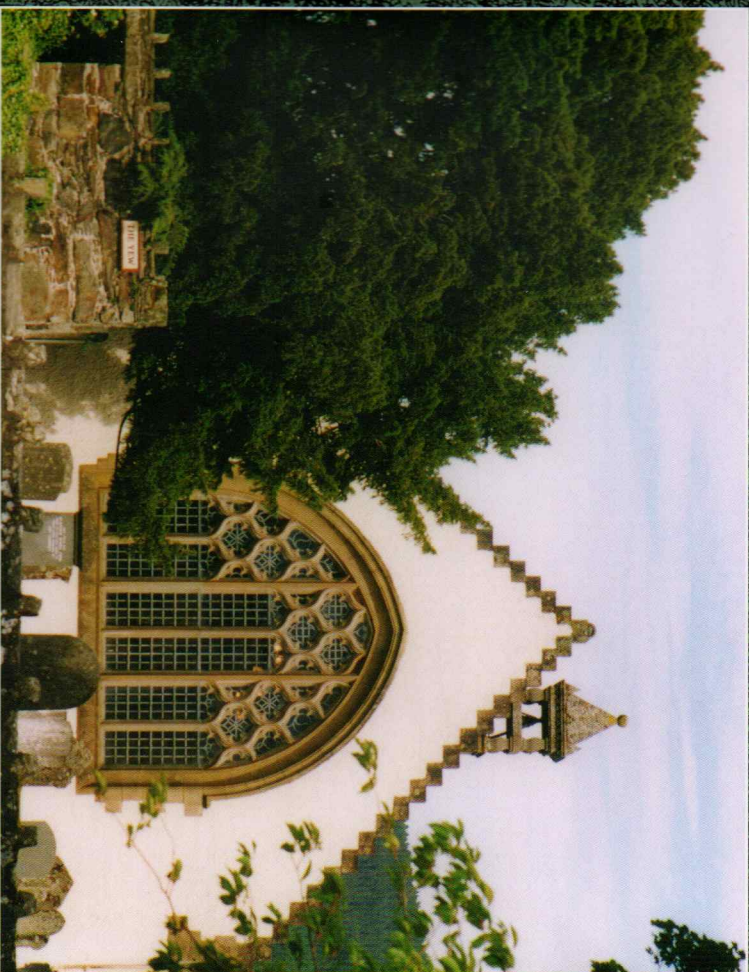
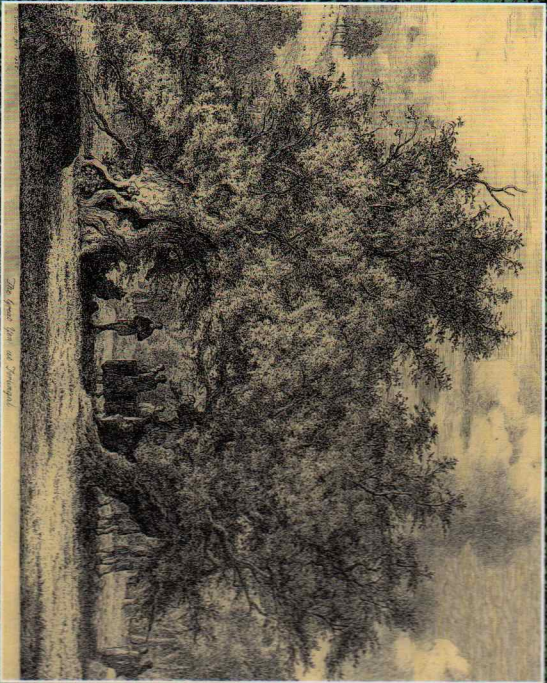
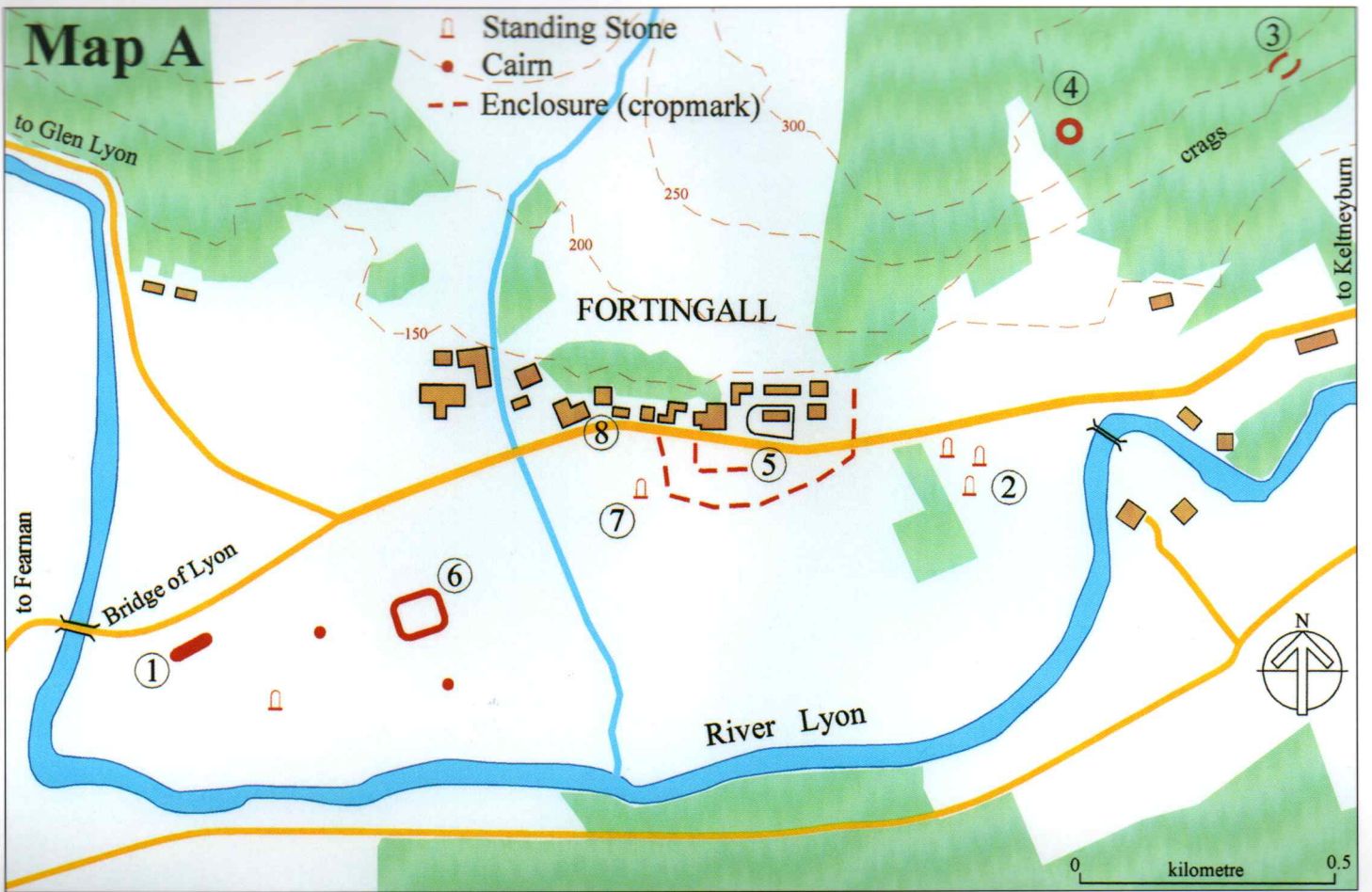


Fortingall

Kirk and Village

Produced & Published by ATHOLE DESIGN, Perth, Scotland.





Welcome

Welcome to our Kirk in Fortingall where there has been a Christian presence for almost 1400 years - since the time of the ancient Celtic Church.

This booklet, published to celebrate the centenary of this building in 2002, has recently been updated and reprinted with support from Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust. It includes a short history of the Parish and a guide to the Kirk and to reminders of the early monastic community in and around the building.

The Kirk is, however, not a museum but a place of worship which welcomes local people and visitors every Sunday and remains a focal point in the life of the community. We hope that you will rest a little while and be aware of God's presence in this tranquil place.

Rev. Anne Brennan,
Minister of Fortingall and Glenlyon.
March 2007.

Prehistoric Fortingall

The name Fortingall, first recorded as *Forterkil*, appears to be derived from the Gaelic words *fortair* (a stronghold or high ground) and *cill* (a cell or church).

The Vale of Fortingall is a fertile valley surrounded by mountains but easily accessible, from both east and west coast, by a network of lochs and glens. Archaeology shows us that for more than 5000 years, the area has not only been inhabited but also regarded as a sacred place.

The *Long Cairn* (Map A1) dating from the *Neolithic Period* (4000-2000 BC) would have served as a communal burial place for important people for centuries. Dating from the same period are numerous large stones with *cup-marks* cut into them. Their significance is obscure but they may have served as boundary markers. An example can be seen in the churchyard (Map B1).



The *Bronze Age* (2000-500 BC) saw the construction of ritual monuments including standing stones and stone circles. In the field 300m east of the church are three groups of three standing stones (A2). Excavations have shown that two of these groups were sub-rectangular settings of eight stones with the largest at the corners. The finding of a Victorian beer bottle beneath one of the stones suggests that they were deliberately toppled and buried in the late 19th century.

The site of the double-ditched hill fort above Balnacrraig (A3) was probably occupied throughout the *Iron Age* (500 BC-500 AD). The Caledonians who lived in this area would have used the fort for protection during this troubled period. Schiehallion, the "fairy hill of the Caledonians", rises 5 miles to the north.



The view of the Vale of Fortingall from above Balnacrraig.

In the *Early Christian period* (500-1000 AD) massively walled circular homesteads were introduced to the area, probably by colonists from the west. Dun Geal ('White Fort') (A4) is one of the best preserved in the district. Such sites were well protected but also had easy access to good arable and grazing land.

These monuments reflect continual human activity over a period of 4000 years from the first farmers to the coming of Christianity. For much of that time the great yew tree would have been a venerated local feature.

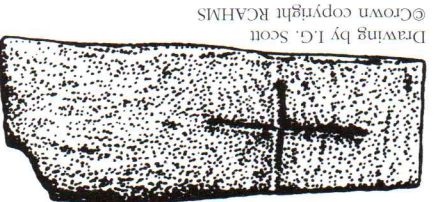
The Pontius Pilate Myth

There is no evidence, however, for the strange tradition that Pontius Pilate was born in Fortingall following a visit by his father to the Caledonians as an emissary from the emperor Augustus. The Romans did not arrive in Scotland until Agricola's campaigns around 80AD, and the eventual front line of the empire was along Strathern and Strathmore.

Early Christian Forthingall

Several factors suggest that Forthingall was an important Christian centre as early as the 7th century AD. At that time, missionaries of Irish origin came from the monastery of Iona (founded by St Columba in 563) to preach the Gospel in the western Pictish province of Athfothla (a name surviving today in Atholl). St Adaman (locally known as Eonan) was Abbot of Iona from 679 and is celebrated for his biography of St Columba. He is believed to have extended his activities from his first base at Milton Eonan, near Bridge of Balgie, down Glenlyon to Forthingall and later to Dull where the parish church was dedicated to him.

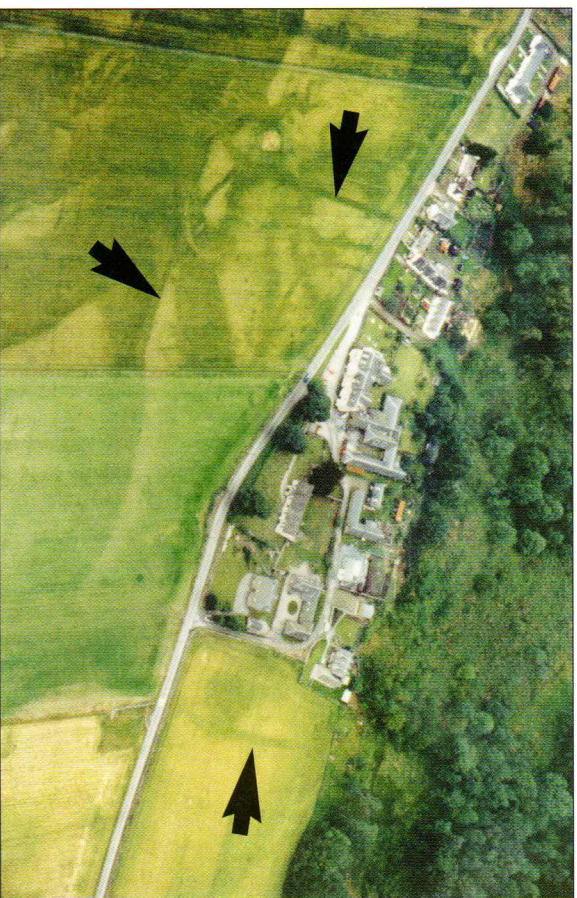
Adaman may have taken this route to summit meetings he attended in Northumbria concerning relations between the Celtic and Roman churches. Forthingall kirk seems to have been dedicated to Coet who was Bishop of Iona in Adaman's time. The Fair (Feil-math-Choedde) held in Forthingall on August 20th well into the 20th century was probably also dedicated to him. An alternative suggestion is that these dedications were to the English St Cedd, who was a disciple of Aidan of Lindisfarne. The old church of Kenmore, Inchadney, was named after Aidan.



Drawing by I.G. Scott
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A cross-slab grave-maker (B10) dating from the late 7th or early 8th century AD.

Compelling evidence of a large early monastic complex at Forthingall can occasionally be seen from the air in the form of crop marks, where now buried ditches cause the plants growing above them to ripen faster and grow higher than the surrounding plants. The photograph (below) shows two large rectangular enclosures with rounded corners, with the church near their centre (A 5). These ditches are possibly the remains of a *vallum monasterii* or early monastic enclosure.



©Crown copyright RCAHMS

Forthingall from the air, showing the two large enclosures containing the kirk, hotel and other buildings.

Within this enclosure have been found more tangible signs of an early Celtic Christian settlement dating from the 7th century. These include a monk's hand-bell and cross-slab which could have been involved in early Christian worship, a Celtic baptismal font and fragments of early cross-slabs showing a combination of Christian symbolism and Pictish decoration.

It is likely that the early Celtic church would have considered the ancient Forthingall yew-tree (B2) sacred. References to the Gaelic *bile* meaning sacred tree are found in local place names such as Coshieville and Tullochville.

The Middle Ages

The monastic settlement at Fortingall was eventually eclipsed by another lower down the valley at Dull. By the 12th century, however, a network of parish churches had evolved and that at Fortingall was thriving. Its patronage is likely to have come mainly from the medieval magnate who occupied the *moated homestead* between the village and Bridge of Lyon (A6).

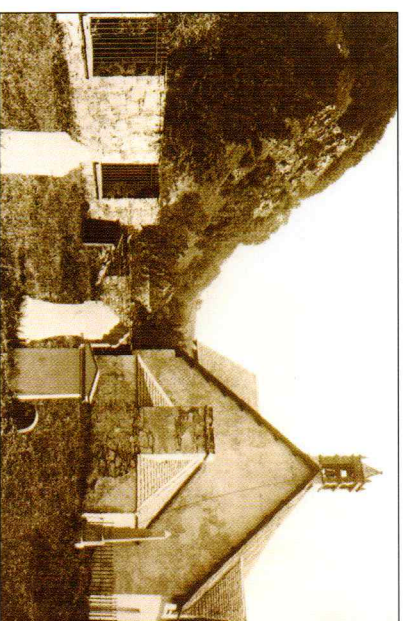
Another reminder of the Middle Ages is Carn na Marbh (Cairn of the Dead). Surmounted by a standing stone in the field south-west of the church (A7), it is traditionally the site of a mass grave for victims of the Black Death in the 14th century, reputedly buried by an old woman, sole survivor of the plague.



Carn na Marbh, with Molteno Hall in background.

By the end of the 15th century, Stewart descendants of the Wolf of Badenoch had established a powerbase at Garth Castle while the Campbells were taking over in Glenlyon from the indigenous MacGregors. Their feuds in the 16th century were recorded in the Chronicle of Fortingall by James MacGregor, Vicar of Fortingall, later Dean of Lismore and an early collector of Gaelic poetry.

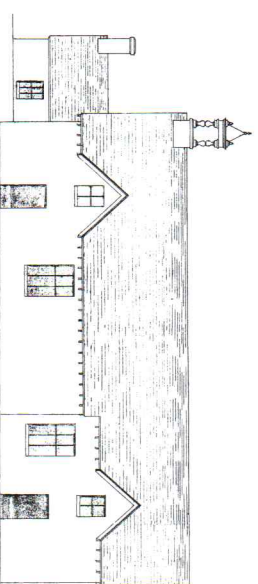
Clach Mo-Luchaig: a large boulder to the east of the Molteno Hall (A8), supposedly named after St. Molurg of Lismore, is said to be where scolding women were chained...



Former kirk, circa 1890.

Post Reformation Church

Following the Reformation in 1560, Scottish churches, especially in the country, were simple structures which reflected the puritanical spirit of the times. They were typically long, narrow and low with a door and windows in the south wall, a bare earth floor and no seating. To this basic 'preaching box' in Fortingall, a belfry was added in 1768 (and can now be seen in the churchyard). Around 1850 a north extension and three galleries were added along with a raised wooden floor and, on the west gable, a small vestry,



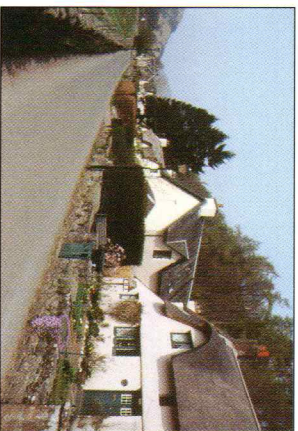
Fortingall Parish

In 1585 the parishes of Glenlyon and Kinloch Rannoch were joined to Fortingall to form an area of almost 300 square miles. In 1845 Glenlyon and Kinloch Rannoch separated; and following the Disruption of 1843 and the founding of the Free Church, there were two churches in Fortingall for about a hundred years. In 1954, Glenlyon was again linked to Fortingall and since 1980 the two have formed a single parish. For a short time they shared a minister with the parish of Dull and Weem, but since 1990 Fortingall and Glenlyon has formed a single linked charge with the Lochayside parishes of Kenmore and Lawers. Originally the parish was almost entirely Gaelic speaking; 100 years ago Gaelic was the first language of about 75% of the people of Fortingall, but it has now been replaced almost entirely by English.

THE NEW CHURCH

Sir Donald Currie (1825-1909)

The present appearance of Forthingall and its Church is due almost entirely to the influence of Sir Donald Currie towards the end of the Victorian era. From humble origins in Greenock where he began work as a shipping clerk at the age of 14 years, he came to establish his own shipping line and went on to make his fortune in South Africa as head of the Union - Castle Line. Typical of the new Victorian elite of self-made men, he sought political power and a place among the landed gentry. He was elected MP for Perthshire and purchased Garth Estate in 1880; Glenlyon Estate, which included the village of Forthingall, followed in 1885. He worked hard and invested heavily to improve the prosperity of his estates and the conditions of his tenants.



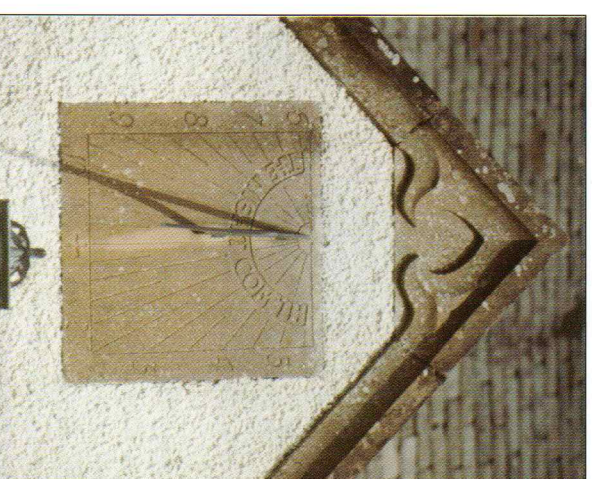
James Marjoribanks Maclaren (1853-1890)

Sir Donald Currie engaged the promising young architect, James Maclaren, to transform the village from a collection of neglected thatched cottages to a model estate village. Maclaren, son of a Perthshire farmer, rejected the fashionable Scottish Baronial style and sought to incorporate elements of Scottish medieval buildings - including harking, corbelling and crow-stepped gables - in a new and modern style influenced also by the Arts and Crafts movement in England. He died at the age of 37 years but influenced contemporaries such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh and left an important legacy to modern Scottish architecture. The Forthingall project was continued by Maclaren's colleagues William Dunn and Robert Watson.



Rebuilding of the Church (1901-1902)

By the end of the 19th century the building was in a poor state of repair with particular concern about the roof. In 1899, Dunn and Watson drew up plans for its renovation and modernisation but these were rejected in favour of a completely new building which they designed in Maclaren style. Built to the highest standards - mainly at the expense of Sir Donald Currie - it was formally handed over to the Heritors on 23rd September 1902.

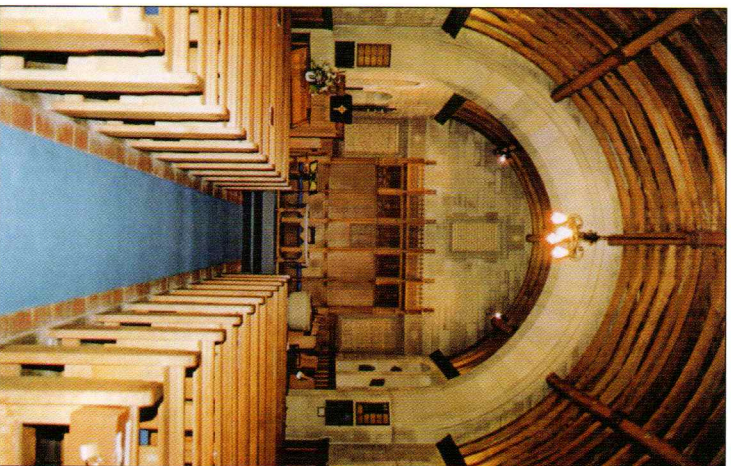


Features of Interest: the Church

The Church

In medieval fashion, the building is harked with crow-stepped gables and a bell cote in 18th century style is based on the chancel arch. Above the porch an Arts and Crafts sundial reminds us ominously: 'The night cometh'.

Inside the church is simple but elegantly constructed of sandstone (origin unknown) with oak pews and panelling. The roof is unusual for a Scottish church with hand-worked oak timbers arranged as an open barrel-vault. There is a hint of Art Nouveau in the floral motif of the leaded windows.



Fellowship Area (Map B3)

In the centenary year 2002 pews were removed from the rear of the church to create a Fellowship Area and the oak timber re-used for new furniture in Arts and Crafts style. Tablets on the walls commemorate young men who gave their lives in the Second World War - including members of the Molteno and Mirrieles families descended from Sir Donald Currie.

Rotterdam Bell (B4)

On a window-ledge on the north side of the nave is the bell from the previous church. It was cast in 1765 by Johannes Sprecht of Rotterdam who also made bells for Paisley Abbey and Portsoy Parish church.

Celtic Hand-Bell (B5)

In a niche behind the pulpit is a quadrangular hand-bell made of iron coated with bronze dating from the 7th Century. While it may or may not have belonged to St Admann, it is of a type common in Ireland and used by missionaries of the Columban church from Iona. A similar bell can be seen in Glenlyon church.



Chancel Screen and Stalls (B6)

The elaborate oak screen, like that in Dunkeld Cathedral, was designed by the celebrated Scottish architect Sir Robert Lorimer. Along with tablets of the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, it was erected in 1913 as a memorial to Sir Donald Currie by his three daughters.

Baptismal Font (B7)

The massive sandstone font is an Arts and Crafts interpretation of its ancient Celtic predecessor and bears the inscription 'suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not'.

Features of interest: the Churchyard

Celtic Font (B9)

Behind the porch is a large stone font of primitive form. Until 1901, it was situated within the church and used for baptism. Early medieval fonts of this type are common in this area with other examples in Fearnan, Killin and Dull.



Incised cross-slabs (B10)

Standing against the south wall of the church, is a stone with a simple incised cross probably of 7th Century date. Such slabs are common in Ireland and in the ancient Scottish Kingdom of Dairiada in Argyll suggesting that it was created by early missionaries from Iona. Until 2002 this stone formed the threshold at the Kirkyard gate and still bears the mark of the iron gatepost.

Next to it is an early medieval slab deeply incised with three crosses. In the kirkyard are several such slabs which appear to have been a local peculiarity.

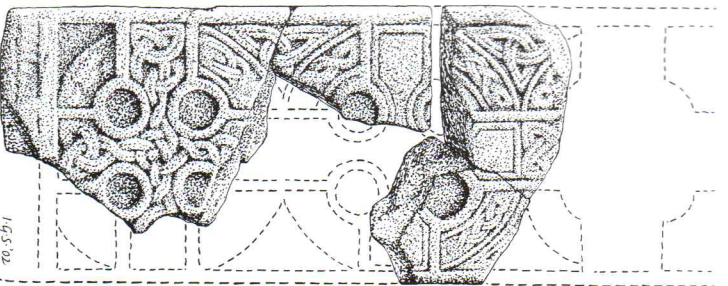
Memorial to Reverend James Ross (B11)

The armorial stone set into the south wall of the church is the gravestone of James Ross, Minister at this Kirk... who died in 1636 and was buried in the old church.

Campbell Burial-ground (B12)

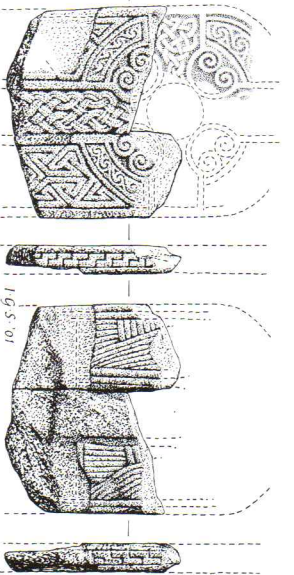
To the east of the church is the somewhat neglected burial ground of the Campbells of Glenlyon. Robert Campbell (1632-1696) was notorious as the commander of the government troops at the massacre of Glencoe.

In the area behind, it is planned to erect a number of 'orphan' stones which have become separated from the graves they marked.



Pictish Stones (B8)

Fragments of Pictish cross-slabs discovered during demolition of the old church in 1901 were mounted in the chancel in 2002. Although sadly broken up, the stones retain crisp carving as a result of protection from the elements for many centuries (at least three of the stones were found in the walls of the old church).



The stones, dating from around 800 AD, do not include Pictish symbols but are decorated with interlacing, key patterns and triquetra knots. On the back of one stone are parts of robed figures, perhaps clerical and consistent with an early monastic site. The stone on the north wall behind the pulpit is made up of three linked, equal-armed, ringed crosses: it is very rare type - the only similar slab is in St Andrew's cathedral.

The slabs are all of a fine grey sandstone which is not local and may have come from Strathmore where similar Pictish cross-slabs were produced and can be seen at Meigle. Common design features suggest that the Fortingall stones were carved by a single school of masons if not by the same craftsman.



Notable Gravestones

Among many interesting stones in the churchyard are the following:

B14 an early medieval slab of local schist bearing 2 small, equal-armed crosses, one within a circle;

B15 a similar but badly weathered cross-slab with what are either 3 equal-armed crosses in a row or a rare triple transomed cross; the initials DMG are later - probably 18th century and may refer to the adjacent grave of Donald McGregor;

B16 in addition to 2 small crosses this stone has what appears to be a hatchet; although rare in the early medieval period this probably indicates the grave of a carpenter;

B17 dated 1715, this is clearly the gravestone of a stone mason with its hammer, trowel, set-square and plumb line.

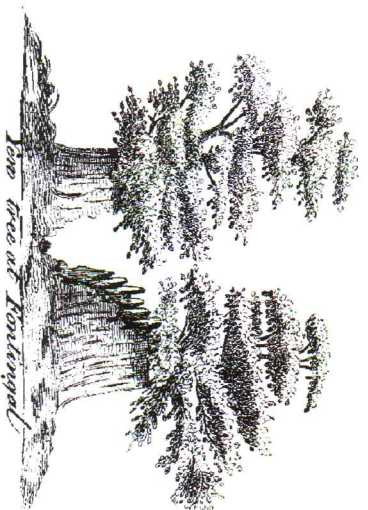


Old Bell-Cote (B18)

In a small enclosure on the left as you leave the churchyard is the bell-cote dated 1768 which housed the Rotterdam bell and was taken down from the former church. For a century, it languished in the yew-tree enclosure and was moved to its present site in 2002. Its influence on the design of its successor is obvious.

Gate posts (B19)

The gate-posts are decorated with water-worn stones from the river - a feature of gate posts in the village.



Fortingall Yew-tree (B2)

Current botanical opinion is that the tree is about 5000 years old. When visited by Thomas Pennant in 1769 it had already been damaged by Belane bonfires and souvenir hunters but measured 56 1/2 feet (17.5 m) in circumference. A protective wall was erected in 1785 and rebuilt with 'windows' in 1842. The area around the tree was the burial ground of the Stewarts of Garth and below its branches lie the remains of the parents of General David Stewart, historian of the Highlands, who is commemorated by a statue at Keltneyburn.

In a small triangular enclosure next to the yew tree is the grave of Rev. Duncan Macara Minister of Fortingall Parish for 50 years (1754-1804). Following the turbulent period of Jacobite uprisings, he brought tranquility and education to the area.

Currie Burial Ground (B13)

Behind the yew tree is a small burial ground set aside in 1902 for the family of Sir Donald Currie. Sadly, its first occupant was his young grandson John Charles Molteno whose grave is marked by a simple stone from the hill. A granite cross stands over the grave of Sir Donald who died in 1909. To the left of the gate as you leave is a cup-marked stone (B1).



Some Ministers of Fortingall

Alexander Robertson (1687) who graduated MA from St Andrews in 1676 was recommended by the Bishop of Dunkeld. Unfortunately he was deposed in 1716 for 'reading traitorous papers issued by the rebels', ie the Jacobites.

Fergus Ferguson (1722) who succeeded him had opposite political sympathies and 'made himself a sort of terror of the Jacobite lairds of the parish and was much detested by them'.

Duncan Macara (1754) is remembered as the author of the 1791 entry on Fortingall in the Old Statistical Account. He is buried behind the yew tree enclosure.

Alexander Irvine (1805) was presented by Sir Robert Menzies Bt. and scandalised the parish by eloping with Jessie, sister of Major-General David Stewart of Garth. He later established his reputation as a Celtic and Oriental Scholar.

Samuel Ferguson (1857) educated at St Andrews, was another distinguished Celtic Scholar involved in the Revision of the Gaelic Scriptures. He drowned in the River Tay in 1869 and his son, a medical student, drowned in Loch Voil seven years later.

William Campbell (1897) was born in Glenquich and educated at Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. He was minister when the church was rebuilt in 1902 and remained until 1935.

Anne Brennan (1999) the present incumbent is the first lady minister of the parish.

