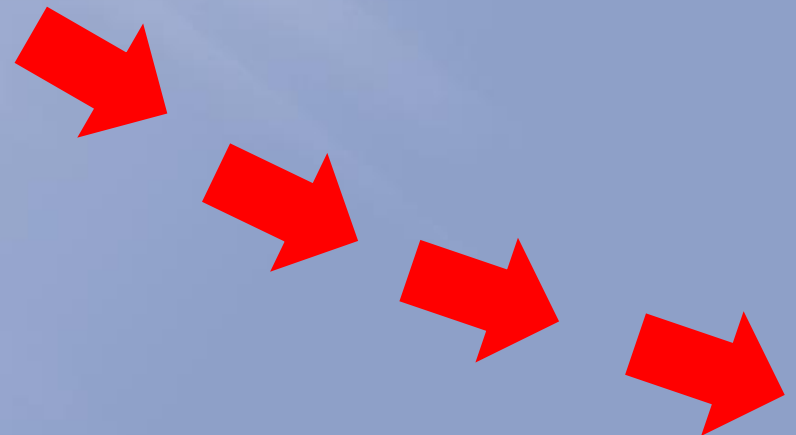
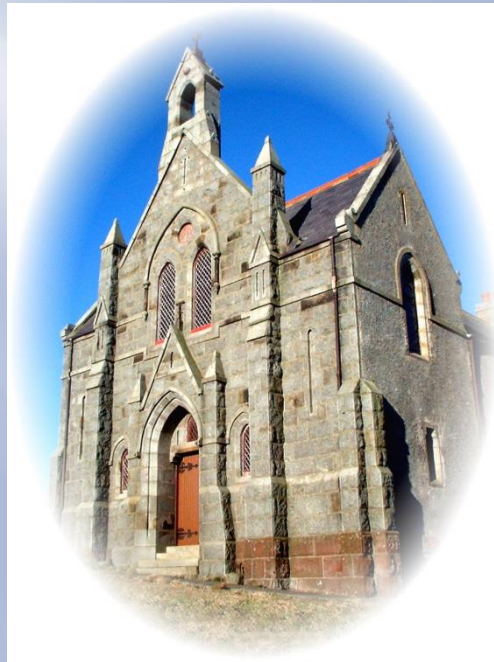


THIS IS QUITE A BIG FILE WHICH MIGHT BE A BIT SLOW TO RUN ON SOME COMPUTERS.

THE BEST WAY TO MOVE THROUGH A PAGE AT A TIME IS TO TAP REPEATEDLY ON THE 'DOWN' ARROW AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCROLL BAR (BOTTOM RIGHT OF YOUR SCREEN) THIS MOVES THE PAGES MORE SMOOTHLY THAN DRAGGING THE SCROLL BAR.



AUCHMEDDEN CHURCH, PENNAN



EXPLORING PAST AND PRESENT

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Prior to the building of Auchmedden Church, the folk of Pennan would have walked over the hill to Aberdour on Sunday by the 'Corpse Road' but by the late 19th century, there would have been a sufficiently large congregation in the village to merit a church of its own.

Initially, a 'missionary' by the name of Thomas Campbell was appointed to help out the Aberdour minister and it seems that he was taking services at Auchmedden School at the top of the brae which had been built in 1874.





No, not the congregation of Pennan Church – JUST THE SUNDAY SCHOOL!

On the 27th November, 1882 a meeting of all those attending public worship was held in Auchmedden School and plans were drawn up to build a church for Pennan.

The women of the village set about organising a bazaar to raise funds – this was planned for the following August (1883)

By 1884, work was well in progress and you can imagine the huge amount of effort and work going on at the top of the brae.

Red sandstone was taken up from the cliffs – probably by teams of Clydesdale horses and women carried smaller stones on creels on their backs.





It's thought that a Pennan man called William West who served his time as a master mason with the millstone quarrymen went off to Peterhead and set himself up as a building contractor and it's likely that he sourced and worked the fine granite blocks of the east gable.



And so, in 1884 the church was finally completed and a contrasting red date stone was added to mark this important event. Such is the quality of the work that 130 years on the stone still looks as if it has been newly set in the wall!

A LOOK ROUND INSIDE...



The interior of the church would have been kitted out by the master craftsmen who built Pennan's boats. All the wood is pitch pine and from personal experience trying to cut it I can say that it is incredibly hard and virtually rot proof.



There were some slight omissions however! There is a circular space for a clock on the balcony and a cupboard behind for winding it up – but a clock was never fitted! Similarly, there is a bell tower with no bell!



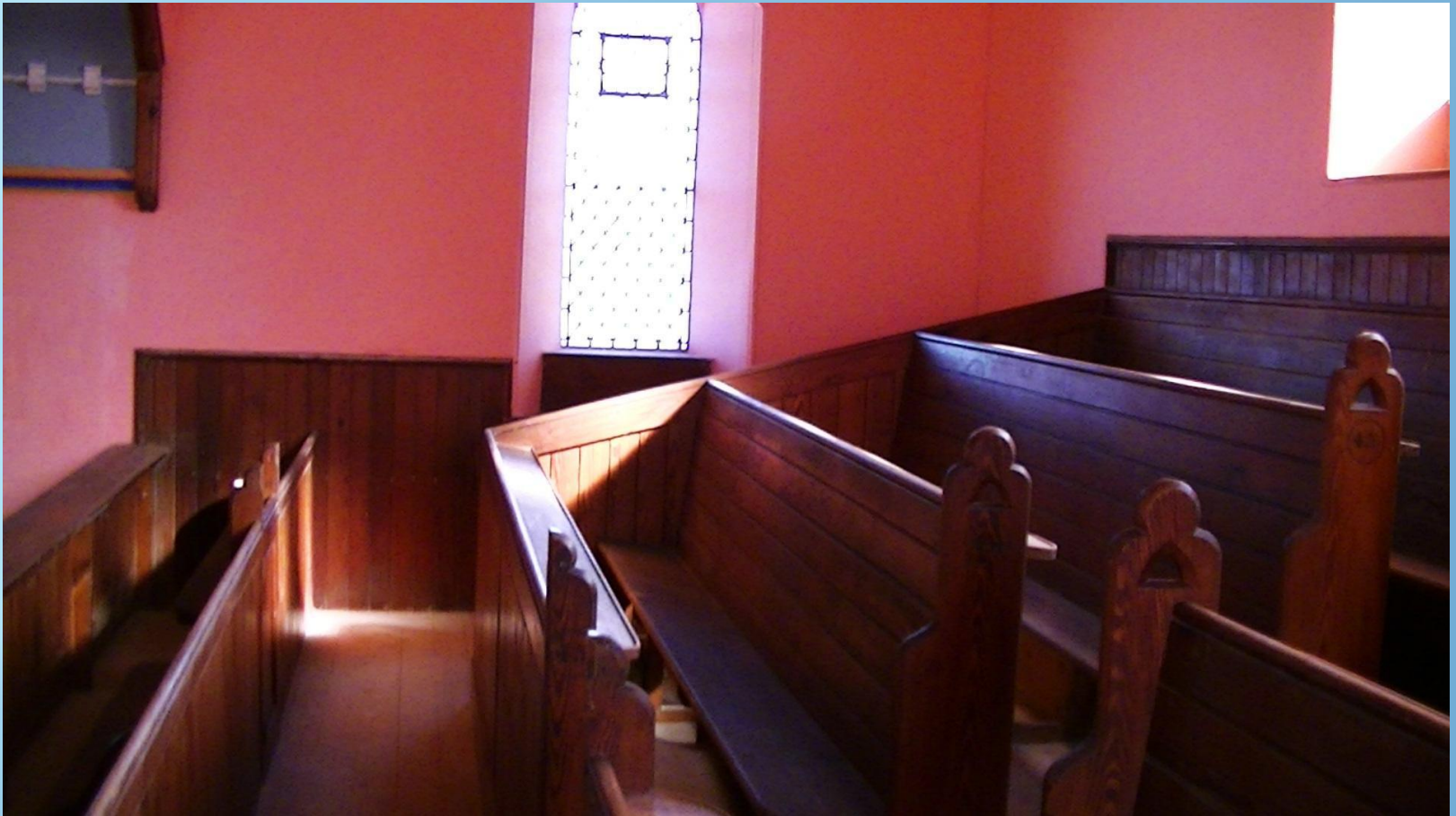
What seems a bit like penny pinching is surprising because in the 1880s the North East would have been in the grip of the Herring Boom and Pennan would have been a relatively prosperous village.



The woodwork on the pulpit is particularly good and everything is perfectly symmetrical – to the extent of making a dummy door, complete with doorknob at the right hand side to balance the vestry door on the left!



The roof beams are massive pieces of wood, although not solid as you would imagine as someone found to their cost.....

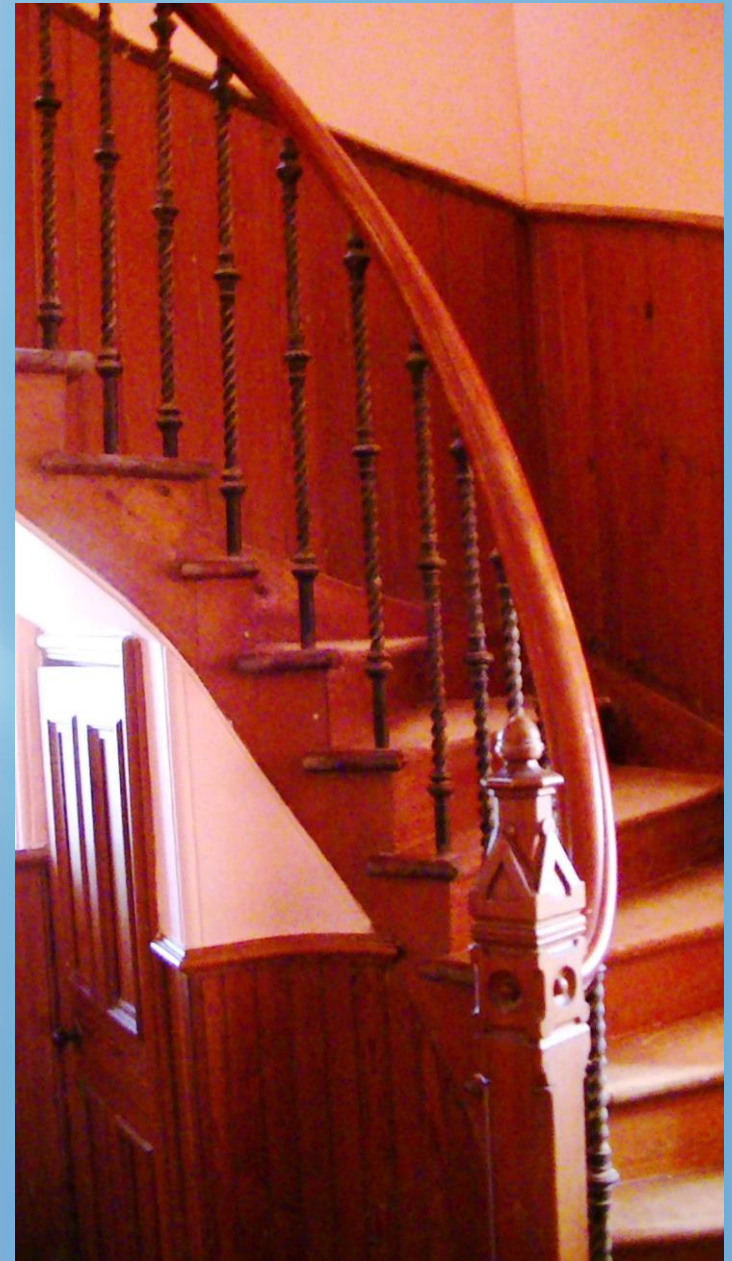


The gallery is no longer needed but until last year was in a very bad state of repair with falling plaster which was making a mess right through the church.



This is a corner of the upstairs ceiling, showing the fine cornice work.

The staircase too is beautifully shaped and finished.



Presumably these vents in the roof drew air up and away through the roof – possibly why smoke was drawn up from the heating chamber.

Of course you have to remember that the church was lit by paraffin lamps and these would have needed ventilation too.





The brass light fittings were in fact the original carriers for the paraffin lamps before they were wired for electricity. At the top of each light fitting you can still see the pulleys that were used to raise and lower the lamps for lighting. The ropes and pulley system are still there up above the church ceiling – they ran down to the back of the balcony.



Pulley system for the paraffin lamps.



A collection of lamp fittings - still in the vestry!

In the late 1950s the church got electricity and the lighting and window heaters were gifted by Mr & Mrs Hepburn of New Pitsligo. Mrs Hepburn's parents were Pennan folk and had a long association with the church.





Looks like a ventilator on the side of the pulpit but it's actually connected by a wooden duct to a heating chamber below the church. It's unclear what sort of fire they used because the chamber is partially bricked up. It would seem to have been pretty basic though – just a big fire with the heat rising by convection up through the church. Apparently it was never a success because it channelled up smoke as well as heat!



The pulpit lamp standards were also wired for electricity.



Two glass partitions in the front lobby protect the main church building from the worst of the draughts. Notice the rows of hat pegs which the men of the village would have made good use of but not, of course the women, who would never have gone to church bare headed!



In the 1960s Pennan had 18 members of a choir and it was decided to remove the relatively small box choir and replace it with a large open choir area. This was complemented by securing new choir chairs, communion table and font.



The large chairs behind the communion table and the font came from a disused church in Glasgow while the communion table was found in a workshop in the Mulben area - painted bottle green! It was sent down to Lord Robert's Workshops in Dundee where it was stripped and refinished.

When the font arrived from Glasgow it was black with the dirt and grime of years. The women of the village scrubbed it – over and over – until the white stone reappeared and it came up as good as new!





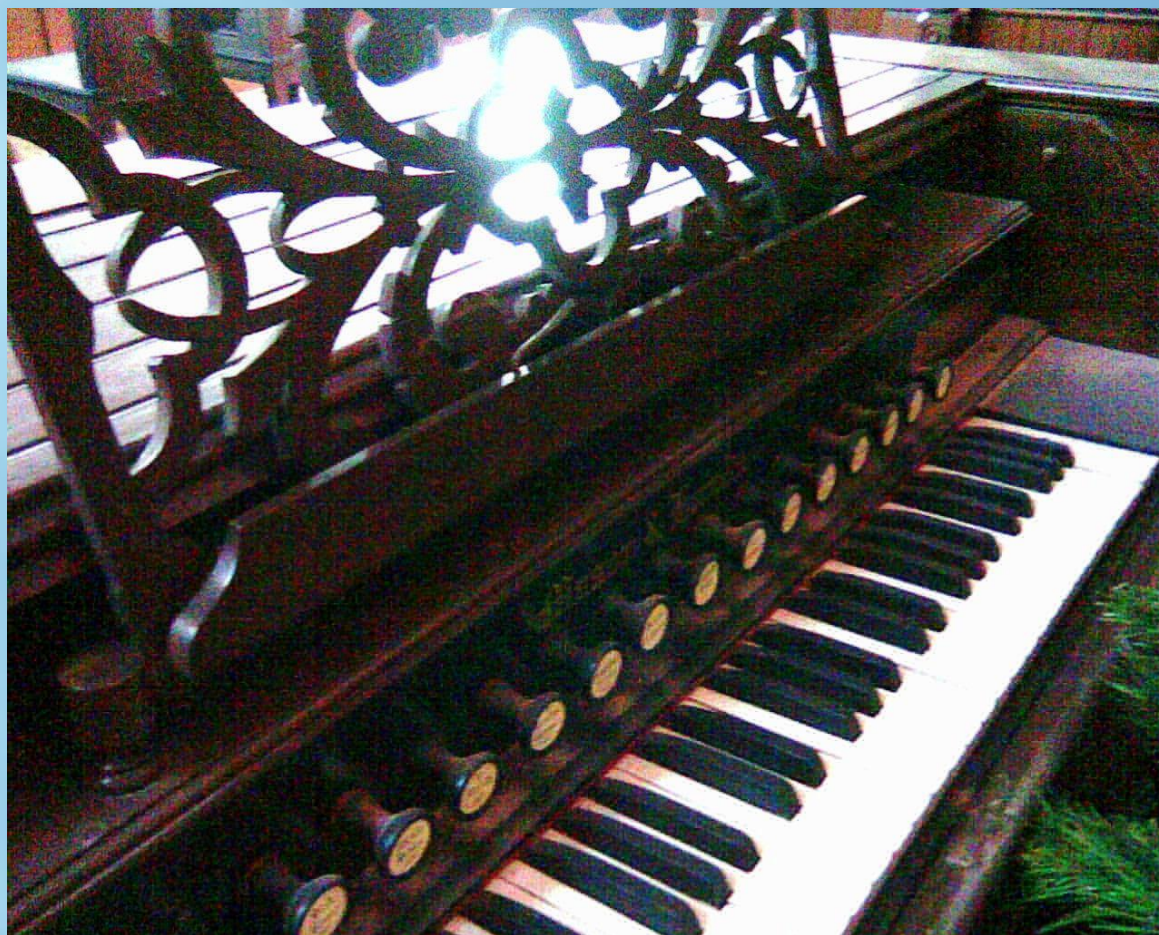
The inscription reads, 'Suffer Little children to Come Unto Me'.



There was no baptismal bowl with the font and a new silver bowl was made up to fit exactly and this was donated by Mrs Mabel Gibson, who many will remember was Postmistress at Pennan for many years.



The bowl was presented on 19th May, 1968



This is the original organ. It was bought in 1918 second hand from the South Church in Fraserburgh for £30. It still plays but you'd risk a hernia pumping it! It was last used in the 1980s when we had a Dutch couple who wanted to get married in Pennan. They brought their own organist.....

SOME CURIOS...



The vestry, like the rest of the church is virtually untouched since it was built in 1884.



The corner fireplace shares a chimney piece with the 'central heating system' that was part of the original design! The two chimney pots can still be seen at the top of the west gable.

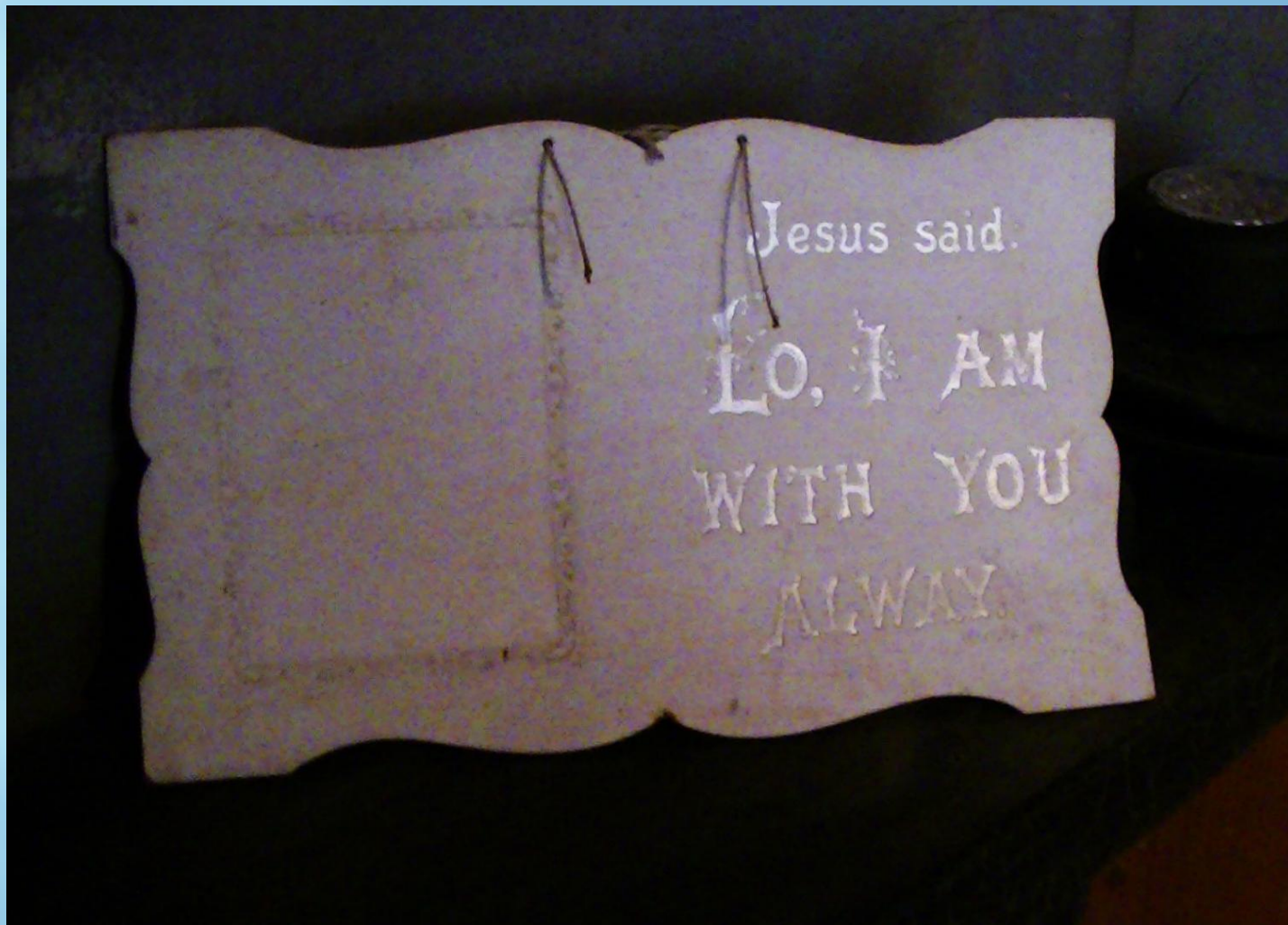
**Above the fireplace there is a mirror ,
brushes and combs for the minister.**







If you turn the mirror round the price can still be seen on the back - one shilling!



Under the mirror on the mantelpiece is an old text which reads, 'Lo I am With You Always'.



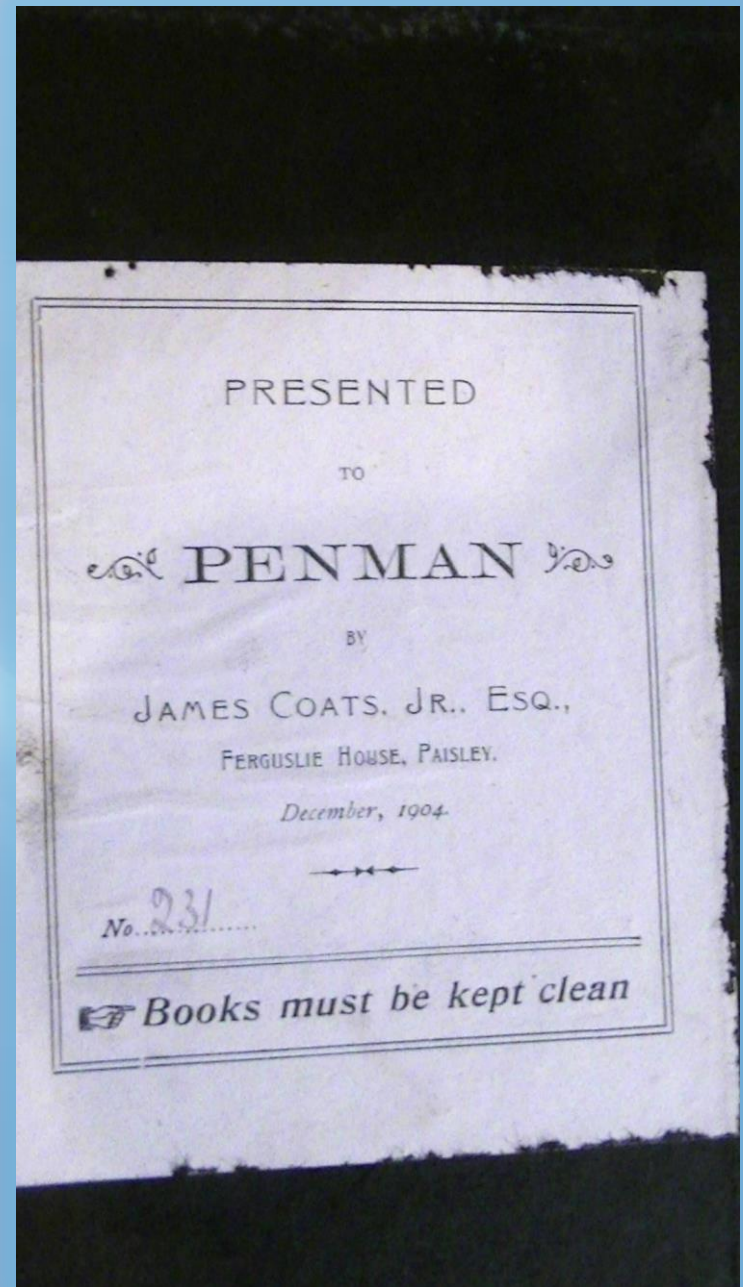
Also in the vestry is a mahogany bookcase and books presented to Pennan by James Coats (as in sewing thread)



Apparently Coats presented some 4000 of these to rural communities who had no easy access to libraries.

Each book has a label but unfortunately they got the spelling wrong so they are all 'Presented to PENMAN'!

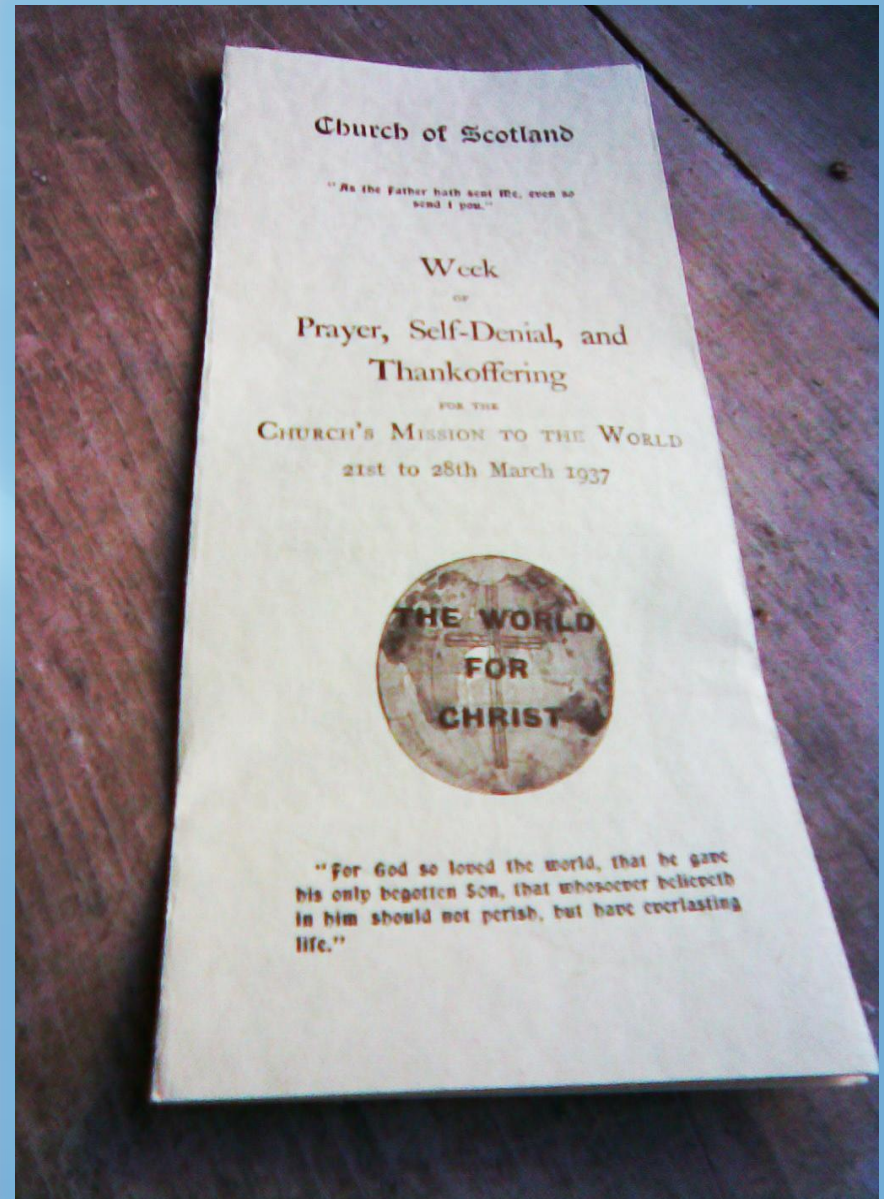
That was in December 1904 and the Pennan schoolmaster would open up the church every Saturday night from 6.00 – 7.00 for folk to come and borrow or return books.

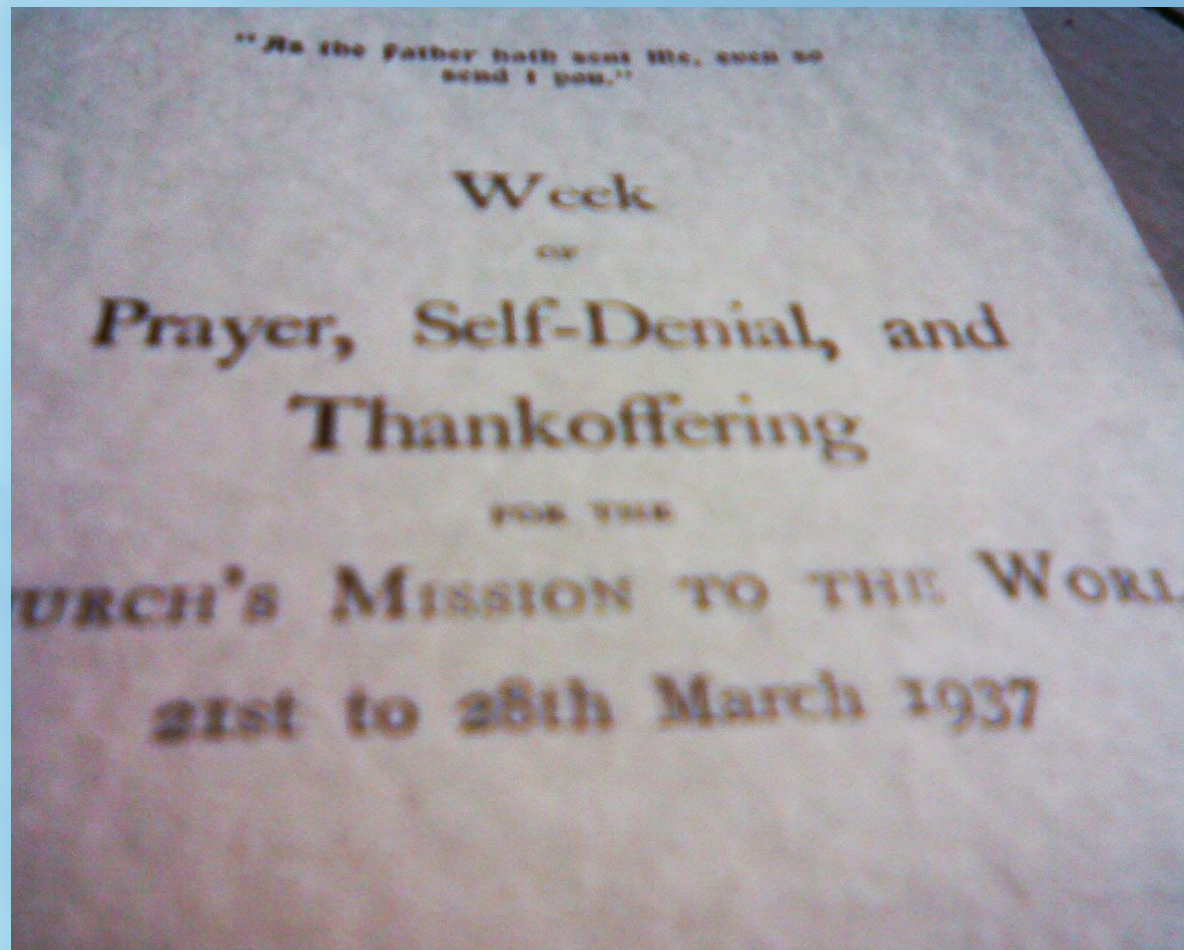




A collection box – could possibly have been for communion tokens.

Found in the vestry drawer! Dates back to 1937.





Week of Prayer, Self-Denial and Thankoffering for the Church's Mission to the World 21st to 28th March 1937



Ink and pen for signing the register at marriages!

**Church keys for all the
inside doors!**





A tobacco tin dating back to the early 1900s and inside.....



A beautiful collection of Victorian texts for use in the Sunday School. The children would take these home and learn them off by heart for the following week.



Beautifully illustrated and richly coloured.



Each one is well thumbbed!



Lovely scene of boy and girl watching bees in a hive – note the 'summer bonnets' and trailer of toys. Much happier and more innocent times!



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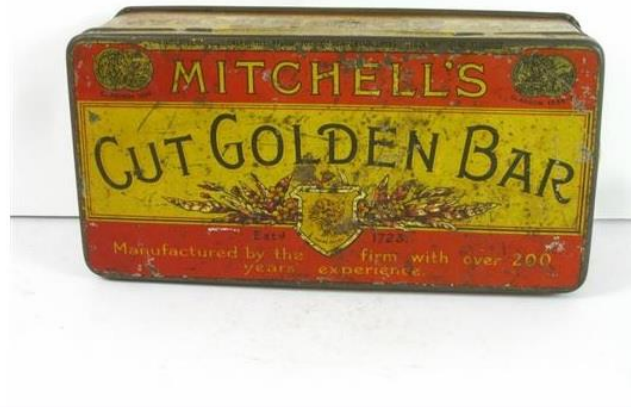
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Old tobacco cigarette tin for sale Mitchell's Cut Golden Bar counter box for
sale (0) £10.00



A webpage showing an identical tin for sale! They want £10 for it.

**DAMAGE, DETERIORATION AND
DESPAIR!**

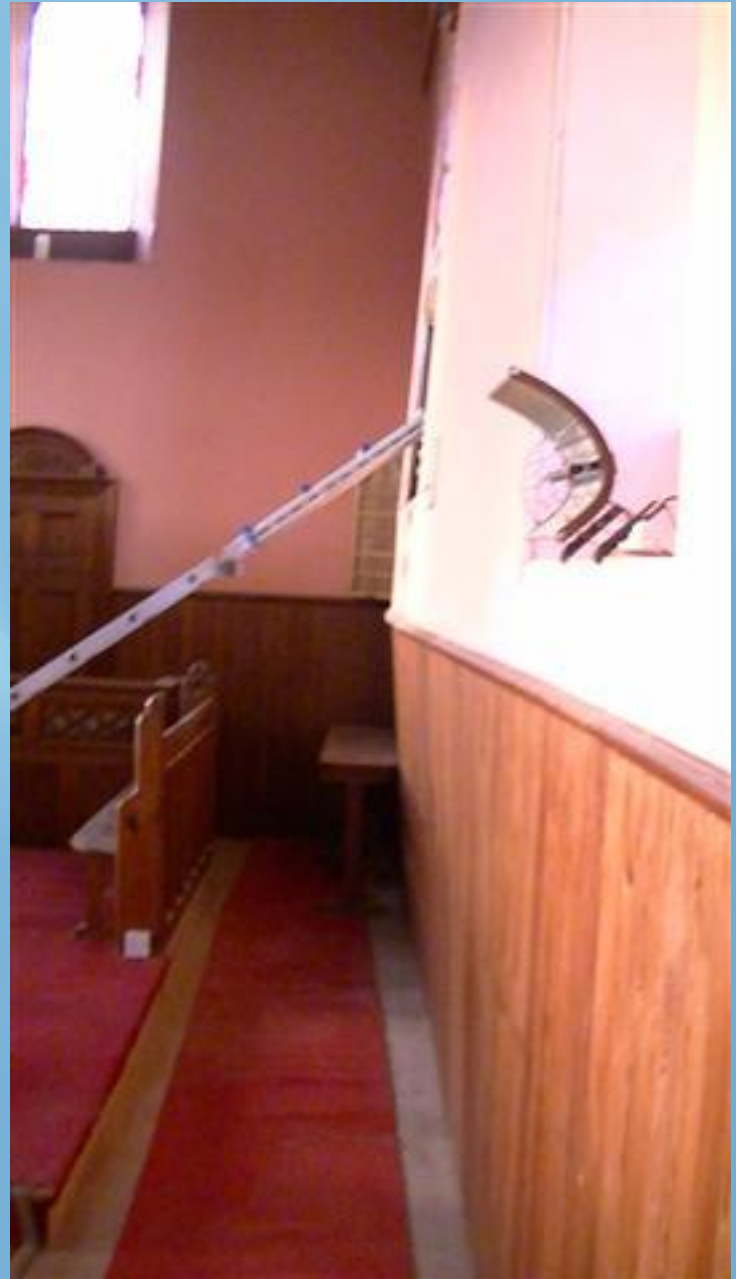


In September 2012 a severe gale blew in one of the windows at the front and for a start this seemed to be all the damage – apart from a few slates off the roof.

On closer examination, however, it became clear that the force of the wind had got in behind the wall and pushed it away from the stonework, so that a large and dangerous looking bulge had appeared inside.

We got estimates for repairs – two contractors didn't want to touch it and other two estimated £12372 and £8012 The insurance argued there must have been 'wear and tear' so all they were prepared to pay was £3215

Because the wall was unsafe it was looking as if the building would have to close.



Ricky Ross the builder from Macduff offered us the use of scaffolding if we were prepared to have a go at it ourselves and this turned out to be a Godsend because we were able to use it to repair other parts of the church that had been needing attention for years.

We began work just before Christmas 2013 and finished just in time for the Christmas Service in 2014.





Downstairs, the sides of all the windows had to be re-lined.

The upstairs was in a particularly bad state – the walls were collapsing, the windows were hanging out and because there was no hope of even patching things up all three walls had to be pulled down and disposed of.

Obviously this produced a huge amount of rubble and we couldn't look at the price of a skip so we cut a hole in the downstairs floor and dumped everything underneath! Fortunately there is a pretty large void – especially at the sea side!





The whole of the upstairs and the stairwell had to be gutted back to the stonework before putting up new posts and plasterboard.





Upstairs was completely re-lined and the ceiling and cornices were re-plastered as needed. In total we went through 37 sheets of plasterboard!



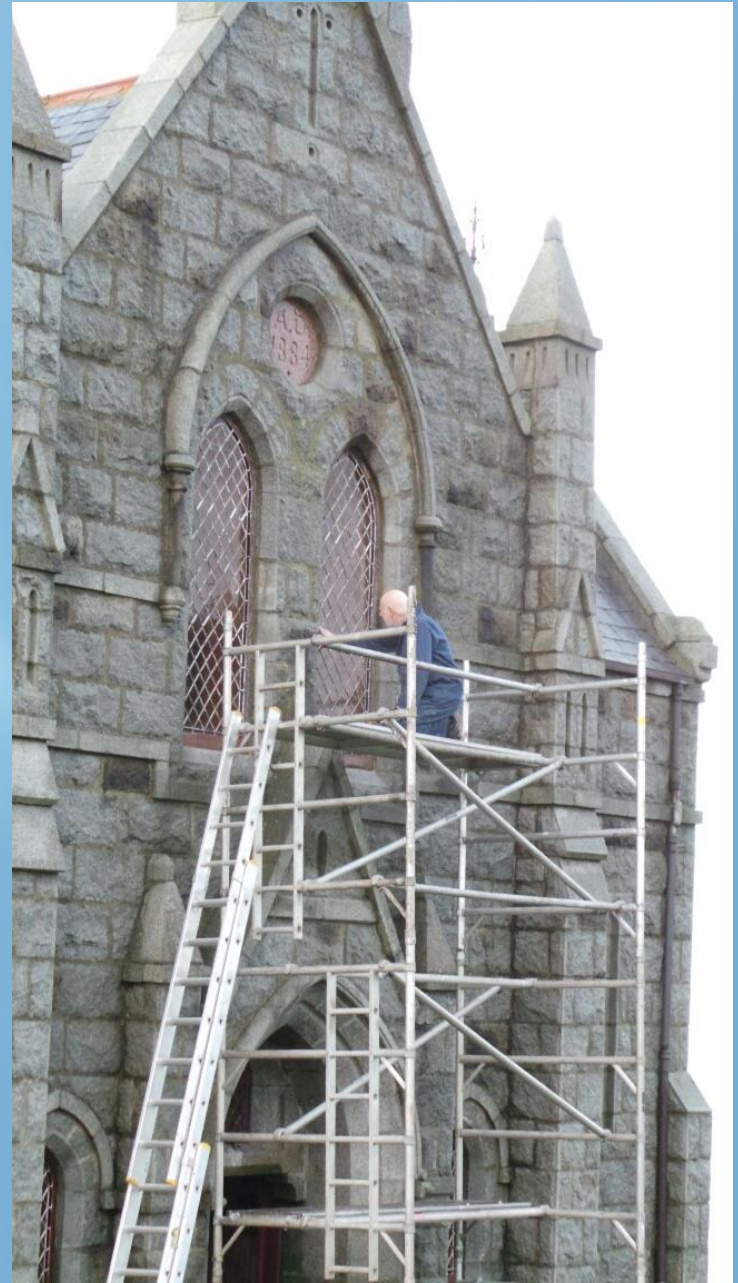


The upstairs windows were falling out (during the winter of 2013-14 they had to be propped up inside with a pole tied to the end of a pew!) They were fixed back to the stone with metal straps then sealed off with expanded foam inside and silicone sealer outside.



East windows stripped and re-fastened.

Sealing the windows from the outside.





**The stairwell stripped and ready
for new linings.**





Upstairs - south window.



Plasterwork on the upstairs ceiling.



A NEW START!



Church finished and cleaned. The red matting on the choir area and aisles was turned upside down to reveal fresh new colour! Paintwork was re-done where necessary using specially mixed paints to match the existing colours as nearly as could be managed. The window heaters were taken down and rewired, the wall heaters were repainted with radiator enamel and all the electrics were checked for safety. Missing slates were replaced outside and a bit of pointing done.

GOOD FOR ANOTHER 130 YEARS!