

Chapelhill Church, Logiealmond

The first church?

The site was 'chosen with an artist's eye' as David Forrester puts in in his local history of Logiealmond' (1). The approach is from the old through road to the north and beyond the neatly walled graveyard the slope drops away very steeply to the west and south, giving long views up the valley of the Almond, and to East and West Lomond in Fife. Now the old gravestones and a small derelict building surround a head high rectangular platform that was once the church.



Above: looking west. Below: looking south, with the remains of the church



Churches were built here in the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, but was there an earlier pre-Reformation building? David Forrester found no evidence of one in his research but thought it possible, and there is no local tradition. Pont's map of 1580 marks a church so there was one in the late sixteenth century but how long had one been on this site, was it pre or post Reformation?

Logiealmond did not become a civil parish until the 1890s. Most of the area was in Monzie, about five miles to the west, until 1702 and then in Moneydie, about three miles east, a slightly shorter walk to services. Mullion or the Little Glenshee area was in Redgorton, about four miles east, and the western part in Fowlis Wester, about four miles south. The area had been recognised as distinctive from as early as 1260 when it was first held by Malise of Logie and thence his descendants, becoming the Barony of Logiealmond in the fifteenth century (2).

The place name element 'Logie' has been understood by Forrester and others to derive from old Gaelic 'logaigh' meaning hollow, or place in the hollow. But Prof Clancy's research found that many 'logies' in eastern Scotland are associated with church sites and are derived from 'login'. This evolved from the Latin word 'locus' meaning place, and became a 'loan word' in local languages for a holy place making it more likely that this was an early church site (3).

The estate passed from the Logie family through marriage to the Hays, the family of the Earls of Errol, around 1500, and then by sale to the Earl of Tullibardine in 1638. Earl Patrick built a church at Chapelhill in 1643. There was no stipend for a Minister so it became a chaplaincy of Monzie and had a service every third Sabbath. The estate was sold again in 1670, this time to the Drummonds, a branch of the family of the Duke of Perth, and they held it for almost two hundred years (1).

The new church of 1834

The area had supported the Secession from an early date and petitioned for a preacher in 1744. Their first kirk was at Kindrum and a replacement was built in 1811 in what became a few years later the small planned village of Harrietfield. Some members of the Church of Scotland were said to go to the Secession or United Presbyterian church in Harrietfield as it was so much nearer than the parish churches for the parts of Logiealmond.

The parish Minister of Moneydie and the Logiealmond members of his congregation worked to get the long derelict church at Chapelhill re-built. The Drummond laird was supportive, although most of the family were Episcopalians, but there was no stipend for a Minister. The new church was said to have incorporated part of its smaller predecessor as well as its date stone, and the local people did most of the work. Thomas Wylie recounted that his great grandmother and other women carried earth from Moneydie in their aprons to the new site (4). The church was a simple rectangle, rubble

built with a slate roof. It had two doors and two large windows on the south side, and a bell-cot and an outside stair to a gallery at the west end.

Chapelhill Church 1890s

post card, A K Bell Library collection



Clifton Johnson, early 1890s, 'An old kirk bedril' (beadle) ringing the bell at Chapelhill Church. Digital Amhurst



Schisms and Unions

Controversy continued in the Church of Scotland. At the Disruption in 1843 the current preacher at Chapelhill, the Rev. Hiram Watson, severed his connection with the Established Church, as did his congregation. But they continued to worship in Chapelhill church without interruption until the Minister moved to a new charge. In the meantime, the estate had passed through the female line to the Drummond Stewarts of Murthly and in the 1840s Sir William sold it to reduce the family debts. The new laird, the Earl of Mansfield, locked the congregation out of the church in 1854, and installed a Church of Scotland minister. He endowed it with the farms of Fostens and Bankhead – the former became the Manse, and the latter had recently ceased to be needed for the school.

The evicted congregation continued by holding meetings in barns, and eventually managed to buy the remaining years of the long lease of the northwest plot in Harrietfield, and built there a new church and a manse. For the next sixty years Logiealmond had three active churches.

In the new century the protestant churches in Scotland gradually came together again. The United Presbyterians of the South Kirk in Harrietfield joined with the Free Church of the North Kirk to become the United Free Church and used the newer North Kirk. (The South kirk was demolished in 1911 aged 100.) In 1934 the United Frees and the established Church of Scotland were joined and held services in both buildings for some years, but Chapelhill was in poor condition so no longer needed.

Chapelhill Church 1975-6

List C Survey, Historic Environment Scotland, CANMORE 1654051



<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1654051>

The remains of the church, summer 2022



After the Second World War Chapelhill was among the buildings listed as Category C, local importance, but listing did not prevent alteration or demolition. It became derelict and dangerous. The Church of Scotland was given planning permission for partial demolition in 1981 and a completion certificate in 1984 (5).

The building was left on its footings with the walls knocked inwards to form a solid block five foot high. The stone stairs that led to the gallery at the west end now give access to the level top and fine views. The bell had been removed from its belfry in 1960 (6). The little watch house was demolished at the same time as the church, but the mausoleum remains though its slate roof has gone, replaced with concrete over the tunnel vaulting. A Manpower Services scheme tidied up the graveyard and its surrounding wall in 1985.

Post Script

J F and S Mitchell recorded the pre-1855 monumental inscriptions at Chapelhill in the early 1970s and Betty Willsher photographed and recorded notable stones in the 1980s. The West Stormont Historical Society published a new survey in 2005 that included the cemetery that had been in use for a hundred years by then as well as the old burial ground round the church.

The remaining church in Harrietfield was linked first with Almondbank in the 1960s, then with Methven, and in 1996 the building was sold and incorporated into the adjoining house, formerly the manse. After so many centuries there was no longer a church in Logiealmond, The Chapelhill graveyard is now

unkempt but still has the fine position that attracted people to this site so many centuries ago.

References

- 1 David Forrester, Logiealmond, 1944
- 2 John M Rogers, the Formation of the Parish and Community in Perthshire, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh
- 3 Prof Thomas Clancy, University of Glasgow, Journal of Scottish Place Name Studies, vol. 10
- 4 Thomas Wylie, Recollections and Traditions chiefly of Logiealmond, First and Second Series, begun 1884, finished 1932
- 5 Planning Applications Perth Area, vol 1981-1986, A K Bell Archives
- 6 Logiealmond Old Parish Church, Places of Worship

Chapelhill Church, 1964, J. Maxwell, scottishchurches.org.uk

