ireland, but became the homeland of the Scots-Presbyterians after the Plantation.

The Ulster-Scots

'Two Ayrshire Scots - James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery pioneered a massive settlement from Scotland to Counties Antrim and Down. Starting in May 1606, over 10,000 Lowland Scots made the short voyage across the North Channel, transforming barren Ulster into an industrial powerhouse.' This event, which is celebrating its 400th anniversary this year, '*inspired King James VI of Scotland and I of England's Virginia Plantation of 1607 and Ulster Plantation of 1610*'. Their achievement was '*The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots*'.

The Scottish settlers who arrived in Ulster from 1606 did not leave their faith behind, and brought with them '*the Scriptural Creed, and habits of industry and love of liberty*', all of which have since been prominent features of Presbyterianism.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

The Early Churches

The first full-time Presbyterian minister in Ireland was Edward Brice, who came to BroadIsland, near Carrickfergus in 1613. He was soon followed by numerous others including Josias Welsh, a grandson of John Knox, who took up his ministry at Templepatrick and preached there for many years without an organised Presbytery. As there were no meetinghouses in these early days, most Presbyterian ministers, despite their objections to the rule of Bishops, were permitted to officiate in the Parish Churches, and could even claim payment for doing so. Public worship was conducted the same way as they were accustomed to in the Church of Scotland, and the early settlers worshipped there *'without violating their convictions or sacrificing their Presbyterian principles'*.

In fact, the first two Protestant Bishops of Raphoe (1605-1630), namely George Montgomery, who was Royal Chaplain to James I, and Andrew Knox, who was from the same family as John Knox, were both born and bred Scot Presbyterians. It was on this account and due to the unsettled state of affairs in the Church and government at the time that these Bishops did not insist on the strict observance of the English Prelacy. Also, the benign influence of Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh, a sympathiser who introduced his *Articles of Religion* in 1615 played an important role in accommodating Presbyterian worship. If this harmonious state of affairs had continued, many of the Presbyterians would have probably been won over to the Established Church, but it was not to be. The troubles before and during the Rebellion of 1641 put an end to it, and Presbyterians were ejected from the parish Churches in the late 1630's. They continued to refuse to conform to the Established Church and persecution by the Bishops escalated. As a result, Presbyterian meetings were secretly held in the *'fields, barns and glens'* or wherever was convenient for them to gather to hear the Word of God.



The earliest form of meetinghouses were modelled on these barns where they so often worshipped and, like the dwelling-houses of the time were of a somewhat crude construction with cold, damp stone walls, leaking roofs and clay floors. The old lime-kiln at Taboin (pictured left) which served as a meetinghouse there for over a hundred years, is typical of the many outbuildings across Ulster that were used as meetinghouses at that time. This was mainly because these people could not afford anything more, but this simplicity is also an example of the traditional Presbyterian principles of worship, as referred to in his book on *'The Laggan Presbytery'*, (1905) by Rev. Lecky - *'Presbyterianism does not, unlike Romanism, approve of the policy of erecting imposing and highly ornate structures in which to worship the God who dwelleth not in the temples made with men's hands...but the day has gone when it deems any sort of house good enough for the house of God'*.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

The general barn-like appearance of Presbyterian meetinghouses, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, was long a subject of reproach against Presbyterians, although it seems that Churches of all denominations at this time were less than basic in design and comfort.

Despite all of this, the Presbyterian people were generally a *'healthy, industrious, sober and in the main a God-fearing people...brought up on the wholesome Scottish fare of oatmeal and the Shorter Catechism'* and at a time when Churches of other denominations were being sparsely attended, these unattractive, comfortless, barn-like structures they called meetinghouses often *'overflowed into the fields'*.

Rev. Lecky also tells the story of the jovial rector, when passing by where his neighbour, the Presbyterian minister was building a new and enlarged meetinghouse, stopped to speak to him. He reminded him of the Scripture that read *'I will pull down my barns and build greater'* and that this Scripture was meant for our warning, not our imitation. So, when later asked what inscription to put on a stone that was to be placed over the door for the official opening of the new building, the minister replied *'This is not a barn!'*

The First Presbytery

The first Presbytery in Ireland was established at Carrickfergus on 10th June 1642 by the chaplains and elders of the Regiments of a Scottish army that had arrived in Ulster earlier that year. (*The 350th Anniversary of this event was marked with the installation of the 'Carrickfergus Window' in Church House in Belfast in 1992, pictured below.*) This Presbytery then organised the supply of ministers to as many congregations as possible and brought more over from



Scotland for the remainder. By the end of 1643 the Presbyterian Church in Ulster was fairly well established, with over thirty ordained ministers in fixed charges by 1647.

These Regiments had been sent to Ulster to quell disturbances during the Rebellion of 1641, a horrifically violent time when many thousands of English and Scottish settlers were viciously slaughtered. This caused many of these settlers flee back to Scotland, but most remained behind and a strong Ulster-Scot tradition still exists amongst Presbyterians across Ulster and Donegal to the present day. This is especially true in the Laggan area, where the plantation in this region was most successful.

The early settlers, who were responsible for the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as we know it, continued to suffer further hardships throughout the 17th century, including extremely tough living conditions, great poverty, religious discrimination and further persecution by the Episcopal Bishops.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Persecution & Conflict



In these early days it was believed that there could only be one Church in a state, and successive rulers tried to enforce conformity to an Episcopal State Church, which was the Church of England (and Ireland). This led to bitter conflict. Presbyterians continually refused to conform, standing firm by their Presbyterian principles, and as a result many were victimised and imprisoned by these Bishops, such as the infamous Bishop Leslie of Raphoe (1633-1660), pictured left, who resided in the Episcopal Palace of Raphoe, pictured below.

These Bishops treated the Presbyterians harshly and showed them little or no mercy. Some Presbyterians and their ministers who had been victimised and



silenced by Wentworth, decided to set sail for New England on a specially-built ship called '*The Eagle's Wing*', but due to adverse weather conditions at sea were forced to turn back. They then fled to Scotland where they later took part in the great movement of 1638.

The Covenants

All of these struggles led to the formation of two great Covenants - one in Scotland and one between the Scottish and English Parliaments. The Scottish Covenant in 1638 was a statement by Presbyterians of their position in relation to the enforcement by Charles I of a Church governed by Bishops. The Scots - English Covenant of 1642 was drawn up by Charles' English and Scottish opponents after his defeat in what became known as the '*Bishops War*'.

One of its terms, under '*The Solemn League and Covenant*' was the establishment of a Reformed or Presbyterian Church in Britain and Ireland, and in 1643 an Assembly met at Westminster to provide - (i) A Confession of Faith - which became known as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*; (ii) A *Form of Church Government*; (iii) A *Directory of Public Worship*; and (iv) *Catechisms for a Reformed Church*. These became the basis of Presbyterian beliefs.

Despite the aforementioned hostilities, Presbyterians then put down strong roots in Ireland and in a relatively short time there were about a hundred congregations established around the country, with over eighty ministers in five Presbyteries. However, a second Rebellion in England had seen the defeat and execution of Charles I and the rise of Cromwell to Lord Protector of the Commonwealth in 1649.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Cromwell & The Commonwealth (1649 – 1660)

Presbyterians suffered badly for a time during Cromwell's campaign in Ireland, but he never came to this region and returned to England in 1650, leaving his Generals Venables and Coote to inflict his wrath throughout Ireland in his absence.

The Presbyterians, who had disagreed profusely with the execution of Charles, who was of Scots blood and sympathetic towards their plight, refused to recognise the lawfulness of Cromwell's Republican party. As a result, they were denied their rights and again, forced to minister secretly.

However, Cromwell and his advisers soon realised that the Presbyterians were inclined to live peaceably and did not present much of a threat. Therefore restrictions were relaxed and they were even offered a salary and the freedom of their ministry. Many Bishops were deprived of their Diocese during the Commonwealth period, and in 1650 the large community of Presbyterians in Raphoe are recorded as taking over Bishop Leslie's Cathedral to use as their meetinghouse.

After Cromwell's death in 1660 the Monarchy was restored when Charles II came to the throne. This *Restoration* meant the return of Episcopacy to Britain and Ireland, and in 1661 the Lord's Justices forbade all '*unlawful assemblies*', which included Presbyterian worship and the meeting of Presbytery. These laws were strictly enforced and anyone caught breaking them would have faced substantial fines, excommunication and possible lengthy terms of imprisonment.

They made no exceptions and even had a minister's wife called Mrs Pont, from Ramelton, taken to Dublin and imprisoned for three years. She had stayed behind after her husband, Robert Pont, '*Preacher of God's Word*' and another grandson of John Knox, was compelled to return to Scotland as,



interior Lifford Jail

owing to his '*anti-prelatical views he was deprived of his benefice*'. Her '*crime*' was cited as being '*the encouraging and frequenting of unlawful religious assemblies*'.

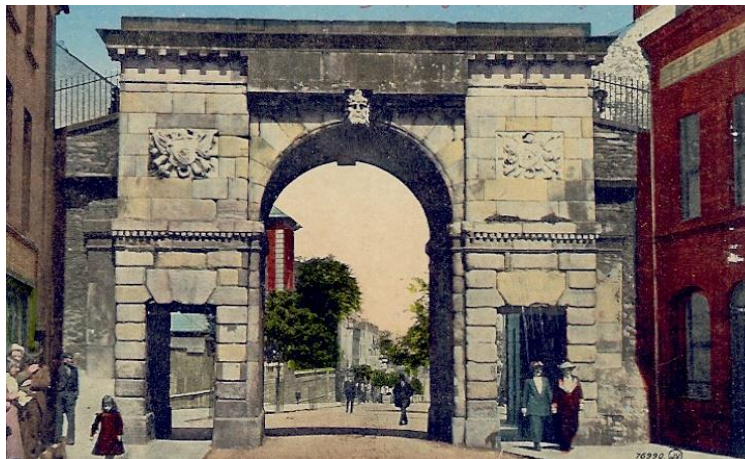
Another local example of this type of discrimination occurred in 1681, when four ministers in the Laggan area, namely Rev. Trail of Ballindrait, Rev. Hart of Monreagh, Rev. Alexander of Convoy and Rev. Campbell of Ray stood trial, were fined £25 each and sentenced to eight months imprisonment in Lifford goal (pictured above). However, they were released after the payment of the fines, which amounted to almost a year's salary each. Their crime had been the holding of a day of fasting and prayer.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

The Siege of Derry (1689)

After Charles II died in 1685, his Catholic brother and successor, James II, had to flee to France in 1688 due to various conflicts caused by Parliament over his controversial succession. William, Prince of Orange, a Dutch Protestant who was married to James's eldest daughter Mary, had been invited to England by a leading statesman to lay his claim to the throne of England. To the great relief of the Protestant people, William landed at Torquay on 5th November, 1688 with full military backing. However, James was plotting his return to England, backed by French and Irish forces, and landed at Kinsale on 12th March 1689 with over 12,000 soldiers.

As James had fled the country, William and Mary were crowned as joint sovereigns in England on 11th April 1689, but by 15th April James's army were already in Ireland, and crossing the river at Clady Ford on their way to Derry. They met with opposition here, but quickly overcame them. Rumour of a planned massacre of Protestants in Ulster, fuelled by '*The Comber Letter*', (a letter found on the street in Comber which detailed such plans) caused widespread panic among the Protestant people. A copy of this letter had reached Derry the same day as a letter that announced the arrival of Lord Antrim's mainly Catholic Regiment, confirming their fears of the massacre.



One of the Gates of Derry shut by the Apprentice Boys in April, 1689 at the start of the famous Siege

With bitter memories of the slaughter of 1641, the Protestant people were on the defensive, and on the 18th April 1689, nine apprentice boys (later joined by four more) swiftly closed FerryQuay Gate, just as one of King James's officers arrived to ask permission to enter. Over 20,000 people were closed within the city's walls, with 7,000 of them bearing arms and fourteen Presbyterian ministers included amongst their numbers.

This was the beginning of the famous '*Siege of Derry*', that lasted an agonising 105 days. In an attempt to force a surrender, the cavalry outside the walls held the friends and families of those inside the walls hostage, but this tactic that did not succeed, and the stand-off continued.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Behind the walls food supplies began to run short and they were forced to eat anything they could get, including rats, cats and dogs. However, scores of people were dying of disease and starvation and as hope was rapidly fading, a number of ships landed in Lough Foyle – *The Dartmouth Man of War*, *The Phoenix of Coleraine*, *The Jerusalem*, and *The Mountjoy*, which famously broke the Boom across the Foyle, providing the much needed relief to the starving and desperate inhabitants of the city.

James's army continued to put up a strong resistance but retreated after two days, and the city celebrated their freedom with thunderous cheer, victorious cannon fire and the ringing of the church bells. The city had lost almost 10,000 people, mostly to starvation and disease, and James's army had lost in the region of 9,000 cavalrymen.

Improvements: After these violent times, life improved dramatically for Presbyterians under William III, with laws such as the *English Toleration Act of 1689* which had granted freedom of worship to Presbyterians. By 1690 the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was established by law, which meant further stability for Presbyterians.

Dissenters: In the early 1700's there was disagreement regarding the Westminster Confession of Faith, and this often brought division in Presbyteries and congregations. Those who seceded became known as *Seceders* and *Covenanters*, who then formed Dissenting Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, and then in Ireland. Hardship continued for these people into the early eighteenth century, and many, disillusioned and dissatisfied with their position and prospects in Ireland were forced to emigrate to Colonial America.

Francis Makemie



It was during this time that one of the most prominent and influential Irish Presbyterians in history came to the fore. He was Francis Makemie (pictured), originally from the congregation of Ramelton, and who later became known as the Founder of Presbyterianism in America. He had emigrated there from Ramelton in 1683 and went firstly to the West Indies and then to Maryland. He established the first American Presbytery in Philadelphia in 1706 in the presence of Mr Andrew Ferguson, whose father was minister of Burt congregation. Makemie was later arrested in 1707 for preaching without a licence in a private home in Long Island, New York. In Court, he based his defence on the *English Toleration Act of 1689* and was acquitted. He died at the age of fifty in 1708, and is buried in Virginia.

The Ulster-Scots in America

In Ulster the outlook continued to worsen, and it is recorded that around 5,000 people left for Pennsylvania by passenger ship in the year 1717 alone. Once in America, they were again badly treated by the British system there, which left them bitter and in strong support of the fight for American Independence, in which they later had a great part.

Presbyterians have always been natural opponents of injustice of any kind and became heavily involved in the American Revolution. The declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Many of these Ulster-Scots who settled in America would be forefathers to future generations of many great men of industry and power and no less than sixteen of America's past Presidents can trace their direct ancestry to these early settlers from Ulster.

Life in Ulster in the early 18th century

Famine: Meanwhile, in Ulster it was getting more and more difficult to scrape a living with increased land rents and several consecutive years of crop failure, culminating in the famine of 1726-1730. This famine was a serious blow to many already at breaking point and caused severe hardship and thousands of deaths, but unfortunately, there is no official account of how it affected this locality.

Communication: In 1737, *The Belfast Newsletter* was launched and is still in circulation, being the oldest surviving newspaper in Europe, and with all that was happening in Ulster and across Ireland at this time, there would have no shortage of shocking stories and bad news to report.

Hardship & Emigration: Emigration rates continued to increase at an alarming level over the next few years. Then, from December 1739 until May 1740, most of Ireland and Northern Europe was covered by a vast high pressure weather system, that resulted in what became known as the *Great Frost*. Rivers and lakes were completely frozen over. The potatoes, which, by now were the main diet of the people, rotted in the ground and a lot of their livestock perished. In October that year the blizzards returned and lasted until the spring of 1741, in what became known as '*Bliain an Air*' or the '*Year of the Slaughter*', caused by starvation and typhus and the fevers that followed. It is estimated that more than 400,000 people died at this time and about 12,000 people emigrated to America every year for many years afterwards.

Presbyterian emigration to America peaked between 1740 and 1760, when, sometimes ministers and their entire congregations made the voyage to where family and friends had previously settled, such as the Carolinas and Virginia. Many of the communities and townships established by them were given Ulster names, such as Donegal, Derry and Tyrone, to remind them of home.

It was here the Presbyterians of Ulster found great freedom and religious liberty, and a much better standard of living amongst like-minded people.

Improvements in Ulster

Industry: Ireland at this time witnessed the development of the wool and linen trade and henceforth the cottage industries, such as spinning and weaving were born. Raw materials such as wool were bought at market and woven at home to make clothing. This industry was the saving grace for many generations of Ulster people, who could now earn a living by exporting their wares to Britain and further a-field, at a time when a living from farming and crop production was almost impossible.

This era also seen the influx of French Huguenots to Ireland. They came here and to other countries in Europe to escape the religious persecution they were suffering in France. They had great expertise in the weaving of fine lace and added greatly to the value of goods being produced in Ulster.

Although living conditions had improved in Ulster at this time, Presbyterians continued to emigrate by the thousand every year. Most went to join already established friends and family in search of a better life and by 1770 they made up one third of the American population.

The United Irishmen

The 1770's in Ireland saw continued suppression against Presbyterians and Catholics, who still had very few rights. The absentee landlords continued to raise rents and evict tenants, a policy that fuelled emigration even more. By the 1790's Presbyterians and Catholics in Ulster were desperate to overcome the old Penal Laws, which were designed to keep 'non-conformers' to the Established Church on the bottom rung of society, by excluding them from all important offices.

The success of the American and French Revolutions led them to naively believe they could achieve something similar in Ulster, and the some Presbyterians in Belfast founded the United Irish Society in 1791. These *United Irishmen* wanted to unite Irishmen of all creeds to win independence and therefore a just society in Ireland. This ended in the tragic Rebellion of 1798, where Presbyterians actually fought on both sides. Due to poor organisation it was soon quelled by government troops and the leaders were executed.

Rev. James Porter, originally from Ballindrait, was blamed for helping the United Irishmen achieve their ends by reading a stolen military dispatch which was obtained from a mail coach held up by them. In court a false witness swore against him and Rev. Porter was condemned to death. The scaffold was erected between the Manse and Church in Greyabbey, Co. Down where he was minister and he walked to the gallows singing the 35th Psalm:



*"Plead my cause O Lord with them that strive with me,
Fight against them that fight against me".*

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The Formation of the General Assembly (1840)

The restoration of subscription to the Westminster Confession in 1835 led to the union of the General Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod in 1840, forming *The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*. This General Assembly later became a founder member of the *World Alliance of Reformed Churches*, which now represents 45 million Presbyterians worldwide.

This was also the beginning of a very creative period within the Presbyterian Church and heralded the formation of foreign missions, theological colleges, social services such as the Orphan Society, and educational services such as the Sabbath School Society.

Other Developments at this time

Newspapers: Donegal's first newspaper, *The Ballyshannon Herald*, was launched in 1831. Due to its conservative and Unionist side, *The Liberator* was published in Ballyshannon in 1839. However, it only lasted a short time, and the next Donegal paper was the *Donegal Independent* in 1885. *The Londonderry Journal* began in 1772, later changing its name to *The Derry Journal*, in 1868.

Population: Ireland's population doubled within the forty-year period from 1791 to 1831, and that of Ulster numbered 2,300,000, of which 60% were Protestant. The population of Donegal alone was over 300,000 (135,000 today), and these statistics are reflected in the high membership in most congregations at this time, including Stranorlar. This growth was mainly due to a period of agricultural prosperity that involved intensive cultivation of barley, oats, flax and potatoes, the main staple diet of the people. Many new congregations were formed at this time due to the increase in numbers, and also due to an increase in the Royal Bounty, which was more than doubled.

The Poor Laws: A sudden collapse in agriculture and the cottage industries meant poverty and living in squalor for many, with diseases such as smallpox and typhus killing one in every twelve people. This resulted in widespread overcrowding, filthy living conditions and wandering beggars further spreading the diseases. The Poor Laws were introduced to help these people, and infirmaries and workhouses were erected to house and feed them.

The Great Hunger (1845-1851)

The potato famine, which began in 1845, was one of the bleakest times in Irish history. The *blight* came to Ireland via Belgium, where it had come from the USA, the country where ironically, the majority of desperate Irish emigrants later sought refuge from the death and destruction it had caused.

The 1845 crop was the first to fail, caused by warm, excessively wet weather, suitable for the spread of the blight. People were reluctantly forced to resort to alternatives like oatmeal and Indian meal, which they found unpleasant to eat and difficult to digest.

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The potato crop of 1846 fared even worse and as people crowded into towns and cities in search of food, the workhouses everywhere were packed to capacity. Soup kitchens were set up to feed the starving multitudes, but by 1847, which brought the worst crop failure, the situation was beyond reprieve. This year became known as *Black '47* and people, especially the poor, were dying by the thousand.

Emigration

As a result, emigration spiralled to unprecedented levels, aboard ships that became known as '*coffin ships*' due to the high numbers that died at sea, caused by the overcrowding, disease and starvation. Most people went to America and Canada, and between starvation and emigration Ireland lost a quarter of its population in a few, short years. The population of Donegal dropped from 296,000 in 1841 to 237,000 in 1861 - a substantial decrease, but somewhat below the national average, suggesting that Donegal did not suffer to the same extent as many other counties. Pre-famine figures are not available, but Stranorlar congregation would have had in the region of 170 families in the early 1840's, compared with 145 families recorded by the Rev. Steele in 1852.

For Terms of Freight, Cabin, Second Cabin, and Steerage Passage, apply on Board, or to

J. & W. ROBINSON,
At the Transatlantic Packet Office, 1, Neptune street, and 16, Goree Piazza;

Or to

W. G. CAIRNS,
American and Australian Emigration Agent,
68, Foyle-street, Londonderry,

Or the following Agents:—Mr. Wm. Kerr, P. O., Raphoe; Mr. Brown, P. O., Stranorlar; Mr. James Brown, Grocer, Maghera-felt; Mr. E. Moore, Merchant, Castleberg; Mr. Wm. Shannon, Maghera; Mr. John Elliott, Innkeeper, New Market, Enniskillen; Mr. Thompson, P. O., Dungiven.

Advertisements in the *Derry Journal* for passage to 'the new world' were commonplace at this time, with as many as forty passage notices featuring in each edition of the paper.

This notice, pictured left, includes Mr Brown of Stranorlar Post Office as an agent. He was a member of this congregation, and father of the poet Frances Brown.

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From 1852 to 1860, the total number of emigrants from Ireland to America amounted to 2,197,000 people, and a further 1,525,000 people emigrated there from 1861 to 1870. In the last U.S. census, 44 million Americans claimed Irish ancestry, and 40% of Australians also claim to have Irish roots. There are also millions of Irish descendants in Britain, Canada and elsewhere around the world.

These years marked a watershed in Irish life. It took many years for any sense of normality to return to the people of Ireland after this, one of the most horrific times in its history. The population, which had been between eight and nine million before the famine, has continued to fall since then and has still not recovered to the present day.

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Stranorlar's First Commissioners

From its establishment in 1649, the Laggan Presbytery had the oversight for the cause of Presbyterianism in North West Ulster, and due to the constant increase in the population of Scots settlers in the region, they were inundated with applications for supply. There simply weren't enough ministers to satisfy demand, and those most suitably located and most capable of supporting a minister were supplied first.

Presbyterians had been present in Ulster for over a hundred years and the first Presbytery established for over sixty years by the time the first officially appointed minister of Stranorlar arrived in 1709. However, there is evidence of a Presbyterian community here prior to this date, as one of Stranorlar's first Commissioners is referred to in the Laggan minutes for **August 1675**:

“John Armstrong from Stranorland desired a visit and some supply for that people, who now become of late more willing and ready to desire and receive the Gospel than before”.

According to Rev. Lecky in his notes in 1905: “this previous unwillingness to ‘*desire and receive the Gospel*’ on the part of the people of Stranorlar and the neighbourhood should not lead us to think that they were sinners above all others who dwelt in the Laggan, but should rather, I suppose, be attributed to the fact that they lived within what would have then been considered not an inconvenient distance from two Presbyterian places of worship, viz., Donoughmore and Convoy”.

Everyone was expected to attend their nearest place of worship on a weekly basis, but the Stranorlar people seemingly had not been doing so, despite both Convoy and Donoughmore meetinghouses being within, what was considered reasonable travelling distance.

However, the considerable number of Presbyterians that by now were living in and around the Stranorlar area began to occasionally meet for worship. Due to the scarcity of ministers, the lack of funds, and ongoing suppression at this time, it was common for the needs of rural outposts like Stranorlar to be met by travelling ministers who went from district to district, preaching at every opportunity, on weekdays as well as on Sundays.

By the time they applied to Presbytery in 1675 they could have been already receiving this type of occasional supply, but now had considered their numbers sufficient enough and their need so genuine to warrant and support a minister of their own.

In September of that year, after another visit from Mr John Ferguson of Stranorlar, Presbytery appointed the Rev. Samuel Halliday (minister of Convoy) to visit them to assess their needs, and more importantly, their ability to support such needs.

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(Convoy was one of the earliest founded Presbyterian Churches in the Laggan and dates to around 1670. Although it had been built to serve the Raphoe area, its location in Convoy would have been the nearest site available outside the lands in control of the Bishop. Rev. Halliday later resigned his charge in Convoy in 1677 and became minister of Omagh before returning to Scotland for a year. When he came back to Omagh they refused to support him and he was later installed in the Ardstraw congregation in 1692. His son was the Rev. Dr Samuel Halliday, minister of First Belfast Presbyterian Church, who was famous in the Conscriptio controversy of that time.)

Rev. Halliday's report on Stranorlar obviously concluded that they were not capable of ministerial support. This was most likely due to their lack of facilities and funds, as in April 1676, after various meetings and discussions with Presbytery, Mr John Armstrong and Mr Andrew Stephenson asked Presbytery to "write to their brethren in Dublin, that they deal with their Landlord, Mr Bazil, that he may assist them in providing a maintenance for a minister".

However, their request was not successful at this time, and Presbytery continued to send occasional supplies to Stranorlar until the first minister, Mr Robert Wilson, was ordained there by the Presbytery of Convoy in 1709.

Master Robert Wilson (1709 – 1740)

Stranorlar's first minister, **Master Robert Wilson** (licensed in Convoy in 1704) was ordained here on 25th June 1709. He was the son of Master Robert Wilson of Camus, near Strabane, who was installed as the first minister of First Strabane Presbyterian Church in 1659, and later died in the city of Derry during the siege of 1689, having gone there for safety.

This first appointment announced the official foundation of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church, and its recognition as a member of the Convoy Presbytery, and it is believed the original Stranorlar meetinghouse dates from around this time.

There are no records of what this first building was like, but it would have been similar to other rural meetinghouses, typical of those across the Laggan and other parts of Ulster at the time - a basic, modest-sized, rectangular, stone-built structure with a thatched roof.

The walls would have been rough cast externally, and plastered with lime and whitewashed internally. The floors were usually of clay and there would have been no internal ceiling or much decoration. Everyone provided their own seating - failing that, they remained standing or squatted on the floor for the duration of the service, the order of which usually followed the guidelines of the '*Directory of Public Worship*':

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“The order of the service consisted in the forenoon of a prayer, a psalm, a lecture on a passage of Scripture commented on verse by verse; then a prayer followed by a sermon; then a prayer, a psalm and the benediction. The same form was followed in the afternoon service with the omission of the lecture. Each line of the Psalm was read before being sung, making good singing practically impossible. These services in summer, with a brief interval between, occupied the whole day from about 11 o'clock until 5 o'clock in the evening.”

In those days, every meetinghouse would have had a public house close to its gates, and it was customary to retire there for a 'wee dram' during the interval between services each Sabbath. Of course, at that time the total abstinence movement was virtually unheard of, and this custom was perfectly acceptable.



Stranorlar Communion Set (early 19th century) –
Consisting of two silver flagons and four goblets

Communion services were also somewhat different to nowadays, and in some congregations was taken several times a year. Partaking of Communion in the pews only began in 1819, as prior to this long benches were set up in the Church, similar to the Biblical scene of the Last Supper in the Upper Room. Groups of Communicants sat in relays until everyone had partaken, with the minister and elders, unlike today, taking Communion first. In many congregations if members failed to attend Communion they could have been brought before the Session to explain themselves and may have been fined.

Stranorlar congregation was very impoverished when Mr Wilson arrived, but he managed to get extra financial aid from the General Synod in 1711. But these early days were trying times and with little or no resources the congregation would have found it most difficult to support their minister.

The Laggan Presbytery, which was the second Presbytery formed in Ireland in 1649, came to an end in 1700 and was placed in the Presbytery of Convoy. This Presbytery was then further divided into the Letterkenny and Strabane Presbyteries in 1717, with Stranorlar now being in the former.

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By 1720 Mr Wilson had to petition the Synod for further help - '*representing in deplorable circumstances by want of maintenance in that place, and showing forth the great weakness; they are not able to pay above £9 per annum.*' This would have been barely enough to keep a man living, even in those days.

However, it was commonplace for congregations to supply food and other basic requirements to their minister as '*payment in kind*'. Some congregations are recorded as supplying "*over and above forty barrels of oats yearly*" and others promised to "*provide turf; pay house rent; provide an acre of meadow; two acres of corn and grass for a horse and two cows free; and as much land for payment for his use as he ploughs*".

The average yearly income for a minister of a rural congregation at this time would have been about £30 plus his share of the Royal Bounty, which would have increased the Mr Wilson's annual salary by £7 or £8. This *Bounty*, which was also known by its Latin term *Regium Donum*, was a yearly grant of £1,200 made by Charles II in 1672 and divided amongst all Presbyterian ministers. Being barely able to pay £9 annually is a clear indication of how hard times were for the Stranorlar people in these early days.

The charge of the Mr Wilson later proved quite controversial as the hardships suffered in Stranorlar began to take their toll. Presbytery had investigated and acted on allegations regarding Mr Wilson, as the following account by Rev. Mullen in his book, '*The Kirk & Lands of Convoy*' suggests:

"In the autumn of 1724, the Presbytery noted that a report was being circulated that Robert Wilson, minister of Stranorlar, had been drunk and drank an obscene health. They decided to inquire into it and so started a case which dragged on for about five years.

The Stranorlar people were in favour of their minister to such an extent that when the Presbytery met in Stranorlar in 1726, the members of the court were insulted, one of the witnesses was cut and abused by the mob, and the rest of the witnesses were afraid to appear. Later that year when Mr Wilson wanted the next Presbytery to be at Stranorlar, the Presbytery decided '*for some prudential considerations*' to hold it in Convoy."

He was obviously very popular with the people of Stranorlar, who were prepared to defend him, regardless of the outcome, and the result of the action taken by Presbytery, if any, is not known. However, owing to the lack of financial support and irregular payment of the Bounty, Mr Wilson was eventually forced to resign his charge on the second Tuesday of July 1727, leaving the congregation under the care of Letterkenny Presbytery.

Despite his resignation the Presbytery kept him there as supply for a time, and various other Presbyteries contributed to his support.

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Later that year, due to continued poverty, the General Synod recommended that as Stranorlar congregation could no longer '*support the gospel*' it should be dissolved. It was reported that the congregation wished to be annexed to Donoughmore and Convoy, and therefore Letterkenny Presbytery decided:

“That the Skirt of Convoy congregation that was Joyn'd to Stranorlar, with those of ye people of the congregation of Stranorlar that ly upon the road between Convoy and Stranorlar shall be joyn'd to Convoy, and that the Skirt of Donoughmore congregation and the rest of ye people of Stranorlar congregation shall be joyn'd to Donoughmore and they do recommend it to and appoint Mr Fairly and Mr Laird to take the ministerial charge of those people, and recommend it to those people to submit to their ministry and pay their salary to them”.

This decision was then presented to the people of Stranorlar and they duly accepted it. Mr Fairly was minister of Convoy from 1711 to 1766, and Mr Laird was minister of Donoughmore from 1709 to 1742.

Stranorlar congregation officially continued to dissolve for some years but records show that the Mr Wilson must have later resumed his ministry as he was still here in 1735. Many people may not have been able to travel to these neighbouring meetinghouses on a weekly basis and, despite having no income, Mr Wilson seems to have remained here, at least part-time, to look after these people who he had now known for twenty years, and who had earlier defended him so faithfully. He may also have been ministering part-time in Strabane, where he had come from, as in June of that year he complained to the Synod of Ulster (of which Mr Laird of Donoughmore was Moderator from 1730 to 1742) that Strabane Presbytery were greatly indebted to him.

There is no record in the Synod's minutes of the Mr Wilson's departure from Stranorlar, but his death is thought to have occurred *circa* 1740. In 1744 the Stranorlar people decided to re-form the congregation, and are recorded in the same year as having sent a commissioner to Presbytery asking that a Mr Hamilton be the constant supplier.

Those who had been joined to Donoughmore under Mr Laird had now returned to Stranorlar after some seventeen years of dissolution. They then requested Presbytery to ask Mr Fairlie to instruct those who had been joined to Convoy to also return to Stranorlar:

“Presbytery accordingly told Mr Fairlie and his Session not to entertain the Stranorlar members any longer. Some of these would evidently liked to have remained in Convoy, for the next year a complaint was made against the Convoy Session for admitting some of the members of Stranorlar to Church privileges without a certificate from Stranorlar Session. The Presbytery then agreed that the Session of Convoy should admit no Stranorlar members to Church privileges without such a

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certificate, and that none of the Stranorlar members should not be received back by Stranorlar until they cleared off all arrears due to Mr Fairlie.”

With many of the original members back in the congregation, and Presbytery prepared to provide a replacement minister, the future looked brighter for the people of Stranorlar. And it wasn't long before a new, able and willing man was found, who led the congregation diligently for more than a decade.

Rev. Joseph Kinkead (1745 – 1755)

On 4th September 1745, Letterkenny Presbytery ordained the second minister of Stranorlar, the **Rev. Joseph Kinkead**. He was licensed there in 1743.

(It was only from around 1750 onwards that ministers were referred to in the minutes of the Synod of Ulster as 'Reverend', being styled as 'Master' up to this time.)

After eleven years of service in Stranorlar, Mr Kinkead received and accepted a call to Killinchy, Co. Down in 1755. Unfortunately, owing to some trouble between that congregation and the Killyleagh Presbytery, he was not installed there until 28th April 1763. His ministry then continued there for almost twenty years and he passed away on 20th July 1782.

Stranorlar congregation at this time was enduring a twelve-year vacancy since the departure of Rev. Kinkead. Presbytery would have provided supply during this time, and finally, a replacement minister was found in 1767.

Rev. Joseph Love (1767 – 1807)

On 16th June 1767, **Rev. Joseph Love** was ordained in Stranorlar. He was licensed by the Letterkenny Presbytery in 1764, and carried out a faithful ministry of over forty years in Stranorlar.

In 1796 the Rev. Love was appointed by Donoughmore to take a poll of the congregation with regard to the election of Rev. Samuel Dill as their next minister. However, this poll became quite controversial as Rev. Love refused to use the voting list prepared by the Session and insisted in using one provided by a Mr Gillespie, which was not sanctioned. This caused protesting and outrage amongst the congregation, and delayed the Rev. Dill's election for three years, but he was eventually installed in 1799.

This era was another troubled time in Irish history, when the Protestant Ascendancy controlled 95% of Irish land, even though Catholics made up 75% of the population - now approaching five million. These festering troubles would later erupt in the form of the disastrous Rebellion of 1798.

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Stranorlar's new Meetinghouse

Although the actual date is not known, the original meetinghouse was replaced some time around 1800. This new meetinghouse is the T-shaped building shown on the Stranorlar Map of 1859 - 1866 (page 5), and served the congregation throughout the ministries of Rev. Neilson, Rev. Steele, Rev. Graham, and finally Rev. Curry (from 1881), who later had it replaced in 1906.



Interior of a typical early 19th century meetinghouse – note the boxed pews and the sounding board positioned over the pulpit.

The new building in Stranorlar was much more commodious than what its predecessor would have been, with east and west aisles to the front, similar to the design of many Anglican

Church buildings. It also had a slated roof and would have had a much superior standard of fittings and comfort than the old building. This church was later extensively refurbished by Rev. Hugh Clarke Graham in the late 1860's, a time when membership of Stranorlar was three times what it is today. Mr Jim Reid (d.1981), a former member, remembered as a young boy this old, dilapidated building with its sagging slate roof in 1904.

Rev. Love, much regretted by the people of the congregation, passed away in Stranorlar on 26th September 1807. He was the first of only three ministers to date to have spent their entire ministry here.

Rev. James Neilson (1808 – 1821)

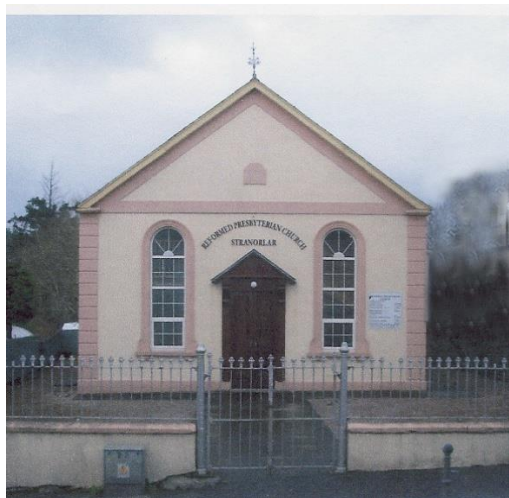
His successor was **Rev. James Neilson**, the son of a Co. Down farmer, who was ordained in Stranorlar on 2nd November 1808. The first hundred years of the congregation had passed and the Centenary of the official foundation would have been acknowledged in June 1809.

Very little is known about the ministry of Rev. Neilson, only that after becoming infirm he formally retired in 1821 after 13 years of faithful service. Rev. James Steele was ordained in the same year as his assistant and successor, and Rev. Neilson remained as the senior minister of the congregation until his death in September 1826.

It was during his early ministry here that a **Seceders Church** was formed in Stranorlar, later to become **Second Stranorlar Presbyterian Church**.

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Stranorlar Second Presbyterian Church



In 1811, Stranorlar Seceders Church was formed. It was established by the Burgher Secession Synod, and was located near Lafferty's Brae.

The first minister was Rev. David Fulton, ordained in March 1812. He resigned his charge in 1829 and was replaced by Rev. John Macaulay from Drumgooland, Co. Down in 1831, a highly respected and popular man who continued his ministry there for some 38 years. He was an uncle of William John

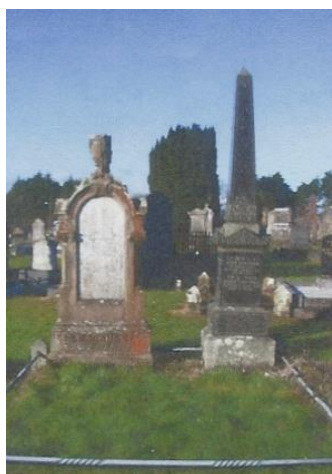
Macaulay, who later ministered in First Stranorlar from 1874 to 1880.

During his ministry, the union of the Synods in 1840, which resulted in the formation of the General Assembly, placed the congregation here in the Donegal Presbytery and it then became known as **Second Stranorlar Presbyterian Church**.



The Rev. Macaulay lived at *Kilross House*, (pictured left) which served as a former Manse and is currently the home of Mrs Alice Woods. Here he farmed a fourteen acre holding together with five

acres at Tircallen, all leased from the Marquis Conyngham, at a total cost of £17-10s per annum. Many rural based ministers combined farming with their ministry at this time. A new Manse was later built in Stranorlar and is currently occupied by the Rev. Stephen Wright.



Rev. Macaulay died in October, 1869 and is buried in Stranorlar Parish churchyard, where his gravestone, (pictured left) reads: *"In Memory of Rev. John Macaulay, Presbyterian Minister of 2nd Stranorlar, Died 3rd October 1869, Aged 61 years. Also, His Wife Eliza Jane, Died 5th January 1910, Aged 93 years; Also Their Daughter Elizabeth Ann, Died 3rd April 1916, Aged 60 years."*

The tall gravestone on the right of the picture on the same grave is that of Mrs Ross Hastings of Londonderry who laid the foundation stone of the new Presbyterian Church in 1906.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Resistance to Union

By June 1870 the congregation had reported to the Assembly that they had given a call to a licentiate named Mr James Manair. However, the Presbytery and Synod had other ideas and tried to force a union between the two Stranorlar congregations.

This was strongly resisted by the Seceders, who had now existed in Stranorlar for sixty years and had ninety communicants, with 43 paying members. As far as they were concerned, they were well established and could afford to keep their own minister with a £35 a year stipend. The matter went to the General Assembly, who eventually decided to close Second Stranorlar. But the church members defied them, and locked the church doors against any of its ministers.

During this time it was recorded that the Covenanter minister in Donegal town frequently travelled on horseback, via Stranorlar to Convoy to take the services there, before returning home to take the service in his own congregation. The Stranorlar people approached him and asked him to provide them with temporary supply, and he obliged.

They then sought occasional supply from the Reformed Scottish Presbyterian Church, to which they later became affiliated, and the Second Presbyterian congregation has been a Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church since then.

Second Stranorlar's New Church Building (1877)

After some time, they decided to replace the old church building on Lafferty's Brae and acquired a new site on the Main Street from Sir Samuel Hayes. The new Church was completed in 1877 under the instruction of Rev. Robert Adams McFarlane (1871-1893 & 1896-1906), a very capable man who had been to the USA twice on fund raising tours.

This new building was somewhat ahead of its time with an under floor heating system and a sloping 'theatre-style' floor. Rev. McFarlane, who had come from Mulvin, left Stranorlar in 1893 to take up duties in Bready, but returned to Stranorlar in 1896. He spent the last ten years of his life and ministry here and was in attendance at the laying of the foundation stone service in 1st Stranorlar in April 1906. He passed away in December that year.

Other ministers of the congregation include Rev. Kennedy (1894-1896); Rev. Thompson (1909-1912); Rev. Davidson (1915-1931); Rev. James Campbell (1933-1947), later a professor of Latin and Greek; Rev. Norman McCune (1948-1956); Rev. Robert Lyttle (1957-1974); Rev. Samuel Cromie (1975-1990) - previously a missionary to Ethiopia for twelve years; Rev. Tim Donaghy (1992-1997); and Rev. Marcus McCullagh (1997-2003). The congregation joined in partnership with the Reformed Church in Convoy in 1931. The present minister is Rev. Stephen Wright.

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Frances Brown – ‘The Blind Girl of Donegal’ (1816 – 1879)

It was also during Rev. Neilson’s ministry in First Stranorlar, that, on 16th January 1816, Frances Brown was born. She and her family were members of this congregation and Frances went on to become a famous and successful poet, novelist and journalist, later known as ‘*the blind girl of Donegal*’. She was a daughter of the first local postmaster (the Post Office being located at the top of Mill Brae, now the home of Mrs Rita Roulston); and they lived at No.3 Main Street, Stranorlar, opposite Kee’s Hotel. Her parents came from Bangor and Frances was the seventh of 12 children. Her brother, John, later became the minister of First Ray Presbyterian Church.

She attended the local school under the auspices of Mr Benson McGranahan, where other renowned scholars included Isaac Butt (pictured left) and William



McArthur. Butt, whose father was the local Church of Ireland Rector, entered Trinity College at fifteen years of age and became a Barrister at Law and later a politician and was the founder of the Home Rule Movement. McArthur, later Sir William McArthur, who was of Methodist extraction, was the first Irishman to become the Lord Mayor of London. In later years, Butt and McArthur used to meet on regular occasions in the House of Parliament at Westminster, where they would recount in glowing terms the teachings received from Mr McGranahan who was the son of the Rev. Dr McGranahan of First Derry Presbyterian Church.

In her biography, Frances Browne tells her own story: “At the age of eighteen months I had the misfortune to lose my sight by smallpox, which was then prevalent in our neighbourhood. This however, I do not remember, and, indeed recollect very little of my infant years. I never received any regular education, but very early felt the want of it. For the first time I remember to have experienced this feeling strongly was about the beginning of my seventh year when I heard our pastor (my parents being members of the Presbyterian Church) preach for the first time.”

This pastor was none other than the Rev. James Steele, whose outstanding service and ministry prevailed in Stranorlar for 38 years, from 1821 to 1859.

Some of the romantic lyrics and expressions of her poetry are profound, considering she was blind from infancy and had never seen the beauty of the natural world around her. She moved to Edinburgh (with her sister, who was employed as her *amanuensis*) in 1847, and later to London where she was given a pension of £25 a year from the Civil List by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, in admiration of her work. Sadly, she died there a pauper in 1879, at the age of 63 years. Her talent and ability were evident in the various collections of poetry she had published in leading literary publications throughout her lifetime, including the fantasy stories of what probably is her most famous work, ‘*Granny’s Wonderful Chair*’.

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One of her best remembered poems is 'Songs of Our Land', published in the 'Irish Penny Journal' on 6th March 1841:

Songs of Our Land

Songs of Our Land you are with us forever,
The power and the splendour of Thrones pass away,
But yours is the might of some far flowing river
Through summer's bright roses and autumn's decay;

Ye treasure each voice with swift passing ages,
And truth with time write-eth on leaves of the sand,
Ye bring us bright thoughts of Poets and Sages,
And keep them amongst us, old songs of our land;

The page may be lost, and the pen long forgotten
The weeds may grow cold o'er the brave heart and hand,
But ye are still left, when all else has been taken,
Like streams in the desert, sweet songs of our land.



Pictured unveiling a plaque outside her home in Stranorlar in her memory in 1958 is Mrs Courtney, wife of Rev. Herbert Courtney of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church. Also present were local journalist James Kelly, and Chris McDonagh of the Donegal Historical Society who was instrumental in having the plaque erected. A copy of a beautiful and touching tribute entitled 'To Frances Brown' published in 'An Tostal Souvenir Programme' in 1953 by James Kelly, still hangs in the church Session room:

To Frances Brown (1816 – 1879)

She through life deep darkness bore
Without rebuke, remorse or tear,
Nor, ever saw the sun's bright light
Or silvery moonbeams playing here;
And yet with all her mind illumed
Until it shone with a jewels' gleam,
And she could find within its sphere
A world, her own, in which to dream
And weave her verse of enchanting grace,
To teach us all the strength of human will
That though compelled unending night to face,
Man may fulfil his Maker's purpose still;
And as we cast our pensive gaze
Upon the scenes she sensed but could not see,
The prayer goes up unbidden from our lips:
May light be hers for all eternity.

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Rev. James Steele B.A. D.D. (1821 – 1859)

Rev. James Steele was ordained as Rev. Neilson's assistant and successor on 8th November 1821. He was born in 1792 and originally came from The Tops,

Raphoe, the only son of James and Jane Steele (nee MacCrea), who also had four daughters.



On his appointment in Stranorlar he took up residence on Main Street, and remained there until his death in 1859.

His work was exemplary in every manner and his record keeping in beautiful copperplate handwriting has left an interesting and detailed record of church life from that time. He began the registry of

baptisms (1821), burials (1831), and marriages (1846), even though the keeping of such records were not required by law until much later, and these were the first official recordings of Church activity in Stranorlar.

Rev. Steele was a very learned and capable man and later received a Doctorate of Divinity from the USA. His genius was often spoken of in glowing terms in the most educated circles, and some twenty years after his demise a reference to him by the Rev. John Armstrong was no exception. In response on behalf of Presbytery at the ordination of the Rev. John Macaulay in Stranorlar, on 14th October 1874, Rev Armstrong declared:

“I had the pleasure of knowing a former minister of this congregation, the late Dr. Steele. He had few equals for talent; he was one of the most eloquent men I ever heard. I remember on one occasion he addressed a congregation from the words, *‘They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength’*, and he carried me away to such an extent with his eloquence, style, diction, and manner, that I was at times almost tempted to exclaim, ‘Is he earthly?’”.

Early in his ministry here Rev. Steele was given permission by the Kirk Session to hold an Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Stranorlar meetinghouse. Slavery was very topical in Ulster at this time due to the strong ties between the Irish and Ulster-Scots Presbyterians in America. Many of them were engaged in the struggle for liberty, and slavery was finally abolished in the British Empire in 1833.

This was the beginning of a time of great improvements for the ordinary working class people as it also prevented the employment of children under the age of nine years and legally reduced working hours significantly for the elderly.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

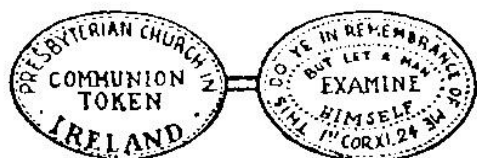
The First Congregational Committee (1839)

Under the auspices of the Rev. Steele, the first congregational committee was established on 18th November 1839. The members of this first committee were Messrs. John Cochrane Esq., William Walker, James Taylor, John Shanklin, William Finlay and Dr Robert Sproule, and they were responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of Church property.

Earlier that year, on 6th January, there had been a ferocious hurricane, the likes of which had never been experienced in living memory. Property everywhere was extensively damaged, with reports of many people killed by collapsing buildings and being blown into waterways. Without doubt, the Church did not escape being damaged and the necessary repair work may have inspired the formation of the first committee later that year.

Communion Tokens

Rev. Steele introduced the use of Communion Tokens to Stranorlar in 1852, a time when the congregation numbered 145 subscribing families. The first type used here in Stranorlar were known as 'Stock-Tokens' and were oval



shaped pewter discs with 'Stranorlar Presbyterian Church' stamped on one side and 'Let a man examine himself' and 'This do in Remembrance of Me - 1st Cor IX.24' stamped on the reverse.

An original token from this Church dating from this time, previously part of the Lowry collection, is on display at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Belfast. It is similar to that pictured above.



1st Ray

Tokens had been in use in Scotland since 1560, and in the Laggan from the late 17th century. These early tokens were usually made from lead by the local blacksmith, and would have had the name or initials of the congregation and occasionally of the minister branded on them. This lead token from 1st Ray dates to 1779.

The Irish Language

Rev. Steele was a fluent Irish speaker and preached his sermons in Irish on alternate Sundays. An article by Aodh de Blacam, in *Studies* for 1934, 'The Other Hidden Ireland', refers to Rev. Steele and the Gaelic culture and language that was practiced by Presbyterians in Ireland until the late 19th century:

"We might take the poets Comyn in Clare, and Fitzgerald in Waterford County as examples of Protestants who were indistinguishable from their Catholic neighbours in Gaelic culture in the Penal days.

Farther back, the dispute among Protestant prelates in the seventeenth century as to whether services should be conducted in Irish shows how

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considerable was the use of Irish among the Protestants of the seventeenth century.

Bishop Bedell wanted Irish-speaking clergy and Irish prayers for existing congregations, whereas the Anglicising party (which prevailed) wished to spread the English language.

When John Wesley brought Methodism to Ireland, his followers soon found the need for preachers in Irish if they were to reach the common Protestant people, neglected by their prelates in Ireland and in England; Gaelic preachers were appointed and it is recorded how one of these addressed the troops in Bandon in 1798 in Gaelic after failing to make himself understood in English – they were Scots.

As for the Presbyterians, they were largely Gaelic speaking when they came from Scotland, and they remained so till a late date. Everyone knows the tale of how Dr. Neilson (author of an Irish grammar published in 1806) was arrested in 1798, after preaching in Irish in County Down, on suspicion of treason.

A predecessor of John Mitchell's father in Newry was a Gaelic speaker from Scotland; he used to go down into County Louth to a Gaelic speaking congregation near Dundalk.

Until seventy years ago a course of Irish was part of the training of Presbyterian clergy. When Cardinal Logue was a young curate in Ballybofey, he was the cordial friend of the Rev. Steele, a Presbyterian clergyman who preached on alternate Sundays in Irish."

Membership of the congregation was so high at this time and for many successive years that pews had to be shared by two families in many cases. After 33 years in Stranorlar, the congregation made a special presentation to Rev. Steele on Christmas Day, 1854 -

“with an Address testifying to the excellence of his pulpit-ministrations, which evidenced both deep research and close study and critical knowledge, and to the zeal which he tended his flock scattered over a wide mountainous region.”

Rev. Steele also acted as Clerk of the Donegal Presbytery for 16 years, from 1843, until his death in 1859.

Rev. Steele's Family

Rev. Steele was married twice. His first marriage on 13th December 1821 was to Mary Ann Patton (b.1798), daughter of Thomas Patton from Castlefinn, and the ceremony was performed by the Rev. William Ramsay of Raphoe. They had three sons and one daughter. Mrs Steele died quite suddenly on 8th September 1833 after a short illness of only a few days duration.

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By this first marriage, Rev. Steele's daughter was **Ann Jane** (right), who married the minister of Carnone Presbyterian Church, Rev. John Porter Dickey M.A. (left). He ministered there for over 50 years, after the ministry of his father Rev. William Dickey who also held the same charge for just under 50 years.



Ann Jane and Rev. Dickey had one daughter and five sons, one of which was a highly talented and gifted scholar of the Presbyterian Church. He was their third son, Robert Henry Frederick Dickey, M.A. D.D., born on 12th September 1856. He was educated at Raphoe Royal School, Queen's College, Belfast and Edinburgh University where he achieved the highest distinctions.

He was later appointed Professor of Hebrew and New Testament Greek Biblical Criticism at the *MacCrea Magee College*, Londonderry. He died in 1915 and is buried at Derry Cemetery.



Rev. & Mrs Henry Stewart Steele



Drumlee Manse & Church

Rev. Steele's elder son, **Henry Stewart Steele**, born 22nd February, 1828, followed in his father's footsteps and took up the ministry. He obtained his degree in Glasgow, was licensed by the Donegal Presbytery in 1850, and accepted a call to Derrynure in the Newtownlimavady Presbytery in July 1851.

However, a few weeks before he was due to be ordained there, he received and accepted a call to Drumlee, near Castlewella, Co. Down, to fill a vacancy created by the sudden death of their previous minister, the Rev. Porter.

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He married Elizabeth Dill, daughter of Rev. John Dill of Carnmoney and granddaughter of the well known Rev. Samuel Dill of Donoughmore (1798-



1845) whose wife Hester, was the daughter and heiress of Robert Foster of Berwick Hall, where the Dill's resided. *Berwick Hall* was a beautiful old mansion below Donoughmore, where James II stayed on his way to the Siege of Derry. Sadly, it was later

demolished, and its replacement (pictured above) is now derelict.

Rev. Henry and Elizabeth Steele had one son, James, who married but without issue; and two daughters, Hester Dill Steele and Elizabeth Steele, neither of whom married. Rev. Henry Steele was troubled with poor health and sought resignation as early as 1859. He continued in his ministry at Drumlee until he retired in 1869 due to prolonged ill health, and passed away on 8th September 1874 at the young age of 46 years.

He obviously had inherited many of his father's traits, as in a summary of the history of Drumlee, the Rev. Thomas Rowan refers to him as:

“a clear and earnest expositor of the Gospel, a humble and affectionate pastor of the most exemplary walk and conversation, much beloved by his people.”

James Thomas Steele, the second son of Dr. Steele, was born on 31st January 1830 and later emigrated to New Zealand where he became a volunteer in the *Wellington Rifles* and a prominent Free Mason. He was also established in business at Lampton Quay and died there in 1885, leaving his wife and seven children. His eldest son died in 1879 aged 21 years and two of his grandsons named Rout served in the N.Z. Forces in France during the Great War, and were wounded.

Rev. James Steele's younger son was **William John Steele**, born on 16th September 1831. He became a scientific scholar of great distinction and was a Fellow of St. Peter's College, Cambridge.

He had been taught the classics by his father and entered Glasgow University at 13 years of age and after distinguishing himself in all the classes of a very comprehensive curriculum including languages, sciences and philosophy, he graduated with the highest possible distinction and received the Dean of Faculty's Gold Medal at 15½ years of age.

He later became Master of Peterhouse at Glasgow University and at St. Peter's College, Cambridge. His only printed work was an advanced scientific paper on '*Treatise on the Lunar Theories*' and his early death in 1855 at the age of 24 years was a great loss to all, including the scientific world.

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The following account of his life and death was published in the *Londonderry Journal* in 1855:

“Death of W.J. Steele

It is a painful task to announce today the universally deplored death of William J. Steele Esq., the third son of the Rev. Dr Steele of Stranorlar, and Fellow of St. Peter’s College in the University of Cambridge.

His name of numerous honours must be familiar to all our readers. Tho’ bereft of his mother’s care when only two years old he became in childhood a wonderful example of precocious devotion to learning and religion.

Under the tuition of an excellent English master and having been taught the classics by his father, he was prepared to enter Glasgow University with great honour at the early age of 13 years (November 1844) and after signalling himself in all the classes of a very comprehensive curriculum, the languages, the sciences and philosophy in its various departments and having obtained many costly prizes, he graduated as A.M. Cum. Magno Honour, and with highest distinction, receiving the Dean of the Faculty’s Gold Medal when only 15 ½ years old.

In October 1847 he obtained the Breadalbane Scholarship, one of great pecuniary value and honour, and was removed to the celebrated seat of Literature and Seres at Cambridge. In St. Peter’s College he was first in all his examinations and obtained several scholarships and premiums.

In January 1852 while little more than 20 years old he obtained the very high honours of Second Wranglership, the Second Smyth’s Prize and his Degree of A.B. In July 1853 he was elected to a Foundation Fellowship and became soon after a ‘F.C.P.S.’

After a short illness borne with a most pious resignation and the full assurance of hope, he expired with his hand entwined with those of his two brothers at the first moment of Sabbath 11th March 1855, to him the commencement of an endless Sabbatism in Glory.

At the time of his demise he was on the verge of giving to the world in a work of profound science, the resort of his talents and study. His death is truly a national calamity.

The entire community in and around Stranorlar of every rank and denomination have been plunged into the deepest sorrow and sympathy, for he was their idol.

We dare not refer to the aching intensity of family distress. His holy life and peaceful death however are fraught with richest consolation. He was ever clothed with the humility, meekness and simplicity of a child, while the polish and dignity of his manner caused the great and the learned of the age to be proud of his society.

Few so young have made more sincere and valuable friends, and by none who knew him can he ever be forgotten. A memoir of his life would undoubtedly be an opulent acquisition to Literature and Christianity.”

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Rev. Steele's second marriage on 16th June 1837 was to Sarah, daughter of Captain Henderson, whose descendants now live in Randalstown, Co. Antrim. The marriage ceremony was performed by the Rev. Dr Browne of Manorcunningham.

They later had two sons, the first of whom was Joseph Zachaeus Cochrane Steele, born on 24th June 1839 and baptised by Rev. Samuel Dill of Donoughmore on 21st July 1839. He was named after Mr J.Z. Cochrane of *Edenmore House*, Stranorlar and he later emigrated to join his brother in Wellington, New Zealand, where he married, resided at Reefton and had a son and a daughter.

The second son from Rev. Steele's second marriage was Frederick Macaulay Steele, born on 6th November 1840 and baptised by Rev. Robert Holmes of Donoughmore on 6th December that year. He was for many years the manager of the Ulster Bank in Strabane and retired to live in Glandore Gardens, Belfast.

Mr F.M. Steele was also twice married and had ten children – five sons and



five daughters. His first wife was Annie Scott and his second wife was Margaret Dowie, daughter of Sir Robert McVicker, Knight of Derry. He and his first wife and daughter are buried in Stranorlar Parish Churchyard, as is Rev. Steele's second wife, Sarah. The family headstone reads:

'To the memory of Sarah, Wife of Rev. James Steele D.D., who died 2nd June 1864 Aged 60 years; Also in Memory of Annie Scott, the Dearly Beloved Wife of F.M. Steele, Strabane, who Died 15th May 1884, Leaving a Sorrow too Deep for Human Sympathy and which Time Cannot Assuage. Also their Daughter

ANNIE, who Died 30th June 1900, Aged 17 years. Also Frederick Macaulay Steele, who Died November 16th 1923, Aged 83 Years'.

Rev. James Steele D.D. passed away on 17th June 1859. His death notice in *The Londonderry Journal* on Wednesday, 22nd June 1859 read:

“At Stranorlar, on Friday 17th last, aged 67 years, the Rev. James Steele D.D., minister of the first Presbyterian Church, much and deservedly regretted for his many and amiable qualities.”

Rev. Steele's portrait still hangs in Carnone House, the former Dickey family home and the current home of Mr & Mrs Ralph Sheppard. Mrs Sheppard (nee Dickey) is a great, great granddaughter of the Rev. Steele.

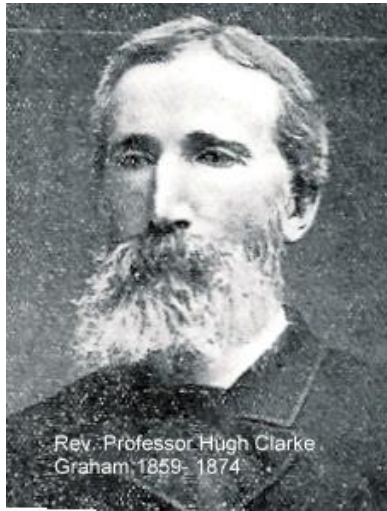
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Griffith's Valuation of Tenements, 1857

| Townland | Occupier | Immediate Lessor | Description of Tenement | Area A.R.P. | Rateable Value - Land £.s.d | Rateable Value - Buildings £.s.d | Total £.s.d |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Tommyscroft, Craigs, Convoy | Joseph Knox | Sir Edmund Hayes, Bt. | House, Off. & Land | 57.0.10 | 14.10.0 | - | 21.15.0 |
| | | | | 3.0.20 | 1.0.0 | - | |
| | | | | 2.0.5 | 1.0.0 | - | |
| | | | | 0.3.2 | 0.5.0 | 1.5.0 | |
| | | | | 5.2.10 | 3.15.0 | - | |
| Cloghroe | Joseph Davis | Sir Edmund Hayes, Bt. | Caretakers' Sho, Off. & Ld | 48.0.10 | 13.8.0 | 0.12.0 | 14.0.0 |
| Cloghroe | Charles Davis | Sir Edmund Hayes, Bt. | House, Off. & Land | 26.2.30 | 3.15.0 | 0.15.0 | 4.10 |
| Drumnacross | John Fairman | Richard Young | House, Off. & Land | 38.0.0 | 20.0.0 | 1.10.0 | 22.0.0 |
| Kilcadden | William Walker | Lord Bishop Of Derry & Raphoe | House, Office Gatelodge, Corn & Flax Mills | 189.0.39 | 156.10.0 | 16.0.0 | 190.10.0 |
| | | | | - | - | 18.0.0 | |
| Kilcadden | James Bates | William Walker | House & Sm. Garden | - | - | 0.5.0 | 0.5.0 |
| Edenmore | John Cochrane | In Fee | Water House, Off. & Land Plantation Plantation | 5.3.0 | - | - | 194.10.0 |
| | | | | 133.0.0 | 162.0.0 | 28.0.0 | |
| | | | | 16.0.28 | 3.10.0 | - | |
| | | | | 1.2.35 | 1.0.0 | - | |
| Cavan Upper | James Russell | Alex. J.R. Stewart | House, Off. & Land | 79.3.20 | 31.10.0 | 4.10.0 | 36.0.0 |
| Sessiagh -oneill | James Reid | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 88.2.22 | 30.15.0 | 1.0.0 | 31.15.0 |
| Dunwiley | John Hastings | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 16.6.10 | 10.15.0 | 1.10.0 | 12.5.0 |
| Dunwiley | Robert Hastings | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 65.0.0 | 42.5.0 | 3.15.0 | 46.0.0 |
| Dunwiley | Robert Kilpatrick | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 24.3.0 | 8.10.0 | 1.0.0 | 9.10.0 |
| Dunwiley | Francis Wallwood | Marquis Conyngham | Land | 2.2.33 | 2.10.0 | - | 2.10.0 |
| Trenamullin | Matthew Fairman | John Cochrane | House, Off. & Land | 59.2.30 | 26.10.0 | 1.15.0 | 28.5.0 |
| Trenamullin | Samuel Maxwell | John Cochrane | House, Off. & Land | 30.1.30 | 24.10.0 | 2.0.0 | 26.10.0 |
| Castlebane | William Kilpatrick | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 24.2.21 | 16.18.0 | 1.7.0 | 18.5.0 |
| Castlebane | Andrew Kilpatrick | Marquis Conyngham | House, Off. & Land | 36.0.18 | 17.0.0 | 2.0.0 | 19.0.0 |
| Admiran | Archibald McQuilkan | James Allen | Land | 2.3.10 | 3.10.0 | - | 3.10.0 |
| Stranorlar | John Gunning | Marquis Conyngham | Land | 10.4.10 | 15.10.0 | - | 15.10.0 |
| Stranorlar | Rev. James Steele | George M. Browne | Land | 4.10.0 | 6.10.0 | - | 6.10.0 |
| Stranorlar | Rev. James Steele | Marquis Conyngham | Land | 3.2.0 | 5.5.0 | - | 5.5.0 |
| Stranorlar | Presbyterian Mtg-House | Exempt | Mtg House & Yard | - | - | 23.0.0 | 23.0.0 |

The above table is a record of property taken by some members of the congregation including the Rev. Steele, in 1857. The Church was listed for rates of £23 per annum.

Rev. Hugh Clarke Graham M.A. (1859 – 1874)



Rev. Steele's successor, **Rev. Hugh Clarke Graham** (b.1830), was licensed in Co. Down in 1858, and ordained in Stranorlar on 28th December 1859. Rev. Graham had been a brilliant student from an early age, and by means of teaching and scholarships had been able to support himself from the age of fifteen years.

He firstly obtained a first class Honours degree in Metaphysics and a Senior Scholarship in Metaphysical and Economical Science, before deciding to train for the ministry and dedicate his life to the service of God.

Rev. Graham was held in high regard amongst the people of Stranorlar where he was noted for being a most erudite and accomplished man.

The Great Revival (1859)

The year of the Rev. Graham's arrival in Stranorlar witnessed what became known as the *Great Revival of 1859*, evident in Protestant Churches all over the country. Open-air meetings were commonplace, and meetinghouses everywhere were consistently '*crowded to suffocation*'. A new style approach to Christian witness and teaching which started off in Ballymena and spread like wildfire across Ulster, led to this Great Revival of 1859.

Such scenes were recorded in Monreagh Presbyterian Church by the Rev. Andrew Long, who states '*On Lord's Day, June 26, we enjoyed great showers of blessing. The scene which took place baffles description....I never witnessed such deep solemnity...one person fell out of her pew upon the aisle...in a few moments about twenty were prostrated in different quarters of the house. Multitudes weeping and the whole congregation moved as if judgement day had come*'.

Although this Revival was generally seen as a positive development, many traditionalist Presbyterians were opposed to it due to the excesses, as described above, that often accompanied it. But it had an overall positive effect on most Presbyterian congregations in Donegal, the membership of which was at a peak at this time.

In the early 1860's Rev. Graham organised a much-needed extensive remodelling programme for the church building.

However, in 1874, after fifteen years of dedicated service in Stranorlar, he was forced to retire from active ministry due to continual ill health.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

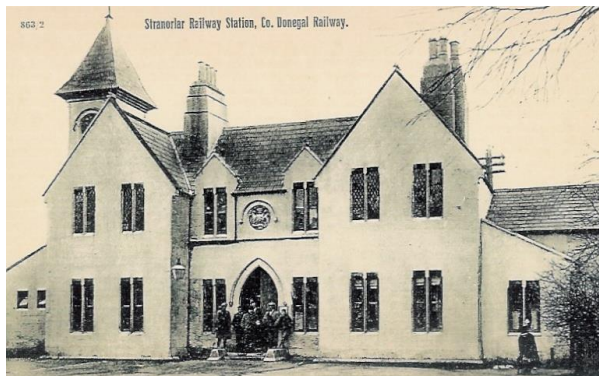
Other developments at this time

Hymn Books: The use of new hymns, as opposed to the time-honoured Psalms and Paraphrases, and the use of instrumental music in worship were also introduced to many Presbyterian Churches during and after this Revival, but were often met with stiff opposition. When a Harmonium was presented to a congregation in Enniskillen, the Assembly was divided for more than twenty years over the issue, and with great controversy.

Eventually, after the need for a new Hymn Book was passed in 1895, it was agreed by the General Assembly to leave the use of musical instruments in worship to the discretion of each congregation. The Reformed Presbyterian Churches remains with the old *precentor* tradition and still do not use any musical accompaniment.

Population: This was a golden era for Presbyterianism in Ulster, which now had record membership, and enthusiasm since the Great Revival was at an all time high. The census of 1861 showed that 10½% of the population of Donegal (over 24,000 people) were Presbyterian.

Transport: In the 1850's, the two largest landowners in the locality, Sir Samuel Hayes, *Bart.*, and the 4th Viscount Lifford were anxious that the benefits of a railway should be brought from Strabane, where it had been in operation since 1847. After preliminary surveys were carried out in 1859, *The Finn Valley Railway Company* was registered. The railway, with its headquarters at Stranorlar Station (pictured), was opened in 1863 and changed the face of the



entire region for the better. It provided much needed employment and commercial benefits, as the Finn Valley was now more accessible and other areas were more accessible to the local people. It remained in operation for almost a hundred years, till its closure on the last day of December 1959.

Rev. Graham's Professorship

After the Rev. Graham's health improved he returned to teaching and was later elected Professor of Metaphysics and Ethics at *McCrea Magee College* in Londonderry. He continued to lecture there for 32 years, until, due to further ill health he eventually retired. He was in his 80th year. Mr Graham enjoyed a further five years in retirement and passed away in 1915, aged 85 years.

After his death, the following account of Rev. Graham's remarkable life was given by the Rev. Professor Woodburn M.A., taken from the *Missionary Herald*, dated 2nd August 1915:

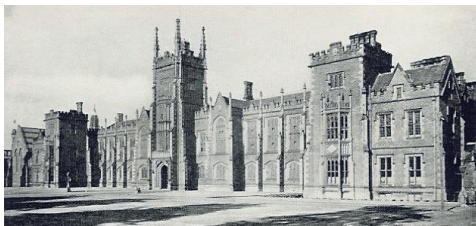
Rev. Professor Hugh Clarke Graham

“A link with the past has been broken by the death of Professor Graham, whose long life extended over nearly 85 years. During this period what changes have occurred, and what alterations both civil and ecclesiastical have taken place even in the quiet Province of Ulster!



Hugh Clarke Graham was born on 12th December 1830 and received his early education in the Royal Academicals Institution, Belfast (pictured). There he proved a brilliant student, and was so much in request as a tutor that from the age of 15 years he was able, by means of teaching and scholarship to support himself. In 1849, the

Queen's College (pictured below) was opened in Belfast, and thus for the first time students in that city could attend classes which would lead to a degree. Mr Graham was quick to avail himself of the privilege, and in the earliest list of scholars his name appears in the literary division. In those days the scholars were arranged in alphabetical order, so it is impossible to tell who stood first in the competition, but there are reasons for thinking that Mr Graham was among the highest.



In the year 1850 he likewise gained a scholarship, but we cannot tell to what place his marks would have entitled him. It is interesting to note that in the list of scholars for this year, the names of Robert Hart and Francis Petticrew stand side by side. The

latter is of course the well-known Professor Petticrew who for many years lectured on theology of the strictest type in McCrea Magee College, while the former found his life's work in the Far East. These three scholars must have known one another well, and from this early association sprang the lifelong friendship of Professor Petticrew and Professor Graham.

For a time however, Mr Graham had to leave college on account of ill health. Never strong, after two years strenuous labour he was forced to give up his studies and to seek relaxation in the country. But he could not be idle, and so we find that he soon became known as a teacher. Indeed, he worked too hard, for although he found employment as a master in a school, he also took students privately both before and after school hours. His first lesson was given as early as seven o'clock.

This strenuous life laid the foundations for permanent ill-health, but in spite of his difficulties he returned to college in 1855 and entered for a third years' scholarship. In the competition he gained first place in the Literary Division, although he had as a rival Andrew Marshal Porter, afterwards Master of the Rolls. About this time Mr Graham turned his attention to the Metaphysics and was happy enough to attend the lectures of Rev. Dr McCosh, a Presbyterian minister.

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He was a Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in Belfast and in that capacity gave Ulster a certain reputation as a home of sound Philosophy. Under his tuition, Mr Graham advanced rapidly in the study of Metaphysics, and gained a first class Honours degree in that subject in 1856. A year later he gained the Senior Scholarship in Metaphysical and Economical Science.

He had already decided to enter the ministry of the Church and dedicate his life to the direct service of God, even before returning to University for the third years' study and entered the Assembly's College where he had as companions Francis Petticrew and Joseph Corkey.

By 1859 he had completed his course and towards the end of that year he received a call from Stranorlar in Co. Donegal. He was ordained there on 28th December that year. For a long time he laboured in that congregation, but his ill health returned and after 15 years' service he was forced to retire from the active duties of the ministry in 1874. It seemed that his life's work, so carefully prepared for and so strenuously pursued was at an end. He was compelled to resume his old occupation of teaching and for some years was a familiar figure in well-known schools around Belfast.

In 1878, however, the Chair for Metaphysics and Ethics became vacant at McCrea Magee College owing to the resignation of Professor Shaw who had decided to join the Irish Bar, a step that soon led him to a County Court Judgeship and eventually to the Recordship of Belfast. Mr Graham became a candidate for the Chair and was elected by the General Assembly.

When Professor Graham came to Londonderry he found the college in an anomalous position. It possessed two Faculties, one of Divinity and one of Arts, but neither was connected with any University and consequently the students, though they attended the usual college lectures were unable to obtain those degrees which constitute a kind of hall-mark of superior study and attainment. Excellent, and sometimes noteworthy men kept their terms in the college, but they were forced to enter upon their life's work without the advantages, real or imaginary, which a degree is supposed to confer. This state of things could not continue.

In 1881, the Royal University was brought into existence, and the college at length was formally recognised as an institution that prepared men for examination. One immediate result was the large increase in the number of students, and thus the college became a much more important centre than it had been in earlier days.

Professor Graham took a deep interest in all who passed through his classes and followed their subsequent careers with close attention. The students found in him a true friend, who was always disposed to take the most kindly and most generous course. None who knew him could fail to have the deepest respect for his character, and his presence in the college was a perpetual benediction.

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His favourite study was Christian Ethics, and its very spirit seemed to animate the man. He approached every subject from the highest standpoint, and had found his way to those supreme, yet simple principles, which furnish at once the beginning and the end of the Christian life. Thus by his unfailing kindness, his wonderful gentleness, and his manifest goodness, he introduced an element into college life that it is sometimes lacking. He never judged any man harshly or even severely, yet his own opinions on most subjects were very definite, and when necessary he could express them with vigour. For 32 years he lectured to his students, and only when he had attained his 80th year that his failing health necessitated his withdrawal from the active duties of Professorship.

In the fortunes of his college Professor Graham was intensely interested and no one rejoiced more than he, when on the dissolution of the Royal University in 1909 the present excellent arrangement was made by which the students of McCrea Magee college obtained their degrees through that ancient and famous seat of learning, Trinity College, Dublin. In order to make this connection the success it proved to be, he subscribed largely to the University Endowment Fund, which was designed to assist students of limited means and he had freely given towards the erection of the Physical Laboratory. Another large donation that is generally unknown also deserves to be mentioned. When he retired he very generously gave up the entire pension to which he was entitled and thus made possible an important re-arrangement of classes by which the subject of History was formally introduced into the college curriculum.

But no one will ever know the full amount of Professor Graham's benefactions. Few who ever came to him were ever sent empty away. Yet, he, himself refused to burden the generosity of others. When, a few years ago, a number of his former students wished to do him honour, he would only consent to receive a very small gift – an Illuminated Album – on condition that the subscriptions were limited to a nominal amount. This action was characteristic of the man and singly exhibited in a single instance his usual kindness and thoughtfulness.

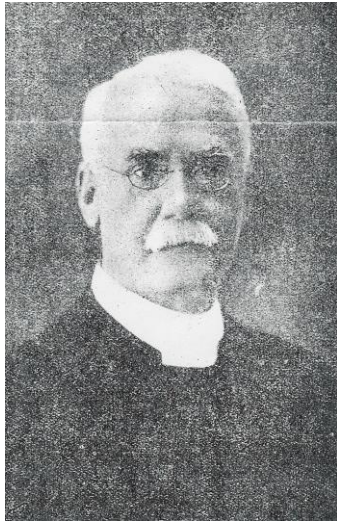


Magee Presbyterian College, Londonderry - where the Rev. Professor Hugh Clarke Graham was elected to the Chair of Metaphysics and Ethics by the General Assembly in 1878. He had retired from his ministry in Stranorlar in 1874 due to ill health.

Professor Graham was married to Miss Bigger, sister of a famous Member of Parliament.

Mrs Graham survives her husband, and all who know her, especially the former students and colleagues of Professor Graham, sympathise with her and her great sorrow.”

Rev. William John Macaulay B.A. (1874 – 1880)



The seventh minister of Stranorlar was the **Rev. William John Macaulay**, ordained on 14th October 1874 as assistant and successor to Rev. Graham. A native of the parish of Drumgooland, Co. Down, where his father served as an elder, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Rathfriland on the 5th May 1874 after a distinguished University and College career.

A very able and intelligent man, he was remembered here for *'his earnestness and enthusiasm for ministerial life and he laboured diligently and successfully amongst the Stranorlar people for a little over six years'*. Rev. Macaulay and his family were by no means strangers to the Stranorlar area, as his uncle,

Rev. John Macaulay, had served a ministry of almost forty years in Second Stranorlar Presbyterian Church from 1831, until his death in 1869.

The following account of the Rev. Macaulay's ordination service appeared in *The Londonderry Sentinel* on Saturday, 17th October 1874. Due to the detail included in this report, making it quite unique and informative regarding the style and order of this 19th century ordination service, it is worth including the complete account, as witnessed and described by the reporter that day :

Ordination of Rev. W.J. Macaulay at Stranorlar

"On Wednesday, at twelve o'clock, Mr William John Macaulay, a licentiate of the Rathfriland Presbytery was ordained by the Donegal Presbytery to the pastoral charge of Stranorlar, as successor to the Rev. H. C. Graham. The ordination sermon was preached by the Rev. James McCay, First Castlederg, from St. Matthew's Gospel, 6th chapter and 10th verse – *'Thy Kingdom come, &c'*. Rev. Andrew Lowry, Ballyshannon, ably explained and defended the Presbyterian form of Church government, and the Rev. Joseph Love, Killeter, put the usual questions to the minister elect, and afterwards offered up the ordination prayer.

Mr Macaulay was then set apart to the duties of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The Rev. John Donaldson then delivered a very impressive address to the newly ordained minister and people.

The other ministers present at the ordination were – Rev. Archibald Lowry, Donegal; Rev. John Armstrong, Castlederg; Rev. Robert Nelson (members of the Donegal Presbytery); Rev. Matthew Macaulay, Cahens; Rev. Matthew Macaulay, McKelvey's Grove; Rev. Samuel Stewart, Alt; Rev. Robert Smyth, Donoughmore; Rev. William Warner, Drumgooland; Rev. Robert Beattie, Convoy; Rev. Joseph Love, Glenelly; and Rev. Mr Bannatyne, Probationer, Free Church, Scotland.

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At four o'clock in the afternoon the members of Presbytery were entertained at dinner in Miss Miller's Hotel. Covers were laid for forty, and fully that number sat down to an excellent repast, which was served up in a manner highly creditable to the establishment. The chair was occupied by James Holmes, Esq., a leading member of the congregation, and on his right sat the newly ordained minister, Robert Cunningham, Esq., manager of the Northern Bank, Ballybofey, and the Rev. Francis Whitfield, Church of Ireland. On his left sat the Rev. Thomas Casserley, Church of Ireland, and Robert Wilson, Esq., coroner, Cavan House, Killygordon. The vice-chair was occupied by William Walker, Esq., another influential member of the congregation. Rev. John Armstrong, having invoked a blessing, the company partook of the good things provided and the Rev. Thomas Casserley returned thanks.

The Chairman then rose and said – 'A programme, containing a number of sentiments, has been put into my hands to propose to the meeting. The first on the list is "Her Majesty Queen Victoria" (*Applause*) "Long may she reign over us, happy and glorious." (*Applause*). The sentiment was warmly received.

The Chairman – "The next on the list is "The Lord Lieutenant and prosperity to Ireland." (*Applause*). The present Lord Lieutenant holds extensive property in Ireland; he spends a great part of his time in Ireland and he knows the want and wishes of the Irish people. I am sure, therefore, that he will exercise his influence in the proper quarter to obtain those measures which will be considered most conducive to the prosperity and happiness of the Irish people'. (*Applause*). The sentiment was received with enthusiasm.

The Chairman – 'I have now to propose the sentiment of the evening – "Our newly ordained minister, the Rev. William John Macaulay." (*Applause*). Since he came amongst us he has given entire satisfaction in every respect, and I have no doubt he will prove an earnest, useful minister, faithfully serving the cause of Christ in this town and neighbourhood. I wish Mr Macaulay every success, and I sincerely hope that the good feeling which at present exists between him and the congregation may long continue'. (*Applause*).

Rev. William John Macaulay, the newly ordained minister, on rising to respond, was warmly received. He said – 'Mr Chairman and friends, I have to thank you for the very cordial manner in which my name has been mentioned and received, and express the pleasure I have received in meeting the people of Stranorlar. If I can rightly interpret the marks of kindly interest in me which have been manifested by the members of the congregation and others during the last few weeks, as well as the responsive feelings of my own heart, I may venture to predict that the union which has this day been consummated will not be one of disappointment on either side. When I received a call to undertake the Lord's work in this part of His vineyard, there were, to my mind, sufficient indications that this was intended by Divine Providence as the sphere of my labours.

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I was induced to come here, not only by the unanimous voice of the people, but by many associations of friendship. The acts of Christian charity and devotedness of my late uncle, who lived and laboured in this town and neighbourhood, are still fresh in the memory of those who knew him. As a faithful and earnest minister of Jesus Christ, he was held in affectionate esteem, not only in his own congregation, but among the members of that over which I have been ordained.

Thus enjoying so largely the fruits of his labours, I hope to be enabled, by Divine Grace, to follow in his footsteps, and prove myself worthy of that name which he has made so favourably known.

Sir, I am very sensible of the awful responsibilities of that high office to which I have been appointed, and of my own incompetency rightly to fill it. When I think of the distinguished men that have preceded me in the pastoral charge of this congregation – of Dr. Steele, who in his lifetime was a leader of thought and a stalwart champion of the truth –(hear)- and of the Rev. H. C. Graham, whose high and varied attainments had gained him an enviable reputation in the Church –(hear)- when it pleased God to lay him aside from the active work of the ministry – a very formidable standard of duty presents itself to my mind. And it is only through the prayers and willing co-operation of my people, and by the guiding and sustaining Spirit of Him who hath said, “My Grace is sufficient for thee”, “My strength is made perfect in weakness”, that I can expect, with any measure of efficiency, to discharge the arduous duties that lie before me. I know that many of the people are farther advanced in spirituality than I am, yet from the first it shall be my aim, although from a lower platform of Christian experience than I could desire, to set forth the whole counsel of God, and to exhibit in my conduct the power of that vital godliness of which I shall speak in the pulpit.

And, as I struggle upwards and outwards, I hope to receive new strength at every stage, and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. These are trying times in the history of the Church. She has to contend, not only with the increasing powers of vice and passion, but against the cavils of infidel writers, who call their bitter hostility to religion by the name of independence of thought, and who would deprive us of our hope of glorious immortality, and tear up our faith by the very roots. There is, therefore, need of increased watchfulness and more energetic action on the part of the friends of Christ. And I feel that the minister of the Gospel should be prepared to use all his strength in rolling back the swelling tide of sin, and at the same time, should be skilful in defending the principles of Christian doctrine against the subtle attacks of unsanctified reasoners. (*Hear, hear*).

Such consideration as these have caused me fear and trembling in taking upon me the solemn vows of this sacred and important office. I don not intend to enter into the relationship that should exist between minister and people; of this I still have much to learn. Nor do I propose making any promises regarding my course in the future. I shall only say that I promise to serve my Master faithfully, and to be able, in looking back on

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my ministerial career, to say that I have set forth Christ fearlessly and fully. And I trust that the blessing of God may rest upon us as minister and people, and that being united in our common enjoyment of the fellowship of Christ, we may find that the most improving of intercourse and the truest bond of friendship; and that as time rolls on we may bound closer to one another as we are drawn nearer to him.' (*Loud Applause*).

Mr Samuel Taylor (senior elder of the congregation) then rose and said – 'I trust, as long as we are together, that minister and people will be a strength to one another, and that our object will be to provoke each other to works of love and grace. (*Hear, hear*).

Mr Armstrong – 'We have no fear of that.' (*Hear, hear*).

The Chairman – 'The next sentiment is "The Presbytery of Donegal". (*Applause*). Since the Donegal Presbytery took charge of our congregation we have every reason to be thankful for their attention, and the careful anxiety with which they conducted us to the happy settlement that has been effected this day. (*Hear, hear*). Their labours in our interest have borne good fruit, and I am sure they join with us now I rejoicing over the result. (*Hear, hear*). I have much pleasure in thanking the Presbytery on behalf of the congregation, and in proposing the sentiment, coupled with the name of the Rev. Joseph Love.' (*Applause*).

Rev. Joseph Love, in responding, said – 'Mr Chairman, I feel under very deep obligations to you, sir, for the way in which you referred to the welfare and happiness of the Presbytery of Donegal, and for the gratitude you have expressed for that brotherly care that we endeavoured to extend to you during the period of this vacancy. I may truly say, that, next to my own congregation, I think there is no other connected with our Presbytery that I have had more intimate relations with than the congregation of Stranorlar. When I became a member of this Presbytery I was a very young man, and your pastor of that day, the distinguished Dr. Steele was one of the first who took me by the hand; and I am sure that during his life, and during my intercourse with him, I always experienced from him the treatment of a father, until God, in His providence, was pleased to call him away. I lived, also, on very intimate terms with Mr Graham during the course of his ministry, and had frequent ministerial intercourse with him. If I have a single regret tonight, it is because of the absence of our friend Mr Graham; and I have reason to believe that nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to be here, did his present state of health permit him. (*Hear*). I trust that the good relationship that existed between the former ministers of this congregation and the Presbytery of Donegal may continue to exist between Mr Macaulay and ourselves. (*Hear*). I also trust, that we, as a Presbytery, shall always endeavour, in cases where vacancies occur, not to show that we are lords over God's heritage, but that we are simply endeavouring in every way to advance the state of true religion within our bounds. (*Hear, hear*). I have much pleasure, Mr Chairman, in returning you thanks on behalf of the Donegal Presbytery.' (*Applause*).

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Rev. John Armstrong also responded; He said – ‘As I happen to be the oldest member of the Presbytery, I feel very great pleasure in returning you thanks, in conjunction with my younger brother, Mr Love, for the flattering manner, which you, Mr Chairman, have referred to the Donegal Presbytery. I must say, that, as a Presbytery we took a lively interest in your welfare, and I would further say that, probably before you were right sensible of your position as a congregation, we were looking down upon you from the mountain brow, anxiously watching your interest in this matter. We all lamented the infirmity of Mr Graham, we all lamented his bodily weakness, but we kept before our view at the same time the value of a living, prosperous and successful church and congregation.

I assure you, Mr Chairman, that it has been the study of the ministers of our Presbytery, and the subject of their reflections in public and private, how to benefit you as a congregation. We had the deepest matters in getting matters so arranged that you would have a man placed over you who would be enabled by bodily strength and a strong constitution to look after your welfare, and train you and your families up in such a manner that God would be glorified and your salvation sure.

As the oldest member of Presbytery, I congratulate you this day on the happy choice you have made in appointing a suitable successor to Mr Graham. I had the pleasure of knowing a former minister of this congregation, the late Dr. Steele. He had few equals for talent; he was one of the most eloquent men I ever heard. I remember on one occasion he had addressed a congregation from the words, “They that wait on the Lord will renew their strength”, and he carried me away to such an extent with his eloquence, style, diction, and manner, that I was at times almost tempted to exclaim “Is he earthly?”.

I know that for some time bodily infirmities have rendered Mr Graham unfit for the duties of the ministry – duties which he discharged when in health and vigour with success. I trust, however, that the man you have appointed over you today may prove a worthy successor to the former ministers – and I believe he will – for, in point of knowledge and ability, Mr Macaulay is a very superior young minister. He delivered three pieces of trial in my Church, and they were the best I ever heard delivered in the Presbytery by any man of his age and standing. I think, therefore, that you may congratulate yourselves on the selection you have made. In youth and in old age I frequently have heard that a chip off an old block is very desirable, and I think you may congratulate yourselves on having obtained a good chip off a gold old block. (*Hear, hear*). I now have only to hope that the union formed this day may be fraught with blessed results, tending to the prosperity of the congregation and the saving of souls in Christ.’ (*Applause*).

Rev. Mr Nelson also briefly replied. He said – ‘The members of the Donegal Presbytery do not claim to have among them men of overwhelming genius; but not withstanding that if you look over the field in which we are engaged, you will find it is second to none in point of interest, whether we regard it in the light of its antiquities or purely in

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matters concerning the Church'. Referring to the newly ordained minister, Mr Nelson said – 'The impression your young minister has left upon us all is most favourable, and not the least of the favourable recommendations he possesses is the name he bears. I am now about six years in this Presbytery, and I remember that when I came here first the late Rev. John Macaulay was one of the most cordial of me into the Presbytery. I am happy to congratulate the congregation of Stranorlar on the selection they have made, and I am sure I only express the general sentiments of the whole Presbytery when I say that you have done the right thing, and you will have no cause to regret the step you have taken this day. (*Hear, hear*). The name your young minister bears will serve as an introduction for him to the home of the various ministers of the Presbytery and to the homes of the district around this congregation.' (*Applause*).

The Chairman – 'The next sentiment on my list is "The ministers of other denominations"'. (*Applause*). I beg to couple the names of two gentlemen present with the sentiment – Rev. Mr Whitfield and Rev. Mr Casserley.'

Rev. Francis Whitfield rose and said – 'Mr Chairman, I appear here partly under a promise that I would not be called upon to make a speech. This is the first time I have had the pleasure and profit of witnessing a Presbyterian ordination, and I can truly say that I was exceedingly gratified by all that I saw and heard. I thank the Chairman and the other gentlemen for permitting me to be present on this occasion, and I trust that I shall have many opportunities of meeting my young friend as a Christian brother, and that we may be able to hold up each other's hands as far as it is permissible or possible in our perspective spheres of labour. (*Applause*). Rev. Thomas Casserley also acknowledged the compliment.

The Chairman – 'The next sentiment on my list is "The ministers from a distance"'. There are several strange ministers here this evening, and we are happy to meet them all at this festive board.' (*Applause*).

Rev. Matthew Macaulay, Cahens, in responding said – 'As I have never been a speechmaker, I should not make the attempt now were it not that I cannot but express my gratitude for the kind manner in which my name and the name of my friends has been put forth by the chairman and received by this meeting. Mine have been very mingled feelings today. I stood this morning beside the grave of one of my best friends, the companion of my childhood, my companion at school, my companion at college. I refer to the late Rev. John Macaulay. I need not attempt to express to you the train of melancholy reflections that standing by that grave called up to my mind.

On the other hand, I was extremely gratified when I saw the aspect of your congregation today, when I attended your very interesting and solemn services, and when I saw William John Macaulay – the twentieth of his name, and of his own kindred since the year 1752 – set apart for the work of preaching the Gospel. (*Applause*). There was something particularly interesting to me in the fact that, when the uncle was stricken down, the young nephew caught up the standard, and I hope he will die rather than lower it.' (*Applause*).

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Rev. Matthew Macaulay, McKelvey's Grove, also acknowledged the compliment.

Rev. William Warner also returned thanks. He said – 'I would not venture to add a word to what has been so eloquently said by my two fathers, who were my companions in the train last night to this place, were it not that perhaps I occupy, and have occupied for some eight years past, a closer relationship to Mr Macaulay than any other minister present. I happen to be the minister of the congregation where Mr Macaulay was brought up, and of which his father still is one of the good constitutional elders.

During the period to which I have referred my relation to your young minister, it was of a close and most intimate kind, and it is to me a great pleasure, indeed, that my first visit to this pleasant valley of the Finn was to witness his ordination. Under other circumstances I would not have been here, but I could not deny myself the pleasure of rejoicing with him in his joy, and, as far as I could by my presence, assist in sustaining him in the solemn duties in which he has been engaged today.

In connection with this settlement there are two or three persons who deserve our congratulations. I am inclined to congratulate Mr Macaulay, in the first place, as his appointment as minister here in this garden of Eden – I speak with reference to the Sustenation fund. (*Hear, hear*). He comes to the place formerly occupied by the men whose names are to be found in the long roll of distinguished ministers of our Church; he comes vested with the prestige of an honourable name, and these two circumstances tend to make his career of ministerial labour very interesting in this locality. (*Hear*). And when I looked at this well-supplied board a few minutes ago, I could not help thinking that if this is the way you treat your ministers here in Stranorlar the lines have fallen to my young friend in pleasant places. (*Hear*).

I cannot avoid congratulating the congregation of Stranorlar in having my distinguished young friend placed over them. Were it not that he is present I would speak of him as a student. You are, no doubt, prepared to hear that he was a distinguished student, careful and painstaking in his pursuit after truth. In him you will find a most agreeable companion and friend in all the relations of life. Perhaps the fathers and brethren of the Presbytery of Donegal will permit me to assure them that they have obtained in Mr Macaulay an honourable co-presbyter.

He comes from a Presbytery, the members of which make it a point to instil into their licentiates something of the *esprit de corps*, and I would be disappointed, indeed, if I found anything else in Mr Macaulay. As regards his piety, those who know him best have no doubt, and of his ability there can be none. He comes here filled with an honest desire to do his Master's work, and the duties devolving upon him, I am sure, will be faithfully discharged.

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Since I came to this district I had the opportunity of seeing some of the young ladies of Stranorlar, and I am convinced from what I have seen that Mr Macaulay will have no difficulty in selecting a rose to place on his breast that will shed a very sweet perfume, a very sweet odour through his home. (*Hear, hear*).

I don't know whether I should mention anything about a Manse –(hear)-but when you erect a suitable place to which Mr Macaulay may transfer a plant of that description, the Manse in this district, will, I have no doubt, become a centre of light and good influence. (*Hear and Applause*).

I augur well for the day, and I hope that by the blessing of God the highest results of the Christian ministry may be realised by my young friend, Mr Macaulay.' (*Applause*).

The Chairman – “The next sentiment is “The congregation of Stranorlar” coupled with the names of Dr Love and Mr Walker’. (*Applause*).

Mr Walker, replying said – Allow me to thank you for the kind way in which you have received the sentiment. I hope that the young minister and the members of the congregation will have no reason to regret the union that has taken place this day, and I trust that he will be long spared to go out and in partaking of the Bread of Life'. (*Hear, hear*).

Dr Love also returned thanks, assuring Mr Macaulay of the good wishes of the congregation in this regard.

The Chairman then gave “The banking profession” to which Mr Cunningham and Mr Downing, Northern Bank, and Mr Macaulay, Belfast Bank severally responded; and after a few words from the Rev. J Love, the interesting proceedings were brought to a close by a cordial vote of thanks to the Chairman.

Early in Mr Macaulay's ministry, the advice given by the Rev. Warner at the ordination service was heeded, and it was agreed by the Session, Committee and congregation to obtain a site and provide a Manse for their minister.

Stranorlar Manse (1881)

The movement for Manse provision by each congregation for their minister, who had up until now sought their own accommodation, had been recently set up by the General Assembly, and many Manses were built around this time.

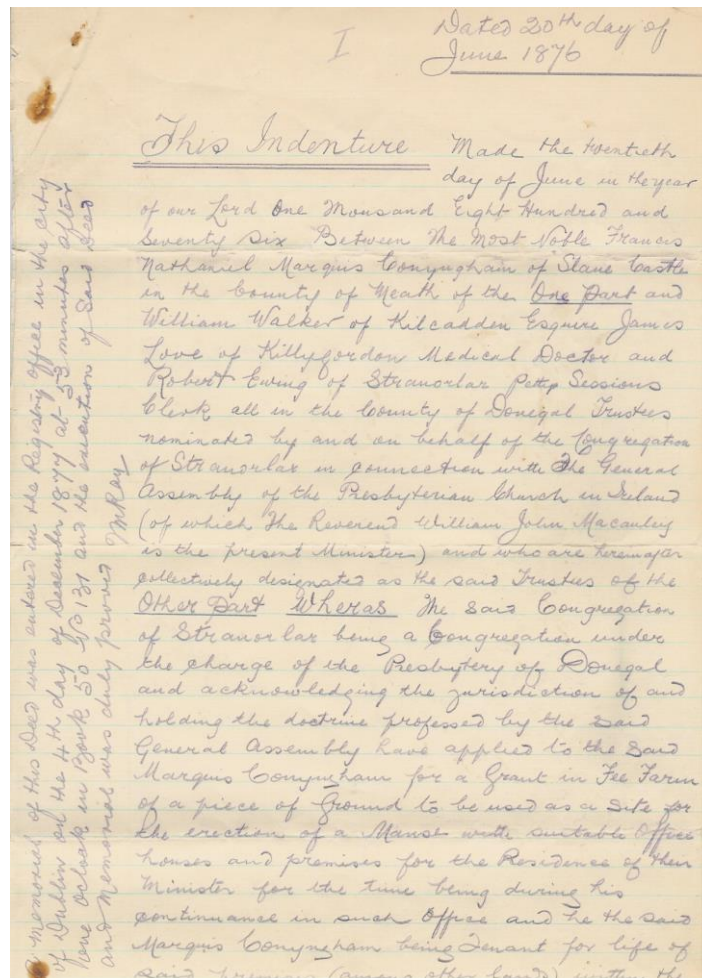
It was therefore deemed both necessary and convenient for the congregation to supply a Manse close to the Church and it was during the Rev. Macaulay's ministry that the site for Stranorlar Manse was secured from the Marquis Conyngham. It is thought the building of the stables and Lecture Hall (Sunday School building) dates from this time also.

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The Indenture between the Trustees of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church at that time (Messrs. William Walker of Kilcadden, Esq., James Love of Killygordon, Medical Doctor, Samuel Maxwell, Robert Morrow and Robert Ewing, Stranorlar Petty Sessions Clerk) and the Marquis Conyngham was signed on 12th June 1876, agreeing a lease of 'a one acre site on the Raphoe road, measuring approximately one Cunningham acre'. The Marquis was to remain as the named 'Tenant for Life', within the meaning of the statute entitled 'The Leasing Powers Act for Religious Worship in Ireland, 1855'.

The site was strictly for the provision of a Manse and the rent payable was £2 per year, clear of all rates and taxes and payable in two half yearly amounts, on the 1st May and the 1st November annually. The Marquis and his associates retained the right to enter the property and possess whatever was necessary to satisfy rent and arrears, if such rents became more than 21 days late.

The original, elegantly hand-written deed, dated 20th June 1876 (pictured below) is still in the congregation's possession and it states that 'a memorial of this deed was entered in the Registry Office in the city of Dublin on 4th December 1877 at 53 minutes past one o'clock, in book 50, No. 131 and the execution of said deed and memorial was duly proved'.



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Part of this Indenture reads as follows:

“ This Indenture, made on the twelfth day of June in the Year of our Lord Eighteen Hundred and Seventy Six, between The Most Noble Francis Nathaniel Conyngham of Slane Castle, in the County of Meath, of the one part and William Walker of Kilcadden Esquire, James Love of Killygordon, Medical Doctor & Robert Ewing of Stranorlar Petty Sessions Clerk, all in the County Donegal. Trustees nominated by and on behalf of the congregation of Stranorlar in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (of which Rev. William John Macaulay is the present minister) and who are hereinafter collectively designated as the said Trustees of the other part whereas the said congregation of Stranorlar being a congregation under the charge of the Presbytery of Donegal and acknowledging the jurisdiction of and holding the doctrine professed by the said General Assembly have applied to the said Marquis Conyngham for a rant in Fee Form of a piece of ground to be used as a site for the erection of a Manse with suitable Office Houses and premises for the residence of their minister for the time being during his continuance in such office and he the said Marquis Conyngham being Tenant for life of said premises (among other lands) within the meaning of the statute entitled ‘The Leasing Powers Act for Religious Worship in Ireland One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Five’.

This indenture continues on for a further seven pages, giving great detail of the transaction and finishes as *‘signed, sealed and delivered by the Marquis Conyngham in the presence of the nominated said trustees, William Walker, James Love, Samuel Maxwell, John Morrow and Robert Ewing’.*

The trustees of the Church were responsible for any legalities relating to Church property. The current trustees are Mr Robert Davis (appointed. 1977), Mr Ivan Knox (appointed. 1977) and Mr Robin Henderson (appointed. 1997).

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(Francis Nathaniel Conyngham was an M.P. from a background of landed gentry, and was the Second Marquis Conyngham (1797-1876), whose family resided (and continue to reside) at Slane Castle, Co. Meath. The family, whose titles includes the name 'Mountcharles' (as the original family seat was at The Hall, in Mountcharles) were extremely influential, and they were known to dine with the King and Queen in 1833, and Nathaniel was in the Coronation Procession of Queen Victoria in 1837.

He was also a Lieutenant for Meath and an M.P. for Co. Clare when only 21 years of age and rose to Lord of the Treasury by the time he was 30. A short time later he became Post Master General and after becoming the Second Marquis he was made Lord Chamberlain. The Conyngham Estates included vast areas of Donegal, including Stranorlar, most of which was later sold off, mostly to the tenants under the Land Acts. He died in 1876, the year the site for Stranorlar Manse was secured from him, and he is buried near his home, 'Bifrons' in Canterbury.)

The congregation immediately began fund raising for their new Manse, with a total of £466 raised from 1877 to 1879, and a very attractive building of generous proportions was built and completed by 1881, at a cost of approximately £620. It later had very attractive gardens, and a tennis court was constructed in the upper garden in 1984.



Stranorlar Manse, completed in 1881

However, the Rev. Macaulay's time in Stranorlar was short, and before the Manse was completed, he accepted a call to First Portadown on 5th December 1880, where he remained in active service for over thirty years.

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During his time there he aspired to the position of Moderator-Elect of the General Assembly in 1913, and had an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred on him by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland.

The following account is taken from *The Irish Presbyterian*, dated May 1913, after the Rev. Macaulay was elected Moderator of the General Assembly:

“The story of Mr Macaulay’s outward life does not take long to tell. He received his former education in his native parish and his secondary education at the Academy in Banbridge, conducted by the Rev. John Rutherford. From his boyhood he was distinguished by his studious habits and an earnest, reverent spirit. The light shone into his soul from boyhood days through the gracious influence of his father and mother who were the honoured instruments in the hands of God of leading him to take Christ into his life, to feel the presence of the Heavenly Father, and to trust and love and serve him wholeheartedly.

I believe strongly in this influence of parents with their children at a time when the mind so easily receives convictions that abide all through life. It is a beautiful and blessed home where husband and wife live their religion day by day, and surely one of the most beautiful and blessed things when they train-up their children for the Lord and are examples to them of Christian love and service. It was in this way that Mr Macaulay entered upon religious life and consecrated himself to God’s service.

That consecration has never been sullied, and there are few men whose records at school, at college and in the ministry are so unblemished as that of Mr Macaulay.

After a distinguished university and college career he was licensed by the Presbytery of Rathfriland to preach the Gospel as a probationer for the Christian ministry, on 5th May 1874. He was ordained to the ministry of the Gospel and appointed to the oversight of the congregation of Stranorlar by the Presbytery of Donegal on 14th October 1874. He entered upon his ministerial life with great earnestness and enthusiasm, filled with the Spirit of the Master feeding the flock with good, healthy food and taking tender care of the lambs. Here he laboured with great diligence and success for a little over six years, and left behind him a name which is still green and fragrant.

In 1881 Mr Macaulay came to Portadown, where for more than 30 years he has been a power of good. He does his work quietly, avoiding all self-advertisement. He hates with perfect hatred all kinds of sensationalism, and while keeping himself abreast of modern and theological thoughts, he asks for the old paths and walks in them. No one ever heard him speak in public or in private of his work or of the success of his work, but all the same he has been a persistent, strenuous worker and his works have been owned and blessed.

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His balance and sanity have been among the most conspicuous assets of his personality; he has kept at his work with praiseworthy persistence; he has reached a high place not by spasmodic spurt, but steadily and surely, and the position thus gained has been steadily and surely maintained.

There is nothing undecided about him. He may move slowly and cautiously in his mental operations, but once he has formed a judgment or arrived at a decision there is no wavering, no hesitation. In his preaching there is a simple directness and everything he says is at once striking and impressive; he brings the keen and vigorous mind to the preaching of Christ and Him crucified; his sermons are the expressions of himself and therefore have the individuality that arrests the attention of his hearers.

But what appeals to them most of all is the obvious, kindly, human sympathy that informs and radiates his speech. That is the preaching that will move and influence men everywhere, and the man who possesses and can display that quality will be a pulpit power wherever he is, and will do a work that will abide.

The dominant note all through his ministrations, founded upon his knowledge of life and its joys and sorrows, and its sunshine and tears, its pathos and bitterness, is reality. He is preaching about things which mattered always; he feels intensely that it is a vital matter whether a man's view of life, his own life, from the standpoint of Christ, or from the standpoint of the world; whether he faces life reinforced by the dynamics Christ can bring into his life or faces life only in his own wisdom and strength.

In the discharge of his pastoral duties, his unwearied devotion, his unfailing courtesy, his wide counsel and Christ-like spirits have won the hearts of his people, and made him a trusted friend and ever welcome visitor to their homes, where he has esteemed highly for his own and his work's sake. He takes a deep and active interest in all departments of congregational work, encouraging all Christian work and discouraging none.

He has a responsive congregation. It is a clear case of like minister, like people. They hail with great delight the high honour the Church is about to confer on their minister, and by way of marking their appreciation of it, they have unanimously resolved to release him from all pulpit and pastoral work during his Moderatorial year, in order that he may give his whole time to the service of the Church.

I have space only for a sentence or two with regards to the conspicuous and splendid service Mr Macaulay has rendered his Church as Convenor of the Fund for weak congregations. Seventeen years ago he was appointed to this post and its history since then has been a continuous career of prosperity. The simple explanation is that the welfare of the ministry lies near the Convenor's heart, and the measure of the success achieved by him in raising the income of the men who labour in the poorer parishes of Ulster from about £100 per annum when he became

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Convenor, to £140 last year is surely something to be thankful for. His heart's sympathy is with them, hence he is so insistent and emphatic in urging the Church to secure for these brethren the financial conditions necessary for the doing of their best pulpit and pastoral work.

He knows their life, its deep encouragement and deeper joys, its disappointments, its difficulties, and its compensating rewards. During his tenure of office he has observed the peace that rests upon the hearts of men who, sometimes with stipend barely adequate for the necessities of life, and steadily and faithfully pursuing obscure and difficult ministries, he has nobly assisted in bearing their burden and so fulfilled the law of Christ.

The whole Presbyterian Church in Ireland hails the nomination of the Moderator-Elect with delight, and ministers and people will unite in prayer that his year of office may be memorable for increased material prosperity, and larger fullness of blessing for our beloved Church and country.

The Presbyterian Theological have since conferred upon the Moderator-designate the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. The many friends of Dr Macaulay heartily rejoice in this further honour, the hall-mark of the Church on theological learning, ministerial faithfulness and high toned piety." *By W.C.*

Rev. James Curry B.A. (1881 – 1940)

On 11th May 1881, **Rev. James Curry** from Nagherintendry, near Bushmills, Co. Antrim, was ordained in Stranorlar.



He was licensed by the Route Presbytery the previous year, and this was to be his first and only charge where he spent his entire ministry of almost 60 years. His ordination service details appeared in *The Londonderry Sentinel* on Thursday, 12th May 1881:

“The Donegal Presbytery met at Stranorlar yesterday (Wednesday), for the purpose of ordaining Mr James Curry, licentiate of the Route Presbytery, to the pastoral charge of this congregation, in the room of the Rev. William Macaulay, who had accepted a call from the congregation of First Portadown. The service commenced at twelve o'clock, by which time a large and respectable congregation had assembled, which gave evidence to the interest manifested in the proceedings.

The ordination service was preached by the Rev. J.H. Stirling, Castlederg. Rev. Andrew Lowry, Ballyshannon, explained and defended the Presbyterian form of Church polity; and the usual questions were put by the Rev. Joseph

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Love, Killeter, and satisfactorily answered by the young minister, who announced his intention of becoming a subscriber to the Widows' Fund; and having subscribed the Westminster Confession of Faith, he was then duly set apart to the work of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.

The young minister was then congratulated by several of the clergy present. The charge to the minister and people was delivered by the Rev. John Donaldson, Pettigo.

At five o'clock in the evening, the newly ordained minister, the members of the Presbytery and a few friends were entertained to dinner in Miss Miller's Hotel, which was served up in excellent style.

The chair was occupied by the Rev. Andrew Lowry, Ballyshannon, and the vice chair by Mr Robert Ewing, Clerk of the Petty Sessions. A number of sentiments were proposed and responded to, among others that of the newly ordained minister, which was received with much enthusiasm. Having exhausted an elaborate programme, the proceedings were brought to a close in the usual manner".

Rev. Curry later came to own various farms in the area, including one at Admiran (known as McClenaghans), one in Stranorlar which he bought from his predecessor, the Rev. William Macaulay; a house at Admiran with two fields adjoining (known as McQuilkans) and a plantation at Greenhills. George McCready from Dunwiley and Johnny Friel from Hamilton's Row were employed as his stockmen for many years.

His sister Mary came to live with him as housekeeper on his arrival in Stranorlar, and later married a member of the congregation, Mr Andrew James Kilpatrick (Senior). Rev. Curry married Miss Harriette Magee (d.1938) in 1883. Her family had a shop on Main Street, Ballybofey and were the same family as the well known *Magees of Donegal*.

Two of the Rev. Curry's nephews from Bushmills, namely William Lucas Auld and Samuel Robert Auld were also Presbyterian ministers, the former at Drum, Co. Monaghan and later in England, and the latter in the joint congregations of Killala, Ballinglen and Dromore West, Co. Mayo. Another nephew, and his namesake, James Curry Auld, remained at home and carried on the family farming tradition.

Despite the general decline in numbers of Presbyterians in Stranorlar and elsewhere throughout Rev. Curry's ministry, he remained positive, and inspired many with his passion for his faith and his people. In the fifty year period from 1860 to 1910 there had been a reduction by almost half in the number of Presbyterian families in the Presbytery of Raphoe. But this did not discourage Mr Curry, who later overseen the financing and building of the new church.

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Rev. Curry attended the Portstewart convention faithfully every year, travelling to Portrush by train. Mrs Dunlop from Bushmills, a daughter of the Rev. Curry's cousin, remembers her father, Mr W.J. Auld setting out in his horse and trap to collect the Rev. Curry, who always came to visit them after the convention. Rev. Curry would have travelled by Tram from Portstewart to Bushmills to meet Mr Auld, who, with his young wife had spent their honeymoon in Stranorlar Manse in 1904, and kept a lifelong, close association.

Mrs Dunlop has very fond memories of the Rev. Curry, who she says had a great love of horses, and when he arrived at the home farm in Nagharintendry, one of his first duties was to view them. On the day of his funeral in 1940, she recalls, it seemed most fitting that when all of the family were in Stranorlar at the Rev. Curry's funeral, one of the mares gave birth to a new foal.

Rev. Curry held his Church and congregation in very high regard throughout his life, and likewise, he proved very popular with the people of Stranorlar. At his Ministerial Jubilee in 1930, which celebrated 50 years of his ministry in Stranorlar, he received '*many costly gifts*', both from the congregation and Presbytery.

After his death in 1940 he bequeathed 'Macaulay's' farm to the trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to be held in trust for the ministers of Stranorlar congregation, to supplement their income. He also left McQuilkan's farm and his plantation at Greenhills to the Presbyterian Orphan Society. However, controversy erupted after it was contested by a third party and eventually reached the High Court in Dublin in the late 1960's with an unsuccessful outcome for the church. He also left generous monetary donations to the Orphan Society and foreign missions.



Main Street, Stranorlar in the early 1900's

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The New Church Building (1906)

As the old building, which was now about a hundred years old, had become cold, damp and barely useable, a decision regarding its future was imminent. The committee decided that it was not worth spending any more money on it, and opted to build a new church in 1906. The foundations of the old building still lie beneath the car park at the rear of the present church, and were uncovered during site work in 1980.

The parents of Mrs Rena Roulston from Carricknamanna, Killygordon, namely Mr Tom McGonnigle from Creggan and Miss Mary Coulter from Drumboe were the last couple to be married in this old building and the doors were closed for the last time a short time later. Coincidentally, the parents of Mrs Roulston's late husband David, namely Mr James Roulston and Miss Ruby Tynan, Carricknamanna, were the first couple to be married in the new Church, shortly after its completion.



The architect employed for the design of the new church and the supervision of its construction was Mr John McIntyre, Letterkenny, and the contractors were *Messrs. S. Donnell & Co., Strabane*. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs Ross Hastings from Londonderry, on Tuesday morning, 24th April, 1906. The fully inscribed silver trowel and mallet presented to Mrs Hastings by Mr McIntyre on this occasion are still on display in the church. The inscription on the trowel reads: *“Presented by Mr John McIntyre, Architect, Letterkenny, to Mrs Ross Hastings, Londonderry, on the occasion of her laying the foundation stone of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church, April 24th 1906”*.



The total cost of the building of the new Church, which can seat approximately 360 people, amounted to **£1,800**. It has been often said that Stranorlar Church and Manse, which are situated on what is still known locally as 'Curry's Brae', as being amongst the finest in the Presbytery.

There is no official record of how the congregation raised the funds required to build the church, but with 110 families mostly from the farming, professional and business communities, it is likely that most of the finances were raised amongst themselves. They must have been a very ambitious and hard working congregation, as there were only three elders and four members of committee at that time.

Other families with a Stranorlar connection would also have contributed. This is especially true regarding the Hastings family who were past members of the congregation, originally from Dunwiley.

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Despite living in Londonderry, they had a very close relationship with the congregation and from the detail of the newspaper report on the foundation



stone-laying service, it is obvious that their contributions were more than generous. This, as well as the Hastings family relationship to both the Rev. William Macaulay and the Rev. John Macaulay, were the likely factors in the selection of Mrs Hastings as the person to lay the foundation stone.

Both Mr & Mrs Ross Hastings, who passed away in 1916 and 1926 respectively, as well as other members of their *Dunwiley* family, are buried in Stranorlar Parish Churchyard. They are interred in the same grave as Rev. John Macaulay, who was minister of Second Stranorlar Presbyterian Church until his death in 1869.

A large attendance at the service of the laying of the Foundation Stone, which included several invited ministers from various districts and other special guests, witnessed Rev. James Curry deposit a time capsule, which consisted of a large glass bottle containing newspapers and coins of the day, into a prepared area beneath where the foundation stone was to be laid.

The following account of the days' proceedings was published in *'The Londonderry Sentinel'* on Thursday, 26th April, 1906:

“Stranorlar Presbyterian Church – Foundation Stone Laid

The ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church at Stranorlar was successfully carried out on Tuesday morning in the presence of a large assembly of people. A prefatory service of Praise was held in the lecture hall, at the conclusion of which the Rev. J. Curry, pastor, delivered a most interesting address on the history of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church. In the course of his remarks Mr Curry said that as early as 1675, a number of Presbyterians about Stranorlar were very desirous of worshipping God according to the Presbyterian form of Church government, and from ancient documents of that period it appeared that application was made to the Presbytery so that a congregation might be formed there and a minister appointed to rule over them and teach them the way of life.

There was a difficulty in finding the exact information as to what took place immediately subsequent, but ultimately a Church was erected, and was generally supposed – and so far as information could be gathered there was no contradiction of that supposition – that it was a thatched building somewhere near or on the spot where the present church building was being re-built. Their old church had got so very dilapidated and become so antiquated, and so many generations behind that the members of the congregation had thought it unwise to spend any more money on it, and so they thought that this year they would get on an equal footing with their brethren, and would build a new church.

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He hoped that before long they would have the privilege of worshipping God for the Honour and Glory of the Master and for the good of His cause, in the new edifice.

The ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone was then performed by Mrs Ross Hastings, who said *“Mr Moderator, Ladies & Gentlemen, in complying with the request of the committee that I should lay the foundation stone of this Church, I am well aware that no efforts of mine can improve upon the work which has already been performed by a skilled workman. I also understand that such work, as has been begun here cannot be carried out successfully by a small congregation without the aid of generous friends and I would heartily recommend all those who have the Church’s welfare at heart to remember Stranorlar, and direct their liberality that way. In this age of progress, the Presbyterian Church requires a building to worship in, in order that there may be a worthy repetition of all that is ancient and honourable in her name in this district. This want is now being supplied, and I hope that this day’s proceedings may hasten as far as possible the accomplishment of this very desirable purpose.”*

Mrs Hastings was then presented by Mr McIntyre, the architect, with a silver trowel (with inscription) and mallet. Rev. Mr Curry having placed in a bed prepared for it, a bottle containing newspapers and coins of the day, the foundation stone was lowered into position and Mrs Hastings expertly performed the service required of her with the words *‘I now declare this foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church of Stranorlar well and truly laid.’*

The Rev. Curry then proposed a vote of thanks to Mrs Hastings. Mr & Mrs Hastings, he observed, took a great interest in and were greatly attached to the welfare of that congregation, and that had been proved again and again by their liberality towards the Church during the most of his (Mr Curry’s) time there. *(Applause)* The present occasion was only the laying of the top stone on the many repeated acts of generosity by Mr & Mrs Hastings. *(Applause)* There was nothing that pleased him better than to see Mr Hastings in such health as to be able to be present on the occasion. *(Applause)* Mr Hastings always took a deep interest in Presbyterian work and especially in connection with Stranorlar Church. He asked that those present would pass a most hearty vote of thanks to Mr & Mrs Hastings.

Mr Tynan, on behalf of the congregation of Stranorlar Church, seconded the vote of thanks. Mr & Mrs Hastings, he said, came before them as representatives of a very ancient and highly respected family. *(Applause)* They came at a great inconvenience to lay the foundation stone of their church and he trusted that the work thus started would be carried to successful completion. As the foundation stone had been well laid, so also, he hoped that the top stone would be well laid. *(Applause)* They had the greatest possible pleasure in welcoming Mr & Mrs Hastings among them and wished to return their very sincere thanks in their kindness in coming to lay the foundation stone. *(Applause)*

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The vote of thanks was passed by acclamation and conveyed by Rev. Dr McMordie, Moderator, to Mr & Mrs Hastings. Mrs Hastings suitably replied and thanked Mr McIntyre for the beautiful trowel and mallet presented by him.

The Rev. Dr McMordie then addressed the gathering. He said that it was a great day for the Presbyterian Church in Stranorlar. They were on the border of an historic region – The Laggan – which had the honour of being the second Presbytery in Ireland. That Presbytery had ordained the Rev. Francis McKemie of Ramelton, who went out to the U.S.A. and organised the first Presbyterian Church in that country. In May, the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. would meet to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of that occasion, and that day was always a great day for the American Church. The old Laggan Presbytery no longer exists under that name, the district at present being divided up into three or four different Presbyteries.

The building of a new church for a congregation marked an epoch in the congregation's history, and new hopes, new aims, and new aspirations gathered round the project. It cheered the minister to see the congregation working together for one end, and he was quite sure the people of Stranorlar Church would do all in their power to cheer their minister. (*Applause*)

Dr Magill of Cork said he never heard of a revival in a dilapidated Church. He considered that whatever stirred people to take a deeper interest in their church and consider what the Church was erected for and pray that the objects for which it existed might be accomplished was good, and tended to the growth of pure and undefiled religion. He was in deep sympathy with a minister and congregation entering on a great work like that which they were at present entering upon at Stranorlar.

In his own congregation, which consisted of 400 families, the congregation had renovated the Church and built three school houses, three teacher's residences and a number of other buildings, almost entirely by subscription from the people. The committee, in the carrying out of these projects, used all the influence they possible could and pulled well together. No bad feeling or unhealthy rivalry existed between them, but every one of them tried to do their best and everyone in the congregation helped in whatever way they possibly could.

After detailing the eminently satisfactory results that had followed his policy in his own district, Mr McMordie gave point to the narrative, by saying that in Stranorlar they could readily do as much. They could all do something in their own particular sphere, and he adjured them to stand together, consecrate all their work to God, and have no fault finding among them. If the majority differed from them, they were not to stand aside as if they imagined they had all the wisdom. It had put new life into old Jerusalem when they re-built the Temple. The result would be the same in Stranorlar.

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Their energy and enthusiasm and sustained effort would encourage the heart of their minister, who would preach better and feel God was giving him revived influence, and was strengthening his faith and hope.

Nor was it for his congregation alone that they began their great work that day. The boys and girls that gathered around their fireside would be the men and women of the next generation. Their work would be the monument of their faith, hope and liberality. And the next generation would gather on Holy Sabbaths within this new Church, praising God for the faith of their fathers, who had reared for them a lovely and beautiful house. Yea, the influences they set astir that day would be such that no man could tell how far into the future they would reach, for the truths taught there would be taught to their children, and by them to the next generation, and so on till the end of time.

A vote of thanks was then proposed by the Rev. Mr Curry, seconded by Rev. Mr McCay and passed by acclamation to Rev. Mr McMordie for his eloquent and interesting address.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Sessional committee of the Church entertained a large number of the clergymen from the different districts to a luncheon served in excellent style in Mr Kee's Hotel, Stranorlar. Amongst those present were: Mrs Ross Hastings, Miss Craig, Rev. Dr McMordie, Rev. James Curry, Rev. William McFarlane, Rev. James McCay, Rev. William Scott, Rev. William Duncan, Rev. Samuel Meek, Rev. James Garston, Rev. Robert Smyth, Mr W.R. Lawson, Mr R.J.B. Harper, Mr W.H. Donaldson, Mr John McIntyre C.E., Mr Tynan and Mr Craig.

It may be mentioned that the architect for the new Church is Mr John McIntyre C.E. and the contractors are *Messrs. S. Donnell & Co.*, Strabane. The building when completed will be a handsome and commodious edifice, and a credit to the enterprise and faith of the Stranorlar Presbyterians."

(Of the above named guests, local ministers include Rev. William McFarlane, Stranorlar Reformed Presbyterian Church; Rev. Samuel Meek, First Raphoe; and Rev. Robert Smyth, Donoughmore.)

Mr McIntyre also designed the new Presbyterian Church at Convoy, built the previous year and very similar in design to the Stranorlar building.

While the new Church was being built in Stranorlar, the congregation would have continued to worship in the Lecture Hall (Sunday School building) and although the official completion date of the new building is unknown, it is thought to have taken about a year to finish. This Lecture Hall, situated to the rear of the Church originally had Victorian stables on the lower level, suitable for accommodating up to seven horses. The stables remained untouched until 1983, when they were completely refurbished to provide a kitchen area,

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meeting room and toilet facilities. In recognition of these improvements, the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Rev. Eric P. Gardiner D.D. conducted the morning service here on 17th April 1983.

The Lecture Hall was used for various purposes at this time, and *The Londonderry Sentinel* made reference to the annual concert held there in February 1907:

“The annual soiree in connection with Stranorlar Presbyterian Church was held in the Lecture Hall on Friday night last. The spacious building was crowded with an appreciative audience. Rev. James Curry, *Pastor loci*, presided, and after tea, a long and varied programme was introduced by the Chairman, consisting of hymns, duets, glees and solos. Miss May Woods presided at the harmonium, and played the accompaniments in a very creditable manner. A vote of thanks was passed by acclamation, and conveyed by the Chairman to all who had taken part. The meeting was closed by singing the doxology.”

It is interesting to note the use of the Harmonium in Stranorlar at such an early date, a time when musical accompaniments was still quite uncommon. However, it was not used in the Church building until 1921, when a new organ was purchased and dedicated that year.



The Sunday School Building in 2006

Church Design



The Church building both externally and internally has many beautiful features. It is traditionally rectangular in form, and retains all of its original fixtures, including the pulpit with its converted gas lamps, and the original furniture and pews.

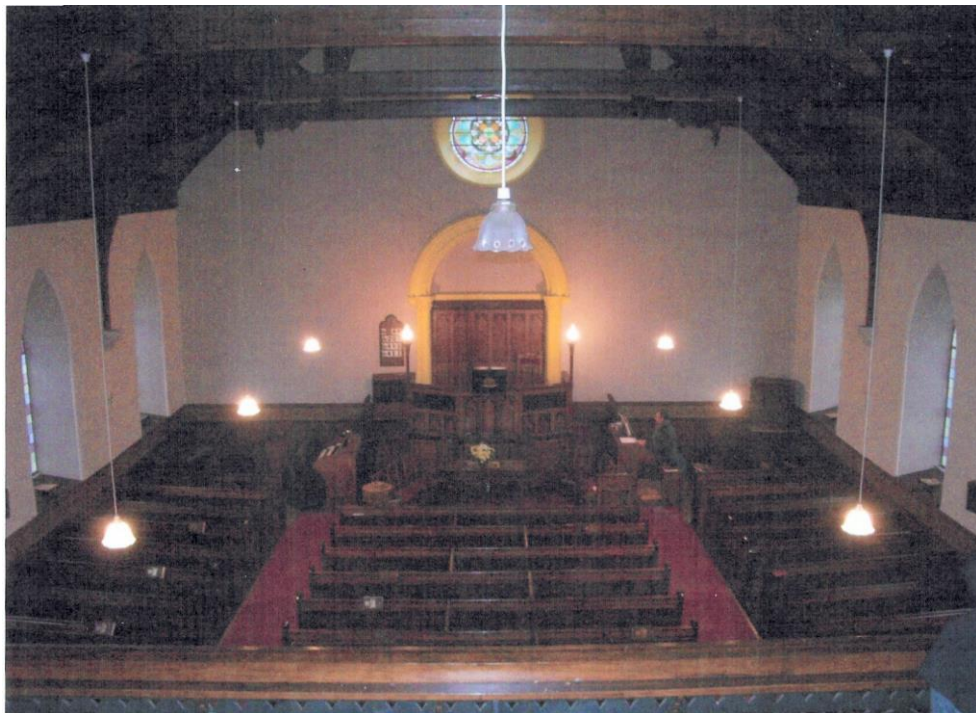
There are four striking gothic-arched stained glass windows on each side and a beautiful timber panelled ceiling with exposed beams. The original furniture and sanitary ware used by the Rev. Curry and subsequent ministers remains in the Session Room.

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The circular stained glass window above the pulpit and the gothic-style arched window in the gallery are fine examples of the craftsmanship of this era. The original solid oak front doors with their beautiful stained glass and the attractive gothic style double-arched door casing, which reflect the design of the gallery window above, also remain in place.

The vestibule has a beautiful Edwardian Minton tiled floor, leading to a side room where a spiral staircase to the gallery, which, with its cast-iron fretwork balcony-front, presents a superior view of the church's interior.



Interior view of the Church from the Balcony

One of the first guest speakers in the new Church was Rev. John McNeill, a missionary preacher who led the worship on 17th October, 1907, the notice of which appeared in the *Londonderry Sentinel* on the same day: "The Rev. John McNeill will deliver an address in Stranorlar Presbyterian Church today (Thursday) at twelve noon, when a large attendance is anticipated."

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World War I

The effects of the Great War of 1914-1918 were deeply felt in Stranorlar, as 29 members of the congregation were involved. Rev. Curry had ministered in Stranorlar for 33 years when the war broke out and would have had a close relationship with all of those who served as well as their families, during what must have been a very difficult time.



The war had started when Serbia started expanding its borders at the expense of others, which eventually led to Britain and Germany becoming involved. As Ireland was then governed by Britain, young men and women from all over Ireland responded by the thousand to the call of Lord Kitchener, and signed up for active duty. The sense of adventure appealed to these men and women, many who were barely 17 or 18 years of age, and it was initially thought the war would be over within a matter of months.

The Ulster force was made up of the *Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers* and the *Royal Irish Rifles (The 36th Division)*, who later lost over 5,100 men in one day at the Battle of the Somme, on 1st July 1916, when a total of 60,000 men were killed. Other Irish men joined the southern Irish force, the 10th Irish, the 16th Irish and the Connaught Rangers. Some Irish people living in other countries when the war broke out served with the regiments based there.

The Great War Memorial Plaque, beautifully mounted in marble and displayed in the vestibule of the church, commemorates those from the congregation who fought in the war. As a fitting tribute to those who did not return the inscription reads, '*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*' (St John XV, 13).

Twenty-five men and one woman from the congregation returned safely from the war, but three members unfortunately made the ultimate sacrifice. **Pte T. Fleming** (Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers), **Pte W. Wauchope** (First Canadians) and **L-Cpl F.J. Lucas** (Royal Scots Guards) were all killed in action, in uniforms of three different countries.

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Indeed, L-Cpl F.J. Lucas (No. 17884), (pictured, left) was the only one of four brothers from Cavan House, Killygordon, all of whom enlisted for the war on the same day (but for the forces of four different countries), who did not return home. He died on 6th June 1917 and is buried in Fauborg-D'Amiens Cemetery at Arras in France. The 'death penny', (inset, left) is a large copper memorial disc with high-grade relief work of Britannia and a lion as well his name and an inscription reading '*He died for freedom and honour*' and is still in the possession of the Lucas family. He had joined the Scots Guards as he was a medical student at Glasgow University during the early part of the war.

The remaining three Lucas brothers were **Pte Adams Lucas** (R.N.R.), who spent the war as a seaman patrolling the English Channel in the motor torpedo boats; **Pte Edward A. Lucas** (Australian L.H.); and **Pte John G. Lucas** (R. Inniskilling. Fus.), who was the only one of the brothers to serve with an Irish regiment.

Of the remaining members of the congregation who served, **Ptes R. Caldwell, J. Harper, S.P. Tynan, L-Cpl J. Hutchinson** and **Sgts G. Wauchope & J. Whyte** served with Canadian regiments. **Ptes P.H. Morrow** and **J. Wauchope** and **Sgt R.Wauchope** served with Australian regiments and there was one man from the congregation in South African uniform, **Pte A. Kilpatrick** of the South African Infantry. Others include **Captain H.H.T. Whyte** who served with the Inniskillings; **Corpl H.B. Whyte & Pte J. Pollock** with the RFA (Flying Corps.); **Spr. T.R. Bennett** (Royal Engineer); **Pte J. Brooks** (Black Watch); **L-Cpl W.Ewing, Lieut. P. Taylor** and **Ptes J. Wilson** and **J. Russell** of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Sister K.M. Caldwell (Q.A.I.M.N.S.R.) was the only woman from the congregation who served. Her long title stands for '*Queen Alexandra, Ireland, (Midwifery) Nurse, State Registered*', and her work would have been near the front and involved witnessing as much bloodshed and suffering as the men.

HMS Laurentic

Another disaster at this time with a Donegal connection was the sinking of a White Star Liner, *H.M.S. Laurentic*, by a German U-Boat, which occurred off Fanad Head in 1917. In 1914, this great ship, which had been a cruise liner more than 550 feet long and fast enough to out-run any submarine, was selected by the Admiralty to fulfil the role of transport and later as auxiliary cruiser. In 1917 she was carrying 43 tons of gold bullion from Liverpool to Halifax, Nova-Scotia and after sailing out from the Royal Navy's base in Lough Swilly after a stop over at Moville struck a mine off Fanad Head and sank within an hour, taking with her the 354 men and cargo.

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It was a freezing night at sea, and most of the men simply died from the extreme cold. When some of the lifeboats were toed into Moville early the following morning, some of them had the sailors still in position, frozen at the oars. They are buried in Fahan cemetery. The gold bullion was later recovered by Navy divers, and the ship still lies where she sank.

The troops returned home from the war in 1918-19 believing their sacrifices meant that such a war could never happen again. However, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles being put in place at the time meant, sadly, that another Great War twenty years hence was virtually guaranteed.

Dedication of the War Memorial Plaque (1921)

The congregation held a Memorial service for the First War on 23rd September 1921. The military authorities, under Captain McGregor, provided Bugle players to sound 'The Last Post' and 'The Reveille'. The beautiful white marble Memorial Tablet was then unveiled by Mrs Lucas, Cavan House and dedicated by the Rev. Curry.

The First Church Organ (1921)



The first organ was dedicated on the same Sunday as the War Memorial plaque. It was purchased on a proposal of Session and Committee and was presented to the Stranorlar congregation on 3rd July 1921. Mrs Lucas of Cavan House was requested to play on the Sunday of dedication, which took place on 2nd October.

A new Hymn book was also published by the General Assembly at this time. Prior to this, hymns were sung from 'Alexander's Revival Hymns' and the singing was led by a 'Precentor,' who usually took his place in front of the pulpit. Precentors usually received an imbursement for their services and would have been exempt from paying 'seat rents' in some congregations.

Rev. Curry held various 'Band of Hope' meetings, which began in Stranorlar in 1907 with 120 members. They continued throughout the years between the wars and Mr Curry invited various well-known speakers to officiate, including the famous evangelist of the day, Mr W.P. Nicholson.

Further Troubles

Unfortunately, troubles in Ireland were far from over. A failed Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916, which had lasted less than a week resulted in its leaders being executed. The War of Independence began in 1919, after the Irish Volunteers began operating as a guerrilla force, attacking the police and the military.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Under the *Government of Ireland Act 1920* Ireland was divided into Northern and Southern Ireland and a police force known as the '*Black and Tans*' were drafted in to help control the troubles. However, this only incensed the Irish and made the situation more volatile, and with anti-British feeling running high, civil war broke out in 1922. It lasted for less than a year, but claimed many lives and left a legacy of bitterness and division that was to remain with the country for many years to come.

Thankfully, these early troubles affected this area less than others, with minor activity such as food raids on local farmers by groups of troublemakers known as 'irregulars', resulting in the occasional exchange of fire.

Economic Hardship

Post-war economic depression also hit Britain and Ireland hard. Unemployment and poverty were still widespread and the emigration trail continued. From 1911 to 1920, over 484,000 people emigrated to America, a trend that continued throughout the 1920's. Many at this time went to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, England and America, providing some relief to the high levels of unemployment and poverty here.



**Unknown group, including nine girls - in front of the church in the 1920's -
Possibly a girls' Sabbath School Class with their teacher.**

In 1929, the Wall Street crash brought great financial ruin to many around the world and led to a time of financial crisis throughout the 1930's. As this was a worldwide problem, emigration was no longer the solution it had previously been for many.

Then in 1939, Hitler's army, who had been secretly planning and arming themselves for years, invaded Poland and other neighbouring countries and overpowered them within weeks.

The Second World War had begun.

World War II

Rev. Curry continued his ministry for a further 22 years after the First War, and lived to see the unfortunate sequence of events in 1939, and those prior to his death in 1940. The second war was known as '*the Emergency*', but thankfully did not have the same effect on Ireland as the first war. Ireland had opted for neutrality in 1938, after it had been declared '*a sovereign, independent, democratic state*' under a new constitution introduced by DeValera, in 1937.

Nevertheless, due to the stark pre-war economic climate in Ireland, over 50,000 volunteers signed up and heroically fought with the Allied Forces. As every available person was needed in the war effort, the problems of the 1930's were soon put aside, and many of those who left Ireland at this time did not return, having later found better standards of living elsewhere.

Ten members of this congregation, including three women were involved in this conflict, which lasted until 1945. The **Rev. John McFall**, minister of Stranorlar at this time also served as Army Chaplain from 1943 to 1945.



All returned safely except one - **Serg. Edward Allen Lucas Fairman** (pictured left & below, in an RAF plane), a young pilot in the RAF who had only a short time earlier got engaged to be married. His aircraft got into trouble over the English Channel and after making it to the mainland he was forced to crash land near Portsmouth. He is buried in Stranorlar Churchyard.

Those who served and were '*mercifully preserved*', include **Robert Ewing**, a Second Officer with the *Merchant Marines*; **Serg. Frederick Fairman**, R.A.F.; **Cecil Fairman**, *The Australians*; **William Frederick Lucas**, A.B.S. Royal Navy; Serg. Joseph Woods (Lettermore), Flight Engineer, R.A.F.; Warrant Officer Class (1); William Woods (Lettermore) R.E.M.E; **L.A.C. Mary J. Bell**, W.R.A.F.; **Serg. Isabella Bell**, A.T.S.; and **Muriel Fairman**, N.A.F.F.A.



It is estimated that over fifty million people perished during the war years and that the economy and general standards of living had fallen to what they had been before the turn of the century.

Another War Memorial Plaque, presented by *Mr Leonard G. Lucas & Family, Cavan House*, and dedicated in 2002, is displayed in the vestibule of the church as a fitting tribute to those involved in this conflict. A wreath laying ceremony is carried out each year in November to commemorate everyone who died in both wars and other conflicts throughout the 20th century.

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“They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them or the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.”

This plaque also recognises ‘others who fought and served in conflicts since 1945 – and were mercifully preserved’, namely **Pte. George Lucas**, 5th Inniskillen Dragoon Guards; **Loadmaster James Irwin Neilands**, R.A.F., (The Suez Canal Conflict 1955 –1956) who received a *Recognition Medal presented by Queen Elizabeth II*; **Serg. Ian J. Woods** (Carrickshandrum) R.A.F.; and **Pte. William Woods** (Kilross), Royal Inniskillen Fusiliers (The Borneo Conflict 1960-1965). During Peacetime, **Pte. Leonard Lucas Kilpatrick**, Royal Artillery, served from 1929-1931.

*For We Wrestle Against Spiritual Wickedness in High Places’
Eph. 6, v12*



Mr Curry acted as Clerk of Presbytery for many years, and faithfully ministered in Stranorlar until his death on 8th July, 1940, after an illness of only one day’s duration. He was 88 years of age and in the 60th year of his ministry. He and his wife are buried in Stranorlar Parish Churchyard, where the headstone on their grave, pictured left, reads “*Harriette, Dearly Loved Wife of Rev. James Curry, 1883 to 1938; Rev. James Curry, for 59 years Faithful Minister of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church, who died 8th July 1940.*”

Rev. Curry (1881-1940), Rev. Steele (1821-1859) and Rev. Love (1767-1807) were the only three ministers in the congregation’s history to have spent their entire ministry in Stranorlar. However, Rev. Curry is the only one buried here. The congregation then remained vacant for over a year, until August 1941.

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The following account of the Rev. Curry's death was published in the local paper, in July 1940:

“Death of Rev. James Curry, Stranorlar

A profound shock was caused to the people of the towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar and district by the announcement of the death of Rev. James Curry, Minister of the Presbyterian Church at Stranorlar, on Monday evening, after an illness of only one day's duration. The deceased gentleman was one of the oldest personalities of the district, being in his 89th year.

He was born at Bushmills, Co. Antrim, and came at the age of 28 years to Stranorlar Presbyterian Church in the year 1881, almost 60 years ago. It was in this Presbyterian Church, Stranorlar that his ordination took place and his entire ministry was served with the Stranorlar congregation.

He married a Miss Magee, who predeceased him two years ago. The late Mr Curry was one of the most popular and highly respected men of his time in Stranorlar. Entirely devoid of ostentation or pomp, he had a cheery word for all, both rich and poor, of every creed, and was ever ready to extend the hand of kindness and help to all his neighbours.

His life-long connection with the district caused him to be regarded as one born and bred in the place, and indeed there are very few in the districts now that remember his coming to Stranorlar. In his quiet, unassuming way, he did much to promote the well being of the towns, and was associated with every moment for the common good.

Little wonder then that this loss is felt and mourned, not only by the members of his congregation, but also by all the residents of the district of



every denomination. He was the Presbyterian Chaplain to the old workhouse at Stranorlar (pictured) and continued his ministry when, later the County Home was established, until his death.

He was also a member of the Stranorlar Old Age Pensions Sub-Committee.

The funeral to Stranorlar burial ground on Wednesday was eloquent testimony of the esteem and regard in which he was held. Members of his congregation, amid scenes of universal mourning and regret, carried him from his late residence to the Presbyterian Church.

The following clergy officiated at the funeral service- Rev. Irwin, Ballyshannon; Rev. McFarland, Killybegs; Rev. Duff, Castledearg; Rev. Lyons, Killeter; Rev. Sproule, Donoughmore and Rev. McClure, Lurgan (and Ballybofey).

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The chief mourners were: Messrs Auld, Bushmills (nephews); Messrs. Andrew James Kilpatrick and Leonard Kilpatrick, Castlebawn, Stranorlar (nephews), Mr Magee (nephew), and Miss Magee, Belfast (niece).

Stranorlar Old Age Pensions Sub-Committee adjourned their monthly meeting until Tuesday next, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Rev. Curry (Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee).

A resolution of sympathy with the relatives was passed on the motion of Rev. J Dunlop, Stranorlar and seconded by Mr D Hannigan, County Council, Cappry, Ballybofey.

The Secretary, Mr Tim Meehan joined in the expression of sympathy, and said that the Rev. Curry was a member of the Sub-Committee since the passing of the Old Age Pensions Act in 1908, and very seldom missed a meeting.

A licentiate of the Ballymena Presbytery, Mr John McFall B.A. will be ordained in the Church to take over the spiritual leadership of a small, but devout congregation that upholds the standard of Presbyterianism in a delectable valley near the blue hills of Donegal.”

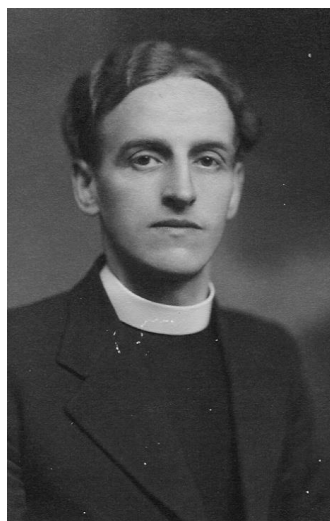


Stranorlar in the 1950's



Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. John McFall B.A. (1941 – 1947)



On 6th August 1941, **Rev. John McFall B.A.**, a licentiate of the Ballymena Presbytery, became Stranorlar's ninth minister since the congregation's foundation, but the first to be ordained in the new Church. Details of his ordination were published in *The Londonderry Sentinel*, on 7th August 1941:

“An event unique in the lifetime of the majority of the members of the congregation took place in Stranorlar Presbyterian Church yesterday, when Mr John McFall, B.A., was ordained and installed minister of the congregation, in succession to the late Rev. James Curry, who died over a year ago.

Presbyterianism in Stranorlar dates back over two and a half centuries, and during that time the congregation has had only eight ministers, and the last, the Rev. James Curry was in charge for almost sixty years. The present handsome Church was built in 1906, so Mr McFall is the first minister to be ordained within its walls.

A large congregation attended the service, which was conducted by the Rev. J.H. Lyons, M.A., Moderator of Donegal Presbytery. After the singing of Psalm 100, the Rev. S.M. Duff, M.A., led in prayer, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. A.E.C. Rowan, B.A. The Rule of Faith was read by the Rev. A.W. McFarlane, M.A., clerk of Presbytery, and the prescribed questions were put by the Moderator to the minister-elect, who afterwards signed the Westminster Confession of Faith. The pre-ordination prayer was offered by the Rev. R.S. Craig, B.A., and after the act of ordination, the Aaronic Blessing was sung. Following the post-ordination prayer, the newly ordained minister received the right hand of fellowship from the other ministers present.

The charge to the minister and members of the congregation was given by the Rev. J.G.D. Irvine, M.A., and after the service the minister was introduced to the congregation.

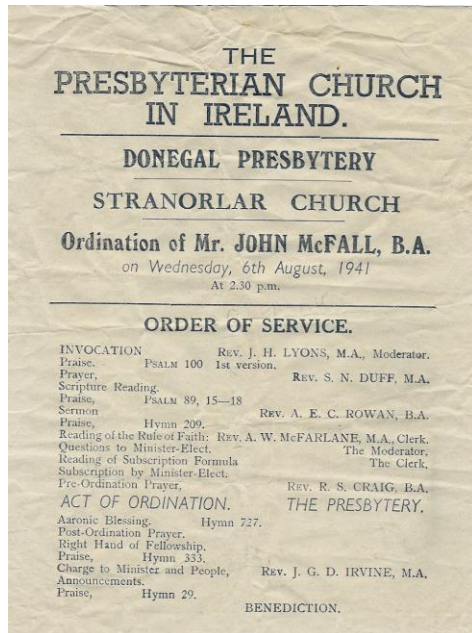
Subsequently, the Rev. Mr McFall and visiting friends were hospitably entertained by the ladies of the congregation. Rev. Mr McFall is a licentiate of the Ballymena Presbytery, and prior to coming to Stranorlar was assistant to the Rev. Dr Moody in Cliftonville Church, Belfast.”

Electricity Installed: At the beginning of his ministry in August 1941, electricity was installed in the church by James Woods of Ballybofey, at a cost of £25.

After two years in Stranorlar he began his service as Chaplain to His Majesty's Forces in the war, from 1943 to 1945. He then returned to Stranorlar, but demitted his charge on 30th September 1947, after accepting a call to Brigh and Albany.

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Rev. McFall, a cousin of the Auld brothers, who were nephews of Rev. Curry, is now deceased. His two sons are currently living in London.



The Order of Service for the ordination of the Rev. McFall, on 6th August 1941.



Certificate of Merit, awarded to the Sabbath School by the Youth Pennies Fund in 1941.

Rev. Charles McKimm Eadie B.A. (1948 - 1951)



From his ordination on 25th February 1948, until his departure on 21st March 1951, **Rev. Charles McKimm Eadie B.A.**, licensed by the Ards Presbytery in 1946, was minister of Stranorlar.

The following is taken from *The Londonderry Sentinel*, on 26th February 1948:

“In the presence of a very large congregation at Stranorlar yesterday, Rev. Charles McK Eadie, B.A., was ordained and installed as minister of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Eadie, who is a former student of Magee University College, Londonderry, began his education at Regent House, Newtownards. After studying at Magee, he graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, and subsequently went on to Assembly's College, Belfast.

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Before being called to Stranorlar, Mr Eadie was assistant to the Rev. S. Gilmore, B.A., in First Omagh Presbyterian Church. Previously he held assistantships to the Rev. S. McGladdery, at First Keady Presbyterian Church, Armagh; Rev. W.G. Sinclair of Edenderry Presbyterian Church; and at Cregagh Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

Several members of Donegal Presbytery took part in yesterday's service, which was conducted by the Moderator of the Presbytery, the Rev. S.N. Duff, M.A.

The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Colin Corkey B.A., and after the Rule of Faith had been read by the Clerk of Presbytery (Rev. A.E.C. Rowan, B.A., B.D.) and the questions to the minister-elect put by the Moderator, the ordination prayers were put by the Rev. J Macaulay, B.A., and the Rev. Mr Sinclair.

The charge to the minister and people was given by Rev. J.H. Lyons, M.A.

At a reception for the new minister, held subsequently, good wishes and congratulations were extended to Rev. Mr Eadie, by Rev. John Sproule, B.A., LL.B., on behalf of the Synod of Derry and Omagh.

Representing the General Assembly, Rev. T McKinney, B.A., said that there was a great tradition in the ministry in Stranorlar, and he knew Mr Eadie would worthily and nobly uphold that tradition. He congratulated the church on getting a man of his solidity and calibre.

Responding to the toast of the Colleges, Rev J. Browne said he brought the best wishes of the Faculty and staff of Magee College and of Magherafelt Presbytery, which he also represented.

Proposing the toast of the new minister, the Moderator expressed a hearty and cordial welcome to Rev. Mr Eadie, who, in response thanked the congregation of Stranorlar Church, and particularly stressed the debt of gratitude he owed to his parents.

Congratulations and good wishes were also extended by Rev. T.R. Johnston, of Newtownards; Rev. S. Gilmore; Rev. G. Boyd; Rev. J.W. Calderwood, of Bready Reformed Presbyterian Church, and other representatives.

Up until this time, all baptisms were carried out privately at home, but this policy was changed by Rev. Eadie in 1950, when John Thomas (Jackie) Reid, infant son of Mr & Mrs Jim and Lila Reid, became the first child to be baptised in the church building.

The Sunday School records for 1948 have a total of 60 children, under the Superintendent Mr Robert Parks.

After three short years in Stranorlar, the Rev. Eadie emigrated to Canada after receiving a call from a Canadian Presbyterian Church in 1951.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. Herbert Courtney B.A. (1951 – 1955)



The next minister was **Rev. Herbert Courtney**, licensed in Belfast in 1947, and ordained in Stranorlar on 28th November 1951.

The Londonderry Sentinel published the details of the day's proceedings on 1st December 1951:

“There was a large congregation in Stranorlar Presbyterian Church on Wednesday for the ordination and installation of Mr Herbert Courtney, B.A., as minister of the Church.

Mr Courtney served in the R.A.F. for five years during the war, and afterwards attended Magee College, Londonderry; Assembly's College, Belfast, and Trinity College, Dublin. He took his degree at Trinity College in 1949, and became assistant minister in Argyle Place, Belfast.

The impressive service was conducted by Rev. C. Marshall, M.A., Ballyshannon, Moderator of the Presbytery of Donegal. Rev. Thompson, B.A., preached the sermon.

The Ordination Prayer was offered up by Rev. W.J. Gregg, B.A., Argyle Place, Belfast, and the Installation Prayer by Rev. W.N. Maxwell, M.A., Woodvale Park, Belfast.

The right hand of fellowship was given by Mr Marshall on behalf of the members of the Presbytery and visiting brethren. Rev. Colin Corkey, B.A., Castlederg, gave the charge to Mr Courtney and the people.

At a reception given afterwards in the Lecture Hall, the new minister said that the day marked the end of an episode in his life that began in 1940. While serving in the R.A.F. he had been stationed in a small town and there was no minister for the Presbyterian Church there. One day one of the elders asked him to take the service in the Church and he had refused. A few days later he realised he should have taken this offer, and as he thought more about it he was asked again and this time accepted the offer, as he was fully convinced that God wanted him for the Church.

He said he was very heavily in debt – to two people - his father and mother, and he would always be in that debt. He thanked them sincerely for their help in past years. He also thanked the teachers in all the Colleges who had shown him friendship and enabled him to be in his present position.

Amongst the clergy who paid tribute to Mr Courtney were Rev. Professor R.J. Wilson, M.A. D.D., Assembly's College, Belfast; Rev. Professor H. Irvine, M.A. D.D., Magee College; Rev. R.G. Craig, B.A., Woodvale Park, Belfast; Rev. W.J. Gregg, B.A., and Rev. S. Haslett, B.A., Argyle Place, Belfast; Rev. J. Sproule on behalf of visiting Presbyteries; and Mr W. O'Neill, B.A., on behalf of fellow students; Mr F.J. Holland, Belfast, and Mrs Holland.

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Afterwards Mrs McClure, on behalf of the congregation, presented Mr and Mrs Courtney with a linen tablecloth on the occasion of their marriage, and Mr James Woods handed Mr Courtney a wallet of notes.

Mr Ernest McClure made a presentation to Rev. H. Lyons, B.A., Killeter, and Rev. W. McCune, B.A., Reformed Presbyterian Church, Stranorlar, for their aid during the vacancy.

Rev. Courtney remained in Stranorlar for four years, and resigned his charge to take up Church Extension duties in Belfast, on 23rd February 1955.

In the early 1950's, the congregation was made up seventy families, comprising 300 people of all ages, including children.

Rev. William James Ewing McClure B.A. (1955 – 1965)



On 14th December 1955, **Rev. William James Ewing McClure**, a native of Stranorlar, was installed as Rev. Courtney's successor. He had previously been minister of St. Johnston Presbyterian Church, and then of Hill Street Presbyterian Church in Lurgan, before returning to his home congregation of Stranorlar. After ten years ministry here, he retired on 31st December 1965.

Both he and his wife, Jennie, were keen gardeners and kept a beautiful rose garden and flower borders in the grounds of the Manse. Rev. McClure was the eldest of six brothers, who grew up beside their father's wholesale and grocery shop on Main Street, Ballybofey (now Alexander's shop) in the early 1900's. The McClure family had a long association with the Convoy area and could trace their roots back to the early settlers who arrived here during the Plantation of Ulster.

Members that became Ministers

Mr McClure's brother, Harry, and his son Jim Jr. were also both Presbyterian ministers in Islandmagee and Canada respectively. The McClure family is one of the few families in the congregation who had members that trained for the ministry. Others include Rev. John Brown (b.1810), brother of the poet, Frances Brown, who, as mentioned earlier was minister of Ray Presbyterian Church and died in 1854; Rev. Henry Stewart Steele (b. 1828), son of Rev. Dr. James Steele of Stranorlar; Rev. Herbert Brooks (b.1917), son of David and Annie (nee McKane) Brooks; Rev. Cecil Ewing, son of William and Mrs Ewing, Millbrae; and Deaconess Evelyn Whyte, daughter of Billy and the late Charlotte Whyte, Kilross.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. McClure's nephew, Malcolm McClure has forwarded the following story of the Ballybofey McClures, an interesting and detailed account of the life and times of a family from this congregation in the early 1900's :

"My uncle, Rev. Jim McClure, minister of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church from 1955-1965 was the eldest of six brothers nurtured in childhood next door to their father's wholesale and grocery shop on Main Street, Ballybofey. The McClure family had an earlier association with the Convoy area. An ancestor called Richard settled at Findrum in the mid 17th century, and over the next 200 years nearly every townland in the Deelee Valley around Convoy had some association with his descendants.

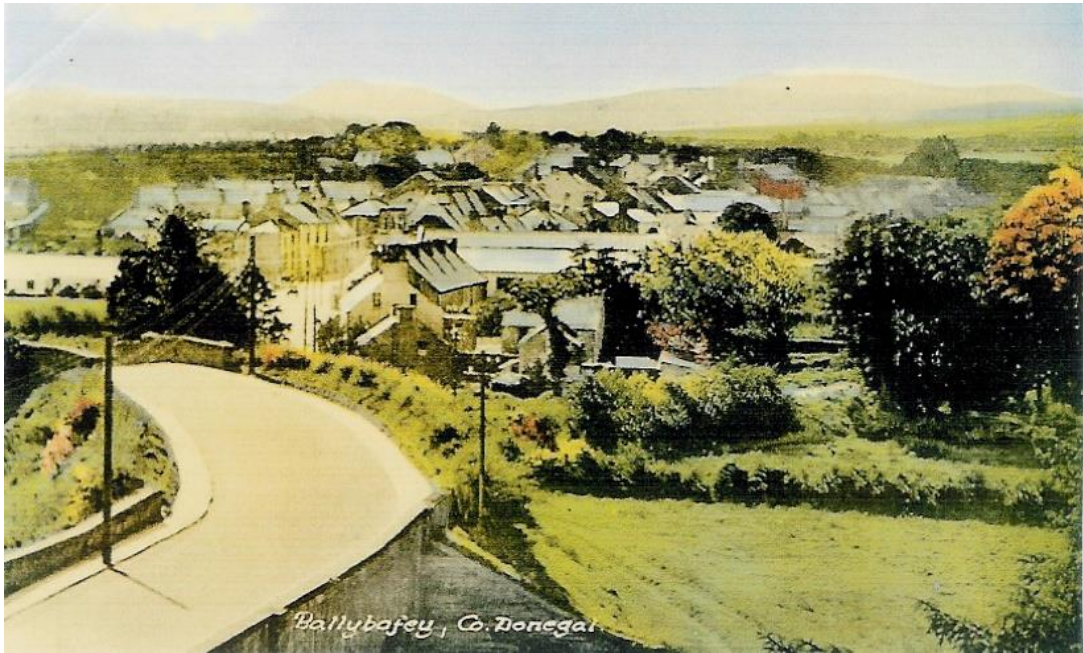
Jim's father, Charlie was born near Convoy in 1874. His parents were Charles McClure Sr. of Convoy and Sarah Nesbitt of Ballylast, near Clady, who were married at Urney in 1862. As the younger son of a large family, which included Kathleen, (who married Andrew Kee) and Robert, who had a grocer's shop at McClure's corner (top of the Port Road in Letterkenny), Charlie served his apprenticeship with a grocer in Newtownstewart, and went on to open his own shop in Ballybofey. He proved to be a shrewd businessman, prospered, and married Margaret Ewing of Stranorlar.

Maggie was the daughter of James Ewing and Letitia (McQuilken) Ewing. Her father was a Colporteur, that is, a travelling bookseller who specialised in Bibles and religious tracts. Their firstborn, Jim, arrived in 1900 and the Ballybofey family gradually expanded with the births of Bertie, Archie, Norman, Ernest and Harry. Maggie was an accomplished pianist who sometimes played the organ in Church on Sundays. A feature in her living room in Ballybofey was an ancient harmonium operated by pressing foot pedals.

Maggie McClure was very ambitious for her children and ensured they all had a good education. After Prior School in Lifford, Jim, Archie, Norman and Harry went on to take Degrees at Magee College in Derry, Presbyterian College in Belfast, and Trinity College, Dublin. Jim and Harry became ministers of Lurgan and Islandmagee Presbyterian Churches respectively. Norman became Principal of Omagh Model School and Archie became County Surveyor for Fermanagh. Bertie was established as a grocer at Finaghy, near Belfast, whilst Ernest married Eletta Stewart from Kilmacrennan and took over the running of the family business in Ballybofey.

The McClure family shop and their home next door reflected a way of life that has all but disappeared in these days of supermarkets and suburban bungalows, so it will be of interest to mention some abiding memories of the place. The shop was long and narrow with a counter on the right, an office on the left and a goods yard that extended down to the Back Lane. This yard had interest all of its own. Beside heaped sacks and cartons of provisions from all over Ireland, there was a large cupboard for bread, brought fresh from Milford before dawn, three times a week.

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Ballybofey in the 1950's

Behind was a double garage, with, on one side Ernest's big black Alvis saloon and the hand-cranked **Esso** petrol pump, advertised by a sign on the back gate, that in earlier times served the whole town. The other garage housed the vans that carried wholesale goods to small shops that dotted the countryside.

What people who ventured down that yard may remember was the *chug-chug-chug* of the single stroke engine that powered the electric generator. Back in the late 1920's, Archie, then a young engineer, convinced his father to install electricity to light the premises. It was a direct current system that stored power in a bubbling range of wet batteries in the loft, that required recharging every few days. This 'McClure's Power Station' was one of the earliest electric generating sets in Donegal and it continued in use until the ESB brought mains electricity to the town in the 1950's.

The kitchen, of course, was the heart of the home. It had a big black range fuelled by turf, that Cassie brought to life every morning with vigorous blasts of the bellows. Kettles of boiling water and pans of porridge, soup, and potatoes exchanged places constantly; there was always plenty of boy's laundry out on the line or waiting to be ironed on the kitchen table.

Ernest and Eletta were both keen gardeners. On the opposite side of the Back Lane their vegetable garden stretched right down to the Railway that ran along the banks of the river Finn. A special treat would be to enter the greenhouse at the height of summer and smell the tomatoes ripening on the vine.

Sometime in the early 1920's, Charlie purchased for £135-0-0, one of the earliest motor cars in the area, a Model T Ford. Built at Trafford Park, Manchester, it was used mostly as a hire car by visiting commercial travellers who arrived in the town by rail.

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Dr Johnston of Stranorlar, whose house on the corner of the Letterkenny road sadly was demolished recently, also hired Charlie's car frequently. It is possible that the well known ballad ***Johnstons' Motor Car*** was actually based on an incident that befell Charlie's car back in the times of the troubles following Partition, when the Doctor was on board.



Johnston's Corner, with Dr. Johnston's house on the right (with railings)

Always looking forward, Charlie installed one of the first phones in the area; it was a bakelite model with a handle on the side that was wound to call the exchange. It had the easily remembered number of '*Ballybofey 7*'.

As well as fresh bread and general groceries, sweets and tobacco and common household items were on sale in Charlie's shop. Most goods were sold by weight; bacon and ham were trimmed to individual requirements from the 'side' of the marvellous big red Berkel slicer with its shiny cutting wheel; fresh grapes arrived in wooden barrels filled with shredded cork and were weighed by the bunch; oatmeal and flour came in Hessian sacks and were served with a scoop from bins at the back of the shop. Tea came in big plywood chests lined with silver foil, from which it was decanted into $\frac{1}{4}$ lb paper bags during the week when times were slack.

'Ballybofey's for drinkin' tae, Stranorlar's for drinkin' brandy, Killygordon's a fine wee town and Castlefinn's a dandy'. This quadrain summarises well the adopted functions of the Twin Towns. Ballybofey was the place to do business, while Stranorlar was where most middle class people lived and where everyone went to school and church.

Like every market town, Ballybofey had cattle in the streets on fair days, and drunks swaying along the uneven pavement on a Saturday night. Charlie's shop window was well protected by a wire grill from their inadvertent attention.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Main Street, Ballybofey (1950's) with McClure's shop - half way up on the right

During World War II there was rationing in the U.K. and Charlie's shop would fill on Saturday nights with visitors from Northern Ireland, eager to buy the sweets, cigarettes, sausages and butter that were in short supply over there. Hearts would stop beating as these day-trippers, homeward bound, approached the Customs at Lifford. They would pound furiously if the man in uniform asked to open the car boot, or to examine their luggage on the rail car. Then came the welcome surge of relief as the bridge at Strabane was crossed and the contraband could be retrieved from its 'secret' hiding place.

In those distant days bananas were unobtainable in the North, and I remember the surprise and delight when Ernest drove me one wild November night to a darkened barn up in Corrafrin or thereabouts, where an enterprising farmer had started a banana importing business. In my young mind tropical exotica came from Donegal and my grandfather's shop would always be a place of absorbing interest.

Throughout the 1940's the canary in its cage sang and chirruped its approval of every transaction in Charlie's shop. Then modern times arrived with the purchase of a cash register around 1950 and this liquid avian chorus was replaced by the shrill beat of a bell. Life was starting to move at a faster pace.

Charlie and Maggie were kind Christian people who raised a loving family in the tradition of their time, with Grace before dinner and bedside prayers. Charlie passed away in 1946; Maggie continued in the shop, where she presided on her high chair close to the front window. In her kitchen she baked soda and wheaten bread until shortly before her death in 1952. Ernest carried on the business for several years, but his family too were growing and concerns for their education persuaded him to sell it and move to Derriaghy, Co. Antrim. It was bought by Bernie Alexander (nee Gallagher), who with her sister Eileen had worked with friendly devotion in the shop for many years. All six brothers and their wives are now dead, with the exception of Eletta, who enjoys reasonably good health at an age now, in 2006, of 91 years."

Malcolm McClure, Ardara & London.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. McClure is remembered fondly by many of the existing congregation in Stranorlar, where he finished the service each and every Sunday with the words **“Go in Faith, which is as old as the Mountains, and as Fresh as the Morning Dew”**, before announcing the benediction.



James McClure (future minister of Stranorlar) in 1908, with his mother Margaret McClure (1876-1952), his grandmother, Letitia McQuilken Ewing (d.1912) and his great grandmother, Mrs McQuilken (wife of Archibald McQuilken of Admiran, Stranorlar).



The McClure Family, Ballybofey in 1918

Back Row: Ernest, Archie, Margaret McClure and Bertie
Front Row: Jim, Norman, Harry and Charles James McClure

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Wedding of Ernest McClure, Ballybofey to Eletta Stewart, Kilmacrennan in 1940.
Rev. Jim McClure (Ernest's Best Man) and Rev. Harry McClure are standing to the left of Ernest. Mrs McClure Sr. is pictured seated on the right.



Rev. Jim and Mrs Jennie McClure's Golden Wedding in 1975.
Accompanied by their daughter Ann, and sons Jim Jr. and Stanley.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

It was with deep regret that the congregation learned of the Rev. McClure's death on 6th October 1988. The following extract is taken from the Presbytery of Donegal News Sheet for December 1988:

“The Rev. William James Ewing McClure passed from us into the presence of his Lord on the 6th October, 1988. He was in the ninetieth year of his age.

Mr McClure was born in Ballybofey, in this county of Donegal, a county for which he had a lifelong affection. He was the eldest of a family of six boys, and interest in the work to which he gave his life, was kindled at an early age. The reality of his commitment to Jesus Christ came when he entered University to study for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

He graduated in Arts in Magee and Trinity Colleges and then studied Theology at Assembly's College, Belfast. Later during his ministry in Hill Street, Lurgan, he studied for and obtained the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

After serving as Assistant Minister in the congregation of Ballysillan, he responded to a call to become Minister of St. Johnston, in which place he was ordained. In 1925, he married Miss Jeannie Salters, the young lady who had been the organist in Ballysillan.

His ministry in St. Johnston was comparatively short as in 1928 he accepted a call to the congregation of Hill Street, Lurgan, where he spent the next 27 years. However, his interest in and affection for Donegal never diminished and in 1955 he responded to a call to minister to the congregation of Stranorlar.

Ten years later he retired from the active ministry but was allowed to remain in the Manse. He was always active in his retirement, remaining chaplain to St. Joseph's in Stranorlar.

Mr McClure will always be remembered for the wonderful relationship with his wife, his love of gardening which was also shared by his wife, and above all for his tremendous capacity for friendship. Few will forget the manner in which he appreciated a good joke.

His love of nature and of people was but a reflection of his love for his Lord. That love gave rise to service which was at times sacrificial in terms of both time and money. Mr McClure has gone to his Heavenly Home, but his works and example remains with us.

To his wife and family we extend our deepest sympathy.”

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. John Sproule B.A., LL.B. (1966 – 1970)

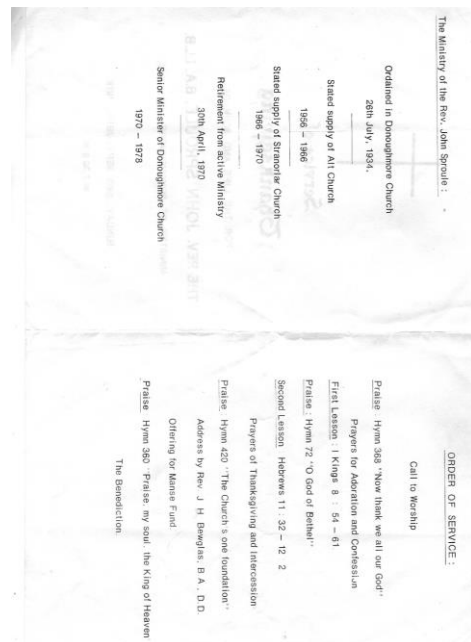
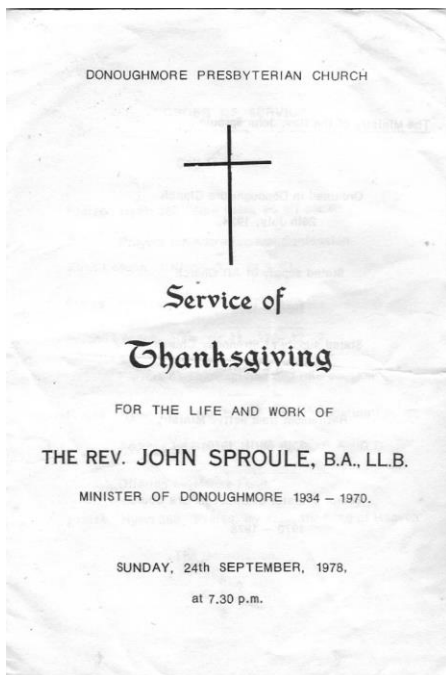


In 1966, Rev. John Sproule, a native of Castlederg and minister of neighbouring Donoughmore, was appointed stated supply to the Stranorlar congregation for the duration of the vacancy after Rev. McClure's retirement. He had been licensed by the Donegal Presbytery on 18th May 1934 and ordained in Raphoe Presbyterian Church on 24th July the same year.

He was educated at Magee College, Londonderry; Trinity College, Dublin (as a graduate in Arts & Law); Princeton Seminary, USA and the Presbyterian College, Belfast. Rev. Sproule and his wife, a nurse, were very popular with all who knew them and he continued as stated supply in Stranorlar until his retirement on 30th April 1970. Stranorlar's membership at this time was comprised of 56 families, with 250 members including children.

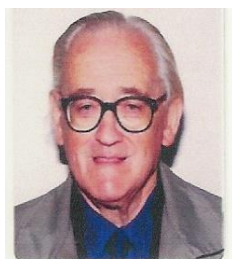
In 1971, Stranorlar and Donoughmore Presbyterian Churches united to form a partnership, whereby one minister would serve both congregations, as had been done by the Rev. Sproule. This arrangement has worked amicably and to the satisfaction of both congregations for thirty-five years.

Rev. Sproule passed away in 1978, and a special service of thanksgiving for his life took place in Donoughmore on Sunday, 24th September.



Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Rev. William Wylie McIlwraith Craig M.A. (1971 – 1975)



Rev. William Wylie Mc. I. Craig, Stranorlar, 1971-1977

On 10th November 1971, **Rev. W. W. McI. Craig** was the first minister to be officially installed to the united charge. He had studied in Derry, Dublin and Edinburgh and had been assistant in McQuiston Memorial.

He had just returned from a seven-year ministry in Canada, having previously ministered in Seaford, Portadown for ten years. During his time here he taught part-time in Raphoe Royal School where he was instrumental in establishing the Bible Union.

He received a call in 1975 but declined it, mainly due to his commitments in relation to the accidental burning of Donoughmore Church that year.



Pictured left is Donoughmore Presbyterian Church, built in 1875. Accidentally destroyed by fire in February of the year of its centenary, 1975.

Renovations to celebrate this centenary were ongoing in the church when the fire started one February night, and with wind fanning the flames, the fire spread rapidly and could be seen for some distance.

A new church in Donoughmore was erected in 1977, and the Rev. Craig accepted a call to Clontibret and Middletown in Co. Monaghan later that year. He subsequently ministered at Dromore and Drumquin from 1981 to 1990, before retiring to Portstewart.



The new church, pictured left, opened on 3rd September 1977. It is a most distinctive building with many unusual features, including curves in the roof-plane and corners; its unique circular foyer; and a stone-slatted roof with a 30 foot high spire, which has a weather vane in the form of a Greenland white-fronted Goose - a bird that winters in the Upper Foyle. The opening service included the dedication of gifts, with a number of ministers including the Moderator of the General Assembly taking part.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

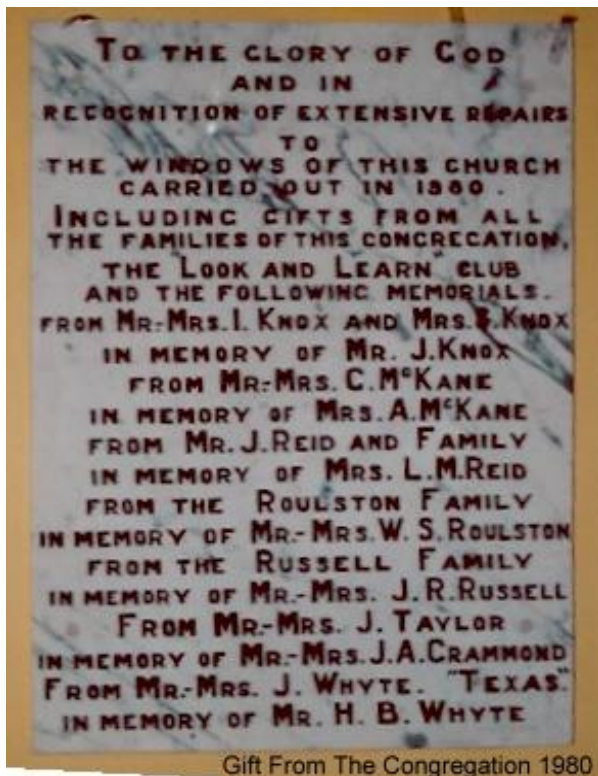
Rev. George Denis Campbell B.A. B.D. (1978 – 1986)



Rev. G. Denis Campbell, licensed in Templepatrick, succeeded Mr Craig when he was installed on 21st August 1978. He had previously been Assistant minister in Stormont congregation, Belfast since 18th July 1976, and his ministry at Donoughmore and Stranorlar was his first charge.

He and his wife Hilary were expecting the first of their two children when they arrived in Stranorlar and Colin and Adele were both born during their time here. When they arrived, the new Manse in Donoughmore was under construction and they had to move in with a member of Donoughmore congregation until the Manse was finally ready a few days before Christmas that year. Rev. Campbell was the first minister in charge of the new church in Donoughmore.

Church Windows



In 1980, donations were made by many of the families in the congregation (of which, by now, numbered 51) together with the 'Look and Learn Club' towards repairs to the windows in the main church. This was quite an extensive project and included repair and replacement of all broken glass.

Vandalism had long been a problem concerning the windows, which were frequently targeted, and reinforced glass screens were put in place to protect them at this time. A marble plaque in the vestibule details those involved in providing for this work, and

includes a list of memorials.

However, in early May 1985 vandals once again, despite our efforts and great expense, caused serious damage to the stained glass windows. The following report was published in the *Donegal Presbytery News Sheet* in June of that year:

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“As they arrived for worship in Stranorlar on Sunday 5th May, the congregation was shocked to find that their church had been attacked by vandals the previous night. The vandals had spared no effort to cause the maximum amount of destruction.

The reinforced glass screens which were erected in 1980 to protect the coloured glass leaded windows were shattered in four places and in one place a large hole was punched right through the screen and the window scattering fragments of glass all over the carpet on the west aisle.

We are grateful and touched by the generosity of our Roman Catholic neighbours in the Church of St. Mary Immaculate, Stranorlar. They were so upset by the news of the vandalism that they asked their people to contribute to the repairs. The following is an extract from their ‘Sunday Letter’:

‘We were all shocked some weeks ago to hear of the attack on the Presbyterian Church in Stranorlar. On behalf of the Catholic community we would like to offer our sincere sympathy to our Presbyterian brothers, and hope that they will accept that such behaviour is totally abhorrent to us who have always cherished our brethren of the other churches and treasured the good neighbourly relations that have always existed.

We utterly reject the actions of those responsible. Severe damage was caused to the church windows and as it is going to be a costly operation for a relatively small community, it has been suggested that an opportunity to help and show solidarity would be welcomed by many people. Boxes for contributions will be placed in the Church porches here for this and the following Sunday for anyone who might wish to give.”

Indeed, the people of St. Mary’s did give generously, and representatives later presented a cheque for £410 towards the repairs - a kind, neighbourly gesture that was gratefully appreciated by the congregation.

Unfortunately the vandalism has since continued over the years with windows being damaged on a regular basis. As recently as February 2006 the beautiful, original, 100 year-old stained glass panels in the front doors were viciously smashed, despite being protected by thick wire-glass coverings.

Church Fire

In the afternoon of Sunday 10th November 1985, a fire broke out in the boiler-house of the church, which is situated below the Session room. This was caused by the boiler chimney being too close to the timber ceiling, and as a result the Session room and boiler house were very badly damaged. The interior of the main church building needed complete redecoration due to smoke damage, and repairs amounted to over £1,500.

The church hall, which was in poor condition at the time was made ready for the service the following Sunday, where services continued for the twelve

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weeks it took to carry out the repairs and redecorate the church. The church was back to its former glory when everyone stood solemnly on Sunday 2nd February 1986, as Rev. Campbell led us in prayer to re-dedicate our Church for the worship and service of God. It is interesting to note that scorch marks on the rear of the Session room door are still to be seen and serve as a reminder of how much worse it could have been.

Rev. Campbell had been editor of the Presbytery News Sheet for a time during his ministry here. He also took leave to study Theology at Queen's College, Birmingham in 1982. The same year, the Youth Club did a sponsored walk from Clady to Ballybofey in aid of youth funds and raised over £500 for their efforts. They then organised a 24-hour badminton marathon in May 1984 and successfully raised funds for the new tennis court.

The Laggan Choir, under the directorship Mrs McSparran led a special service of Praise on St. Patrick's Day in 1985. They sang a variety of hymns by Irish writers and composers, including St. Patrick's '*Breastplate*', and the life of the Saint was described through hymns and sacred songs.

On 16th February 1986, the Rev. Campbell preached his final sermon as minister of Stranorlar after accepting a call to St. Andrews in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, where he has completed twenty years service. Rev. Campbell has since returned to visit both Stranorlar and Donoughmore on numerous occasions.



August 1985: Group pictured at the presentation of a cheque, the contribution of the Church of St. Mary the Immaculate, Stranorlar, towards the repair of windows damaged by vandals. Back Row (L-R): Mr Billy Whyte, Mr Charlie Bonner, Mr Roy Laughlin, Mr Jim Taylor, Mr Francis Mulrine (dec.), Mr John Flanagan, Cllr J.J. Reid, Mr Ivan Knox, Mr Charles McKane (dec.). Seated (L-R): Mr Robert Davis, Mrs Muriel Perry, Monsignor Dan McDyer (dec.), Rev. Denis Campbell & Mr Bertie Dennison (dec.).

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Rev. Eleanor Henning S.R.N., Dip.H.V., B.D. (1988 – 1997)

After a vacancy of just over two years, Mr Campbell was succeeded by **Rev. Eleanor Henning** from Belfast, the first female minister, who was installed on Saturday, 19th March 1988.



It was during this vacancy that the decision was taken at a congregational meeting, chaired by the Rev. Jim Stothers, to sell Stranorlar Manse. The congregation had it built during Rev. Macaulay's ministry (completed in 1881), but it had been vacant for a number of years with Rev. & Mrs McClure as its last residents.

Since the McClures had moved out in the early 1980's it had become obsolete, as the minister for the joint congregations now lived in the new Manse in Donoughmore.

Stranorlar Manse had been used as a base for the Youth Club for a number of years in the mid 1980's, but was falling into disrepair and with long term, high maintenance costs it was

deemed a liability and the decision was taken to sell it in September 1987. A site in the grounds with a separate entrance, previously used as the tennis court, has been retained to provide for a new Manse in the future, if needed.

Mrs Henning had trained and worked as a nurse and health visitor and had spent time working in India prior to becoming a Presbyterian minister. Rev. Henning, who is married to Hal and has a grown up family, served as Assistant minister in Fisherwick congregation, Belfast, before accepting the call to Stranorlar & Donoughmore as her first charge.



Rev. Henning also had responsibility for Alt congregation for a time and had many achievements during her time here. These included starting a very successful Bible Study group, having a library installed in Donoughmore Manse, as well as carrying out various improvements in Donoughmore School, culminating in refurbishment and an extension.

The FAS scheme was set up with the help of Mr Drew Corry at this time, with Mr Jackie Reid employed as the first caretaker.

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December 1988 seen former congregation member Jean Packham (nee Davis) receive an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II, in recognition of her services as casualty sister at the Erne Hospital, Enniskillen, especially for dealing with the Enniskillen bombing.

In 1989, new music and hymns were introduced to Stranorlar - firstly with a replacement organ and then with the introduction of the now familiar 'Songs & Hymns of Fellowship' Song Books. Freda Roulston, who had been the full time organist for ten years resigned at this time also, and the organ has been played on a rota basis since then by Mrs Ina Watson, Mark Knox and Keith Roulston.

Other memorable events of her ministry also included a special New Year's Day Praise service led by the Moderator, Rev. Dr Godfrey Browne from Ballycastle on 1st January 1989, and two special weeks of Praise led by the Rev. Denis Patterson and his team from Saltcoats in Scotland in November 1992 and again in April 1996.

Improvements to the church in 1989 include the installation of the P.A. system, substantial repair work to the main roof, a new boiler was installed and a new roof was put on the Session room. Further renovations were also carried out to the Sunday-School building, including the installation of a central heating system, and structural repairs. Fundraisers for this work included a very successful social evening in Kee's Hotel, a concert in the Butt Hall and an auction, which raised over £5,500. Due to its great success, the Session and Committee organised another very successful auction in April 1996.



Three new elders, pictured left, were ordained in the same year, namely Mrs Muriel Whyte, Mrs Irene Scott and Mrs Elizabeth Henderson.

Rev. Henning, after being on sick leave for almost a year, took early retirement on 31st May 1997. After a short time living in Carnone, the Mr & Mrs Henning returned to live in Co. Antrim, and Mrs Henning continues as our Senior minister during her retirement.

During the vacancy period of 21 months, **Rev. Robin Logue** ministered to us. He endeared himself to everyone in the congregation, young and old alike. His sense of humour and lively stories brought his message to life, and his term as supply in Stranorlar ended on 24th May 1998.

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Rev. Alan W. Carson BSc (Econ), B.D. (1998 – 2004)



On Friday, 29th May 1998, the 17th minister of Stranorlar in 289 years, **Rev. Alan W. Carson** from Belfast, was installed. He was Assistant minister in Regent Street Presbyterian Church, Newtownards before taking up this, his first charge and moving into the Manse in Donoughmore with his wife Gillian.

Their son Joshua was born here on 21st June 2000 and since returning to Belfast they have had a daughter, named Leah.

Rev. Carson, who proved to be most popular with everyone who knew him, was a very energetic and vibrant minister and inspired many in the church



with his youthful enthusiasm. Later that year, on Sunday 1st November 1998, we were, once again, privileged to have the Moderator of the General Assembly join with us, this time in the person of Rt. Rev. Dr John Dixon.

Pictured at Rev. Carson's installation are, from left, Rev. Andrew Watson, Mr Billy Whyte, Rev. Patricia McBride, Rev. Alan Carson, Mr Robert Lowry and Rev. Brian Brown.



To celebrate the new Millennium, Stranorlar congregation were joined with Benburb congregation, near Dungannon, with about thirty Stranorlar members attending a special evening of Praise there on 11th March 2000.

A bowling competition was held in the Henderson Hall the same year as a fund-raiser for the church repair fund, with the Leckpatrick Bowling Club as winners.

In 2002, various improvement projects were carried out, including a new car park and street lighting at the rear of the church, and a new entrance with access for the disabled was constructed at the side of the church. A substantial extension was also added to the Manse in Donoughmore at this time.

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Mr Ivan Knox (centre) presenting his fund-raising book in 2001, to Mr Billy Whyte, clerk of Session (left) & Rev. Alan Carson.

On Saturday 17th February 2001, a formal book launch was held in the Church. Mr Ivan Knox had compiled an extensive genealogical history, entitled '*The McKane Connection*', a very popular book that raised almost £5,000 for Church funds.

Then, on 6th September 2003 another fund raising book by the same author, entitled '*Fifty original Picture Poems of People and Places around the Finn Valley Area*' was launched at another well-attended gathering in the church. Ivan's teacher from Cooladawson School in the 1940's, Ms Nellie Herron, was invited as special guest to say a few words to make the launch official. Rev. Carson then interviewed Ivan about the book, which has to date has raised over €7,000. These funds have been divided equally between Church funds and the Sunday School Project.

Sadly, on 14th March 2004 Rev. Carson preached his farewell sermon after accepting a call as assistant minister in *Orangefield* congregation in his native Belfast. The Stranorlar people had grown very close to the Carson family during their time here and held a farewell function in their honour in Kee's Hotel on 3rd of March. The following is taken from the News Sheet for June 2004:

"The Choir, Sunday School and 'the three musketeers', Muriel, Lizzie and Irene provided the entertainment. Many tributes were paid to the Rev. Carson in respect of the six years he spent with us, when most would say they got to know him, Gillian and Joshua quite well. Presentations were made by the Sunday School, PWA and congregation, to all three. A few tears fell as a well-worded poem written and read by Mr Ivan Knox was presented to the Rev. Alan at the end of the evening:

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A Tribute

A soldier of Christ is this stalwart man,
To teach God's word so we understand;
To lead lost sinners to their Eternal Throne,
That their souls may enter God's Heavenly Home.

Colonel in Chief of Stranorlar Brigade,
For your support in all decisions made,
For your prayers and cares amongst the ill,
And the undying love of your kindness still.

For your words of comfort to those in need,
For your vision and wisdom to every creed,
For the way you display the love of the Lord,
To those who believe in his Mighty Word.

For the Sabbath school children that you adore
And the children's addresses and much, much more!
How these little children loved to hear
Your stories and lessons displayed so clear.

For your fruitful Sermons each Sabbath day,
For your chosen words in the way you pray,
For your love of singing and taking part,
Expresses the love within your heart.

To you Rev. Carson, and to your wife and son,
We all say thank you, for a job well done;
We thank you sincerely for pointing the way,
To the Kingdom of Heaven and a bright new day.

We, of Stranorlar congregation say,
How sorry we are that you're going away;
But remember this our trusted friend
You are more than welcome to return again.

This is not a last goodbye; it's not even a long farewell,
You'll be back in Stranorlar soon, maybe sooner than one can tell.
How happy we'll be should that be in God's plan,
That you will return and help us, God's Kingdom to expand!

So here's our hand our trusted friends, to bid you all adieu,
And may God bless you one and all, and the church you are going to;
May you prosper in your ministry, and live to see the day,
That your Army of Christian soldiers continues on its way.

May you journey far or journey near,
May your journeys be rich and your message clear,
May you journey in faith to the very end,
Then receive your reward, from Jesus, your Friend.

Ivan Knox (2004)

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Stranorlar & Donoughmore congregations have been vacant since Rev. Carson's departure, but under the guidance of our vacancy convener, Rev. Stephen Richmond, have been given *leave to call* by Church House in Belfast, and, in conjunction with Donoughmore congregation, are actively seeking a replacement full-time minister.

Rev. Tom Luke (2005 -)



In the interim, we have been most fortunate in securing the **Rev. Tom Luke**, a retired minister from Ballymoney, as Stated Supply. He has been ministering to us for some time and travels a considerable distance faithfully every week to visit members of the congregation and to take the Sunday services. His keen sense of humour and cheery manner has made him very popular with both congregations, and we are greatly indebted to him.

Moderator's Visit 2005

In October 2005 we had the honour of welcoming the Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev. Dr Uprichard, who led us in worship at our evening Harvest Thanksgiving service. Rev. Uprichard, who brought good wishes from the General Assembly and wished the congregation well coming up to the centenary in 2006, paid tribute to those who had tastefully decorated the church for the occasion and to Mrs Ina Watson and the choir for their contributions to the service.

On 23rd October 2005, Rev. Fred Reilly and Rev. Cecil Ewing conducted a memorial service for their friend, the late Mr Bob Minter. Mrs Minter travelled from America for the service and also gave her testimony and spoke of the time when they operated the Bible School in Shan Creggan House.

Centenary Service

To mark our centenary year, the Session and Committee, with our Vacancy Convener Rev. Stephen Richmond, have organised a special centenary service, to be held in the Church on Saturday, 29th April 2006. The special guest speaker will be the Rev. Dr John Lockington, a former Moderator of the General Assembly.

Other invited guests will include local clergy, and some of our past ministers, including Rev. Craig, Rev. Campbell, Rev. Henning and Rev. Carson. The Donegal Presbytery Choir will also be in attendance and, afterwards there will be a range of Church artefacts and memorabilia on display at a reception in the Henderson Hall.

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The New Johannus Organ, 2006

We have also decided to celebrate the centenary with the purchase of a new Church organ, and plan to floodlight the Church building, as well as to carry out essential repairs and to fit protective coverings to the Church windows.

A centenary *Proverbs Calendar* for 2006 with daily verses and Scriptural quotations has also been successfully organised as a fund-raiser by Jonathan and Tara Cowan, which to date has raised approx. €2,000. These funds were divided evenly between the Sunday School Fund and St. Joseph's Hospital Patient Comfort Fund.



Pictured making the presentation of €1,000 to St. Joseph's Comfort Fund, raised from the *Proverbs Calendar* are Tara Cowan (2nd from left) and Jonathan Cowan (3rd from right). Also included are, from left, Paul Hume (Director of Nursing), Donna Gallagher (Ward Sister), Marie McClintock (Clinical Nurse Manager) and Veronica Doherty (Care Attendant).

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Mr W.J. Whyte



Mr Billy Whyte has been an elder of Stranorlar congregation for 41 years and has been Clerk of Session for 35 years. He also served as a Sunday School teacher and as Superintendent for 45 years, before his retirement from these posts in 1991. He has been asked to write a few words about his life and experiences in Stranorlar Church, and the following is his account:



“I have very fond memories of Stranorlar Sabbath School and my teachers in those days, Mr Charles McClure, pictured left (Rev. Jim McClure’s father) and Mr Bob Parks. Mr McClure was Superintendent in those days and was also the teacher of the senior class. Mr Parks was the teacher of the Junior class and to me, these men were men of God and had a tremendous influence on my life, which was to bear fruit in later years.

Of course, there were other teachers too, Miss Sarah Jane Irwin of Summerhill, teacher of the Primary class of girls; and Mr Jack Gillespie of Ballinacor, Killygordon and Mr Jim Ewing of Cooladawson both of whom also took Primary and Junior classes. The number of children in those days numbered between fifty and sixty, with the teachers being faithful to both God’s Word and to the children, and have long gone to their Eternal reward and to be with their Master, whom they loved and served.

After Mr Parks retired as teacher and Superintendent, I was asked by the Session to take over where he left off. This I carried on, as teacher for 45 years and Superintendent for 40 years. I am also an Elder 41 years in October this year, Clerk of Session 35 years in April this year and have been a Lay Preacher for over 35 years, and to God Be the Glory.

As I grew up into my teens, and over my lifetime I have seen many ministers come and go in Stranorlar. Many of these I got close to, being like a brother and father to me.

At the time when the Rev. W.W.McI. Craig was our minister in Stranorlar, Presbytery was much the same as it is at the present time, with only four ministers. I said to the Rev. Craig that ‘if an Elder was worth his salt could he not help out in this scarcity of ministers?’. Rev. Craig put this to Presbytery who accepted it and this is how the Lay Preachers started. Professors and lecturers came down from the college in Belfast to teach us and around 25 people enrolled. That is over 35 years ago, but at present there are hardly five left, as many of these have gone to their reward.

There were many Missions in the Church during my teenage years, taken by the General Assembly’s Evangelist, namely Mr Robert Miller in 1947. The meetings were held in the hall which were so packed out that many people could not get in. It was there that I was brought face to face with

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Christ. Although I was brought up in a very strict Christian home and never entered a dance hall, picture house or public house, not even had taken drink for medicine, I knew I was a sinner in God's sight. I do not remember a word of the sermon that Mr Miller preached, but it was clear in my mind what he said at the close of the service. He said 'you folk here tonight will do one of two things, you will either accept the Saviour or you will reject him.' I did not wait behind that night, came home and later got down at my bedside and asked the Lord into my heart, and after 59 years am still going on.

Over the years in our Church since the days of Mr McClure and Mr Parks, the work of the Gospel has been going on steadily by the faithful proclamation of God's Word by faithful ministers of the past years. Now in 2006 we are back in the same situation we were 35 years ago and are in our second year of vacancy due to the scarcity of ministers at the present time, but the Lord was good to us in sending us a gentleman by the name of Rev. Tom Luke as Stated Supply. Now we are looking forward in the will of the Lord to our centenary celebrations on 29th April 2006."

W.J. Whyte



A former member of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church who became a minister is Mr Cecil Ewing, formerly of Mill Brae, Stranorlar. Mr Ewing, who now lives in Wales has forwarded the following account of the influence Stranorlar Church had on his life whilst growing up in the congregation in the 1940's & 1950's and of his life since then:

"I encountered a good teaching at Stranorlar Presbyterian Church and at the Sunday School, thanks to Godly men like Bobby Parks, Billy Whyte and ministers like the Rev's Eadie, Courtney and McClure among others. The youth and sports activities kept us active and involved in the Church.

When the World Mission to Children came to Donegal and set up their work at 'Shan Creggan', I among many others benefited from the excellent work that they did among the young. Robert and Mae Minter attended the Presbyterian Church in Stranorlar with their own family and brought their extended family along as well.

They ran a Daily Vacation Bible School in the summer holidays at Shan Creggan. It was that first DVBS in 1950 run by Bob & Mae Minter, Mrs Kauffman, and Eldon & Patti Padgett, at the age of 13, that I committed my life to Christ, and was born again as Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in John, Chapter 3. They began to involve us young people by encouraging us to help out at the other DVBS at Ramelton and Cloughroe, and it was there at Cloughroe schoolroom that I gave my first sermon in 1951 at the age of 14.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

I can't remember what my text was or what the subject was, but I don't think the people who were there were too impressed with my first effort. World Mission to Children came to Ireland and their main purpose was to set up a home to look after children who had been orphaned as a result of the War. For some reason the Irish government refused them permission to do that and so it was decided to use the facilities at Shan Creggan to run a Bible School and I was one of the first to enrol along with my sister Emmeline, Bertie Taylor, Pearl Crawford, Fred Reilly and others. I believe I was the only student to graduate from Shan Creggan Bible School. After a few years when World Mission to Children moved to Drewstown House in Co. Meath, I continued to study at Bible School there where I remember with great affection Mr & Mrs Williamson, John Griswald and Mrs Cannon and many others who gave to us a great training in the Word of God.

The desire to be in the service of God grew and developed, but the death of my father William Ewing in 1955 meant I had to move to England to seek work. My brother Stanley later joined me and we set up an electrical business together. We found a spiritual home in that Elam Church at Longton, Stoke-on-Trent. The minister there at the time was Rev. David J. Ayling, the current minister of the Ulster Temple in Belfast. The Rev. Ayling was a very good Bible teacher and a great motivator of young people and encouraged us all to dedicate our lives to Christ's service. As normal for me, I got actively involved in the work and outreach of the Church. I taught in the Sunday School and became the Sunday School Superintendent for 13 years.

It wasn't long until I had met and married my wife, Maureen and we have three sons-Edward William, Matthew James & Daniel Joseph. Matthew now has two sons-Alexander Joseph and Thomas Samuel.

I remained in business for 21 years more and still had His hand on my life. In 1977, I was asked to become an Honorary Pastor of a Pioneer Church in Stone in Staffordshire and was ordained in 1982 and continued to Pastor there. Some years later, due to a variety of factors, I became Chairman and Executive Trustee of Foundation Stone Trust. This is a Christian Organisation which seeks to promote independent living and vocational training for people with disability. At first I combined this with my Pastoral role but the workload became excessive, and the Elam Headquarters arranged for me to be seconded to work for the Trust.

Due to health reasons I am now semi-retired and living near Harlech in Wales. There my wife and I enjoy a rich Fellowship with Christ Church Presbyterian Church in Wales, at Bartmouth, where I usually preach once a month, lead the Bible Study and when required, carry out visiting the sick."

Yours in Christ, *Cecil J. Ewing*

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Church Groups & Activities

There are various groups and regular activities within the Church that cater for the needs of young and old alike.

These groups would not function if it were not for the dedication and ability of those who freely give of their own time to organise and coordinate the successful activities involved, including Sunday School, Children's Church, Wednesday Bible Club, Youth Club, and PWA.



A group of Sunday School children pictured with Christine Stewart and Kathleen Lindsay in February 2006.

Sunday School was held in the Gallery of the main Church in the early years. It then moved to the Sunday School building behind the Church, reverting back to the main Church in the 1980's whilst the Sunday School building was being renovated.

Pictured above: Back Row - Mrs Christine Stewart, Clara Mason, Elizabeth Reid, Christina Reid, Mrs Kathleen Lindsay; Middle Row - Holly Mason, Christopher Stewart, Aaron McCauley, Andrew Lucas, Karen Gallagher, Alan Gallagher, Alexandra Stewart; Front Row - Aaron Knox, Megan Lucas, Shania Knox, Emma Gallagher, Amy Mason, Shannon Russell.

The number of children at Sunday School has been constantly in decline over the years, in line with membership and Church attendance. Sunday School membership peaked in the 1870's, with 100 children in regular attendance, taught by eleven teachers. By the early 1900's the average membership was down to 90, falling to 60 by the 1930's, to 40 by the 1950's, and to 35 by the 1970's and 1980's, where it remained fairly constant until the 1990's. Sunday School membership consists of 21 children this year, taught by four teachers.

Superintendents since the opening of the new church include Mr Charlie McClure, Mr Bobby Parks, Mr Billy Whyte, Mrs Irene Scott, Mr Graham Neilands, Mrs Christine Corry, & Mrs Audrey Chambers, assisted by Mrs Kathleen Lindsay.

Children & Youth (by Tara Cowan)

The Church is committed to the spiritual development of its young people. It aims to teach the scriptures in a way that is relevant to them and to communicate the love of God in a practical way.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Currently there are 21 children who attend Sunday School weekly. We are grateful for the commitment of the teachers for their preparation and presentations of the topic each week.

The four teachers are Audrey Chambers, Muriel Whyte, Christine Stewart and Andrena Faulkner. They are assisted by Kathleen Lindsay who deals with the administration.

The Church also runs a Good News Club, which meets fortnightly. This club is open to all children in the local community regardless of their church background. Activities at the club include games, quizzes, Bible stories and singing and food is provided each night. The club is organised and run by Muriel Whyte, Audrey Chambers, Gary Forsythe and Jonathan & Tara Cowan.

Each year in early June the Church holds a 'Five Day Club', where in recent years up to 50 children have attended. Activities are similar to those on offer at the Good News Club, however there is more continuity in the nightly activities.

The teenagers of our congregation are encouraged to attend the Donegal Presbytery events which are held monthly. These include football, bowling, unihoc, films and specific interest items.

Young people also occasionally take part in singing & drama at church, usually for special occasions such as during Christmas and Easter services.

Children's Church, which is a crèche for younger children during the latter half of church service each Sunday is currently coordinated by Ms Andrena Faulkner, assisted by other volunteers, usually parents who take turn to supervise and instruct the children. Highlights of the year for the children include excursions, Christmas parties and the Sunday School Rally.



Stranorlar Railway Station in the early 1900's, from where the Sunday School children would have departed on the annual Sunday School Excursion, which traditionally was a day trip to Rossnowlagh on the first Wednesday in July.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Women's Association (PWA)

The PWA is an organisation for women within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It was originally known as the Women's Missionary Association (WMA), has a membership of approx. 14,000 and there are branches in almost every congregation. Their PWA badge (left) is a Celtic Cross on a blue background. Blue represents the Presbyterian Church, the outer circle represents the world and the cross represents their outreach into the world.



The purpose of this association is:

- (i) to unite the women of the Church in the dedication of their lives to Jesus Christ and His service at home, the workplace, the community and abroad;
- (ii) To share in the mission of the Church at home and overseas through thought, prayer and financial support; and
- (iii) To provide a link with the women of other Churches in Ireland and abroad.

Stranorlar PWA (by Muriel Whyte - Vice President)

The PWA have met in Stranorlar for over fifty years. The founder President was Mrs Margaret Courtney, wife of the Rev. Herbert Courtney, who ministered in Stranorlar from 1951-1955.



We thank all those ladies in the congregation who have kept the PWA in Stranorlar going over the years. The aim of the PWA is to invite its members in friendship and service within the congregation and community and to encourage Christian living, and through a balanced programme plan, members should be encouraged to take an interest in the wider outreach of the Church. As PWA members we have a responsibility to pray and to give our resources, so that missionaries and deaconesses can be sent to take the love of Christ to others.

Pictured above is a Wall-hanging in Church House, Belfast, representing all the Young Women's groups in Ireland.

We in Stranorlar sponsor a young boy in Kenya for his education and find great joy in doing it. The theme for the PWA in 2005-2006 is 'Rooted in Christ'. The cacti thrives in deserts - one here, one there -and appear not to have anything to do with each other. But if you dig into the sandy soil you would soon discover that one cactus is linked with others by its unseen roots.

Like cacti, each of us is an individual, each different, a character in himself. That's as it should be. But all of us are linked by hidden ties and united purposes. It is such deep things as love and service which surely binds us together in PWA and makes us one.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

**Family Names Associated with
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church
- since 1675 -**

Adams, Alexander, Allen, Anderson, Arle, Armstrong
Baird, Barr, Bates, Bell, Bennett, Blair, Boggle, Bonar, Bonner,
Bracegirdle, Brooks, Brown
Caldwell, Campbell, Carson, Cathers, Chambers, Cochrane, Corry, Coulter,
Courtney, Cowan, Craig, Cramond, Crawford, Curry
Davies, Davis, Dennison, Desmond, Duncan;
Eadie, Edmiston, Elliott, Ewing
Fairman, Faulkner, Ferguson, Fettridge, Finlay, Foster
Gallagher, Gillespie, Glenn, Graham, Gunning, Guy
Hall, Hanna, Harper, Hastings, Henderson, Henning, Huston, Holmes,
Hutchinson
Inglas, Irwin
Jeffrey, Jenkins
Kee, Kincaid, Kinkead, Keady, Keen, Kerr, Kilpatrick, Knox
Lafferty, Laughlin, Lee, Leeper, Lindsay, Love, Lucas, Luke
Macaulay, Macklin, Magee, Mallon, Malseed, Marshall, Martin, Mason,
MacGregor, Maxwell, McAuley, McCain, McClean, McClintock, McConnell,
McComb, McClay, McCleery, McClenaghan, McClure, McCullagh,
McFarland, McFeeters, McFall, McIlee, McKane, McMenamin, McQuilkan,
Minter, Mitchell, Morrow, Morrison,
Neilands, Neilson, Neely, Newsom
Parks, Patten, Patton, Patterson, Pollock, Perry, Pinkerton, Price, Purvis
Ramsay, Reed, Reid, Rice, Roulston, Russell
Scott, Shanklin, Shields, Smith, Smullen, Smyth, Speer, Sproule, Stewart,
Steele, Stephenson;
Tallett, Taylor, Thompson, Tinney, Torrens, Tynan
Virtue;
Waddell, Wallace, Walker, Walls, Walson, Walwood, Watson, Wauchop,
Whyte, Wilson, Wisley, Woods, Wray



Main Street, Stranorlar in the 1940's – On the left is Thompson's cottage, further up is the home of Frances Brown (centre left, white windows) with Kee's Hotel, opposite, on the right.

Statistics for Stranorlar Presbyterian Church (1845-2005)

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

| Year | Total No. of Families | Total No. of members incl. children | No. of communicants | Most present at any one communion | No. of Elders | No. of Committee | No. of Stipend Payers | Seat Rents Paid | No. of S. School children | No. of S. School Teachers |
|------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1845 | 175 ? | | | | | | | £s.d | | |
| 1852 | 145 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1871 | 128 | | 240 | | 6 | 7 | 114 | £84.2.7 | 85 | 9 |
| 1875 | 116 | | 208 | | 3 | 10 | 115 | £79.16.5 | 100 | 6 |
| 1880 | 120 | | 203 | | 3 | 10 | 106 | £77.7.9 | 88 | 10 |
| 1882 | 116 | | 127 | | 3 | 7 | 106 | £75.19.5 | 87 | 6 |
| 1885 | 113 | | 140 | | 3 | 7 | 106 | | | |
| 1890 | 102 | | 140 | | 3 | 6 | 102 | £60.0.0 | 89 | 11 |
| 1895 | 110 | | 180 | | 3 | 6 | 100 | £63.7.6 | 80 | 10 |
| 1899 | 110 | | 180 | | 5 | | 101 | £65.0.3 | 80 | 10 |
| 1905 | 110 | | 210 | | 3 | 4 | 93 | | 90 | |
| 1906 | 110 | | 210 | | 3 | 4 | 93 | | 90 | 90 |
| 1907 | 106 | | 208 | | 3 | 4 | 87 | | 93 | 9 |
| 1910 | 106 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1920 | 101 | | 150 | | 2 | 12 | 88 | | 90 | 6 |
| 1930 | 75 | | 140 | | 2 | | 75 | | 60 | 6 |
| 1940 | 70 | | 140 | | 1 | 12 | 70 | | 50 | 6 |
| 1950 | 70 | 300 | 140 | | | | | | 40 | 5 |
| 1960 | 67 | 205 | 155 | | | 5 | 73.fam | | 32 | 4 |
| 1970 | 56 | 250 | 150 | | | | | | 34 | 4 |
| 1980 | 51 | 177 | 143 | | | 8 | | | 42 | 8 |
| 1990 | 62 | 190 | 162 | 92 | 7 | 6 | | | 30 | |
| 2000 | 57 | 180 | 154 | 110 | 8 | 9 | 51.fam | | 19 | |
| 2005 | 56 | 170 | 135 | 54 | 7 | 10 | 45.fam | | 22 | 4 |

These statistics, which have been published annually by the General Assembly since 1871 based on the information returned by the minister each year, clearly illustrate the trend in membership of the congregation, which has been in continual decline since these records began. Figures for membership prior to the famine of 1845-1851 are not available, but it is estimated it would have been about 20% higher than the 145 families present in 1852.

Seat rents were a compulsory payment made by each family, all of which usually went towards the minister's salary. Each family had an assigned seat, and although these seat rents no longer exist, many of the present families still sit in their 'family seat', which had been used by their family for several generations.

The minister also had other income from various funds, with an average salary of £130 per annum at the turn of the century, which was paid half yearly. Total funds raised by Stranorlar congregation in a typical year at this time averaged around £160, with the highest income for this period of over £198 recorded in 1871, which would have been somewhat of an exception. This income was made up of Sabbath collections, Sustenation fund income, mission collections, charitable collections, stipends and seat rents. Further income for the building, repair & maintenance fund would have been generated as required, such as when the Manse was being built - over £466 was raised for this purpose from 1877 to 1879.

Past & Present Members of Kirk Session

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

| | Ordained | | Ordained |
|-------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| Andrew Stephenson | 1675 | Samuel Woods | 1944 |
| Archibald Harper | 1675 | Charles McKane | 1944 |
| John Armstrong | 1675 | Edward Lucas | 1944 |
| John Ferguson | 1675 | Charles McClure | 1944 |
| | | Ernest McClure | 1948 |
| William Taylor | 1838 | James Woods | 1948 |
| William Walker | 1838 | Robert Parks | 1948 |
| William Thompson | 1838 | William Roulston | 1948 |
| James Taylor | 1838 | Francis Elliott | 1948 |
| John Arle | 1838 | Robert Davis | 1969 |
| John Shanklin | 1838 | Daniel Henderson | 1969 |
| John Wallwood | 1838 | James Woods | 1969 |
| Dr Robert Sproule | 1838 | Charles McKane | 1969 |
| James Crawford | 1838 | William J. Whyte | 1969 |
| John Speer | 1838 | James Taylor | 1981 |
| James Crammond | 1855 | Roy Laughlin | 1981 |
| William McClean | 1855 | Bertie Dennison | 1981 |
| John Barr | 1855 | Jack Neilands | 1981 |
| Samuel Maxwell | 1855 | Elizabeth Henderson | 1996 |
| Samuel Pollock | 1855 | Irene Scott | 1996 |
| Samuel Taylor | 1855 | Muriel Whyte | 1996 |



Current Kirk Session, pictured with Rev. Alan Carson (2004)

Back Row, L-R: Mr Roy Laughlin, Mr Robert Davis, Rev. Carson, Mr Billy Whyte (Clerk), Mr Jack Neilands; Seated L-R: Mrs Muriel Whyte, Mrs Irene Scott, Mrs Elizabeth Henderson.

Past Members of the Congregational Committee

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

(named in the year when first elected only)

18th November 1839 (Date of election of the first Committee)

Messrs. John Cochrane Esq., William Walker, James Taylor, John Shanklin, William Finlay, Dr Robert Sproule;

1845 - *Messrs.* James Wallwood, Samuel Taylor, John Gunning, John Barr, George Davis, George Bates;

1849 - *Messrs.* Charles Leeper, Joseph Stewart;

1853 - *Messrs.* James Holmes, James Russell, James Crammond;

1854 - George Barr;

1855 - *Messrs.* William McClean, Samuel Maxwell, William McClure, Samuel Pollock;

1860 - *Messrs.* John Gunning Esq., George Davis Esq., Robert Bell, Robert Stewart, William Russell, Samuel Bell, John Taylor, William Finlay, James Reid;

1861 - 1919 - Records unavailable;

1920 - *Messrs.* Charles McKane, Thomas J Ewing, Charles McClure, John J Russell, William J Brooks, James Whyte, Joseph Fairman, William J Morrow, Peter Taylor, Samuel Woods J.P., William V Hanna, James McClure;

1921 - *Messrs.* Edward Lucas, Francis Elliott, Thomas Morrow, John Shields;

1922 - *Messrs.* John Tynan, Alexander Pollock, Ben Boggle, William Whyte;

1940 - *Messrs.* Ben Boggle, Francis Elliott, Joseph Fairman, Edward Lucas, George McClure, Charles J McKane, Robert Parks, James Reid, William Roulston, Joseph Russell, William Whyte, Sam Woods;

1942 - *Messrs.* William J Morrow, Ernest McClure;

1943 - *Messrs.* George Bates, James McKane, Robert J Bonner, George Brooks, Joseph Knox;

1949-50 - *Messrs.* William J. Whyte, William Ewing, Jack Roulston, Alexander Duncan, Walter McFarland;

1953 - *Messrs.* William Morrow, Charles McKane;

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

1957 - Mr Richard Morrow;

1965 - Messrs. Jim Taylor, Daniel Henderson, Jack Neilands, George Woods, Robert Davis;

1971 - Messrs. T Morrison, James McKane;

1973 - Messrs. James Stewart, Ivan Knox, Roy Laughlin, Ernest Roulston, Mrs Susan Fairman, Mrs Elizabeth Henderson;

1975 - Messrs. George Woods Jr, Joseph Whyte;

1981 - Messrs. Leonard Lucas, Robin Henderson, Stewart Woods, Cecil Fairman, Horace Whyte, Mrs Muriel Perry

1991 - Messrs. Pat Chambers, Drew Corry, Wesley Knox, Graham Neilands, Mrs Audrey Chambers, Mrs Kathleen Lindsay;

1992 - Mrs Irene Scott, Mrs Violet Russell, Mrs Jean Davis



Current Committee: L-R, Mark Knox, Ms Andrena Faulkner, Stewart Woods, Ivan Knox, Pat Chambers, Robin Henderson; Absent from picture: Mrs Monica Woods, Mrs Christine Stewart, Jonathan Cowan & Drew Corry.

Current Committee (Elected 2004)

Kirk Session together with Messrs. Jonathan Cowan, Mark Knox, Robin Henderson, Ivan Knox, Drew Corry, Stewart Woods, Pat Chambers, Mrs Christine Stewart, Ms Andrena Faulkner, Mrs Monica Woods

Some Original Church Furniture, Gifts & Artefacts:

(Some of which have been presented by families as Memorial Gifts)

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Antique Collection Plates
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Baptismal Font Presented by
the Davis Family, Cloughree, 1969.



To the Glory of God,
and
in loving memory of
Margaret Elie's Roulston
Wife of
William Samuel Roulston 1966.

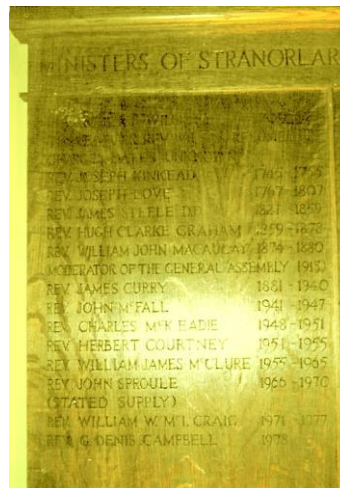
To the Glory of God, and
in Loving Memory of
William Samuel Roulston,
Ruling Elder of
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church
1966.



Table and chairs Presented by the Hinderson Family



Original 1906 Ministers Chair in the Pulpit
of Stranorlar Presbyterian Church.



Description of Original Furniture, Gifts & Artefacts:

1. Original Session Room Table

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

2. Silver Communion Set – Wine Jugs & Goblets;
3. Oval Silver Rose Dish – Lucas Family
4. Long-Handled Collection Spoons (19th Century)
5. Baptismal Font – Davis Family
6. Pair of Silver Goblets – Roulston Family
7. Display Cabinet (containing Communion Silver etc) – Roulston Family
8. Minister's Throne Chair
9. Pulpit, with original Gas Lamps (converted)
10. Mallet – presented with trowel at laying of the foundation stone, 1906
11. Ministers Board – List of past ministers from 1709–McMenamin Family
12. Hymn Boards – McKane Family
13. Session Room Table & Chairs – Henderson Family
14. Unusual Trefoil Window - Cloakroom
15. Church Organ – Fairman Family – Replaced 2006
16. New *Johannus* Organ, February 2006 (Centenary Fund)
17. Collection Plates – 1970's
18. Original Jug, Basin & Soap Dish Set
19. Antique (Marble-Top) Wash Stand

Other Gifts Donated by Members:

20. P.A. System – Neilands Family
21. New Side Entrance with disabled access – Knox Family
22. Good News Bibles – Woods Family, Kilross
23. Church Hymn Books – Whyte Family, Kilross
24. Pulpit Bible – Mr Jack Roulston & Family
25. Hymn Boards – McKane Family
26. Set of Chairs – Taylor family
27. Various Monetary Donations by Members Past and Present



Sunday School Children & Teachers pictured with Rev. Carson in February 2004
Down Memory Lane.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Pictured above: Back Row – Mrs Kathleen Lucas; ?,?,?,?; Rev. Sproule, Mrs Charles McClure, Rev. McFall, Jean Bonner (in front), Mrs Sarah Knox, Ms Aileen Brooks & Ms Amy Brooks; Front Row: Raymond Parks, Ms Lila Blair, Ms Isobel Davis, Miss Olive Brooks, Ms Frances Reid.



Rev McClure celebrates 60 years since his ordination.
L-R: Rev. D Campbell, Mr Billy Whyte, Miss Janet Currie,
Mr & Mrs McClure & Mrs Muriel Perry

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



Bridal Party at the wedding of **Rev. Charles McKimm Eadie**, Stranorlar Presbyterian Church, and Miss Doreen Rachael Poots, Whiteabbey. (Left to Right) – Rev. J. Sloan, B.A. (Groomsman), Miss Jean Maybin (Bridesmaid), the Bridegroom and Bride; Miss Edne Muriel Poots (Bridesmaid), and Rev. J Kane, B.A. (Best man).



Convoy Presbyterian Church, 1930.

Group taken at the installation of the Rev. James Beattie (centre of front row) - Included is Rev. Curry, Stranorlar (front row, second from left), and of those known - Back Row from left: Mr James Shankleton, Mr Richard Gregg, Mr James Shirlow; Middle Row: Left, Mr Thomas A. Tait and on extreme right, Mr William J. Ewing

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

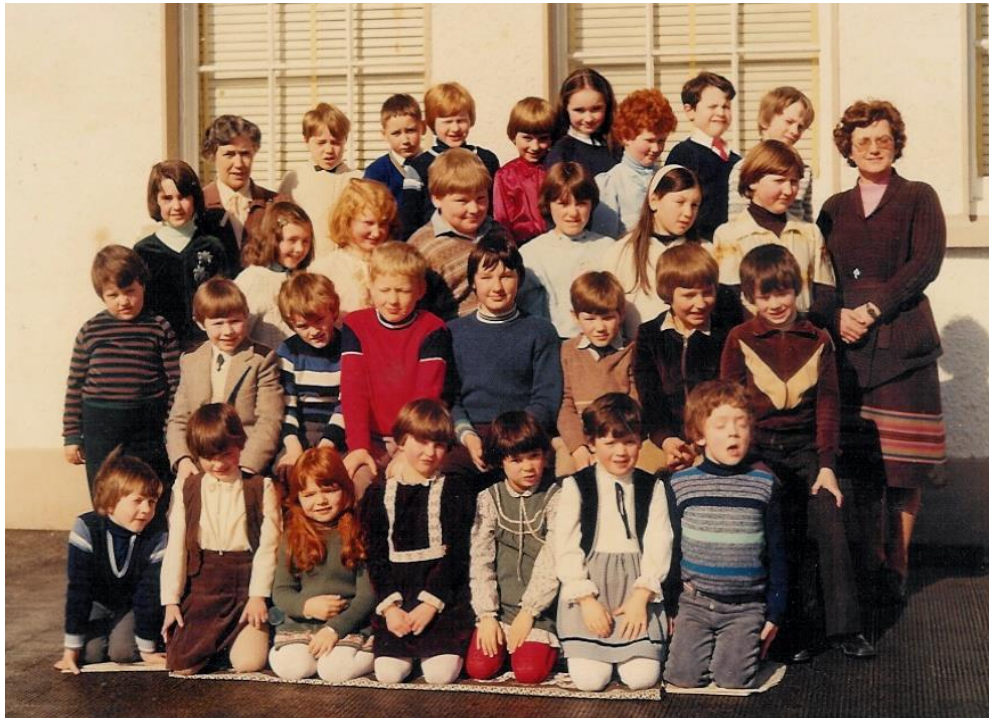


Sunday School Christmas Choir, 1979

Back Row (L-R): Hilary Roulston, Wesley Knox, Doreen Crawford, Elizabeth Whyte, Graham Neilands, Lynn Crawford;

Middle Row (L-R): Andrew Knox, Elaine Davis, Nora Crawford, Mark Knox, Stephen Woods, Alan Roulston, Ruth Perry, Joseph Knox, Ethel Lucas;

Front Row (L-R): Mark Bates, Geoffrey Bates, Amanda Bates, Jonathan Lucas, Heather Neilands



Robertson National School, 1982

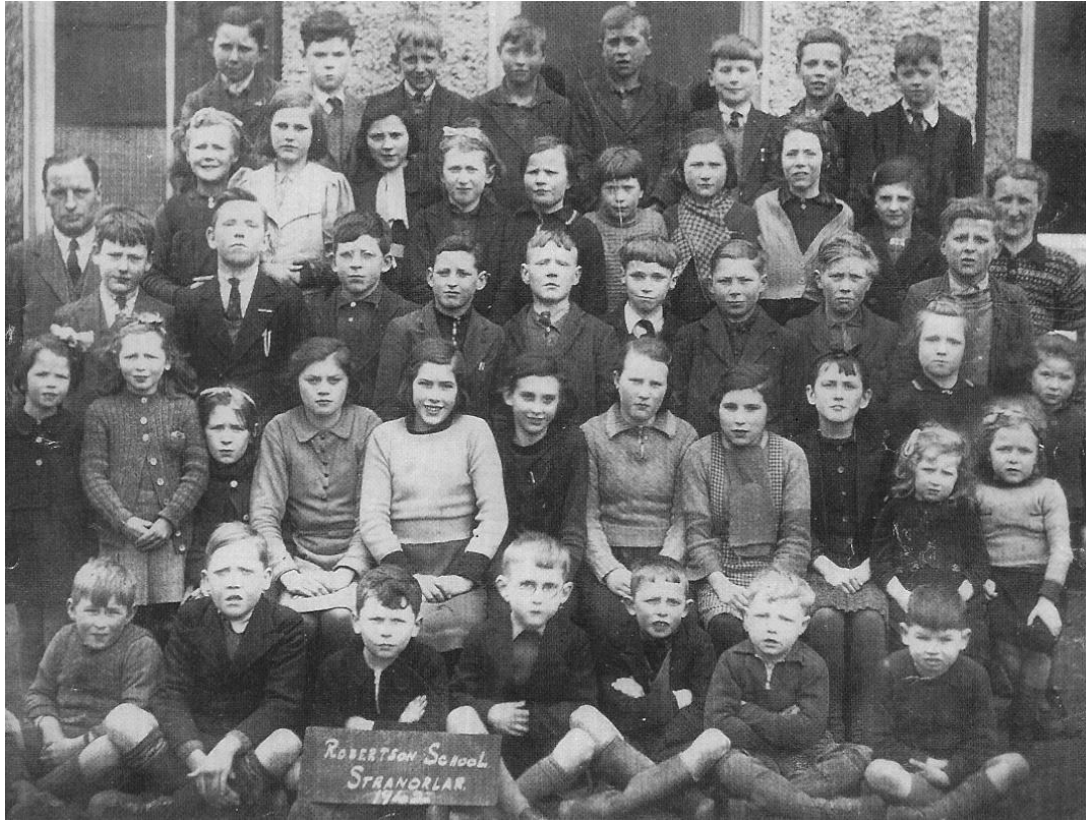
Back Row (L-R): Miss L Patton, Alan Oliver, Albert Patton, David Reilly, Linda Hanlon, Lara Oliver, Samantha Davis, Christopher Fairman, Keith Hanlon, Mrs E Corry;

Third Row (L-R): Estelle Taylor, Elizabeth Magee, Tracey Davis, Andrew Knox, Nora Crawford, Vicki Kee, Heather Neilands;

Second Row (L-R): Alison Mahon, Jonathan Magee, Jonathan Barclay, Mark Knox, Stanley Stewart, Alan Roulston, Clive Davis, Jonathan Lucas;

Front Row (L-R): Ivor Reilly, Sharleen Lucas, Lynn Patton, Georgie Reilly, Zoe Bezaz, Leah Fairman, Christopher Barclay.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church



The Robertson National School, 1942

Back Row, L-R: James Elvin, Thomas Leahy, Stewart Lyttle, David Whyte, Joe Whyte (Dec.), Raymond Parks, Sam McCready, Stanley Ewing.

4th Row, L-R: Mr Alexander Adams (Teacher), Bella Reilly, Ethel Crawford, Phyllis Woods (Dec.), Jean Raitt, Kathleen Grant, Nancy Jones, Iris Woods, P. Ormiston, Olive Leeper, Martha Russell (Teacher).

3rd Row, L-R: Jim Neilands, George Elvin, Barton McGuckin, Freddie Foy, Freddie Reilly, Bobby Parks (Dec.), Bertie Bonner, George Magee, Jim Robinson.

2nd Row, L-R: Evelyn Ewing, Leslie McClay, Gwen McClay, Isobel Ewing, Carrie Frazer, Muriel Leeper, Jeannie Grant (Dec.), Susan Crawford, Margot Raitt, D. Parks (in front), Susan Elvin (behind), A. Parks (in front), Norma Woods (behind).

Front Row L-R: Jim Hardy, Charles McKane (Dec.), Bernham Woods (Canada), Horace Raitt, J. Knox, David Reilly, Cecil Ewing.

The Robertson School: A British Colonel named Francis Robertson, born at Fahan in 1737, bequeathed money in his will for the establishment of Parish schools in Donegal, of which there are six named in his honour. They are located at Ballintra, Gartan, Tamney, Welshtown, Killygordon and Stranorlar. The old school in Stranorlar, later known as the Robertson Hall, was located on Main Street, and the new building, opposite the Parish Church, was opened in 1963.

Most of the Presbyterian children attended the Robertson School as the Presbyterian Church did not have a school of its own, and some past members are included in the picture above.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Epilogue

The people of Stranorlar have enjoyed a hundred years of faithful worship in this beautiful 'new' Church building, and have seen many changes in this time.

Since that April day in 1906, when the Rev. Curry, his congregation and the invited guests witnessed the laying of the foundation stone, our new church has diligently served our needs under the guidance of nine different ministers, each with their own individual contribution.

Presbyterians had already worshipped here for over 200 years when this church was built, and every generation since that time has played a part in the realisation of the family of people that now make up Stranorlar Presbyterian Church as we know it today.

It is therefore important to remember, that although we celebrate this important anniversary of our Church building, our Church means much more than these buildings. Our Church is about people more than anything else, and all of the activities that go on within its walls are for the benefit of its people.

As we look forward to the congregation's tercentenary in 2009, it is hoped that the people of Stranorlar will continue to worship here for many generations to come, and that the common bond that exists within the family of our Church will help it to grow and to prosper throughout the 21st century and beyond.



Wedding of Edwin Foy & Minnie Bell at the Church in 1952

Pictured from Right – Ethel Davis (nee Crawford), Alma Crawford (nee Foy), Hilda Jones (nee Bell), Letitia Knox (nee Hardy), Emily McClay (nee Morrow), Willie Ewing (Millbrae), Marion Deasley (nee Mulligan), Sue Hunt (nee Crawford), Stanley Foy, Isa Porter (nee Bell) (Bridesmaid), Freddie Foy (Best man), Sam Bell (Bride's father), Bertie Porter, Mrs Bell (Bride's mother).

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Some Key Dates

- 1675 First recorded members sought supply from Presbytery;
- 1709 Stranorlar's first Minister, Master Robert Wilson is appointed;
First meetinghouse dates from around this time;
- 1727 Congregation is dissolved due to poverty -
Members joined with Donoughmore & Convoy;
- 1744 Stranorlar Congregation is reunited -
Members return from Donoughmore & Convoy;
- 1767 Rev. Joseph Love begins a ministry of 40 years in Stranorlar;
- 1800 Approx. date for the erection of the second meetinghouse -
On the same site as the original building;
- 1809 Centenary of the official foundation of the congregation;
- 1821 Rev. Steele begins a distinctive ministry of 38 years -
First official records of the congregation are made;
- 1839 Formation of the first committee on 18th November;
- 1840 Formation of the General Assembly - Seceders Church becomes
Second Stranorlar Presbyterian Church;
- 1852 Rev. Steele introduces the use of Communion tokens;
- 1865 Church building is refurbished (Rev. Hugh Clarke Graham);
- 1876 Site secured from the Marquis Conyngham for a new Manse;
(Rev. Macaulay)
- 1881 New Manse is completed & Lecture Hall constructed around
this time also - Rev. Curry begins a ministry of 60 years;
- 1906 New Church building is erected (Rev. Curry);
- 1909 Bicentenary of official the foundation of the congregation;
- 1971 Stranorlar is joined with Donoughmore;
- 2006 Centenary of the new Church, built in 1906.
- 2009 Tercentenary of the official foundation of the congregation.

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

Bible Gems:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| The Lord' Prayer | Matthew 6 |
| The Ten Commandments | Exodus 20 |
| Beatitudes | Matthew 5 |
| Christ's Great Prayer | John 17 |
| Prodigal Son | Luke 15 |
| Talents Parable | Matthew 25 |
| Abiding Chapter | John 15 |
| Resurrection Chapter | 1 Cor. 15 |
| Shepherd Chapter | John 10 |
| Love Chapter | 1 Cor. 13 |
| Armour Chapter | Ephesians 6 |
| Traveller's Psalm | Psalms 121 |
| Greatest Verse | John 3, v16 |
| The Soul's Rest Verse | Matthew 11, v28 |
| Salvation Verse | Acts 16, v31 |
| Consecration Verse | Romans 12, v1 |
| Great Commission | Mark 16, v15 |
| Eternal Life | 1 Cor. 5, v1 |
| What Money Cannot Buy | Isaiah 55, v1 |
| Sublime Chapter | Isaiah 40 |
| Shepherd Psalm | Psalms 23 |
| Be Strong, Fear Not | Isaiah 35 |
| Heavenly Aid | Psalms 121 |

Some Favourite Scriptural Quotations

'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' *Psalm 8, v5*

'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.' *Romans 8, v38*

'Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.' *Matthew 4, v4*

'Lo, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.' *Isaiah 55, v1*

'For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' *John 3, v16*

'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and alight unto my path'. *Psalm 119, v105*

Stranorlar Presbyterian Church

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Numerous other books and publications, too numerous to mention.

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**Centenary Celebrations
Stranorlar Presbyterian Church**

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**And a History of the Congregation
- Since 1675 -**