

# Aberdalgie Church

## a quiet sense of history



Christian worship has been offered up at Aberdalgie for well over a thousand years. The pre-Reformation parishes of Aberdalgie and Dupplin were amalgamated in 1618 then later united with Forteviot parish. In 2000 the parish became part of The Stewartry of Strathearn. It remains in the recently enlarged Presbytery of Perth now configured as a linked charge with Aberuthven and Dunning parish.

The **present church** at Aberdalgie was completed in 1773 by Thomas Hay, the Earl of Kinnoull, to replace an older building which stood in the lower part of the church yard. The graves of the Earl, his wife and son lie within a vault at the east end of the church. The church is typical of the eighteenth century “T-plan” rural church design. The building was entered by two doors on the south side. A **high pulpit** would have been situated on the centre of the long (south) wall between the windows. It would have featured a sounding board above a precentor’s desk on the lower level. It was common for the minister, having entered the pulpit, to bow to his

patron who faced him from his loft. The **congregation** sat in box pews on three sides. To receive the **sacrament** worshippers would have sat at a long fixed table below the pulpit. **Baptism** would have been administered from a bowl held by a bracket attached to the pulpit. The “leg of the T” provided for a **session house** and a retiring room for the Laird and his family. In the 1920s the church was **remodelled** by the first Lord Forteviot to plans by Sir Robert Lorimer. As with many rural “T-plan” churches, the interior was **reoriented** to face east with the old box pews replaced by Victorian style “toast-rack” seats. A dais was raised to create a **sanctuary** for a central Holy Table, font, lectern and pulpit. Austrian oak was used for a new ceiling and panelling and a three light stained-glass window was created. Lorimer added a **porch** on the southwest corner and created a new **bellcote**. A new bell was founded by Taylors of Loughborough.





## The Aberdalgie Incised Slab

To the side of the pulpit at the east end of the church is a slab of bluish-grey Tournai stone incised (possibly in the Low Countries) around 1365. It has the effigy of a knight within an elaborate architectural framework. It commemorates **Sir William Oliphant of Aberdalgie** (sic) who died in 1330. Sir William, a signatory of the

Declaration of Arbroath, defended Stirling against Edward I. He was held in the Tower of London before returning to Scotland. His son, Walter Oliphant of Aberdalgie married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert the Bruce.

**This slab is of great national importance** as few such continental medieval carved stones survive in Scotland. When the stone was brought into the present church at the beginning of the last century, hard cement was used in repairs and over the years there was chemical reaction to damp drawing from the church wall. Conservation to rectify these issues was undertaken in 2006.



## Stained Glass Windows

*A sower went forth to sow...some fell on good ground (Matthew 13:3)*

*As the shadow of a great rock in a wear land (Isaiah 32:2)*

*Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)*

This wonderfully proportioned **stainless-steel cross** is startling for its elegant simplicity and always draws the eye when the sun catches it. Ken Murdoch (1928-2022), one time elder of Aberdalgie Kirk, designed and installed the monument above the communion table.



The **Communion Cups** bear the inscription

***This cup belongs to the Church of Aberdalgie DMS 1708.***

*(“DMS” refers to David Shau, minister from 1691 to 1718).*

The following extracts from the Kirk Session minutes, tell the story:

**1708 Jan 11.** After sermon, the session met, the Min. informs that he met with the Deacon of the Weaving Calling in Perth and did uplift from him the principall sown of twa hundred merks Scots and ane year and quarter of ane year’s annual rent was added the sowm of twenty four pounds six shillings eight pennies and being accumulate to the former sowm amounted in hail to the sowm of two hundred and fifty merks which the Min. was desired to d’lyver to James Rankine principall servant to the Visc. of Dupplin to be employed by him for buying two silver cups for the Communion.

**1708 Oct 10.** The session met and the min. informs that James Rankine according to his Commission had brought with him from London two Communion cups for q’h he had payed the sowm of eighteen pounds eight shillings three pence Sterlin money according to ane Instruction of the silver smith presently produced to the Sess. by the min. and the Sess. finding yt the two hundred and fifty merks formerly d’lyvered to the sd. Mr Rankine does not fully pay what he had given out for the cups, the complet payment th’of was presently ordered and given to the min. to be d’lyvered to him.



## The Bellcote

In 1992/93, Aberdalgie church underwent major restoration work. Hard Portland cement covering the external walls, with resultant damage to the stone, was removed and the entire building was re-pointed with traditional lime mortar. The sandstone pillars of **Lorimer's bellcote** had begun to split due to expansion of the corroding iron framework. The bellcote was dismantled and rebuilt with new stone, a renewed cupola and the ironwork replaced by stainless steel.



## The Graveyard

Ledger stones are flat stones placed over a grave inside a church, usually incised with the name and dates of the deceased. They are often decorated with heraldry, and many include interesting inscriptions about the person, their family and their life in the local community.

**Those in our graveyard suggest the location of the medieval church.**



Currently there is uncertainty about the future of this architecturally and historically important ecclesiastical cluster comprising a Georgian church, a handsome Manse and a picturesque Walled Garden situated in an ancient Graveyard and a 20-acre working Glebe.

## Today at Aberdalgie

In recent years the Kirk Session has spent significant sums improving the annexe, installing a modern kitchen, upgrading accessible toilet access, refurbishing the interior fabric and renovating the heating/insulation and electrical systems. Repairs to the walls of the garden are progressing together with tree planting and new landscaping designed to create a **“Green Shoots” garden for community outreach**

