

Newburgh – Site Summaries



United Reformed Church, Newburgh. (B. Rhodes)

Sacred Landscape Project

St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

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Newburgh – Places of Worship – Past and Present

Baptist Chapel, South Side of High Street

Denomination: Baptist

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

In 1808 a Baptist chapel was founded in Newburgh. The congregation was established by Archibald McLean, who was leading figure in the Scotch Baptists (a group which developed in Edinburgh in the eighteenth-century and was rather more hardline than the English Baptist tradition). The congregation initially worshipped in a chapel on the south side of the High Street in a wynd known as Mr Ramsay's Close. The first pastor of the congregation was a linen manufacturer called James Wilkie. He was succeeded in around 1840 by Alexander Craighead – who also served as school-master and post-master of Newburgh. Craighead was a skilled Hebrew scholar and apparently 'revelled in the Book of God in the original language'. One of the last pastors of what became known as the 'Old Chapel' was James Wood, who was converted to Baptist beliefs by his wife Christian Wilkie. Wood was baptised in the River Tay and, together with his spouse, helped expand the Baptist congregation in Newburgh. In the 1880s the Baptists moved to a larger church on the north side of the High Street. The fate of the original chapel on Ramsay's Close is uncertain.

Sources

T.A. McQuiston and R.F. Conway, *A Short Historical Outline of Newburgh Baptist Church* (1920).

T. Cooper and D. Murray, 'McLean, Archibald (1733-1812), Scotch Baptist Minister', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17648> [Accessed 10 November 2021].



The site of the old Baptist chapel in Newburgh. (Source: 1855 Ordnance Survey Map of Fife, sheet 4. Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74426821>)

Baptist Church, North Side of High Street

Denomination: Baptist

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

The Baptist Chapel on the north side of the High Street in Newburgh was built in the early 1880s. It replaced an earlier chapel on a wynd on the south side of the same street. The funds for the new building were largely raised by James W. Wood, who was chairman of Tayside Floorcloth Company. Around this time several Baptists (including Wood) were influential on the Newburgh town council. The Baptists seem to have had a presence in Newburgh beyond the official membership of their church. In the early 1900s the pastor noted that while the Newburgh Baptist Church had about thirty 'regular adherents' (presumably people who could be relied upon to attend Sunday services), the 'average attendance' at their Wednesday evening prayer meeting was forty people, and that between forty and fifty also attended their 'class' (possibly a reference to some form of Sunday school). An active Baptist congregation continued in Newburgh into the early twenty-first century. However, in the 2010s the church closed. The former Baptist church has since been converted into a house.

Sources

T.A. McQuiston and R.F. Conway, *A Short Historical Outline of Newburgh Baptist Church* (1920).

Planning Application to Fife Council for Newburgh Baptist Church (2017). Archived at:

<https://www.tellmesotland.gov.uk/notices/fife/planning/00000139209> [Accessed 10 November 2021].



The former Baptist church on the north side of the High Street in Newburgh. This building was in use as a place of worship until the 2010s. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

Burgher Church / United Presbyterian Church

Denomination: Burgher Church, United Secession Church, United Presbyterian, United Free Church

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

A Burgher Church was built on the west side of Clinton Street in the 1780s. The Burghers were a break-away movement from the Church of Scotland and enjoyed considerable support in Newburgh. In the 1790s the local Church of Scotland minister commented that the 'Burgher Seceders may exceed one third of the whole inhabitants of the parish'. In the 1820s most of the Burgher churches in Scotland joined with the Anti-Burghers (a related movement which adopted a more severe line on engagement in civic life) to create the new United Secession Church. Not long after this, in the 1830s, the church on the west side of Clinton Street was expanded. In 1847 there was further reorganisation and the congregation became part of the United Presbyterians. Sadly for much of the late nineteenth century the congregation was split by bitter feuding, and in the 1890s the minister John Brown apparently gave 'serious offence to a large section of his people' by a controversial sermon on the evils of alcohol. At the start of the twentieth century the congregation became known as Newburgh West United Free Church (following the union of the United Presbyterians and the Free Church). However, numbers attending the church had already declined significantly. By 1912 the site seems to have stopped being used for worship and was functioning as a drill hall. The former church was used by Polish units during the Second World War. It later became a weaving centre and now serves as holiday accommodation.

Sources

Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church From 1733 to 1900* (1904), vol. 1, pp. 195-198.

Thomas Stuart, 'Parish of Newburgh', in the *Old Statistical Account* (1793), vol. 8, pp. 170-191.

Places of Worship in Scotland, 'Newburgh United Free Church':

<http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/sites/site/id/8136/name/Newburgh+United+Free+Church+Newburgh+Fife> [Accessed 11 November 2021].

Historic Environment Scotland, Canmore entry for 'Newburgh, 2,3 Clinton Street, Drill Hall':

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/331502/newburgh-2-3-clinton-street-drill-hall> [Accessed 11 November 2021].



The former burgher chapel in Newburgh. The building now provides holiday accommodation. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

Lindores Abbey

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Period: High Medieval, Late Medieval

Current Place of Worship? No

Lindores Abbey was founded in the late twelfth century by David, Earl of Huntingdon. The earl had recently fought in the Third Crusade and established the abbey to give thanks to God for his safe return to Scotland. Lindores was a Tironesian monastery. The Tironesians were at that time a relatively new religious order, and were part of a movement for a stricter style of monastic life. Lindores Abbey would go on to play a major role in shaping the medieval development of the south side of the River Tay. In the 1260s the abbot and monks of Lindores were instrumental in founding the new urban settlement of Newburgh. They also introduced new farming practices on their estates, including establishing renowned orchards. In the early 1500s fruit trees from Lindores Abbey were sent to Stirling Castle to develop the royal orchards. The monks of Lindores also undertook distilling. In the 1490s a brother at the abbey named Jon Cor received a delivery of malt for producing 'aquavitae' for King James IV. This is thought to be the earliest reference to whisky production in Scotland. The monastery appears to have thrived up until the period of the Scottish Reformation, when it was sacked in June 1559 by Protestant activists led by John Knox. Many of the religious furnishings of the abbey were burned in front of the monks and they were forced to reject Catholicism. Lindores Abbey ceased to serve a religious purpose after this date. The southern area of the monastery is now occupied by Lindores Distillery, while the ruins of the church and cloister can be visited by the public as part of tours of the distillery.

Sources

Marilyn Brown, *Scotland's Lost Gardens* (2012).

George Burnett, ed., *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (1887), vol. 10, p. 487.

John Dowden, ed., *Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores* (1903).

Website of Lindores Abbey Distillery: <https://lindoresabbeydistillery.com/> [Accessed 18 November 2021].



Ruins of Lindores Abbey. This photograph looks across what would once have been the cloister. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

Newburgh Parish Church (Formerly United Free Church)

Denomination: United Free Church, Church of Scotland

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? Yes

Newburgh Parish Church was built in the early 1900s. It originally served as the United Free Church. The building was designed by the Dundee architects Patrick Thoms and William Wilkie (who had then newly gone into partnership together). In 1929 the United Free Church rejoined the Church of Scotland. A few decades later in the 1960s it was decided that Newburgh no longer required two Church of Scotland congregations. At this point St Katherine's (Newburgh's original parish church) closed, and the former United Free Church building became the main parish church for Newburgh. In the early twenty-first century the Church of Scotland congregation in Newburgh joined with the congregation in Abdie to create a new parish known as Lindores. Services are currently held at both the Newburgh and the Abdie sites.

Sources

Historic Environment Scotland, Canmore entry for 'Newburgh, Cupar Road, Newburgh Parish Church': <http://canmore.org.uk/site/30113> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

Places of Worship in Scotland, 'Newburgh Parish Church': <http://canmore.org.uk/site/30113>

<http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/sites/site/id/1439/name/Newburgh+Parish+Church+Newburgh+Fife> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

St Andrews Presbytery Website: <http://www.standrewspresbytery.org.uk/standrewschurches.cfm?ChurchID=35> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

1912 Ordnance Survey Map of Fifeshire, sheet VI.7 & 3. Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/82879908> [Accessed 18 November 2021].



Gothic revival carving above the main entrance to Newburgh Parish Church. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

St Katherine's Chapel / Parish Church

Denomination: Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland

Period: : Late Medieval, Early Modern, Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

For several centuries St Katherine's Church (which was formerly located on the north side of the High Street) served as Newburgh's parish church. The church is first recorded in 1470 when it was described as 'the chapel of St Katherine the Virgin'. At this point the chapel seems to have already been an established place of worship. In 1508 there is a reference to funds being put aside for the 'new kirk' which was to be built in the burgh of Newburgh in honour of St Duthac, St Katherine, and St Mary Magdalene. It is thought that this relates to a remodelling and expansion of the original chapel of St Katherine. Unlike many Scottish chapels St Katherine's survived the Reformation as a place of worship. In the early seventeenth century St Katherine's became a parish church when Newburgh split from the parish of Abdie. Some restoration work was undertaken on St Katherine's in the late eighteenth century. In the 1790s the building was described by the parish minister Thomas Stuart as 'an old Popish chapel... which, in consequence of a late thorough repair, has been made a very convenient place of worship'. Later generations did not agree with this assessment. In 1832 the medieval church was demolished and replaced with a new building designed by the notable Edinburgh architect William Burn. Slightly ironically Burn's design was in the Gothic revival style. The nineteenth-century St Katherine's Church was an impressive building, which for many decades dominated the High Street. However, in the 1960s St Katherine's was demolished and the congregation moved to the current Newburgh Parish Church (which stands more towards the eastern edge of Newburgh). The site is now occupied by a garden and flats known as St Katherine's Court.

Sources

John Dowden, ed., *Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores* (1903).

Thomas Stuart, 'Parish of Newburgh', in the *Old Statistical Account* (1793), vol. 8, pp. 170-191.

Historic Environment Scotland, Canmore entry for 'Newburgh, High Street, St Catherine's Parish Church': <http://canmore.org.uk/site/30076> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

Places of Worship in Scotland, 'St Katherine's Chapel':

<http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/sites/site/id/4601/name/St.+Katherine%27s+Chapel+Newburgh+Fife> [Accessed 18 November 2021].



The impressive street frontage of St Katherine's Parish Church in the mid-twentieth century. (Source: Newburgh Ancestry and History Society)

St Katherine's Episcopal Mission Church

Denomination: Episcopal

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

There were some Episcopalian families in Newburgh in the eighteenth century. However, they do not appear to have had an official place of worship. In the 1890s a small Episcopal Chapel was built on the corner of Abbey Road. In the 1920s a peal of bells was given to the chapel in honour of the men of the parish who lost their lives in the First World War. A stone memorial tablet was also created at this time. This building was demolished in 1987. The site is now occupied by housing. The low stone wall and metal gates which once surrounded the chapel can still be seen.

Sources

Thomas Stuart, 'Parish of Newburgh', in the *Old Statistical Account* (1793), vol. 8, pp. 170-191.

Imperial War Museum, War Memorials Register, 'Newburgh, St Katherine's Episcopal Church':

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/76801> [Accessed 19 November 2021].

Places of Worship in Scotland, 'St Katherine's Episcopal Mission Church':

<http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/sites/site/id/10497/name/St.+Katherine%27s+Episcopal+Mission+Church+Newburgh+Fife> [Accessed 18 November 2021].



The site once occupied by St Katherine's Episcopal Mission Church. The stone wall and iron gates are all that remain from the former church. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

United Reformed Church (formerly Congregational Church)

Denomination: United Presbyterian, Evangelical Union, Congregational Union, United Reformed Church

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? Yes

On the east side of Clinton Street stands Newburgh's United Reformed Church. This building has a complicated denominational history. In the early 1840s over a hundred people who disagreed with the congregation at the former Burgher Church on Clinton Street banded together to create a Relief Church congregation which worshipped in the town hall. They subsequently joined the United Presbyterian Church, and around 1850 built what is now the United Reform Church. As a result for much of the mid-nineteenth century there were two United Presbyterian churches on Clinton Street (the other being the former Burgher Church on the west side of the street). In the 1870s it was suggested that the two congregations should merge together. However, the members of what is now the United Reform Church objected to this plan, and determined 'to try their fortunes elsewhere'. As a result they left the United Presbyterians in favour of the Evangelical Union, which by the 1890s had become part of the Congregational Church. In 2000 the Congregational Union of Scotland joined the United Reformed Church, meaning that the affiliation of the church on Clinton Street changed once again. The building is still a place of worship with regular Sunday services.

Sources

Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church From 1733 to 1900* (1904), vol. 1, pp. 198-200.

Newburgh United Reformed Church Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Newburgh-United-Reformed-Church-1641537442558861/> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

1855 Ordnance Survey Map of Fife, sheet 4. Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74426821> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

1912 Ordnance Survey Map of Fifeshire, sheet VI.NW. Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/75530875> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

Information Panels in the Laing Museum, Newburgh [Visited August 2021].



The United Reform Church on Clinton Street. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)

Livingstone Hall

Denomination: Uncertain, Church of Scotland

Period: Late Modern

Current Place of Worship? No

The building now occupied by Newburgh Flooring is widely believed to have once been a church. In reality for much of its history it appears to have functioned as a church hall. In 1885 John Livingstone paid for the construction of a stone hall for 500 to 600 people on the east side of Newburgh. The hall was designed by the Dundee architect John Young, and cost £1,450. The building became known as Livingstone Hall in his honour. In the late 1920s the Church of Scotland took on responsibility for the building. The property documents recording this transfer specified that Livingstone Hall should be used for Sunday schools, Bible classes, choir practices, religious education, 'benevolent purposes', and lectures and entertainments 'of an instructive and elevating character'. In the 1960s Livingstone Hall was converted to a garage, and significant alterations were made to the building. It is currently home to a local company selling flooring materials. The west end of the building still has the pointed nineteenth-century windows from the original hall, although much of the rest of the structure has been transformed.

Sources

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Dictionary of Scottish Architects entry for 'Livingstone Hall':

http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=225114 [Accessed 19 November 2021].

Places of Worship in Scotland, 'Livingstone Hall':

<http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/sites/site/id/10496/name/Livingstone+Hall+Newburgh+Fife> [Accessed 18 November 2021].



The west end of the former Livingstone Hall. (Source: Open Virtual Worlds / University of St Andrews)