# History, religion, and community in North East Fife

## A picture of an early modern parish

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# Contents

# Abstract

This research project focuses on the small parish of Kingsbarns in the Presbytery of St Andrews in North East Fife. Split from Crail in 1631, researching the parish forces the chronological focus away from the success or failure of the Reformation, and allows a descriptive analysis of early modern Scottish society relative to the normative standards set out by the first generations of reformers. Additionally, the small geographical scale offers a chance to understand the interplay between local and national trends and how those helped foster different levels of identity.

The first half of the essay outlines the circumstances around the foundation of the parish, and the motivations behind its creation from lay and Church members. It then outlines the makeup and function of the kirk session, before using the session as a way of understanding discipline and welfare on the local scale. Throughout the section, there is a focus on how Kingsbarns's parishioners conceived of themselves, their connections to each other in the parish and to others outside of it. The use of primary sources intends to give agency to the laity in an historical anthropological way.

The second half explains the methodology and gives a literature review. The key body of primary evidence was the kirk session minutes, a group of sources that has been used by historians to diverse effects. The methodology used by historians inevitably changes the way the sources are interpreted, as well as the final analysis. The literature review focuses on the ways the kirk session minutes have been used by different historians, and the results of those methodologies. After that, it lays out the caution required for use of the minutes by underlining their drawbacks.

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As well as these, my thanks go to Dr Gillian Mitchell for her patience in helping me with my ethical application process. Further thanks go to the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde, whose online course helped me appreciate the nuances of conducting historical interviews. This will be a great help to me when I come to interview the custodians of the Kingsbarns church in January 2021.

Finally, I would like to thank all those I spoke to in the Kingsbarns community for their valuable contributions to my project. While it is a great shame that I could not meet them in person or visit the parish, their kindness and the warmth of the community shined despite my distance from them.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *Acts* | *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638-1842* (Edinburgh, 1843). |
| BHO | British History Online |
| *FES* | Scott, Hew, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae: the succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation* (7 vols., Edinburgh, 1915-1926). |
| *PER* | *Ecclesiastical Records: Selections from the minutes of the Presbyteries of St. Andrews and Cupar, M.DC.XLI. – M.DC.XCVIII* (Edinburgh, 1837). |
| *RPS* | Brown, K. M. et al (eds.), *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* (St Andrews, 2007-2020) <www.rps.ac.uk>. |
| *RSCHS* | *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* |
| StAUL | St Andrews, St Andrews University Library Special Collections. |
| *SER* | *Ecclesiastical Records: Selections from the minutes of the Synod of Fife, M.DC.XI. – M.DC.LXXXVII* (Edinburgh, 1837). |

# List of Ministers of Kingsbarns parish from inception to 1842.

| | |
|---|---|
| **1632-1662** | James Bruce (d. 26th May 1662) |
| **1663-1678** | George Pattullo (d. Nov. 1679) |
| **1678-1700** | Gilbert Simson (d. 8th May 1700) |
| **1701-1737** | Joseph Pitcairn (d. 11th Nov. 1737) |
| **1739-1786** | William Vilant (d. 27th Feb 1786) |
| **1787-1795** | James Beatson (transferred to Dunbarney on 26th Nov. 1795; d. 17th Nov. 1820) |
| **1796-1799** | James Thomson (d. 19th July 1799) |
| **1800-1808** | Robert Arnot (d. 2nd July 1808) |
| **1809-1869** | George Wright (d. 28th May 1869) |

Source: *FES*, pp. 215-7.

# History, religion, and community in North East Fife

## Introduction

The small parish of Kingsbarns contrasts sharply with the nearby ecclesiastically dominant St Andrews. However, this does not mean its four hundred years of history should be treated as less useful to the historian. Practically, there survives abundant sources of information about lived religion among the laity in the form of the kirk session minutes.[1] While these sources can be difficult, as will be demonstrated in the second section of the essay, they are exceptional in their closeness to the lives of those 'in the pew' and invaluable in understanding the social experience of early modern religion.[2] However, the parish is also well situated to make a significant contribution to wider historiographical debates. It was separated from the parish of Crail in February 1631.[3] As a reformed parish, therefore, it forces the historical focus away from debates about the success or failure of the Reformation in its first generations,[4] and towards the lived experience of early modern Scots relative to the normative standards inherited from those generations. These two benefits closely link to each other. The sources left to the historian are so abundant because of the active and bureaucratic role played by the kirk session in shaping Kingsbarns parish towards the ideal. Therefore, this essay will highlight those connections across two sections. Firstly, it will create a picture of Kingsbarns in the early modern period. This will start with the circumstances of its creation, and then outline the role of the kirk as both a behemoth on local discipline, and as an intermediary for lay participation in wider charitable work. These will be compared to other parishes. Secondly, it will analyse the role of the kirk session in early modern Scottish society, using this to underline the methodological challenges associated with using these sources.

[1] StAUL, CH2/819, Kingsbarns Kirk Session Minutes.
[2] Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (London, 2002), pp. 7-8.
[3] *FES*, p. 215.
[4] This period was covered in Michael Graham, *The Uses of Reform: Godly Discipline and Popular Behaviour in Scotland and Beyond, 1560-1610* (Leiden, 1996), and Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*. For more recent analysis, John McCallum, 'The Reformation in Fife, 1560-1640' (PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2008).

**Kingsbarns the parish**

Understanding the erection of the new parish of Kingsbarns out of the older one of Crail in February 1631 helps to reveal both the function of the Church and what the laity wanted from it.[5] For the laity did not passively accept the rulings of their superiors; there was a dialogue between the clergy and laity. Each had their own agency, desires, and motivations. The laity cared for the betterment of their lives, and those of future generations. They believed in the value of preaching, hearing the gospel, and having access to the minister, since that was the path to salvation. It is that lay desire for proximity that drove the erection of Kingsbarns parish.

The foundation of Kingsbarns was an example of a broader phenomenon of parish splitting. An act of parliament in November 1581 identified that many parishes had a plurality of kirks, with the minister preaching to multiple groups and fostering 'Godles atheisme.'[6] This effectively recommended that large parishes be split to allow easy access to the kirk. Therefore, while we lack direct evidence about the split, there were similar cases nearby. The most immediate comparison comes in the erection of the parish of Cameron in 1645. Information regarding this split is more accessible, perhaps due to the perceived importance of St Andrews as an ecclesiastical and population hub in Fife. Regardless, it demonstrates that the Church recognised that it was necessary for the laity to have easy access to the kirk. The emphasis on accessibility was re-emphasised in parliament in June 1592, when a visitation to St Andrews parish found it to be 'sevin myles of lenth.'[7] This made sufficient instruction by the pastor unviable due to the 'greit distance of the saidis parrochinaris duellingis frome the said parroche kirk.'[8] Thus in February 1645, the parish of Cameron was separated from that of St Andrews by act of parliament.[9]

There was also popular desire for accessible kirks, dispelling the notion that worship was entirely directed from above. Evidence of this kind comes from the recordings of a visitation in December 1649 of St Andrews by representatives from the Presbytery, the same Presbytery that oversaw the governance of Kingsbarns. The presbytery minutes mention that the visitors consulted the parish both 'town and landward, both pastors and people' and received 'ample testimony.'[10] The testimony they received revealed discontent at the geography of the parish,

[5] *FES*, p. 215.
[6] *RPS*, 1581/10/21 [accessed 21/08/2020].
[7] *RPS*, 1592/4/38 [accessed 21/08/2020].
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] *RPS*, 1645/1/98 [accessed 21/08/2020].
[10] *PER*, p. 51.

'ther being severall parts in the landward paroch of St. Andros lying at a great distance from the kirk thereof, by reason quherof they seldome come to the hearing of the Word.'[11] A selection of ministers and elders gathered in Kinkepill on 20th March, 1650 to investigate further. Perambulating the west parts of the parish, the committee found 'some places whereof they find above thrie myles distant from St. Andros, and verie evill way, especiallie in winter.'[12] Three miles is the same distance as Kingsbarns is from Crail. What was more, there was no other kirk conveniently enough placed for those afflicted by geography to be annexed to.[13] The testimony of the laity was clear: their chances to hear the gospel and live a devout life were diminished by the large size of their parish. The presbytery thus found it necessary that 'there be a paroch kirk erected according to the [visitation report].'[14] Even though the available records are not clear as to the result of that recommendation, it can be seen that the creation of a new parish could derive from the parishioners themselves.

It is therefore likely that the inhabitants of early modern Kingsbarns too sought greater proximity to a place of worship. What was the profile of the Church in village life once it had been established? The most immediate impact of the kirk on the local level was the kirk session, the local church court, which oversaw moral standards in the parish. It was moderated by the minister, whose position was defined as 'Moderator *ex officio*, and constant out of necessity.'[15] Alongside the minister was a collection of lay elders drawn from the parish. The size of this group varied depending on the size of the parish; for an area the size of Kingsbarns, it can be estimated that the group would be between twelve and fifteen.[16] Elders were laymen who were supposed to represent the society as a whole, elected by the rest of the laity and chosen to help govern the church.[17] At the beginning of our period, the elder was always local. As such, the eldership of the Kingsbarns session was likely made up of farmers from the surrounding countryside and merchants whose income was from trade from the North Sea. A member of a small community would recognise the elders from their work or social position outside of the church, as it was expected that the ordained would have 'prudence, gravity, and interest, in the

[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[15] 'Acts: 1704 – Overtures concerning discipline and method in ecclesiastical judicatories, II, 1' in *Acts*, pp. 337-381, BHO, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts/1638-1842/pp337-381>, [accessed 22/08/2020].
[16] Estimate based on Todd's range of examples: Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, p. 8 n22.
[17] W. H. Makey, 'The Elders of Stow, Liberton, Canongate and St. Cuthberts in the Mid-Seventeenth Century', *RSCHS* 8 (1970), pp. 155-167.

parish.'[18] Some elders found it necessary to prioritise their local work over their dedication to the church, as evidenced by fines for absentees.[19] Later in the period, it appears that people were being considered who did not have sufficient interest in the parish. Kingsbarns, located as it is on an important coastal route between St Andrews and Crail, was granted the freedom of 'two free faires to be holden […], one upon the first Teusday of June and the other upon the third Wednesday of October' in 1696.[20] On the ground, it is probably the case that the increasing interchange between outsiders and parishioners, particularly regarding trade, led to vibrant but heated debates on market day.[21] It may be that those travelling between parishes frequently for trade were considered for the eldership. An overture to the General Assembly in 1784 attempted to rule out this practice, indicating it was becoming more common in this period of increasing trade connections between parishes.[22]

The kirk session primarily handled matters of discipline. Analysis of the kinds of offences examined by the session can offer an insight into the religious and social life of the parish, since these were often impacted by local factors. A common offence discussed in the session was sabbath breaking. This could include absence from the service, or working on a Sunday. The presbytery records for St Andrews show repeated attempts to prevent the latter.[23] For a coastal parish like Kingsbarns, the emphasis on those working on the salt pans and those salmon fishing indicates that these were the key drivers of the local economy. The entry dating 22nd March 1643 demands the 'greeve [overseer] of [Kings]Barnes pans shew that his pannes rests from sixe on the Sabboth morning till sixe on Monday morning.'[24] Interestingly, the accused was brought to the presbytery not by the minister of Kingsbarns, James Bruce, but by Arthur Myrton, the minister at Crail, indicating a continuing close relationship between the parishes. The entry does not indicate whether the overseer was absent from the service himself, but the act of working on the sabbath was still considered an offence. Offences such as these were commonplace enough for an act of the General Assembly to chastise not only the servants who worked on Sundays, but also their masters; those with power would break the sabbath by

[18] 'Acts: 1704, II, 2', in *Acts*, pp. 337-381, BHO, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts/1638-1842/pp337-381>, [accessed 22/08/2020].
[19] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, p. 10.
[20] *RPS*, 1696/9/221 [accessed 23/08/2020].
[21] A parish with a similar trading economy, Burntisland, saw a high number of verbal offences brought to the session: McCallum, 'Reformation in Fife', pp. 163-4.
[22] 'Acts: 1784, X, Sess. ult., May 31, 1784', in *Acts*, pp. 819-822, BHO, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts/1638-1842/pp819-822> [accessed 22/08/2020].
[23] *PER*, p. 7, 10, 12, 22.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 10.

proxy.[25] Offending by working on the salt pans was a common occurrence in other coastal parishes, with kirk session minutes alluding to the offence in Culross and Burntisland.[26] Thus we can build a picture of the local economy and society. Salt pan workers would rise early and trudge to the North Sea, the sun not far above the horizon. Elders, some of whom may have worked in the same profession, would visit their 'quarters' during the Sunday service to catch those profaning the sabbath.[27] In a parish the size of Kingsbarns, those they caught would probably be familiar faces. Throughout most of our period, punishment involved public repentance. It would be common to see Kingsbarns's sinners stationed on the stool of repentance during the sermon to discourage others – the number of Sundays spent in this public humiliation varied depending on the seriousness of the offence.[28] The kirk session's judicial remit remained this way until the middle of the nineteenth century.[29]

The welfare side of the parish allows us to see how local activities linked to wider patterns. Parishes formed a web through the interconnecting of ministers and elders at the presbytery and synod level. Investigating how charity was managed locally helps us understand the creation of Protestant and national identities among early modern Scots. Monetary help would be requested by national and regional institutions, to be enacted by the session.[30] Parishioners would be part of that wider picture, with the kirk as the intermediary. The presbytery records show how local events, managed by the synod, fit into the national picture. On 6th October 1669, the synod appointed that 'a charitable contribution be collected throughout all the parish churches within the dioces of St Androis' in response to a fire in Cupar the previous April.[31] The presbytery thus gathered a group of 'faithfull and honest men' to receive the charitable collection from the ministers, who would have explained the purpose of the collection in the service.[32] Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Kingsbarns's residents would also empty their pockets to raise money for the Protestant rebel army in Ireland,[33] for maintenance of the 'Incorporation of the Scotts att London,'[34] and to allow a young boy of

[25] 'Acts: 1643, Sess. 11, August 14, 1643,' in *Acts*, pp. 73-96, BHO, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts/1638-1842/pp73-96> [accessed 22/08/2020].
[26] McCallum, 'Reformation in Fife', pp. 168-9.
[27] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, pp. 10-11.
[28] John Di Folco, 'Discipline and Welfare in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Scots Parish', *RSCHS*, 19 (1977), pp. 169-183, p. 174-5; *SER*, pp. 124-6, 132.
[29] Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 73.
[30] Di Folco, 'Discipline and Welfare', p. 177.
[31] *SER*, p. 186.
[32] *PER*, pp. 87-88.
[33] *SER*, p. 134.
[34] *PER*, pp. 88-9.

'Erish tongue,' Zacharie McCallum, to learn at the grammar school in St Andrews.[35] Kingsbarns's laity would have heard a more exotic excuse for their donations in April 1633. The synod records reveal the supplications of Alexander Lathrishe and David Kirkaldie, of Dysart and Kinghorne respectively, who were captured by Turks at sea and imprisoned for three years before being sold to a Spanish galley. There, they were kept in 'most lamentable captivitie and slaivrie' for eight years, with a ransom set at a thousand Scots marks. The synod therefore urged ministers to uplift their congregations to help pay for their fellow Fifers' release.[36] These diverse examples demonstrate how the daily lives of local laity could be shaped by national events.

[35] *SER*, p. 162, 165.
[36] *Ibid*., p. 113.

**The kirk session and its sources**

This section reviews the range of ways the kirk session minutes have been used by historians with different methodologies, and how these lead to different conclusions and analyses. It then considers the availability of the sources, with an analysis of the issues that arise from using these sources to create a social history.

The kirk session generally plays one of two roles in the historiography of the Scottish church in the early modern period. The older position was to treat the session in administrative terms, as a layer in the hierarchy of church organisation. Its importance in this regard has been appreciated since the 1970s; Walter Foster called it 'one of the most enduring features of the Scottish Reformation' whose administrative features benefited the church beyond the seventeenth century.[37] Foster's analysis was heavily influenced by that of Gordon Donaldson, which removed emphasis from early modern episcopal-presbyterian conflict and stressed church unity.[38] He argues that the Church of Scotland was made up of an episcopal superstructure built on a 'second-rank leadership' managing 'local discipline and church administration.'[39] This means the session is approached from the viewpoint of the Kirk authorities. It is seen as a mere functionary whose only purpose was to uphold the standards laid out by Knox in the Confession of Faith.[40] This focus on the structural organisation of the Church itself leads to a prescriptivist understanding of early modern Scottish society on the local level, excluding the agency of the laity.

More recent treatment of the kirk session has recognised the role of the laity more. This has involved the introduction of historical anthropology into the analysis of post-reformation Scottish society. With this methodology, the kirk session minutes take on a more central role as a deposit of sources that give insight into the daily lives of early modern Scots. The most prominent use of this collection of sources in recent years has been the work of Margot Todd. Shifting away from Foster's bureaucratic focus, Todd's work uses the kirk session minutes to uncover the role of ritual and symbolism in the lives of early modern Scots at the parish level. She argues that the development of a culture of reformed Protestantism was dialogical, with top-down change and lay continuity existing in 'symbiotic tension.'[41] This demonstrates that a

[37] W. R. Foster, *The Church before the Covenants: The Church of Scotland, 1596-1638* (Edinburgh, 1975), p. 71.
[38] Gordan Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, 1960).
[39] Foster, *Church before the Covenants*, p. 70.
[40] John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion within the realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1790), pp. 237-8.
[41] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, pp. 22-3.

historical anthropological reading of the kirk session leads to the conclusion of a more active laity overall.

More recently, however, Alistair Mutch has emphasised the role of the kirk session in creating a 'culture of organisation' in the Church of Scotland.[42] Mutch's research acts as something of a synthesis between the school of Donaldson and Foster, and that of Todd. His inspiration was Keith Snell's intention to 'infuse cultural meaning into administrative history.'[43] Focused on the eighteenth century, Mutch focuses on the organisational aspect of the kirk session in its administration of ritual and cultural symbols. A good example of Mutch's approach was his detailed description of the administrative procedure behind the receiving of communion, one of the two Reformed sacraments.[44] This treatment of the kirk session lets us view it as the intermediary between the laity and the larger government of the Church. Mutch has also used this methodology to understand Foucault's 'pastoral power,' whereby misconduct by one member of the parish was known and shared with the others to help solidify collective identity, in the context of eighteenth century Scotland. He argues that Church administration was essential in the creation of routine, through which belief was solidified.[45]

The way the historian encounters these sources has a substantial impact on the final analysis they create. Two points stand out. The first is methodological. The kirk session minutes are still an untapped resource, offering insight into community and lived religion that is not comparable on this scale anywhere else in Britain and Ireland. However, reading them does not offer an experience in 'eavesdropping across time.'[46] Rather, they are distant echoes. The sessions offer a mediated version of events from a narrow, clerical point of view. Session clerks had their own turns of phrase, and were subjective players themselves. The memories of those giving depositions were fallible. These all mean that, while today's historians can critically and carefully infer information from the session minutes, they cannot take the words they read as gospel. The second point appears more forcefully because this research essay was largely written during the coronavirus lockdown in the middle of 2020. The sources used have all been

[42] Alistair Mutch, ''To bring the work to greater perfection': Systematising Governance in the Church of Scotland, 1696-1800', *Scottish Historical Review*, 93, 2: 237 (October 2014), pp. 240-261, p. 242-3.
[43] K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 14.
[44] Mutch, *Religion and National Identity: Governing Scottish Presbyterianism in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 100-5.
[45] Mutch, '"Decently and order": Scotland and Protestant pastoral power', *Critical Research on Religion*, 5: 1 (2017), pp. 79-93, p. 82.
[46] Term coined in a review of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou*: Michael Ratcliffe, 'The yellow cross', *The Times*, London, 1 June 1978, p. 9.

made available online by other individuals before I encountered them. There is therefore a two-tier organisation of primary sources. The kirk session minutes are untapped because the vast majority of them remain only in physical manuscript form. They are under supervision in libraries and archives, waiting for the trained historian to enter and examine. At the same time, there is a selection of canonised sources. These are the sources that historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have deemed relevant enough to be printed, and that the ones of the twenty-first century wished to scan and publish on the internet. In practise, central records were prioritised over local ones in this process. Acts of the General Assembly were easy to find; kirk session minutes were near impossible. I understand that the analysis I have formed during my lockdown research is indebted to the work of these past historians, but it is also at the mercy of their decisions. However, I have used the sources available to me to create a localised version of Todd's anthropology-based analysis. Encounter with the manuscripts themselves will prove fruitful in the continuation of this analysis.

**Appendix – January 2021**

While I was ultimately unable to examine the kirk session minutes as I had hoped to in the second phase of my research, I did have the opportunity to interview the current clerk of the Kingsbarns session. I used our discussion to understand change and continuity in the village over time in subjects such as church governance and hierarchy, and the role of the session in the community.

The first key similarity was the close relationship that exists between the session and the presbytery. Today, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is great value in maintaining connections between the layers of administration, as the Kingsbarns clerk attested:

> 'there is a close relationship. All the churches are represented on the presbytery and we try to work together on the problems we face […] We have the advantage of the presbytery that we can bring together scarce resources of knowledge and of experience.'

There is thus a sense that the interplay between different layers of localism is important in fostering local identity as well as having a practical use. Just as with the story of Alexander Lathrishe and David Kirkaldie, captives on a Spanish galley, the sessions were able to coordinate together over relatively large geographical areas through this close exchange of information and ideas via the presbyteries and sessions.

With regards to church government, there have been some differences in geographical scope since the period covered in this essay. In the earlier years of the church, there was a tendency to reduce the size of parishes so as to ensure a high standard of pastoral care in the community. However, advances in modern technology have allowed the mergers of presbyteries into bodies that cover larger areas:

> 'It is the trend in the Church of Scotland to reduce the number of presbyteries but to make them more effective in their use of resources. Online meetings are becoming more familiar and in some ways they are more inclusive – anyone in the meeting has the chance to speak up in a way that might have been a bit daunting in a large group'.

This insight is revealing for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates how Church administration has adapted and changed to suit its background over time. While the earlier Church pursued a localised policy due to the limitations of travel and bureaucracy, the modern Church has focused on streamlining administration to ensure efficient distribution and management of resources. This has also been enabled by greater communications and travel opportunities. Secondly, it helps us when reading presbytery minutes by reintroducing personalities and

individuals into our understanding of source creation. The session clerk's insight into the realities of speaking reminds us that absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence with regards to the links between the session and the presbytery or General Assembly. This adds a further filter through which the written sources we have today have travelled.

Finally, the central role played by the session on the community has remained consistent. However, the session clerk made me more aware of the dialogic nature of the session's relationship with the congregation. He informed me of the discussions the session has had over the interior design of the church:

> 'People have a very strong feeling about any changes we make about the physical environment […] we have a pulpit but it is never used; ministers prefer to stay at ground level and talk to the people […] people don't want to give up the pews or the pulpit, which they see visually'

The clerk's testimony on the equal interaction between the session and the congregation helps contextualise certain episodes in the primary sources regarding visual changes to churches. For instance, a visitation to the kirk of Darsie, between Guardbridge and Cupar, in November 1641 recommended the wall between the choir and congregation be removed as part of the process of reformation in the parishes.[47] Yet a report on the progress on that removal in October 1642, almost a year after the initial recommendation, revealed that 'there wes nothing done in that matter as yet.'[48] There was clearly some resistance from the kirk in Darsie against the architectural change. When I initially read this, I viewed it as evidence of conflict between different layers of Church governance. However, my interview with the modern clerk revealed the possibility that the congregation liked the presence of the wall, and were resisting the session's efforts to remove it. Since the membership of the session largely consisted of local people with ties to the community, it is likely that such backlash was more powerful due to personal connections between individuals. Today's clerk therefore reminded me that 'the building is not important, it is the people and their relationship with God.'

[47] *SER*, p. 129.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 133.

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